

**“KEEPING THE KIDS OUT OF TROUBLE”: EXTRA-DOMESTIC LABOUR AND
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION IN TORONTO’S REGENT PARK, 1959-2012**

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Abstract

This dissertation is an historical ethnography of social reproduction in Regent Park, Canada's first public housing project. Built from 1948 to 1959 as part of a modernist 'slum clearance' initiative, Regent Park was deemed a failure soon after it opened and was then stigmatised for decades thereafter, both for being a working-class enclave and for epitomising an outdated approach to city planning. A second redevelopment began in 2005, whereby the project is being demolished and rebuilt as a mix of subsidised and market housing, retail space, and other amenities. Despite its enduring stigmatisation, however, many current and former residents retain positive memories of Regent Park. Participants in this study tended to refer to it as a 'community', indicating senses of shared ownership and belonging that residents themselves built in everyday life.

This dissertation emphasises the capacity of working-class people to build and maintain 'community' on their own terms, and in spite of multiple and intersecting constraints. To theorise community-building, I begin from the concept of social reproduction: the work of maintaining and replenishing stable living conditions, both day-to-day and across generations. Much of this work is domestic labour – unpaid tasks done inside the household such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children. In Regent Park, social reproduction demanded even more of residents: the stability of households was often threatened by dangers and challenges unique to life in a stigmatised housing project, and it was largely left up to residents themselves to redress these. To account for the considerable effort this involved, I propose a concept adjacent to domestic labour that I call "extra-domestic labour": unpaid work done outside the household, usually through informal collaboration among members of different households, that is necessary for social reproduction. Extra-domestic labour built 'community' and fostered a territorial solidarity that, I argue, is the primary means through which Regent Parkers developed class consciousness. This

was often expressed through emic class categories, which were defined in relation to the locality more so than the workplace, and through which people interpreted their position in the wider social order.

Dedication

To my parents, Kathy and Russ James. Their decades of hard work, kindness, and support made it possible for me to try university in the first place, let alone finish a PhD. I love you both.

To my daughter, Nia James-O'Connor, nine years old and writing her first book, a screenplay, and some songs. I love you Nia! You are amazing.

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Chapter One

“So Many Eyes On You”

Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the connection between domestic labour, social reproduction, and class consciousness in an urban Canadian context. It makes this connection through an historical ethnography of everyday life in Regent Park, a part of downtown Toronto widely known as Canada’s first modernist public housing project. Following Marxist-feminist scholarship on “domestic labour”, I use the term to refer to unpaid tasks done in the household towards the ends of social reproduction. Throughout this dissertation, I also expand the term to include what I call “extra-domestic labour”: unpaid work done in the “community” just outside the household, usually through informal collaboration among members of different households, and also towards the ends of social reproduction. I argue that everyday experiences with domestic and extra-domestic labour are central to how these working class Torontonians interpret their position in the social order. More specifically, Regent Park residents have ascribed meanings to their domestic labour that are central to the emic class categories with which they identify. These identities are reflective of a conflicted, shifting class consciousness formed in relation to the hegemonic ideologies of the day, and rooted in the material conditions specific to the time and place.

This argument is based primarily upon my participants’¹ memories of growing up and/or raising children in and around Regent Park at various points between 1959 and 2012. This data includes my own experiences and my familial history: my parents and other relatives grew up in

¹ I use the term “participant” rather than the more traditional “informant” to refer to the people I interviewed for this dissertation. “Participant” better reflects my view that an interviewee is an active co-creator of knowledge, while “informant” connotes a passive source of raw information.

Regent Park in the 1950s and 60s, and while conducting participant-observation fieldwork for this dissertation in 2011-2012 I lived in non-profit co-operative housing in the area with my preschool-age daughter. As might be expected, a great deal has changed in Regent Park during the timespan of three generations covered in this dissertation; but there are some notable continuities across the period as well.

One point that remained more or less constant through the generations was a description of a communal style of parenting that was practiced in Regent Park. Whether remembering their experiences in 1965, 1985, or 2005, people described the grounds between Regent Park apartment buildings and townhouses as lively social spaces centred around children at play. At any given moment, a parent might or might not have been supervising their child; either way, every child and every parent knew there were always some adults watching the children from somewhere. All adults knew which children belonged to whom, and all adults supervised each other's children. A misbehaving child was reprimanded on the spot by whichever adult happened to be watching, and then again at home, as news of the offense would reach the household before the child did. Meanwhile, through years of supervising children together, neighbours became acquaintances, friends, and sometimes fictive kin.

I was told that this omnipresent parental gaze brought an important element of security and comfort to the spaces between the buildings. As one participant, Monica,² reflected on her childhood in the early 1980s: "There was a feeling of community – like everyone was a family. There was a feeling of safety – so many eyes on you, people telling you to do up your coat and your shoelaces, parents walking kids to school in groups together." While portrayals such as these border on the idyllic, a similar scenario also appeared in other people's unpleasant

² All names of participants are pseudonyms.

memories. For example, a man who had survived child abuse in the 1970s remembered feeling reassured, to at least some limited extent, by neighbours who looked out for him: “There was always someone outside my door to put their arms around me and say, ‘You’re gonna be okay’”, he remembered. Other participants, from various generations, described how this gaze could detect and thwart the sexual predators who seemed to specifically target children who lived in public housing. Though parents were vigilant, their gaze tended to operate quietly and in the background, such that youth were permitted a healthy freedom to explore and socialise within circumscribed safe confines. As a notable exception, however, one woman interpreted the practice of watching other people’s children as nosiness, plain and simple; but the vast majority of my participants described it as a well-intentioned, ubiquitous, and powerful backdrop to everyday life in Regent Park. Some participants felt it was a property of how the housing project was designed, despite the fact that ‘Regent Park’ has been treated as synonymous with ‘bad planning’ since the 1960s.

Though “Regent Park” is usually understood as one single residential complex, it was built in two phases that were at first administered as two separate properties. Regent Park North was completed in 1957, and was a mix of low-rise apartment buildings and townhouses. Regent Park South was completed in 1959, and included five high-rise buildings at its centre, and townhouse complexes along its perimeter. Both phases were ‘urban renewal’ schemes, built where a working-class ‘slum’ had stood before it was ‘cleared’. In Regent Park North and South alike, apartment buildings and townhouse rows were surrounded by grassy expanses and a network of pedestrian walkways, dead-end driveways, and small parking lots. There were no through-streets in North or South, but the arterial Dundas Street East formed the border between the two phases. The requirements for determining eligibility for subsidised housing and the

formulas for determining rental rates both changed over time, but one constant throughout the history of Regent Park North and South was that the rent paid by a household was determined based on the total income of that household.

At the time of my research (at various points from 2009 to 2012), the built environment of roughly two-thirds of Regent Park (North and South taken together)³ appeared much the same as it would have in 1959. The rest had been demolished, and the newly cleared land was being redeveloped as a grid of relatively small city blocks comprised of new subsidised rental buildings, condominiums, retail space, and other amenities. Officially referred to as “the Regent Park Revitalisation”, this process of redevelopment began in a corner of Regent Park North in 2005, and will extend to the entirety of North and South over a period of at least 20 years in total. Nearly all of the subsidised housing in Regent Park is owned and operated by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), a non-profit wholly owned by the City of Toronto. As TCHC’s partner in the redevelopment, the privately held Daniels Corporation is the builder of all new TCHC properties in Regent Park, and the exclusive developer of the condominiums.

During the redevelopment, when an old TCHC building is condemned, each affected household draws a number in a lottery for a place in line in the relocation process. In some cases, people move directly into a newly constructed unit in Regent Park; in others, they are offered an older TCHC apartment as a temporary “relocation unit”, not necessarily in Regent Park. In either scenario, but with some notable exceptions explained in Chapter Six, the relocated tenants are guaranteed an offer to move back into Regent Park when new units are available. They may also defer selection. Throughout, TCHC covers their moving expenses. The non-profit housing co-operative in which I lived during my fieldwork is not a TCHC property nor included in the

³ For the most part, my participants used the term “Regent Park” to refer to North and South as a unitary whole, except when it was necessary to specify between them. I do the same in this dissertation from this point forward.

redevelopment plan, though it does include some subsidised units and is usually considered a part of ‘the Regent Park community’ by residents and social service agencies.

The primary sources of data for this dissertation are my interviews with current and former residents, and the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted from 2009-2012. Also important are the print media archives. As a means of identifying how hegemonic ideologies regarding Regent Park have built up and shifted over time, each of the following chapters addresses how Regent Park has been portrayed throughout its history in the major daily newspapers. This aspect of my analysis culminates in Chapter Six, which covers the period of 2002-2012. By then, in the discourse of the local mainstream media, Regent Park was more than simply a pair of housing projects that were being redeveloped; it was a formerly desolate and dangerous place, or at worst a “ghetto”, that was being “revitalised.” This outsider misapprehension was a poor match for the communal parenting scenario described above, and is instead informed by the hegemonic paradigm of “revitalisation” for which the redevelopment is named. According to this paradigm, the Regent Park projects (like all postwar modernist housing projects) are the built manifestations of well-intentioned but tragically ill-informed planning and architecture. It is taken as axiomatic that crime and despair were endemic, and caused by an absence of through traffic, a preponderance of open space, and the fact that the population was comprised entirely of low-income earners. The construction of condominiums, retail space, a new park, and a new swimming pool are promised to solve these alleged problems by creating “social mix”, while a new layout of small, dense blocks and through-streets is said to better integrate Regent Park with its surroundings.

Portrayals of “the Regent Park Revitalisation” in the mainstream media have been overwhelmingly positive. News reports tend to echo the vocabulary and implicit biases of public

relations documents by using the verb *to revitalise* uncritically, as if a residential area with a population of at least 7,500 had somehow lacked life. Since the early 2000s, nearly every newspaper article about Regent Park mentions that it was a terrible place to live, and that the “revitalisation” is fixing this. The following selection of newspaper clippings epitomises this current commonsensical portrayal of Regent Park:

It started with the best of intentions ... But the public housing project went off the rails almost the moment it was completed. The red-brick blocks at Parliament and Dundas streets served as the grim barracks for an army of single mothers, working poor families and, later, gang members and drug dealers. Its residents were left to fend for themselves when the good intentions of the concept were undercut and ultimately quashed by political infighting and disinterest. Many people raised healthy, happy children in spite of the surrounding lawlessness. They even banded together to create after-school programs, daycare centres and other community pillars. But everyone agreed that Regent Park had evolved largely into a playground for crime and despair (Raymaker 2007).

... Regent Park, while well-intended in the post-war era, had some of the design [that] crime studies have shown lead to ghetto-like conditions. For example, the courtyards between buildings do not draw children to play and neighbors to talk as planned[,] because they don't face the street. Those areas have instead become fertile ground for petty crime and the drug trade (Mallan 2002).⁴

Regent Park was built more than 50 years ago in the hopes of creating a park-like setting for public housing. But the neighbourhood is cut off from the city because there are few businesses to draw people there ... The lack of public streets has also created an environment that fosters crime (Lu 2006).

... cutting a community off from the street grid and failing to distinguish between public and private property turned out to be fundamentally flawed. It made Regent Park a city-within-a-city, but for all the wrong reasons. Like some high-density subdivisions, the neighbourhood was isolated and always felt disconnected from things. The shared spaces of the commons were better suited to drug dealing than children playing. Despite the good intentions, Regent Park was an enclave on the way to becoming a ghetto. The new Regent Park aims to change all that ... (Hume 2012a).

These clippings contain several familiar tropes of the revitalisation paradigm that I heard repeatedly, as if they were patently true facts, in conversations with politicians, housing officials, and fellow academics during my fieldwork. The most common among them include the

⁴ Citing Derek Ballantyne, then CEO of TCHC.

patronising lament for the naïveté of modernist “good intentions”; the vague assertion that Regent Park was “cut off from the city”; and the dystopian image of drug dealers displacing children from fields of grass. As the following chapters will address, these tropes are the most current iterations of a specific process of stigmatisation that became prominent in the 1960s (when the projects – beginning with Regent Park South – were first deemed failures), and are rooted in elite anxieties regarding the working class that date back to the beginnings of capitalism.

Many of my participants saw these dominant portrayals as skewed, if not completely incorrect and/or offensive. This was particularly the case when we discussed the topics of child safety and security in Regent Park. For example, I asked Angela, who grew up in Regent Park in the 1960s and 70s, what she thought of the idea that the green space between buildings was deserted and dangerous. “To me that’s a bunch of baloney,” she replied. “We played ball there! The grass was nice...the space was nice.” Another participant, 18 years old when I spoke to her in 2010, had spent most of her life in Regent Park and said she never found it particularly dangerous. She speculated that Regent Park’s reputation for danger was likely part of a ruse to justify a collusion of business interests that drive the redevelopment, which she called “the revitalisation attack”. Some participants did feel that the built environment of the old Regent Park invited danger, and that its redevelopment was thus necessary; but they never described it in such hyperbolic terms as a “grim barracks” or as “a playground for crime and despair”. Instead, they tended to emphasise that despite its design flaws, Regent Park was a “great community” that could be improved with new infrastructure.

It is entirely possible, of course, that views such as these were excessively coloured by the nostalgia that often comes with remembering one’s own youth. It is also possible that

participants were overstating the pleasant aspects of Regent Park as part of a defensive reaction to the revitalisation paradigm, at a time when some iteration of this paradigm appeared in local newspapers on an average of at least twice a week. However, Regent Park has been portrayed by residents in similar terms at all points through its history. This includes times when there were no serious efforts underway to entertain redevelopment proposals, and thus when there was less at stake in representing Regent Park. This letter to the editor of the Toronto Star is an especially forthright defense of Regent Park at such a time:

I am sick and tired of hearing about drab, desolate Regent Park. I live in Regent Park. The outside is a beautiful oasis in the midst of the city. It is truly a park, with lots of green grass, ball diamonds, playgrounds, two skating rinks, our own swimming pool, trees, wooden tables and benches outside the buildings, sandboxes for the wee ones set among red tile walks. It's gorgeous.

Do you know how many areas are fighting this city for just one patch of grass in the whole neighbourhood?

As for apartments, neither I nor any of my friends have drab apartments. They are cozy, clean, well furnished and tastefully decorated.

Much can be done with a little money if one puts one's mind to it (Welsh 1979).

A similar disjuncture between insider and outsider portrayals appears throughout the period covered by this dissertation. Early in my research, I suspected that this disjuncture was more than a series of isolated mistakes: it was repeated in a wide variety of sources, over half of a century, and often in glaring fashion. There had to be a systemic explanation; but at the same time, other subsidised housing projects with architecture and demographics similar to those of Regent Park were not subject to the same degree of targeted negativity over the years. There was something unique to the stigmatisation of Regent Park.

I argue that the stigmatisation process is rooted in the fact Regent Park has been hotly contested territory ever since its beginnings in 1947, when a municipal referendum on whether to fund the construction of Regent Park North inspired heated debate and aggressive propaganda both for and against the approval. By the 1960s, the concept of the modernist public housing

complex had fallen out of favour with most decision-makers (including the original proponents of the project). In the dominant local discourse, Regent Park became cast as a problem in need of a solution. The decades since have seen many wide-ranging efforts to rebuild, regulate, and “help” Regent Park in various ways and towards various ends; the ongoing redevelopment is the most current example. Many of these efforts – experiments in planning, policing, social work, education, and local-level politics – have been “firsts” of their kind, which were then replicated in similar contexts elsewhere, both citywide and nationwide. Usually, Regent Park residents are recruited into the implementation of these solutions; some of the solutions were conceived by residents themselves. Throughout, Regent Parkers have repeatedly found themselves at the nexus of a protracted struggle among outsider elites, who adhere to a range of conflicting and conflicted ideologies, for a hegemonic position in the social and political life of downtown Toronto. In the process, the idea that Regent Park is a problem remains in constant circulation, prolonging (if not intensifying) its stigmatisation with each reiteration.

To compound the situation, a wide range of non-elite interests have also used Regent Park towards their own illegal, unscrupulous, and/or eccentric ends, causing still more conflict and notoriety. Some participants blamed this, in part, on the stigma: the idea is that because Regent Park was commonly perceived as a chaotic and outcast space, a variety of criminals, deviants, and eccentrics also shared in this perception and thus assumed it was an opportune venue for abuse and exploitation. Some data presented in the following chapters supports this view, with examples ranging from minor transgressions to heinous crimes committed by outsiders against Regent Parkers, particularly children. On the relatively trivial side of the spectrum, non-residents have vandalised buildings, dumped toxic waste, and abandoned vehicles in the parking lots. Various fringe groups have also chosen Regent Park to advance their bizarre

and sometimes violent agendas: the neo-nazi “Western Guard”, for example, spread agitation propaganda in Regent Park in the 1970s as part of an attempt to establish a base among white working-class Torontonians. As another example, the Guardian Angels, the New York-based vigilante organisation, chose Regent Park for some of its “patrols” during failed expansions into Toronto in 1982 and 2006. Regent Park’s reputation as a drug market was a much longer-term and more worrisome issue: several participants said that both the controlling interests and the clients of the trade tended to come from outside, with local youth recruited to do the dangerous legwork between them.

By far the most disturbing topic that came up in my research, and the most extreme example of the abuse of Regent Park by outsiders, was the sexual predation of children. Some participants felt that Regent Park youth were at a uniquely elevated risk of victimisation: one survivor of abuse said that being from Regent Park was like “having a target on our backs for pedophiles.” I was told several stories of outsiders attempting to lure children from within the grounds of Regent Park; in each, the predator was expelled from the area by ordinary residents, often violently. Particularly egregious were the three separate murder-abductions of children from Regent Park that occurred in 1973, 1977, and 1980. Though none of the victims were present in the projects at the moment of their abduction, the fact that they lived in Regent Park was certainly a factor in their victimisation. Two of the children were taken from places just outside of Regent Park – the first from a grocery store, the second from a park. The third child was abducted while shining shoes on a downtown commercial strip – a common pursuit of preteen boys from Regent Park at the time. For all the misinformed public perceptions of Regent Park as a dangerous place, the worst crimes committed against its children occurred outside its confines.

The introductory vignettes and examples presented thus far may seem to contradict each other: children in Regent Park were well-protected, and many people retain fond memories of their childhoods there; but the place was contested and heavily stigmatised, and some of its residents apparently suffered atrocities and others minor transgressions as a result. On this note, Regent Park did not sound like such a fraught, conflicted place when I first heard people describe things like the communal parenting scenario. This apparent contradiction, however, is what led me to my arguments regarding domestic labour and social reproduction. By comparing participants' largely pleasant childhood memories with archival data that revealed the more challenging aspects of everyday life in Regent Park, it became clear that it took a great deal of effort on the part of local adults to create the conditions that made the communal parenting scenario possible. This view was further reinforced by the memories of participants who were the parents in this scenario: by supervising their neighbours' children, confronting suspicious outsiders, organising social events, and campaigning for better services and living conditions, they were performing always-unpaid, often-thankless labour that provided for the safety and security of Regent Park's children. In the process, they also turned a housing project into a "neighbourhood" or "community" in the emic sense (many people used the terms interchangeably, to denote a residential space to which they felt a sense of belonging.) As with domestic labour in the traditional sense, it is apparent that women did a disproportionate share of this extra-domestic labour.

The dissertation examines how these everyday experiences with domestic and extra-domestic labour were central to the formation of class consciousness, often expressed through emic class identities, among Regent Parkers. Class consciousness is more commonly understood as a potential outcome of paid labour done in the public sphere: by selling their time to complete

standardised tasks in a workplace they do not control, workers may come to understand how alienated and exploited they are, and hence that their miserable condition is neither natural nor inevitable but a product of the class difference that is endemic to a capitalist social order. In my research, however, no one I spoke to described their paid labour in these terms. For the most part, people took wage-labour in a capitalist economy for granted; going to work was a simple fact of life. Domestic labour, as I reinterpret the category, was a more potent source of class identity than wage-labour for most of the people I spoke to. It took a great deal of work to maintain a secure, pleasant environment for children in a place that was stigmatised, targeted, and exploited; for many of my participants, this work (done inside and just outside of the household) was more meaningful and involved than the work they did for a paycheque. As such, domestic labour was often the realm of experience that caused people to reflect on their position in the social order: keeping one's teenagers away from a police riot occurring right outside the home, organising against cultural bias in the education system, and explaining the local drug trade to a 5-year-old, for example, were all experiences that provide vivid indications of one's place in an inequitable class-based society.

This understanding of class formation is guided in large part by a distinction between etic and emic class categories (Silverman 2001) and attention to how the emic categories are formed in locally specific ways. My own view of 'class' mostly fits the classical Marxist conceptualisation of the working class, the capitalists, and the fundamental conflict between them; hence this is the 'etic' class framework in this dissertation. All of the Regent Parkers I spoke to were "working class" in this etic sense, or at least they were when they had lived in Regent Park; but none saw themselves in precisely this manner. However, even my politically conservative participants tended to identify with people in a similar position as themselves, were

well aware that they lived in an inequitable society, and saw that Regent Parkers faced barriers and limitations not of their own making. Labelling their worldviews ‘false consciousness’ would be an inaccurate and patronising simplification. Instead, I analyze how participants identified with, and defined themselves against, various emic class categories. Some of these categories overlap with the etic class framework; others contradict it. Some of the categories are explicitly named – for example, the “real Regent Parker”, the “hard worker”, the “bum”, “rich people”, and “snobby white people”. Many are unnamed, and no one ever called any of them “class categories”. Instead, they appeared as fragments in people’s memories of everyday life; most often in memories of domestic labour. These understandings of class build up over time in reference to (or in defiance of) earlier frameworks, and to at least some extent, they are usually self-contradictory; a “complex consciousness”, or “metissage” to use Silverman’s (2001) term.

Methodology and Ethics: “I Do Not Foresee Any Risks or Benefits From Your Participation in the Research”

Though the structure and focus of this dissertation have changed several times since I began my research, the idea that Regent Park is contested territory has remained both a theoretical and practical consideration throughout the process. This section recounts my research methods and my relationship to the subject matter, and includes some thoughts on the implications of studying an exceptionally visible and contested place.

Phase One: Pre-Fieldwork

November 2007: Following several stressful weeks of applying for governmental funding for the doctoral program that produced this dissertation, I got together with my father one Saturday afternoon for a much-needed break. We decided to spend some time in and around Regent Park, so we could catch up with each other while I did some pilot research and he revisited the places where he had spent his adolescence and early adulthood. Our first stop was

“The Dominion on Queen”, then a well-furnished pub with roughly a dozen obscure craft beers on tap and a gourmet menu. My father still calls it “The Dominion House”, as it was known in the 1970s when it was frequented by blue-collar workers and locals who cashed cheques at the bar. By 2007, the Dominion on Queen was part of a generally quiet stretch of Queen St. East dominated by row houses and a few small eateries, just two short blocks from the southern border of Regent Park South. My father and I spent more than we had planned on some pints of exotic beer and time on the pool table, as he told stories from his youth and noted how surprisingly clean the place was compared to how he had known it in the 1970s.

Next, my father and I visited Nelson Mandela Park Public School⁵ (of which my mother is an alumna) to attend the annual Regent Park Film Festival. Neither of us has any interest in “film” or film festivals, but I suggested we attend because I assumed there would be good number of Regent Parkers there, possibly even some from my father’s generation. We entered the festival light-hearted and mildly intoxicated, and soon found our surroundings incongruously dour: the program for that afternoon was a slate of short documentary films on gentrification, followed by a discussion moderated by an academic. Most of the screen-time was filled by documentary case studies from Chicago and New York. The seven minutes of local content were provided by the teenaged filmmakers of the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre, who had documented the closure of a downmarket restaurant on an upscale shopping strip just outside of Regent Park. The ensuing question-and-answer period was dominated mostly by people who did not live in Regent Park or seem to know much about it; and though the local experts in attendance were teenagers, it was not particularly youth-oriented. The conversation included an academic exchange on gentrification; an impromptu debate on the merits of Regent Park

⁵ Known as Park School when my mother attended it in the 1950s and 1960s, it was renamed in honour of the former South African president during his widely celebrated visit to the school in 2001.

redevelopment between a TCHC employee and a radical anti-poverty organiser; and tangents that strayed away from the Chicago and New York case studies and into discussions of filmic technique and theory. At that point my father and I decided to return to drinking beer and shooting pool. I was somewhat confused and disappointed by the fact that the “Regent Park Film Festival” had very little to do with Regent Park, and was attended by only a handful of Regent Parkers.⁶

Phase Two: Interviews, Volunteerism, Observation, and Establishing a Research Agenda

In 2008, I moved to another city for roughly one year. I focused my efforts on the earliest stages of my doctoral program, and tried to decide among Regent Park and other potential dissertation topics. By May 2009, I had settled upon Regent Park, began writing my research proposal, and started to make connections in ‘the field’. I went to Regent Park to meet a friend-of-a-friend: a social worker who was assigned to the area by his agency, and who agreed to be my first present-day contact.⁷ At that point I planned to write a dissertation about residents’ experiences with being relocated during the redevelopment. I excitedly met with my new contact, who had offered to take me on a tour of Regent Park, to show me around the local social service agencies, and to introduce me to some other social workers and hopefully some residents as well. We also planned to explore the possibility that I could collaborate with his agency through my research – potentially a fine example of applied anthropology or even “embedded research” (Lewis & Russell 2011).

⁶ Years later and to my surprise, I learned that this event had struck a nerve. Shortly after the festival and the programme my father and I attended, the housing authority had evicted the film festival’s year-round office from its Regent Park facility, ostensibly because the program was deemed too critical of the revitalization plan (August & Walks 2012). The festival’s office then moved to the other end of downtown, into a complex of art galleries and studios, and later into the Daniels Spectrum, an “Arts and Cultural Centre”, which opened in Regent Park in 2012. The Daniels Corporation is the namesake of this new facility and a sponsor of the festival.

⁷ Though a previous generation of my family grew up in Regent Park, all had moved out by the 1970s. In 2009 I did not yet know anyone who currently lived or worked there.

We walked through Regent Park South, past high-rise apartment towers that have since been demolished. Much of what I saw was incongruous with common perceptions of the place as decrepit and foreboding: well-maintained playground equipment, brightly coloured murals by youth depicting anti-violence and motivational sentiments, and reasonably clean outdoor space with no more litter than one would expect to find around an urban apartment complex. We crossed over Dundas Street East into Regent Park North, and ended up at a short, red-brick building that looked much like the low-rise apartment buildings adjacent to it. It housed both TCHC's local management office, and the office of the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative (RPNI), a residents' association of sorts. My contact introduced me to the RPNI staffer as "a student who's planning to do some research in Regent Park."

"Another one, huh?" deadpanned the man behind the desk.

I laughed; he did not smile.

"What do you want to know, man?"

Feeling on-the-spot, I said something about working on a PhD in anthropology, planning to study what it's like to live in Regent Park during the revitalisation, and looking at how all the moves-in and moves-out had affected "the community".

"You're gonna have a really hard time getting people to talk to you, unless you can pay them."

I told him I could not. He chuckled. "There's been a lot of students and researchers around here, and, well, people are tired, man."

"Yeah, well, I'm not just studying this place just to study it," I said. "I actually give a shit about it. My parents grew up here, so I know a lot about the history and uh...I wanna write

something that will be useful to people from here.” My defensive, unplanned speech was ineffectual and awkward.

“Well maybe you two can talk more sometime,” my contact intervened. “Do you mind giving Ryan your card?”

“That I can do,” said the RPNI staffer, jabbing a business card at me with mock earnestness. I thanked him, and as we got up to proceed to the office next door, he recommended a few residents and agency workers for me to contact.

I was then introduced to some front-line TCHC staff. When I asked about the possibility of interviewing them when I began my fieldwork later that year, I was again warned of a rough road ahead. One staff member told me that anyone researching Regent Park must go through TCHC’s ethics screening process, which is “very competitive” as there was a lot of interest in studying Regent Park at the moment. I immediately doubted that TCHC had any binding jurisdiction to decide how many researchers were allowed to study one of its properties, nor to allocate these spots to the victors of a competition. I kept my skepticism to myself, however, and assured the TCHC staff that I would only attempt to do interviews after passing my university’s very rigorous ethics procedure. I asked how I might enter the competition for permission to study Regent Park, and she replied by writing down the name and phone number of the off-site official responsible for dealing with researchers.

By this time, my contact had to return to his duties. I followed him out of the office and began my two-hour commute by regional transit. I passed the time by trying to come up with an entirely different doctoral project, and by imagining the many other things I could have done on a sunny afternoon in May.

Obviously, I ended up studying Regent Park, despite this uninspiring first meeting with some “gatekeepers” – in classical anthropological jargon, that is, those influential people with the power to facilitate or discourage a research project according to their own interests (Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert 2008). During my subsequent fieldwork, I found further “inconsistencies and instabilities” with regards to gatekeepers in Regent Park, similar to those encountered by Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert in a marginalised urban locality in northern England. For not only were gatekeepers’ claims and posturings of authority contested within “the community” they represented, but also the very notion of “the community” was itself an unreliable oversimplification. I soon found (as should have been obvious) that Regent Park was internally variegated, and at times conflicted, along lines of generation, ethnicity, religion, politics, and other factors; that relationships among gatekeepers were rarely clear and never stable; and that the process by which one became a gatekeeper is not necessarily democratic.

In any case, I followed the TCHC’s “ethics” procedure. Their head office was courteous and prompt in replying to my “application” to study Regent Park. I was told that I had permission to ask several specific staff members for an interview. I would also be allowed to tell people that TCHC was aware of my study. Though I had not asked for (nor wanted) TCHC’s endorsement of my work, nor its help with recruiting tenants as participants, their reply specifically mentioned that they offered neither. I also tried to reconnect with RPNI, but at that moment it was *de facto* defunct, as far as I could tell.⁸

In late 2009, I set out to begin, in earnest, fieldwork for my dissertation on the everyday effects of the redevelopment for Regent Park residents. Two of my earliest neophyte interviews were with the TCHC officials I had been permitted to contact, who for the most part replied to

⁸ RPNI was inactive during most of my fieldwork, though its website remained online, and tents bearing its logo continued to provide shelter at local events sanctioned by TCHC.

my questions with their own versions of the revitalisation paradigm. I also interviewed a handful of tenants and ex-tenants, and soon found that this paradigm was notably absent from these conversations. Instead, the communal parenting scenario began to surface as a paradigm of its own, as my participants often went “off-topic” to reminisce about their pre-redevelopment childhood and early parenthood. In the process, they (deliberately or not) undermined the commonsensical notion that Regent Park was a bleak and hopeless place that could only be improved by demolishing it. This emerging pattern was interesting to me, but only tangentially relevant, because I was supposed to be studying the present-day redevelopment.

This early stage of my research was conducted during the rare moments when I was not teaching, moonlighting, or taking care of my daughter, then two years old. My efforts were thus being frustrated by three problems simultaneously: my time to focus on research was scarce, research fatigue was widespread in Regent Park, and the people who were willing to speak to a researcher were more interested in sharing their pre-redevelopment memories than discussing the redevelopment yet again. Eventually, I came up with a new plan that mostly solved these problems: my dissertation would become an historical-ethnographic study of youth and parenting in Regent Park from the 1940s to the present. I could thus present a history of Regent Park from a vantage point that had not yet been explored, offering my own challenge to the hegemony of the revitalisation paradigm in the process.⁹ On a pragmatic note, I could bring my daughter along for most of my fieldwork, and I could focus my interviews on themes that most of my participants seemed most interested in discussing. My interest in youth and parenting led me to

⁹ Though Laughlin (2008) privileged children’s perspectives in her study of Regent Park in the present, and Purdy’s social history includes references to youth and their experiences (2003a), no one has yet employed youth and parenting as an ethnographic lens for theorizing the place over the long term.

focus more specifically on domestic labour and social reproduction in the later stages of my research.

Most of my initial participant-observation efforts were spent volunteering with the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre (“Focus” for short). From November 2009 to March 2010 I spent an evening or two each week at their studio, which was then located in the basement of a TCHC apartment building in Regent Park North (now demolished). I helped teenagers with their radio and video scripts, acted as an extra in their short films, and went on-air¹⁰ as needed. I twice arranged for on-air guests to come to the studio to be interviewed by Focus participants, and I was also a volunteer roadie at Focus’s free monthly concerts. I did not conduct any official interviews during my time at Focus, however, largely because we were always too busy with the task at hand and I did not want to be an additional burden on already-overworked staff and participants. In any case, interviews in this context would have been redundant: by engaging in Focus’s work, I was already immersed in a perpetual discussion of life in Regent Park for youth during the redevelopment – sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit. It was participant-observation in the purest sense, and I did not want to interrupt the organic flow of daily events with obtuse consent forms or contrived questions.

During this first phase of my research, I lived a twenty-minute walk away from Regent Park, in the relatively well-off Broadview & Danforth area. Classical interpretations of participant-observation place a premium on living in the area one is studying. However, in my attempts to reconcile multiple needs by finding an apartment of a suitable size, price, location, and timespan of availability, this was the closest my luck had allowed me to get to Regent Park. Unfortunately, I soon found that this arrangement was less than ideal for conducting

¹⁰ At the time, Focus still had a weekly slot on CKLN 88.1 FM, the non-profit radio station that closed in 2011.

ethnographic research. I would deliberately go to Regent Park to shop for groceries, loiter, and take my daughter to playgrounds; all things that I would have done closer to home had I not been researching Regent Park. As a result, these attempts to cross paths with locals and experience the everyday ambience of Regent Park – its “cityness”, to use Anthony Leeds’ term – felt artificial. To compound this problem, I soon found that intra-redevelopment Regent Park was an uninviting place. Much of it had become a loud, dusty patchwork of construction sites and dead-end pedestrian pathways, and so it was seldom worth going outside just for the sake of doing so. I had expected to meet plenty of fellow parents entertaining their children at swing sets and seesaws, but my daughter and I were often the only people in the park. Hence as a commuting fieldworker, casually being present in the area yielded little ethnographic data apart from descriptions of the buildings and their desolate surroundings.

Meanwhile, I began the historical component of my research with informal conversations and interviews with my family. Social media then proved very useful in recruiting participants, in particular a Facebook group popular with people who had lived in Regent Park decades ago. I posted a brief summary of my research plan to this group and invited members to contact me, resulting in 15 interviews and many casual comments, anecdotes, and words of encouragement. I also searched the Toronto and Ontario archives for primary documents on Regent Park and on some of its key players. I also Googled the names of people who had appeared in newspaper coverage of Regent Park in previous decades; this yielded one interview.

Phase Three: Archival Research

Personal circumstances put my fieldwork on hold for parts of 2010 and 2011, when family obligations took me out of Toronto again to live abroad for ten months. During this time I completed most of the archival portion of my project, which is the main source of data for my

observations of the hegemonic influences upon Regent Parker's emic class identities, and the connections between the revitalisation paradigm and the historical stigmatisation of Regent Park. Using Micromedia ProQuest's online database, I retrieved every identifiable¹¹ newspaper article and advertisement published in the local Toronto Star and national Globe and Mail broadsheets that included the phrase "Regent Park", up to 2012. I then used conventional periodical indexes to retrieve mentions of Regent Park in another national broadsheet, the National Post, since its first issue in 1998, and in the Toronto Sun, a local tabloid, since 1994. Unfortunately, there were no searchable databases which covered the Sun from its inception in 1971 to 1993, nor for The Toronto Telegram (the Sun's predecessor) which published from 1876 to 1971. I compensated for these gaps by identifying important events in news coverage in the Star and The Globe and Mail, and by later browsing microfiche of the Sun on the relevant dates to locate their coverage. The result of these efforts is a collection of over 10,000 articles from 1945 to 2012. As I read every article and made notes on the events deemed newsworthy, I focused on the language used to describe Regent Park and its residents, and on the similarities and differences in the coverage of the various papers. These observations are woven into the chronological progression that is the body of this dissertation.

Phase Four: Participant-Observation

A stroke of good luck came shortly before I moved back to Toronto in 2011. While away, I had placed my daughter and myself on the waiting lists of roughly ten different non-profit

¹¹ These databases consist of digital photographs of microfilm. Their search function matches a word or phrase with images of it that appear in the roughly three million digitized pages in storage. It is not completely accurate. Pages sometimes turned up that did not include the phrase "Regent Park", and so my searches must have also missed some pages that did. Apart from this limitation, these databases are the most effective means available of conducting a search of this nature.

housing co-operatives around Toronto.¹² Miraculously, I was offered a unit in a co-op that was considered part of “the Regent Park community” for the month that I had planned to move back to Canada. After moving in, my new status as a local resident provided ample opportunities for participant-observation that had previously been compromised or impossible. I loitered, attended local events and meetings, and went through the mundane motions of everyday life among Regent Park residents, such as taking my child to daycare, buying groceries, doing laundry, waiting for public transit, volunteering in the co-op, and partaking in communal child supervision. I was thus engaged in the same processes of social reproduction that would become the focus of this dissertation. Of the people I encountered in my daily life, I asked those with whom I became most acquainted for an interview. All but one said yes, and some introduced me to other participants. Interviews, however, as formal occasions, were generally less informative than simply experiencing the place and sharing informal observations with residents.

In sum, through my own outreach, personal networks, and referrals from prior interviewees, I ended up finding a suitable number of people (70) to interview either formally or informally. As it is beyond the scope of a solitary doctoral candidate to produce a representative sample of the hundreds of thousands of people who have lived in Regent Park, this was not my goal. Instead, I employed something along the lines of Edward Liebow’s usage of Klov Dahl’s “random walk” sampling technique: interviewing a “strategic selection of initial respondents”, asking each of them for a list of relations and/or acquaintances of various types, randomly selecting one person from that list for a subsequent interview, and repeating the process (Liebow 1989, 68). Because my study does not share Liebow’s aim of ascertaining the degree of “social

¹² An opening in a housing co-operative (anywhere in Toronto, let alone in the part of Toronto I was studying) can be difficult to come by. Many wait-lists are several years long; others are closed indefinitely.

cohesiveness” among a localised ethnic group, I did not randomly sample lists of secondary contacts. However, my own adaptation of his method allowed me to find a reasonably sized, heterogeneous set of participants. I first interviewed those Regent Parkers whom I encountered fortuitously (“opportunistic sampling”). I then went beyond this core group of initial respondents by asking them to put me in touch with other Regent Parkers whom they knew.

Research Ethics and Positionality

In the scholarship following the “reflexive turn” in anthropology during the 1980s and 1990s, much attention has been afforded to the issue of power dynamics between researcher and participant. Robertson has noted, however, that this important consideration is often reduced to the issuance of a “writing as a [name the category]” statement: early in the text, the author names his or her ethnic, linguistic, and/or class identity and upbringing, and then notes that he or she is “writing as” that category while analyzing the experiences of a less privileged group (Robertson (2002, 788). This usually involves an admission of outsider status, and some consideration of how the researcher’s power and privilege may shape the research process and its implications for participants. This approach would be a poor match for my relationship to Regent Park, and consists of some flawed assumptions that ought to be rethought.

Designating oneself a powerful outsider, and assuming that participants would agree with this assessment or care about the issue to begin with, is an alienating and homogenising simplification that can prevent respectful, grounded dialogue. I am certain that none of my participants saw me as an especially powerful person; some of them instead took pity on me because I was “still in school” in my 30s, and showed up to meetings carrying a bicycle helmet because I could not afford a car. Some older participants were patronising in their benevolence, offering to teach me “how it really was” in Regent Park, and to “help” me with my “school

project” even after I explained that I was writing a publicly available, book-length manuscript. My participants of all ages tended to be politically astute, shrewd, and tough people. Many had raised children on a low income, often as sole-support parents; many were themselves raised by a low-income sole-support parent. Among them were self-made entrepreneurs, published authors, and veteran political organisers. Some had survived domestic abuse, police violence, and imprisonment. I am certain that they had been through enough in life to be able to handle themselves in an interview with a graduate student, and I suspect that many would have been offended had I acted as if I were the more powerful member of the conversation.

The standardised “informed consent” forms that researchers must explain to participants before soliciting a signature are a flashpoint for researchers’ misguided anxieties around power and difference. These forms recount a heavily simplified version of our research topics, and then explain in obtuse, bureaucratic language that the study is voluntary, that the participant may stop participating at any time, and that stopping the interview would “not affect any relationship” they may have with the university, “now or in the future”. Lest anyone was hoping to turn a profit from being interviewed by a graduate student, or worried that the interview might somehow endanger them, my form also made it clear to the participant that “I do not foresee any risks or benefits from your participation in the research.” Before asking people to sign, I would always recite a quick verbal summary of the form and then offer “as much time as you need to read it over”. Only a few participants seemed to read all or most of it; most looked at it for a few seconds, scribbled a signature in the wrong place and thrust it back to me. When I explained that I never use real names in my writing, most people said they did not care. One man laughed and said “Use my name if you want – I’m from Regent Park, there’s nothing anybody can do to me

that hasn't already been done." When I asked people if they had any questions about my research before signing, no one ever did. The surliest among them replied "What the fuck for?".

I suppose it would be possible for me to claim a sort of "insider" status, as a local low-income parent and the son of two Regent Parkers. These aspects of my identity certainly helped me establish credibility with some participants, but "insider" would be an oversimplification in several senses. To begin, there is no unitary bounded "community" that I or any other researcher could belong to in the first place. More importantly, much of this dissertation addresses experiences with systemic discrimination that I will never have. On this note, I aim to be conscientious of how my privilege in terms of gender (male) and ethnicity (white) could have influenced what participants were willing to share with me, and how I interpreted their input; I address this issue where relevant throughout the course of the dissertation.

On the question of advocacy and/or political engagement in the field, I have already described my early attempt at something along the lines of Lewis & Russell's "embedded research", in which ethnographers integrate themselves within an organisation and conduct research for, through, and about it (2011, 404). In my fieldsite, though I took part in various consultations and community meetings, I soon found that the agencies and institutions involved were, to varying degrees, active proponents and/or brokers of the current redevelopment: they were among the outside interests staking claims over the contested territory of Regent Park towards their own ends. Becoming "embedded" – were it even possible or desired by anyone involved – would undoubtedly compromise my critical perspective and direct the research in partial and limiting ways. Instead, since my study concerns a place and people that have been so thoroughly stereotyped, stigmatised, and simplified in the service of a wide range of elite agendas, I am confident that my attempt to document the complexity of its history, while

highlighting the significance of its residents' unpaid labour, is itself a meaningful counter-hegemonic pursuit.

On that note, one somewhat troubling aspect of my research is that some participants espouse quite different sociopolitical views than I, and may have hoped I would write something different than what I am writing. For example, while comparing their memories of Regent Park in the 1950s and 1960s to the ways they imagined it in the present, some older white participants assumed that Regent Park is now a terrible place to live, and blamed this on the fact that most of its current residents belong to racialised minorities. These participants would express unrestrained bigotry in one moment, and then nuanced insights in another. In analyzing this input, I have tried to follow the lead of ethnographers such as Dunk (2003), Grindal (2011), and Walley (2013) in addressing white working-class racism in a way that contextualises it without absolving it.

From a very different perspective, some of my participants strongly believe in the tenets of “social mix” planning theory, view the redevelopment in almost exclusively positive terms, and actively take part in its implementation. This dovetailed with my own critical views in two ways. First, I was much less critical of the plan during the earlier stages of my research, before I had interviewed enough people who told me that the Regent Park of the past “wasn’t that bad”. Second, I did not express my critical stance with any great strength because I dislike arguing with neighbours. Instead, I strove to understand their perspectives in their own terms, and saw the pragmatic appeal of the redevelopment plan. My idealistic and theoretical criticisms aside, residents and ex-residents involved in the redevelopment are working to replace decaying affordable housing, by using the scant means and tools still available after two decades of

neoliberal austerity, and in the absence of any social movement that offers any meaningful alternative.

In sum, my connection to Regent Park is personal and complex, and this dissertation does include some personal narratives. I do not consider myself a “complete member researcher”, however, and this dissertation is not an “analytic autoethnography” (Anderson 2006). Instead, I endorse Robertson’s pointed contention that

... confidence in one’s authorial ‘voice’ ought not to lie in genealogical claims or childhood experience, but in the assiduous fieldwork and archival research necessary to generate historically resonant, thick descriptions and subtly evocative interpretations of people’s lives in all their messy complexity (Robertson 2002, 788).

This is essentially what I aspire to with this project.

From “Slum Clearance” to “Revitalisation”: Background and Chapter Outline

Historical Background

To provide context, this subsection briefly reviews some key developments that occurred before my period of study. Regent Park North was built from 1948 to 1957, and Regent Park South from 1953-1959. The earliest memories addressed in this dissertation are those of participants who moved into Regent Park South, as children, soon after construction was completed. The historical period covered begins at that point and ends in 2012. Events prior to 1959 that led to the establishment of Regent Park have already been covered exhaustively by historians, as has Canadian postwar housing policy in general. For these reasons I do not address these topics in detail, though Chapter Three does contain some analysis of media texts from before 1959 to illustrate the underpinnings of the stigmatisation process that was well underway by the time my participants moved in.

Given their reputation at the time of my research and writing, perhaps it is ironic that the Regent Park projects were intended to bring order, staidness, and modernity to a place whose character was seen as chaotic, degenerate, and backward. Regent Park was built on land cleared through the demolition of most of Cabbagetown,¹³ a working-class area comprised mainly of row-houses, many of them in poor repair. At the time of the Great Depression, Cabbagetown was widely known as a ‘slum’ (a reputation which dated back to its beginnings as an Irish immigrant enclave in the 1840s) and, partially as a result, was made a key priority of a social movement for better housing and urban renewal. Brushett has “traced back” the origins of this movement to “turn of the century dialogues between enlightened manufacturers and socially minded trade union leaders” (2001, 59). Its early successes included the construction of two relatively smaller-scale affordable housing complexes which opened in 1913, and continue to operate today as housing co-operatives (Brushett 2001, 59).

Regent Park North was Canada’s first public housing project, however. Its origins lie in the Bruce Report, which came out of the efforts of this broad-based housing movement and become a “bible for social housing” after it was released in 1934 (Brushett 2001, 59). Before the Depression, social welfare in Canada had been premised on a “residual” model of minimal economic intervention or support for the poor on the part of the public sector. In response to the chaos and social conflict of the 1930s, policymakers then turned to a Keynesian focus on “social action and planning” aimed at more equitable distribution of “social goods” (Lemon 1993, 267-70). In this context, the Bruce Report found that three quarters of “several thousand dwellings”

¹³ In present-day usage, the name ‘Cabbagetown’ refers to a different area to the immediate north of Regent Park. Previously known as Don Vale, this upper-income district was also a ‘slum’ before its gentrification began in the early 1970s. From that point, Don Vale was rebranded as ‘Cabbagetown’ as part of a contrived sort of nostalgia that matched its newly renovated Victorian houses. Though historically inaccurate, the name and the image have stuck: Don Vale’s status as ‘Cabbagetown’ is seldom questioned, and one would never guess that the tony district was a ‘slum’ less than 50 years ago. See Caulfield 1994, 22.

in Toronto were substandard, and contained blueprints for an early conception of what became Regent Park North (Purdy 2003a, 65). “A comprehensive slum clearance and public housing program” was put “on the backburner”, however, until 1943 when “the city and the nation geared up for post war reconstruction”, with the redevelopment of Cabbagetown “the top of Toronto’s political agenda” (Brushett 2001, 117).

The institutional underpinnings for ‘slum clearance’ in Cabbagetown began with the National Housing Act of 1944, which finally “enabled the City of Toronto to initiate land clearance for Canada’s first public housing project” (Milgrom 2003, 210). This Act “mixed the provision of housing with slum clearance mechanisms”, and allowed for federal funding to municipalities to cover “half the cost of acquiring (and clearing) sites, but not construction” (Milgrom 2003, 210-211). Regent Park North was built through such an arrangement. The question of whether the City of Toronto should fund its share of the project was put to a referendum, which was held in conjunction with the Toronto mayoral election of January 1, 1947. This was done at the urging of the Citizens’ Housing & Planning Association (CHPA), which “represented a broad cross section of Toronto society” ranging from wealthy philanthropists, to social workers, to members of the Communist Party (Brushett 2001, 121). Sixty-two percent of votes supported the proposed municipal expenditure of \$6 million for Regent Park North, and so the project went ahead (Milgrom 2003, 215).

It bears emphasising that the development of Regent Park was, to quote Caulfield, “autocratic and often brutal” in its implementation (1994, 28-29). The construction of Regent Park North necessitated the expropriation and demolition of 628 houses, which had contained a total of 765 units inhabited by a total of 4,000 people (Purdy 2003a, 74). Few of them had any say in the process – only property owners and long-term leaseholders were eligible to vote in the

1947 referendum, and just 20% of the expropriated properties were owner-occupied (Milgrom 2003, 215). Everyone living in the redeveloped area on or before July 15, 1947 was promised first priority for rehousing, but there was widespread confusion and skepticism among residents after the plans were approved (Brushett 2001, 138). To minimise the need for replacement units amidst a citywide housing shortage, construction began on vacant land, and residents were “shuffled from one house to another in advance of the wrecking ball”, many of them left “in squalor for years” in the process (Brushett 2001, 131). The first moves-in occurred in 1949, while construction continued until 1957 (Purdy 2004, 522).

Throughout, residents resisted displacement and other injustices wrought by ‘slum clearance’. The Regent Park Ratepayers’ Association, made up of “working-class home owners” facing expropriation (Purdy 2003a, 123), organised to demand fair compensation for their homes. The RPRA called for “replacement value as the guide to settling expropriation cases,” but the city instead promised to pay 150% of the assessed value of a property (Brushett 2001, 130). As Brushett explains, this was arguably adequate compensation for absentee slumlords, but was clearly unfair to owner-occupiers who “would now likely become tenants once again” since “the prices paid for their homes were nowhere near enough to purchase similar accommodation elsewhere in the city” (2001, 130). The RPRA also demanded a maximum rental rate in Regent Park North of \$30 a month for a five-bedroom unit, but monthly rents would be indexed to 20% of wage earners’ monthly earnings, plus \$10 a week extra for each secondary wage earner – totalling as much as \$75 a month in some cases (Brushett 2001, 139). Rents in pre-redevelopment Cabbagetown had averaged \$21 month (Brushett 2001, 119). Despite these and other controversies, ‘slum clearance’ continued apace. In 1952, a majority of voters in a second

citywide referendum approved an additional \$5 million expenditure needed to complete the project (Purdy 2003a, 78-79).

Created in 1947, the Housing Authority of Toronto oversaw the Regent Park North project while also lobbying for its southward expansion. The Regent Park South project was approved in 1952, and another 456 dwellings inhabited by 2,389 “largely poor, working-class people” would be expropriated and demolished to make way for another modernist housing complex (Purdy 2003a, 79-80). This phase would be developed and managed through a new institutional arrangement. An umbrella government of “Metropolitan Toronto” (comprised of the City of Toronto proper and several other municipalities) was created by the province in 1954. The Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA) was then created by this government to assume control of Regent Park South, as well as the similar Lawrence Heights housing project in North York.¹⁴ Unlike in Regent Park North, where displaced residents of any income level could apply for re-housing in the project from which they were forced to move, eligibility for rehousing in Regent Park South was limited to “the lowest income earners only” (Milgrom 2003, 224). As a result, most of those rehoused in Regent Park South had been renters. Owing to these differences to at least some extent, South was often seen as the ‘rougher’ part of Regent Park by outsiders, the media, and residents of North alike.

There was no referendum to approve Regent Park South. Instead, the process was guided by an advisory committee comprised of representatives from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the provincial and metropolitan governments, and was fraught from the beginning. Under pressure due to a sense of urgency rooted in a moral panic regarding the ongoing housing crisis (Brushett 2001, 148), planners were expected to “accommodate as many

¹⁴ Then one of the municipalities that comprised Metropolitan Toronto, now usually considered part of ‘the inner suburbs.’

families as possible, while creating the optimum environment contributing to their rehabilitation as citizens” (Brushett 2001, 215). These two goals were “almost irreconcilable”: high-rise apartment buildings could have maximised the number of new units constructed, but were thought to cause family dysfunctionality and other ills (Brushett 2001, 215). In the end, Regent Park South consisted of five mid-rise buildings in the centre, and townhouses around the perimeter.

As construction continued in North and South, local residents continued to resist and self-advocate through the Regent Park Ratepayers and Tenants Association, which had been renamed to include tenants of the new housing as well as homeowners facing expropriation (Brushett 2001, 224). Their petition to block the Regent Park South redevelopment bore 350 signatures, but was dismissed by City Council and the MTHA (Brushett 2001, 225). Owner-occupiers were again under-compensated, as settlements in the southern phase were also gauged by a “replacement value” that was “not nearly enough to purchase prefabricated housing, never mind replacing a six-room house elsewhere in the city” (Brushett 2001, 227). Further, it was alleged that senior residents in particular were bullied by officials into accepting underpayment (Brushett 2001, 227-228). The “vast majority” of tenants, meanwhile, had paid less than \$30 per month in the old Cabbagetown; in Regent Park South, most paid at least \$60, with nearly three quarters renting for \$90 or more (Brushett 2001, 231).

Together, Regent Park North and South constituted a 69-acre housing project with roughly 10,000 residents living in new, affordable, and well-equipped apartments (Purdy 2004, 522). In the end, the construction of these projects involved considerable displacement. Though the Housing Authority of Toronto estimated in 1948 that 80% of displaced residents would apply for rehousing in Regent Park North, when the project was complete more than half of the new

housing was “occupied by families who had not lived in the area before” (Purdy 2003b, 55). In Regent Park South, meanwhile, only 23% of displaced households were rehoused by the time of its completion (2003b, 55). Reflecting these statistics, all of my participants who had lived in Regent Park in the 1960s had been the children of ‘new families’.

The effects of ‘urban renewal’ were disastrous for many of the displaced households, who were forced out of their homes and into an inflated and inadequate rental housing market. For new and rehoused residents alike, new housing did little to alleviate the other stressors of working-class life. It did nothing of consequence to reduce the stigma that Cabbagetowners had felt as residents of a well-known, low-income enclave, as Regent Park itself was harshly stigmatised in much the same way shortly after South was completed. For these and other reasons, Brushett described Regent Park North as a “mixed blessing,” and South as an “unmitigated disaster” (2001, 232). None of my participants described either project in these terms, however, and I attribute this to the capacity of ordinary people to build ‘community’ in a challenging environment – in this case, an autocratically implemented and flawed housing project. The remainder of this dissertation addresses how this played out from 1959 to 2012.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two is a review of prior literature on hegemony, social reproduction, domestic labour, and historical ethnography. It synthesises some key points from these areas into a conceptual framework for studying the connection between domestic labour and class consciousness in Regent Park over a period of 53 years. Afterwards, the ethnography begins in Chapter Three and continues through Chapter Six. These four chapters are arranged chronologically, with each covering one of four periods in the history of Regent Park. The periods are separated by events or transitions that, in retrospect, mark a substantive shift in the

nature of local-level emic class formation. As I discuss further in Chapter Two, periodising history is an arbitrary exercise; these periods are not stable entities to be taken for granted, but rather analytical constructs that fit patterns exhibited in the data and that inform the overall argument of the dissertation.

The ethnography begins with Chapter Three: ““Whoever Planned South Regent Did a Great Job”: A Youthful Regent Park, 1959 – 1969”. This chapter begins when the construction of Regent Park was completed amidst great fanfare in 1959, and ends when a federal report called for an end to similar projects just a decade later. This chapter traces how Regent Parkers were stigmatised even at a time when Regent Park was still seen as a successful social intervention. I focus on the material effects of this stigma upon young residents. In their memories, Regent Park appeared as a working-class enclave that provided a respite from the class inequity that undergirded many of their interactions with the city outside – particularly at school and work. Then an overwhelmingly white and Anglophone population, Regent Parkers cultivated a conflicted, often conservative sort of working class identity in reference to, and in defiance of, the patronising dominant discourses of planning, social work, and the media. This identity was expressed in fragments, often alongside memories of the everyday labour it took to make Regent Park a decent place to live in spite of a wide range of disruptive outside incursions. During the apex of the Canadian Keynesian welfare state, social supports were relatively ample by contemporary standards; Regent Park itself was a product of this. But when “help” was accepted, it was often accepted grudgingly according to the judgmental standards of an urban Canadian sort of Protestant work ethic.

Chapter Four, “Youth, Stigma, and Security in Regent Park, 1970-1984”, covers an especially turbulent period in the history of Regent Park. My arguments regarding domestic

labour are brought to the forefront in this chapter, as I examine how Regent Parkers worked to maintain stability and ‘community’ in spite of a wide-range of pressures and perils. Some of the participants I consulted for this chapter drew a disturbing connection between stigma and predation, as three Regent Park children were abducted and murdered by sexual predators in separate incidents that occurred in 1973, 1977, and 1980. In the aftermath of the second murder in particular, Regent Park became embroiled in a citywide homophobic moral panic and a law-and-order crackdown. Meanwhile, “multiculturalism” was officially implemented at the federal level through changes to immigration policy, and the already diverse population of Regent Park became differentiated by new constructions of race and culture as it began to transform into the largely racialised place that it is at present. In the summer of 1976, youth fought each other along intersecting lines of ethnicity, nationality, North / South allegiance, and insider / outsider status in a complex wave of violence that was interpreted by the media and other commentators through the simplified terminology of the “race riot”. Afterwards, Regent Parkers were stigmatised in newly racialised ways – black residents as esoteric troublemakers, and white residents as unenlightened bigots. Throughout much of this era, a protracted economic downturn exacerbated poverty and unemployment.

Through the tumult of the 1970s and early 80s, public funding for community services and organisations remained relatively ample; Keynesianism and Red Toryism predominated at the local level despite the earliest emergences of neoliberal ideology. Chapter Five, “Common Sense, Territory, and Stigma, 1985-2001”, foregrounds the early implications of neoliberal restructuring for Regent Park, most notably a renewed intensity with which the disciplinary and punitive capacity of state power was inserted into the domestic spheres of the urban poor and working class. Meanwhile, Regent Parkers worked to maintain a sense of ‘community’ in spite

of systemic racism, unemployment, and continuing violence and predation in and around their buildings. Their means of doing so – what I call extra-domestic labour – came to be subsumed within officialised channels controlled by outside interests. Reflecting this, the period covered by this chapter begins with the release of a report on calling for greater cooperation between the police and “the community” in 1985. This chapter ends in 2001, the year before the Regent Park Revitalisation plan was approved. During the time in between, the racist dimensions of the stigma became especially pronounced as Regent Park was among the more visible of several parts of Toronto that became cast as “black neighbourhoods” in the dominant local discourse; a crude simplification of the reality that the racialised urban working poor tended to live in particular parts of the city.

Chapter Six is entitled “‘Like Any Other Neighbourhood’: Neoliberal Urbanism and Social Inclusion in Regent Park, 2002-2012”. It begins with the approval of the redevelopment in 2002, and ends with the conclusion of my participant-observation fieldwork as a local resident in 2012. The chapter contains a critical discourse analysis of newspaper coverage of Regent Park during this period, some other mass media and popular culture treatments of the “Regent Park Revitalisation”, and the “Regent Park Social Development Plan” – the document released in 2007 as a “blueprint”, in some metaphorical sense, for how ‘community’ would be fostered in Regent Park during and after the redevelopment. It argues that this comes at the expense of the ‘community’ that Regent Parkers built through the decades as a low-income enclave, and that the redevelopment is more of a state-led intervention to normalise Regent Park to a neoliberal standard, than it is the grassroots community-building effort that it appears to be in policy documents. These arguments are based on my participant-observation fieldwork on the everyday realities of the redevelopment, conducted from 2009-2012 in the midst of a redevelopment that

will take at least 20 years in total. Fieldwork took place at a stage too early in the redevelopment to attempt a final, authoritative evaluation of its effects, but the immediate material conditions of the present were of far greater concern to most people I spoke to than were long-range future projections.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter Seven, “It Wasn’t That Bad”. It summarises the main findings presented in the four substantive chapters, and suggests some directions for further research – in particular, the need for more ethnographic research on Canadian low-income localities that foreground the importance of class in everyday life, and that challenge the commonsensical assumption that working-class communities are inherently parochial and dysfunctional. Since I first planned my research on the Regent Park Revitalisation in 2007, four more large-scale redevelopments of Toronto public housing projects have been approved. As with the Regent Park plan, these have mostly been celebrated uncritically in the local media, as if any pleasant or valuable aspect of life that existed in the modernist public housing complex was an anomaly, and as if ‘social mix’ will enable these anomalies to reach their full potential. I argue that critical urban scholars must challenge this stigmatising discourse by documenting how working-class people have built ‘community’ – on their own terms, and in the absence of middle-class interveners, for decades.

Chapter Two

Social Reproduction, Domestic Labour, and Emic Class Formation: A Framework for an Historical Ethnography of Regent Park

Introduction

The setting of this dissertation is an urban Canadian housing project in which as many as 10,000 people have lived at any given time during a period of over 50 years. This chapter outlines a framework for studying the history of class consciousness in this locality – that is, how ordinary people understood their position in a stratified society, and how they developed that understanding in light of their experiences as labourers of one sort or another. My framework derives from Antonio Gramsci's writings on hegemony and consciousness, and some recent interpretations of these; Marxist-feminist studies of social reproduction and domestic labour; and discussions of emic and etic meanings of class, community, and history.

As noted in Chapter One, 'class consciousness' is commonly understood by Marxist theorists as an awareness that develops from the experience of wage-labour. Workers sell their labour-power in standardised, time-based units in a workplace they do not own or control, and the 'alienation' and 'exploitation' that characterise this arrangement make work a miserable experience. Class consciousness is thought to arise from an awareness that this situation is neither natural nor inevitable, but a product of the class-based inequality that is endemic to a capitalist social order. But this Marxist depiction barely appeared at all in the content of my interviews for this dissertation. Participants who came of age during the apex of the Fordist-Keynesian compromise in the 1960s, for example, tended to take pride in their labour. Feelings of solidarity with their fellow workers dovetailed with a guarded respect for authority and faith in meritocracy, and, for the most part, this belief system 'worked': many 1960s Regent Parkers looked back on a lifetime of decent, stable paycheques; others had won significant class and/or

status mobility through hard work and/or entrepreneurship. And for those who grew up during the economic tumult, deindustrialisation, and neoliberalism of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, work was more often taken-for-granted as a dull, unrewarding, but necessary part of life. It was something no one liked, but everyone had to do; and something one would rather forget as soon as possible rather than ruminate about. In place of the Marxist ideal of class consciousness was a bitter acceptance that work is usually awful, but unemployment is always even worse.

Most participants, men and women alike, had more to say about their experiences in and around their homes than about their experiences at work. This observation guided the literature review contained in this chapter, and led me to modify a generally shared understanding of ‘domestic labour’ to include what I call “extra-domestic labour”. This refers to everyday unpaid tasks done in the public space around the home, such as collectivised supervision of children and surveillance of shared grounds. Extra-domestic labour was usually done in informal co-operation with members of other households, and it was central to making Regent Park a liveable, secure ‘community’. Throughout the chapters that follow, I argue that it is through labour of this sort (much more so than wage labour) that residents of a hyper-visible, heavily stigmatised place came to reflect upon their marginalised position in society, and to form their key solidarities – with other members of the ‘community’, more so than with fellow waged workers. Throughout, I concur with Purdy (2003a) that “territorial stigmatisation” loomed large through the history of Regent Park; in defiance of it, residents built a territorial sort of solidarity.

In other words, extra-domestic labour was both central to social reproduction and a primary means through which Regent Parkers developed emic understandings of class and community. These understandings sometimes approximate the Marxist concept of class consciousness; at other times they are conservative and exclusionary. In any case, extra-domestic

labour made a housing project into a community, and is the primary reason why many ex-Regent Parkers insist that life in the projects was ‘not that bad’. The fact that this occurred over generations in a modernist housing project that is now being “revitalised” can be taken as an “antidote to the selective story-telling of modernism” (Young 2006) that informs the now-hegemonic view that such projects were uniformly spaces of despair and lifelessness.

Gramsci, History, and Regent Park: the Concept of Hegemony

In putting together a theoretical framework for this project, I have sought to highlight the agency of ordinary people, but also the structural limitations and impositions that limit and inflect it. In other words, I focus on how large-scale socioeconomic phenomena become tangible in people’s lives through their impact upon the local level, and how people make sense of this and of their capacity to influence it. For example, neoliberalism has been a dominant ideology in Toronto since the 1990s. Its general effects include a deindustrialised and precarious job market, the ongoing gentrification of the city’s entire downtown core, and large-scale public-private redevelopment projects such as the Regent Park Revitalisation. How do people understand these transformations, and what capacity do Regent Park residents have to shape them? Many of my interviews yielded specific and literal answers along these lines: neoliberalism at the provincial scale appeared through memories of “Mike Harris cutting everything” in the 1990s; while neoliberal urbanism in the local context appeared in a comment on how the Regent Park redevelopment “destroys a lot; like it takes a lot from you” when neighbours have to move away. Very few participants had anything to say about what potential they saw (if any) for ordinary people to influence things in their turn. To analyze this input in light of other data and over the long-term, I begin from the writings of Antonio Gramsci – “the first major Marxist theorist to

take the culture of the popular masses as the direct and privileged object of study and of cultural practice” (Johnson 2007, 209).

Gramsci’s widely influential discussions of “hegemony” are central to this dissertation. As Crehan (2002, 101) noted, Gramsci never offered any “neat capsule definition” of the concept of hegemony, at least in part because it refers to “a way of marking out ever-shifting, highly protean relationships of power” and not to a uniform characterisation of an “easily delineated relationship” that might befit a dictionary. In the absence of an easily replicable definition, however, a note by Gramsci entitled “The Intellectuals” elaborates the concept in a manner particularly relevant to my project. This is Gramsci’s descriptions of “two major superstructural levels” in an inequitable society, and the roles of each in maintaining the social order most of the time (2003, 12). One of these two levels is “political society”, also known as “the state”, which exercises “direct domination” over the masses (Gramsci 2003, 12) through its overt authority and monopoly on violence, to use Weber’s term. Essentially a last resort, state violence, or coercion, is typically reserved for “moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed” (Gramsci 2003, 12). What usually keeps the peace (albeit a “peace” that is actually the maintenance of inequity in a relatively stable, nonviolent form) is the other superstructural level: “civil society”, an “ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’”(2003, 12). This level “correspond[s] ... to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the dominant group exercises throughout society” (Gramsci 2003, 12).

Gramsci then described this “function” of hegemony as:

The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Gramsci 2003, 12).

As noted above, no unitary definition of “hegemony” appears in Gramsci’s writings. But many of his iterations of the concept, including the one cited above, refer to the perpetual negotiation of power that is usually sufficiently potent to maintain the status quo of an inequitable society without recourse to direct domination by the state. It is also incomplete and subject to challenge, however. As Critcher summarised the concept, a “hegemonic class” is “one which imposes its own ends and its own vision on society as a whole”, while the masses defend and seek to improve a position in a “social order” not of their own choosing (2007, 38). More often than not, and certainly in the case of urban Canada in general and Regent Park in particular, a conception of a “struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed” oversimplifies “the process by which a given ruling class successfully avoid[s] such confrontation by gaining popular consent for its domination” (Silverman 2001, 11).

In the chapters that follow, class oppression and intersecting forms of inequity figure prominently. But they usually appear diffuse and multilayered, with the status quo being maintained subtly by a wide range of agents including Regent Parkers themselves. For example, many of those who grew up in the 1950s and 60s continue to espouse the conservative, working class values that the projects were designed to instil: patriotism, the Protestant work ethic, respectability, and the valorisation of the nuclear family. Some members of more recent generations embrace the dominant ideology of present-day Toronto – what some call “third-way urbanism” (e.g. Keil 2000) and others “neoliberal urbanism” (Fanelli & Paulson 2011; Theodore et al. 2011). In the time in between, more often than not, the status quo in Regent Park has been upheld through the influence of the dominant ideology of the day. The only major example of a pitched battle between Regent Parkers and the overt domination of political society was a “police riot” that occurred in 1995. Though explosive violence of this sort is rare, it is still essential to

note that ideological domination is always crosscut by less dramatic examples of physical violence committed by state agents. The long, well-documented history of police violence against Regent Parkers, particularly racialised persons, indicates how the “apparatus of state coercive power” was a significant factor in the history of Regent Park. Though addressing an American context, Wilderson’s (2003) argument that Gramscian theory has not adequately addressed the violent subjugation of black people by the state, nor how central this has been to the functioning of capitalism, resonates here.

In the absence of insurrection, however, people do engage in everyday critical thought and practice that does not align neatly with the dominant order of their day, and sometimes they clearly contradict it. On this note, my conversations with participants often brought to mind Gramsci’s assertion that all people “are philosophers”. By “philosophy”, Gramsci was not referring to “the specific intellectual activity of a particular category of specialists”, as the term often implies (2003, 323). Instead, he meant something that is ubiquitously “contained” in “folklore” – “the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting” shared by “the subaltern”, i.e. the ordinary people in the least privileged position in the society (2003, 323). Elsewhere, Gramsci referred to folklore as a

“conception of the world and life” implicit to a large extent in determinate (in time and space) strata of society and in opposition (also for the most part implicit, mechanical and objective) to “official” conceptions of the world (or in a broader sense, the conceptions of the cultured parts of historically determinate societies) that have succeeded one another in the historical process (1985, 106).

This discussion of folklore and philosophy could help frame insights as to how ordinary people make sense of their surroundings in just about any context. But it is especially relevant to Regent Park in a very concrete sense – Regent Park was designed, quite literally, to instil a dominant ‘conception of the world’ in its residents. The planners of the 1940s promised that orderly,

standardised housing would bring clean living and aspiration to residents of a chaotic, impoverished ‘slum’ (as went the stereotypes of the day). The same could be said of the present: the “social mix” planning theory that guides the redevelopment sets out to encourage social housing tenants to socialise with, and ideally emulate, their new middle class neighbours. Now and in the past, Regent Parkers respond to these ‘official conceptions’ in diverse and conflicted ways, rarely accepting them uncritically or rejecting them outright.

I want to emphasise, as did Crehan (2002), that there is nothing sentimental or even necessarily hopeful about the statement that ‘everyone is a philosopher’. Far from romanticising the working class, Crehan argued that Gramsci’s distinction between ‘folklore’ and ‘political consciousness’ reflected a “highly critical attitude to subaltern culture in general” (2002, 176). This aspect of Gramscian theory can be a source of discomfort for anthropologists: cultural relativism remains axiomatic in the discipline, and so we are to avoid criticising the worldviews of our participants (except in extreme cases such as hate ideologies). Counterposing “folklore” and “political consciousness” may be an uneasy fit for cultural relativism, as it could imply a judgmental (and at worst, ethnocentric) binary opposition between the two: folklore as deluded and misinformed, and political consciousness as lucid and correct (Crehan 2002, 176). On this note, we should remember that Gramsci was a communist who wrote these notes while a political prisoner in fascist Italy. Clearly he hoped that a revolutionary political consciousness would have emerged from the everyday philosophising of subaltern groups, and this was something of an ideal-type standard by which he weighed the coherence of ideas. On this note, my own anarchist leanings certainly shape what I feel ‘makes sense’, and lead me to agree with some participants more than others. However, I strive to avoid judging participants’ ideas by the standards of dated European political traditions in which none of them expressed any interest.

Instead, I see Gramsci's analysis of folklore and philosophy as a framework for giving my participants their intellectual due, by drawing out the connections and contradictions between their perspectives and those of canonical social theorists such as Gramsci himself.

The many conflicted, vaguely class-conscious worldviews I encountered in my research suggest that folklore and philosophy are better thought of as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. As one example, many male participants from the 1960s and 70s remembered schoolteachers in general as petty and effete, but with an authority provided by the support of the school principal, the school board, and the capacity for corporal punishment. Teachers were for them the front-line agents of an oppressive middle-class elitism that ran counter to male working-class identity and values. For boys in particular, it became a norm to deliberately underachieve in school; often with a creative zeal that targeted the idiosyncrasies of the specific teacher. Though no former classroom troublemakers had read Willis's Learning to Labour, their stories essentially amounted to a Canadian version of the working-class "counter-school culture" which he identified in a British context (1977, 11). As another example, young residents unhappy with the redevelopment have told me that it undermines the informal collegiality that was rooted in their families' Commonwealth Caribbean backgrounds and that had previously structured everyday life in Regent Park. These high school students were well aware that racism and classism operate beneath the progressive veneer of social mix planning theory; they had experienced it all their lives. In telling their stories, they made an important criticism of neoliberal urbanism without naming it as such, framing it instead in the lay terminology of a grade 12 student. Both of these examples illustrate how philosophy (like folklore) is often embedded in everyday life, and perhaps at its most meaningful when not explicitly marked as philosophy.

The concepts of “folklore” and “hegemony” also offer a means of evading the pitfalls of cultural relativism outlined above. These ideas allow for a grounded and principled analysis of ideas and practices that nearly any contemporary anthropologist would find objectionable. I have used them to identify the various components of the beliefs and outline how they contradict and overlap, while reminding myself that ‘all people are philosophers’ even when they say things I cannot accept. Some older participants, for example, expressed anger over the de-industrialisation and declining unionisation rates they had witnessed over their lifetimes, and blamed this on the presence of new immigrant groups (rather than on global economic shifts and neoliberal restructuring, as I would). In the media archives, some local rappers fiercely displayed their pride in Regent Park and spoke against its stigmatisation, while themselves replicating a stigmatising “ghetto” iconography borrowed from the United States. More than one white participant would analyse (for example) class-based stigma in a way that I would agree with, but then begin to tell me they are not racist and that they “have many black friends”, as a sort of pre-emptive apology for the racist comment they were about to make. In the 1970s and 80s, local iterations of homophobia bore traces of anxieties regarding the gentrification of Regent Park. In those and other similar examples that appear throughout the following chapters, marginalised people made sense of their social context using the limited tools available to them. The results were complex and multifaceted, and yielded opinions that ranged from emancipatory to hateful.

As explained in Chapter One, this dissertation also makes extensive use of media archives: I consulted over 10,000 articles published from 1945 to 2012 in two local and two national newspapers. At the level of description, I used these archives to identify key moments and issues in the history of Regent Park to ask about during interviews with participants. On a more theoretical level, much of their content is reflective of the dominant ideologies of the

broader society in which Regent Park is embedded. My interest in media texts began from Herman and Chomsky's "propaganda model", which outlines in great detail the process by which "the media serve, and propagandise on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them" – not usually by "crude intervention", but by the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors' and working journalists' internalisation of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that conform to the institution's policy" (1988, xi). Though Herman and Chomsky developed this model primarily to explain American media coverage of American foreign policy, their insights are also relevant to the local-level Canadian context that I study. Chapters Three through Six illustrate how newspaper coverage of Regent Park has consistently reflected the dominant ideologies of the day, ranging from the paternalism of the Keynesian-Fordist compromise of the 1960s, to the racism and austerity of neoliberalism in the 1980s, to the vagaries of "social inclusion" and "social mix" that drive present-day neoliberal urbanism. The overarching narrative that emerges from the media archives is one of a stigmatisation process: prejudiced views of the working class as a whole manifested with particular intensity with regards to Regent Park, as it was arguably urban Canada's most widely known working-class enclave. In the chapters that follow, I examine the connection between broader ideological shifts and the specific trajectories of stigmatisation during a given period, and how conceptions of class and community among Regent Parkers have built up over time with reference to, and in defiance of, the stigmatisation process.

In addition to using the media archives as a bellwether for the dominant ideologies of a given period, Chapters Three through Six also document how Regent Parkers engaged with media coverage in everyday life. Because Regent Park has always been among the most widely known low-income localities in Toronto – and for that matter, Canada – it has consistently been

used by the media as a case study and/or venue for opinion pieces and human interest stories on themes pertinent to low-income localities in general. Regent Parkers have thus borne the full brunt of elite opinion of the poor and the working class throughout the decades. Quite consistently, the result has been stigmatisation; though the content and intensity of the stigma has varied according to dominant ideologies through time. Always a problem, the stigma has been annoying at best; at worst, it has caused considerable material disadvantages for Regent Parkers. Decades after they were printed, some participants accurately remembered the content of specific newspaper articles, and elaborated upon the material implications of these articles at their time of publication and thereafter.

Domestic Labour, Social Reproduction, and Class Consciousness

If all people are philosophers, when and where do they philosophise? Usually not at work on their employers' time, according to most of my data from Regent Park. For the most part, when participants said something reflective about their place in the social order, it was in relation to a memory that took place in the home or in 'the community', rather than while engaged in paid labour 'at work'. In this section, I frame this observation in relation to a selection of Marxist-feminist writings on domestic labour, social reproduction, and class consciousness. In the process, I propose a revision to the category of 'domestic labour' as it is commonly understood, and introduce its centrality to how generations of Regent Parkers have understood class and/or class-like categories.

Purdy has convincingly argued that "housing reform" in early- to mid-twentieth century Canada was central to "securing social consent" from the working class, "by stabilising the physical and moral structures" of its families and "contributing to the construction of healthy citizens and communities" (Purdy 2003a, 50). In other words, Regent Park was part of a plan to

provide working-class families with the living conditions necessary to raise and sustain productive wage-labourers, while also making life under capitalism sufficiently tolerable to dissuade them from seeking revolutionary alternatives – a serious concern in the aftermath of the tumult wrought by the Great Depression and the Second World War. By these standards, the plan was a success: conditions in the housing projects were usually tolerable at worst, and no politically radical formation has ever had a considerable presence in Regent Park. Reflective of Gramsci's notes on hegemony and folklore, however, the process of 'securing social consent' was never simple nor complete.

In the absence of insurrection, many Regent Parkers developed complex and conflicted worldviews comprised of strands that varied from acquiescent to defiant. Meanwhile, as time went on, it took an increasing amount of unpaid labour on the part of Regent Parkers themselves to maintain decent living conditions in the housing projects. This is the 'community'-building labour that I have termed extra-domestic labour, and that was central to social reproduction. By arguing that this was a much more potent source of everyday philosophising than was wage labour, I contradict some key assumptions underlying conventional Marxist understandings of 'class consciousness': as Secombe wrote in 1974 (paraphrasing Sartre), "one would almost suppose, from reading many Marxists, that a person's consciousness suddenly appears when they take their first job" (1974, 15). This section frames my ethnographic observations of class consciousness in Regent Park within a selection of Marxist-feminist writings on social reproduction, particularly Canadian studies of domestic labour.

Domestic and Extra-Domestic Labour

Since "at least the industrial era" in the West, domestic labour has been overwhelmingly assigned to women and trivialised (Fraser 2016, 102). Perhaps less obviously, the historical lack

of attention to domestic labour on the part of Marxist theorists is a gender-based bias that mirrored the devaluation of women and their labour in capitalist society. In response to sexism on both fronts, “the notion that something called ‘domestic labour’ should be theorised” emerged among “women’s liberationists” in the late 1960s (Vogel 2000, 152). This literature was partly rooted in somewhat disparate elements dating back far earlier, however, which had “never transformed into a distinct theoretical component” (Seccombe 1980, 26).

Luxton traced the Marxist study of domestic labour back to Engels’s foundational The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, first published in 1884. To Luxton, Engels was aware of the importance the production of both “the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that production”, and “the production of human beings themselves”; he also “recognised as false the apparent separation of the family from other labour processes” (1980, 13). But the potential of that recognition remained unfulfilled nearly a century later, as Marxist theory continued to focus disproportionately on industrial wage labour, effectively ignoring “the fact that workers live a 24-hour day” (Luxton 1980, 14).

Of the many challenges faced by women’s liberationist scholars of domestic labour, perhaps the most fundamental was establishing that domestic labour *is* labour. Luxton’s ethnography of “working-class housewives” in Flin Flon, Manitoba, for example, was entitled More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women’s Work in the Home (1980). The title foregrounds the fact that running a household is a demanding, essential, and lifelong occupation, rather than merely a ‘labour of love’ as the cliché goes. Luxton emphasised how domestic labour could be “isolating and frustrating” (1980,12), not to mention dangerous: “few other jobs require workers to care for young children while simultaneously using sharp knives, handling boiling liquids or poisonous chemicals, or ...concentrating on something else

altogether” (1980,196). In a similar vein, Fox’s description of domestic labour from the same time period bordered on the Kafkaesque:

... the emptiness of the early morning home with its unmade beds, dirty dishes, and universal chaos; the energy drain caused by growing kids with boundless energy and unceasing demands; the escapist relief offered by the soap operas; the psychological onslaught waged by the ad men and the idiocy of the directions on their products. For some, it also means the conflicting demands of a double workload – in the home and at a waged job (1980,10).

These descriptions overlap considerably with much of my own ethnographic data. And though the following chapters do contain plenty of happy memories of childrearing in Regent Park, this dissertation offers further evidence that domestic labour is ‘more than a labour of love’, to say the least.

Benston’s “The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation”, published in 1969 in Monthly Review, is widely credited as a starting point for the Marxist discussion of domestic labour during the women’s liberation era (e.g. Fox 1980, 16). Citing Mandel’s “structural definition of the wage earner” as men¹⁵ who sell their labour to the owners of the means of production, Benston noted that there was no “corresponding structural definition of women” (1969, 14). The definition she proposed was “that group of people who are responsible for the production of simple use-values in those activities with the home and the family” (1969, 16). To Benston, this fact explained women’s oppression – because domestic labour is not bought and sold as a commodity (exchange-value), it is not seen as ‘real work’ despite its indispensable use-value (1969, 15). Benston likened women’s labour in the home to that of “serfs and peasants”, in that they worked “outside of commodity production” (Benston 1969, 16). And when a woman did work for wages inside that realm of commodity production, it was as part of a “massive

¹⁵ “Men” both in a traditional / patriarchal sense and in Benston’s analysis.

reserve army of labour” – a temporary deviation from the norm that did not relieve her of her domestic responsibilities which were paramount (Benston 1969, 21).

In the long run, Benston succeeded at establishing domestic labour as a worthwhile topic of study among leftist academics, but her view of women as a subordinated class unto themselves within the class hierarchy of capitalist society has since been criticised as economically deterministic. According to Fox, early studies of domestic labour such as Benston’s were marred by a tendency to seek “abstract definitional purity” (1980, 21) by attempting to shoehorn domestic labour into established Marxist paradigms at the expense of nuance and precision. To Fox, Benston’s attempt to establish women as a ‘class’ was unconvincing, while the “tight functional ‘fit’” she assumed “between household and economy” could not account for “contradictions or change” (1980, 16-17). To this critique, I would add that Benston’s portrayal of the nuclear family as a universally oppressive structure that relegated women to a serf-like status reflected the white, middle-class cultural bias characteristic of much of the first two waves of North American feminism (hooks 1981). Benston missed, for example, how working-class black women in the United States established networks of mutual aid¹⁶ to meet their household’s economic needs while mitigating against alienation and loneliness, even while leading lives firmly entrenched in the patriarchy of mainstream society and its nuclear family ideal (e.g. Stack 1974). The ethnographic chapters of this dissertation document these and similar practices on the part of Regent Park residents.

¹⁶ Based on observations of hunter-gatherer societies, the nineteenth-century anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin argued that mutual aid – or the propensity of individuals in a given group or locality to share with and support one another – was an important adaptive feature in human evolution, and exhibits the potential for the creation of just and equitable societies without states (Barnard 2004). Though this topic is outside the scope of this dissertation, the concept of mutual aid is relevant to my observations of how generations of Regent Parkers have ensured their social reproduction by sharing with and supporting one another, through informal and voluntary means unrelated to the state or other bureaucracies. The same could be said, I would argue, of other urban working-class ethnographic contexts such as Stack’s.

Subsequent research has added more depth and specificity to Benston's focus on the structural significance of domestic labour. To this end, others have grouped the tasks that comprised domestic labour into a range of sub-categories defined by specific purpose. Briskin, for example, proposed that there were "three main forms" of domestic labour: "reproduction of the labour force" (childcare); "maintaining the labour force" (cooking, cleaning, and shopping); and providing "emotional services" such as "tension-managing" in the home (1980, 137). Luxton outlined four main components of the domestic labourer's responsibilities: i) care for herself, her husband, and other adults in the household; ii) childrearing; iii) cooking, cleaning, and other housework; and iv) managing money, including shopping. Luxton's fourth component also included women who faced a 'double day' by retaining primary responsibility for the household while also taking on waged labour outside the home to make ends meet (1980, 18-19). Domestic labour thus encompassed the totality of a working-class woman's life, spanning the time she spent in both the public and private spheres. Because her waged work was done to fulfill her responsibilities to the household's finances, even this public-sphere labour was, in a sense, also domestic labour.

The feminist anthropology of this era provided a comparative global perspective, finding for example that "women's status will be lowered in those societies where there is a firm differentiation between domestic and public spheres of activities and where women are isolated from one another and placed under a single man's authority, in the home" (Rosaldo 1974, 36). However Rosaldo also noted that the traditional Western conceptualisation of discrete public and domestic spheres, and the gendered division of labour that this entailed, were not universally shared (1974, 35). Ethnographic examples in which the domestic/public distinction was ambiguous included the "lean-tos" of the Mbuti of Central Africa, and the Iroquois longhouse

“which holds several families and is itself a kind of domestic sphere” (Rosaldo 1974, 35).

Rosaldo also noted that “extra-domestic¹⁷ ties with other women ... are an important source of power and value for women” in societies with rigid gender norms and a sharp public/domestic divide (1974, 39).

Based on my research in Regent Park, I propose a fifth, adjacent component of domestic labour that I call extra-domestic labour. This refers to everyday, unpaid tasks done in public space around the home that are essential to the stability of the household, and that build ‘community’ among households in the process. Supervising children and surveilling common grounds collectively are two especially prominent examples from my research. I would also include other examples of unpaid labour done in the public sphere, such as attending meetings, writing letters to editors and politicians, and organising demonstrations.¹⁸ I argue that these tasks are ‘domestic’ in a sense because, like those tasks more commonly defined as domestic labour, they were integral to “making life tolerable for household members” (Luxton 1980, 17) – both inside and just outside of the household. As I elaborate below, they were also central to the process of social reproduction, which capitalism paradoxically depends upon and beleaguers at the same time.

I do not suggest that extra-domestic labour is a necessity as universal as cooking, cleaning, and other more conventional examples of domestic labour. Instead, it is a necessity of

¹⁷ Rosaldo used the phrase “extra-domestic” as a synonym for the public sphere, in contradistinction with the domestic / private sphere. Similarly, Low & Lawrence-Zuniga (2003, 13) use “extra domestic” to describe public, i.e. non-domestic, space. In my own writing, I only use “extra-domestic” in the theoretical sense that I outline in this section, to refer to public space just outside the household in which (like the domestic, as conventionally understood) social reproduction occurs.

¹⁸ The work of Sean Purdy (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005b) provides an exhaustive analysis of political activism in Regent Park, particularly structured formations such as the Regent Park Community Improvement Association of the 1970s. This dissertation draws on Purdy’s insights where directly relevant, but instead focuses on informal acts of ‘community’-building that are not conventionally seen as political activism. In this regard, I took the lead from my participants, none of whom were politically involved, but many of whom cared deeply about ‘community’. Still, I found considerable overlap between what I call extra-domestic labour and what is conventionally understood as ‘activism’, and see each as central to social reproduction.

households in a hyper-visible, heavily stigmatised place.¹⁹ Throughout its history, Regent Park was menaced by sexual predators, unscrupulous drug dealers, racist police officers, and exploitative journalists, among others. The dangers they posed created instability at the level of the ‘community’ that had to be alleviated to create the peace and stability that is necessary for a household to function. More often than not, the work that this involved fell upon Regent Park residents themselves – often women, but not always. As a result, I consistently found that when participants referred to Regent Park as a community, ‘community’ appeared as an incomplete work-in-progress, built day-by-day by local people as they did extra-domestic labour. For most people I spoke to, extra-domestic labour and community-building were more potent sources of class identity and philosophising than was wage labour. It was patently clear to most participants that the multiple victimisations of Regent Park that created so much extra work for them were products of social inequity.

In keeping with the feminist roots of the concept of domestic labour, I address the gendered dynamics of extra-domestic labour where relevant throughout this dissertation. In general, extra-domestic labour is gendered, but not as rigidly as is domestic labour in the conventional sense. Many of the tasks I refer to as “extra-domestic labour” are, like domestic labour, traditionally feminised: those involving child supervision, for example. But others are more traditionally masculinised, such as participation in the public realm of local-level politics, and the potentially dangerous work of confronting suspicious outsiders – policing without the blessing of the state, in essence. There are examples from throughout the history of Regent Park of men and women alike partaking in both feminised and masculinised forms of extra-domestic labour. In total, though it would be impossible to quantify, it seems clear that a majority of extra-

¹⁹ While I suspect the concept would be relevant to other localities similar to Regent Park, I have not yet tested its generalizability.

domestic labour in both its masculinised and feminised variants was done by women. If the women in a mining town in the 1970s faced a double day (Luxton 1980), it could be said that the women of Regent Park throughout much of its history faced a triple day: working for wages, running a household, and working to maintain a stable community around the household. All of this work was essential to social reproduction, but none of it brought much compensation or prestige.

Social Reproduction

As defined by Ferguson et al., social reproduction refers to “the activities associated with the maintenance and reproduction of peoples’ lives on a daily and intergenerational basis” (2016, 27-28). Not only are these activities essential to sustaining the household, they are also “the foundation on which markets, production and exchange rest” (Ferguson et al. 2016, 28).

Domestic labourers feed, clothe, and shelter adult members of the household who work for wages in the present, while also raising a subsequent generation of (traditionally) boys to become wage-labourers in the future, and (traditionally) girls who will grow up to reproduce the social unit into the next generation. In other words, domestic labourers “restore the labour power consumed today in order that it can be trained again tomorrow” (Secombe 1980, 43); or as Luxton put it, so that this labour power “can be re-sold the next day, the next year and in the next generation” (1980, 14). Secombe wrote of how any social formation must reproduce the means, forces, and relations of production, and how “within capitalist relations”, domestic labour is “integral” to the latter two (Secombe 1974, 14).

In essence, the argument is that a capitalist system is dependent upon the unpaid labour of the working class (overwhelmingly that of women in particular) that creates a pool of ready-and-willing wage-labourers, while at the same time it denigrates and under-compensates this labour.

In the common sense of “bourgeois economists,” Seccombe wrote, “housewives” are treated as “social parasites, consuming but never producing” because their labour is unwaged and its indispensability rendered invisible (1974, 4). Seccombe explained this through a macro-level historical analysis, which illustrated how industrial capitalism entailed a new division between the domestic and industrial realms, with the latter privileged over the former because wage labour is paid and subject to contracts and other formalities. In pre-capitalist feudal societies, by contrast, “the family was the basic unit of production and so domestic labour was embedded within the labour of general production” (Seccombe 1974, 6).

Seccombe also outlined the correlation of women’s labour and domestic labour as a dovetailing of three interrelated conditions. First, a structural division between working class men and women as an example of the ‘divide-and-conquer’ imperative of class domination; second, “the fetishism of the wage” (1980, 83) whereby work outside the home is seen as ‘real’ work because it generates income; third, the “patriarchal family norm” that defined the nature of the household and the roles of its members in Western societies (Seccombe 1980, 61). As Fraser has put it more recently, “the capitalist economy relies on – one might say, free rides on” the activities that comprise domestic labour, but “accords them no monetised value and treats them as if they were free” (2016, 101). The result, according to Fraser, is a “deep-seated social-reproductive ‘crisis tendency’ or contradiction” that has been present throughout the various stages and iterations of capitalism, but is particularly acute during the neoliberal era in which Chapters Five and Six take place (2016, 100).

The concept of social reproduction also allows for a precise understanding of aspects of domestic life that are often taken for granted. Feminist anthropologists have long established, for example, that there is nothing natural or inevitable about the traditional Western, gendered

division of labour, nor is the “household” a stable unit that universally overlaps with the “family” (Moore 1988, 53). As Ferguson et al. note, the ‘household’ in this sense is just one “highly flexible” and “historically evolved institution through which the need for capitalist labour-power has been met” (2016, 30). Even in Western contexts, where the ideal-type family and household are one and the same, the reality obviously does not always correspond. Members of the working class manage to reproduce their own labour power (and in the process, capitalism itself) in a wide variety of domestic arrangements, ideal-type or not. This brings to mind Stack’s definition of “household”, based on how the construct actually appeared in her fieldsite: “the smallest, organised, durable network of kin and non-kin who interact daily, providing domestic needs of children and assuring their survival” (1974, 31). Likewise, I encountered a considerable diversity of household forms during my research in Regent Park, as well as co-operation among members of different households that (like domestic labour) facilitated social reproduction.

Like that of the household, the concept of ‘community’ is variegated and elastic, but refers to something both meaningful and structurally essential. As outlined above, I treat ‘community’ as a shifting and incomplete state of solidarity, built by its members in everyday life through their shared ownership over space. Communities are comprised of households, and for a household to fulfill its imperative of social reproduction, the community outside its walls must be stable and secure. While a typical middle-class household (by contrast) can count on the state to provide this safety and stability, residents of a stigmatised and marginalised housing project often had to provide it for themselves. I theorise the considerable work involved in this task as extra-domestic labour, and found it was the primary means through which ‘community’ was built. As I elaborate further in the next section, it was also central to class consciousness.

The Emic and The Etic: Community, Class, and Metissage

This section elaborates some analytical tools for clarifying the similarities and differences between my theoretical framework and the varying worldviews of my participants, and for analyzing how objective facts become meaningful in everyday life. More specifically, it addresses the dual concepts of ‘the emic’ and ‘the etic’ as they relate to how people understand ‘class’ and ‘community’.

In the etic (anthropologist’s) sense, Regent Park is a locality – a part of downtown Toronto bounded by River, Shuter, Parliament, and Gerrard Streets. It is (or was) also a low-income housing project. But what do people mean when they describe Regent Park as a ‘neighbourhood’ or ‘community’? The time period covered by this dissertation spans 1959, the year construction in Regent Park was completed, to 2012, the year I completed my participant-observation fieldwork. Historians of Toronto and/or Canada can identify a set of key events and developments that occurred during the period 1959-2012, but which of these do ordinary people remember and what do they make of them in retrospect? Finally, Regent Parkers are a diverse group in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and other markers of identity. Prior to the redevelopment, they were all working-class by virtue of engaging with the wage labour market, and of sufficiently low income to be allowed to live in rent-geared-to-income housing. Is this what they mean, however, when they identify as ‘working class’? What do their other concepts of class identity mean and where do they come from?

To begin to answer these questions (ones that I return to throughout the dissertation), I start from the “emic” / “etic” distinction. The terms were coined by linguist Kenneth Pike in the early 1950s, to distinguish between “phonetic accounts of the sounds of a language” (the etic – the physical production of vocal sounds) and “phonemic accounts” of those sounds (the emic –

the “unconscious system of sound contrasts which native speakers have inside their heads”) (Harris 1976, 331-332). When carried over to sociocultural anthropology, the distinction appeared as a means of distinguishing between: the insider view (emic), an understanding shared by at least some, if not all of the people being studied²⁰; and the outsider view (etic), the anthropologist’s understanding based on some combination of her/his analysis of the issue at hand and her/his own cultural context.

To begin, the term ‘community’ has several overlapping, imprecise meanings in everyday and academic usage that require specification and critique. For one, ‘community’ is commonly used interchangeably with ‘neighbourhood’ to denote a particular area of a city, such as ‘the Regent Park community’. ‘Community’ can also refer to a group of people who share an ethnicity, nationality, language, and/or religion, such as ‘the Portuguese community’, or ‘the black community’; this is particularly common in a city such as Toronto which prides itself on multiculturalism. Labels of this nature are especially resonant when they also include a ‘neighbourhood’ affiliation, such as ‘Greektown’. In the social sciences, ‘community’ was historically used as part of a now-obsolete ‘community study’ approach, which assumed that ‘communities’ were bounded, discrete microcosms of the society and/or nation-state in which they were located; and that data gleaned from the community could then be used to extrapolate general truths about the society as a whole (Leeds 1994, 210). Regent Park has never been an enclave of any one ethnicity, nor a representative sample of the population of Toronto, Ontario, or Canada as a whole.

To avoid the trappings of ‘community’ as it appears in these commonsensical and obsolete academic usages, I follow Leeds in using “locality” as an umbrella term for any

²⁰ These emic worldviews do not exist as bounded units unto themselves, however; they are assembled in conversation between anthropologist and participant.

relatively small and dense conglomeration of people. Regent Park is thus a ‘locality’ rather than a ‘community’ in the etic sense. In Leeds’s formulation, a locality could be a small town, several city blocks, a mine, or a housing project, for example (1994,10); the boundaries are arbitrary and not to be taken for granted, but specified according to the goals of the study. Localities, defined as such, exist in symbiosis with “supralocal structures”, such as political parties, professional associations, and the state (1994, 10). Defined in these terms, the construction of the ‘locality’ is well-suited to “focus[ing] on the local level without doing a community study”, which Silverman argued is both “possible and necessary” in historical-ethnographic research (2001, 9). With this in mind, I treat Regent Park as a venue for studying macro-level socioeconomic and cultural processes and their “trajectories”, which “have a complexity that only a local-based perspective can uncover” (2001, 9). This perspective also highlights how “the nature of ... local worlds invariably impinges on the trajectories of socio-economic and cultural processes” (Silverman 2001, 9). Hypothetically, a study of any other locality of its kind could have yielded insights along the same lines; studying Regent Park was exceptionally fruitful given its status as the first and most visible of its kind, and given my own personal connections to it.

None of this is to deny the importance and uniqueness of Regent Park to its residents, nor to reduce the place to a mere theoretical construct. Indeed, Regent Park matters a great deal to most of the people I spoke to, and many of them do describe it as a “community” in one sense or another. Following anthropological literature on “space and place”, I emphasise that the layout and condition of the built environment was a significant factor in the formation of people’s identities and allegiances. To quote Low’s ethnography of an urban plaza in Costa Rica, I study how Regent Parkers have transformed space “into scenes and actions that convey meaning” through their “social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting” (2000,

128). Emic senses of “community” in Regent Park arise not out of any innate cohesiveness to the land bounded by Shuter, River, Gerrard, and Parliament streets, but through the efforts of its residents to make it a community – efforts that I call extra-domestic labour, as outlined in the previous section. While the “space and place” literature has tended to focus on “the meanings generated by [the] social production of space” (Low 2000, xiii), I am also interested in the material significance of ‘community’-building. This labour was not only the primary means by which many of my participants came to understand ‘class’ or something like it, but also essential to social reproduction in a stigmatised housing project.

The rift between the emic and the etic tends to be particularly wide regarding class. Much of the content of my interviews brings to mind Heron’s observations of a Canadian working class family who took pride in being “working people”, but never used the term “working class” and seldom said “class” at all (2009, 12). On a similar note, Ortner observed from prior literature that “the phrase ‘working class’ is rarely used, and, indeed, usually rejected by people we might think of ‘objectively’ as members of the working class” (1998, 7). Elsewhere, Ortner has noted that class is “‘hidden’ in American social and cultural life” due to “personal embarrassment about talking about money” and “the changing place of the idea of class in American public discourse” (2003, 11). From fieldwork and personal experience, I would argue that these observations are about as relevant to the Canadian context, and I concur with Ortner that “class is not some natural object lying around in the world but is culturally or discursively constructed” (2003, 11). As discussed in Chapter Three, only my participants who came of age in the 1960s identified as “working class”, and even in this example, their emic understandings of the term did not neatly overlap with the etic.

Silverman's discussions of the emic usage of class are helpful in framing how members of an entirely low-income locality identify themselves and relate to one another, and how this rarely if ever corresponded to a Marxist analysis of class. In her fieldsite in rural Ireland, Silverman found that, a "status-class hierarchy underlay people's experiences, forming the bedrock of their common sense, their individual consciousness, and their personal and collective perceptions" (2001, 7). This hierarchy "only partly corresponded" to the etic class framework based on "access to the means of production and whether labour was exploited" (2001, 8). These emic categories were formed over the long run of history and were "entwin[ed] into ever-developing, everyday 'common sense'" (Silverman 2001, 8). This amounted to a "complex consciousness," formed through a "*metissage* or braiding" of various strands of experience which come to co-exist despite their contradictions (Silverman 2001, 8). This analysis is also relevant to the terms people used in Regent Park to variously praise or disparage their neighbours – for example, the "real Regent Parker" (which could be a good or bad thing, depending on the context), the "hard worker", the "bum", "rich people", and "snobby white people". These are emic class categories specific to working-class Toronto, if not even more specifically to Regent Park. To quote Ortner's invocation of Bourdieu's "habitus", these categories add up to a set of "cultural assumptions and social institutions that ordinary people inhabit without thinking very much about them, and an internalised version of that world that becomes part of people's identities, generating dispositions to feel/think/judge/act in certain ways" (2003, 12). Chapters Three through Six address how these terms built up and shifted over time as people built, held, and protected 'community'.

By comparing how these emic class categories were recast and reiterated through the generations, I trace how they built up over time in reference to (or in defiance of) earlier

frameworks. I did this by analyzing the data through two interrelated approaches to historical anthropology outlined by Silverman & Gulliver. First, “historical ethnography” studies “how the past led to and created the present”; it is the “synchronic and diachronic stud[y] of a past time” (Silverman & Gulliver 1992, 16). Second, the “anthropology of history” studies “how constructions of the past are used to explain the present (history as ideology)”; “how the past is created in the present (the invention of tradition)”; and “how the past created and recreated the past” (Silverman & Gulliver 1992, 16). While the former “provides a description and analysis of a past era of the people of some particular, identifiable locality”, the latter aims “to record and describe the insiders’ views, assumptions, and perceptions and to show them in the insiders’ own sociocultural terms” (Silverman & Gulliver 1992, 19). The aim is not an ‘objective’ conclusion, but to outline “what people know and remember about the past, and how and why, and how people make sense of the past and relate it to the present” (Silverman & Gulliver 1992, 19).

While conducting fieldwork, I was unsure of whether I was doing historical ethnography or the anthropology of history. In the absence of a clear allegiance to either approach, I planned the questions I would ask in life history interviews in a manner that would, ideally, yield the kind of data necessitated by each. Through conversations with my supervisors early in the writing process, I found that I was doing both at the same time: each of the following chapters constitute works of historical ethnography unto themselves, which taken together comprise an anthropology of history. This stems from my decision to structure the dissertation chronologically, as opposed to thematically – a decision informed by the nature of the data my participants offered. For the most part, interviews focused on the significance of local key events and the minutiae of everyday life. Of the participants who took an interest in the potential outcomes and implications of my research (as opposed to those who were simply helping a

student as an act of generosity), most were concerned with having their memories preserved and the history of Regent Park documented in a respectful manner.

There was also little continuity of persons across temporal periods – each of the following chapters covers a period of roughly ten to twenty years, and very few participants spent more time in Regent Park than that. Few took much interest in an era other than their own: someone who lived in Regent Park from 1982 to 1989, for example, would have little if anything to say about local events or issues from before or after that period.²¹ The work of making connections over the long run of history, and theorising the cumulative significance of several loosely-defined, overlapping eras, would mostly be left up to me as the anthropologist. Yet, through ‘metissage’ as outlined above, people’s consciousnesses were inflected by ideas and events from bygone eras that they did not necessarily know or care about.

Taken separately, each of the following chapters is an historical ethnography of Regent Park during a particular period. As a whole, this dissertation is a work of the anthropology of history: it addresses how the past of a particular locality has been simplified and derided in its mobilisation towards various ideological projects over the decades, and the everyday lived effects of this. My intention in writing it is to provide a counter-narrative of this past, by highlighting texture and complexity in the locality; an approach which I hope will yield a valuable contribution to relevant bodies of academic literature while also living up to participants’ expectations of a measured, dignified documentation of their pasts – to some extent, in these “‘insiders’ own sociocultural terms” (Silverman & Gulliver 1992, 19). At times, this effort is an uneasy match for the Gramscian approach to culture and politics from which I begin; such is a reality of doing research in such a complicated place.

²¹ As one exception, many people commented on whether the building in which they had once lived had yet been demolished as part of the Regent Park Revitalisation. Others asked me if I knew.

Conclusion

Prior research that focuses specifically on the connection between domestic labour and political consciousness is scarce. One quantitative British study, conducted after the election of Thatcher's second majority government in 1983, surveyed 526 households in an industrial town to determine whether patterns of domestic labour in a household correlated with a propensity to vote Conservative (Missiakoulis et al. 1986). The study found that "self-sufficiency" – doing one's own gardening, knitting, repairs, automobile servicing, and other tasks – correlated with conservatism. "Domestic division of labour has a small effect of relatively low significance", the study showed, as households with more equal sharing of domestic labour were slightly less likely to vote Conservative (Missiakoulis et al. 1986, 36). Still, Missiakoulis et al. argued that "the crucible of political consciousness is as much in the experiences of everyday life as in the workplace – perhaps more saliently in the kitchen than in the office, shop or factory" (1986, 36). In light of my own research on extra-domestic labour, to this list I would add sites such as the playground, the hallway, the stairwell, the community centre, and the housing authority's office. In an ethnography of a majority-black area of Queens, New York, Gregory found that "everyday networks of child care, communication, and exchange among women" were central to local-level political organising in the 1970s, as these linked "households, floors, and buildings" and provided a "social base for the mobilisation of ... tenants as a political force within the community" (2002, 290). In Gregory's analysis, however, activism and labour-sharing among households are two distinct (if closely-linked) categories of efforts. By theorising both categories as extra-domestic labour, I emphasise that each is both political and central to social reproduction.

Luxton's ethnography of women in Flin Flon contained some analysis of how the domestic labourer (the "housewife", in this specific context) was uniquely positioned to engage with the dominant ideologies of the day. Working in the house all day with the television on in the background, the "housewife" was the primary target of advertising: a "powerful promoter of ideology" (Luxton 1980, 161) engineered to instil dominant consumerist values in its viewership. Because women's domestic labour included "handling most of the household consumption", marketers addressed them directly through the language and imagery of the hegemonic gender constructions of the day: "The advertising industry promoted a series of images about what constituted a 'normal' household, a 'successful' housewife and mother, and a 'happy, healthy' family" (Luxton 1980, 161). To connect this observation to my own fieldsite, the domestic labourers of Regent Park also encountered this same pressure from television advertising and other media. To add to it, they lived and worked in a housing project that was built according to a plan to inculcate the nuclear family norm and other middle class values in its residents; ideals that became increasingly untenable following the breakdown of the Keynesian-Fordist compromise beginning in the 1970s. Regent Park, as a home and as a workplace for domestic labourers, was a place where people encountered dominant ideologies in especially potent forms.

As Marxists, the scholars of domestic labour cited in this chapter were also interested in resistance – an interest that I share, and revisit throughout the course of the dissertation. In the concluding chapter of More Than a Labour of Love, Luxton explained a problem familiar to activists and radicals of all orientations: by virtue of their oppression, the people who stand to gain the most from a social movement are generally the least able to find time to participate in it. Some do, however, as Luxton notes:

Many women are so caught up in the relentless business of daily life that they end up avoiding the problem and not taking a stand. This leaves them

vulnerable to all the contradictory pressures of life under capitalism. But many others are defiant and some are able to transform their defiance into active resistance and finally into political action to change the very structure of their work and hence the pattern of their lives (1980, 206).

Luxton found that “women’s resistance” “begins in the home”, “radiates out into the community”, and sometimes “stretches even further into the very workings of the state or industrial production” (Luxton 1980, 206). Seccombe, meanwhile, broke from the detached ambivalence that is standard academic tone to make an intersectional call to arms of sorts:

Only when class conscious activists of the workers’ movement fight to unify its ranks on an up-from-under basis by actively supporting women’s demands, will the working class be able to become a class for itself, a universal class capable of taking charge of its own historic destiny (1980, 88).

Again, the emic / etic paradigm is useful for contextualising the divide between this idealised image and what domestic labourers, and working-class people in general, have actually done in the way of political engagement and philosophising. Hegemony and associated Gramscian concepts, meanwhile, are helpful for understanding how and why the status quo is usually maintained subtly and by a diffuse range of agents, including members of the working class themselves.

The remainder of the dissertation takes the approach outlined in this chapter through the history of Regent Park from 1959 to 2012. This period begins with the completion of the first Regent Park redevelopment, and ends with my participant-observation fieldwork during a midpoint in its second. It treats Regent Park as a partially unbounded context for studying how working class urban Canadians develop a metissage of emic understandings of class and community, and how this changes and develops over time.

Chapter Three

“Whoever Planned South Regent Did a Great Job”: A Youthful Regent Park, 1959-1969

Introduction

Regent Park has always been a demographically young place. The percentage of children in the total population, and the average number of children per family, have consistently been higher in Regent Park than in Toronto at large – at times as much as double.²² These children have always had exceptionally convenient access to public elementary schools – four of them (three non-denominational,²³ one Catholic) are all located within one city block of the perimeters of Regent Park. Teenagers do not enjoy the same convenience, however. It takes at least 15 minutes to walk from Regent Park to the nearest high school, and no one high school has ever been designated ‘the Regent Park high school’ in any formal or informal sense. As a result, most people I interviewed described spending their primary years at a school very close to home, and among a student body derived almost entirely from Regent Park and its immediate surroundings. After that, they chose (or had chosen for them) a high school in another area, based on any combination of factors such as convenience, educational “stream”, subjects of interest, the opinions of family, the choices of friends, and/or religious affiliation. By enrolling in high schools located all across Toronto, teenagers from Regent Park joined geographically “mixed” student bodies for the first time. For many, high school was their first experience with being in a peer group that was not based in Regent Park.

Some participants said that entering high school was also the first time they learned that Regent Park had a bad reputation in some circles. Susan, for example, remembered that she

²² For detailed statistics on the period 1951-1991, see Purdy 2003a, 201-202. For a summary of relevant census data from 1991 – 2006, see Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007, 21-22.

²³ One of these closed in 2013.

“didn’t feel a stigma” until she “got outside and went to high school. Then it was like, ‘*You’re from Regent Park*’?” Jane remembered how her sister never told her schoolmates where she lived, and still does not disclose that she ever lived in Regent Park some 45 years after the fact: “I’ve tried to tell her that she lived there as a child, so it wasn’t her choice,” she said, “and plus, it wasn’t bad.” Another participant said she still feels mildly uncomfortable telling people she grew up in Regent Park in the 1960s – unlike her husband who “can’t wait to tell people he’s from Regent Park,” as she put it.

Forty-five years after it happened, Susan can now find humour in an unlikely coincidence that almost mortified her when she was a teenager. At the time, Susan lived with her large family in Regent Park, and commuted daily to a Catholic high school in the inner suburbs. Her school held a gift drive every Christmas, whereby students would supply a basket of goods for an anonymous household drawn randomly from lists of “the needy” provided by church parishes. To help them choose gifts, students were told the age and sex of each member of the needy household. Susan was horrified when she learned she had been assigned to a family with six children who matched herself and her five siblings exactly – including a pair of twins. It was immediately clear to Susan that the recipient family was almost certainly her own, and it was imperative that her middle-class peers never realise that she was actually one of the ‘charity cases’ they were helping.

At school, Susan pretended there was nothing unusual about the situation. At home, she “tried to laugh it off”, and asked her siblings what they wanted in their gift basket. To add to her frustration, Susan was certain that her parents had never consented to being on any list of ‘the needy’. “I don’t think they wanted charity. So that was the way I felt, too; I don’t want charity,” she remembered. Nevertheless, the basket Susan had helped prepare arrived at her home shortly

before Christmas. Unsolicited as it was, Susan was “sure it helped anyway”, because her parents “weren’t rich, by any means.” And much to her relief, Susan’s secret remained safely hidden from her peers.

Susan’s story illustrates how hegemonic conceptions of work ethic and respectability, as refracted through a spatially determined classist stigma, affected the first generations of Regent Park youth. This chapter addresses the complicated and contradictory ways in which young people in 1960s Regent Park variously resisted, appropriated, transformed, and enacted upon these conceptions and the process of stigmatisation. It focuses on the emic class identities they constructed through interpreting their position in the social order, and as a means of differentiating themselves from other Regent Parkers and various categories of outsiders. Experiences with labour were central to this identity formation and differentiation – this includes wage labour, domestic labour, and what I call “extra-domestic labour” alike.

Regent Park was a product of a willingness to invest in the stability of the working-class household that characterised the urban social policy of the postwar era. Fraser describes the postwar era in the industrialised West as a time of “Fordism and the family wage”, when “a stratum of enlightened elites had come to believe that capital’s short-term interest in squeezing out maximum profits had to be subordinated to the longer-term requirements for sustaining capital accumulation over time” (2016, 109). This entailed the “cultivation of a healthy, educated workforce with a stake in the system, as opposed to a ragged revolutionary rabble” as had developed to some extent during the Great Depression (Fraser 2016, 109). On this note, Chapter One outlined how Regent Park was envisioned in the 1930s and 40s as panacea for housing scarcity, urban blight, and the moral laxity that was stereotypically associated with the working class. The current chapter charts how an early generation of Regent Parkers accepted subsidised

housing and other social supports out of necessity, while rejecting the stigmatising master-status²⁴ of the ‘charity recipient’; and how they embraced a Protestant work ethic (of sorts) while resisting classist paternalism. Fraser reminds us that the relative prosperity that characterised this period in the West was underwritten by global injustices such as racism and imperialism, and thus cautions against romanticising it as a “golden age” (2016, 110). It is true, however, that it was a time when the state was relatively highly invested in the health and stability of working-class households, and this was palpable in everyday life in working-class ‘communities’.

This chapter is based on interviews with 15 people who experienced a newly-completed Regent Park in the 1960s, during their childhoods and/or teen years. Interviewed in 2010 as they approached retirement age, most participants emphasised the pleasures and conveniences of life in a working-class enclave. They found little relevance in the now-commonsensical view that modernist social housing complexes bred isolation and despair. Some were even offended by the notion that Regent Park was poorly planned, such as a woman who said emphatically, “Whoever planned South Regent did a great job.” In this sense, and in a present-day context, much of their input was counter-hegemonic. But many people also retained an enduring faith in conceptions of work ethic and respectability that were hegemonic when they were young, and that underpinned the creation of the Regent Park housing projects. Others highlighted the upward mobility they have enjoyed since their time in subsidised housing. All of this suggests that the Regent Park North and South were, for the most part, stable housing for a dutiful working class, though South was declared a “colossal flop” in this regard by a local newspaper in 1968 (Allen 1968), and North was soon judged in similar terms as well.

²⁴ I borrow this concept from mid-20th century sociologists, who used it to highlight how one of many aspects of a person’s life can come to define them, often in a stereotypical and/or stigmatising way. See for example Becker (1963) and Hughes (1945).

I presume that some of my participants' memories of the Regent Park of their childhood and adolescence were sentimental, to at least some extent. But some provided sober reflections on how classism and stigmatisation constrained their options in life, while others shared graphic descriptions of the violence, abuse, and danger they survived in Regent Park. In so doing, they often described how much effort it took for Regent Parkers to protect their children from such threats and hardships – efforts that I conceptualise throughout this dissertation as extra-domestic labour. Also belying any romanticism is the fact that many people's stories are peppered with bitter, derisive references to “welfare bums” and other undesirables, while others are tinged with varying and self-contradictory forms of racism and nativism. These elements were key components of the emic class identities to be discussed later in this chapter.

Taken together, my participants' stories point to a characterisation of the postwar housing project as a site where youth collectively engaged with hegemonic notions of a work ethic and respectability within the constraints of material scarcity. For them, Regent Park was a working-class enclave that provided youth and their families with a venue to establish networks of mutual support, a partial escape from the biting stigmatisation and condescension of more privileged outsiders, and protection from the instability and exploitation of the private housing market. What emerged out of this experience, I argue, are locally- and temporally-specific emic class identities that simultaneously exhibit resistance to, and enrolment in, the dominant ideologies of postwar Canada.

My interviews exhibited what Silverman calls “metissage” – the weaving of different, often contradictory strands of experience into a “complex consciousness”, both on the part of individuals and shared within culture (2001, 8). This chapter builds this argument through attention to three interrelated aspects of everyday life for young people in 1960s Regent Park:

their experiences with the built environment of the newly completed housing projects of Regent Park North and South; their engagements with the broader hegemonic processes through which these projects were crafted; and the unpaid labour it took to endure stigmatisation and social control at work, at school, and at home in Regent Park.

“No One Could Ever Convince Me to Leave”: The Built Environment of a Working-Class Enclave

The projects that today most urgently need salvaging are low-income housing projects. Their failures drastically affect the everyday lives of many people, especially children. Moreover, because they are too dangerous, demoralising and unstable within themselves, they make it too hard in many cases to maintain tolerable civilisation in their vicinities (Jacobs 1961, 393).

We had a small playground right out front of our houses, two painted hopscotch courts ... a slide, three swings, and I think there was a sandbox for a while ... Me and my friends once flooded the parking area behind our houses for a splash pad. We would march around the circular driveway playing band, or have picnics or do crafts in the grass circle out front of our houses. My dad flooded our back yard every winter for us to skate, and then two other neighbours did it too, and we had our own hockey rink. In the summer someone always had their water sprinkler going. There were all kinds of different playgrounds around Regent, and we could go to any one of them. There were never any roads we really had to cross. Whoever planned South Regent did a great job. – Mary, Regent Park resident, 1958-1972, remembering her childhood in 2010.

When I asked participants to describe what they remembered about the built environment of Regent Park, I was initially surprised to find that none of them hated it. At the time in 2009, Regent Park was widely known as a dangerous and hopeless failure that was about to be ‘turned around’ by state-of-the-art planning. Jane Jacobs’s criticisms of modernist planning (cited above) were commonsensical, while the name “Regent Park” was effectively shorthand for ‘bad planning’. The “Regent Park Revitalisation” was frequently praised in the local media and popular culture, as well as in policy, planning, and some academic circles for replacing a low-income housing project with Jacobs’s vaunted ideal of the mixed-use, mixed-income ‘community’. It was as if no one remembered that Jane Jacobs was an American journalist

writing about American housing projects (which were already at least two decades old when The Death and Life of Great American Cities was first published in 1961), and not Regent Park in 2009.

This dissertation is a counter-narrative to this dominant representation of public housing projects in general, and that of Regent Park in particular. Towards this end, I highlight the deep contradictions between Jacobs's generalisations and my participants' memories of life in Regent Park. These contradictions became apparent early in my research, as I noticed that many of the features of Regent Park that today's 'new urbanists' single out as examples of 'bad planning' are the very things that many of my participants especially liked. These include the preponderance of open space, the dead-end and low-traffic streets, and the fact that 'Regent Parkers' were a somewhat parochial and entirely working-class population. Participants told me that these features made Regent Park a relatively secure environment for youth that instilled in them good moral values, while allowing them significant personal freedom. At least some participants from all generations felt, as Mary did, that the planners and architects who designed Regent Park "did a great job". This view was especially prevalent among participants who were young in the 1960s.

I do not romanticise the Regent Park of the past as an argument against its redevelopment in the present, however. Nor did any of my participants – most had at least something negative to say of their time in Regent Park, and some of them did feel that the projects were poorly planned. Instead, I present conflicting memories and opinions to highlight the internal complexity and contradictions in a place that is most often portrayed through classist (and, later, racist) simplifications and stereotypes. This begins from acknowledging the near-constant discrepancy I found in my research between the contemporary hegemonic understanding of modernist housing

projects as architectural failures, and the memories of participants who actually lived in a modernist housing project. To that end, this section focuses on what this early generation of Regent Parkers said about the built environment of the place.

Many participants described Regent Park in a way that inadvertently brought to mind Foucault's analysis of the panopticon²⁵ – albeit an inverted, pleasant version of both the concept itself, and Foucault's metaphorical usage of it. Just as any guard could have been watching any prisoner at any time in the Panopticon, any adult could have been watching any youth, at any time, through any window in Regent Park. At any given moment, a child's own parent may or may not have been supervising them – but this was irrelevant, because every child knew there were always some adults watching. All adults knew which children belonged to whom, and each of them supervised all children with equal care. A misbehaving child was reprimanded on the spot by whichever adult happened to be watching at the time, and then again at home – news of the offence would reach the household before the child did. The result was an environment ordered by a powerful, omnipresent sort of surveillance in which a smaller number of adults could safeguard and discipline a larger number of youth, while still permitting them a degree of freedom sufficient for fun, exercise, and development. Child supervision, a key component of domestic labour, was in this sense collectivised and done outside the household.

²⁵ A model for a prison in which several circular storeys of cells all faced a central guard tower. A few guards would supervise hundreds of prisoners from the vantage point of the tower, and no prisoner could see them in turn. Any one prisoner in any given moment was probably not being watched, but because it was always possible that they were being watched, prisoners were always “compelled to act, that is, work” as if an unseen guard was staring at them (Davis 2003, 46). While the literal panopticon was an architectural design that came out of late-18th century utilitarianism, it is now more commonly used as a “potent academic metaphor” (Rhodes 2004, vii) in theoretical discussions of power and surveillance. This use of the concept is rooted in Michel Foucault's Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, first published in 1975. According to Foucault, the Panopticon was designed to “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power”; a metaphor for how millions of ordinary people are usually kept in line with the quietly repressive social order of contemporary Western societies (1995, 201).

The following exchange typifies participants' descriptions of collectivised child supervision in 1960s Regent Park:

Ryan James (RJ): You mentioned how everyone watched out for everyone's children – were the adults strict? Could a kid get away with much in Regent Park?

Mary: On our block, no way. Anyone's mother would yell at you to "stop doing that", or would be off to tell your parents what you were up to. And we all had to be in before the streetlights came on. It was always the mothers who did the disciplining ... and there was always a mother to break up a fight so no one ever really got hurt.

Youth were allowed to roam freely within specified perimeters, which were expanded as they grew older. Younger children were usually kept to the space immediately around their building, for example, while pre-teens were allowed to traverse a broader section of the housing project. They were not always supervised directly, but were watched-out-for by someone at all points along the way.

Older children and teenagers would play an intermediate role in this security web, expected to set a good example and assume partial responsibility for the safety of their juniors. Meanwhile, they also found their own enjoyment in the built environment, as in Dave's recollection of a respectable sort of loitering:

There used to be a place in North Regent where we'd always meet, called the barrier ... it was a gathering, a hangout ... we never disrespected any of the families, we never created havoc, we never had the cops come; we'd just hang out and socialise, and that was it. And we treated everybody with respect. And a lot of people did that with us too. And you know, it was great, it was a real community thing.

A woman remembered occasional fights between teenagers from Regent Park North and South at the barriers, but also that "nobody really got hurt" in these. She explained that the north-south divide was one of a few overlying divides among local youth (another was defined by school

affiliation, for example), but that none of these divides were taken too seriously: it was “sort of normal, I guess”.

While my participants were children and teenagers, Jane Jacobs was advancing her “attack on current city planning and rebuilding” that became her highly influential monograph (1961). In an argument which referred to a Buffalo housing project as a “festering sore” (1961, 393), Jacobs noted that such projects needed

among other things, casual public characters, lively, well-watched, continuously used public spaces, easier and more natural supervision of children, and normal city cross-use of their territory by people from outside it (1961, 394).

To Jacobs, the hallways and elevators of “the usual high-rise, low-income housing building” were nightmarish “traps”. In the absence of actual input from any tenants of public housing, Jacobs imagined that such “traps” would cause people to fret, “Where can we go? Not to a project! I have children. I have young daughters” (1961, 399). Though some people I spoke to remembered dirty hallways and elevators, none of these descriptions bore much resemblance to this distressed internal monologue imagined by Jacobs. On the contrary, many participants said that Regent Park had plenty of the important features that Jacobs felt were lacking in public housing projects.

Though it housed roughly 10,000 people in a city with a population then approaching two million, one participant described Regent Park as “like a small town” in that “people knew your name and your business.” Another said “it was like a little village; you knew everyone.” Regent Park was also likened to “a little country” where “you didn’t know about the outside world unless you jumped on the streetcar” – this was taken to be a positive feature. “We had everything,” Bobby said. “No one could ever convince me to leave. We’d ride bikes forever, we

had our own ball hockey area, a playground, the Root N' Burger,²⁶ hockey, everything. We didn't need anything else.” Descriptions such as these would seem to confirm outside suspicions that the built environment of Regent Park bred parochialism and self-containment; perhaps it did, and if so this was fine by my participants.

Still, while describing how Regent Park functioned in some ways as a society unto itself, participants also explained that its boundaries were porous – again, in sharp contrast to contemporary understandings of modernist housing projects as fortress-like enclosures. Participants described the generally cordial relations between Regent Parkers and the small businesses that lined much of its perimeter. Most stores extended credit²⁷ to most customers: “Everybody had a bill at Max’s”, one man told me, referring to a men’s wear store where custom ‘made-to-measure’ dress pants (then part of young men’s everyday attire) cost a typical week’s pay. Other fondly-remembered amenities that were nearby (but outside of) Regent Park included a movie theatre, a traveling carnival in a nearby park, dances at local community centres, hills for tobogganing, skating rinks, and affordable shopping on nearby main streets. The border between Regent Park North and South also mattered to some extent – it was variously the source of playful rivalry, minor violence, petty disdain, and/or indifference. But as with all borders, it was porous, as many people’s kin relations, social networks, and marriage ties crossed over the perimeters of Regent Park and the dividing line between North and South.

Outsiders also crossed over into Regent Park for many different reasons, despite Jacobs’s argument that housing projects lack “normal city cross-use of their territory by people from outside it” (1961, 394). Some “cross-use” of Regent Park was normal and welcomed, such as people visiting their friends and family in the projects. In light of other data from Regent Park,

²⁶ A restaurant that operated in the Regent Park South strip mall from this era until well into the 2000s.

²⁷ Credit cards were not yet in widespread use.

however, Jacobs's assertion that housing projects *need* cross-use by outsiders is an example of the naïveté that comes with socioeconomic privilege. As noted by several participants, it was the city outside of Regent Park (and thus outside the range of panoptic child supervision) that was feared as potentially dangerous. The remainder of this dissertation contains many examples of groups and individuals coming into Regent Park to 'use' it for disruptive, antisocial, and/or abusive purposes, causing incidents that ranged in severity from annoyances to catastrophes. Cross-use of a housing project by non-residents is not always desirable, and is sometimes predatory.

Regent Park has been subject to all manner of outside interventions and trespasses over the years. One of the main arguments of this dissertation is that the stigmatisation of Regent Park made it over-visible in the media and mass culture, while simultaneously under-protected by the police and other official security apparatuses.²⁸ For example, the projects have been a frequent target for pedophiles and other sexual predators; a venue for gang violence and racist proselytising; an open-air drug market; a setting for exploitative, yellow-journalistic accounts of urban poverty; a dumping ground for abandoned vehicles and toxic waste; and allegedly a destination for the disciplinary transfers of underperforming teachers and police officers. In many cases, the stigma created a perfect storm of perceived criminal opportunity: Regent Park was cast as a place unworthy of basic respect or dignity, *and* known to be relatively poorly protected by the state. This created an element of danger that was unique to everyday life in a stigmatised place, and that could only be kept at bay by residents themselves through an

²⁸ Throughout its history, Regent Park has been subject to an inordinate amount of violence and coercion on the part of the state. Meanwhile, this history includes several instances in which residents felt that the criminal justice system, particularly the police, had failed to protect them from predators and violence. Though it may seem contradictory that Regent Park has been under-protected while also over-regulated, I argue that both problems are among the material effects of stigmatisation in everyday life.

additional sort of domestic labour. This is what I call extra-domestic labour: unpaid tasks done collectively outside the household to protect a stigmatised housing project and allow it to function as a ‘community’, thus facilitating social reproduction. I return to this issue later in this chapter, and again throughout the dissertation; for now, the point is that Regent Park was indeed ‘used’ by outsiders, and this was a problem for residents more often than it was an asset.

Though the construction of Regent Park North was widely celebrated in the local media in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Regent Park South was portrayed as poorly planned nearly as soon as it opened in 1959. As Purdy observed, “in less than a decade, the image of public housing had shifted from the ideal, working-class community to a sick patient in need of treatment[;] these attitudes were soon reflected in official state and popular media discourse” (2003a, 252). In 1960, for example, a headline in the Toronto Star declared that Regent Park South was “wrong as [a] housing model” (Becker 1960) just one year after it was completed. The article described Regent Park South’s mid-rises as “attractive yet crowded”, and speculated they would likely be the last of their kind to be built in Toronto (Becker 1960). A year later, a housing project under construction in the City of York²⁹ was lauded precisely because it was different from projects like Regent Park North and South, which epitomise “the old look in public housing”: large, self-contained communities that tend to “shut in the people who live there and to shut out the people who don’t” (Needham 1961). Traces of the old celebratory discourse appeared as late as 1966, however, when Regent Park was described as a model housing project with upwardly mobile, community-minded tenants – in contrast to a Scarborough project where the polar opposite was allegedly the case (Mortimore 1966). But by the late 1960s, print media portrayals of Regent Park as anything but grim had become scarce.

²⁹ Now part of the City of Toronto.

Though The Toronto Star had once been among the most vociferous advocates for both the initial construction of Regent Park and its southward expansion, this changed decisively with a special series of articles on Regent Park printed in 1968. “Regent Park South, which started with such great promise, has become a filthy, crime-infested human jungle, probably the only one in Canada ever built with taxpayers’ money,” the Toronto Star reported (Allen 1968). The article declared Regent Park South “a colossal flop” and “an acute embarrassment both to its inhabitants and to their landlord” (Allen 1968). Though these pronouncements were based in part on the survey input of 127 households, they stand at odds with much of what I was told by participants in 2010.

One participant, who was seventeen years old in 1968, retained vivid memories of how she had viewed the Star’s series when it was published:

Of course we were upset. I think others looked down at people from Regent, because they didn't know us ... it was no different than living in any other neighbourhood. We had all the same amenities, if not more. The only difference between neighbourhoods was your rent was based on your income. It wasn't a place where they put degenerates to live so they could keep watch over them – it was a community. People protected one another, they shared, and they cared about their neighbours.

As noted by this participant, the Star series missed the facts that Regent Park was “a community”, and that people protected and shared with one another. To my participant, these facts also distinguished Regent Parkers from “degenerates” – a point I return to in the discussion of emic class identities later in this chapter. For now, I mean to illustrate how the stigmatisation of Regent Park began with condemnations of its built environment that are now taken as commonsensical, but which differed from most of the input I received in interviews with current and former Regent Parkers.

Those who felt that Regent Park “had everything” and/or “all the same amenities” as “any other neighbourhood” were overstating reality, however. One amenity that Regent Park was missing, until 1973, was a local swimming pool. This fact had devastating consequences that, in the end, reflected Regent Parkers’ tenacity and their capacity to support one another. During summer heatwaves in the 1960s, children cooled off by standing in the streams of sprinklers (on grounds often littered with bottles that had been smashed by “teenagers”), or by visiting the local fire station (“once in a while they’d turn the tap on for us, but they couldn’t do it all the time”). The closest place to swim was the heavily polluted Don River, and the next-closest was a public pool roughly two kilometres across the Don Valley in Riverdale. Rather than taking a long, inconvenient trip around the valley, most youth took a shortcut through it. This shortcut inevitably included a brief run across a train trestle that spanned the Don River, where three children were killed by trains in four years.

In 1968, after the third death, Regent Parkers began to campaign for a pool to be built inside the projects, while also supporting the bereaved family. “The support shown was amazing,” a relative of the slain boy told me in 2010. “There were so many people and kids that showed up at the funeral home. My mother wasn’t strong enough to accept visits from people at our apartment, but they left lots of cards for us.” Shortly afterwards, the family moved into a townhouse in the recently completed Don Mount Court housing project, just east across the Don River from Regent Park. Though “Regent was a better place”, the family needed a change of environment.

“There was quite a protest” in 1968, Debbie remembers of the campaign for a pool. “We all took part in that. We all made placards and sat out the back, marched up and down Parliament and Dundas, and chanted ‘What do we want? A pool! When do we want it? Now!’” Meanwhile,

residents raised over \$2,700 to put towards the construction of a pool. Following an acrimonious debate with the school trustee with whom the money was entrusted, the funds were frozen for several years. Eventually, all three levels of government committed to funding the pool, and in 1973 it was built with these monies instead. The funds that residents had raised were converted into a program that awarded scholarships to students graduating from local primary schools annually until it ran out (Regent Park Community Improvement Association 1973). Named after the third child to have died crossing the train trestle, the pool remained in operation until a new indoor ‘aquatic centre’ opened 2012, as part of the Regent Park Revitalisation.

The Regent Park of the 1960s was generally described by those who had spent their youth there as a somewhat insular but thriving place, where children were well-supervised most of the time, and rarely bored. As a sole exception, however, one woman I spoke to was skeptical of the spirit of collective child supervision:

Would neighbours keep us safe? Yeah, I guess you could go to anybody if you had a problem. But I don’t really remember it being that warm [laughs]. I don’t think it was really like that – most people just kept to their own. But there was more gossip and rumours than watching-out. If they were watching out for your kids, it was just because they were nosy! [laughs].

Memories of nosiness and gossip featured to some extent in many of my interviews, but most people tended to accentuate the positive side of the shared surveillance of youth.

This section has begun a counter-narrative to dominant representations of Regent Park by documenting how its young residents used the space shortly after it was built. As a further corrective to the contemporary common sense that such projects were failures of planning and architecture, similar patterns in usage continued into more recent times, and are documented later in this dissertation. As time went on, however, it demanded more of Regent Parkers to make the space usable in the ways I have outlined in this section, and so my observations regarding extra-

domestic labour thus become more prominent in subsequent chapters. In the meantime, the next section turns to the stigmatisation process – one of the main pressures that constrained Regent Parkers’ enjoyment of ‘community’ at all points through its history.

Stigma, Roughness, and Coal in Bathtubs

Since the 1980s, stigmatising media portrayals of Regent Park have tended to portray drug-related homicides, conflicts among youth gangs, domestic abuse, and other violent crimes as endemic to living conditions in the housing projects. This was not so in the early days of Regent Park, however. In the 1950s and early 1960s, newspapers generally reported on crimes that occurred in Regent Park as randomly occurring misdeeds, and conveyed the details without much sensationalism or embellishment. This was the case when Regent Park’s first murder was reported in 1955, for example, and even in 1963 when a woman was accused of killing her eight-year-old daughter (Toronto Star 1955, 1963). The first newspaper report of spousal abuse in Regent Park occurred in 1957, when a man fired a gun a foot over a woman’s head during an argument; this too was portrayed as an isolated incident (Toronto Star 1957).

This section focuses on media portrayals of Regent Park from the beginning of the period that I study and just before it. Though Regent Park was not initially stigmatised through an association with violence, it was instead stigmatised through problematic attention to the mundane: specifically, through middle-class and elite preoccupations with the domestic sphere of the working class. This section makes this point through examples drawn from media archives, social work literature, and life history interviews with participants. It begins with an examination of how the Regent Park projects were built, in part, to facilitate idealised homemaking and parenting by working class women in the 1940s and 1950s. I then illustrate how the paternalism that drove this effort dovetailed with broader anxieties around ‘juvenile

delinquency' in the 1960s. This added new iterations of stereotypes of violence and criminality to the ongoing stigmatisation process, which by then also included the misguided criticisms of the Regent Park projects as architectural failures addressed in the previous section. This section examines some of the material consequences of this stigma for the Regent Park youth of the late 1950s and 1960s, and how they and their families responded.

For context, I will begin by tracing how a paternalistic focus on the working-class household was central to the administration of Regent Park since its beginnings. In 1949, shortly after the first tenants had begun moving into North, the Globe and Mail praised “the new Regent Park houses” for their “womanly touch” (Globe and Mail 1949). The Globe and Mail had credited this largely to Mrs. H.L. Luffman of the Women Electors’ Association, who then appeared in the papers in conjunction with Regent Park for years to come: in 1954, for example, she made the “society highlights” of the Toronto Star by leading the “community action group of the National Council of Jewish Women of Canada” on a tour through Regent Park (Toronto Star 1954b). The 1949 article also mentioned a tenant who received professional instructions to improve her housekeeping skills, and noted that “the fact that she is accepting it cheerfully is a tribute to the tact and sympathy of Frank Dearlove”, then the superintendent of Regent Park North (Globe and Mail 1949). In reports such as these, early supporters of social housing focused on the cleanliness and good order of Regent Park tenants, successes which were attributed to the benevolent influence of the elite women who helped shape the projects.

Other reports from this era praised Regent Park women themselves, going so far as to present them as models of idealised femininity. A 1954 Toronto Star article of this sort told a story of a Regent Park woman riding the streetcar. Described as wearing “a smart navy coat and hat and carrying a pink and white sleeping cherub”, the protagonist could not help but to

overhear a conversation among passengers described (by the journalist) as “two dumpy little women” (Armstrong 1954). As the streetcar passed by Regent Park North, one of the “dumpy” women said to the other, “I don’t know why they spend all that money on beautiful places for those filthy people to ruin.” The protagonist was offended by what she overheard, but ignored it and got off the streetcar. After telling the story, the journalist rhetorically suggested that she “should have dragged the pair from the car and forced them to take a tour of the buildings to compare what they saw with their own homes” (Armstrong 1954). Armstrong then detailed the exemplary homemaking of the Regent Park woman and several of her neighbours, as evidence against stereotypes that Regent Parkers were “filthy” ingrates ruining the “beautiful places” that public funding had provided them. By this account and others like it, the women of Regent Park were living up to standards of “the popular academic and social sciences of the day”, which “sanctioned the inclination to believe that collective happiness and well-being were most likely when women concentrated their energies on the home front” (Strong-Boag 1991, 475).³⁰

Yet even when it was commonsensical to laud Regent Park North as ultra-modern and hopeful, and its residents as staid and upstanding, the stigma that had afflicted Cabbagetown and Cabbagetowners still persisted after slum clearance. For example, the 1953 National Film Board documentary Farewell to Oak Street presented Regent Park North as a monolithic solution to the social ills of the “slum” that it had partially replaced. It made this point mainly through a domestic narrative, in which a morally upright family had been brought to the verge of dysfunctionality by everyday life in Cabbagetown. Their stressors included overcrowded conditions, vermin, outmoded appliances, and a lecherous neighbor who sexually harassed the

³⁰ Strong-Boag’s observations were made with regards to postwar suburban development in Canadian cities. Though Regent Park was not a suburban but an inner-city development, it was planned according to many of the same ideals of the postwar suburb: spacious, modern housing units to accommodate the large families of the baby boom, ideally with a woman as a full-time homemaker and a man as a full-time breadwinner.

teenage daughter of the household. Interspersed with this fictional narrative was the real-life footage of an old Cabbagetown block being demolished, as the narrator triumphantly proclaimed,

... Down came Oak Street. Down came the verminous walls, the unclean, unhealthy rooms. And down came the fire hazards, the juvenile delinquency, the drunkenness, the broken marriages. And up rose something new! The nation's first large-scale public housing project, to be called, "Regent Park" (National Film Board of Canada 1953).

In the conclusion to the film, the beleaguered working-class family finds complete redemption after moving into a clean, private, and spacious unit in the newly-constructed Regent Park.

Illustrating how objectionable such paternalism could be, Farewell to Oak Street was denounced by an association of the same so-called 'slum-dwellers' for whom it advocated (Low 2002, 85). The Regent Park Ratepayers' Association protested the screening of Farewell to Oak Street at a public theatre. They found it particularly objectionable that Cabbagetown had been referred to as a "slum" – a term which they felt was inaccurate and laden with stigma, even though it was then used regularly by supporters and detractors of public housing alike. The Ratepayers' Association found supporters including Liberal MP Charles Henry, who said the film was "deeply offensive to the human dignity of many Canadians" and should only be shown privately to housing officials and others with a "particular interest" in the topic (MacDonald 1954). William Dennison, then an alderman and later mayor of Toronto from 1966-1972, said the documentary "cast a stigma on all residents of Regent Park" (cited in MacDonald 1954). The editors of the Toronto Star, however, praised the National Film Board for "calling a spade a spade":

"Slum" is a good word. It brings to the mind a picture of rickety, dark, smelly, crowded abodes. And "slum clearance" is a good term: it rings like a call to action – a call to the community to get rid of such dwellings and replace them with decent ones. When that is done, it is good not only for human dignity but for human behaviour as well. The lower rates of crime and vice in Regent Park since the new homes were built are evidence of that (Toronto Star 1954a).

Similarly, a Globe and Mail columnist derided those who objected to the word *slum* as “mealy-mouthed,” and asserted that

if the film was offensive to the dignity of many Canadians, then the conditions under which many of the residents of the area used to live were a great deal more offensive to their dignity as Canadians. Or their dignity as human beings, for that matter (Tumpane 1954).

As evidence, Tumpane described children in Cabbagetown playing “on filthy ash heaps behind their houses” because there were no parks nearby, and seeing “coal stored in bathtubs and ice-boxes in the bathroom” in the absence of modern appliances (1954, 3). In cases such as these, the concept of the slum was used to illustrate the need for quality affordable housing, but the Regent Park Ratepayers’ Association and others felt that the stigmatising connotations of the word were counterproductive at best.

The idea of “coal stored in bathtubs” mentioned in the Tumpane article was a particularly loaded image at the time, used by commentators on all sides of the public housing debate to bolster claims and to mock opponents. To understand its impact and significance, the modern-realist novel Cabbagetown is instructive. In the preface to a 1971 edition, author (and ex-Cabbagetowner) Hugh Garner introduced his story of Depression-era working-class Toronto to his 1970s readership, by briefly explaining that the novel was set in the “slum” that once stood on the grounds of Regent Park. Garner then described the ongoing stigmatisation of the area, referring to the ‘coal in bathtubs’ trope in the process. He snidely explained how some 30 years after ‘slum clearance’, some outsiders continued to imagine rehoused Cabbagetowners storing coal in their bathtubs:

Contrary to uninformed and malicious public opinion at the time, there were no substantiated instances of rehabilitated slum-dwellers storing their coal in their new unaccustomed-to bathtubs; stove coal had disappeared along with the Cabbagetown big black kitchen stoves (Garner 1971, 8).

Likewise, in a retrospective printed in 1964, the Toronto Star recalled that when Regent Park North first opened, “stories were circulated to the effect that ungrateful tenants ... kept coal in their bath tubs and lived in squalor, sneering at the society which allowed them to loaf their lives away” (Toronto Star 1964b). Two years later, the editors of the Star defended the decency of social housing tenants by noting that 80% of them “have steady jobs” while “only 10 per cent are on welfare”, and that none of them “keep coal in the bathtub” (Toronto Star 1966). In another example, columnist Ron Haggart dryly disparaged an East York councillor opposed to public housing by musing, “These days, Councillor McConaghy and his brethren don’t talk about undesirable public housing tenants putting coal in the bathtub. Instead, they invoke the god of ‘good planning’” (Haggart 1963).

As time went on, the domestic sphere remained a primary focus of outsider discussions of Regent Park. However, attention began to shift away from homemaking and the debate over the word ‘slum’, and towards a preoccupation with the behaviour of Regent Park youth. In the 1950s and 60s, “juvenile delinquency” was a common topic in popular culture and criminology alike; perhaps predictably, the concept informed both lay and academic discussions of Regent Park. As had happened with the word *slum*, the concept of *juvenile delinquency* began to amplify the stigmatisation of Regent Park even though some commentators used it with the best of intentions.

Albert Rose, the long-time Dean of Social Work at the University of Toronto who played a significant role in the planning of Regent Park, dedicated a full chapter of Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance (1958) to the topic of “juvenile delinquency” as it related to the rehousing of Cabbagetown families. Though Rose used the concept without much reservation, he also seemed aware that it was imbued with at least some degree of class prejudice. For example,

Rose foregrounded this chapter with the observation that an “upper-class” or “upper-middle-class” youth would likely face no consequences for committing a minor infraction that would be written off as a “foolish prank”, whereas a young man from a ‘slum’ would likely be arrested for the same deed (Rose 1958, 157). Rose also noted an anti-urban bias in the labelling of ‘juvenile delinquents’, in that any individual is more likely to be arrested in a dense downtown setting than in the suburbs or the countryside (1958, 157). In sum, Cabbagetown and Regent Park youth who broke the law were at a higher risk of being labelled ‘delinquent’ than were their more privileged counterparts, while even the most law-abiding youths were stigmatised for living in a ‘slum’ that was apparently prone to juvenile delinquency.

Conceptual problems notwithstanding, Albert Rose conducted a study of juvenile delinquency rates during the redevelopment of Regent Park North. He found a slight overall increase between the periods of 1945-1947 and 1950-1952. In particular, the number of “delinquents” aged 9 to 15 had increased from 22 to 47, while the total number of times they were adjudged to be ‘delinquent’ increased from 27 to 55 (Rose 1958, 162-163). But since only three of these “delinquents” had been rehoused in the newly constructed Regent Park, and because most of their “family settings were considered hopelessly insecure”, Rose concluded that “these facts neither confirm nor deny what has been verified elsewhere: a beneficial effect of rehousing upon delinquency in a slum neighbourhood” (Rose 1958, 165). To further the point, Rose argued that the rates of theft and vandalism that had accounted for much of the overall increase had likely been exacerbated by temporary factors. “Slum clearance” had created large construction and demolition sites which are not normally present in working-class residential areas; with valuable items such as tools and building material stored at these sites, there was

simply more for local youth to steal and/or destroy than usual (Rose 1958, 165).³¹ In the years that followed, fluctuations in delinquency rates were somewhat erratic, but Rose noted that local police and social workers tended to “feel very strongly” that the development of Regent Park North had made a “tremendous” positive difference (Rose 1958, 167). Overall, he emphasised, the rate of juvenile delinquency in Regent Park had dropped through the 1950s while it had remained stagnant in downtown Toronto as a whole (Rose 1958, 170).

Related to widespread concerns over juvenile delinquency, teenagers of the urbanised West in the 1950s and 60s tended to be associated with colourful but volatile youth ‘subcultures’. The British “mods” and “rockers”, for example, have inspired trends in music and fashion ever since these identities first cohered in the early 1960s, and their initial portrayals in the media informed sociologist Stanley Cohen’s enduring concept of the “moral panic” (1973). But while working-class British youth were fighting each other by the thousands on lines drawn by subcultural affiliation, nothing of this nature was happening in Regent Park – none of my participants of the same age as the British mods and rockers had heard of them.³² References to the subcultures of the 1950s and 60s were few and far between, and mostly tangential: the Toronto Star (1956), for example, reported on vandalism committed by “a smart-alec teen-ager with tight jeans and a duck-tail haircut” - the typical dress of a “rockabilly”, though the article did not use this term which had been coined in the United States that same year (see Morrison 1996). One participant said her sister had been a “hippie” in the late 1960s and was rarely at

³¹ Rose had offered the same explanation to the Globe and Mail in a 1956 report on security in Regent Park (Globe and Mail 1956).

³² On this note, in a comparative study of “youth cultures and youth subcultures” in the United States, Canada, and England, Brake found that Canadian youth was the least inclined to join subcultures. He attributed this to a number of cultural and geographical variables, not least of which was the fact that the Canadian climate is too cold for gangs of youth to congregate outdoors (let alone riot) for roughly half the year (1985, 144).

home in Regent Park, since she had little in common with her peers there. Instead, she spent most of her time in Yorkville, which was then the countercultural centre of Toronto.

In an urban Canadian context, youthful subversion seems to have been largely a middle-class pursuit. Even if a young Regent Parker had been interested in the anti-establishment movements of the 1960s, identifying with their roughshod aesthetic could only exacerbate stigma and create a disadvantage in a job market that demanded total conformity and deference – features to be explored further in the next section, along with the importance of working-class ‘respectability’ in this era. These pressures were described succinctly in a community newspaper in 1969: “A long-haired boy from north of Bloor Street is a non-conformist; a long-haired composer is an artist; a long-haired Regent Parker is considered a bum” (Zimmerman 1969, cited in Purdy 2003a, 249).

This section has outlined the nature of the media-driven stigmatisation of Regent Park at an early point in its history. For context, it included examples drawn from a period just before the one that I focus on: representations of the working-class household in the late 1940s and 50s that illustrate how Regent Park North was intended to bolster the morality of its population. In the 1960s, when these interventionist concerns combined with a preoccupation with ‘juvenile delinquency’ on one hand and architectural ‘failure’ (particularly with regards to Regent Park South) on the other, the result was a more locally specific reiteration of the stigma that had afflicted ‘Cabbagetown’ prior to redevelopment. Chapters Four, Five, and Six trace how this stigmatisation process was further intensified through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s as it was augmented by racism and neoliberal policy and ideology. Before that, the final substantive section of this chapter examines the worldviews of Regent Park youth of the 1960s, with an eye for the material effects of stigma as they encountered it through their dealings with powerful

outside institutions. Throughout, I focus on the emic class identities they constructed in the process.

Emic Class Identities: Work, Welfare Bums, and Meritocracy

This section focuses on the material implications of stigma for young Regent Parkers in the 1960s. Having described the ideological content of this stigma in the previous section, I now turn to its effects on everyday life in the housing projects, as well as at school, at work, and in residents' dealings with state agents such as the police and welfare authorities. To frame this, I return to the concept of "metissage" explored in Chapter Two, to account for how people draw upon their experiences to identify themselves and others around them, in relation to the material conditions they live in and the ideologies they encounter. In so doing, Regent Parkers developed a shared system of emic class identities that they used to identify and differentiate themselves in relation to others – to other categories of Regent Parkers, and other groups in the broader society. The content of this emic system simultaneously exhibits resistance to, and enrolment in, the hegemonic ideologies of postwar Canada.

Taking a cue from Silverman's analysis of life history interviews with working-class people in rural Ireland, I found that a conception of "respectability" was a "central idiom" underpinning the emic class identities of older Regent Parkers (1989, 111). My participants' discussions of class brought to mind the construction of a "labouring class" that appeared in the memories of Silverman's participants (1989, 111). This was a category largely corresponding to the concept of the working class, but overlaid with an association with "respectability" as a "flexible, general attitude which is assigned or taken on the basis of numerous criteria, not all of which have to be satisfied all or even part of the time" (Silverman 1989, 113). In another working-class Canadian context, Heron found that "respectability" was something of a "class

struggle ... to maintain a level of decency in the face of still tight material constraints” and “not simply an attitude” but “a practice” (2009, 25). The Regent Parkers of the 1960s set high standards for respectability, took pride in the work it took to meet them, and had little sympathy for those who fell short of them.

Throughout this dissertation, I highlight the significance of domestic labour in the formation of emic class identities and in the development of class consciousness. Further to this, I argue that the material consequences of stigmatisation have created uniquely challenging conditions for domestic labour in Regent Park, and I expand the concept of domestic labour to account for this specificity. Within it, I include extra-domestic labour – tasks such as shared surveillance of public grounds, political organising, and collectivised child supervision – which built ‘community’ in a stigmatised and underserviced housing project. This labour, I argue, is as central to social reproduction – “the maintenance and reproduction of peoples’ lives on a daily and intergenerational basis” (Ferguson et al. 2016, 27-28) – as is domestic labour done inside the household.

Extra-domestic labour appears more prominently in the following chapters. As the stigmatisation and neglect of Regent Park intensified with time, residents had to invest progressively more unpaid labour into maintaining decent, stable living conditions at a ‘community’ level. As of the 1960s, Regent Parkers could still (for the most part) count on the state to provide these necessities. This section establishes a foundation for my analysis of extra-domestic labour, however, by providing an historical context and mapping of the emic class system that developed in the early days of Regent Park and resonated through the decades to come.

Borders, Ethnicity, and Violence

Regent Park was designed and built long before “multiculturalism” became either federal policy or a ubiquitous fact of life in urban Canada. At first, the ethnic composition of Regent Park generally mirrored that of Toronto at large; as of the 1960s, both remained predominantly white and Anglophone. Given these demographics, and given the methodological limitations of opportunistic sampling, I was only able to recruit white participants for the research that informs this chapter. I am regretful of the shortcomings that result from this, but my interviews with white Regent Parkers do yield important insights regarding the interplay of race and class, among other issues. On the surface, their input generally reflects what is widely known of ethnic relations in pre-multicultural Toronto: Protestantism and Britishness were the taken-for-granted norms against which all other cultural groups and practices were judged, and racism and racial conflict were (and remain) ugly realities in urban Canada. The ways these structural inequities manifested at the local level and in the consciousness of individuals, however, were complex and contested. This point is an important component of my counter-narrative of the history of Regent Park, particularly in the next chapter: beginning around the mid-1970s, a stereotype of white Regent Parkers as ignorant xenophobes emerged as a powerful new component of the stigma. Traces of this were already apparent in the 1960s as well.

The identity of the “Regent Parker” was rooted in an emic sense of class, and claimed with pride by many of my participants. It was also shifting and unstable in its interactions with two other important identity schemas: ethno-racial difference, and the boundaries (both real and imagined) between the North and South phases of the Regent Park projects. The importance of the “Regent Parker” identity often came up when I asked about ethnic differences, as part of an assertion that “no one cared” about these. Differences were apparent, but according to one participant, “the unifying thing” was that “these were families bordering on working class to

poor – and plenty of deadbeats were down there too.” “In my building there were two mixed couples – one black and white, the other Chinese and white – but nobody cared,” was typical of the spirit in which people responded. A woman remembered a classmate in the late 60s who was black and spoke with a British accent – a combination which had “seemed so odd” to her.

Another participant remembered,

I don't think I noticed as a child a difference in anyone. Maybe they talked a little different, or ate something that sounded strange, but there was no fighting between nationalities ... I had to stop and think about this question, as I truly didn't recall any differences.

In their youth, my participants befriended the children of the small minorities of black, Asian, and indigenous families in Regent Park. While reflecting on their youth as adults, they seamlessly incorporated their racialised neighbours into the “Regent Parker” category.³³

In contrast, these young Regent Parkers sharply differentiated themselves from outsiders of different ethnicities. At the worst of times, this interplay between ethnic and territorial divisions became tangible through violence. As mentioned earlier, Regent Park had neither mods nor rockers, but it did have group violence that exhibited elements of the same nihilism and lateral aggression that Stanley Cohen (1973) observed among the British youth subcultures of the time. But the ‘rumble’ of 1960s Toronto tended to be smaller-scale, less subcultural, and more ethnicised than the British seaside youth riots. Writing as an undergraduate student and youth worker in 1967, Wally Seccombe³⁴ observed that “Regent Park unites very quickly and can muster a force of thirty or more, complete with weapons³⁵, within an hour” for

³³ Social desirability bias may have been a factor, as it is possible that some participants did hold racist views (in the past and/or present) but opted not to express them. But because many of them freely voiced socially undesirable opinions on other topics, and given that no one seemed particularly troubled by the prospect of my judging them negatively (as noted in Chapter One), I doubt this caused much distortion in the data.

³⁴ Seccombe went on to become an influential sociologist and theorist of domestic labour. He is also cited in this capacity throughout this dissertation.

³⁵ Baseball bats, chains, and knives.

gang fights that were “quite rare, but regarded very seriously” (Seccombe 1967, 4). In June of 1964, The Globe and Mail reported on a prearranged “rumble between two gangs” at Riverdale Park that was pre-emptively broken up by the police. Youths dropped knives and chains while fleeing the scene, and one suffered a broken leg which police claimed was an accident (Adams 1964).

From the archives and my own interviews, it seems that most of the violence involved Regent Parkers versus outsiders, and that these territorial groupings often (but not always) corresponded to ethnic groupings: white Anglophones versus ethnic ‘others’, usually Italians in particular. Frager’s concept of “interlocking hierarchies” among the working class, based on how “class, ethnic, and gender issues have intertwined historically in complex ways”, is relevant to these examples of ethnic and territorial divisions – inconsistent but powerful examples of “intra-class conflict” (1999, 218-220). Behaviour and attitudes could be bigoted in the extreme, but ethnic prejudice was not a monolithic belief system that people consciously subscribed to, and many today deny that it was a major factor in the violence. Seccombe noticed that local teenagers resented Italian youth due to “differences in language and appearance” (1967, 7), but that he found “absolutely no prejudice” against “Negro” [sic] Regent Parkers who instead were “usually of high status” amongst their peers (1967, 7). In the same report, Seccombe noted that a youth riot which occurred on Toronto Island in 1965 was “originally intended as a fight against an Italian group” who were subject to “the main intense prejudice” of the Regent Park boys (1967, 7). Likewise, one of my participants recalled a series of brawls with Italian youth from the west end of the city during 1965-1966. This spate of violence included an attack on a group of Jewish youth whom the Regent Parkers had mistaken for “Italians”. “A few guys did jail-time – one almost killed somebody with a bat”, a participant remembered of that incident in particular.

On this note, Seccombe recalled another fight on Centre Island that was “against a group of Jewish boys”, but in his view not motivated by anti-Semitism as reported by the media (Seccombe 1967, 4).

Meanwhile, Regent Park was internally differentiated by North / South allegiances – a further marker of difference unique to the local context. One participant said that Dundas Street East operated “like a fence” separating the Regent Park North and South housing projects, and that many youth took that difference seriously for reasons he could not remember. Another former resident of Regent Park South remembered getting along with “guys from North Regent” because he played sports with them. While alone in North one evening, however, he was cornered by several unfriendly youth, until a friend (from North) with considerable clout vouched for him and ordered the others away. In one of his reports as a youth worker, Seccombe described how some boys from North were “cold and indifferent” to him because he was more closely associated with their counterparts from South. In Seccombe’s words, “they regarded the South group as “in too deep” – i.e. their delinquent tendencies and police-attracting behaviour was too serious for the more socially-oriented North youths” (1967, 3). When I asked one woman who had grown up in South what she remembered of the North / South divide, she replied, “one time that North and South were going to fight, and I don't think it even happened. But, yes, South thought they were better...and yes, we were.”

By all accounts, youth violence was indeed a problem; but it is important to avoid portraying Regent Park as exceptionally criminogenic in this regard. Seccombe’s reports illustrate how much of the violence was driven by familiar factors that could cause problems among youth in any locality: alcohol, for example. In every fight that Seccombe observed one summer, the combatants had been drinking. He elaborated upon this observation with a pair of

graphs that, as juxtaposed, border upon the comedic: one graph plots the mean number of fights by day of the week; the other plots the group's typical rate of alcohol consumption by day of the week. Not surprisingly, the curves display a nearly perfect positive correlation: the more drinking, the more violence (Seccombe 1967, 14). Still, Regent Park was not exceptionally prone to the violence caused by drunken teenagers, and not everyone was affected by the violence that did occur. One participant who was a child in the 1960s remembered,

... Maybe I was just too stupid to realise there was a lot of danger out there, but I grew up oblivious to it. There were motorcycle gangs, or the occasional stabbing or murder – but we were pretty sheltered from it overall.

He remembered that major incidents of crime and violence tended to occur in the summers, which he typically spent at church camp with most of his peer circle. Another participant of a similar age remembered “gangs and stuff – Regent Park versus the Winchester Boys, young guys with slingshots and BB guns – but it wasn't as bad as people said. I felt very safe there.”

As another important corrective to common assumptions about Regent Park, a significant portion of the violence that did occur there was committed by outsiders. “What people don't realise is, a lot of people came to Regent Park looking for trouble,” Gary said. “And if you come looking for trouble, you'll get it in Regent Park!” On a similar note, Seccombe explained in his reports that a significant number of the teenaged boys he worked with (many of them ‘rough,’ at least to the extent that they had some involvement in violence and petty crime) did not live in Regent Park, but used the projects as a “home base for the group” (Seccombe 1967, 6).

Other examples of violence were those actions perpetrated against outsiders who were seen to be using the space illegitimately. Returning to the issue of ‘cross-use’ of the projects by outsiders, many Regent Parkers (of all ages) were annoyed with non-residents who would get drunk at a bar on Gerrard Street and then cut through Regent Park. Some of them urinated in

public; others slept in the stairwells of the buildings. Two brothers from Regent Park North began booby-trapping these “drunks coming from Gerrard” with fishing line. They tied the line between fences to create a nearly invisible tripping hazard, and to an empty wallet left on the sidewalk so it could be yanked away from a hapless drunkard who tried to pick it up (one target was considerably injured by falling over face-first as a result). In another incident involving the same boys, a man once chastised them for playing ball hockey too close to his car, so they smashed his tail lights with their hockey sticks. Perhaps it could be said that the two brothers were, in a sense, policing the boundaries and proper use of Regent Park: in each scenario, outsiders were violating shared norms for how Regent Park should be used. The drunks were abusing the space in an especially slovenly manner, while the man who worried for his car was defending the appearance of his property at the expense of local youth and their rights to play outdoors. Neither of the two brothers described the incidents as such, however. One of their wives (who grew up in Regent Park South) mocked them for telling these stories shortly after they had insinuated that Regent Park North was less ‘rough’ than South. “Oh yeah, very respectful,” she said sarcastically. “Us kids from South were such a bad influence.”

At other times, youth took pride in the Regent Parker identity by mocking and subverting the stigma – a response to the stigmatisation process that was reminiscent of the ‘coal in bathtubs’ discourse addressed earlier in this chapter. “There was some stigma; some of us played some games on people like that”, Susan told me while remembering her time in high school. She described a group of friends from Regent Park who would make up ridiculous stories for their middle-class schoolmates, to “lead these kids on about how bad it was ... and of course they bought it, that’s the sad thing.” One day during lunch break, a girl pretended to have never heard of cutlery and explained that people in Regent Park always ate with their hands. Another

girl pointed to an abandoned, dilapidated house near the school and said it was her home. In both cases, Susan and her friends had “a good laugh” when the ruses had worked. Another participant described playing on the stigma to see how far a rumour could go: he and his friends in their early teens started calling themselves “the garden boys”, for the church garden where they frequently loitered. Rumours soon spread and escalated to the point that people became worried of a much older, more violent gang than was the reality. “It was just a rumour we shot out there,” he explained, still sounding proud of it. “There was no gang or nothing – we were just a bunch of boneheads!” “I don’t remember ever *seeing* gangs,” his wife added.

The archives also contain an example of Regent Parkers taking direct action against one of their own for perpetuating the stigmatisation process. Though none of my participants remembered it, the Toronto Star in 1968 reported on an odd scenario in which a sole-support mother protested, in her view, the substandard conditions of Regent Park South. She took her children out of their apartment in Regent Park South, and illegally occupied a unit in the newly constructed Don Mount Court with them. “Regent Park has steadily gone downhill over the years,” she was quoted; “It drove my husband to alcoholism and he finally took off” (Toronto Star 1968). The woman agreed to return to her Regent Park apartment when the police showed up with an arrest warrant two weeks later. She returned to ‘nasty signs telling her to get out’, demands for a public apology, and ostracism “by people she once thought of as friends” (Dinsmore 1968). Despite this opposition, The Star later printed a letter from a bitter ex-resident who had “nothing but sympathy” for the woman, based on her own experience of seeing Regent Park South ruined by teenage vandals in the short period of 1958-1964 (Casimir 1968).

Welfare Cheats, the Fresh Air Fund, and the Friendly Fuzz

Welfare benefits, and the manner and frequency with which people used them, constituted a key variable in the formation of emic class categories. It was generally possible to receive benefits and even break the rules to some extent, and still be considered a respectable “Regent Parker” – a working-class identity laden with pride. But most people drew a line at some point, labelled those who crossed it “welfare cheats” or “welfare bums”, and denigrated them without restraint. For the most part, respectability in this regard hinged on how the funds were used (or presumed to have been used) in the domestic sphere, and on the conduct of the family in the extra-domestic sphere.

Mary, for example, described an ideal-type Regent Park couple that was epitomised by her own parents: her father was “a proud man” who “took nothing for nothing”, and worked full-time despite a chronic illness that limited his mobility. Her mother, meanwhile, did most of the domestic labour involved in caring for ten children, while also working for some extra income for the post office during the Christmas rush every year. The only “charity” Mary knew her parents to accept were occasional Christmas gifts from the Salvation Army; fifty years later, she still “gives back” every December by donating to the Salvation Army every time she passes their bell-ringing solicitors on the street. During our interview, Mary contrasted her parents to a neighbour whom she remembered as the archetypal “bum,” who “lived good on welfare” by taking a taxi to the beer store. For Mary, the difference in lifestyles was most evident in the domestic and extra-domestic spheres: women “whose husbands worked” often shared food, cooking supplies, and children’s treats; while “the welfare bums didn’t share” because “their money went on beer.”

Mary and others remained resentful of people who they felt abused “the system” by spending their benefit payments on alcohol and other non-essentials, and by making no attempts at upward mobility. For breaking the rules, “bums” in this category were labelled “cheats” – slovenly ingrates who abused the largesse of the state, at the expense of honest Regent Parkers and other taxpayers. Meanwhile, those who broke the rules while achieving the respectable ends of “getting by,” and/or working towards financial stability, were not begrudged for it; some were lauded. For example, having unanimously disapproved of “welfare bums”, a family from Regent Park North then described how their widowed mother of four children supplemented her “mothers’ allowance” by housekeeping for cash under the table. They described how she was perpetually at risk of being reported by busybodies:

Bruce: They had people watching what you did. So if someone reported Mom for cleaning houses on the side...if they reported her to the office, then they’d want to jack her rent up. There was always somebody ratting everybody out.

RJ [wrongly assuming this referred to paid investigators]: Did you ever see them? Could you pick out their cars or something?

Bruce: Well it was other tenants! People who lived on the same floor would rat you out if you got a new coat or something.

Gary: Well there was one...remember they had that detective going around? They were real assholes.

Bruce: There was a lot of that going on with the welfare.

Earning unreported income was perfectly understandable if it was done for the right reasons, and anyone who would report this to the authorities was placed in a category perhaps even more stigmatised than the ‘welfare bum’: the ‘rat’.

Regent Parkers also used stereotypes regarding welfare and family structure to disparage each other across the North / South divide, often resulting in the further stigmatisation of South. As with any stereotypes, these were based on ill-intended exaggerations of some measure of

reality: as explained in Chapter One, South was populated entirely by low-income households by virtue of its eligibility requirements. Like South, North was subsidised, rent-geared-to-income housing, and thus largely low-income; but it also included families who had been rehoused from the original Cabbagetown and were not necessarily low-income. South was arguably the more stigmatised phase of the project, and this appeared in semi-facetious bickering during a group interview. Regarding whether Regent Park North or South was superior, a family who grew up in North blended the class category of the “welfare bum” with the moralistic concept of “unwed mothers” to mock their in-laws from South:

Kenny: North Regent was whole families. And South Regent seemed to be a lot of unwed mothers. There were more single people.

Nancy (loudly): *No*, Kenny. I lived there, and I don’t think so!

Joan: Anybody that I knew that was from South Regent was from a single-parent family.

Nancy: Well not my friends!

Dave: Yeah, Kenny’s right – there was a big difference. Because everybody from North had both parents.

Gary: Well I think Nancy wasn’t in that same boat, but most of the people I knew in South were on welfare.

Nancy: Well we weren’t on welfare!

Gary: ...Or the father wasn’t supposed to be there, but he was.

Nancy: But see, Gary, there again, we thought the same thing about North.

Gary: [Pause] It was probably exactly the same in North.

Nancy: Of course!

Once those from North had conceded that their generalisations regarding South were unfounded, Joan rebuilt bridges by changing the subject to the castigation of welfare cheats in North and

South alike. Specifically, she referred to families who used windfalls of unreported income frivolously:

Joan: I knew families in Regent – you went into their apartment, and you’d think you were in Rosedale!³⁶

Nancy: Oh yeah, there were plenty of them.

Joan: They were making a lot more money than they were reporting, so their apartments were gorgeous ... I had to check and see if I was still in Regent, some of their apartments were so beautiful in the way they’d decorate!

Though she disapproved of homemakers who furnished their Regent Park apartments like Rosedale mansions, Joan admitted that others suspected the same of her own frugal and modest mother: “Although, I must say, all of our friends used to think Mom was rich, because our apartment was so nice.” Domestic labourers were expected to provide pleasant homes, and it was respectable for them to bend the rules towards this end; but those who bent the rules enough to be ostentatious in their homemaking risked being regarded as “cheats” by the standards of respectability.

Other participants described similar criteria for evaluating how people used charity. As indicated by Susan’s story that began this chapter, accepting ‘handouts’ often carried at least some measure of stigma. But, as with welfare benefits, one could accept charity and remain respectable if the support was used for respectable purposes: providing a “nice, calm, clean household”, in Debbie’s words. On this note, Debbie remembered growing up unaware that her family was poor, thanks to her mother’s hard work, resourcefulness, and discretion:

They used to have the Inner City Angels, a community group. They’d come around at Christmas time, because...well we didn’t know it, but we were the underprivileged. I never felt that way – my mother always provided a good home

³⁶ An old-money enclave at the northern edge of downtown Toronto, roughly four kilometres away from Regent Park.

and a clean place, and with wonderful Christmases. I found out later, she'd go around and play the community services. She'd get the Star Santa Claus fund ... and she worked part-time, moonlighting as a hat-check girl or waitress, and she'd buy lavish things at Christmas for us with her tips.

That she seemed to leverage her status as a relatively young, conventionally attractive woman threatened her respectability among neighbours: Debbie remembered a rumour that her mother was "a stripper", which had started because she was often seen waiting for a taxi in the sexualised "bunny" costume that she had to wear to work at the hat-check counter. For 'playing' charities by accepting duplicate donations, moonlighting, and earning undeclared income to provide for her children, Debbie fondly remembered her mother as an imperfect but devout caregiver, and as respectable.

"Help" was plentiful from the charities, churches, associations, and philanthropic enterprises of the middle and upper classes. Some Regent Parkers accepted it gratefully, others reluctantly. Others refused it, and still others 'played' it. But the charities also 'played' Regent Park in turn, as their appeals to donors traded heavily in 'slum' imagery and thus comprised a strong component of the stigmatisation process. These appeals reflected a holdover of Victorian-era anxieties around urban life in general as injurious to the health and wellbeing of children – let alone the alleged effects of life in a so-called 'slum'. The many solicitations of the Toronto Star's Fresh Air Fund, established in 1901 to subsidise rural excursions for disadvantaged urban children, constitute a quintessential example. Days before Regent Park North was approved in July 1948, an appeal for donations referred to the area as "the district of Toronto that has more children per block than any other area in the city, and the district least fit in which to raise children" (Toronto Star 1948). What followed was a "little batch of pathetic stories" that illustrate "how 'the other half lives'", to underscore the seriousness of the problem. Twenty years later, another Fresh Air Fund advertorial included the ridiculous assertion by a day camp

worker that the grass outside a local church was “the only grass some of these children ever see” (Campbell 1968) – this at a time when Jane Jacobs and other critics of modernist planning worried that public housing projects had *too much* green space. On this note, one participant remembered when he was pictured in a local newspaper playing baseball in Regent Park North. He paraphrased the photo tag from memory as, “Here’s some inner city kids who can’t afford to go to camp – so they have to play baseball *here*”.³⁷ He remembered being perplexed as to why the newspaper viewed a grassy field as an inadequate venue for baseball. Nevertheless, continuing into the present era, a Fresh Air Fund appeal from 2012 stated that because of the ongoing redevelopment, children from Regent Park have “no green space” in which “to spread out” (Ferenc 2012). The archives yield many more examples along these lines that span the decades.

At other points, reports on charity work drew on the same romanticisation of rural life that characterised charity advertisements. In a 1964 report on a Regent Park nursery school’s field trip to a farm, for example, the Toronto Star noted that “some of the children had never been close to cows” as if this were a worrisome deficiency (Toronto Star 1964a). In an example from 1967, the Globe and Mail documented a free trip to Toronto Island³⁸ for children from Regent Park and its surroundings. A photo tag noted that many of them had “never been on a ferry before, or seen a live pig,” and “are trapped in an environment that more often than not suppresses their attempts to achieve anything” (Globe and Mail 1967). These portrayals bring to mind the vitriol of Cabbagetown author Hugh Garner, in recalling his own childhood in Cabbagetown some 40 years earlier:

³⁷ Spoken with a derisive sneer to emphasize the word “here”.

³⁸ Part of a chain of islands just off the shore of Lake Ontario, commonly used for recreation and outdoor education.

One thing that always hands me a cynical laugh is the statement by somebody who, while weeping crocodile tears over poor kids, says something about them never having seen a cow. Who the hell has ever gone through life suffering a trauma from not having seen a cow? Believe me there are much worse things about living in a downtown slum than the deprivation of not having seen a cow (Garner 1973, 7).

To add to the absurdity, the children of 1920s Cabbagetown and 1960s Regent Park alike had a relatively easy time seeing cows, pigs, and other animals: many of my participants remembered frequenting the zoo that was located three blocks north of Regent Park until 1974.³⁹

Participants did retain positive memories of some services around Regent Park – mostly those that had broken from the overtly paternalistic classism of earlier generations of social work. As a young ‘street worker’ employed by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in the 1960s, for example, Wally Seccombe’s task was to establish himself as a regular presence around Regent Park, socialise with local youth, and guide them away from trouble and towards recreational and community programming. “In the initial phase of my relationship with a boy, he was often very conscious of our class difference, and would ask why I bothered to come down to Regent Park”, Seccombe wrote in a 1967 assignment for an undergraduate course; “but class distinction usually vanished rapidly and I was soon accepted as a ‘Cabbagetowner’” (1967, 6). Bobby, who seemed generally mistrustful of professional interveners, described Seccombe to me as “a really good guy” and “something like a therapist; you could shoot the shit as a group, or talk one-on-one with Wally.” Bobby remained grateful for the positive effect this had on him in his early teen years.

Of all the relationships I studied between Regent Park youth and outside agencies, that with the police was perhaps the most fraught and inconsistent across time and demographics.

³⁹ The Riverdale Zoo moved and became the much larger Toronto Zoo in 1974. Since 1978, Riverdale Farm has operated on the former site of the zoo, and serves a similar function (City of Toronto 2016).

“Actually it was a pretty good relationship,” Gary explained; “ ‘the friendly fuzz’, we used to call them. To illustrate the point, he shared vague recollections of police officers playing hockey with local boys. “They helped a lot of kids”, Gary remembered. It seems the police were at their best when engaging with smaller children, as Joan provided this summary of her interactions with the police, seamlessly moving between descriptions of their benevolence and that of firefighters, subsuming both within a category of friendly faces of the state:

The police were great. My Mom had them drive us to the hospital when my nose wouldn't stop bleeding, and when I sprained my foot... They were always kind to us kids, stopping to talk to us. We got to tour the station and see the cells. The firemen were the same, we got to slide down the poles and they were always talking to us. The fire station would turn on one of the fire hydrants outside the station in the summer for us kids. I remember them on horses patrolling the neighbourhood; I never once saw them in a fast trot, chasing someone.

Bruce cut in to explain, however, that the reason “we got along good with them” was that “they couldn't catch us. You couldn't get through Regent Park – there were no through streets.” He described how their escapes from patrol cars were aided by the traffic barriers placed at the perimeter of Regent Park – “They'd hit the barriers and we'd hop over.” However, this would not work against police on horseback or motorcycles, such as “Handlebar Hank”, a locally renowned officer who was said to chase youth up stairwells on his motorcycle. On this note, Secombe's youth worker reports were heavily critical of the police, for their using intimidation during interrogations, denying suspects their rights, and verbally and physically abusing youth. One example was a practice akin to kidnapping, in which officers would drive a person in circles and then abandon them far from home (1967, 20). As addressed in Chapter Four, by the 1970s this came to be known as ‘The Cherry Beach Express’ when it was done at a remote point on the lakeshore and accompanied by a beating. Abuse at the hands of police is among the most disturbing of the themes that endure through the history of Regent Park.

Other data illustrate how youth occupying public space – the “real community thing” described by Dave in the first section of this chapter – was treated as a problem, if not a crime, in and of itself. One woman remembered police routinely entering the Root N’ Burger restaurant in Regent Park South to “kick the teens out and send them home.” Likewise, Palmer (2008, 193) cited a study by a local community agency from November 1964 to January 1965, which found that teenagers who socialised at the Root N’ Burger were heavily watched and harassed by police, with black youth often subjected to racist abuse. In 1967, the Toronto Star reported on a demonstration staged at Park Public School, in which the teenaged protestors asked a school trustee to provide more age-appropriate recreational facilities such as “a drop-in centre where teenagers can play records and dance”. “The adults and cops are always chasing us out,” one of the protestors complained. “They think we’re really bad juveniles and we get blamed for things we don’t even do” (Toronto Star 1967).

At the same time as teenagers were over-policed, Regent Parkers felt a need to take policing into their own hands when it came to protecting their children. The threat of sexual predation appeared in some of the earliest memories I was told of, and had already been cause for alarm in the area long before: Brushett, for example, notes that “many observers” of Cabbagetown before ‘slum clearance’ had been worried about “the sexual abuse of children, which many believed to be a natural product of poor and overcrowded housing” (2001, 124). These anxieties persisted after Regent Park was built. The first in-print mention of a sexual predator in Regent Park appeared in a 1960 report of police searching for “a sex deviate who twice attacked a Wyatt Walk boy last night, then threatened him with death if he told what happened” (Toronto Star 1960). A woman who lived in a Regent Park South mid-rise in 1960 described being in an elevator with her sister, when they were 10 and 12 years old, when a man

got on and started masturbating in front of them. They escaped untouched, told their mother, and she went looking for the man, unsuccessfully, with a butcher knife in hand. “It was open access – anyone could walk in. There was no such thing as locks,” a man remembered. Though most stories along these lines involve assailants who did not live in Regent Park, sometimes the threat came from within – other participants remember a young man who stood naked in his window, again, masturbating.

At a time when the sexual abuse of boys by men was referred to as an act of “homosexuality”, Seccombe’s street workers’ reports include a section on “homosexual behaviour”. Though he did not see or know of any such behaviour occurring in Regent Park, it seemed “a certain amount of homosexual contact is the rule” in “detention homes and training schools” where some of the youth he worked with had spent time (1967, 8). On an ominous note that foreshadows a horrific child murder that occurred in 1977, Seccombe noted that “shoe shining” was another “factor promoting homosexual contact”. “Boys have admitted to me that some of their friends (though never themselves) have accepted propositions from elder men to indulge in oral-genital contact for money” while shining shoes for cash downtown (1967, 8). Regardless, Seccombe did not attempt to dissuade boys from shining shoes, because it provided “many compensating positive factors” despite these apparently rare sexual solicitations (1967, 8). By the 1970s, thwarting sexual predation was a major component of extra-domestic labour.

Class and Discipline at School and Work

At worst, schools were a venue for the sort of predation described above – one woman recalled a lecherous male physical education teacher who “tried to look up girls’ skirts” in his class. At best, a day at school was an enjoyable experience that engaged students’ curiosity and helped prepare them for adulthood. Systemically, schools were a site where the myriad goals and

projects of the state, as refracted through the unique and growing stigma that afflicted Regent Park, touched upon the everyday lives of local youth.

As with low-income housing, education in Canada had also gone through a recent process of expert-driven modernisation. Wotherspoon describes education systems in postwar Canada as authoritarian bureaucracies that treated “educational matters as technical problems”, mitigating against “meaningful community involvement in the education system” in the process (2004, 66). This coincided with a shift in the purpose of schooling from “habit formation and citizen development” towards credentialising pupils in preparation for the job market (Wotherspoon 2004, 66). More bluntly, Curtis et al. argued that throughout its history, public education in Ontario has “worked to ensure that the vast majority of working-class people remain in their class of origin, while recruiting a very small and select minority of them for social mobility” (1992, 1-2). They were referring in large part to “streaming”, whereby students from already-marginalised groups were the most likely to be placed in schools and programs that ruled out postsecondary education.

In Toronto, the injustices of streaming became particularly acute with the passage of the Canada Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act in 1960, whereby “the federal government ... sought to make high school a form of direct job training” in a context of “fears for the competitiveness of the Canadian economy internationally, and concern about the lack of skilled labour in key trades amid rising unemployment” (Curtis et al. 1992, 46). The agreement, from 1961 – 1967, stipulated that the federal government would provide funding for vocational and technical facilities at schools if half of their class time was devoted to technical, commercial, or vocational subjects (Curtis et al. 1992, 46). It turned out that all nine of Toronto’s “vocational schools” built with these monies were located south of Bloor Street, then an unofficial dividing

line between the downtown working class and the more affluent (Curtis et al. 1992, 87). A 1970 study found that vocational students were “almost entirely ... from working class, ethnic / racial-minority and single-parent families” as “a working class child ran a ten times greater chance of ending up in a vocational programme than did a child of the professional or managerial class” (Curtis et al. 1992, 89). Beginning with the 1962-1963 school year, incoming grade nine pupils were interviewed, and “in close consultation with the parents” directed into one of three streams: arts and science, business and commerce, and science and technology. Only those in the first stream stood a reasonable chance of being admitted to university (Curtis et al. 1992, 87 citing Arvay 1984).

For pupils who had been labelled and streamed unfavourably, school was little more than a punitive, bureaucratic gambit leading to a personal and financial dead end. One man had been expelled in his third month of Grade Nine for smoking a cigarette on a school rooftop, which entailed an automatic failure of the entire school year. Not seeing any value in attempting to recoup the lost time, he dropped out of school permanently to work full-time, with his mother’s permission. At a time when young men could reasonably expect to earn decent wages without a high school diploma, this was a pragmatic decision; though most people remembered that young women tended to stay in school longer, at least completing Grade 12 to gain the typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping credentials required for stable employment in an office.

Despite the bureaucratic rigidity of the education system, much of what actually occurred in the classroom was left up to the whims of the teacher. This entailed considerable potential for the abuse of power, at a time when absolute deference to authority was expected and enforced with corporeal punishment. Memories of school in 1960s inner-city Toronto tended to oscillate between two poles: at one end, some participants appreciated their teachers’ authoritarian

classroom management as stern and “no-nonsense”, but fair and measured. One woman described “very strict” female teachers who projected the clichéd image of the headmistress – “with the grey skirt, that maiden hair and the big shoes” – as being among the most effective educators because they commanded the most consistent and restrictive control. Male participants in particular tended to respect authoritarian, “tough” male teachers, bringing to mind Heron’s argument that “working-class masculinities” were formed “in the home, school, street, workplace, and pleasure site” long before boys grew up to be breadwinners (2006, 7).⁴⁰ Bruce and Gary held favourable memories of the same “tough but fair” shop⁴¹ teacher, who kept his unruly students in line with physical force and who was remembered as a much-needed disciplinarian and role model. “He was great – he was a tough bastard,” said Bruce after telling a story of being punched in the back of the head by the teacher for talking out of turn. The same teacher would take cigarettes out of boys’ shirt pockets, break them in half, and admonish the student with “You’re gonna kill yourself with those goddamned things.” Kenny named one of his favourite teachers as a burly, former professional football player who pelted students with chalk when he caught them daydreaming. Gary said that ‘the strap’⁴² should be reinstated, and speculated that its discontinuance is at least partially to blame for a general degradation of morality in Canadian society.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, participants remained resentful of the eccentric, sadistic, and outcast teachers who seemed to be unusually common in the schools such as those

⁴⁰ Though based on a different historical context (the nearby industrial town of Hamilton, Ontario from the 1890s to the 1930s), many of Heron’s observations of working-class masculinities resonated with my data from 1960s Regent Park. Regarding the education of boys, for example, “the schools seemed to want boys to accept that working-class manhood meant deference to authority and expertise and to the superiority of book-based knowledge ... over practical know-how” (Heron 2006, 12).

⁴¹ Woodworking and similar activities later known as ‘industrial arts’. At the time, ‘shop’ was taught only to boys, while girls learned ‘home economics’ (cooking, cleaning, and other domestic skills).

⁴² A piece of leather used to whip students’ wrists a certain number of times for a given offence.

that served Regent Park. Even those who were in favour of the judicious use of ‘the strap’ hated the teachers who applied it with a sadistic flourish, such as one who would climb atop a chair and begin his swing just as he jumped down. The downward momentum of the teacher’s entire body combined with the whipping motion of his hand was often forceful enough to wrap the strap clear around the child’s wrist after initial contact, producing a secondary strike on the other side. Some men remembered mocking this teacher by telling him it did not hurt, even though it did; and one remembered being delighted when the teacher missed and whipped his own leg. A woman explained that normally, teachers would phone parents at work to inform them of what their children had done, “and when you got home you'd get a beating from them too, because they wanted you to have discipline”. In one case of this double-strapping, however, a mother was driven to tears by the sight of the two contusions on her son’s wrists.

I was told of an art teacher who kept cats in the classroom cupboards, and would laugh when the frightened pets lashed out at an unsuspecting student who opened the door. One man remembered being disciplined for kicking a cat that had pounced on him. Another remembered two eccentric teachers who claimed to hold PhDs, and thus insisted on being referred to as “doctor” – they were “doctors with no patience”, according to another participant’s pun. One teacher would slap a student and then break down in tears; another would cry after throwing a chair across the room, or throwing a garbage can at a student in time with the epithet, “Get out of my sight, you make me sick!” Participants interpreted this bizarre behaviour as symptoms of this especially competitive teacher’s overwhelming stress over his desire to have “the best class in the school” and noted that, despite his strangely violent behaviour, he was a good teacher.

These often-volatile schooling experiences prepared students for a job market in which working conditions could be similarly abusive, exploitative, and/or dangerous. The workplace

appeared in my interviews as another venue in which young Regent Parkers encountered the hegemony of the day and worked it into their own emic understandings of the world around them. Structurally, the job market of the 1960s was relatively robust by contemporary standards: young Regent Parkers could reasonably expect to earn a living wage, with or without a high school diploma, in a wide range of industrial and service-sector positions. Their labour was part of a trend in which the percentage of youth ages 14 to 19 working for wages nearly doubled from 36.2% in 1961 to 68.9% in 1975; for 20 – 24 year olds, the same change was from 51.1% to 75.9% (Palmer 2008, 216).

Meanwhile, the male breadwinner norm persisted, as 88% of 20-24-year-old men were employed in “the civilian labour force” compared with 54% of women the same age (Palmer 2008, 217). Still, among the Regent Parkers I interviewed, all of the women had jobs in their teens and early twenties, and neither women nor men alluded to women’s participation in waged labour as unusual or novel at the time. Many of the women’s career paths followed a taken-for-granted trajectory whereby they would leave the waged labour force to bear and raise children, later to return to it while also retaining primary responsibility for the children and the rest of the domestic sphere.

It was also an unquestioned norm for pre-teen children to contribute to the household’s income, and many were eager to do so at a time when their flexible, often informal, labour was in high demand. This labour was also rigidly gendered. Boys’ work was often dangerous: for example, a popular gig for pre-teen boys was “hopper”, which entailed jumping on and off of a slow-moving truck to deliver bundles of newspapers to stores. “Hopper wasn’t that hard of a job to get, because kids kept falling down and breaking their legs,” Bruce deadpanned. “Back then, there was no problem getting a job,” Gary confirmed, and then recalled a stint as a scantily

trained roofer, working with hazardous chemicals at deadly heights at the age of 14. Boys also worked in considerably safer conditions in factories, warehouses, stores, and kitchens. The importance of work in their lives is evidenced by the fact that many used the dates they accepted and quit a particular job as milestones for organising their life histories. One man who aspired to be a professional artist as a teenager described being bullied by peers who pursued more traditionally masculine careers: “The plumbers and everybody thought I was a fairy.”⁴³ Working-class masculinity structured all aspects of boys’ work, from the types of positions they would pursue, to their conduct on their job, to their reactions to injuries and abuse.

The rigid gendering of the job market was just as apparent in experiences related to me by women. Preteen girls did domestic labour for pay – one woman recalled earning 25 cents by doing her grandmother’s laundry and shopping for her neighbours. While they did not usually face the physical danger of a male “hopper” or roofer, the stigma affixed to Regent Park appears to have affected girls more acutely. “I tried working as a mother’s helper – it lasted two weekends,” one woman remembered. “I didn’t like them looking down at me. I remembered I had a hole in the knee of my pants; it seemed they were always looking at it.” In other instances, the informal, at times gossip-driven side of the job market could work in a labourer’s favour: Joan told me that if a girl earned a reputation as a good office worker, “your name would go around the street and you’d be offered all kinds of money just to switch – it was your reputation, basically.” For the most part, men and women alike recalled work in positive terms; the only common complaint was that some bosses were rude and disrespectful, and others narcissistic in their insistence on being referred to by their military honorific instead of the standard “mister”.

⁴³ A derogatory slur referring to gay men in common usage at the time.

Though this dissertation focuses on the role of domestic labour in the formation of class consciousness, it should also be said that wage labour was at times a critical component as well. Those who were usually able to find work differentiated themselves from the less fortunate, by relating stories of other Regent Parkers who lived in conditions of poverty commonly associated with the Great Depression. Sole-support parents, persons with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, and especially large families tended to face the most acute hardships. One participant, who counted his family among those in Regent Park who “had it pretty good”, recalled the abject poverty experienced by some of his neighbours:

A lot of people were really, really broke. There was one woman who had seven kids and the father had died young ... another family had 20 kids. The mother would put bananas on the kitchen table and the kids would literally fight for them. Charlie on the fifth floor – he was raised by a single mom, and the kids used to fight over pork chops. Sometimes the parents wouldn’t eat so the kids could.

Regent Park units were large by contemporary standards – as large as five-bedroom townhouses. But even these could not comfortably accommodate some of the larger families of the baby boom. I was told cases in which three children of the same sex would share a bedroom with a baby, for example. A woman remembered her family’s “hand-to-mouth” subsistence: her mother would earn seven dollars in cash from a day of housekeeping, immediately spend much of it on groceries for that evening’s dinner, and then “come home dead tired, and then have to cook for all us kids with no husband there.” This woman proudly remembered, however, that in her family the children were served the exact same dish as their parents at every meal. She contrasted that with other families in which “the father would get a steak, and the kids got soup with one noodle floating in the bowl”.

Conclusion: “Working-Class Realism” and Nostalgia

“I would like to reflect upon the optimistic spirit that has made CMHC more than just a government agency for managing the money invested in housing. To the

extent that CMHC people have had dreams about making something wonderful and beautiful out of all this counting and accounting, to the extent CMHC has been a cultural institution concerned with the very basis of our civilisation: the environment of our daily lives. Through CMHC's whole forty years, this aspiration has glowed just below the surface and sometimes burst into flame. It is not surprising that this ambition has so often taken the form of wanting to build a whole ideal community – a very seductive prospect. In a new country like ours, there are no great cathedrals to show that seeking perfection is a respectable and civilised human endeavour.” – Humphrey Carver, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation advisory group chair from 1948-1967, writing in 1986 (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1986, 37).

According to Carver's sanguine and patriotic retrospective presented above, modernist housing complexes such as Regent Park were nothing short of testaments to the potential for perfection shared by all Canadians. As is clearly displayed in Farewell to Oak Street, Rose's 1958 study, and various newspaper accounts, however, the moralism at work behind this pursuit of “perfection” sought to instil clean living and a work ethic in “slum dwellers” – falsely and offensively assuming they did not already possess either. This moralism was generally irritating to the people it was supposed to “help”, and ironically contributed to their stigmatisation perhaps as much as did commentators who opposed government-subsidised housing.

The ways in which the youth of 1960s Regent Park responded to this moralism and stigma inspired, to a significant extent, the Gramscian theoretical orientation that guides this dissertation. Young people engaged with the hegemonic notions of work ethic and respectability that were imbued in all aspects of their living environment and day-to-day circumstances, in complex, self-contradictory ways that spanned the spectrum from resistance to adoption. Class consciousness was ubiquitous in that nearly everyone I spoke to from this area identified as “working class” – but it was a thoroughly pragmatic, at times conservative class consciousness that equipped people with the planning and motivation to “get ahead”, and the mutual moral support to sustain the everyday attacks upon one's dignity that came with the progressively

intensifying locality-based stigma. Articulations of class among the Regent Parkers of the 1960s generally brought to mind Heron's concept of "working-class realism", also developed in reference to postwar working-class Canada (2009, 25): "not a fixed political position and certainly not a synonym for conservatism, but rather a propensity among workers during the past 150 years to evaluate what is possible and realisable in any given context and to act on that understanding" (Heron 2009, 25-26). During the apex of the Keynesian welfare state, and before a "shift from consent to coercion in state mediation of industrial relations" (Carroll 1990, 404), the terms of the "'class compromise' between capital and labour" as a "guarantor of domestic peace and tranquility" (Harvey 2005, 10) were generally favourable to the white Anglophone working class. As part of their consenting to an arrangement that worked reasonably well for them, and to emphasise their respectability in defiance of stigmatisation, some of the participants I consulted for this chapter strongly identified with 'the working class' as they understood it.

Often in the same breath as articulating their own respectable working-class-ness, many people cast their own stigmatising gaze upon their neighbours who accepted social assistance to an extent they deemed unrespectable. As an example, Bruce remembered that many Regent Park residents were employed by the state – "in the service of the Queen", as it was called at the time. "They were cops, firemen, or posties."⁴⁴ "There was a lot of – " "it was a *working class area*," Dave cut in, emphasising that most Regent Parkers were indeed workers, as opposed to layabouts. Put another way, the class identity emerging from this generation of Regent Parkers emphasises the "working" in working class. Many structured their life histories around milestones established by the dates they worked at a certain job, and the moment they began working full-time was often portrayed as a paradigmatic shift from one stage of life to another.

⁴⁴ Letter carriers.

People took pride in their youthful hard work some 45 to 60 years after the fact, and many retain bitter, judgmental, and/or derisive attitudes toward “welfare bums”. As noted earlier, much of the differentiation along these lines played out with regards to the domestic sphere. This became increasingly important in subsequent decades, to the point that, as I argue later, domestic labour emerged as a more potent component of class consciousness than wage labour.

In the absence of any strain of radicalism, participants from this era retained a strong belief in meritocracy – the notion that hard work can, and should, trump the disadvantages people experience due to systemic barriers. Most people I spoke to from the pre-1968 era had left public housing permanently by the 1970s, and all experienced upward mobility. Most of the men went on to spend 30 years or more in unionised, reliable, and decently waged blue collar positions, while the women worked in offices with similar degrees of income and stability. Some made it into the managerial middle class, while others remembered peers and siblings who are now millionaires, and even one who is a billionaire. Even participants whose caregivers struggled with addiction described prolonged stability, feelings of safety, and upward mobility as a result of their time in Regent Park. Debbie explained that though her grandfather often embarrassed the family as “the town drunk”, the boys he raised still “turned out pretty successful,” including one millionaire. “For kids from the boondocks, they did pretty well,” she said. One woman remembered that even while struggling with alcoholism, her parents continually reinforced meritocratic principles in their children – “it was all about getting an education, self-improvement, and working your way up. There was never money, and too many beers later on – but school was so important.”

Another woman recalled her father’s bitterness arising from the non-fulfilment of Regent Park’s mission in his life. “My dad hated Regent Park,” she remembered. “He hated every

minute he was there, because he felt like a loser.” This family had experienced downward mobility, having left a new subdivision in a then-booming industrial city, because two of the children had fallen ill and the family could no longer afford mortgage payments due to the escalating costs of prescription medicine. “I can remember him saying to Mom, ‘It won’t be long, we’ll be out of here in a couple months; we’ll get on our feet and move on’ ... but it didn’t work out that way.” The man died of a stroke while still living in Regent Park, his pursuit of respectability left unrealised despite his best efforts. As they related his history to me some fifty years later, however, his grown children certainly respected his efforts to provide for them and saw no shame in a childhood and adolescence spent in Regent Park.

Another common theme across the decades that began in this era is the tendency of residents to identify their later years in Regent Park as the beginning of the full-fledged downfall that began after they left. As examples of this, many residents of the 1950s and 60s say they liked Regent Park until “the drugs came in,” or until the vandalism caused by newer generations of tenants rendered the project unliveable. Yet I also spoke to Regent Parkers of the 1970s who said the same of their successors of the 1980s; and in turn those who said life was good in the 1980s before the downfall of the 1990s. One early resident attributed the alleged decline of Regent Park not to the poor planning or governmental neglect, but to the actions of degenerates who had been rendered listless and self-entitled by the welfare state – but not in a way not unique to Regent Park:

Gary: It’s not just Regent Park. People aren’t responsible or feel thankful for what they have. They’re getting it for nothing, because 90% of them are on welfare, and they trash the places. They don’t take care of things. We were taught respect, even though we had nothing.

Susan did not share Gary's view of the degeneracy of future generations of Regent Parkers, but she did contend that Regent Park was well-designed, and that its contemporary flaws are due to societal change, rather than poor planning and architecture:

RJ: It's interesting, because with all this talk about redevelopment, they make it sound like the opposite of what you said. Like, kids weren't safe, there was nobody watching them – but everybody I talked to, including yourself, tells me the opposite.

Susan: See, if you're doing [different] generations, then later on that probably came into play. But then, is it just Regent? In my mind, society changed. So you could get pockets of whatever they're talking about anywhere in the city.

In Susan's analysis, Regent Park and its design were the scapegoats for a decline in security and community that was manifested not only in Regent Park, but all across "society". The chapter that follows addresses the period of 1970 to 1984, when a new generation of Regent Park youth confronted similar concerns – but in arguably more difficult economic circumstances, and when it was all but entirely taken for granted that low-income modernist housing complexes were a failure of planning and architecture.

Chapter Four

Security, Racialisation, and Social Reproduction in Regent Park, 1970-1984

Introduction

Mike was already waiting for me when I arrived at the passenger pick-up area of Toronto's northernmost subway station. We had never met, nor thought to describe our appearance to each other, but still recognised each other immediately. Having heard of my work through another participant, Mike had contacted me several months earlier and offered to talk to me about growing up in Regent Park in the 1970s and 80s. After a few attempts, we had finally found a feasible time to meet. We shook hands, made small talk, and he drove us to a nearby chain donut shop for the interview.

Mike's youth in Regent Park was marked by poverty, substance abuse, and conflict with the law; a sharp contrast to the law-abiding, sober, prosperous life he had since led in the suburbs for over two decades. Before we started talking about Regent Park, he issued a disclaimer: "Listen, man, the things I'm going to tell you are *my* story, but they don't represent about 99% of the people from Regent Park. Almost everybody there were good people who weren't involved in this shit." With that, Mike had begun our conversation on a familiar note: he needed to establish that, contrary to common stereotypes, most people in Regent Park were not criminals. But while other participants had made this point by describing themselves as typical law-abiding, upstanding Regent Parkers, Mike cited his younger self as an example of what most Regent Parkers were *not*: "a big shit-disturber" who "didn't give a rat's ass about anything", in his words.

Mike had good reason to be wary of how I might frame his story. If stereotypes are unfair generalisations that take a kernel of truth out of context and exaggerate it far beyond reality, a

younger Mike had once been that kernel of truth. This occurred when one of his arrests was covered on local television news in the 1980s, and the broadcaster identified him not by name but as an anonymous “resident of Regent Park.” In Mike’s analysis, his personal misdeeds had been unfairly attributed to an entire ‘community’. He was making sure I would not do the same.

To be sure, Mike’s memories of crime and violence reflect his own unique experiences, and these should not be presumed to reflect the reality of other individuals who lived in the same ‘community’ at the same time as him. When taken together, however, participants’ memories reveal similarities and differences in how they handled a shared set of circumstances, in the process developing a “complex consciousness” through “*metissage* or braiding” of various strands of experience” shared, to some extent, at the local level (Silverman 2001, 8). Mike’s stories of his former self reflect the social order of urban Canada from 1970 to 1984 as it was experienced and interpreted by a particularly stigmatised and vulnerable sector of the working class. His own trajectory in life was shaped by the interaction of this social order with circumstances specific to himself and his family, and by his own choices – and was rare among Regent Parkers, as he insisted.

The social order in which Regent Park was embedded was especially fraught during the period covered by this chapter. The timespan it covers – 1970 through 1984 – has been bracketed by Whiteside as the period in which neoliberalism emerged in Canada as an attempted “fix” for a “crisis in global capitalism” (2009, 80). Early in this period, the influence of neoliberalism upon the local level was minimal: through the 1970s in Toronto, Keynesianism and Red Toryism continued to dominate local politics and social policy. By the 1980s, however, neoliberal priorities began to appear in the administration of public housing and other social supports, and thus began to impact upon Regent Park. Federally, the Progressive Conservatives under Brian

Mulroney (elected to two majorities in 1984 and 1988) are seen as Canada's first neoliberal government (Gibbs & Leech 2009). This chapter focuses on the earlier transitory period, and the next two chapters trace how neoliberalism was consolidated as hegemonic at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels through the 1990s and 2000s, from the vantage point of Regent Park.

With regards to a central theme of this dissertation, Fraser (2016, 112) has theorised how neoliberalism has exacerbated the contradiction whereby a capitalist economy depends upon domestic labour, but treats it as if it were trivial if not nonexistent (Fraser 2016, 101). This has made the conditions of domestic labour (and, by extension, extra-domestic labour) even more demanding and frustrating than was the case during the Keynesian era. By the 1980s, Fraser writes, a “new regime” of a “globalising and neoliberal ... financialised capitalism” had emerged, which “promotes state and corporate disinvestment from social welfare, while recruiting women into the paid workforce – externalising carework onto families and communities while diminishing their capacity to perform it” (2016, 112). In this context, though the normalisation of women's waged work outside the household was an important victory of the second wave of the feminist movement, it hardly came as a relief to working-class women who had already been in the workforce by necessity. Deindustrialisation made ‘the breadwinner wage’ an increasingly scarce prospect, and so more working-class women *had* to work for wages to support the household while also retaining primary (if not exclusive) responsibility for the domestic sphere. This was the “double day” of waged and domestic labour described by Marxist-feminist scholars in the 1970s and 80s (e.g. Luxton 1980, 18-19). In Regent Park, where women (largely but not exclusively) also took on a set of unpaid tasks *outside* the household

towards the ends of social reproduction – tasks which I refer to as extra-domestic labour – the double day could look more like a triple day during particularly hard times.

With regards to the stigmatisation process, strands of neoliberal ideology (such as the primacy of the individual over the ‘community’, and the imperative of self-reliance over social supports) dovetailed with the growing disillusionment with Regent Park that had appeared among politicians, housing officials, and the media in the 1960s. For example, a federal “Task Force on Housing and Urban Redevelopment” had called for a freeze on the construction of public housing projects in 1969, based largely upon the alleged inadequacies of Regent Park (Hellyer 1969). Regent Park was thus designated a ‘problem’, and its residents were then stigmatised not only for living in subsidised housing (and thus falling short of the ideals of self-reliance and upward mobility), but also as residents of a place that was singled out as emblematic of the apparent failures of subsidised housing projects in general.

New developments and complications related to ‘race’, ethnicity, and culture were also central to the experiences of Regent Parkers from 1970 – 1984. The concept of “multiculturalism” fundamentally altered local-level dynamics and, contrary to its purportedly inclusive spirit, served to intensify the stigmatisation of Regent Park and its residents. Following changes to federal immigration policy in the late 1960s and 70s, the population of Regent Park became increasingly differentiated by culture and ethnicity, as racialised minorities formed an increasingly larger segment of the population. Into the 1980s, some Regent Parkers faced virulent racism that entailed serious material consequences, in dealings with police, school principals, social workers, and housing administrators, for example. Meanwhile among Regent Parkers themselves, race and ethnicity came to interact with North / South allegiance and income status to shape local-level emic class categories. Later in this chapter, the section “New

Economy, New Differences” foregrounds the significance of race and racism in stigmatisation and identity formation in the 1970s and early 80s. Amidst ongoing deindustrialisation and rising unemployment (particularly for youth), the Keynesian class compromise had less to offer the Regent Parkers of the 1970s than it did those of the 1960s. In Chapter Three, I argued that the emic working class identity articulated by my participants exhibited their consent to a compromise that worked out reasonably well for them. Among the Regent Parkers of the 1960s, being “working class” was generally defined with reference to positive traits such as industriousness and respectability. This chapter addresses how an increasingly precarious job market in the 1970s and early 80s, together with new ethnoracial differences among Regent Parkers, inspired emic class identities that were more territorial, more ethnicised, and more oppositional to various ‘others’.

Part of Chapter Three addressed participants’ memories of predators who targeted children from Regent Park. This predation, and its connection to stigmatisation, becomes increasingly apparent and disturbing when analyzing the atrocities committed against Regent Park children during the period of 1970 to 1984. The most extreme examples of this are the abduction, rape, and murder of three children, in three separate incidents that occurred in 1973, 1977, and 1980. Mike was among several people I spoke to who knew one of the victims personally, and who were themselves sexually abused as children, mostly in unreported crimes committed by outsiders in a position of authority. As Mike put it, being from Regent Park was “like we had a target on our backs” for sexual predators. As one result of these patterns of abuse, claiming and protecting territory from outsiders became increasingly important, which also contributed to the increasingly place-based character of emic class identities in the 1970s.

This chapter also addresses other abuses of Regent Park and its residents by predatory and disruptive outsiders who preyed upon the housing projects for other self-serving and antisocial purposes. Regent Park was abused as an open-air drug market, as a dumping ground for toxic waste, and as a venue for racist proselytising, for example. These examples are of course very different in nature from child abuse, and were understandably taken much less seriously. But the thread that connects them, I argue, is stigma: Regent Park was widely seen as a derelict and worthless place, and thus as an opportune and/or deserving ‘target’ in the minds of abusive non-residents. Regent Parkers spent an inordinate amount of their time contending with these threats, by policing common grounds, demanding action from officials, and organising mutual aid, among other efforts. I argue that this unpaid work constitutes an extension of domestic labour done outside the household (largely but not entirely by women) that was crucial to social reproduction, and was made necessary by stigma and predation. The next section focuses on how Regent Parkers countered their victimisation through what I call “extra-domestic labour”, and addresses the connection between labour of this sort and the development of class consciousness.

Security, Violence, and Predation

This section returns to themes of predation and security from Chapter Three, by addressing the abuse of Regent Park and its residents in the 1970s and early 1980s. The most extreme examples of this abuse are the murders of nine-year-old Kirkland Deasley in 1973, twelve-year-old Emanuel Jaques in 1977, and six-year-old Elizabeth Tomlinson in 1980. This section also addresses lesser known and unreported cases of sexual child abuse, as well as other very different forms of abuse that other Regent Parkers survived. Throughout, I argue that these violations are material manifestations of stigma, and that the effort it takes to thwart them

occupies an inordinate amount of time for residents of a stigmatised place. Regent Parkers turned to themselves and to each other for the mutual aid and self-defense it took to maintain the safe, stable households that are essential for social reproduction. As such, I conceptualise these efforts as extra-domestic labour.

“Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design”

As addressed in Chapter Three, exaggerated (if not completely erroneous) portrayals of Regent Park as unkempt and anomic date back to the 1960s. These became increasingly commonsensical in the timespan addressed in this chapter. But before I could ask any questions to begin our interview, Angela described how clean and secure Regent Park had been during her childhood in the early 1970s. “The buildings were immaculate – they were always clean”, she began. She recalled how she and most of her neighbours were on a friendly, first-name basis with the custodian of her building, to illustrate both the importance of cleanliness and how “everybody knew everybody – everybody watched out for everybody.” As an indication of the state of security in Regent Park North in the 1970s, Angela explained that each apartment in her building still had a milk chute.⁴⁵ Since the chutes were held shut by a mere latch, “anyone could have just kicked them in if they wanted to, so it wasn't very high-security”. These obsolete elements of the built environment posed a potential security threat, but to Angela’s knowledge, they were never exploited as such.

As a child in the early 1970s, Angela was of course oblivious to the fact that many architects and planners saw the entirety of Regent Park as a potential security threat. Shortly after the publication of his widely influential Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design (1972), Oscar Newman toured Regent Park while in Toronto. He cited the projects as

⁴⁵ A vestibule for door-to-door milk delivery, which had been discontinued shortly before Angela was born.

further evidence for his argument that housing developments should be designed to instil a state of mutual surveillance among residents. Newman found that “the bigger the building ... the greater the vandalism”, apparently because people’s sense of accountability to neighbours and ownership over a structure diminishes in proportion to its size (Toronto Star 1973c). In fairness, Angela had lived in one of the three-story Regent Park North buildings that Newman had deemed the least problematic. But other participants who grew up in the high-rises of Regent Park South remembered them in much the same way: safe and tight-knit, most of the time. This discrepancy between Newman’s ‘defensible space theory’ and Angela’s childhood memories is one of many examples from throughout the history of Regent Park in which outsiders’ authoritative pronouncements do not match residents’ lived experiences.

Regent Parkers did contend with threats to their security, however. But the data from all eras, perhaps most notably that from the 1970s and 80s, suggest these threats were caused less by the design of the built environment and more by abusive outsiders. In the July 1972 newsletter of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association (RPCIA), association president Neil Tanner outlined the “most urgent problems” facing Regent Park: “maintenance and supervision, vandalism, parking, noise, garbage collection, dogs and speeding cars” (Tanner 1972).⁴⁶ Tanner suggested pragmatic quick-fixes for each of these: Noise in the hallways and vandalism, which “we know is caused by a small minority who have no consideration for the people living here”, could be deterred by hiring live-in superintendents in each building; so could illicit dog ownership (Tanner 1972).⁴⁷ Other problems could be solved simply by ejecting the trespassers who caused them:

⁴⁶ For an exhaustive history of the RPCIA, see Purdy 2003a.

⁴⁷ At the time, tenants were not permitted to keep pets.

We all know that people who do not live in Regent Park are using our parking areas, leaving abandoned cars here, parking large trucks overnight, doing major repairs, etc. Young people are using parking areas for hangouts and drag strips. The tenants feel that OHC⁴⁸ has been too lax in dealing with this situation. **WAYS AND MEANS MUST BE FOUND TO REMOVE THE CARS AND TRUCKS WHICH DO NOT BELONG HERE. ANYONE DOING MAJOR REPAIRS MUST BE STOPPED WITHOUT DELAY AND YOUNG PEOPLE CAUSING A DISTURBANCE WITH THEIR CARS MUST BE STRICTLY DEALT WITH** (Tanner 1972, capitalisation in original).

By simply installing front-door locks, Tanner argued, management could prevent “people who do not live in Regent Park” from “coming into the hallways and creating all kinds of noise,” while also barring access to the “people out of the taverns who sleep in the halls and do other things too unpleasant to mention” (1972).

It took until the summer of 1974 for management to install the first front-door lock as a “pilot project” at a six-storey building in Regent Park North, at a time when “the buildings [had] been wide open to strangers who come in to vandalise or sleep in the halls” (7 News 1974). On the strength of this successful pilot project, the RPCIA pressured OHC to expand it to all of the buildings in Regent Park. The example shows that the flaws in the built environment of greatest concern to residents were minor, and caused more by neglect of basic security measures on the part of the housing authority than by any weaknesses in planning and design. These flaws were exploited by non-residents at the expense of Regent Parkers.

“Like We Had a Target on Our Backs”

Soon after we got in his car, Mike asked me what I wanted to know about Regent Park in the 1970s. At this early stage of my research, I mentioned a few things I had found interesting in the archives of the major newspapers and community newsletters of the time: the recreation centre for teenagers, the state of inter-ethnic relations in the housing projects, and the quality of

⁴⁸ The Ontario Housing Corporation, which took over management of all public housing in the province in 1968 (Purdy 2003b, 51).

local schools. Then I asked Mike if he remembered much about the murder of a 12-year-old boy in 1977 who, I had just recently learned, had lived in Regent Park. At that, Mike said nothing and handed me a Ziploc bag full of yellowed newspaper clippings. These were original printings of articles I had read in the online archives about Emanuel Jaques, who was abducted while shining shoes on Yonge Street and then raped and murdered by four men. As I looked through the clippings, Mike explained that he and Emanuel Jaques had been close friends of the same age. As did other preteen boys from Regent Park, they had shone shoes together on Yonge Street,⁴⁹ working informally for cash.

The sexual abuse of children appears with alarming frequency in the data from this period. I made no efforts to interview anyone accused or convicted of crimes against Regent Park children, and it is beyond the scope of this project to determine conclusively why predators targeted Regent Park, but several of my participants (and I) suspect there is a systemic explanation. This was expressed most succinctly by Mike, who said the Regent Park projects were “almost like an attraction, like we had a target on our backs – ‘Look here pedophiles, we’re easy prey!’” In his view, predators targeted “the kids that weren’t well-protected by their parents, or the parents are drug addicts or alcoholics, whatnot, and they knew they could take advantage.” Perhaps more so than the participants who came of age in the 1960s whom I consulted for the previous chapter, Mike and other children of the 1970s described growing up amongst perpetual vigilance regarding this risk.

At the time of the writing of this dissertation, a diverse range of stigmatised persons (sex workers, drug users, and persons with mental illness, for example) and their advocates use the social media hashtag #stigmakills to bring attention to how stigma leads to discrimination and

⁴⁹ A commercial and entertainment strip roughly a kilometre west of Regent Park.

victimisation: by individual abusers, by powerful institutions, and/or by an inequitable social order. Others have argued that incidences of brutal violence, which are typically understood as isolated in their extremity, are actually embedded in broader injustices. Razack (2000), for example, foregrounded racism, colonialism, and stigmatisation in her analysis of a 1995 death that was ruled “manslaughter”: two white men solicited an indigenous sex worker on a street in Regina, Saskatchewan, and then beat her and left her for dead – modern-day “colonial violence”, in Razack’s analysis (2000, 96-97). At present, the federally mandated National Inquiry of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has begun to examine “systemic causes” for disproportionate victimisation rates, which include “underlying historical, social, economic, institutional and cultural factors” (Canada 2016). Like missing and murdered indigenous women, victimised Regent Park children were subject to stigmatisation, marginalisation, and a vulnerability owing to a perception that they were ‘easy targets’ because they come from an apparently dysfunctional and under-policed place.

Reflecting my observations in Chapter Three on communal child supervision, however, the data from the 1970s suggests that children were relatively safe within the confines of the housing projects. They were mainly at risk of being targeted when they ventured outside Regent Park to places that Regent Park children were known to frequent, as was the case in each of the three murders. The same can be said of other abuses, such as the crimes of Gordon Stuckless, who became infamous as the serial abuser of children at Maple Leaf Gardens⁵⁰ when he was first prosecuted in the 1990s. Some of my participants remembered Stuckless from the 1970s, when he had volunteered and worked as a teaching assistant at a public school in the Regent Park area (Grange 1997). In other cases, children themselves expelled suspected predators from public

⁵⁰ Then a professional ice hockey arena.

spaces known as their ‘hangouts’: Bobby, for example, remembered when a man approached him and his friends while swimming at “bare-ass beach”, on the shore of the Don River near Regent Park. “He was calling us over, saying he had candy,” Bobby said, “so we all threw rocks at him.”

Child abuse also occurred within the confines of Regent Park, however, as the network of communal supervision was of course not infallible. To Mike’s knowledge, the men who murdered Emanuel Jaques had previously been abusing at least two other children in Regent Park, while buying them sporting goods and giving money to one of their alcoholic mothers to “keep them quiet”. But even the children of conscientious, sober parents were at risk, such as two women I spoke to who had each survived two abduction attempts as children. “I was pretty street-smart,” one of the women remembered. “You became streetwise fast, as a little girl there; and it happened to the boys too.” In stories such as these, the predators were typically outsiders; though one woman told me there were also “a lot of creeps in Regent Park” who “just did horrible things, but you couldn’t prove it. You just had to watch out for them.” She had been molested three times in childhood.

The surveillance provided by official channels – specifically the police, and the small “Community Guardians” security service – was by itself insufficient to protect Regent Park from predators. As a result, Regent Parkers took some of this work upon themselves. As outlined in Chapter Two, domestic labour (in a Marxist-feminist sense) is unpaid work done inside the home that is necessary for social reproduction, both at the level of the household, and that of capitalist society. The work of maintaining a safe, clean, and pleasant household is demanding and time-consuming in any context, but is made especially demanding by the challenges of life in a stigmatised, low-income area. Watching out for other people’s children, confronting predators,

and taking to the streets in moments of crisis were examples of extra-domestic labour that were central to the safety of Regent Park's households, and thus essential to social reproduction. Most of this labour was benevolent, some of it even heroic; in some examples, it was discriminatory and hateful towards other marginalised groups.

The 1973 and 1980 murders were similar in nature, and drew similar reactions from Regent Parkers. In 1973, nine-year-old Kirkland Deasley was abducted while delivering groceries for a local supermarket. His body was found a day later in a downtown hotel, after he had been sexually abused and killed by a man later found not guilty by reason of insanity, and committed to a prison hospital for the “criminally insane” (Darroch 1974). In 1980, six-year-old Elizabeth Tomlinson was taken from a park across the street from Regent Park South. Four days later, her body was found in the Don Valley, and it was determined she had been raped and killed in an extremely cruel manner. Following the Deasley murder, one woman remembered that “it seemed like half the Park” went out looking for the perpetrator. The Toronto Star reported that a crowd of 300 civilians had been searching back alleys and side streets with “a mood that bordered on the vigilante”, including “several youths” carrying “three-foot lengths of board” (1973b). Likewise in 1980, when news broke that the police had arrested a suspect in the Tomlinson murder, a crowd of over 100 “relieved but angry Regent Park residents” – “mostly young mothers and teenagers” – assembled at the local police division where they thought the suspect was held, but were told he was in hospital and would be taken to police headquarters (Toronto Star 1980a). The victim's adult cousin was charged but later acquitted (Layton 1980), and the crime remains an unsolved cold case.

An important similarity between the 1973 and 1977 murders was that both victims had been working informally when they were abducted. Kirkland Deasley was one of the many

children from Regent Park who had done wagon-drawn deliveries for supermarkets, drug stores, restaurants, and film developers. One of my participants, Angela, was the same age as Deasley and had delivered for the same supermarket from which he was abducted. In the 1977 murder, twelve-year-old Emanuel Jaques was shining shoes on Yonge Street when a man lured him away with an offer to hire him as a mover for \$35 per hour. In both cases, the victims were targeted while engaged in activities that marked them as working-class, if not poor, and thus potentially vulnerable. For generations, deliveries and shoe-shining had been common, reasonably safe ways for children to help sustain their households and earn spending money; this was sharply curtailed in 1973 and all but ended in 1977.

The reaction to the Jaques murder was the most pronounced and politically contentious. To begin, I heard somewhat conflicting accounts as to how it affected the state of communal child supervision in Regent Park. A woman who had moved into the Regent Park area in 1975 told me that it was the first time she worried for her children's safety to any great extent. Angela, who was roughly the same age as Emanuel Jaques, did not recall noticing any increased strictness on the part of local parents as a result of the murder:

People were always that way anyway; not so much strict, but, we were always taught, "You can have your free reign, but we need to know where you are and you need to be in by the time the lights come on." Everyone looked out for everyone; it helped our parents not have to be *strict*-strict.

But Bobby, who was a young adult in the late 1970s, remembered a different dynamic in the aftermath of the Jaques murder, as compared to what he remembered from his own childhood in the 1960s:

I mostly remember just silence around the whole area. You needed a buddy to do anything, and parents started paying more attention. It used to be, I told my mom I was sleeping at your house, you told your mom you were sleeping at my house, and we'd walk the streets all night. All that was gone.

Roughly ten years older, perhaps Bobby was in a position to make an historical comparison in which Angela was not. It could also be said that Angela had a more authentic, insider view of the state of child safety in the late 1970s because she experienced it then as a child herself. Specific reactions differed, but everyone I interviewed who had lived in Regent Park in 1977 was traumatised in some way by the Jaques murder.

The reaction to the news that Jaques had been raped and murdered, and his body left on the roof of a business associated with the sex trade (a massage parlour), drew Regent Parkers into a citywide moral panic. This included calls for the reinstatement of the death penalty,⁵¹ and for a law-and-order crackdown on Yonge Street (then known as Toronto's 'sin strip'). The panic was often expressed through unrestrained homophobic vitriol, in an era when it was an unquestioned norm for the media to refer to the rape of a child as an act of 'homosexuality'. For example, one Toronto Sun report referred to the crime as a "homosexual orgy" (Millar and McCann 1977), while the Toronto Star reported that Jaques had been "made the victim of a sex orgy" (Toronto Star 1977). The Sun had also reported that "two young Regent Park boys have been victims of homosexual slayings four years to the day apart in downtown Toronto, and residents of the east-end housing development say they have had enough" (Toronto Sun 1977). This portrayal, including the loaded and inappropriate reference to 'homosexuality', seems to have been reflective of the prevailing mood both in Regent Park and citywide.

Four days after the funeral, 15,000 people marched to City Hall and then to the provincial legislature, many of them Portuguese (the Jaques family were immigrants from the Azores); it was later argued that this event consolidated the Toronto Portuguese community as a political bloc for the first time (Vista-Global Productions 2006). Another rally of 150 people led by

⁵¹ It had been abolished in Canada in 1976.

Harold Jackman, a politically active Anglican pastor who lived in Regent Park, held a moment of silence outside the massage parlour and then led a march to City Hall. The marchers demanded a “clean-up” of the Yonge St. “sin strip” and capital punishment for murderers and sex offenders (Toronto Star 1977). A Globe and Mail columnist noted that a member of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association collected 1,000 signatures on a petition to “stamp out gays and body rubs” (Beddoes 1977). A longtime tenant activist led 150 people in a standing ovation at the local police station, inspiring the headline, “friction disappears as Regent Park cheers its police” (Graham 1977).

Mike was part of the Regent Park march to City Hall, and remembered initially espousing its homophobic tenets to some extent. However, he also recalled “knowing deep down inside” that it was “pedophiles” who killed his friend, and not “homosexuals”. He explained that the interventions of a prominent gay rights activist had an effect on the Regent Park contingent, to the point that some marchers began to dissuade others from yelling anti-gay slurs. Mike said the intensity of homophobia in Regent Park soon faded, though some residents – especially older ones – remained adamant in their bigotry.

The second horrific loss of a child in a short timeframe had drawn Regent Park into a broader current of homophobic authoritarianism that had already been influential in local-level politics. Two months before the murder of Emanuel Jaques, for example, a municipal report had outlined an agenda to target Yonge Street’s “amusement industry”, in which all three levels of government would discipline undesirable businesses with fines, citations, and other bureaucratic means (City of Toronto 1977). Pinball arcades were a primary target: since there was “no auditing of the income each individual machine produces”, these seemingly innocuous toys were actually ideal tools for laundering the proceeds of “prostitution, drugs, loan-sharking or

protection rackets” (City of Toronto 1977, 130). Children and teenagers were thus being drawn into the venues of mid-level organised crime, which tended to be located in close proximity to “nude service establishments,” to make matters worse (City of Toronto 1977, 130). Problematic as it was, this crackdown seems to have been driven by at least some legitimate concerns: one participant remembered being cautioned by adults who worked on the strip to stay away from an arcade manager known to have been “a “diddler”.”⁵²

Homophobia was of course a problem not unique to Regent Park, but it manifested in and around Regent Park with a trajectory unique to local circumstances. The area known as “Don Vale” immediately north of Regent Park had recently been rebranded “Cabbagetown” through a rapid process of gentrification that included gay newcomers to the area (Bouthillette 1994). It seems this disdain for gentrifiers, concerns over child safety, and the homophobia that was commonsensical at the time combined in the creation of a new, potentially dangerous “other” in the minds of working-class downtown residents: the eccentric and privileged ‘homosexual’. For example, the gay liberation newspaper The Body Politic was once denied permission to hold a dance at the Don Vale Community Centre, apparently because of accusations that its editors condoned pedophilia (Brewster 1972), and was later denied an office for rent on Parliament Street (Dayman 1974). In The Intruders, Hugh Garner’s novel of the gentrification of Don Vale in the early 1970s, all of the namesake upper-middle-class ‘intruders’ were portrayed in an unfavourable light; but Garner was at his most resentful in describing a stereotypical couple of “visually and obviously flaming homosexuals,” as his narration described them. This couple irritated the novel’s sympathetic characters by bringing frivolity and ostentatiousness to a formerly staid working class area (Garner 1977, 287-292). Taken together, my interviews also

⁵² Child molester.

suggested an “othering” of gay people, as straightness was an unacknowledged norm - or an “unmarked normality”, to borrow from Mackey’s discussions of “whiteness” in a Canadian context (1999). No one I spoke to recalled any openly gay residents of Regent Park, and if the topic came up at all, it was usually in reference to the gay gentrifiers of a socially and spatially distinct Don Vale. Though none of my participants expressed any homophobic views while speaking to me in early 2010s, and Mike made a point of renouncing the homophobia he had espoused in his youth, gay men were one of the groups of ‘others’ against which the ‘Regent Parker’ identity was articulated in the 1970s and early 80s.

In the end, the citywide reaction to the child murders of 1973, 1977, and 1980 contributed to the further stigmatisation of Regent Park. One newspaper article written in the aftermath of the murder of Elizabeth Tomlinson in 1980 focused on how the horrors of recent years had made local children “street-wise” and suspicious to the point that they became small-minded and parochial from an early age (Ward 1980). The journalist then took gratuitous poetic license to emphasise their apparent isolation and despair: “the children have bad teeth, and grape jelly stains on their t-shirts” in a place that “smells of poverty – unwashed bedclothes and sour hopes,” for example (Ward 1980). The article noted that while the Tomlinson murder “could have occurred anywhere in Toronto”, the fact that the girl was abducted from near Regent Park was “just a little more bad luck” for “the thousands of street-wise kids who live downtown” (Ward 1980). Besides contributing to the stigmatisation of Regent Park, this report was also damaging in that it trivialised an atrocity just over a week after it occurred – a time when its effects were undoubtedly acutely painful and shocking for those affected.

Mike described how the law-and-order crackdown that followed the Emanuel Jaques murder was purported to protect street-involved children, but ironically put them at greater risk:

“Innocent children, you know, that’s all we were – well, borderline. But that’s what really sent me for a loop, was when they took that privilege away from me,” he said, referring to shoe-shining. “I started making money other ways: shoplifting, stuff like that. ... They said no more, you can’t do it. But I wanted to go out and do it – it’s good money for a kid! But those scumbags took a lot away from Regent Park. And that wasn’t the first time.” Mike soon moved on from shoplifting to larger-scale professional thieving, and then to drug-dealing. He attributes this to the compounded effects of child abuse, income inequality, and the crackdown on informal child labour on the Yonge Street strip:

The wanting of shit – when you grow up not getting it, if you can’t get all of that shit that the other kids in other areas have, then you’re going to want to get it one way or another. You either take it from another kid, or you start boosting⁵³ ... as soon as they took the shoe-shining away from us, I got caught, 13 or 14 years old, that winter after, for stealing gold rings from the Eaton Centre.⁵⁴ I got caught shoplifting. That was my first offence, and from there I just kept wanting more and more and more.

In a moment of panic and despair, Regent Park residents participated in a law-and-order crackdown that stigmatised another marginalised group, and indirectly contributed to the further marginalisation of Regent Park over the long run. The “clean-up” of the Yonge St. sex trade diminished opportunities for children to supplement household income through informal labour, and bolstered broader patterns of gentrification that continue at the time of the writing of this dissertation. Throughout, a police division renowned for its racism, violence, and above-the-law attitude recouped at least some credibility locally. By apprehending the perpetrators of a heinous crime against a child, the police had for once brought the disciplinary capacity of the state to bear upon individuals who ‘deserved it’, according to seemingly everyone in Regent Park.

⁵³ Stealing.

⁵⁴ A shopping mall near where Mike used to shine shoes.

“None of Them Were Saints by a Long Shot”

There’s the honest Joe Blow who uses Regent Park: he works hard, his wife’s a good person, she works maybe too. But they just want that stepping stone: to pay low rent in order to save for a house. That was the plan. And a lot of people took advantage of that.

And then there were the families that worked, [but] the wife collected welfare that got shuffled under the table. He moved, left her with the kids, he still did his honest thing, but he had some stolen crap; he wasn’t dealing crack, but he had his fingers dipped in there. Not like the Straight John who wouldn’t do nothing.

And then there was the low-down, don’t-give-a-shit-about-anything, I’m going to rob, steal, I don’t care who you are, if you’re a fellow Regent Parker or not, I’m going to rip you off. I’ll shoot you, kill you, stab you, I don’t care.

- Mike, describing the three categories in his typology of Regent Park residents

After outlining these three types of Regent Parkers, Mike explained that the first (“Joe Blow” or “Straight John”) was the most common, and the third was a small minority; and that stigmatising portrayals of Regent Park tend to get this backwards. Mike would place his teenaged self in the third “don’t-give-a-shit-about-anything” category, deep in the fast-paced, unstable lifestyle of the illicit trades. He remembered at age 17 spending \$8,000 in illegally earned cash on a week-long binge of “drugs and partying” and then being left with very little. “I wasn’t taught how to save, what was right; I was always taught how to get things on the quickie,” he said. Violence was such a constant possibility that Mike recalls developing something akin to a “sixth sense” for sensing danger (or a “Spidey Sense”, we joked, referring to one of Spider-Man’s superpowers). In one instance, it saved him: while on the way to buy a wholesale quantity of drugs, he sensed something was wrong and decided not to go. He later learned that the deal was a set-up; the other party was planning to kill him for an earlier incident in which he “ripped some guy off for magic mushrooms or some shit like that”.

Perhaps contradicting his earlier portrayal of the ruthless, unrestrained criminal, Mike then explained how most people who would be willing to kill or maim someone over a drug deal would never hurt an uninvolved party:

Say I know a guy, I've been in prison with him, who's done armed robbery. And there's a guy who I don't know, off the street. And I have to pick between one of them to watch my kid. I would pick the armed robber, because I know his M.O. is not child molesting. ... I know my kid would be safer in the hands of that armed robber I know, than with the stranger I don't know. Because guys that go down⁵⁵ know that when they get a hold of them in the jail, that's it, lights out. That's one way I could say criminals have morals – they won't hurt a child or kill an innocent person.

On one level, perceptions of crime rates in Regent Park were greatly exaggerated; on another, according to Mike, many of the people who did contribute to the crime rate were less of a menace to uninvolved bystanders than is commonly presumed.

As a Regent Parker of the “don't-give-a-shit-about-anything” type, Mike spent much of his teenaged years and early twenties either in prison, or in the open-air drug and stolen merchandise markets in and around Regent Park. Inspired by the 1979 cult film The Warriors about gang warfare in New York City, Mike and his adolescent friends started a gang of their own and began selling stolen goods such as cigarettes, liquor, meat, clothing, stereos, and power tools in the outdoor space in front of the strip mall in Regent Park South. Their clientele was comprised largely of housing authority maintenance workers, and Regent Parkers of Mike's second category – people who would never steal anything themselves, but would buy stolen goods they could scarcely afford legitimately. For his part, Mike stole from restaurants, factories, and stores. But despite his recollection of having been without moral qualms, he noted that he had always been opposed to home invasions. This was the case even as “break-and-enter

⁵⁵ Go to jail.

skyrocketed,” in his words, as ongoing gentrification in areas just outside of Regent Park presented many tempting opportunities for burglars.

Among my participants, the honest, law-abiding Regent Parkers generally confirmed Mike’s observation that “criminals have morals”. Their input also suggests that many “criminals” were closer to Mike’s second (law-breaking but ethically sound) type than his third (“don’t-give-a-shit-about-anything”) type. Monica, who was a child in the 1980s remembered being aware of, but generally indifferent to, the illegal activities of teenagers and adults she saw every day: “You knew people sold drugs outside the Root N’ Burger – you were aware, but they did their thing and didn’t bug you.” When I asked Sheila what she remembered of the drug trades as a sole-support mother in Regent Park in the early 1980s, she replied:

There was violence at times. But it was based on what people were involved in. I was kind of oblivious. I talked to the guys involved in it every day. They were protective of the people they knew; they were part of the community. None of them were saints by a long shot, and a lot of them are dead now. But they were fathers, and they looked out for kids.

At times, the street presence of the criminally involved was more than merely benign; it was an important component of the informal security system that Regent Parkers provided for themselves. Mike remembered an incident from the early 1980s, when he and a friend (then teenaged criminals) were called upon by a child as a first line of defense against a suspected predator. A young boy approached the two, and pointed out a man who had been offering children money and candy to “go somewhere with him.” Mike accosted the stranger, who responded aggressively; and with that, Mike knocked him down a flight of stairs leading to an underground parking lot. Mike was charged with assault, but was acquitted because the man did not show up to court. He learned from his lawyer that the man was indeed “a convicted sexual predator,” and it was presumed that the man did not show up to court for fear of further

incrimination. Confronting and expelling predators from common grounds was a key component of the unpaid, extra-domestic labour that protected stigmatised children from predators in the absence of ample state protection. As reflected in this story, it was a task to which intimidating young men with fighting experience were particularly well-suited.

Of course, the drug trade did have negative implications for Regent Park youth. Mike explained how Regent Park had “everything a kid could ask for to have fun” legally and safely, but “the other element” was “like a wall” that blocked him from participating. At the age of 13, that “element” included adult drug dealers who sold the most dangerous of recreational drugs – such as phencyclidine (PCP) – to young teenagers such as himself. While generally nonjudgmental regarding most lawbreakers, Mike remained bitter towards dealers of this sort:

What kind of goof does that? Fourteen years old, and I’m fucking injecting needles in my arm full of horse tranquilisers that the local drug dealer was selling out of the Root N Burger! Fourteen years old, you go in, ten bucks, you get a dime of what they called ‘tea’”.

Mike explained from his own experience that youth who used hard drugs at such an early age were likely self-medicating for trauma caused by child abuse. In this sense, they were being re-victimised by unscrupulous and predatory dealers acting on unrestrained self-interest.

Help and Discipline: Supralocal Power Institutions

Monica: It’s been quite consistent – they’ve always been the same. They’re abusive; mean to the wrong people. They take too long to respond. They’re bullies who will attack kids for going out at night without a helmet or lights on their bike, but they don’t touch drug dealers. They’ve always been like that.

In the late 90s, a task force changed that a lot: Mike McCormack⁵⁶ helped to build police-community relations ... learning that we’re not just “niggers and white trash selling drugs”. That’s how they talked about us. You were a “nigger”, a “nigger-lover”, “white trash”, or a “traitor”. While kicking the shit out of people.

RJ: Would they say those words to people’s faces?

Monica: Yes, openly.

⁵⁶ A well-known officer at 51 Division, which was stationed in Regent Park until 2005. McCormack is now head of Toronto’s police union.

-Excerpt from a conversation about the police in the 1980s.

This section addresses the material effects of stigma that manifested in Regent Parkers' interactions with powerful institutions: the police, social services, and the education system in particular. These bodies fit well within Anthony Leeds's concept of "supralocal power institutions": "social bodies" with at least some measure of authority over ordinary people, and "to whose organisational principles any given set of local and ecological conditions is irrelevant" (1994, 221), and that "confront any locality ... with uniform, generalised, organisational, and operational norms or equipment" (1994, 221). When these larger-than-local institutions variously govern, regulate, and/or 'help' at the local level, ideally they treat all localities the same; but in practice these engagements are fraught with systemic inequities and the biases of the individuals who comprise institutions. Monica's portrayal of the state of 'police-community relations' in the 1980s is a particularly stark example of the profound effects of systemic inequity on everyday local life, as manifested through supralocal power institutions.

The concept of hegemony usually refers to a process by which an inequitable social order is upheld in the ephemeral realm of ideas and culture, whereby explanations for inequality that favour the interests of the socioeconomic elite become commonsensical over time (See Gramsci 2003, 12). Yet Gramsci also noted that this ideological hegemony is underwritten by the capacity for coercion through legalised violence over which the state holds a monopoly, even in the most liberal of democracies (2003, 12). This section focuses primarily on this domination – the heavy-handed, coercive side of the social order, which became exceptionally present and visible in Regent Park in the 1970s and early 1980s. Meanwhile, I argue, the intrusive regulations of the housing authority and other social services constituted another sort of coercion by the policing of the domestic sphere in Regent Park. This section also addresses how Regent

Parkers pushed back against these and other pressures, through efforts that are not quite commensurate with the concept of political activism. I argue that resistance of this sort is instead better conceptualised as extra-domestic labour – unpaid work done just outside the household that was necessary for social reproduction. Those who shared in this labour developed a strong, territorial sense of solidarity while confronting the material effects of territorial stigmatisation.

Later in this section, I begin to address how Regent Park became increasingly ‘racialised’ in the local media and popular discourse of the 1980s as a ‘black’ and/or ‘West Indian neighbourhood’. This was inaccurate in two senses: first, it reflected a misconception that the categories of ‘black’ and ‘West Indian / Caribbean’ were interchangeable (as if all black people in Toronto were of Caribbean descent and the converse); secondly, neither black people nor people of Caribbean descent ever comprised a majority of the Regent Park population. Loaded with racism, this assumption also entailed a tendency to blame Regent Park’s problems on an overstated chasm between a monolithic Caribbean ‘culture’ and the “unmarked normality” (Mackey 1999) of Canadian whiteness. This section addresses how these views were at first expressed in a relatively sympathetic but patronising tone, reminiscent of Oscar Lewis’s discussions of a “culture of poverty” (1959); the next chapter addresses the more overtly reactionary turn taken with neoliberalism in the 1990s. Throughout, as a local-level manifestation of systemic racism, black Regent Parkers were particularly targeted by the coercive power of the state as manifested through both the police and social service bureaucracies.

Luxton, Burlie, and “The Cherry Beach Express”

Monica’s memories of the police as an unabashedly racist and violent group of “bullies” is quite dissimilar from what I was told of “the friendly fuzz” by some of the people I consulted

for Chapter Three. As a black woman born in the mid-1970s, Monica's experiences with the officers of the local 51 Division had little in common with those of white participants born in the 1950s. The period covered by this chapter marked a substantive (but not complete) shift in the nature of the relationship between Regent Park's police and civilians, owing largely but not entirely to anti-black racism.

Racism in 51 Division was a local instance of a problem that spanned the entirety of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force.⁵⁷ This included the killings of two black men by police (both elsewhere in Toronto) within just over a year in 1978 and 1979. Several reports in this era provided "long lists of recommended changes in police training, recruitment, and selection" (Littman 1980), but by 1985, only 171 of Metropolitan Toronto's 5,431 police officers were "non-white" (English 1985). The archives contain many examples of normalised, widely accepted, and overt racism among officers. In 1980, for example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission called an inquiry into a wrongful dismissal claim filed by a former South Asian officer. In his testimony, a white officer admitted that he had often called the complainant a "Paki", and that their peer group often used racial epithets (LaPointe 1980). To make the example even more troubling, this same officer had sat on a "race relations committee" established by Regent Park's 51 Division in 1976 (LaPointe 1980). Meanwhile, a black officer testified at the same inquiry that he had experienced similar treatment over the years, but had opted not to raise the issue and had advised the complainant to do the same (LaPointe 1980).

Angela, a white woman born in the mid-1960s, remembered during her youth that "there was respect for the police – everything was way different back then." Her view epitomises one end of a broad spectrum of the nature of civilian-police encounters in Regent Park from 1970-

⁵⁷ Now the Toronto Police Service.

1984. Other participants from this era described what was known as the “Cherry Beach Express” – the police practice of taking a person to a nearby beach at night, beating and abandoning them, and often throwing their shoes in the water. One participant, who recalled her brothers surviving this treatment, said that they were especially vulnerable to this treatment as young black men; even more so if they had been seen in the company of young white women. While racism was clearly a strong factor in victimisation by the police, I also interviewed some white men from Regent Park who had survived the same treatment in their youth. The practice was also well-known outside of Regent Park: for example, a new-wave band provided a first-person narrative of surviving “the Cherry Beach Express” in the lyrics to their 1984 radio hit of the same name (Pukka Orchestra 1984). And in another example of the targeting of stigmatised persons by the police, men “leaving gay bars late at night” in this era were also fearful of being unjustly apprehended and taken to Cherry Beach (McCaskell 2016).

At the other end of the spectrum were early iterations of what is now valorised as ‘community policing’. Slightly predating this era in 1968, The Toronto Star profiled two young police officers who would roam Regent Park in plainclothes, attempting to win the trust of local teenagers; according to the Star, they were considerably successful at this (Harrison 1968). No one I spoke to remembered the pair profiled by the Star, but some remembered another pair named Luxton and Burlie who did much the same thing several years later. Bobby, a white man born in the late 1950s, summed up the situation as such:

Cops – they were bad...some of them were. They would take you down to Cherry Beach, beat the shit out of you and leave you there. [Others] were sneaky. Not all of them – but the ones that were, were obvious. They’d try to fit in, want to sit at the bar with you and get information from you, shit like that. Like Luxton and Burlie – Luxton was “Babyface”.

By Bobby's account, few (if any) of his peers took "Babyface" and Burlie seriously, and generally mocked their thinly veiled attempts at gathering inside information. The same pair were once gently derided in the "Regent Park youth" page of the tenant association's newsletter, in what seems to have been a mockery of both their feigned earnestness and true intentions: "Joe Cocker busted in Australia", the snippet read, referring to the recent arrest of the popular American musician for marijuana possession. "Luxton and Burlie sure get around!" (Regent Park Community Improvement Association 1972b).

Policing the Domestic Sphere

At a time when "half of Regent Park's units [were] occupied by sole support mothers on mother's allowance" (Rickwood 1984), these women were often subject to intrusive and patronising treatment from front-line workers inspecting whether they were legitimate recipients of these supports. As discussed in the previous chapter, this sort of policing of the domestic sphere had occurred in the past, but by the 1970s and early 1980s it appeared more vindictive in line with strains of racism and austerity that foreshadowed the neoliberal restructuring of social services in Ontario in the 1990s.

The Regent Park Area Sole-Support Mothers' Group addressed these issues in a pair of short video documentaries. One member described being inspected by welfare officials as such:

You're not allowed to have any privacy, because you're not a human being ... they search for men's clothing in your apartment. You're not allowed to have a double bed ... You're not allowed to have a relationship because they own you. ... When you go for your yearly report, they ask you, "How much money do you have in your pockets right now?" When they know they don't give you enough to live on. You live below the poverty line (Regent Park Area Sole Support Mothers' Group 1984).

Other women in the film remembered unannounced visits from case workers demanding they produce a "work sheet", which was to bear signatures from at least six people every two weeks

attesting to the fact that the woman had been looking for a job. One member explained how securing a part-time job while remaining a full-time parent would have pushed her income over the permitted maximum for recipients, resulting in a net loss of income for working more (Regent Park Area Sole Support Mothers' Group 1984).

The Metro Toronto Housing Authority (MTHA) – the organ of the Ontario Housing Corporation that oversaw Regent Park at the time – appeared as a similarly coercive and intrusive bureaucracy. The Regent Park Sole Support Mothers Group satirised the MTHA in a series of biting humourous skits set in its local office. They feature a front-line housing worker who berates a tenant who was late paying her rent because of a family emergency. The worker accuses the tenant of freeloading, through a string of increasingly racist allegations that culminate with “all you people come here from the West Indies” to exploit “Ontario taxpayers”. In another scene, a tenant asks to be transferred to a new unit in hopes of avoiding her abusive ex-boyfriend's unwanted visits; the worker harangues the woman for owning a double bed, and accuses her of poor parenting before denying her request for a transfer. Fictional and deliberately exaggerated as they were, these amateur productions are caricatures of real-life scenarios that appear throughout the archives and the memories of my participants.

In recent years, widespread racist patterns and practices on the part of children's aid societies have received considerable attention from academic researchers and journalists alike (e.g. Contenta et al. 2015, Contenta & Rankin 2016). These present-day patterns of inequity can be traced back to the early 1980s, when the local children's aid society publicly struggled with the overrepresentation of black children in its caseload. A Globe and Mail report from 1981 attributed the struggles of black (read as interchangeable with Caribbean) families to a three-step process of “culture clash”. First, the children “find their parents' values useless outside family

life, and even detrimental, especially at school where they are ostracised for being different”; second, the children’s new “preference for the Canadian lifestyle” places them in conflict with their parents; and finally, “they rebel against society” through violence, truancy, and in some cases suicidal ideation (Lavigne 1981). The report also blamed “the ignorance” of some teachers who do not understand “the West Indian culture” (Lavigne 1981). To mitigate these problems, the Children’s Aid Society assigned five “black West Indian child care workers” to an after school arts program and homework club for black children in the Regent Park area. One of the workers echoed the idea of “culture clash” by explaining that part of the problem lay in the inability of teachers to understand children’s accents and aspects of nonverbal communication that differed from Canadian norms, such as a Commonwealth Caribbean cultural norm that a child must avoid making eye contact when being addressed by an adult (Lavigne 1981).

A 1982 document for “helping professionals” on “West Indians in Toronto” reflects the full extent to which black / Caribbean people were ‘othered’ at the time, and the extent to which this othering was focused on the domestic sphere. A manual of sorts, the document focuses on the development of a “culture-specific family life education program” for Caribbean clients in the inner-suburban district of Downsview (Christiansen et al. 1982). To establish context, it begins by telling the history of the entire Caribbean from European conquest to the present, replete with a structural-functionalist analysis of how centuries of slavery gave rise to a family structure centered on matrilineality and serial polygyny. For helping professionals, the most relevant implication of this history was that “West Indians” were more likely to seek support from their large extended families than from social service agencies (Christiansen et al. 1982, 53). This inherent disinterest in the helping hands of charity and the state was allegedly exacerbated by syncretic religious beliefs, whereby “many see themselves as victims of spiritual

actions beyond human control” and thus sought help from Obeahmen rather than social workers (Christiansen et al. 1982, 53). The document advised professionals that “engaging clients with a fatalistic attitude demands a genuine acceptance of their right to these perceptions and beliefs”, and to focus on “the redirection of energies (most of which were previously spent in ritualistic behaviours) into the development of more productive life skills” (Christiansen et al. 1982, 109-110). I return to this issue later in the chapter to address ways in which black and Caribbean families were also ‘othered’ by Regent Parkers themselves.

“Downtown Kids Aren’t Dumb”

The othering of the children of Caribbean families was a locally specific iteration of racism that was exhibited strongly in schools serving Regent Park. A relatively new development, it intersected with earlier forms of anti-black racism, and with the classism and “territorial stigmatisation” (Purdy 2003a, 271) that afflicted all Regent Parkers by virtue of where they lived. This section concludes by returning to the early 1970s, when parents from Regent Park and adjacent areas struggled against classism as it affected their children at school.

In 1971, the Park School Community Council drew attention to longstanding problems at the non-denominational public school located at the edge of Regent Park South on Shuter Street.⁵⁸ In their report, Downtown Kids Aren’t Dumb, They Need a Better Program, the Park School Community Council angrily outlined a wide range of problems that amounted to the systemic neglect and marginalisation of their children. The report was framed as a response to the commentary of a school board trustee (which was supported by a board superintendent, and by a teachers’ union representative) that attributed the correlation of low grades and low family income to the innate intellectual limitations of working class students and their parents (Park

⁵⁸ Renamed Nelson Mandela Park Public School in 2001.

School Community Council 1971, 2). The Council was outraged, and countered that the true problems were laziness, apathy, and low expectations for “downtown kids” on the part of many teachers.

The “Park School Brief”, as it was also called, alleged that teachers were willfully ignoring students’ difficulties with reading so they could avoid the demanding work of teaching literacy. Students were uncaringly passed into grades for which they lacked the fundamental skills to succeed, and then pathologised for their inevitable failure that resulted. From there, they were placed into a so-called “opportunity” stream which, despite its euphemistic name, foreclosed any and all opportunities for higher education. The Council recommended hiring teaching aides, training teachers more rigorously, and conducting standardised reading tests at regular intervals. The director of the board of education called a meeting to consider the Brief, but not enough board members attended and so it lacked the quorum necessary to initiate any action. The RPCIA’s interpretation was that “it seemed that the parents in Regent Park had been duped into attending a meeting which had been deliberately planned not to succeed” (1972a).

The problems documented by the Park School Community Council appeared in the memories of participants who were in primary school at the time. But Bobby in particular was surprisingly light-hearted in this regard:

Park School was great. Apparently the school board used to just dump teachers there who weren’t so good, but, all of us had a good relationship. There would be fistfights between students and teachers, but it was forgotten the next day.

In a similarly casual tone, Bobby then remembered how a physically imposing teacher who had once played professional football would reprimand a boy by punching a locker next to his head, warning that he would dent the student’s skull rather than a locker should he misbehave again. Like the male participants I consulted for Chapter Three, Bobby tended to be blithe when

describing acts that were patently abusive by contemporary standards. While this may be owing to a general tendency towards nostalgia in recalling one's own childhood, it also fits the pattern addressed in the previous chapter in which working class boys respected authoritarianism and 'toughness' on the part of male teachers. In these examples, boys accepted (if not embraced) coercion when it was exercised by a charismatic male authority figure within the parameters of hegemonic masculinity.

Other participants seemed oblivious or disinterested in schooling as a topic of discussion. One woman who attended another Regent Park-area school told me that "school was good; the teachers were all good; classes were smaller than they are today", and then changed the subject. Another replied just by explaining that she was proud to have been one of five generations of her family who had attended Nelson Mandela Park Public School. I also interviewed a man whose mother had been instrumental in the writing of Downtown Kids Aren't Dumb. He remembered being confused as to what she was fighting for, since "everything seemed fine" to him. "I didn't understand that myself – when I went to school there, I wound up with a very good education compared to many others," he said. He also noted, however, that many of his peers grew up to be "functionally illiterate" in adulthood, and speculated that the reason "might have been the difference in my home life compared to theirs". It would seem that this parent-activist managed to shield her own children from the worst effects of a substandard education system on a day-to-day basis, while also making time to fight for a better system in the medium and long terms.

Another important effort towards educational reform from this period was a campaign by politically active residents for the construction of a new primary school. The original concept was to build the school in empty space in Regent Park. The plan was not approved, owing in part to the misconception that public housing projects were isolated enclaves. One trustee said that

Regent Park was “the last place in the world” to build a school, predicting that if children lived and went to school within the same block, they would never have reason to venture outside of it, and this would lead to a community-wide social myopia that would in turn “create a ghetto” (Toronto Star 1970). Instead, the Toronto Board of Education expropriated 52 households across the street from the eastern boundary of Regent Park North, and cleared the land to build a school there. The plan was fiercely resisted by some of the homeowners,⁵⁹ and to add insult to injury, plans for the school stagnated soon after the land was cleared. By 1972, The Toronto Star ridiculed the Board for paying a million dollars for a site it might never use (Moon 1972, 4).

The RPCIA newsletter published several appeals from the Oak Street Citizens Committee (named for the street on which the school was to be built), which had federal funding to run educational programs out of a portable on the site, and drew up ambitious plans for a school that would double as a community centre of sorts and feature an Olympic-sized pool. Despite this, the school plan was cancelled in 1974, purportedly due to a declining child population in the area. For years, much of the cleared land remained an urban prairie adjacent to a vacant industrial building, with “thousands of windows” serving as “target practice”, according to one participant; it was also a popular venue for underage drinking and other illicit uses. Eventually, a nonprofit housing cooperative was constructed on the site and opened in 1985.

Meanwhile, Park Public School continued to exhibit the same problems and remained mired in administrative disarray. In 1978, all 38 of its teachers requested, en masse, to be transferred to other schools “out of frustration” over “the board’s indifference to the plight of

⁵⁹ Among the outraged residents were an elderly couple then facing their second expropriation. They had previously been forced to leave their Arnold Street home in the 1950s to accommodate the construction of Regent Park South (Strupat 1969, 6).

their students” (Vienneau 1979). Meanwhile, five principals had come and gone between 1968 and 1979. A Board of Education report found in 1979 that 60% of eighth grade Park School graduates – “most of them needy and ethnic” (Vienneau 1979) - were still being sent to “dead-end occupational and vocational schools” where they were not expected to exceed a third grade level of literacy, and would be ineligible for admission to college, university, or training in a skilled trade (Fluxgold 1979, 5). Meanwhile, by comparison, 98.9% of students from the wealthy Forest Hill area went to a university-oriented high school (Vienneau 1979).

Mike attended a Catholic primary school near Regent Park in the 1970s, and described his experiences there as “pretty rough”. There, he and his friends were often blamed for things they did not do because they were known to be “shit-disturbers” from Regent Park. He did not learn to read or write until being sent to a rural, prison-like “training school” in grade seven. Mike then traced the devastating long-range effects of classist streaming on himself, his peers, and some of their children:

I didn’t learn much...I have two friends who can’t read and write to this day. How did they ever get to high school? ... And why aren’t these guys suing the school board for allowing this to happen? ... They had no chance. And the one friend had dyslexia ... [but] they said, “Push him through, push him through”. And today he can’t read or write, he doesn’t work, he’s addicted to OxyContin. And my other friend, he’s a criminal still, [and] his kids are following in his footsteps...it’s like a snowball of shit.

Lacking the protection of involved, conscientious parents, Mike and his friends were vulnerable to the full extent of the same neglect and abuses documented at the nearby Park Public School.

Meanwhile, like Regent Park itself, the schools that served the area had become exceptionally multicultural spaces in a generally diversifying city. A 1980 feature in The Toronto Star on multiculturalism took pride in Canada’s antiracist progress, especially that of Toronto in particular. It was illustrated by a photograph of five Park Public School pupils, each of them born

in a different country: Portugal, Guyana, Poland, Taiwan, and an unspecified nation-state in “the West Indies” (Walker 1980). This feature reflects how a celebratory discourse of multiculturalism glossed over the harsh realities of racism, both in its systemic and interpersonal varieties, in the schools that served Regent Park.

In 1978, for example, the Globe and Mail reported on an acrimonious meeting in Regent Park during which “two new Canadian parents” reported that their children and others had been told by teachers to Anglicise their names, forget their first languages, and that “all other countries are inferior to Canada” (Globe and Mail 1978). The article also quoted “a black woman from Belize” who said her children were being treated as “second-class citizens” (Globe and Mail 1978). One of my participants, a black Nova Scotian woman whose children were in primary school in the early 1980s, remembered “a really defeatist attitude” and “low expectations of the kids” on the part of teachers. Despite her own high expectations for her son despite his struggles in school, the teacher “acted like he didn't want to waste resources on him.”

Local schools, meanwhile, were conflicted spaces that sometimes propagated the racist and otherwise oppressive side of life in 1980s Toronto, but also provided a valued education for children and a venue for parents to build networks of friendship and mutual support. Sheila recalled feeling “isolated” upon moving into Regent Park as a young sole-support parent, but soon found that it was “like a small town – people knew your name and your business”. She made her first local friendships through drop-in programs at her child’s school. Another participant described a similar experience upon moving to Regent Park, but also found that some teachers “had no faith” in local children. While volunteering at a school lunch program, she found a teacher muttering “they’ll probably be in jail soon” while looking at the grade-school children in her care. At another point, a teacher once told the woman that she should not expect

her son to “get by on his good looks alone”, which she interpreted as an attempt to evade responsibility for her precocious son’s difficulties in the classroom by distracting her with a patronising and trivialising platitude. “They thought it was normal to talk and act like that,” she remembered. “A lot of parents were just putting up with it, so we began to organise parents to try to empower them.” Much of this “organizing” involved researching school board policies regarding the rights of students and parents, and sharing this information with other parents. The participant had done this herself when her son learned he was to spend his next grade in the classroom of a teacher who had previously made him feel “alienated and picked on.” When her initial request for a transfer was rebuffed, “I told them I didn't care about technicalities – I wouldn’t let them put him in that class”. Nevertheless, she had learned that the school board was indeed obligated to grant her request and her son was placed with a different teacher the following year.

This section has addressed how stigma materialised in the 1970s and early 1980s in Regent Parkers’ interactions with the “supralocal power institutions” (Leeds 1994, 221) that exercised coercive state power over their lives: the police, housing and welfare bureaucracies, and the education system. Sadly, much of it is a story of official ineptitude, discrimination, and outright violence. Though the situation remained largely bleak at the time, the chapters that follow address how the attention raised by their efforts led to substantive improvements for future generations. Through the unpaid labour of community-building and political organising, Regent Parkers remained resilient in the face of the dangers and frustrations posed by the official bodies that held coercive power over them.

New Economy, New Differences

This section addresses the local-level impacts of economic, demographic, and cultural changes that occurred in Canada from 1970-1984. Working-class upward mobility, which Regent Park had been designed in part to foster, was compromised by economic tumult and deindustrialisation. Elite discourse began to include early strains of the neoliberal ideology that became commonsensical by the 1990s and resulted in the further residualisation of public housing. Meanwhile, as addressed above, the demographic composition of Regent Park began to change in line with multiculturalism, a concept with pleasant connotations of inclusion and diversity that were undercut by the harsh realities of interpersonal prejudice and systemic racism. This section addresses how the tension between the hopes and the realities of multiculturalism interacted with the pre-existing stigmatisation of Regent Park, such that the housing project was cast as a hotbed of racial conflict by the local media in the mid-1970s, and later as a “black” and/or “West Indian neighbourhood” by the 1980s. I focus on how the economic and demographic changes of the era were reflected in the emic class categories through which people identified themselves and their peers, as racism, territorial conflict, and a deindustrialising economy led to new expressions of both differentiation and solidarity.

From Consensus to Conflict

By contemporary standards, the political-economic status quo of this period was relatively benign towards Regent Parkers. Keynesianism was at its apex in Canada before its material and ideological foundations were compromised in the years following the 1973 oil-shock recession. As a stagnant (at times shrinking) economy undermined the “postwar consensus between capital and labor” that was “premised on an ever-expanding economic pie to be shared by the two”, the earliest traces of a movement towards neoliberalism in Canada began in the

mid-1970s (Lightman 2003, 20). The election of the Brian Mulroney Conservative government in 1984 is often taken as an indication of Canada's alignment with neoliberalism as a new normality, led by Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the United States (Gibbs & Leech 2009, Swarts 2013). Whiteside identified the period of 1970 to 1984 as a "crisis in global capitalism" brought on by overaccumulation, for which "the emergence of neoliberalism" was employed in Canada as a "fix" (2009, 80). A sharp downturn in corporate profitability in the United States between 1965 and 1973 was "of special concern for Canada given its branch-plant status", such that "overaccumulation" now afflicted Canadian manufacturing in the form of 'high unemployment of labor and capacity, slow growth of output, and limited accumulation of capital'" (Whiteside 2009, 82, citing Webber and Rigby 1986).

David Katz argues that Canada's "fairly standard welfare state" inventory of health care, universal family allowances, "generous employment benefits", and income supports reached an "apogee", roughly defined, from 1968 to 1978 (Katz 2003, 29). But the belief that profitability was threatened by "the Keynesian class compromise" was gaining credibility and influence, and "became enshrined in policy to a significant degree by the early 1980s" (Whiteside 2009, 82). Following elite resistance to measures such as Trudeau's National Energy Program and proposed tax reforms, Katz argues that "big business" mounted "an ambitious campaign to reverse the profit slide that had begun in the early 1970s" by attacking "what they saw as excessive wage demands" and "an overly generous" Keynesian welfare state in the process (Katz 2003, 31). Carroll and Shaw (2001) identified a "neoliberal policy bloc" that began to emerge in 1976, comprised of five policy groups that came to prominence in this period and were made up of the "organic intellectuals" of the capitalist elite; defined in Gramscian terms, they contributed to the "consolidation of neoliberal hegemony" in Canadian public policy (2001, 196). The Fraser

Institute think tank, for example, was treated as right-wing “lunatic-fringe” when it was founded in 1974, but by the 1990s was often consulted by the mainstream media for its ‘expert’ opinion on social policy (Carroll and Shaw 2001, 202).

These ideological changes among the elite were not immediately apparent at the local level, or even in electoral politics. Provincially, the Progressive Conservative party (PC) had held power since 1943; its “Red Toryism” was especially pronounced under the premiership of Bill Davis from 1971 to 1985 (Fanelli and Thomas 2011, 147). Brownsey described these PCs as a “brokerage party”, whose right-wing rank-and-file elements were kept in line by a more centrist leadership (1999, 64). Meanwhile, municipal politics were also dominated by Red Toryism in the form of the 14-year, vastly popular mayoralty of David Crombie. Rounding out the “local political culture”, according to Kipfer and Keil, was the “urbanism” of Jane Jacobs, and middle-class gentrifiers and activists who succeeded at blocking several key urban renewal schemes (2002, 239).

Throughout, the local economy was steadily deindustrialising and corporatising (Caulfield 1994, 75-87). To summarise Caulfield’s overview of these changes, manufacturing jobs comprised “more than half the inner municipality’s workforce” in 1951, for a total of over 150,000 jobs; by the 1960s, this total was reduced by roughly half, and then by another 28% in the 1970s (1994, 76). Meanwhile, owing to “Toronto’s growing importance as the capital of corporate and financial activity in Canada”, by 1985 “the white-collar and service sectors as a whole accounted for almost three-quarters of all employment” (Caulfield 1994, 82). Through gentrification and new development, much of the downtown core was transformed to the tastes of “the city’s affluent white-collar workforce” (Caulfield 1994, 84), a process which continues in earnest at the time of the writing of this dissertation.

Regent Parkers, particularly youth, were among those least likely to benefit from a corporatised and deindustrialised economy. A study from 1978 found that the youth unemployment rate in Regent Park was 68%, as compared to 14.5% among 15-to-24-year-olds nationally, and 8.1% among Canadians of all ages (Mays et al. 1978, 1). The authors of this study framed most of their findings as evidence against stereotypes of unemployed youth as feckless and lazy, noting that “the attitudes to work of Regent Park youth are not significantly different from the attitudes to work of the Canadian population as a whole” (Mays et al. 1978, 1). In a letter to the editor of the Toronto Star, a sociologist who contributed to the report noted that in at least one sense, Regent Parkers were being exploited in that their predicament “provided gainful work for countless middle class bureaucrats and professional helpers who attempt to ‘solve’ the problems of poverty, with relatively little success” (Rockman 1978). Rockman went on to suggest that “the unemployed Regent Park youth ... might at least be compensated for furnishing so much employment for socially advantaged professionals” (Rockman 1978).

“New Smells of Cooking in the Hallways, New Frictions”

The contents of a community newsletter from the early 1970s would not have suggested that Regent Park was about to be afflicted with a citywide reputation for racist violence. For that matter, the amateur publication of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association was more tactful and less ethnocentric than much of the professional mainstream media of the day when it came to the topic of ‘multiculturalism’. The newsletter promoted the efforts on the part of the Regent Park Services Unit to welcome and support newcomers: the Unit provided free English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults, solicited volunteers to babysit the children of learners, and urged native English speakers to extend their friendship. “If we were in their country they would be just as genial and courteous to us”, two residents wrote (Fowler and

Downing 1972). A relatively proportionate number of contributors to the newsletter were racialised persons, and the regular “tenants’ favourite recipes” section listed South Asian and Caribbean dishes alongside British staples without exoticising them.

During the 1970s, the concept of “multiculturalism” became enshrined in federal policy which, alongside changes to immigration policy, transformed Canadian demographics – particularly in the three largest cities of Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver. Previously, English Canada was “for most purposes, a monocultural, monolingual, single-nation state, and made no apologies for being so” (Day 2000, 178). Abu-Laban traces this shift back to the federal White Paper on Immigration of 1966, which “merged the concept of non-discrimination with a belief that Canada’s expanding industrial economy required skilled immigrants” (1998, 75). In 1967, the Department of Manpower and Immigration introduced a “universally applicable point system” – an ostensibly objective measure of a potential immigrant’s desirability and employability, which was purported to redress the discriminatory and/or arbitrary procedures of the past (Abu-Laban 1998, 75). The “clear call for more immigration” of the White Paper was muted in the 1974 Green Paper, however, which reiterated the centrality of economic need in immigration policy-making during “an era of stagflation”, and which informed a new Immigration Act in 1976 that finally replaced its 1954 predecessor (Abu-Laban 1998, 75).

Outlined by Dewing, other institutional turning points include the 1969 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which “recommended the ‘integration’ (not assimilation) into Canadian society of non-Charter ethnic groups⁶⁰ with full citizenship rights and equal participation in Canada’s institutional structure” (Dewing 2013, 3). The “multicultural policy within a bilingual framework” was introduced by the Pierre Trudeau government in

⁶⁰ Non-English or French-Canadian.

October 1971, and a Ministry of Multiculturalism was created in 1973 (Dewing 2013, 3).

Dewing and Leman have identified four senses in which multiculturalism has since become ubiquitous in Canadian society: as ideology, as policy, as a “process” of “intergroup dynamics”, and as “a sociological fact” (2013).

Ever since, Toronto’s international branding has been built on the simultaneous celebration of multiculturalism and disavowal of racism. As Teelucksingh has observed, “easily consumed and packaged versions of race” have long been used to market Canadian cities to global visitors and investors; but rather than reaping the benefits, most racialised persons are “shunned to the status of otherness” in terms of access to quality housing, employment, and other essentials (2006, 1). This contradiction dates back to the 1970s, when Toronto was “world renowned” as “the great metropolitan city of North America which had ‘made it’” (Council of Metropolitan Toronto 1977, 22). The most prominent feature of Toronto’s global reputation, according to a municipal report from this period, was that “people of all colours, ethnic backgrounds and religious traditions could enjoy its public places in safety” (Council of Metropolitan Toronto 1977, 22).

However, this reputation obfuscated an intensifying reality of racism, including nearly-lethal racist violence. In 1976, for example, two reported incidents occurred on the Toronto subway system in which men of South Asian descent were attacked by youths yelling racist epithets. In one case, the victim was barely saved as he lay on the tracks with both legs broken (Hakala 1976, Norris 1977). The situation had worsened to the point that even an outlet of the American media, which is normally oblivious to Canadian current events, had aired a report on racist violence in Toronto (Council of Metropolitan Toronto 1977, 22).

Other sources outline how deeply entrenched racism was at the time, in both its systemic and interpersonal varieties. Henry conducted a questionnaire in 1976 with “617 white Torontonians,” and found that half of them “indicated some belief in negative stereotypes against visible minorities,” while 16% could “be considered to be extremely racist” (Henry 1978, 1-3). In 1981, a Toronto Star poll found that 62% of respondents “admit they are prejudiced to some degree”, up from 49% in 1980 (McNenly 1981). “With 80,000 people in Metro unable to find work,” the article continues, “residents are grumbling that they are seeing more and more immigrants who they feel are taking scarce jobs”. Some respondents reported discomfort with sitting next to “an immigrant” on a bus or airplane, “especially if they are East Indian or Pakistani” (McNenly 1981). In Day’s analysis, the racism of this era was one of many examples in which “Every time the Canadian government had set out to acquire foreign bodies, it had encountered a nativist reaction from existing Canadians” (2000, 186).

From the 1970s to the time of writing, Regent Park has epitomised the contradiction between multicultural urban branding and the reality of racialised poverty: it is among the city’s most visibly multicultural and poorest localities. As was done with other topics, Regent Park has often been employed as a venue for coverage of multiculturalism when literally dozens of other localities could have been selected to make the same points. This can be traced back to 1975, with the first mention of “multiculturalism” and “Regent Park” in the same mass-market newspaper article (Gerrard 1975). The article explained how an estimated 35 percent of the population of Regent Park was “no longer Anglo-Saxon” – they were ethnic newcomers who brought “new ways, new smells of cooking in the hallways, new frictions.”

June 1976

At the same time, Regent Park was also used as a setting for case studies of Toronto's racist side; while reflecting an ugly reality, many of these reports were of dubious accuracy. In these early days of multiculturalism, and at a time when race riots were a persistent problem in American cities, the mainstream Canadian press lacked the insight and vocabulary it would take to convey the complexities of inter-ethnic relations in a place like Regent Park and its environs. Several of my participants explained that just as friendships were formed within and across ethnic divides, so too were rivalries; hence a fight involving youth of multiple ethnicities was not necessarily a racial fight, and sides were not necessarily chosen by ethnicity. In some cases, these nuances were lost upon journalists covering violence. In 1973, a Toronto Star report on a local brawl bore the headline, "7 arrested after racial fights" (Toronto Star 1973a). The Star followed up the next day to report a general consensus among combatants, police, and bystanders alike that the conflict was not a "race riot", but rather a fight between two groups that each included black and white members (Devitt 1973). The Star's retraction aside, this association with racial violence became a powerful new component of the stigmatisation of Regent Park.

The most dramatic example of these problems – both the reality of racism, and its stigmatising overrepresentation – was a spate of youth violence that occurred in Regent Park North in June, 1976. The problems began with a battle fought by groups defined in part, but not entirely, by ethnicity; this was oversimplified in the local media as a "race riot". In the aftermath, other acts of violence occurred that were undeniably racist, owing at least some extent to the interventions of an outsider fringe-right group. As one result, nearly every mention of Regent Park in the newspapers in 1976 was part of a story about racism. This subsection pieces together

the events of June, 1976 from the memories of my participants,⁶¹ mainstream and ‘ethnic’ media archives, a report by the local school board, and Sean Purdy’s historical interpretations of the incidents (2003a, 279-286).

The violence of 1976 stemmed from escalating tensions between two groups: one was comprised of Jamaican youth from Regent Park, and their friends from outside, who played soccer at a baseball diamond in Regent Park North. The other was comprised of black and white Canadian Regent Parkers who used the same diamond for baseball. These new lines of division also cut across a pre-existing North vs. South divide that was already “sometimes a source of hostility” (Clarke et al. 1976, 2). Not simply a race riot, it was a conflict based on lines drawn according to three variables that were not mutually exclusive or neatly overlapping: ‘race’ (black and white), nationality (Jamaican and non-Jamaican), and territorial allegiance (both North versus South, and Regent Parker versus outsider). The violence erupted on Saturday June 5, 1976, when “a white youth was cut by a black Jamaican youth” at the North Regent baseball diamond; the victim felt that the police fell short of due diligence in their search for his assailant (Clarke et al. 1976, 4). This led to a “general feeling of unrest” in Regent Park that escalated into the morning after, when “both black and white youths got up earlier than usual and were expecting trouble” (Clarke et al. 1976, 5). Residents called a meeting for community representatives, police, and community guardians at the baseball diamond on Monday June 7. That day, a “clash” occurred that was difficult to outline “because of conflicting interpretations and confusion at the time of the incident” (Clarke et al. 1976, 5). It began when a black youth stabbed a white youth, and then “a group of whites chased some blacks,” some with baseball bats

⁶¹ Regrettably, all of my participants who lived in Regent Park in June, 1976 are white and Canadian-born. While cognizant that individuals do not speak for groups, I have attempted to redress this bias by drawing on archival sources that document the views of black residents at the time.

– but at this point, “the Black Canadians who were watching did not initially perceive the fight as racial”, as “there were no derogatory remarks or threats of violence toward them” (Clarke et al. 1976, 5).

Later, some white youth stormed a townhouse in Regent Park South, smashing windows and furniture. The police response was so slow that “the black mother of the household” ran to the station herself, while “the blacks chased the whites out of the house” (Clarke et al. 1976, 5). When security staff and other tenants arrived, “they found members of the white supremacist Western Guard passing out hate literature, and encouraging the whites to fight the blacks” (Clarke et al. 1976, 6). Smaller disturbances followed, youths were arrested, and rumours of a black baby being kidnapped were dispelled by RPCIA members and the police – who “did a good job in restoring order”, it was “generally agreed” (Clarke et al. 1976, 6).

Small-market newspapers that catered to black Torontonians, particularly those of Caribbean heritage, emphasised that Regent Park has been “plagued by what has been described as racial violence” for several days (Lewis 1976). As Contrast summarised the events:

... eight youths have been arrested on five charges. In an incident, white youths threw stones into the second storey window of a black family’s apartment. A racial clash in a later incident resulted in two white youths being taken to the Wellesley Hospital, one was detained after receiving slashes to the arms during a fight. A construction worker needed 65 stitches to close a cut in his arm which he received when slashed by a youth. At a meeting of citizens concerned about the outbreak of violence, a youth pulled a knife causing the meeting to end abruptly.

Police had increased their patrols and would continue to do so “until some form of normalcy returns to the area” (Lewis 1976). The local staff superintendent was quoted as denying there was any evidence that the violence had been “racially motivated”, however, as “the opposing factions are a mixture of black and white” (Lewis 1976). Likewise, Harold Jackman, a black Trinidadian Regent Parker who was then RPCIA president, denied there were significant racial

problems in the community. Instead, Jackman blamed high unemployment, the prevalence of drugs and alcohol, and the meddling of a small but ardent white supremacist group called the Western Guard.

“Within hours” of the first incidents, Jackman told Contrast, Western Guard members went leafleting in Regent Park, “influencing youths to riot” in an attempt to “make this place like Thistletown” (Lewis 1976).⁶² The RPCIA reportedly urged the Ontario Housing Corporation to enforce trespass regulations to rid Regent Park of the Western Guard and any other unwanted interlopers (Lewis 1976). When facing charges for other incidents a year later, lifelong white supremacist activist Don Andrews testified that the Western Guard had sent “patrols” into Regent Park “to protect whites from being beaten up by blacks” (Globe and Mail 1977). The Islander, another black / Caribbean-focused newspaper, reported that white and black residents corroborated Jackman’s claim that “people from outside the community stir up tensions” (Johnson 1976).

A week later, Contrast reported that despite a “lull” in the violence, “at least one family” was “still being harassed”: a week after their home had been broken into and vandalised, the family now found “a black, scare-crow like effigy on their front lawn. Written on the figure was ‘Kill all Jamaicans, or else’” (Chong 1976). The family had also received a phone call “from the Western Guard” which played a recorded voice stating that “Regent Park is for the white kids and not for immigrants.” Two weeks later, The Islander spoke to “a Jamaican widow and mother of a 9 year old girl” who said all the windows of her first-floor apartment were smashed “by a group of white youths who screamed nasty racial slurs at her” (The Islander 1976a).

⁶² Thistletown is a housing project in Rexdale (northwestern Toronto) where racial fights had occurred in 1975, owing to the Western Guard to at least some extent.

Among my participants who lived in Regent Park at the time, no two remembered the events of June 1976 or the general state of inter-ethnic relations in the same way. One woman said that problems between youth from Regent Park North and South were common; a man said they were not. I was told there were sometimes conflicts between white and black Jamaican Regent Parkers; at other times, between black Canadian and black Jamaican women. A white participant explained that long-term white and black residents, and black newcomers from Nova Scotia, had “no problem integrating” in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Among them, their shared Canadian nationality trumped ethnoracial difference, and together they resented the black Jamaican immigrants who generally arrived later in the 1970s. They soon recognised the folly of excluding people from their ‘mixed’ group based on nationality, however, and Jamaicans were soon welcomed into the ‘mixed’ category of the Regent Parker. Another man insisted he remembered the incident I described, but then recounted a seemingly different situation in which two black men came to blows during an argument, triggering a skirmish involving white and black associates of each that was foolishly labelled a race riot. He angrily denied there was ever violence along the lines of race, and alleged this was simply a lie perpetuated by the media to sell papers.

One white participant said the violence of June 1976 began when several black youth visiting Regent Park from Detroit attacked “one of our guys”, and insinuated that race was indeed a factor. However, another white man told me that in the 1970s, violence in Regent Park escalated from one-on-one fights to stabbings for the first time. Before that, “you’d fight, shake hands and have a beer. It wasn’t until a lot of blacks came in that it changed – and I’m not prejudiced, I have lots of black friends, but that’s how it was.” A woman said she remembered hearing black versus white fights nightly from her bedroom window near the swimming pool in

Regent Park North, and that this was “the only bad part” about living in Regent Park. She said her more bigoted neighbours blamed the trouble on black residents of Regent Park South, and began demanding that any black person they ran into justify their presence in Regent Park North.

Mike remembered the violence as primarily a result of the North / South divide:

RJ: I’m reading the old papers from back then, and it said in ‘76 there was like a fight between black and white kids. And they weren’t sure if it was about race or if it was...

Mike: I remember that. It was about ’76, it was?

RJ: What was it really about?

Mike: Nah, it was...I remember Terry was loading his friend’s car up with baseball bats. And they were going, “There’s gonna be a beef war!” But it was more just North Regent and South Regent than race, I think. Because it was crazy! Everybody had friends on both sides of the fence! I think North was separated; I had what I called dual citizenship, I had friends in North Regent and in South. So I could go anywhere in Regent I wanted. But there was something to that extent; South didn’t go in North much, North didn’t go in South. ... But yeah, that wasn’t...nah, it might have been a black guy and a white guy who started fighting, but...no way, it wasn’t race. If it was, it was only in a few people’s minds, or the media.

When I asked Mike whether there was much tension between black and white Regent Parkers, he reminded me of another key element of Canadian racism that was mostly missing from archival sources on the issue: put bluntly, cowardice. Mike explained that those who held racist views would generally only express them while in all-white company:

RJ: Was there much...did people mostly get along between black and white, things like that, was there much problems?

Mike: Nope, not when I was growing up, man. I remember in Regent Park there was probably about 20 families who were black, and a couple East Indian families. But everybody got along. There was also racists though. They would “n-word-this, n-word-that” when no one was around; but as soon as a black guy comes around, it was “Hey, buddy, how’re you doing? You’re my best friend!” They were sort of like the cowards, I called them. The losers.

The views of Mike and my other participants were likely clouded by the passage of over 30 years, and by their own positionality: Mackey, for example, has examined how Canadian-born white Anglophones retain the privilege of being oblivious to racism, particularly in its more subtle everyday forms, by virtue of their “whiteness” operating as an “unmarked normality” in Canada (1999). Still, Mike’s interpretation seems reasonable in light of the other data, which suggests the most vile actions of June, 1976 could be blamed to at least some extent on a hate group not from Regent Park.

Official sources, meanwhile, even those released shortly after the violence and for the express purpose of addressing racism, were subject to distortions of their own. I decided to include the report by the Toronto Board of Education in my analysis, for example, even though it was tabled (“killed”) by the Board nine days after it was released (Toronto Star 1976b). Soon after the violence occurred, The Toronto Board of Education hurriedly appointed a commission to study “alleged racial conflict” in Regent Park consisting of a principal, a teacher, and a community worker. The authors noted that theirs was “an enormous and difficult task”, in part because they were given a tight timeframe and a budget of just \$2,000 (Clarke et al. 1976, 3).⁶³ On this note, the typographic errors and awkward and/or informal phrasing scattered throughout the report do suggest that it was written in haste, but for the most part, its analysis is thoughtful and its data fit well with that of other sources. The report was met with considerable outrage from some parties close to the issue, however. A “black teacher” and “expert on West Indian dialects” told The Toronto Star that the report was “not even worthy of my contempt, this kind of trash” (Toronto Star 1976a). A group of 30 school principals tried to block the report from being written in the first place; when this failed, they successfully pressured the Board to retract it.

⁶³ \$7,712.57 in 2016 dollars, according to the Bank of Canada’s online inflation calculator (<http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>).

Their outrage had less to do with the report's analysis of the June incidents, than with a very small portion of the document that focused on teachers' alleged indifference to racism in schools (Clarke et al. 1976, 11; Toronto Star 1976b).

Among a list of "causes of conflict", the school board report blamed boredom and bitterness on the part of unemployed youth; a false view held by some white residents that black families were jumping the housing authority's queue for larger and more desirable apartments; inadequate recreational facilities; "lack of strong action" by the police with regards to vandalism and public and/or underage drinking; and the ineffectiveness of the Community Guardians and local schools (Clarke et al. 1976, 7-11). The report also explained that racism in Regent Park was not monolithic, nor could it be singled out as the sole cause of the violence: "most of the hostility is directed at black Jamaicans rather than black Canadians or other West Indians", as black Canadian youth were "either not involved or tend[ed] to support white teenagers against black Jamaican teenagers when there is a clash" (Clarke et al. 1976, 8-9). Meanwhile, as "a further complication to race relations", the most intense prejudice was directed towards "East Indians and Pakistanis" while there was "no visible sign of discrimination against the Chinese" (Clarke et al. 1976, 9). The report criticised the mainstream and small-market media alike for sensationalising and overemphasising racism (Clarke et al. 1976, 9).

It is clear that racism was a presence in 1970s Regent Park, racist violence did occur, and some white participants expressed racist sentiments (though always couched in disclaimers, euphemisms, and apologies) in relating their memories. However, it is also likely that at least some of the terrorising and harassment of black residents in the aftermath of the violence was committed as agitation propaganda by neo-Nazis who had no base in Regent Park, but saw its white residents as potential pawns in their sociopathic agenda of race war and white revolution.

Regardless, racism – both as a concept and a reality – emerged as another factor in the stigmatisation of Regent Park youth in the 1970s. Racialised residents, of course, bore the brunt of the new racist component of the stigmatisation process. Meanwhile, the stigmatisation of white residents came to include stereotypes of the white working class as too ignorant and backward to embrace the new norm of ‘multiculturalism’ – depoliticised and tokenising as it was.

Following the incidents of June 1976, racism was discussed in conjunction with Regent Park so frequently that when eight white people were charged in the death of a white man in a Regent Park apartment, officials felt the need to clarify for local journalists that this incident was “not a racist attack”, but an “all white affair” (The Islander 1976b). Traces of this association with racial violence persisted into the 1980s, and even inflected newspaper content that had nothing directly to do with the topic. Leading up to the 1981 provincial election, for example, a summary of the provincial riding that included Regent Park noted: “with more black West Indian families moving into the project, there are occasional racial problems, especially during hot summer months when young residents clash outside” (Johnson 1981). Similarly, a 1980 report on youth employment veered into a discussion of “the violence and racial tension that plagued the area,” paraphrasing a youth worker as worried that the area was “ripe for exploitation by racist groups” (Rickwood 1980). No one I spoke to recalled any activity from the likes of the Western Guard in the 1980s, however.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The extreme right did run a candidate in the 1980 federal election in the riding that included Regent Park, however: Ann Ladas, of “the unregistered Nationalist Party”, was purported to be a “community organizer in Regent Park” who ran on a platform of making “government housing available to citizens only and immigration for Europeans only” (Toronto Star 1980c). Ladas, a confirmed associate of racist activists including the leadership of the Western Guard (Canada 1994) placed eighth among nine candidates with 102 of 38,469 votes (Toronto Star 1980b).

“Gottingen is Like Parliament”

By the 1980s, the association with ‘race riots’ began to fade, and in its place emerged a new component to the long-running stigmatisation process: Regent Park was among the more visible of several Toronto neighbourhoods that were cast as “black neighbourhoods” in the popular imagination. Categorising areas of a city by “race” and/or ethnicity is always a flawed and problematic pursuit, and this was certainly the case with regards to Regent Park. The housing authority did not keep race-related statistics for any of its properties; one of its spokespeople once told the media that a “breakdown of tenants by race, color or national origin”, as was common practice in the United States, “isn't allowed in Canada” (Brehl 1983). Purdy used census data to note that by 1991, 15.3% of Regent Park South and 8.4% of Regent Park North identified as black, compared with 4.3% of Metropolitan Toronto – excluding those who identified with multiple origins (2003a, 221).⁶⁵ Statistics released by the Board of Education in 1975 on the ethnic composition of local schools said nearly 10% of students had been born “in the West Indies”, another 10 to 20% were of Chinese descent, and “there has also been a slight increase of people from India and Pakistan, and various other ethnic groups” (Clarke et al. 1976, 2). Other figures and estimates of dubious accuracy have been reported over the years, such as a 1985 documentary on social programming for black youth in Regent Park which noted, without a source, that “recently, the black population has increased to 40%” (Rhombus Media 1986). In a 1994 ethnography of Toronto’s Caribbean population, Frances Henry vastly exaggerated the reality by stating, also without a citation, that “over the years, Regent Park has become almost entirely Caribbean” (Henry 1994, 237). Vagaries and inconsistencies aside, all accounts suggest

⁶⁵ As Purdy noted, census data “offer us sound indications, if not exact measures, of the socio-economic profile of Regent Park residents”, since the boundaries of census enumeration areas were similar but not identical to the boundaries of Regent Park North and South (2003b, 51-52).

that by the 1980s, black people comprised a greater proportion of the Regent Park population than in previous decades, and that an increasing proportion of this black population was of Caribbean descent.

As one result, Regent Park became even more visible and stigmatised in a city that, “in the realm of the imaginary... often continues to be totally Anglo-Saxon” (Lowe 1982).

Borrowing heavily from the American trope of the “ghetto” with all its racism and stigmatisation intact, this linkage of Regent Park with blackness and the Caribbean was an exaggeration of a certain demographic reality that became commonsensical despite its inaccuracy. The following passage reflects the content and tone of these portrayals from the early 1980s:

Nowhere is the distance between the West Indies and Toronto more obvious than in the tortured family relationships in a grimy cluster of low-rise buildings called Regent Park. The buildings are the closest Toronto comes to having a slum. They are home to hundreds of black immigrants trying to get a toe-hold in a new land. They are also a battleground where two cultures clash, driving a wedge between parents and children (Lavigne 1981).

Here, ‘West Indian culture’ was cast as an esoteric, self-defeating lifestyle that caused an identity crisis in black youth. The resultant stress and alienation was said to result in chronic underachievement among “West Indian” children.

Blaming the victim for systemic racism, the media had thus rewritten Oscar Lewis’s 1959 “culture of poverty” concept into a flawed explanation for the difficulties, both real and imagined, facing black families in Toronto. This discourse informed many portrayals of “West Indians” in Toronto, at a time when their very presence was a news item in and of itself. In the absence of a particular event or issue to serve as a focal point, a number of features simply sought to explain “West Indian culture” to an assumed white Canadian-born audience. In keeping with the pre-existing stigma, many of these features were set in Regent Park when any of several other Toronto neighbourhoods could have just as easily illustrated the point. A feature

from 1981, for example, cites Regent Park as one of several housing projects where less privileged Caribbean migrants settle, and thus become “pressure points” of racial conflict (Ross 1981). Among this group, Ross noted, “for reasons rooted in the days of slavery, common-law unions are the norm rather than the exception” (1981). In an earlier example, the “often-depressing world of welfare recipients” is brought to life through a rhetorical “walk through Regent Park”, where one can “walk down a cold-narrow brick hall, along the concrete gray floors that look more like a prison block than a home” to “a dark, crowded apartment, where six children live with their mother on her welfare cheque” (Zosky 1978). The people whom the reader has visited are black.

In a particularly grating example of the othering of “West Indians”, newspapers took creative license with the inaccurate, inconsistent transcription of Caribbean-accented speech. In 1978, a Jamaican⁶⁶ teenager was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for attempted murder as a result of a slashing that left a white youth paralyzed in Regent Park the previous summer (Darroch 1978a). The quotations attributed to the accused include, “The knife dropped. I pick up the knife and he get cut when I swing”; “I say, no brother, I never push you and they started to fight me”; and, “So one of dem have the knife. Then the knife drop from him, so I pick it up and swing and I cut him”⁶⁷ (Darroch 1978b). As shown here, the digraph “th” is sometimes replaced with “d”, but not always; and some sentences blend inconsistent verb tenses. This constitutes an attempt to phonetically transcribe non-standard speech with an exceptional degree of specificity. In addition to doing it poorly, the attempt was only made when documenting the speech of a black youth in trouble: in stories unrelated to crime, Jamaican speakers were quoted in standard

⁶⁶ This was one of the relatively rare cases in which nationality was specified beyond the generic “West Indian”.

⁶⁷ All spelling and grammar is reproduced here exactly as it appeared in the original article.

English, as was the speech of the Canadian-born working class in almost all cases, though it too exhibits nonstandard features of its own.

Some people I spoke to who lived in Regent Park in the 1980s did describe the place as something of a “black community”; but in their accounts, this blackness was loosely defined, heterogeneous, and framed positively. Sheila found 1980s Regent Park to be culturally similar to the working class black community in semi-rural Nova Scotia where she grew up. She saw important similarities between Toronto’s Regent Park and Halifax’s Uniacke Square, and between Regent Park’s Parliament Street and Uniacke Square’s Gottingen Street. Architecturally similar to Regent Park, Uniacke Square is a social housing complex opened in 1966 to house people who had been displaced by the demolition of Africville, an informal seaside community of predominantly black residents. Gottingen Street is a historically downmarket commercial strip that was beginning to gentrify at the time of our interview in 2010, as had happened to Parliament Street beginning in the 1970s. In making these comparisons, Sheila reflected on how territorial stigma had affronted the dignity of black Canadians in both places:

There are parallels around how people are treated, and urban development in those communities. Gottingen is like Parliament: there’s a housing project in the middle of it, and there’s always people around trying to “fix” or change it. It’s the same thing: “we’re gonna come in and fix you.” In the case of Africville, people used to own their own homes, and then [after its demolition] they had to pay rent. It was very demeaning to pay rent out of social assistance. It’s a means of support, to help you get through a gap, to find employment; but there’s a real stigma attached to it. So your housing has a stigma and your employment has a stigma, and you’re trying to better yourself, to get out of a hole; it’s hard to do that.

A connection to black Nova Scotia was often made during my interviews that related to this period. A family from North Preston,⁶⁸ all of whom had also lived in another downtown Toronto social housing complex for several years, described their patterns of long-term labour migration

⁶⁸ A predominantly black community on the outskirts of Halifax.

between Nova Scotia and Toronto. They said these patterns were common among people from their hometown, from the postwar era well into the 1980s.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, some black social workers, artists, and intellectuals managed to gather resources for a range of antiracist and counter-hegemonic projects amidst all of this problematic attention to race and racism. A program called “Immi-Can”, for example, grew out of the efforts of a social services student who had been assigned to Regent Park “to mingle with young blacks and help them” in the aftermath of the violence of 1976, as one newspaper article put it (Serge 1978). Supported early on by local agencies, Immi-Can was officially designated as a youth employment program and received federal funding, but operated largely on its own terms and with an Africentric ethic. “They live and work in a commune atmosphere. When they’re not working, they’re playing in a band together, or discussing African history, learning more about their black identity,” the report continued (Serge 1978). Also on this note, an advertorial from 1979 for the Toronto Star’s Fresh Air Fund – whose condescending appeals for charity had emphasised the apparently depraving effects of urban life upon working class children since long before Regent Park was built – asked readers to support “Black Heritage”, a “cultural, recreational, and education program for 40 West Indian and Canadian black young people in the Regent Park area” (Campbell 1979). Monica, a child at the time, remembered this program as an important source of positive self-identity for black youth in Regent Park.

In sum, emic class identities became newly racialised in the 1970s and early 1980s. Regent Park in the 1960s was overwhelmingly white and Anglophone, and entirely working class; the emic “Regent Parker” identity of the time reflected this. It was differentiated both from outsiders (especially ‘ethnic’ ones), and social assistance recipients deemed to have lacked a respectable work ethic. Meanwhile, the “Regent Parker” identity was internally split into North

and South, though the consequences of this were generally limited to the trivial in the 1960s. By the 1970s, broader economic and demographic changes reflected strongly in the new ways that Regent Parkers identified themselves and each other. Ethnicity, nationality, and territory (i.e. North versus South) emerged as meaningful lines upon which Regent Park was internally differentiated. The differences were unstable and unpredictable, and their effects ranged from acts of inter-ethnic solidarity to hate crimes. In examples spanning this spectrum, people's sense of their place in the social order was based on practices and events in the domestic and extra-domestic spheres.

Conclusion: "This Park is Our Park"

[Chorus:] This park is our park; this park is our home

From Parliament, on down to River;

From north to Gerrard, from south to Shuter,

This park belongs to you and me.

We're organising, 'cause we want changes;

We're tired of brutal cops driving our ranges.

We're tired of MTHA taking our lives away;

This park belongs to you and me.

[Repeat chorus]

Let's get together, respect each other;

Remember our neighbours, our sisters, and brothers;

We've got to start talking, and co-operating;

'Cause this park belongs to you and me.

[Repeat chorus]

Now we are a community – we need a centre,

A place where we can all come together.

From the youngest member, up to our seniors,

The centre belongs to you and me.

[Repeat chorus]

And for the future, we're gonna take action;

Bringing together all the different factions.

No more boundaries, no more divisions;

United, this park is you and me.

[Repeat chorus]

-Sung to the tune of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" by the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers' Group, 1984

The lyrics cited above were sung by members of the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers' Group in 1984, as an introduction to their autobiographical video documentary (Regent Park Area Sole Support Mothers' Group 1984). "This Park is Our Park" was a rewrite of the signature song of Woody Guthrie, the American leftist folk singer best known for chronicling the hardships of the rural United States during the Great Depression. While the version crafted by the Regent Park women remained faithful to the spirit of Guthrie's original, its details were modified to document the injustices of their day: racist and violent police, an inept and patronising housing authority, and inadequate amenities.⁶⁹ "This Park is Our Park" was accompanied by the acoustic guitar of Arlene Mantle, a member of the Regent Park group who was also a lifelong participant in Toronto's labour and queer activist communities until her death in 2012 (Kirzner 2012).

Though Woody Guthrie's Depression-era American dustbowl was a time and place very different from an urban Canadian social housing complex in the 1980s, the two contexts were similar enough for Guthrie's lyrics to have resonated with the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers' Group. Both songs were recorded during historical moments that marked turning points in their respective societies, when political and economic change made everyday life especially unpredictable and precarious for the poor. Further, "This Land is Your Land" and its Regent Park counterpart each reflect an ethic of territorial solidarity and mutual support in trying times, and a shared sense of pride and ownership in a place that was more often understood as tragic and hopeless. These themes reflect powerfully in the memories of Regent Parkers of all generations. The data from the 1970s and early 1980s invoke these themes once again, as people

⁶⁹ The campaign for a "centre" referred to in the lyrics was a success: the Regent Park South Community Centre opened in 1987.

strove to maintain a safe place to live and a sense of community in spite of racism from multiple fronts, a declining labour market, and violence and predation in and around their buildings.

In several senses, the period covered by this chapter was transitory. In the years following the official abandonment of the large-scale apartment complex as a desirable model for the provision of affordable housing, the label of “bad planning” emerged as something of a master status of an entire community, and added another powerful element to the ongoing stigmatisation of Regent Park residents. Regent Park continued to face numerous and significant problems during this period, but the insights of those who experienced it as young people and/or parents suggest that the built environment was a relatively minor factor as compared to others such as economic regression, classism and ineptitude in the education system, racism among Regent Parkers and in Toronto at large, and predation and abuse by outsiders. Throughout this dissertation, I conceptualise residents’ efforts to protect themselves, their children, and each other from these threats as extra-domestic labour. While extra-domestic labour did appear in participants’ memories of the 1960s (as addressed in Chapter Three), the danger and instability of the 1970s and early 80s made it a more prominent, necessary, and meaningful aspect of everyday life. Increasingly, residents themselves had to create the safety and security at the level of the ‘community’ (or what I call the extra-domestic sphere) necessary for social reproduction. This trend continued through the remainder of the 1980s and thereafter, which I theorise in Chapters Five and Six as a local-level implication of neoliberal restructuring.

This chapter has also illustrated some important shifts with regards to hegemony, common sense, and the balance between consent and coercion in the maintenance of the social order. I argued in Chapter Three that the strong working-class identity espoused by Regent Parkers of the 1960s represented the acceptance of a “‘class compromise’ between capital and

labour” (Harvey 2005, 10) – by no means a bad deal for the working class, especially when compared to terms of the capital-labour relationship that had predominated before Keynesianism. Through the tumult and deindustrialisation of the 1970s and early 80s, “the fear of being fired [was] replaced by the fear of plant closure, transfer of operations, and plant disinvestment” (Burawoy 1985, cited in Carroll 1990, 396) and coercion re-emerged as central to securing the compliance of the working class. As a result, emic senses of working-class-ness were no longer as rooted in the sense of respectability that had come with agreeing to a mutually beneficial arrangement with capital. Beginning in the 1970s, emic class identification was more defensive and territorial, as Regent Parkers worked together to mitigate the local-level effects of losses in income, stability, and prestige that were common to the working class in general. At the same time, however, allegiance to Regent Park was increasingly cross-cut and fragmented by ethnoracial difference. The effects of this were diverse and unpredictable, ranging from racist violence, to inter-ethnic solidarity, to counter-hegemonic artistic representations of Canadian blackness.

Still, traces of the older discourses remained, as exhibited in comments by 1970s Regent Parkers who emphasised that working-class communities foster a work ethic, modesty, and respectability. Angela, who was raised in a nuclear family that Mike likely would have placed in his “Straight John” category, told me that she likes to tell people where she grew up. Though some people question her candour for disclosing something they imagine would be embarrassing, “I say I’m *proud* of my roots,” Angela emphasised. “I wouldn’t have changed a thing!” To conclude, she told me that, instead, a childhood in Regent Park instilled good moral character in upwardly mobile ex-residents, who otherwise may have become as smug and

egotistical as their new middle and upper class neighbours: “Even those who have done really well for themselves – they’re not snots.”

Chapter Five

Common Sense, Territory, and Stigma, 1985-2001

Introduction

Monica has lived most of her life in Regent Park South. She remembers her childhood in the 1980s as mostly pleasant, owing largely to the ‘community’ that was built by ordinary Regent Parkers and that shielded local youth from the effects of stigma, danger, and inequity. After her son was born in 1996, she joined a new generation of Regent Park parents to take on this unpaid labour – not as political activism or altruism, but as tasks necessary for social reproduction and a decent life. Demanding at the best of times, this labour was made all the more difficult in the 1990s by new challenges wrought by violence, neoliberal social policy, and the increasingly racialised stigmatisation of Regent Park.

Beginning in 1988, the advent of crack-cocaine emerged as yet another widespread social ill that was widely (but inaccurately) presumed to be unique to Regent Park and several other low-income, racialised parts of the city. While my participants blamed media coverage for this exaggerated and stereotypical connotation, they also confirmed that crack did have a transformative effect upon Regent Park. Because crack was more affordable, addictive, and fast-acting than any other illicit drug on the market, its trade was at once more destructive and more seductive than any other criminal enterprise they had seen. In the 1990s, Regent Park parents witnessed lives ruined by addiction, while also worrying that their children might turn to crack dealing in their teen years as an alternative to a legitimate job market that offered little but minimum-wage drudgery.

The crack trade was not Monica's greatest fear regarding her son's future, however.

During our interview in 2010, she recalled some of her recurring thoughts and fears from the late 1990s:

My son will not sell drugs here, because I would go to the supplier and say, "My kid will not be in this line of work, so this must stop, and you don't want me to take this any further." That's not my fear. My fear is my son being harassed, beaten, mistaken for someone else.

In that last sentence, Monica was referring to her fear that her son would be mistreated by the police as he grew older. For a black teenager in Regent Park, she explained, it was only a matter of time before this happened; the best she could do was to teach him "how to respond" and "not to get aggressive" when it did. Monica's expectations were largely confirmed: her son never did get involved in the illicit trades, and her lessons in self-restraint proved useful in his teen years when Regent Park was subject to increased foot patrols after it was designated as an area with a high rate of 'gang activity'.

Monica's memories bring together some key themes elaborated in this chapter: police racism, the drug trade, and how difficult times impacted the conditions of social reproduction for Regent Parkers. The period covered by this chapter begins with the release of a report on "police-community relations" in 1985, and ends in 2001 – the year before a plan to redevelop Regent Park as a 'mixed-income community' was approved. In the time in between, I argue, everyday life in Regent Park was reordered according to the priorities of neoliberal ideology, as the disciplinary, punitive, and coercive capacities of state power were asserted into the domestic spheres of the urban poor and working class with renewed intensity. At the same time, residents of Regent Park sought new solutions to violence and instability, as the crack trade and systemic neglect placed heavy strains on their capacity to build 'community'. In keeping with a trend I began to analyse in Chapter Four, emic class identification in the late 1980s and 1990s continued

to become increasingly ethnicised and territorial, largely in response to the intensifying realities of racism and territorial stigmatisation. Allegiance to Regent Park was still a class-like means of self-identification, but the relatively cohesive and stable manner in which the Regent Parkers of the 1960s identified as ‘working class’ (see Chapter Three) was largely a thing of the past by the 1990s.

In the period covered by this chapter, bureaucratisation emerged as a key component of the neoliberal restructuring of Regent Park, and thus another important influence upon class consciousness in the local context. Extra-domestic labour – previously an informal and spontaneous process of claiming shared ownership over public space – was subsumed and redirected within new bureaucratic channels. These channels, such as police-community forums and architectural “charrettes”, were controlled by officials and/or outsiders. They called upon residents to participate (uncompensated) as individuals, and rarely resulted in meaningful change. Through its effects upon the conditions and practices of social reproduction, neoliberal restructuring thus began to replace emic class-based solidarity with austerity, bureaucracy, and individualism. As I address in Chapter Six, the ongoing redevelopment approved in 2002 represents an intensification of this process. Residents of redeveloped public housing in Regent Park are now cast as individual ‘stakeholders’ – on ostensibly equal footing with other stakeholders such as condominium owners, corporate officials, the police, and local politicians – in an urban space rebuilt to blend in seamlessly with its gentrified surroundings.

This chapter examines the neoliberal restructuring of Regent Park in two substantive sections: “Common Sense” and “Territory”. The first focuses on policy and ideology, and the second on everyday life. “Common Sense” is a reference to Gramsci’s notes on the subject, and to the title of the election platform of the Conservative provincial government of 1995-1999 –

the “Common Sense Revolution.” This section draws a symbiotic link between the policies of the Conservative government, and the stigmatising views of low-income localities in general and Regent Park in particular that had become ‘commonsensical’ by the 1990s. While provincial policies exacerbated the actual depth of poverty and despair in Regent Park, the dominant media discourse exaggerated this reality, downplayed its structural causes, and blamed it instead on malevolent individuals and flawed architecture. These portrayals fueled calls for law-and-order crackdowns on one hand, and redevelopment proposals on the other; each came from outside interests and from residents themselves.

This section also addresses the increasing prominence of racism in the stigmatisation process: in the late 1980s and 1990s, the mainstream media blended the anti-black racism and othering of Caribbean cultures addressed in the previous chapter with a new tendency to liken Regent Park to a colonial frontier. These frontier metaphors drew on a national mythology of Canada as a progressive society formed through a history of “benevolent gentleness” by white settlers (Mackey 1999, 14), occasionally with some more explicitly racist content borrowed from American ‘western’ mythology. They invoked deeply embedded cultural scripts to justify (if implicitly) the re-regulation of Regent Park by powerful institutions and, later, its ‘settlement’ by gentrifiers. The section then concludes with some thoughts on resistance to stigmatisation exhibited in the 1980s and 1990s. While some residents wrote angry letters to the editor and published rebuttals in a local community newspaper regarding particularly egregious coverage, others collaborated with local artists on works that reclaimed Regent Park as a setting for counter-hegemonic, pro-black representations of low-income Toronto.

The section entitled “Territory” returns to the material conditions of everyday life, as I introduced above with Monica’s memories. Regent Park was hotly contested territory during the

period of 1985 to 2001, as residents, drug dealers, police, and other outside interveners vied for a position in, if not control over, the housing projects. This section focuses on the unpaid labour that residents such as Monica did to reproduce their domestic unit and make life liveable, despite disruptive, often violent, and overlapping conflicts. With emphasis on problems related to the drug trade and the police, I analyze the growing bureaucratisation of extra-domestic labour as both a response to growing instability, and as a move towards an agenda of privatisation of public housing projects. The chapter then concludes with a brief discussion of some campaigns to redevelop parts of Regent Park that did not come to fruition, but provided a basis for the Regent Park Revitalisation plan that was approved in 2002.

Common Sense

This section outlines the entrenchment of neoliberalism as a dominant ideology in late-twentieth century Toronto, and the implications of this development for social reproduction in Regent Park. With a focus on the media archives and policy shifts of the 1990s, I outline how the local-level effects of this ideology were overlaid with preexisting inequities to result in further stigmatisation and marginalisation. Following Brodie (2010, 1560-1561), the data reflect how neoliberalism exhibits a “fundamental and growing antagonism between the prevailing model of ... economic growth and the maintenance of stable conditions for social reproduction”. In Canada since the 1990s, according to Brodie’s summation, the effects of the “disappearance of the family wage and the declining financial capacities of middle- and lower-income families” have outstripped the provisions of measures to alleviate poverty, such as “targeted, conditional, and meagre tax credits for the working poor, child benefits conditional on income, a small baby bonus masking as a child care program, and privatised savings plans for the disabled” (2010, 1588). In line with neoliberal ideology, these approaches treat families as atomised units. Yet

even before neoliberalism was entrenched as hegemonic, however, the conditions of social reproduction were particularly difficult for Regent Parkers due to the intersecting effects of stigma, racism, and class inequality. The restructurings of the 1990s thus made a preexisting struggle increasingly difficult.

Problems exhibited at the national scale manifested particularly acutely in Regent Park. Following a recession in 1982-83, the Canadian economy was said to have mounted “one of the strongest economic recoveries in the western industrialised nations”, though “not all groups of workers enjoyed the fruits of these developments” (Yalnizyan 1988, 3). In short, Regent Parkers were among those least likely to enjoy this fruit. At a citywide scale, the apparent ‘recovery’ was more aptly described as a shakeout: in Toronto, job creation in the service sector was offset by losses in the manufacturing sector, to the extent that one commentator wondered in 1988 whether “deindustrialisation is as much related to economic recovery as it is to economic decline” (Yalnizyan 1988, 14). Meanwhile the decline was more pronounced in Metropolitan Toronto, and the recovery more pronounced in the suburbs (Yalnizyan 1988, 9-10). Regent Park was a downtown area with an entirely working-class population, and by the late 1980s, the Toronto labour market had become significantly more service-oriented, part-time, and suburban.

To compound the problem, the systemic and interpersonal racism discussed in the previous chapter continued to go virtually unchecked through the 1980s. A report on Toronto’s “multi-racial” workforce from 1985 found that “non-whites” were most likely to work for manufacturing firms and in unskilled positions (Billingsley & Muszynski 1985, 98-100). The same report found that employers used informal recruitment procedures that put “non-whites” at a disadvantage, and were generally resistant to anti-discriminatory regulations and other attempts to redress inequitable hiring practices (Billingsley & Muszynski 1985, 111). In 1985, Henry &

Ginzberg delineated the problem by having actors of different ethnicities respond to the same job postings with fabricated resumes illustrating virtually the same qualifications. Among their findings, white applicants were three times more likely to be offered a position than black applicants, while South Asian applicants were four times as likely to be told the position was already filled than were white applicants (Henry & Ginzberg 1985).

In addition to an adverse economy and racism, stigmatisation bore additional challenges for job-seekers from Regent Park. One participant remembered that a Regent Park address was essentially a “red flag” on a job application, and that people would use friends’ or relatives’ addresses to avoid this. A black woman who spoke standard Canadian English was told during a job interview in the mid-1980s, as if it were a compliment, “You don’t *sound* like you’re from Regent Park!” This anecdote in particular reflects the prejudices of the 1980s discussed in the previous chapter: specifically, an assumption that Regent Park was a ‘West Indian neighbourhood’; and that ‘West Indians’ were an obstinate ‘other’, unable or unwilling to adapt to the Canadian mainstream, and thus unsuited for employment. The intersectional effects of economic disadvantage, racism, and locality-based stigma intensified through the 1990s, with the neoliberal restructuring of the province of Ontario.

The Common Sense Revolution

By the 1990s, public housing was treated as an undesirable liability by all levels of government. In 1993, the newly-elected federal Liberals offloaded responsibility for public housing to the provinces (Hackworth & Moriah 2006, 515). At the time, Ontario was governed by the New Democratic Party – an increasingly unpopular, nominally social-democratic party that had taken on some strains of fiscal conservatism in a botched response to an economic recession (Tanguay 2002, 146-147). The NDP were soundly defeated by the Progressive

Conservative party in 1995, whose back-to-back majority governments of 1995-2003 brought paradigmatic change, as a discourse of neoliberal logic as “common sense” was implemented “quickly and ranged over virtually all aspects of public service” (Hanna & Walton-Roberts 2004, 47). The Conservatives of this era have been described as “perhaps the most interventionist government this city / province has ever seen” (Keil 2002, 588); as the agents behind “one of the most far-reaching reorganisations of the local state in 20th century Canada” (Kipfer & Keil 2002, 241); and as central to an “epochal shift from a Keynesian-Fordist-welfarist to a post-Fordist-workfarist society” that was “reflected in a marked restructuring of everyday life” (Keil 2002, 578). They remain widely remembered for their populist leadership, particularly Mike Harris, premier during all but the final 18 months of their eight years in power; and by their branding, epitomised by the title of their 1995 election platform, “The Common Sense Revolution”. The party was elected to two consecutive majorities in 1995 and 1999.

Gramsci’s notes on common sense and hegemony addressed how the power of the dominant class rests, to a significant extent, upon the extent to which its self-interested worldview passes as the generally accepted norm among subordinate classes as well. A political party entitling its election platform “The Common Sense Revolution” could be taken as a literal, if not crude example of an attempt by a particular segment of the Canadian elite to normalise its worldview to this end. In the case of the Harris Conservatives, the worldview sold as ‘common sense’ was that of the “mostly white, Anglo males” – and more specifically “small nonurban entrepreneurs (such as car salesmen and resort owners)” – who formed much of the party’s leadership (Keil 2002, 589). Writing in 2002, Keil saw in their policies an “antiurban bias”, and compiled an inventory of changes made by this government since 1995 that had “most directly affected the urban”: these include a 21% cut to social assistance rates; the vindictive

criminalisation of panhandlers and “squeegee kids”⁷⁰ as codified in the 1999 Safe Streets Act; amalgamations of municipal governments (most significantly in Toronto) which reduced a total of 951 municipalities in the province to 571; and “the elimination of all public housing programs and downloading of responsibilities to the local level” (Keil 2002, 589).

The latter two points emphasised by Keil are of particular relevance to this study. Amidst promises of greater ‘efficiency’, six municipalities were amalgamated into the City of Toronto (or “the Megacity” as it was often called at the time) in 1998, even though three-quarters of voters in a referendum disapproved of this plan (Hanna & Walton-Roberts 2004, 47). The first mayor of the newly created “megacity” was the owner of a furniture retail chain, whose two terms in office were marked by civic boosterism and a revanchist attitude to the poor and/or street-involved. In 2000, responsibility for public housing was transferred from the provincial to the municipal level, and public housing was now to be provided by 47 local service providers, “most affiliated with an existing municipal government” with an aim of making “housing providers behave more like businesses” (Hackworth & Moriah 2006, 516). Public housing administration in Toronto was subject to a string of amalgamations around the same time: in 1999, two agencies had merged into the Toronto Housing Company, which then merged with the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corporation to become the Toronto Community Housing Corporation in 2002 (TCHC, 2016). In the process, in 2001, when the federal government committed \$300 million to the construction of new social housing on the condition that the province match that amount, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives refused the deal (Hackworth & Moriah 2006, 516). To compound this residualisation, these municipal governments also had their taxation powers reduced (Keil 2002, 591). Hackworth & Morah elaborate how public

⁷⁰ The colloquial term used in Toronto in the 1990s for informal labourers (many of them youth) who, for cash, washed the windows of vehicles stopped at intersections.

housing providers such as TCHC had to become “entrepreneurial” to remain solvent in this context, by means such as selling off properties and engaging in public-private partnerships (2006, 522). The Regent Park Revitalisation, approved the same year TCHC was created, is a key example of this entrepreneurialism.

Meanwhile, much of the austerity of the Harris Conservatives targeted the domestic sphere of the working poor and unemployed. Within eight months of the enactment of a new policy that deemed social assistance recipients ineligible for further payments if they were determined to be cohabitating with a partner, 10,000 recipients lost their benefits – 89% of them women (Little 2001, 27). The process of determining eligibility amounted to a highly interventionist and gendered policing through which “poor single mothers are particularly investigated and scrutinised for their personal relationships” (Little 2001, 12). In 1997, single mothers with school-age children were moved to a category of recipients deemed “employable”, and were thus compelled to take part in “workfare” programming to retain benefits (Little & Marks 2006, 20). Mayson sees this as “a redefinition of women’s relationship to the employment market and to domestic labour” centred around a devaluation of child rearing, which until then had been seen as a “contribution to society” worthy of financial assistance since 1920 (1999, 90). As addressed in previous chapters, benefit recipients had been subject to similarly intrusive and patronising policing even during the apex of the Keynesian welfare state; what was new was the extent of this treatment, and the moralistic vigour that drove it.

The section of this chapter entitled “Territory” focuses on the material conditions of everyday life in Regent Park during neoliberal restructuring. In the meantime, it bears mentioning that participants described the effects of these cutbacks as immediately tangible and harrowing, as they saw friends and neighbours in desperation after losing their benefits. While

cutbacks are often the most apparent effects of neoliberal restructuring, other scholars have emphasised that this does not entail a retreat of the state from the lives of ordinary people; rather, it entails a dramatic reassertion of the state which seeks to reorder everyday life according to market principles (e.g. Dardot & Laval 2013). The remainder of this section turns to how the mainstream media discourses of the late 1980s and 1990s dovetailed with this ideological imperative by framing Regent Park as a lawless place in need of discipline and regulation, and how residents resisted these portrayals.

“The Patois of the Street”

The parallels between gentrification and colonialism are well-documented (e.g. Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). In Clay’s (1979) typical four-step gentrification scenario, an initial cohort of newcomers – typically young, white, and countercultural of some sort – move into a depressed working-class area to take advantage of low housing costs. With time, the presence of these “pioneers” (Clay used this colonial term to describe the first wave of gentrifiers) – makes the area appear ‘safe’ to less adventurous newcomers, and new capital investment begins to flow into the area. Prices rise, the streetscape is remade to cater to monied residents, and eventually the original residents of the area (and even the ‘pioneer’ gentrifiers) can no longer afford to live there. By the late 1980s, Regent Park was surrounded at most points by areas in which gentrification had followed this typical pattern: Caulfield (1994) described how adjacent areas were popular among all manner of gentrifiers, both countercultural and corporate, for their convenience and quaint Victorian aesthetic. Because there was little (if any) incentive for gentrifiers of any type to venture into a modernist low-income housing project, however, Regent Park sharply stood out as a relic of a pre-gentrification, working-class Toronto. To say that

Regent Park was beyond the frontier of middle-class settlement would be an apt extension of the ‘pioneer’ metaphor for gentrification.

I am not the first to draw parallels between the history of Regent Park and processes of colonisation and settlement – critically or otherwise. On the critical side, for example, Kipfer & Petrunia drew on Fanon to make a compelling argument that the Regent Park Revitalisation is a process of “recolonisation” of long-neglected land (2009, 111). The mainstream media, meanwhile, has used colonial discourse and imagery uncritically as part of the stigmatisation of Regent Park as far back as the late 1980s. Like the western frontier during the colonisation of North America, Regent Park in this era was portrayed as a chaotic and lawless place ripe for encroachment by a superior settler society, populated by naïve but potentially dangerous “natives” in need of moral uplift and control. This section presents some key examples of this discourse, and argues that it was integral to securing consent for the restructuring of Regent Park according to neoliberal priorities.

To begin with a particularly blatant example: the police station located in Regent Park South was nicknamed “Fort Apache” by police themselves, and in turn by the local media. The nickname was appropriated from popular culture representations of the American frontier to liken 51 Division to an outpost of settler society embedded within a hostile native population. By extension, the perils of the colonial project called for rule-bending and extralegal violence, as is often seen in ‘western’ films. On this note, one retrospective in The Toronto Star described how “Fort Apache” reflected a “reputation – maybe merited, maybe manufactured – as a place where Toronto police officers would kick ass first and take names later” (Quinn 2002). Originally the title of a 1948 western film about a U.S. Cavalry post, “Fort Apache” had also been used as a nickname by a police precinct in a part of the Bronx, New York known for gang violence and

urban decay – this usage of the term was then popularised by the 1981 police drama film, Fort Apache, The Bronx (Slattery 2014). When newspapers referred to Regent Park’s 51 Division as “Fort Apache,” they often placed the nickname in scare quotes (e.g. Mascoll 1996); but at times it was used uncritically and without attribution, as an apparently objective means of identifying the police station (e.g. Bonokoski 2004, Mandel 1996).

In some cases, stigmatisation took the form of sympathetic portrayals of Regent Park’s children. These bring to mind Rudyard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden,” with their descriptions of good-hearted but primitive locals in need of salvation from a chaotic environment. A 1991 feature, for example, praised the staff of Park Public School for bringing hope to children who were enmeshed in “a violent and desperate world of drug dealers, prostitutes and thieves” (Reid 1991). A front-page feature in 1992 presented a similar setting in the melodramatic second-person: “in Regent Park you grow up listening to the sounds of poverty: the smack of fists on flesh, the howl of sirens, people weeping, the crack of gunfire in the night” (Cheney 1992). A particularly salient example is “Regent Park: Through a Child’s Eyes”, an excerpt from a monograph printed as a special feature in The Toronto Star in 1993. The author followed a ten-year-old boy through Regent Park, evoking Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden” and Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in the process:

I carry my own prejudice and alertness, watching for trouble, looking for signs, trying to shake my nervousness. I imagine guns and hate and unpredictable rage. I forget how human nature orders itself, reaching instead like a reader of too many tabloids (Tracey 1993).

Descriptions of Regent Parkers encountered along the way include “closed-off Asian faces” and “hurt black ones” (Tracey 1993). Among the oddities described, the author is surprised that the boy’s mother allows him to move freely within Regent Park, but not to cross Parliament Street by himself: “What a delicious irony”, Tracey notes, “Toronto as the menace, Regent Park as

safety” (1993). As discussed throughout this dissertation, public space within Regent Park was protected by a network of shared parental supervision; the Tracey feature missed this point entirely, instead describing one woman’s trust in Regent Parkers as a curious irony of an esoteric place.

Building on stereotypical depictions of Regent Park as a ‘West Indian neighbourhood’ established earlier in the 1980s, reports from this era blended anti-black racism into the colonial discourse addressed in this section. At the peak of a broader moral panic⁷¹ over youth gangs in 1989, a Toronto Star columnist reported on her “10 days in malls, after hours clubs, schools and mingling with street kids” in an attempt to understand their antisocial behaviour (DiManno 1989). The second of the report’s two parts tells of teenagers loitering, thieving, selling and using drugs, and otherwise disturbing the peace (DiManno 1989). Several paragraphs focus on a 15-year-old mother said to live in Regent Park, who identifies as a member of The Untouchables.⁷² She admits that her jacket is stolen, and that her group regularly commits muggings on Tuesday nights. In a mixing of metaphors, she and other youth loitering at The Eaton Centre are likened to exotic birds, spirit possession practitioners, and speakers of patois:

They squat on the ledge, lean against the wall, hang over the railings, sprawl across the stairs. Birds of a feather in leather plumage. Dozens of them now, up above a hundred before the evening is done, chattering and chirping, speaking in tongues; the patois of the street (DiManno 1989).

⁷¹ On this note, in March 1989 the Toronto Star printed a feature (Contenta 1989) comparing the local gang scene of the time to the mods and rockers of 1960s England – the very case study upon which Cohen’s concept of the moral panic was based (1973). The feature focused primarily on the subcultures themselves, and did not address the role of the media in creating moral panics.

⁷² Of my participants who remembered the Untouchables gang, none remembered them operating in Regent Park. For my own part, I am slightly too young to have relevant memories of the late 1980s. The Untouchables appeared in several other newspaper articles in this era, and are also mentioned in a number of brief, anonymous web postings from recent years. Yet little exists in the way of credible information as to where they were based. One retrospective traced their origins to a group of skateboarders who won a fight against skinheads in 1987 and grew from there, with an all-ages nightclub associated with Toronto’s nascent house music scene serving as their homebase (Benson 2014).

The reference to “patois” is especially loaded, given that the report also notes that “yes, almost all of them [are] black” (DiManno 1989, A1). Because much of Toronto’s black population is of Commonwealth Caribbean heritage (this was particularly the case at the time), it is almost certain that some of these youth were actually speaking a real Patois.

In an even more loaded example, in 1994 The Toronto Star twice repeated a misstep it had first made in 1980 by referring to Regent Park as a “jungle” (Wright 1994a; 1994b).⁷³ One of these articles was a front-page feature which described the urine and vomit of “winos and crack addicts” as a river running through Regent Park North. This description was presented in an entirely objective tone, as if such a river of bodily waste actually existed. The other example noted that while over 20,000 people were waiting for MTHA housing, roughly 100 apartments were vacant in Regent Park North; ostensibly because applicants were rejecting offers to move there. This article began with the line, “There’s room in ‘the jungle’ – but it’s apparently a little too wild for some people’s tastes” (Wright 1994b). Two days later, however, the Star ran a more nuanced follow-up by the same reporter, which featured quotations from people in a queue at MTHA headquarters who said they would certainly accept an apartment in Regent Park North (Wright 1994c).

As had happened in 1980, the racist implications of the ‘jungle’ metaphor drew angry letters to the editor from local residents and agency staff (Acker 1994, Hubbard 1994). Roughly a month later, a free newsprint magazine published by a local social service agency provided a detailed account of the local reaction to Wright’s two articles. According to The T.O.! Magazine,

⁷³ For clarity, it should be noted that the Lawrence Heights housing project in North York (built just after Regent Park, and with a similar history of racialised stigmatisation) has been colloquially referred to as “Jungle” (but not “the jungle”) over the decades. In the case of Lawrence Heights, however, the nickname is emic to at least some extent (used by insiders in a value-neutral way, if not affectionately), though the connotations of the term are of course troubling.

Wright had “considered moving into an empty North Regent apartment for a month or so to better understand the Park and its residents”, but was discouraged by “someone at the Star” from doing this, because another reporter had already used this method at Jane & Finch⁷⁴ (Carder 1994b, 28). Instead, while conducting a single day of research on a tight deadline, Wright took “at face value” the statements of an MTHA maintenance worker who “told her North Regent Park was called the *jungle* and *the North Regent Penitentiary* (Carder 1994b, 28, italics in original). In response, “Residents phoned Wright and blasted her”, wrote letters to the editor, and presented a list of demands aimed at securing “balanced coverage” of Regent Park by the media (Carder 1994b, 28). The Toronto Star has not since referred to Regent Park as a jungle, but other racist, stigmatising, and/or neocolonial vocabulary stayed in circulation well past 1994 in this and other newspapers.

Other reports portrayed Regent Park as a society, if not a world, unto itself, such that when a Regent Park resident (or a person imagined to be a Regent Park resident) was implicated in crime or disorder outside of Regent Park, the situation was portrayed as an invasion by an uncivilised other. Coverage in this vein also took a colonialist tone even when the accused criminals were white. In an example that made the national news in 1999, three young men carjacked a wealthy elderly couple who were driving in the old-money Rosedale area, roughly four kilometres away from Regent Park. The couple were then held in an apartment building just outside of Regent Park North, while the assailants raided their home in Forest Hill (an old-money area in the city’s west end). After twelve hours, the man who had stayed in the apartment to guard the couple fell asleep, and they escaped. Though no one involved lived in Regent Park or

⁷⁴ A part of North York that was (and is) stigmatised in much the same way as Regent Park.

Rosedale, a national headline read “Two Worlds Collide in Car-Bump Kidnapping: Regent Park Intrudes on Rosedale in an Incident That Shook the City” (Cheney 1999).

As it turned out, however, one of the three carjackers had once lived in Regent Park as a child. Ten months after the incident, this fact was the main focus of a lengthy feature on the Metropolit brothers: Troy, who was then awaiting trial for his part in the kidnapping; and Glen, then a professional hockey player. It was described as “nothing short of incredible” that Glen “emerged from Regent Park not only as an NHL⁷⁵ player, but a young man with confidence and high self-esteem”; meanwhile, Troy’s recent actions were portrayed as typical of an ex-Regent Parker (Campbell 1999). In this case, the coverage was devoid of racialised metaphors (the Metropolitans are white), but the carjacking was consistently framed as an incursion upon civilised society by a deviant other.

The examples addressed in this section reflect a tendency in the media of the 1990s to portray Regent Park as lawless and violent, sometimes to the extent that it posed a threat to the city around it. While new provincial policies brought tighter regulation and austerity to the lives of the poor and working class in general, the media discourse addressed here fueled ongoing calls for state intervention in Regent Park in particular. Highly conspicuous as a modernist housing project surrounded mostly by gentrified blocks of Victorian houses, Regent Park by the 1990s was one of a few outlying areas of the east end of downtown that had not yet been ‘settled’, in a metaphorical sense, by the middle class and/or elite. Before the chapter turns to the material conditions of Regent Park at the time, this section concludes with an analysis of counter-representations of Regent Park by residents and their allies.

⁷⁵ National Hockey League.

“You Call Me Coloured”

Importantly, local residents, social workers, and artists worked to reclaim Regent Park through counter-representations that also associated the place with blackness – but in a positive and at times subversive sense. In the mid-1980s, a program called “Black Perspectives” operated out of Dixon Hall, a local social services agency; one participant who had attended some of their events as a child remembered them as “a space for young black people to be expressive” through music, art, and poetry. She said this was a rare and important opportunity at the time. The program produced a documentary on its efforts entitled “You Call Me Coloured”. It described the three sub-committees that comprised it: “people of promise”, whose work lay in “poetry and politics”; a collective of musicians called “mystique”; and a visual arts committee (Rhombus Media 1986). The documentary provides glimpses of the heterogeneity and fluidity of Toronto’s “black community,” and of the population of Regent Park at the time. At an outdoor performance in Regent Park South, for example, a young man on stage is shown popping and locking to reggae music – adapting a style of dance associated with the hip-hop subculture of the United States, to a Jamaican genre of music, in a Canadian context. The crowd of spectators that appears in the footage was about as ethnically diverse as Regent Park was at the time, with black, white, and Asian participants of all ages watching.

The documentary also includes footage of poet (and now creative writing professor) Lillian Allen performing her work of dub poetry,⁷⁶ “Rub a Dub Style Inna Regent Park”. The piece begins with a vocal imitation of a wailing police siren, and then tells a story of a woman being taken to a police station after “her Johnny got a gun from an ex-policeman.” The verses

⁷⁶ A genre of spoken word poetry accompanied by electronic-infused reggae music, commonly with lyrics of a revolutionary, black-pride, or otherwise subversive nature.

address the stressors associated with low-income life in 1980s Toronto, and place the struggles of black Torontonians in an historical context rooted in the transatlantic slave trade:

It's a long time since we make the trip, cross the Atlantic on the slave ship
It's a long long time we knocking, and every time you slam the door, seh, no job,
discrimination, injustice
Ah feel the whip lick, and it's the same boat (Allen 1986).

Throughout the documentary, other artists speak of recovering a connection to “Mother Africa” that had been embattled and denigrated for centuries.

Released in 1995, Rude was the first feature film of Clement Virgo, who lived in Regent Park as a child (Conquering Lion Productions 1996). The film splices together three unrelated narratives of black young adults in difficult circumstances with the cryptic, dramatic commentary of the namesake Rude, a pirate radio disc jockey. In one story that closely reflects a common scenario described to me by several participants, a man recently released from prison strives to rebuild his relationship with his wife and child while being constantly tempted by his white former crime boss to return to selling drugs in Regent Park. In the second, a woman is haunted by visions of a dancing child after aborting a pregnancy; and in the third, an aspiring boxer takes part in gay-bashing while desperately hiding his own sexuality from his peers. Though the subject matter reflects stereotypically “Regent Park” content, the characters are generally afforded a measure of agency and depth that goes beyond the flattening portraits of crime and despair that typify more common portrayals of Regent Park, especially in the 1990s. The three narratives are stitched together by Rude’s incitements to rebellion, and black-power imagery such as a stalking lion.

In works such as Rude and “Rub a Dub Style Inna Regent Park”, the connection to Regent Park was important but not necessary. Allen was active at the time with the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers’ Group (Regent Park Area Sole Support Mothers’ Group 1986), and the

themes in her poem clearly resonate with other data from the period; but it could have conceivably been set in any one of several other Toronto neighbourhoods with a prominent black presence at the time. Likewise, Rude was directed by a former Regent Park resident and was certainly relevant to Regent Park, but could have been just as relevant to several other settings in Toronto. That these portrayals were set in Regent Park, however, reflects an effort to reclaim a place that had long been exploited as a setting for the hegemonic (and increasingly racist) portrayals of the mainstream media.

Territory

Life history interviews that addressed the period of 1985 to 2001 depict Regent Park as a place that was contested on multiple fronts. As discussed in the previous section, media representations of Regent Park as lawless and chaotic were exaggerated at best, and overtly racist at worst. They did reflect a kernel of truth, however, in that Regent Park was subject to protracted conflicts among various interests, both internal and external to the housing projects: residents, police, drug dealers, the helping professions, and others all staked various competing claims over Regent Park. It was also a place marked by informality, which included the continuance of sharing and mutual aid among residents that has been addressed in previous chapters. Less pleasant examples of informality included discretionary policing by a division known as “Fort Apache” on the one hand, and the operation of predatory illegal businesses on the other. As in the past, residents responded to these challenges and dangers through extra-domestic labour: the unpaid work of ‘community’-building that shielded local youth from the effects of stigma, danger, and inequity. In this era, however, this labour was increasingly subsumed and redirected within new channels that brought a new element of formality to everyday life in Regent Park. This laid the foundation for the Regent Park Revitalisation which,

as I argue in the next chapter, entails the normalisation of Regent Park according to neoliberal standards.

With regards to informality, very few of my participants from this or any other era engaged in activities traditionally understood as political. The Regent Parkers I spoke to had little interest in formal or quasi-formal bodies such as tenant associations, activist coalitions, or electoral campaigns. Instead, those who consciously worked to improve conditions in Regent Park tended to do so through relatively unstructured, unglorified, and pragmatic means: supervising children collectively, volunteering with schools and social programs, or taking direct action against the drug trade, as will be addressed later in this section. As an important exception, a sole-support parent from Regent Park named Carolann Wright ran for mayor in 1988, and then for member of provincial parliament (MPP) in 1990. Now known as Carolann Wright-Parks, she explained to me during an interview in 2010 that her campaign was an effort to raise issues generally ignored by an “elitist” mayor who faced no viable competition in his bid for re-election:

It came out of conversations with the tenants’ association on what the issues were in Regent Park ... It was an anti-poverty, anti-racist coalition ... it was about changing how people see politics. People didn't even campaign around Regent Park – the mayor wouldn’t even post signs there. I came in runner-up, but it was more educational. It highlighted poverty, race, and homelessness.

Wright-Parks came in a distant second to the incumbent Art Eggleton, in an effort that she felt “helped increase participation and change apathy.” Two years later, as a New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate for MPP, she lost by just 50 votes. As an effort to establish Regent Park as a place that electoral candidates would at least need to address in the future, the Wright campaign was an example of Regent Parkers asserting control over their territory; one that blended extra-domestic labour with formal political participation.

“Something Changed With Crack”

Crime in Regent Park could be overt and fearsome even before the advent of crack. In one example from 1986 that many participants remembered, one man doused another with gasoline and set him on fire with a cigarette lighter during a drunken argument. Though the assailant immediately called for help and tried to extinguish the flames with his own shirt, the victim died from his burns 33 days later (Toronto Star 1986). The assailant, 34 years old at the time, was a long-time Regent Park resident who appeared in participants’ life histories as far back as their childhood in the early 1960s. Participants who knew him at various points in his life described him as a hapless and contradictory personality, whose substance abuse and capacity for extreme violence was counterbalanced by an endearing loyalty and sense of humour. After he pled guilty to manslaughter, a report on his sentencing focused on his apparent double life, describing him as a “wife-beater” and “an alcoholic, who used to play Santa Claus at the local church” who had been “imprisoned for 10 years for torching one of his closest buddies to death” (Darroch 1987). Incidents such as these, disturbing as they were, occurred in relative isolation and did not bear a lasting effect on local-level relations. According to several participants who remembered the era, it was not until the advent of crack-cocaine that uninvolved bystanders felt significantly threatened by crime and violence.

Because popular culture is rife with tired and offensive stereotypes that associate low-income, racialised localities with “crack”, I was reluctant to feature the topic in this dissertation to any significant extent. Interviews with participants confirmed, however, that beginning in 1988, the crack trade was indeed an important aspect of the history of Regent Park, particularly with regards to the conditions of social reproduction. Moreover, the disruptions caused by the crack trade were an indirect but important precipitating factor to the neoliberal restructuring of

Regent Park. At a time when their capacity to build and protect ‘community’ on their own terms was heavily strained, residents sought new solutions to violence and instability, such as calls for redevelopment and law-and-order crackdowns. This marked the beginnings of neoliberalism as hegemonic in Regent Park, as residents turned to private interests and to the punitive capacity of the state to redress the sorts of local-level problems that were previously handled internally. Meanwhile, drug users (“crackheads”) and sex workers (“hookers”) emerged as new categories of undesirables against which cleaner-living Regent Parkers defined their own respectability. Not unlike the ways in which an older generation derided “welfare bums” and “cheats” (see Chapter Three), many of this generation resisting their own stigmatisation by judging and stigmatising others in their midst.

Mike remembered that in the early 1980s, the local illicit drug market was centered on marijuana, PCP, and hallucinogens such as LSD – relatively innocuous substances as compared to cocaine, which “really started coming in hard” around 1985. “It started as freebasing,⁷⁷ and then the next thing you know, instead of people freebasing themselves, they started buying it already cooked in rocks.⁷⁸ That’s when the problems really started happening”, Mike remembered. He summarised the effects of crack, from his perspective as someone who had been criminally involved for roughly a decade by that point:

It turned everybody against everybody. Regent was no longer Regent Park, the “family” place to be. It was horrible. They started controlling the lobbies, the buildings, the exits. And it was families that were scared of these guys – me, I couldn’t care less. At that age I was packing⁷⁹ too.

⁷⁷ Smoking.

⁷⁸ The relatively low-cost, impure format now widely known as “crack”.

⁷⁹ Carrying a gun.

He knew several men who died during this era from suicide, substance abuse, or violence, including a friend who was shot and killed in front of a community centre and his body looted for clothes and valuables. Disgusted over “what it’s become,” this became part of the impetus for Mike’s decision to leave the illegal trades entirely in the early 1990s.

Linda, who had no involvement in the drug trade, perceived a fundamental change in the state of security in Regent Park as a result of crack. “I never walked through Regent Park afraid, but people on crack are unpredictable,” she said. “Women who were once vibrant were now on street corners, their kids were probably gone. People with promise and potential were now dealing.” As she and other residents (particularly women) began to fear walking through Regent Park for the first time, the crack trade had begun to impinge upon social reproduction.

Participants from earlier eras tended to describe the dangers associated with the drug trade as something that only put those involved at risk: as one said of dealers in the early 1980s, “You were aware, but they did their thing and didn’t bug you.” My interviews suggest the late 1980s were the first time uninvolved bystanders felt significantly worried about the potential for random or accidental victimisation as an offshoot of ‘the trades.’ As Barbara described it,

I had to be a very strict parent; I knew what was going on there. I’m blessed that none of my kids came out of it dead or addicted or pregnant. Random bullets scared the shit out of me. The group of guys playing dominos outside, they were targets; I was never afraid of being targeted, but I was afraid of random bullets.

By 1995, she was at “a point where I couldn’t go to any more funerals” after some of her children’s friends had been killed by gunshots. Another participant compared the situation to that of another housing project where she had grown up in the 1970s. In those days, people in the illegal trades

... did their thing, but did not mess with innocent people. But something has changed over time, and it’s not unique to Regent Park. Something changed about

respect, and who you can mess with...something changed with crack, and now a 14-year-old will put a gun to your face.

While none of my participants told stories of being directly harmed by violence associated with the drug trade, the possibility that this could happen was one part of their everyday reality. Particularly for women, it could make them uncomfortable in their own homes and influenced their decisions on where to go and at what time of day.

Local newspapers first mentioned crack in conjunction with Regent Park in 1986, in an article which quoted a police officer, “If crack catches on, the whole spectrum of our society will suffer” (Lavigne 1986). By 1988, the official bodies responsible for security in Regent Park portrayed the projects as besieged. In October 1988, the Toronto Star quoted a police officer who said the situation had worsened to the point that “Regent Park used to be controlled by the police...now it’s controlled by the drug dealers” (Swainson 1988). Under the leadership of George Mammoliti,⁸⁰ the union representing MTHA employees negotiated for added security measures for its members, while the MTHA general manager admitted that working conditions in its properties had deteriorated in the past two years “mainly because of crack” (Appleby 1988).

Meanwhile, MTHA embarked upon what the Toronto Star called “a get-tough campaign by the housing authority against pushers,” which included eviction proceedings against “drug families” (Howell 1988). These problematic tenants were living in properties across the city, many of them in five “trouble spots” including Regent Park (Howell 1988). The Globe and Mail noted that MTHA chair (and former mayor of Toronto) John Sewell “played down a controversial policy of ousting tenants – and their families – who sell drugs” (Appleby 1988). Sixty-five families had been ordered out of MTHA apartments in a 12-month period; Sewell

⁸⁰ Now Giorgio Mammoliti, the eccentric right-wing city councillor.

estimated that 25 of them had been successfully evicted, and stated that this was merely standard policy (Appleby 1988). He also noted that in cases in which the mother of the household was clearly unaware that someone else who lived there was dealing, the court and MTHA alike “would be very loath to kick her out”, but “the assumption often is that they do” (Appleby 1988).

Comments from participants reveal the unjust oversimplifications at work behind this ascription of “drug families” as a master status. One woman described a scenario she observed repeatedly as a resident and community worker in the early 1990s, in which women were victimised on multiple fronts by abusive partners, the drug trade, and social services:

Women were vulnerable. They’d be going out with a guy who seemed like a nice guy. He’d start staying over, then his friends would come by, and then they’d turn her apartment into a crackhouse. We’d work with women who didn’t know what to do about people who wouldn’t leave their apartments. ‘I have people in my house, they have guns, I don’t know what to do.’ They’d go to a shelter with their kid, and then Children’s Aid would be contacted. But she’s the victim, not the perpetrator!

The same participant then asked me rhetorically to imagine myself in the situation of a woman living in poverty, with three children, whose teenage son starts bringing home enough cash to pay the rent and other bills.

Alongside stories of gunfire and chaos, I also heard of crime committed quietly and sometimes under a semi-legitimate guise. One participant remembered that the major dealers “came from their nice homes with mortgages,” and exploited the “vulnerability and desperation” of local youth by recruiting them into the more dangerous, less lucrative legwork of the trades. Another described an apartment down the hall from hers, from which an MTHA supervisor and his daughter sold crack. I was told that “it was easy to recognise taxi drivers who did drop-offs; a cabbie would reach under his dash and give someone a gun or a baggie. There were several cars doing it; they were making easy money.” On this note, one issue of the community newspaper

The T.O.! Magazine contained a detailed and nuanced cover story on the role of taxi drivers in the crack trade: while some were willful participants, another was quoted, “I don’t like crack, I don’t like what’s going on ... But am I supposed to put myself in ... jeopardy because I’m refusing a client based on my assumptions as to what he’s up to?” (Carder 1994a, 14). The Root N Burger restaurant, located in Regent Park South’s strip mall, was remembered in the 1990s as “a hub of bad activity”, but was also frequented by law-abiding residents for coffee.

Monica described the dealers who sat outside her apartment window all day as jovial and gregarious, not fearsome – but for her, this was precisely the problem. One morning, her three-year-old son told her that instead of going to daycare, he would prefer to spend the day with his “friends” in front of their building, referring to the dealers. Monica described her dilemma to me:

What should I have done? Scare him by saying they're bad people? They were there all day every day, always in a good mood; happy, jokey. That’s how you get involved in drugs – you see it all the time and it’s normalised. I didn't want him to grow up thinking this was normal.

It was this realisation that compelled Monica, who is proud to be a lifelong Regent Parker, to move away in the late 1990s (she later returned to the area). For Sheila, a similar scenario had played out a decade earlier: as mentioned in the previous chapter, she told me that the drug dealers she often encountered “weren’t saints by a long shot”, but were still “part of the community”. Still, she felt compelled to leave Regent Park one day in the late 1980s, when she found a chalk outline directly outside her building while in the company of her young son. Worse yet, the suspect lived in her building, and so “that’s when I decided I couldn’t have my kids growing up there,” she remembered.

Sheila remembered a widely shared perception that much of the clientele were not Regent Parkers, but people who drove “in from other areas” to buy drugs in Regent Park. When the issue came up during a police-community liaison meeting, she remembered the police

focusing excessively on alleged “problems within the black community”. It was a white woman who intervened and suggested they pay more attention to “who’s driving through to buy drugs”. In this sense, building on themes elaborated in prior chapters, the crack trade was in part another example of outsiders exploiting the stigmatisation of Regent Park towards predatory ends: knowing that vulnerable local black youth would likely shoulder the worst of the consequences, dealers from the outside saw them as pawns in an opportune venue to conduct their trade. As addressed in the previous section, one of the fictional narratives of Clement Virgo’s film Rude reflected this very real scenario.

“It Would be Nice if We Had Martial Law for the Purposes of Clearing Up the Drug Problem”

Amidst the preponderance of stigmatising media coverage of Regent Park over the years, one participant remembered a Toronto Sun article from 1997 as particularly offensive during our interview some 13 years after the fact. This article had portrayed violence in Regent Park as so rife that residents were unfazed when the bodies of two women lay in a stairwell for at least twelve hours after they were shot dead (Nesdoly 1997, 14). Two participants described the Sun’s portrayal as patently ridiculous: while there were indeed cases in which dead bodies did lie in public for hours on end (which they described as among the worst practices of the police), it was categorically false that Regent Park residents were so hardened that they did not notice. It also bears mentioning that the victims were sex workers – likely a factor in the trivialisation of their deaths, and a further example of the vulnerability that stigma entails.

Contrary to the 1997 Toronto Sun report, Regent Parkers were profoundly disturbed by violent deaths that occurred in their midst. They also expected prompt service and effective protection from the police, and many were willing to cooperate with officers in the process despite the often-fraught relationship between them. In 1987, for example, a homeless 14-year-

old girl from a Regent Park family was beaten and slashed to death. Reports described how Kelly Ann Mombourquette had “fallen in with the wrong crowd” three years before, living with friends and in a group home, selling sex, and developing addictions (Pron 1987). In response, the chair of the Regent Park Residents Association blamed the murder on controversial federal legislation regarding the prosecution of minors, and not the victim’s “home environment and social background” (Picard & MacLeod 1987). Among other provisions, the Young Offenders’ Act⁸¹ had made it illegal to reveal the identity of a young offender. Having been convicted of a “minor delinquency”, the victim had been placed in a group home, which she then fled; she was said to have been living in stairwells in Regent Park at the time she was killed. Because she was technically a young offender while missing, police could not disclose her name or news of the situation, and thus could not conduct an effective search. A co-chair of the Regent Park Residents Association said that had police been allowed to disclose the girl’s identity to them and ask for their help, “maybe she would still be alive today” (Picard & MacLeod 1987). The murder remains an unsolved cold case.

Though none of my participants remembered it, the archives mention a “Tenant Action Group,” which began meeting in the basement of a Regent Park apartment building in 1989 to take direct action against the local drug trade. The Toronto Star called them “an audacious band of women” who had “set up shop amid the dealers, junkies, pimps and prostitutes they want flushed out of their neighbourhood” (Stefaniuk 1989). When turnout was low, organisers worried that residents were too fearful of reprisals to get involved (Stefaniuk 1989); but the group was able to collect over 1,000 signatures on a petition calling for “stiffer laws and longer sentences” for drug offenses, and sent it to all levels of government (Darroch 1989). Members of the Tenant

⁸¹ Replaced with the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003.

Action Group told reporters of carrying a baseball bat every time they answered their doors at home, carrying mace at all times, witnessing people defecate in hallways, and living under a near-constant threat of violence (Stefaniuk 1989). One participant recalled a small-scale effort in a similar vein from a few years later, in which

There was a crackhouse on the tenth floor, so a woman organised all the women against it. She'd stand by the elevator and ring a school bell when a customer got off; all the women would come out and say "the drug store's closed".

Amidst a rapid, unprecedented escalation in the often fearsome social problems associated with the crack trade and addiction, a small group of residents attempted a law-and-order crackdown of their own, after those on the part of the police and the housing authority amounted to little beyond rhetoric and sporadic evictions and arrests. As unpaid work done outside the home towards the end of creating better living conditions, this was a form of extra-domestic labour that drew a sharp distinction between legitimate (or respectable) and illegitimate uses of Regent Park.

Return to Regent Park, a 1994 documentary film, depicts a tense meeting of the Community / Police Liaison Committee, in which a (mostly white) group of residents accuse police and housing authority staff of inaction and indifference regarding the perils of the drug trade. All at once, their anger reflects a mistrust of bureaucracy, a suspicion that the authorities saw Regent Park as undeserving of protection, and an unwavering disdain for drug dealers and users. "We've given the car license plates to you – why are they still here? They're still coming in night and day," a senior resident asks angrily. The visibly frustrated police officer explains that license plate numbers alone are not grounds for arrest:

We can't grab somebody and search them on suspicion. It would be nice if we had martial law for the purposes of clearing up the drug problem, but we don't. Therefore we need citizens that say they've seen a rock of crack-cocaine get passed from one person to another, and we need to know that money was handed back to that person. Specific evidence. Because we know who the dealers are ...

but in order for us to take action we need concrete information that can stand up in court (Close Up Film Productions, 1994).

At the same meeting, a housing authority official places the onus on “residents” to “band together and make a difference”; a chorus of senior women immediately responded by yelling “Bullshit!”

Before the implementation of the “community policing” approach, the fact that Regent Parkers took action of this sort from time to time was seen as an obstacle to a traditional model of policing that prioritised identifying offenders or potential offenders, and questioning or detaining them on an individual basis. A report from 1985 described Regent Park as an especially close-knit community, and cited this as a factor which contributed to defensive aggression on the part of the police:

Many residents of Regent Park are interested and very involved in what is going on in the community. Many of the residents know each other personally, or by sight or nickname. These residents have expressed the feeling that they have the right to know what is happening when a member of the community is arrested. However, they state that the police typically respond to questions from a bystander with comments (sometimes discourteously phrased) that people should mind their own business (Linden 1985, 20).

In this passage, a trait commonly seen as indicative of “community” – that many people look out for one another and are “very involved in what is going on” – is identified as a source of frustration for the police.

One participant shared a vignette in which police seemed to actively impede her small, innocuous attempt at brokering peace amongst a somewhat difficult group of residents. She had organised a house basketball league at the local community centre, largely for young men who had recently been released from jail. Before the league was established, the men would play “chaotic” games in a local schoolyard; this woman’s goal in establishing the league was to encourage a more peaceable sort of gameplay while also preserving safe play-space for small

children. In her recollection, the police worked against these efforts through a passive-aggressive sort of power display:

The cops would come to the league, and look at them playing ball from the hallway. I told them they couldn't do that. They were in there being intimidating. We were trying to get these guys to normalise their lives, to calm down; and of course seeing the cops in there aggravated them, made things worse.

She also recalled moments when police struck more forcefully, conducting “sweeps” (mass arrests): a scenario which overwhelmingly (but not entirely) involved white officers targeting black men. In these moments it seemed that any black youth outdoors in Regent Park was at risk of ‘fitting the description’. Groups of youth would come into the centre during raids, and the densely populated, indoor space supervised by local adults would function as a safe haven of sorts.

In this context, a Regent Park Committee Against Police Harassment (RPCAPH) had been formed in 1982. Members of the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers’ Group identified it as one of their most important initiatives (Regent Park Area Sole Support Mothers’ Group 1984). The Committee received citywide attention in March, 1983 when a Regent Park resident died in police custody. A coroner’s inquest concluded the following year that the man had died of a drug overdose, but according to one report, the incident had “caused considerable upset in the community and resulted in a number of outside interest groups approaching Regent Park residents and discussing violent ‘solutions’ to problems with police” (Linden 1985, 2). A meeting called by the RPCAPH to discuss the death was publicised by a poster that “contained a somewhat startling illustration depicting a black youth being grabbed by a police officer and being bitten by a police dog in front of a burning building” (Linden 1985, 3). The report judged this image as a product of “naïveté” on the part of the RPCAPH, which “understandably” upset police and led them to equate the Regent Park activists with non-credible “outside interest

groups” (Linden 1985, 3). This apparent misstep aside, two local aldermen had arranged for Committee representatives to meet with the unit commander of 51 Division and found that the Regent Parkers were “making a bona fide attempt” to rectify “perceived police-community problems” (Linden 1985, 3).

Based on conversations with Regent Park residents spanning roughly one year, the Linden report portrayed the problems identified as resulting from a series of misunderstandings and unwise decisions on the part of two interlocutors. It downplayed systemic inequity and the obvious power differential between the police and residents of a social housing complex, portraying racism and anti-police sentiment as two types of prejudice inspired by unfortunate stereotypes that harmed their targets to a roughly equal degree. In this formulation, it was equally important for “the community” to meet its “obligation to make an effort to understand and not pre-judge the police officer,” as it was for the police to stop being racist (Linden 1985, 9). With the problem defined as such, the solution posited was for both sides to calm down, better acquaint themselves with the formal complaints process, and learn to better respect one another (Linden 1985, 10-11). Throughout, the onus was placed primarily upon Regent Parkers to engage (voluntarily and without compensation) with the conciliatory efforts extended by the same police who had wronged them, even though these efforts had been failing for years “due partly to lack of community involvement” (Linden 1985, 1).

In the same report, Linden acknowledged the seriousness of residents’ “allegations that the term ‘nigger’ and references to ‘apes, monkeys, and swinging from trees’ [were] used by officers in dealing with black residents (Linden 1985, 15). He suggested that persons abused in this way seek redress by filing “a formal complaint” – since a 1979 “standing order” had established that officers could be disciplined for racism (Linden 1985, 17). The report also cited

the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms at great length to explain the legal recourse available to citizens who had been wronged by the police. While noting that many residents who had been wronged feared retribution for complaining, the RPCAPH agreed to encourage residents to make use of the formal complaints process. The Public Commissioner in turn agreed to take complaints directly at the office of the Regent Park Residents Association, and 16 of these had been filed by early 1984. As solutions to the “generally perceived problems” that emerged from these filings, the report recommended greater oversight regarding decisions to send more than three police cars in response to a call; an increase in foot patrols as opposed to car patrols; and ongoing talks between the police and community representatives (Linden 1985, 6).

As time went on, official channels such as these became the predominant means of taking action against mistreatment by the police. By 1986, a Regent Park Advisory Committee on Police Community Relations had been established, and was collaborating with the housing authority and a consultant on a study of safety and security in Regent Park South’s outdoor space (N. Barry Lyon Consultants 1986). In dealings with police, Regent Parkers thus experienced two sides of state intervention characteristic of a law-and-order crackdown that others have associated with neoliberal restructuring (Parenti 1999): extralegal violence and abuse on the one hand, and the subsuming of grassroots community organising under apolitical and ineffectual bureaucracies on the other.

The Linden Report’s reliance on the status quo of outreach committees, complaints bureaucracies, and federal legislation presumed a good-faith relationship between police and Regent Parkers, and a devout adherence to the law on the part of police – neither of which seems to have been the reality. The Report eschewed the reality of extralegal police violence and abuse,

which remained rife in spite of such purportedly strict new legal controls: references to “The Cherry Beach Express” continued into this period, for example. Also disturbing was a story from one activist who was certain the police had targeted her for harassment by using her children as proxy. As she recalled,

My kids were only 8, 9, and 10 and the cops were picking them up! They had gone to play ball and were supposed to be back in an hour, which was the rule for them. They were gone a long time, and I got a call from the police station, saying they were there because they fit the description of some boys who had robbed a house. I was wild. And the boys were scared to death. I said, “Did they use their basketballs to rob the house?” Of course they realised I was a rally organiser. And I can’t prove it, but I know they did it to scare me.

The apparent targeting of children for their mothers’ political activism provides perhaps the clearest example of the discretionary and vindictive nature of police power in 1980s Regent Park, and illustrates how a good-faith relationship between the police and ‘the community’ could not be taken for granted as it was presumed in the complaints process.

The Linden report marked the beginnings of a formalisation of the police themselves, and of the state of ‘police-community relations’. When I asked Linda, a white woman, what “some of the day-to-day problems with the cops” were, her immediate and unqualified response was, “and MTHA security was really bad too – it was day-to-day targeting of black youth. It was overt and undeniable. If you were a black teenager you would be stopped, made to unpack your bag, have your faced slammed into a cruiser”. She remembered the “Cherry Beach Express”, and hearing about “new recruits being told to beat the shit out of the first black kid they find as some kind of initiation.” Two officers known for extralegal violence had cruiser license plates that bore their nicknames: “Warpo” and “Wacko”. At a time when Regent Park was frequently portrayed in the media as the wild beyond the frontier, and its police station as “Fort Apache”, the police

appeared in residents' remembrances as wielding the discretionary power and extralegal violence of an occupying colonial army.

Around the same time, racism among Toronto police, and the widespread denial that it existed, was epitomised by a chain of events following an unjustified stop-and-search just outside of Regent Park in 1993. In the very early morning, two police stopped a vehicle, and forced the driver and sole passenger (both of them black men) to lay face-down and handcuffed while they searched the vehicle. When nothing illegal turned up, the police let the men go. It turned out the driver was a prominent journalist, who filed a complaint; when his complaint was dismissed, the Deputy Chief of police took the unusual measure of charging the two officers under the Police Services Act (Tanovich 2002, 155-156). In January 1995, the officers' lawyers tried to have the hearing stayed, and failed. In response, their colleagues at 51 Division in Regent Park staged an eight-hour wildcat strike – the only of its kind in the history of Toronto (Mascoll 1995b). Two shifts of officers left the station locked, left their cruisers parked, and refused to patrol (Mascoll 1995a). Amongst the reaction from Regent Park, one resident was quoted in The Toronto Star, “The drug dealers had a great time and could do their business in the open. It was the police saying to the community, ‘We don’t care about you’” (Murray 1995).

Conflicts and controversies over the police came to a head on the night of August 29, 1995. Residents said the incident began when a black man angrily chastised a police officer for nearly hitting a child while speeding in a cruiser down a pedestrian walkway; the officer responded with racist abuse. In an initial statement, Bill Blair (then staff inspector,⁸² later chief of police) said that a “routine arrest” became complicated when an uninvolved black man made “an obscene gesture” at the police. A crowd of “between 100 and 300 people” formed, and “45

⁸² Division head.

police vehicles and nearly 100 officers” arrived (Gombu et al. 1995). Projectiles flew at the police from the crowd, and down from balconies. Children were among those affected by the pepper spray that was used by police.

Wary of the hyperbole and oversimplifications that saturate the media archives on Regent Park, I was unsure about using the term “riot” when raising the incident with participants. In one interview, I first addressed the topic as such:

RJ: Were you there for the big scrap in...1995, was it?

Linda: You mean the riot?

RJ: Yeah – did people in Regent call it a “riot”, or was that just the media?

Linda: Everyone called it “the riot” because that’s what it was. There was no denying it was a riot.

Linda then described approaching the Sackville Green cul-de-sac in Regent Park South, which had become a chaotic mass of “lights, noise, and people.” Up close, she saw “cops in riot gear, and residents with any weapons they could find. To this day, I’m surprised there were no fatalities.” A front line of police pushed against the crowd with riot shields, while others shot rubber bullets and discharged pepper spray. In the immediate aftermath, Linda remembered “police tape and broken bottles everywhere”.

Within two days, a generally accepted explanation for the cause had emerged. According to Linda, “there were some parents sitting on their stoop drinking beer” at the St. Bartholomew’s cul-de-sac. “A cop car came flying in with no siren and barely missed a kid. One of the fathers threw a beer bottle and said, ‘What the fuck are you doing?’.” Monica, perhaps the strongest critic of the police I spoke to from this era, did not remember a “riot” as such, but did remember a time when “people were throwing stuff out of their windows and off their balconies at the cops” and that “everyone supported” the man who told the police to slow down. “I found out that a guy got pepper-sprayed for telling the cops not to speed, and then everything went nuts ... a lot

of people supported him. Anyone would have said what we said, just telling the cops to slow down because there were kids around.” Others said they did not remember the riot, but then described a scenario that matched it almost exactly. One respondent said she wasn’t sure if she remembered a “riot” in 1995, but did remember “a very big brawl” in which her mother was among those pepper-sprayed while trying to help an injured friend.

In 1996, another report on “police-community issues in Regent Park” was produced by a private consultant and a “working group” comprised of three residents, two constables, and Staff Inspector Bill Blair (Jim Ward Associates, 1996). Based on surveys and interviews with residents, police, housing authority and social services staff among others, the report documented a wide range of “major concerns” on the part of police and residents at the time – but not the riot that had occurred the year before. Echoing the approach of the Linden Report from a decade earlier, the Ward Report likewise portrayed residents and police as equals with a common interest, but also with a relationship soured by misunderstandings and stereotypes. The two goals of The Ward Report were to build “more harmonious, trusting, and mutually respectful relationships” between the police and the community, and to work towards “a safe community for law-abiding and mutually respectful citizens” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 1). The report noted that both residents and police wanted to be treated with respect by each other, and that the “prevailing mood” was a “desire to see common ground”, though some police and residents alike “were not interested in getting beyond an ‘us versus them’ mentality” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 3-4).

The contents of the Ward Report reflect a local-level example of the implementation of ‘rule of law’ as a neoliberal imperative (Brabazon 2017). The aforementioned ‘common ground’ that the report found between residents and police was mostly related to law-and-order concerns:

“residents wish to see more concentrated policing efforts directed towards clearing up illicit drug activities, prostitution, and crimes such as breaking and entering” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, no page number). For their part, a list of the “most effective aspects of their work in Regent Park” compiled from input from police included, “assisting clearly deserving victims of crime; prostitute and john suppression; trying to communicate with the children in the area; drug arrests; [and] proactive policing, when there is time” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 54). The police thus pledged their support for the “clearly deserving”, while suppressing and containing the undeserving.

Some standout results from the Ward Report point to the toothlessness of the exercise. For example, one quotation from a residents’ questionnaire alleges that police were “picking on and planting drugs on young and adult black people in the community.” This allegation of an egregious and patently illegal abuse of power is neither contextualised nor investigated further, and was listed directly after the innocuous complaint that the police “don’t run social and fun events” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 23). In another example, a resident was quoted as saying the police “sometimes drive their cars through the area at high speeds, not taking into account the children playing in the area” (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 8). Though speeding of this nature was apparently what had sparked the 1995 riot, this snippet was decontextualised, and to repeat, the riot was not mentioned anywhere in the report. As the report merely stated these serious allegations without addressing them, it should not come as a surprise that other data it presented suggests a profound ambivalence with the entire process on the part of residents: when they were asked on questionnaires what they like about “the way the police do their work”, two responses were tied for most common: one was “they do their job”, and the other was “nothing” (Jim Ward

Associates 1996, 5). Meanwhile, “Nothing” also topped the list of things that residents said they did *not* like about the way that police do their work (Jim Ward Associates 1996, 7).

In the long-term aftermath, participants remembered the appointment of Bill Blair⁸³ to Staff Inspector of 51 Division as an important turning point for policing in Regent Park. As Barbara remembered, “the cops did a lot of sifting of their ranks – Blair did a lot of that, getting rid of cops who just wanted to put something on their resume and then get an easy job in Peel⁸⁴ or something.” Linda respected Blair for standing before a community meeting alone at the podium and presenting the findings of the Ward Report. “He wasn’t surrounded by other cops or anything. I think he won over the community immediately. He cleaned house – got rid of Warpo and Wacko and others.”

Despite the reforms attributed to Bill Blair, Monica remembered an incident from the summer of 2002 when she was walking through Regent Park South with six teenage girls, on their way to buy groceries for their drop-in program. “The cops approached us and said, ‘Where are you little niggers going?’” And they said to me, “‘You must be big momma nigger.’ I really wanted to freak out, but I just said, “‘You need to find something productive to do with your time, because we’re busy.’” Afterwards, the girls were too dejected to go through with the shopping trip, so they “just got Kraft Dinner” nearby. “The mood changed for no reason; just because the cops wanted to be pricks,” Monica explained. Subject to such unrestrained harassment, Monica saw little merit in other residents’ calls to once again increase the presence of police on foot in Regent Park: “You don’t need more cops, more presence – they just police the wrong people. I’ve never been about that.” Yet she also continued to engage in good-faith efforts to improve the

⁸³ Partially on the strength of his work in Regent Park, Bill Blair was appointed Chief of the Toronto Police Service in 2005.

⁸⁴ A regional municipality comprised of suburbs and exurbs to the west and northwest of Toronto.

situation, to little effect: “Every time I planned an event, you always want to include cops so they can see there’s more good than bad. But, nine times out of ten they don’t come.”

The sort of ‘house-cleaning’ attributed to Bill Blair, I argue, was constitutive of neoliberal restructuring. Others have addressed how the appeal of gentrifying areas depends, to a significant extent, upon the smooth functioning of the police and other security services (Waquant 2009). Since it is hard to imagine that prospective gentrifiers would find the notion of a “Fort Apache” alluring, the reforms of 51 Division are an example of local-level restructuring in the interests of private investment. Meanwhile, as Monica’s story of racist harassment suggests, black Regent Parkers continued to face familiar threats and coercion in the era of ‘community policing’.

As far back as 1986, data reflect this bifurcation in opinions regarding the police: people who voice favourable opinions of the police tended not to encounter them very often. The Lyons report noted that 86.7% of respondents “gave police presence in the square a favourable rating, while just 5.1% gave police presence a negative rating” (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 5). Over half reported having been in contact with the police; of them, 81.8% were satisfied by this contact and the remainder dissatisfied (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 5). “Interestingly,” the report deduced, “a direct relationship exists between those who think police presence in the Square⁸⁵ is a bad thing, and those who have had contact with the police in the Square and were dissatisfied with it” (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 5). Those dissatisfied constitute a “small minority of residents” who “should not be ignored” (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 5).

⁸⁵ All Saints’ Square – outdoor space in Regent Park South that was the subject of this report.

Though old divisions persisted, from the late 1990s onward, residents responded to such abuses within the legitimised, state-sanctioned complaints and participation parameters which presume a good-faith relationship between police and “the community”. One woman described going through the police’s complaints process only to be “told it was all in our heads.” Some saw “the problem” as shared, to some extent, between Regent Park youth and the police, which could be ameliorated with workshops for youth on what to do when stopped by police. Monica, perhaps the most critical of the police of anyone I spoke to about the 1990s, enrolled her son in one such workshop. Barbara described it as a situation in which “you’re all wrong, and you need to fix this. Cops need to stop this stuff, and kids, if the cops ask you for your ID you show it to them and don’t flip them off.” She was also part of an effort to lead new recruits on tours of Regent Park, “explain what time of night problems tend to happen,” and explain that a community facility frequented by large groups of black youth was in fact legitimate and should be left alone. One resident campaigned for a greater reliance on foot patrols such that officers might get to know residents better, and thus avoid the misconception that “we residents are part of the problem” (Brent 1994).

In the end, conflicts over territory in the 1990s laid the foundation for the normalisation of Regent Park, in keeping with neoliberal ideology, through the rule of law. The likes of “Warpo and Wacko” in the 1990s, “Handlebar Hank” in the 1960s, and the “Cherry Beach Express” from all years in between, did not appear during my fieldwork in 2009-2012. In place of the raucous, at times profane meetings of the early 1990s, present-day community consultations related to the Regent Park Revitalisation are genteel affairs moderated by housing authority staff in business-casual attire, who follow schedules displayed on PowerPoint slides. Perhaps most obviously, the built environment is in the midst of being completely rebuilt to

“blend in” with a downtown increasingly dominated by condominiums and corporate retail space. While the frontier iconography of late 1980s and 1990s media coverage was obviously objectionable and racist, there is some truth to the view that the neoliberal normality of the rest of Toronto is enclosing upon and remaking Regent Park. Yet the illicit trades continue to operate, albeit usually more discreetly but with some occasional high-profile exceptions.

Of final note regarding the police, and reflecting themes of discipline and masculinity elaborated in Chapter Three, Mike credits the words of one officer with the inspiration for his abrupt turnaround in his 20s. During a sentencing hearing, a police officer (Jimmy) whom he had known since childhood pulled him aside, and told him to “have a good look around at all the 40 and 50 year old men” he would inevitably see upon returning to prison, as he was sure to become “the exact same fuckin’ loser” when he reached their age. Just as Jimmy predicted, soon after Mike re-entered prison he saw inmates in their 40s and 50s – embittered recidivists who hated him for his youth and nonchalance. He described the “epiphany” that occurred to him in prison, while high on hash and looking around at the elder men:

Sure enough, man, it hit me like a punch in the face. Jimmy’s words in my head ... that’s exactly what you’re gonna be when you’re 40, 50 years old. And I thought about it and I said, you know, I’m gonna have nothing. No property, no respect, and I’m high as I’m thinking all this ... and after I got out, I never returned, because of what Jimmy said. It scared the shit right out of me! ‘Cause I didn’t wanna be a bum.

Mike was released from prison in 1991 and has been operating a legitimate business in the suburbs ever since. At the time of our interview, he was seeking a pardon to clear his criminal record.

Conclusion: Creative Destruction

During the period of 1985 to 2001, the local-level implications of neoliberal hegemony were complex and conflicted. Despite the aggressive attempt on the part of the provincial

Conservatives elected in 1995 to instil their agenda of austerity and free-market individualism as (in their own words) ‘common sense’, the influence of their neoliberal ideology over the commonsensical (in Gramscian terms) worldviews of Regent Parkers was, in the end, minimal. The cutbacks of the 1990s did have a profound effect on local living conditions, making the terms of social reproduction considerably more difficult; but most of my participants formed their intellectual responses to these new challenges through the familiar paradigms of emic class-like categories rather than embracing the neoliberal priorities of individualism and self-reliance. “Regent Park,” as residents understood it, remained a working-class community – one that they built for themselves through extra-domestic labour. This community was, however, divided in terms of how its members encountered the coercive power of the state; a difference that amounts to a local-level manifestation of systemic racism. Some residents (largely but not entirely racialised, predominantly black) voiced their outrage over the violent and discretionary policing they experienced. Others (largely but not entirely white) devoutly participated in efforts to facilitate ‘police-community relations’, and/or enacted informal law-and-order crackdowns of their own. Though none of my participants cited racism among Regent Parkers as a significant issue in this era, to some extent this divide can be seen as a continuation of patterns of differentiation along ethnoracial lines that had begun in the 1970s, as addressed in Chapter Four.

Also during the period of 1985 to 2001, the less punitive iteration of neoliberalism that others have termed “neoliberal urbanism” began to influence Regent Park (e.g. Fanelli & Paulson 2010; Theodore et al. 2011). As addressed in Chapter Six, by the early 2000s this was entrenched as hegemonic in the broader context. As far back as the mid-1980s, concerns over the physical design of Regent Park, the use of its outdoor space, and its policing were sufficiently intertwined that the Metro Toronto Housing Authority commissioned a report to address all of

them at once. The report was prepared by consultants who listed the Regent Park Advisory Committee on Police Community Relations as collaborators (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986). It was based on a survey of 368 residents of Regent Park South on what should become of All Saints Square, a small outdoor space. Beginning with the pithy one-line introduction, “It’s working, but it can work better,” the report then meticulously outlined an overall theme of relative satisfaction with the square. Contrary to the new urbanist tenet that under-defined outdoor expanses breed anomie and invite danger, the report recommended that All Saints Square be renovated and improved upon rather than rebuilt from scratch. Nearly half of those surveyed were pleased with the Square, which was described as “a good place for children to play” and “a fairly pleasant, convenient, park-like setting” (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 2). Residents tended to view problems such as “broken glass, garbage, dog droppings, poor lighting and seating, and not enough grass” as resulting from “limited maintenance” and/or “mistreatment of the Square by a minority of residents” (N. Barry Lyons Consultants Ltd. 1986, 4). This summary is largely consistent with memories of my participants from all eras on the state of outdoor space in Regent Park.

An important but long-forgotten project also appears in the pages of the Lyons Consultants’ Report. Acknowledging that many residents “did not know the name of the Square until they received the survey”, the report considered having the Square renamed something more meaningful, but dismissed an idea to this end that came from some respondents:

A number of residents either mentioned to interviewers, wrote on their questionnaires, or even went as far as to phone Lyon Consultants, to stress the point that approximately eight years ago, promises were made to the area residents by local politicians that the Square was to be re-named in memory of Emanuel Jaques, the Regent Park youth who was murdered on Yonge Street at that time.

This proposition certainly has much merit. However, the value of associating the park with such a tragic event should be carefully considered. Rather than naming the square after him, possibly some thought could be given to erecting a plaque in memory of Emanuel (N. Barry Lyon Consultants Ltd. 1986, 14).

Instead, All Saint's Square retained its relatively meaningless name until it was closed, piece-by-piece, through the Regent Park Revitalisation in 2011 and 2012. This tokenisation of residents' "participation" foreshadows developments to be covered in the next chapter.

The period covered by this chapter can aptly be viewed, in David Harvey's terms, as one of "creative destruction" (2006). I heard many stories highlighting the need for a drastic modification of the built environment: one participant active in the planning of the revitalisation cited her own maintenance emergency as an example of why the old buildings seemed so hopeless. When a pipe broke through a wall and into her apartment, bedbugs entered through the hole and began a serious infestation in the two days it took MTHA to repair the damage. "We had been fighting roaches the whole time we were there, and this was the end of the line," she remembered. Decades of residual funding and mismanagement had led to inadequate conditions in many units. In a less literal sense, the retrenchment of the Keynesian welfare state in the 1980s and 1990s further eroded the living conditions of Regent Parkers, while also establishing the institutional framework and justifications for a new form of state intervention into Regent Park in the 2000s. While the hype has quieted considerably in recent years, the Regent Park Revitalisation has generally been exalted by new urbanists as the epitome of a progressive, participatory, "green", even benevolent plan – yet it is rooted in the policies of an anti-urban neoliberal government, and bears more continuities with the policies of this government than is often recognised.

In 2010, I spoke to a participant who had worked as an MTHA official in Regent Park, and was remembered well by some of the former residents I spoke to as an accessible, helpful

point of contact in an otherwise frustrating bureaucracy. He spoke of the grassroots nature of campaigns from the 1990s to have smaller portions of Regent Park redeveloped, and explained the ostensible irony that the current large-scale reinvestment in Regent Park is rooted in an earlier process of de-investment and disinterest. Speaking of the Harris provincial government, he noted that “what they did ... ironically if you think about it, really worked out well for Regent Park.” After the province downloaded housing to the municipal level,

The City of Toronto decided to take all of its public housing ... into one company and make that an arm’s length corporation,[which] made it a lot easier for TCHC to start making those kinds of decisions without political interference. It opened the door for a lot more flexibility and creativity. So TCHC could come in and look at this land, these buildings, the social problems in this community, and think, we could rebuild these buildings which were in really bad shape, and we could do that by leveraging the land, which would allow for a whole mixed income community at the end of the day, and that would be how we could revitalise and redevelop this community. So there’s an irony in a sense of what Harris did. Irony in the sense that so many people didn't like Harris ... but it ended up being very helpful for this community for sure.

I also appreciate the note of irony in the situation, but disagree with the idea that it prevented “political interference.” It did prevent political involvement in that a disinterested provincial government was no longer in a position to stonewall redevelopment proposals, but the process by which these proposals led to the Revitalisation was, as I argue in the next chapter, entirely political. This chapter concludes with a brief analysis of some precursors to this process.

A significant portion of the documentary Return to Regent Park focuses on the efforts of a committee of residents to build support for their proposal to redevelop a portion of the project (Close Up Film Productions 1994). One scene follows a committee member as she canvasses door-to-door in the buildings that would have been affected by the plan. Reading from a script, she explains, “I am part of the community group that has been active in the planning of Regent Park”, and asks if the woman would be interested in buying an affordable unit in a new

development. The exchange that follows reflects an awkward clash of dogged determination and complete disinterest:

Tenant: You're changing the housing; it won't change the people.

Activist: Well it would. We're changing the face of the place, to make it more like a community rather than this four-wall square that we have.

Tenant: Yeah I know what you're saying, but it ain't going to change the people.

Activist: Well I think it would if it's changed into a more liveable looking place. Okay. So you say no.

Throughout, the activist appears reluctant to accept the woman's "No", and responds to her objections by restating the same opinion that drew the objection in a slightly different way.

In a portion of Milgrom's 2003 doctoral dissertation that focuses on these early redevelopment proposals, he examines "how those who claim to represent the interest of the residents influence the built form", and "whether the form that it is produced is a representation of the everyday lives of the population" (Milgrom 2003, 207). One event he witnessed was a "charrette" – essentially a group of invitees assembled to discuss an architectural case study – held in 1989 (2003, 231). The group of roughly 50 included architects, agency staff, John Sewell, and only two Regent Park residents, both of them members of the Regent Park Sole Support Mothers Group. Milgrom summarised the effort as an exercise in imposing the "neo-classical postmodernism popular at the time", refracted through a measure of Jane Jacobs and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, upon Regent Park (2003, 232). Milgrom felt unable to conclude whether this exercise reflected the interests of Regent Parkers, as the only two tenants involved were merely advisors and were not necessarily representatives, but "simply two outspoken tenants who had, or made, the time to be involved" (Milgrom 2003, 233).

Milgrom provides a detailed description and analysis of the various committees and sub-committees that were assembled and disbanded through the late 1980s and 1990s to create redevelopment proposals for relatively small portions of Regent Park, none of which came to

fruition (2003, 236-321). The role of powerful outside institutions and individuals appears far more prominent in Milgrom's analysis than it does in more recent and influential accounts of this period (e.g. Micallef 2013, Toronto Community Housing 2007). One plan, for example, was launched by the Regent Park United Church as an attempt to re-establish its relevance as its congregation dwindled and it faced potential closure (Milgrom 2003, 236). While the church had established the Toronto Christian Resource Centre in the mid-1980s, its services were focused primarily on homeless people who frequented the area rather than Regent Park tenants. A plan to rebuild the church alongside new housing on its land would potentially be part of a "broader process of neighbourhood regeneration" (2003, 238). In another effort, John Sewell initiated an attempt to redevelop the northeast portion of Regent Park North (Milgrom 2003, 247-249).

Throughout, Milgrom found that resident participation was largely limited to people filling a small number of positions in professionalised committees who, in addition to being outnumbered and operating within a limited scope, were self-selected rather than elected. "Simply having committee members with home addresses in the neighbourhood did not mean that they can speak for all the communities present," Milgrom noted (2003, 251). To Milgrom, the bulk of these efforts lay at the lower rungs of Arnstein's "eight rungs of citizen participation" – decisively in the range of "nonparticipation" and "tokenism", rather than "citizen power" (Arnstein 1969, Milgrom 2003, 249). A woman who was active in the process initiated by the United Church described it as marred by "horrible meetings" and infighting. She also explained a lack of consistency across the various attempts, in that people simply "got old" and stopped participating. In a Masters' thesis, McManus documented his experiences as a researcher and volunteer organiser with the United Church's Christian Resource Centre during the time of the redevelopment proposal. Drawing upon a "radical planning tradition" (1990, 7), McManus's

insights include reflections on his own role as an asset to the Christian Resource Centre “in a power struggle against John Sewell” (1990, 43); that popular education would have been useful in enabling conservative Regent Parkers who blamed “bums” for their hardships to “recognise the real source of their oppression”; and that “the experience of working in Regent Park has confirmed my belief in Poulantzas’s view that the state, like the United Church of Canada, “is not a monolithic block but a strategic battlefield”” (1990, 66).

One participant explained to me matter-of-factly that “every community has its bad apples”, but the effects of their presence were exacerbated by the modernist built environment of Regent Park. “What happened in Regent Park is, it’s designed according to the garden city model, which means it’s bad for police patrols,” she said. “It isolates a 100% poor community, creates desperation and depression; it can create paralyzing fear, not wanting to go out.” However, Milgrom argued, as I also found in my own research, that “it is easy to focus on the negative aspects of the neighbourhood’s layout, but the issues are not that clear and there are a variety of opinions in The Park” (Milgrom 2003, 290). Writing in 2003, Milgrom found that “residents have ... laid claim to some of the ambiguous spaces” around buildings by establishing quasi-legal garden patches, for example (2003, 290). Some of these were still there during my own fieldwork in 2009-2012.

Well before the time of writing, it had become “common wisdom” that replanning Regent Park as a street grid would “help ‘normalise’ the neighbourhood” (Milgrom 2003, 290). Still, “many residents” had “resist[ed] the idea” for fear that “the traffic will put children in danger”, while the “park-like aspect of the neighbourhood” might be lost (Milgrom 2003, 290). I heard similar concerns during my fieldwork, and shared them myself as the parent of a small child living in the area. Yet for decades, the claims of Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman have been

commonsensical, despite the ostensibly obvious point that most people would rather their children play on a patch of grass, unkempt as it may be, than on a through street with vehicular traffic. The next two chapters will address how the creative destruction of the 1990s led to the redevelopment of Regent Park in line with neoliberal and new urbanist hegemony.

Chapter Six

“Like Any Other Neighbourhood”: Neoliberal Urbanism and Social Inclusion in Regent Park, 2002 – 2012

The city housing corporation proposes to level the decaying downtown neighbourhood and rebuild from scratch. It will take 15 years, but the dream is that a zone of isolated, decrepit apartment buildings will be replaced by a thriving downtown neighbourhood with a mix of rich and poor, young and old. And the ambitious project won't require much public money.

-Newspaper Editorial, 2003 (Toronto Star 2003)

RJ: Have you guys had to move yet because of the redevelopment?

Keandra: Yeah ... so we got the revitalisation attack, I would call it.

[Laughter]

RJ: How come you call it an attack?

Keandra: Um, in a lot of ways it destroys a lot; like it takes a lot from you.

Possibly physically because you're not in the same space; mentally you lose a community, in other words, like you don't feel that connectedness as you do while you're in Regent Park ... 'cause I don't even know my neighbours' names, where before, like I knew the whole family next door to me, and so forth, right down the line. It's not the same.

-Excerpt from a focus group with youth in Regent Park, March 2010

Introduction

In March 2010, I sat around a table at a youth centre in Regent Park South, with several current and former residents, ages 18 – 25. Located on the first floor of a residential building, the centre was originally an apartment that had been converted for use by social service agencies in the early 1970s. I had been invited by one of the staff members to conduct a focus group on the effects of the Regent Park Revitalisation during one of the group's weekly meetings. Mixed in with their teasing one another and their banter about school, sports, and popular culture, participants also aired their grievances regarding the special discussion topic I had introduced that week. The excerpt presented above, in which Keandra called the redevelopment of Regent Park an “attack,” is a powerful example of those grievances.

Comparing Keandra's comments with the Toronto Star snippet also presented above illustrates a discrepancy between insider and outsider portrayals of Regent Park that has appeared throughout most of the history of the projects. As addressed in Chapter Three, for example, one of my participants who lived in Regent Park South as a teenager in the 1960s told me that the planners of the project "did a great job"; meanwhile, The Toronto Star had called the project a "colossal flop" in 1968 (Allen 1968). Likewise, Keandra emphasised the "community" and "connectedness" she had enjoyed in Regent Park, though The Toronto Star in 2003 had described the place as "a zone of isolated, decrepit apartment buildings" during her childhood. Like most Regent Parkers displaced by the redevelopment, Keandra and her family were entitled to a new apartment in Regent Park as soon as one was available, but this was of little consolation in the short term. To stay connected to her "community", as she called it, she regularly walked to Regent Park (a thirty-minute trip each way) to attend the weekly youth group meetings.

This chapter completes the substantive portion of the dissertation by analyzing everyday life, public policy documents, and media and popular culture texts related to Regent Park from 2002-2012. The period begins with the approval of the Regent Park Revitalisation plan in 2002, and ends with the conclusion of my participant-observation fieldwork as a local resident in 2012. As the final chapter of a counter-narrative of the history of Regent Park, it focuses on participants' conflicting and fraught experiences with an intervention that has been widely celebrated by the media, local politicians, and some Regent Park residents. While I acknowledge that the redevelopment has brought some significant improvements to living conditions in Regent Park, I argue that these improvements have come at the expense of the sort of "community" described above by Keandra. More fundamentally, it argues that the plan is more of a state-led intervention to normalise Regent Park to a neoliberal standard, and an incursion of

private capital into what was once a public good, than it is the grassroots community-building effort that it appears to be in policy documents.

In the redevelopment plan, residents of the public housing stock (who previously comprised 100% of the population of Regent Park) are cast as one of several groups of ‘stakeholders’ in a ‘mixed’ community. Other stakeholder groups include condominium owners, representatives of the housing authority and its private developer-partner, local business owners, the police, and social service agencies. These various stakeholder groups are expected to contribute to and benefit from “social inclusion” as atomised individuals on an equal footing, despite the significant and tangible differentials in power, privilege, and interests among them. Appropriated from the theory and methods of organisational leadership, ‘stakeholder’ discourse is a contrived approach to community-building that stands in sharp contradiction to the ‘community’ described by my participants. This represents a continuation of the process of bureaucratisation that began in the 1980s, and that I addressed in Chapter Five. In the past, ‘community’ meant an organic sense of belonging through which Regent Parkers resisted stigmatisation, by differentiating themselves from outsiders and taking pride in their low-income enclave. ‘Community’ in this sense was heavily disrupted as the redevelopment began, and Keandra and other youth I interviewed experienced this as an irrecoverable loss.

The next section of this chapter, “Like Any Other Neighbourhood”, establishes context by reviewing some recent literature on “neoliberal urbanism”, an iteration of neoliberal ideology that local scholars have identified as hegemonic in millennial Toronto. It then provides a factual outline of the Regent Park Revitalisation, and concludes with an analysis of the Regent Park Social Development Plan, a key policy document in the redevelopment.

Next, the section entitled “Melodrama” returns to the discrepancy between insider and outsider perspectives on Regent Park outlined above. With reference to media and popular culture portrayals, it illustrates how the long-running stigmatisation of Regent Park took an intensified and melodramatic turn in the era of redevelopment. Social problems exhibited in Regent Park were exaggerated and decontextualised beyond recognition during a moral panic around gang-related gun violence, while residents’ actual concerns (with the redevelopment and other issues) were routinely trivialised, if not completely ignored. In sum, Regent Park was portrayed as a threat both to its own residents and to the city as a whole, and a problem that could only be solved through redevelopment.

The final substantive section, entitled “Social Inclusion”, draws on participant-observation fieldwork and interviews conducted in 2009-2012 to illustrate the neoliberal restructuring of everyday life in and around Regent Park. It focuses on how the redevelopment has marginalised the longstanding solidarity that residents had developed over the decades that Regent Park was an entirely low-income enclave. In present-day Regent Park, the work of claiming and protecting ‘community’ – the aspect of social reproduction that I call extra-domestic labour – is increasingly subsumed within formalised channels controlled by outside interests, and directed towards the goal of building “social inclusion” rather than class-based solidarity and mutual aid. This section also addresses the incompleteness of the present-day hegemonic discourse of social inclusion, as residents of public housing – youth, in particular – continued to view themselves and their new ‘neighbours’ through the lens of emic class-like categories and displayed little interest in changing this.

“Like Any Other Neighbourhood”

In 2012, a Toronto Star editorial called the Regent Park Revitalisation “Toronto’s most successful city-building effort in more than 30 years” (Hume 2012b). Among the highlights identified, the plan was intended “to make Regent Park look and act like any other neighbourhood in Toronto, not a ghetto” (Hume 2012b). This section addresses what it means to make Regent Park “like any other neighbourhood”, and problematises the assumption that the status quo of Toronto neighbourhoods is an exemplar worth emulating. Later in this chapter, in the section entitled “Melodrama,” I return to the issue of Regent Park being likened to a “ghetto” in light of the discussions of racism and racialisation begun in Chapters Four and Five.

Neoliberal Urbanism in Toronto

The previous chapter addressed how the province of Ontario, and concomitantly the newly created “megacity” of Toronto, were restructured according to neoliberal ideology by the Conservative provincial government of the late 1990s. In 2003, two separate elections brought the provincial and municipal governments closer to the political centre: provincially, the Liberal Party formed a majority government by winning 72 of 103 seats; municipally, the mayoralty election of the same year was won by David Miller, an environmentalist lawyer backed by organised labour. With regards to these developments in local electoral politics and political culture, some have referred to the dominant ideology of Toronto in this period as “third-way urbanism” (Jackson 2009, Keil 2000); and others as “neoliberal urbanism” (Fanelli & Paulson 2010; Theodore et al. 2011). In short, the welfare state remained marginal, and social policy continued to emphasise “more self-reliance in the creation of wealth” (Jackson 2009, 402); but “the excesses of social polarisation” were tempered through government intervention and “metropolitan plans ... designed to be both competitive and socially inclusive” (Boudreau et al.

2009, 402). Though dominant, this ideology was limited in reach, as illustrated by the election of the right-wing populist Rob Ford as mayor in 2010 (Filion 2011). Much of Ford's appeal stemmed from his pandering to inner-suburban working-class frustration with the elitism (both real and imagined) of the downtown middle and upper classes. Though Ford targeted the Toronto Community Housing Corporation for restructuring and selloffs amidst rhetoric of 'stopping the gravy train', and his allies baited their rivals with threats to disrupt the progress of the Regent Park Revitalisation, the redevelopment continued according to plan during the Ford mayoralty.

By the standards of neoliberal urbanism, municipalities and urban regions must be competitive, but also environmentally responsible and – to use a popular but imprecise term – socially inclusive. These imperatives may seem contradictory: keep the welfare state diminished and restrictions on the 'free market' minimal, but also ensure that everyone is 'included' and the environment is preserved. As if to resolve this contradiction, a new class-like category emerged as a profile of the idealised city-dweller of the early 2000s: the "creative class", first named as such by Richard Florida in a 2002 monograph. This large, fluid category includes all manner of "knowledge-based workers", intellectuals, and bohemians. In Florida's formulation, this worldly and mobile 'class' will move to whichever city makes itself most attractive, and cities should compete for their presence because where they go, trickle-down soon follows (2002). The concept has been widely criticised as vague and euphemistic (e.g. Peck 2005, Slater 2006), but others have illustrated how it does refer to a politically powerful (if amorphously defined) sector of the middle class. In the local context, for example, Kipfer & Petrunia described "Toronto's metropolitan mainstream" of the 2000s as a "loose constellation of predominantly white, new middle class gentrifiers, condominium dwellers, and edgy hipsters" (2009, 111). Meanwhile, the extent and significance of trickle-down remains dubious at the time of writing, to say the least:

the few remaining working-class pockets of downtown Toronto are being gentrified, vacated and deindustrialised land continues to be redeveloped for upscale condominiums, and the waiting period for affordable housing is typically several years long (Park 2016).

The restructuring of public housing that occurred in this era is a quintessential example of neoliberal urbanism in practice. As addressed in the previous chapter, responsibility for public housing was offloaded from the provincial to the municipal level in 1999, and a series of amalgamations led to the creation of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation in 2002, which now oversees most of the city's affordable housing stock. Kipfer & Petrunia note that the implications of these changes were "typical for neoliberal state-rescaling projects," in that the TCHC's new purview came with "provincially mandated financial austerity and administrative marketisation pressures" such as contracting-out, "ramping up evictions", and "legitimising its corporate strategy with tenant participation schemes" (2009, 120). Compared to other public housing providers, the TCHC functioned relatively well under these conditions, owing to its size (by far the largest in Ontario), its "considerable resource base (particularly its real estate holdings)", "a currently supportive City Hall", and its particularly adept entrepreneurialism (Hackworth & Moriah 2006, 522).

To return to a central theme of this dissertation, Fraser (2016) has outlined how disruptive neoliberal restructuring has been to the social reproduction practices of the Western working class. Fraser argues that the "crisis of care" documented in recent mainstream sources ought to be instead interpreted as a "more or less acute expression of the social-reproductive contradictions of financialised capitalism" (2016, 99). Through deindustrialisation, "the recruitment of women into the paid workforce", and the residualisation of social welfare (2016, 104), this current permutation of capitalism places significant pressure on "a key set of social

capacities” (handled traditionally but not exclusively by women) which span domestic and extra-domestic labour: “those available for birthing and raising children, caring for friends and family members, maintaining households and broader communities, and sustaining connections more generally” (Fraser 2016, 99). And since “no society that systematically undermines social reproduction can endure for long”, the result is “a major crisis” of social reproduction (Fraser 2016, 99). The situation in Regent Park from 2009 to 2012 was not quite this apocalyptic; but life as a low-income caregiver was certainly stressful, and some of the strategies that prior generations had used to manage this stress were being undermined by the effects of the redevelopment.

The Regent Park Revitalisation: A Primer

The Regent Park Revitalisation is an effort to transform a stigmatised housing project into a new ‘community,’ rebuilt according to the priorities of neoliberal urbanism. Regarding the ‘urbanism’ component, the new Regent Park is planned according to the key principles of the ‘new urbanist’ school of thought popularised by Jane Jacobs: short blocks, walkability, and buildings that function as a “container of public open space, enclosing streets, highlighting corners, defining parks and providing “eyes on the street” increasing surveillance and safety” (Toronto Community Housing 2007, 2). In line with neoliberal priorities, the plan is a public-private partnership: private capital raised through condominium sales is used to rebuild public housing. Meanwhile, new parks, arts facilities, and other amenities have been constructed to the apparent tastes of the ‘creative class’, while also providing programming and resources that are both accessible and useful to low-income residents. Though public housing and condominiums are built in separate structures, “social mix” is intended to occur on streets, in a new central park, in retail space, and in a new three-storey arts facility named after the condominium developer.

According to the TCHC website in 2007, the Regent Park Revitalisation had been “successful to date because of a key guiding principle: community participation in all aspects of planning and implementation” (cited in James 2010, 80). This process of redevelopment began with public consultations in 2002. According to figures from the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, a total of roughly 2,000 residents provided input of some sort into the plan; their participation was facilitated by Regent Park residents who were hired and trained by TCHC to “animate a discussion that was rooted entirely in the community” (Meagher & Boston 2003, 5). Released in December 2002, the draft plan was met with “overwhelming approval”, according to a TCHC report, as residents “expressed strong support for the design and clearly felt a strong sense of ownership”, but still “retained a healthy skepticism about the future” (Meagher & Boston 2003, 51).

The first of five phases of redevelopment began in 2005, when 1,160 residents (in 381 households) began moving out of their newly condemned buildings and into “relocation units”. 40% of them moved to TCHC units elsewhere in Regent Park, 56% to other TCHC units elsewhere across the city, and the remainder left TCHC altogether. Moving expenses and other provisions were covered by TCHC. The process of selecting a new unit is a bureaucratic and frequently perplexing one that centers around a lottery – tenants draw a number to determine their place in line, and then fill out a “preference form” listing their top choices for a new unit based on a series of floor plans. Residents can also choose to defer selection to a future phase. All residents in all phases are guaranteed a “right of return to a new unit being built as part of the revitalisation” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2012), but there are important exceptions: 254 of these new units were not built in Regent Park. As part of the first phase of redevelopment, they were built in three buildings elsewhere downtown, “mixed” with market

rental units in each. Moving into these buildings legally ‘counted’ as “return” – this remains controversial, because “this fact did not become clear to residents until the move-back process was initiated” some three years after they had signed the right-to-return contract (Kelly 2012). Though that contract “does state that residents have the right to move back to a new unit in Regent Park ‘*or surrounding areas*’” (Kelly 2012, my emphasis), this remained controversial during my fieldwork as some tenants remained adamant that a move into the ‘surrounding areas’ did not legitimately constitute a ‘return’.

In the original plan for redevelopment, the total units of housing in the new Regent Park would be 29% rent-geared-to-income housing – down, of course, from 100% (Kipfer and Petrunia 2009). As a result of a controversial rezoning passed in 2013, that figure will drop to roughly 20% while increasing the projected total population of Regent Park to 17,000, up from an earlier estimate of 12,500. Housing units of all tenure types would total 7,500, up from 5,400 (Marcusa 2013, 3). When the redevelopment was first approved in 2005, it was estimated that it would take twelve years to complete (Ferenc 2005); as of May 2017, only the first phase is complete. The second (and by far the largest) has been underway since 2009 and is expected to finish later in 2017; meanwhile, phase three began in 2014 for an estimated completion date in 2019.

The Regent Park Social Development Plan

The Regent Park Social Development Plan is a 262-page document researched by Public Interest, a local research firm, for the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. It was released in 2007 – five years after TCHC’s first consultations began – and is described as an approach to “change management” to “help address issues of transition and social inclusion” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007a, 1). This brief subsection focuses on “social inclusion”

– an imprecise but potent concept that is central to the hopes and goals articulated by the Social Development Plan. Social inclusion, I argue, is a class-blind conception of belonging that undermines formations of class-based solidarity that had developed in Regent Park in the past. As a result, the means of bringing about social inclusion elaborated in the Social Development Plan reflect the restructuring of everyday life in Regent Park in line with the hegemonic ideology of neoliberal urbanism.

“Social inclusion” is mentioned 103 times throughout the body of the Social Development Plan. The Executive Summary provides something of a definition of the idea, presented in bold type outside the main body of text:

A community that values and respects the needs and priorities of all its members is considered “inclusive”. Social inclusion contributes to the quality of life of individuals and improves the health of the population by ensuring that the full range of needs in the community get attention (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007a, 5).

In this example, “social inclusion” connotes a good quality of life, health, and respect for everyone in Regent Park. Elsewhere in the Social Development Plan, it connotes other pleasant and/or essential qualities of a livable urban space: multiculturalism, friendship, employment opportunities, accessible building entrances, and others. Though no agreeable person would object to “social inclusion” defined as such, the concept is problematic, as the plan lacks practical details as to how these unambiguously good things will be delivered. It is said that all needs get attention in a socially inclusive place, but there is no assurance that all needs are met; and that everyone is valued and respected, without specifying how or by whom. Further, it is taken for granted throughout the Plan that these good things had been partially or entirely precluded by the physical design and demographic profile of the postwar housing project, reflecting both the middle-class bias of ‘new urbanism’ and the media-based stigmatisation of

Regent Park. This set of assumptions is contradicted by much of my ethnographic data presented in previous chapters.

These chapters focused on the everyday efforts of ordinary Regent Parkers to build and claim ‘community,’ which I call extra-domestic labour. This work is generally informal, unpaid, and cooperative; and it is primarily through this labour that Regent Parkers developed emic class identities that formed a basis for local-level solidarity. The Social Development Plan recognises this work in a substantive “history of social and cultural change in Regent Park” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007b, 5). Though this history celebrates a “strong history of grassroots, tenant-led activism”, it focuses almost entirely on initiatives that were formalised and/or run under the auspices of outside institutions. The redevelopment is thus portrayed as the next logical step in this history of institutionalised community organising. Creating “social inclusion” is a highly formalised affair: The Social Development Plan outlines the roles potentially played by community associations, social service agencies, employment agencies, new facilities to be constructed, and schools in implementing “strategies for social inclusion” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007a, 4). Regent Park residents, as well as representatives from these bodies, would meet regularly at a “stakeholders’ table”: a “forum for voluntarily sharing information, identifying issues, considering opportunities, conferring on resolutions to problems, and coordinating action” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007c, 99).

The plan does recognise the significance of informal community-building activity, however:

Stakeholders in Regent Park will engage in formal and informal ways to advance the community’s well-being but happen outside the specific recommendations of the Social Development Plan. These processes are equally important. Communities that lack robust informal processes miss valuable informal

opportunities to make improvements (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007c, 95).

As addressed in previous chapters, most of my participants from previous eras remembered informal means of community-building as particularly important: shared supervision of children, shared surveillance of common areas, direct action against predators, and holding territory by “loitering”, as examples. While the Social Development Plan notes that informal and formal processes are “equally important”, it entrusts a newly-created formal body with harnessing these informal processes and channeling them into undefined “improvements”. Extra-domestic labour is thus subsumed within the efforts of a group of “stakeholders” and towards the end of “social inclusion”. In the past, it was done by Regent Parkers for Regent Park.

In sum, “social inclusion” is a new conception of belonging, imposed from outside, that is supplanting the class-based solidarities that Regent Parkers of the past had developed through ‘community’-building in a low-income enclave. As a final point of note, the Plan de-politicises potentially controversial aspects of the redevelopment: the word “gentrification”, for example, does not appear at all in the document. Instead, in a projection of “fluctuations in demographics” during the various phases,⁸⁶ the Plan noted that “the only group that undergoes significant growth in each phase is English-speaking adults aged 25-50 with household incomes over \$60,000 per year” (Toronto Community Housing Corporation 2007b, 29).

Melodrama

To further address the dominant ideologies of Toronto in the 2000s and their local-level impacts, this section returns to the discrepancy between insider and outsider perspectives on Regent Park outlined at the beginning of the chapter. It presents highlights from an analysis of

⁸⁶ Among other changes, the plan for redevelopment has since been modified such that it will occur in five phases, not six.

1,996 articles from two national and two local newspapers, a documentary film, a stage production, and several YouTube videos from the period of 2002-2012. It illustrates how the media-driven stigmatisation of Regent Park provided ideological justification for its redevelopment, by trivialising residents' concerns while exaggerating and decontextualising social problems exhibited in Regent Park. In sum, this presented Regent Park as hopelessly flawed, and its demolition and reconstruction was cast as the only viable solution for this assumed condition. In the era of redevelopment, this was frequently taken to the point of melodrama. Finally, continuing from my observations in the previous chapter of how Regent Park emerged a setting for counter-hegemonic depictions of Canadian blackness in the 1980s and 1990s, the section addresses some artistic representations from the 2000s that challenge, to varying degrees, the dominant discourse of social inclusion.

“The Ultimate Extreme Makeover”: The Trivialisation of Regent Park

By any measure, the Regent Park Revitalisation is a serious topic with a wide span of relevance: it directly involves as many as 17,500 current and prospective residents, at least \$1 billion in capital, and 69 acres of the core of Canada's largest city. It has also been invoked as a model, both locally and internationally, for other large-scale redevelopments of low-income localities. Strangely, despite its import, the redevelopment was often discussed in a breezy, whimsical tone appropriated from millennial “reality” television and the fashion media. For example, a Toronto Sun headline regarding the first redevelopment consultations read, “Going from Drab to Fab: Regent Park Could Be a Hot Property” (Masterman 2002). When TCHC approved the redevelopment plan, the Toronto Star described it as “the ultimate extreme makeover” (Ferenc 2005) – referring to a then-popular reality show about cosmetic surgery patients. In other coverage, the redevelopment was repeatedly described as a “facelift” (e.g.

Christopoulos 2002, Granatstein 2005) and a “makeover” (e.g. Christopoulos 2003, Spencer 2008). These metaphors trivialised displacement, and likened Regent Parkers who complained about it to the vain and petulant stars of a reality television program.

In tandem with its trivialisation, Regent Park was thoroughly ‘othered’ in reports on the redevelopment through “us and them” phrasing. “Sixty years ago, we thought we had affordable housing all figured out,” began an article in the “Condo Living” section of The Toronto Star (Barmak 2008). A 2003 editorial lamented the failures of Regent Park and modernist architects in general, alongside a call to action: “as the inheritors of their fundamentally flawed conceits, we are the ones who must deal with their mistakes and, in this case, tear them down and start again” (Hume 2003). In these and other examples, the readership was imputed as the in-group (“us” and “we”), and presumed to live anywhere in Toronto but Regent Park, and the object of discussion was Regent Park and its residents. In this rhetorical configuration, the readership was encouraged to identify vicariously with the planners, politicians, and corporate officials empowered to make decisions regarding Regent Park, while its residents were neither addressed nor consulted.

Residents themselves were rarely quoted, apart from a small number of experienced public speakers who usually echoed the promises of the redevelopment. When fears and criticisms were cited, they were usually trivialised, as in a 2005 Globe & Mail article on the “conspiracy theories” of Regent Park teenagers. These included: “They’re tearing down Regent Park because rich people want the land”; “Yo, dog, it’s gonna be Regent Park, the home of the rich”; and “it’s not gonna be Regent any more ... it’s gonna be a bunch of rich little fags”. Here, legitimate concerns about displacement – shared by many local residents and social scientists alike – are attributed to high school students, and presented with their youthful slang and

homophobic slurs intact. As a rare exception to this pattern, the Globe and Mail's 2007 feature, "Regent Park Revitalisation: Socially Progressive or Trojan Horse?" included measured commentary from a 32-year-old phase-one relocatee on the trauma and stress caused by relocation (Schufelt 2007).

"Born and Raised in the Ghetto"

At the same time, media discourse built upon earlier discussions of Regent Park as a 'black neighbourhood' to refer to the place, uncritically, as a 'ghetto'. This occurred during a citywide moral panic regarding gang-related gun violence which exhibited a strong current of anti-black racism, and fed into justifications for the demolition of Regent Park. This subsection looks at the 'ghetto' discourse of the 2000s as it appeared in the local mainstream media, and how some local artists reappropriated and/or subverted it.

Walks and Bourne have argued that places such as Regent Park are not "ghettos" in the traditional American sense of the word, since low-income localities in urban Canada tend to be ethnically diverse (Walks & Bourne 2006). Reflecting this, one report identified the largest "cultural groups" in Regent Park as of 2002 as "Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking), Vietnamese, Somali, Tamil, Hispanic, Filipino, Black and English-speaking Canadians of Western-European descent" (Meagher & Boston 2003, 18). Still, since "racialised depictions of minority groups and criminality are enhanced when linked with certain identifiable places" (Purdy 2005b, 541), and Regent Park had been already been stigmatised since the late 1960s, racist moral panics around Toronto becoming an "American city" marred by drug-related gun violence among young black men have tended to center around Regent Park (Purdy 2005b). This was the case in the mid-2000s.

In keeping with the theme of melodrama, the local media broke from the status quo of secularity to treat religious figures as ‘experts’ on urban crime and violence – a position normally reserved for police, social workers, and sometimes criminologists. The strongest example of this came in the wake of the “Boxing Day Shooting”, in which an uninvolved teenaged girl was killed in the crossfire of a daytime gunfight on Yonge Street on December 26, 2005. A black man (17 years old at the time) was eventually convicted in the killing, and the gunfight was attributed to a dispute between two rivalling Regent Park gangs (Small 2010). For solutions, the local media and some politicians turned to Eugene Rivers – a black Reverend from Boston who was vocal about crime prevention at the time.⁸⁷ When Rivers visited Regent Park in January 2006, he called upon black Christians to lead a process of racial upliftment (Toronto Star 2006), and endorsed mandatory minimum sentencing (Gray and Appleby 2006). Similarly, The Toronto Sun repeatedly praised the local Rhema Christian Ministries for the en-masse prayer sessions they held in parts of the city known for gun violence. One report described Rhema as “an army of God clad in black” who “declared spiritual warfare on Regent Park, Malvern, and Jamestown,” and praised their leader for “breaking every politically correct taboo in the book when discussing black-on-black crime” (Fenlon 2004). The latter point also reflected a broader agenda of de-legitimising resistance to police racism, at a time when “racial profiling” was under widespread scrutiny, as reflected in the article’s headline, “Tough Talk on Black Crime: Sermon Inspired Community.”

Meanwhile, a series of human interest stories – some trivialising, others condescending – lionised prominent black men from Regent Park who had risen above ‘the ghetto’, and worked to

⁸⁷ Rivers was strangely credited for “the Boston miracle” – a 50% decrease in that city’s murder rate in the 1990s, as if one person who does not even hold public office could control such a complex phenomenon (e.g. James 2006, Welsh 2006). That he is an American reflects the unfounded but then-prevalent fears that Toronto’s violent crime rates were approaching those of American cities.

bring other Regent Parkers with them. A profile of a black police officer in the Toronto Star, for example, began by describing how the protagonist had “witnessed shootings, fights and drug deals at his doorstep” while growing up in Regent Park. Now, the story continued, he too “carries a gun” – but also “a police badge – as he patrols the neighbourhood he called home for 25 years” (Huffman 2006). A Toronto Sun story on a professional pianist from Regent Park foregrounded the author’s surprise that a man in such a highbrow line of work had grown up in such a lowbrow place, and included a pun based on the pianist’s Nigerian name (Strobel 2006). In a favourable column on a support service for local high school students, conservative pundit Margaret Wente described its coordinator Ainsworth Morgan as “a most unusual teacher” – “unusual” in that he grew up in Regent Park, once played professional football, and “looks like a more handsome version of Spike Lee” (Wente 2003). To the credit of The Toronto Sun, the tabloid printed a guest column by Morgan himself, nine months after the Globe and Mail’s Wente article. Amidst a focus on the racist scapegoating of “the Jamaican community” for gun violence, Morgan also identified the racism at work in ‘hero’ narratives: “If a black person is successful, it is looked upon as a novelty; however if a black person engages in a criminal act, an entire community is at fault”, Morgan wrote (2003).

Regent Park’s status as a “ghetto” in the popular imagination reflected strongly in the mainstream recognition of Point Blank, a collective of rappers who ardently displayed their affinity with Regent Park. Though the group dates back to the late 1980s, they remained largely unknown outside of hip-hop- and Regent Park-based circles until their existence became national news in 2007. This development followed the release of their single, “Born and Raised in the Ghetto” (Point Blank 2007). For roughly two years afterwards, Point Blank’s public image reflected a skillful maneuvering through gangster imagery borrowed from the United States, the

stigmatisation of Regent Park, and the media's search for authentic voices during the redevelopment. They consistently appeared in the hypermasculine fashion of mid-2000s hiphop, while their lyrical content ranged from braggadocio about their capacity for violence, to social commentary and uplifting messages for low-income racialised youth. While in the spotlight, they consistently denied any connection to the Point Blank Souljahs⁸⁸ (Kaplan 2007), an alleged gang operating in Regent Park. The National Post (a conservative daily broadsheet, and by no means a hiphop-related publication) gave front-page billing to a feature that followed the rappers to a radio interview, highlighting the police surveillance they encountered along the way (Kaplan 2007).

"Born and Raised in the Ghetto" remains Point Blank's best-known work. A solemn composition built around a looping piano track and a sample from Phyllis Dillon's "Woman of the Ghetto" (2004), the verses largely address youth gun violence in "Canada's first block; Regent Park, the ghetto." The lyrics do not mention the redevelopment, but the video foregrounds it: grainy clips from Farewell to Oak Street (1953) are juxtaposed with present-day imagery of Regent Park's brick walls, graffiti, murals, smiling children, and members of Point Blank themselves. It was nominated for "best rap video" at the 2007 MuchMusic Video Awards, and later featured in Invisible City, Hubert Davis's widely-acclaimed documentary of three black teenagers growing up in millennial Regent Park (Industry Pictures Inc. 2009). After the hype surrounding Invisible City faded, however, Point Blank (the musicians) were *de facto* written out of the narrative of the Regent Park Revitalisation, with no explanation as to what happened to them. The Point Blank Souljahs (the gang), meanwhile, were mentioned sporadically in crime reports for some time afterwards: a spate of violence that occurred in 2012 after the conclusion

⁸⁸ Sometimes also spelled as the standard "soldiers".

of my fieldwork was blamed on conflicts between factions that had split from the Souljahs, apparently defunct by then (e.g. Appleby & Morrow 2012, Pagliaro et al. 2012).

As in the 1980s and 1990s, Regent Park also appeared as a setting for counter-hegemonic portrayals of Canadian blackness in the 2000s. Darren Anthony's stage production, Secrets of a Black Boy (2009), was described on the production's website as a "brutally honest piece" that "gives voice to five black men from Toronto whose in-your-face stories are set against the backdrop of the displacement of families in Regent Park" (Playing With Crayons 2016). Much of the play could have been set anywhere in Toronto, as the characters broach familiar topics such as racism, masculinity, relationships, and violence. The story is framed by a strong critique of the Regent Park Revitalisation, however: its setting is a final game of dominos at a beloved, now-condemned community centre. In the end, the five men occupy the centre in a quixotic last stand, refusing to move for an approaching demolition crew while shouting "We are here!" in unison. Perhaps ironically, a repeat performance was staged at the Daniels Spectrum in 2013 – a venue that had recently opened through the very redevelopment process rebuked in the script.

Social Inclusion

Farewell to Oak Street

Most discussions of the Regent Park Revitalisation focus on its potential outcomes after completion. During my research, for many residents – particularly youth – there was little reason to be concerned with the Regent Park of the 2020s. The time it takes to rebuild 69 acres of urban space is longer than a young person's entire living memory, and longer than most people hope to spend as tenants of public housing. The immediate material conditions of the present were of far greater concern to most people I spoke to than were long-range future projections. With this in mind, this section presents a study of everyday life in and around Regent Park during an early

period of the redevelopment. It is based on ethnographic research conducted from 2009 to 2012, when the first two phases of redevelopment were in progress.

Early in my fieldwork in 2009, and before I lived in the area, I wandered the streets and walkways of Regent Park to become acquainted with the space and how people used it. On one unseasonably warm November afternoon, I did some of this wandering on my way to volunteer at the annual Regent Park Film Festival. I entered Regent Park North via Oak Street, which became a 20-foot-wide sidewalk closed to vehicles just east of Parliament Street. Locally known as “the boardwalk”, the sidewalk portion of Oak Street was identified as central to the social lives of local youth just as the redevelopment was beginning in 2005 (Laughin & Johnson 2011). Soon after I reached it, I was challenged by three young men standing outside an apartment building to justify my presence. “What do you want?” one of them yelled at me from about 20 feet away. After taking a few seconds to figure out that he was talking to me, I replied, “I’m headed to the film festival.”

“The what?”

“The film festival, at Park School,” I replied.⁸⁹

“That’s proper. Park is way down there though, you know,” the man said, pointing towards Regent Park South.

“Yeah I know, I’m just cutting through.”

“Alright, cool,” the man replied, nodding upward as if to indicate everything was fine.

“Cool, see you around,” I said, and continued down the boardwalk.

The interaction began on a tense note, but ended neutrally. While there is no way to determine for certain why these men questioned me or what they had thought I wanted (I did not

⁸⁹ Forgetting that the school is now named Nelson Mandela Park School.

ask them), the fact that they did question me suggests they felt ownership over the space, and suspected that I did not, and/or should not.

Further, the scenario brings to mind data from previous chapters that illustrate how Regent Parkers deterred unwanted and/or suspicious outsiders, by informally policing the common grounds around the buildings. As elaborated throughout the dissertation, I understand this as extra-domestic labour: work done outside the household to provide a stable and safe home towards the ends of social reproduction, and which is made necessary by problems and dangers unique to life in a stigmatised housing project. In previous eras, Regent Parkers built solidarity through sharing this work, making their low-income enclave into a ‘community’ in the process. This continued into the time of my fieldwork, when most of Regent Park North and all of Regent Park South still stood. My interaction with the young men had occurred adjacent to the first block to be redeveloped, which was then still partially under construction. Though the redevelopment had begun to dramatically alter the landscape, ownership over spaces that had not yet been redeveloped still looked much the same in 2009 as it had before the “Revitalisation” had begun.

Two years later, I frequented the Oak Street boardwalk not only as a researcher but also as a local resident. I found that the long, wide sidewalk was a calmer and safer path for walking with a small child across three large downtown blocks than the nearby through-streets were, and so I made it part of our daily commute. By early 2011, another block of Regent Park North buildings adjacent to the boardwalk had been demolished, and the landscape temporarily turned into a dusty, fenced-off urban prairie. Following successive delays, this block was reopened as a park in 2014; the park is now lively and well-used, but the space had previously been desolate

for over three years. Meanwhile, I have never again seen anyone exhibiting ownership over space by checking someone's presence in Regent Park.

At the time of writing, what remains of the boardwalk has been closed. Oak is one of three formerly dead-end streets to be converted into through-streets as part of the redevelopment, in keeping with the new urbanist principle that traffic flowing through a locality better connects it to its surroundings. This marks the second time in seven decades that Oak Street has been reconfigured in line with the priorities of the hegemonic ideology of the day. As addressed in Chapter Three, the title of the 1953 documentary Farewell to Oak Street referred to the demolition of most of the street as part of the 'slum clearance' initiative that created Regent Park North. Now that dead-end streets are thought to cause isolation and disconnection, the two dead ends of Oak Street will be 'reconnected'. This was celebrated during a "street party," held by the housing authority and its private builder-developer partner in the summer of 2010 to celebrate the opening of the nearby Cole Street, named after tenant-activist Pat Cole. A local funk band performed the jubilant "Dancin' Down the Avenue", featuring lyrics by the developer's vice-president on how "we've learned a thing or two" about planning since the 1940s (Daniels FirstHome 2010).

In the decades between the two redevelopments of Oak Street, generations of Regent Parkers built a livable working-class 'community' in a stigmatised housing project. This section addresses the loss of class-based 'community' as a result of the redevelopment. In the most straightforward sense, everyone who lived in Regent Park when the redevelopment began will be required to move at some point; nearly all are entitled to 'return' eventually, but of course some will not. In a more abstract sense, class-based understandings of 'community' are supplanted by an imposed concept of 'social inclusion' as part of the normalisation of Regent Park to the

standards of neoliberal urbanism. Longstanding solidarities that had developed among residents over the decades that Regent Park was an entirely low-income enclave are strained, as extra-domestic labour – the work of claiming and protecting ‘community’ – becoming increasingly subsumed within formalised channels that are controlled by outside interests, and directed towards the goal of building “social inclusion” rather than class-based solidarity and mutual aid. This section will elaborate how Revitalisation is a state-led intervention to normalise Regent Park to a neoliberal standard, through attention to three substantive aspects of everyday life: use of public space; the bureaucratisation of ownership and extra-domestic labour; and issues related to security and policing.

“Social Mix” and Public Space

During a typical Toronto winter, the weather is usually too cold for people to socialise in parks or on outdoor walkways. People begin to come outside in the spring, and from what I had heard, outdoor space in Regent Park tended to be particularly lively. With this in mind, I thought I had an ideal approach to participant-observation research in Regent Park planned for the spring of 2011. I would take my three-year-old daughter to the small parks and green space in and around Regent Park, let her approach other children, make small talk with the other parents, and form acquaintanceships in the process. Much to my dismay, however, these opportunities were few and far between, even after all the snow had melted. As Phase One was nearly complete and Phase Two was in-process, Regent Park had become a patchwork of demolition and construction sites; old apartments and townhouses in various states of disrepair; and pristine new buildings containing either condominiums or subsidised housing units. Corporate retail franchises and social service agencies lined the perimeter of the first rebuilt block. With a few exceptions

discussed here, Regent Park's outdoor spaces remained relatively underused through the summer of 2011.

Throughout my fieldwork, I frequented a "farmer's market" at the western edge of Regent Park North, just off of Parliament Street. The structure is made of wood and polytarp, stands on the grass between two low-rise apartment buildings, and is heated by electric space-heaters in the winter. Its stock consists of discount-grade fruits and vegetables priced for quick sale. The gregarious owner routinely gives children free kiwifruit and apples, and gently upsells customers by offering slightly greater quantities than what they first chose at an appealing price. In the warm months, he sets up lawn chairs and an old weightlifting bench for customers to sit on while drinking coconut water fresh from the shell and/or fresh-pressed cane juice. Some customers stand near the market, peeling their own sugarcane with machetes. The scene may bring to mind the rural Caribbean more than it does urban Canada, but it reflects the sort of informality that characterised Regent Park before redevelopment.

The housing co-operative in which I lived, at the perimeter of the Regent Park projects, also exhibited a social life reminiscent of what older participants remembered from earlier days in and around Regent Park. At the park just outside the co-op, a group of adults would sit together in the shade, collectively watching a group of children on the playground equipment nearby. Preteen boys played a loud and occasionally rough game of basketball on the tiny court behind us. Extra-domestic labour was key to keeping the co-op a liveable place: for example, one member routinely took his large dog for nighttime walks to claim ownership over the park and dissuade suspicious outsiders from hanging around. Before children were set free to play, we scanned the playground for needles and condoms, and routinely cleared the park of litter. The scene is also a model of the type of 'mixed' urban sociality that the Regent Park Revitalisation is

promised to create: our impromptu group ranged in age from 25 to 80 years old; it included parents, grandparents, and other caregivers; our occupations included graduate student, factory worker, and caterer; there were at least four spoken languages among us; and we represented a broad spectrum of gender and sexual identities. Co-operative housing will have only a small role in the Regent Park Revitalisation, however: one of the three off-site buildings containing “replacement units” is a housing co-operative, and the local city councilor is pushing for the construction of two more co-ops within the original ‘footprint’ of Regent Park (McConnell 2016).

By the time the redevelopment was approved, it was all but taken for granted that the design of the old Regent Park facilitated crime, particularly drug-dealing. The Regent Park Revitalisation purports to change this by replacing a criminogenic built environment with one that follows the principles of “crime prevention through environmental design”, particularly “eyes on the street” – an omnipresent sense of surveillance provided by architectural features such as well-lit, glassy apartment buildings, and row-houses that tightly hug sidewalks. Another key aspect of the plan was to diminish the stigma affixed to public housing by making it visually blend with its surroundings – a “‘normalisation’ of the built form” as part of “place destigmatisation” (Dunn 2012, 87). Indeed, few of the new buildings bear any physical traits that would immediately reveal whether they contain public or market housing. During my fieldwork, only one portion of Regent Park North had been completely redeveloped along these lines. One factor that would seem to mitigate “social mix” on this new block, however, is the presence of “SkyParks” in the new buildings – relatively small, parklike outdoor spaces built into the structures for use by residents and their guests only. Residents of One Cole, the first condominium complex to open in Regent Park, have one above the supermarket that is also a

part of the complex, as well as a two-storey “mixer lounge”, while the two public housing towers on the same block also have their own outdoor spaces. The large public park that opened in 2014 now draws residents of nearby public housing, condominiums, and anywhere else for that matter, but it did not open until five years after the SkyParks. New retail space, meanwhile, was filled entirely with corporate chains: a supermarket, a donut shop, a mobile phone provider, and a pharmacy.

During a focus group I conducted with youth who lived in public housing in Regent Park, I elicited perspectives on the state of “social mix” roughly a year after the first condominiums had been occupied. Participants seemed taken aback by the subject:

RJ: Have you or your parents...has anybody met the condo owners? Do you socialise with them at all?

Fayth: Sorry?

RJ: Does anybody in your family know any of the condo owners?

Fayth: No.

RJ: Ok, I was wondering ‘cause the plan was that everybody was gonna mix together...

Fayth: No, I don’t know anybody.

One participant then described how one new block in particular “looks like segregation”, with public housing on one side of the street and market housing on the other. Worse yet, she felt the superficial differences in the appearances of the two types of housing were “colour-coded” to reinforce difference.

Janelle, a participant in her mid-20s answered the question by describing an awkward situation that occurred when she attended a child’s birthday party, hosted by a friend in the party room of a new condominium building. At one point in the party, the participant and several other guests went outside and stood on the sidewalk near the entrance to the underground parking garage.

We were just all hanging out there to get some air, but I could tell the people driving into their parking garage were not impressed. Like just privately they were kind of looking at us ... they were like why are all these black people hanging out here? I'm trying to get into my garage, this is supposed to be a high-class condo.

Excerpts from my fieldnotes from this redeveloped block reflect how neoliberal urbanism entails a profound shift in ownership over the space. One of the first businesses to open was Tim Horton's, the ubiquitous coffee and fast food chain. Much like any Tim Horton's anywhere in the country, it is almost always busy and difficult to find a seat inside, and so many people sit on bench-like concrete slabs outside the restaurant. While standing outside one afternoon, I was approached by two senior white men, dressed casually but very clean-cut. "Excuse me, do you live around here?" one of them asked me out of nowhere. I said that I did. "We're just on a walkabout, taking in the new sights, seeing how the area is changing," he continued. Pointing to the Cole Street townhouses, he asked, "Do you know which of these is assisted housing?" I explained that those on the south side of the street were rent-geared-to-income, and those on the north side were market housing. He said "Thanks" while staring at the south side housing, and the two walked away before I could say anything else. Reflecting the changing nature of ownership over space, this interaction occurred close to where the young men had asked me why I was walking into Regent Park roughly a year-and-a-half earlier. In another example along these lines, I was walking by the same corner with a friend who had lived in Regent Park for most of his life. Approaching from the other direction were four young white men, all dressed in the clean-cut "preppy" style that had been revived at the time, each of them carrying packages of beer of various sizes. My friend began to laugh as they passed by. "So, guys like that wouldn't have been doing that around here ten years ago?", I asked him. "Even three years ago, they would have got their beer stolen," he replied.

One quiet weekday afternoon in the summer, I decided to take my daughter to a park across the street from Regent Park South. At first, the only other people in the park were two young municipal workers guarding the children's wading pool – a dish-shaped concrete slab with about two feet of water at its deepest. After a few minutes, a dog ran into the pool, and the workers told its owner that this was not allowed – the pool was for children only. “Do any kids actually use it?” she responded sarcastically. I pointed out that my daughter had just been in the pool. “Okay, so there's one,” she conceded. “But I never see any kids in there. There's lots of dogs in this park; it should be for the dogs!” Later that day, I noticed the same woman taking her dog to a dog-grooming facility at another point along the perimeter of Regent Park called “The Bark Place Hotel and Spaw”.⁹⁰

Critical as I am of the contrived nature of ‘social mix’ as an idealised outcome of urban planning, working-class Torontonians do tend to ‘mix’ relatively well, in some regards, without outside influence. The racism of the 1970s and 80s was all but entirely absent during the time of my research, and I only encountered one overtly racist sentiment while doing fieldwork. This occurred one afternoon while I was watching my daughter play on a jungle gym in Regent Park North, and a man approached me and said “You're the first white person down here in a long time! It's a blessing!” Before I could reply, he began to rant about how “the pakis are taking over”, based on how he had “caught” two women digging garden plots outside the sanctioned area by his building. I made it clear how strongly I disagreed with him and that I had no interest in speaking to him, and he left. When I told some of my neighbours of the incident, they

⁹⁰ The “Spaw” has since closed, and the space is now occupied by STRYKE, a novel sort of target range for axe-throwing, knife-throwing, archery, and air-gun shooting. The opening of the range was controversial, as some area residents, the local city councillor, and others worried that its violent connotations would exacerbate the stereotyping of Regent Park as a violent place (see Hong 2016). To these criticisms I would add that both STRYKE and the “Spaw” are the sorts of businesses which typify stage one in Clay's (1979) four-stage model of gentrification: niche, upmarket enterprises which provide no added value or convenience for longtime low-income residents, but instead cater to the whims of new residents and visitors with substantial entertainment budgets.

recognised him from my description and said he had been asked to leave the co-op grounds for similar behaviour in the past. In another conversation, a black woman of Commonwealth Caribbean extraction complained about the same unsanctioned gardens. She lamented that “there’s none of *us* left in Regent Park,” and that the population is largely South Asian and East African now.

During my fieldwork, Regent Park was home to a number of high-profile events meant to introduce the ‘new community’ to the city at large. “Jane’s Walk”, for example, is an annual series of free walking tours held in cities worldwide, guided by volunteers who are ideally residents of the area being toured. The starting point of the 2011 edition of the Regent Park “Jane’s Walk” was the Daniels Corporation condominium sales office on Dundas Street East, and my volunteer guide was an employee of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. The tour passed through several key sites in Regent Park, where other volunteers explained the significance of these sites. The content of this tour epitomises the state of ‘social mix’ and the built environment during the first two phases of the redevelopment.

To begin, attendees were brought to a three-dimensional glass-encased model of the complete redevelopment, where two representatives of the Daniels Corporation explained that the plan was participatory and that it would create a safer, ‘mixed’ community. “For 60 years there was absolutely no commercial activity in all of this land,” one representative said while gesturing to the model as a whole. “And that’s just weird!” This statement was false; Regent Park South had a strip mall, Parliament Street remains a largely commercial strip, and there has always been ample informal commercial activity in venues such as the farmer’s market described earlier. It also reflected the theme of normalisation, which became clearer when the representative noted that “some people say what we’re doing in Regent Park is radical, but it’s

not. We're not radicalising Regent Park – we're de-radicalising it.” As the walk continued, some speeches were optimistic: a TCHC tenant explained that she looked forward to the beginning of the phase of redevelopment that would affect her. One was promotional – a condominium owner explained that Regent Park is perfectly safe at all hours, and that ‘social mix’ works. She then implored attendees to “buy a condo!”

An unscripted segment of the tour foregrounded some of the key frustrations with the redevelopment on the part of TCHC tenants. The tour had stopped in front of Nelson Mandela Park Public School, which was then closed for a redevelopment of its own. A tenant explained some history of the school, and noted that it was being rebuilt with a new community centre attached. One of the tour attendees asked her what she thought about the revitalisation in general. “There’s good and bad,” she began – the “good” was that people are getting new housing; the “bad” was that some were being displaced. She was adamant that the tenants who had accepted “relocation units” in the three new buildings built outside Regent Park “did not know what they were doing”, as most were under the impression that they were entitled to a new unit back inside Regent Park in the future. She explained that the process was marked by miscommunication, with children acting as language interpreters for their parents. The same tenant also explained that the new units were poorly built: she gestured as if tapping a wall with moderate effort, and said “if you put your hand like this, it leaves a mark.” Visibly concerned, a woman from the tour group immediately asked, “You mean our new condos are going to be like that?” “No no no,” the tenant assured her: “I’m talking about the social housing units. I can’t speak about the condos because I don’t know.”

Other parts of the tour, however, recognised some important moments in the history of the housing projects. At one point, over the tepid objections of the tour guide, the local city

councilor interjected to explain that the new Cole Street was named after Pat Cole. The councillor honoured Cole's memory, foregrounding her activism before her early death due to diabetes, "a disease of poverty". Later, the tour passed by Regent Park South's Peace Garden, which had been established in 2001 by a local woman who had lost two sons to gun violence. The garden was a tranquil, shaded alcove built in memory of all Regent Parkers who had died from violence and accidents.

Participation, Bureaucratisation, and Extra-Domestic Labour

By October 2011, two of Regent Park South's high-rises and some townhouses had been demolished. The three remaining high-rises and other townhouses still stood, and the space around them appeared largely unchanged, but the redevelopment had reached the point that the Peace Garden had to be moved. The plan was to dig up every plant and tree in the garden, store as many as could be saved, and then re-plant them in a newly built Peace Garden on redeveloped land. The first step was made into a solemn ceremony emceed by a longtime resident, and featuring a speech by the founder of the garden. The roughly 30 adults (mostly residents and some agency staff) in attendance were soon joined by two classes of grade-school children. The mood was lightened somewhat when the children were given shovels of various sizes and instructed to dig up as many plants and trees as they could. After about 30 minutes of gardening, it began to rain heavily and so the children went back to school. I was one of the last two people who remained, soaked and covered in mud, to finish yanking small trees out of the ground. The other was a TCHC employee whose job was to liaise with residents and facilitate 'participation' during the revitalisation; when I had to leave for work, he continued on his own. The new Peace Garden was officially opened in November 2014, outside a new supportive housing building on Oak Street. I am unsure how many of the original plants survived the three years.

As noted earlier in the chapter, no reasonable person would disapprove of “social inclusion” as outlined in the Regent Park Social Development Plan. The Plan also emphasises that the process by which “social inclusion” is created is thoroughly ‘participatory’. It is thus unsurprising that enthusiasm for the concept of redevelopment was so prevalent and forceful on the part of local politicians, the media, and some residents that it effectively “drowned out” any effective opposition that may have come from Regent Parkers (Khosla 2007, cited in Kipfer and Petrunia 2009). With this in mind, this subsection focuses on comments from interviewees and experiences as a participant-observer related to ‘participatory’ aspects of the redevelopment. In keeping with the counter-narrative that structures this dissertation, this section focuses on inconsistencies between ideals and practices, and highlights critical views that were marginalised by celebratory ones.

During the youth focus group mentioned earlier, I asked participants if they had taken part in any of the consultations involved in the redevelopment. After roughly 30 seconds of trying to jog each other’s memories, one of the more outspoken participants described having been part of a meeting to help plan the facility that would replace the Regent Park South Community Centre. This is the exchange that followed:

Keandra: They're gonna break down the whole centre, and create a new centre. So the idea is that's where we're gonna all be at, so we should have input on what it's gonna be like. Yet all of us are getting moved out, so I don't see how that's gonna work. But yeah, we did get a chance to put in ideas on what we wanna see for the new centre. They said, “Anything is possible, just say what you wanna say.” So some people went off, and said “a Jumbotron in the basketball court”, or some obnoxious/whatever [laughter]...

RJ: How many people were there participating?

Keandra: Um, it was a good amount. [Pause.] Well, maybe not ... I don't know exactly. I'd say 20.

RJ: Okay, and um. Are they keeping in touch with you, or how are you learning about...

Keandra [interrupting]: No, no. Unless their idea of keeping in touch is the “presentation centre” across the street on Dundas, I don’t know what that is, I never set foot in it.

Keandra’s story suggests that youth lack clout and purpose in the ‘participation’ that is often described as fundamental to the plan. It took considerable time for her and other focus group members to recall which consultations they had been in, when they had occurred, and for what purpose. When she did remember, she noted that it was unlikely that many of them would be around to see the implementation of the plan based on their input. That she remembered another participant in the consultation suggesting a stadium-grade display screen, and something “obnoxious”, suggests that these young residents did not feel overly invested in the redevelopment process.

One of the institutions set up to promote “social inclusion” was the Regent Park Community Engagement Task Force, whose meetings were open to all, and facilitated by TCHC staff and residents. These meetings constitute strong examples of how “social inclusion” entails the normalisation of Regent Park to the standards of neoliberal urbanism. One meeting was structured around the ‘SWOT analysis’ approach – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats – a method originally developed in management studies for evaluating the competitiveness of a business. As one resident-facilitator explained, she had taken a concept from business school and “brought it to the people”, seeking to “speak the language of business so business would listen” to the needs of residents.

At this meeting, each table was assigned to brainstorm a list of either strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats. Among the “strengths” identified were “a good community”, “good schools”, being downtown, a local employment centre, and a local health centre. Weaknesses included bedbugs, cockroaches, poor garbage disposal and laundry

facilities, language barriers among residents, and “a lack of opportunities for new and old residents to interact”. “Opportunities” included the potential for everyone to “learn about the talents and human capital of Regent Park,” and the fact that buildings are close together. “Threats” included bedbugs again, drug dealers, negative attitudes regarding the revitalisation, and the “snitch line”: a controversial initiative on the part of TCHC that encouraged tenants to call a special phone service to report neighbours for undisclosed income and/or property damage.

During the second meeting, the goal was to build “goal statements” that would direct observations from the SWOT analysis towards putting the Social Development Plan into practice. The facilitator talked about the need to bring people of different income levels together to “avoid class conflicts”. The onus was placed on tenants of public housing to make their presence and ‘the community’ appealing to ‘new residents’ – a commonly used euphemism for condominium buyers. There was talk of creating a new, functioning neighbourhood association to build “unity” between TCHC tenants and condominium owners. One tenant said that for the plan to work, “old” residents will need to cultivate a positive image so that prospective condominium owners “feel comfortable in the community”. Someone else remarked that “really, they’re just like us – some of us just got here five or six years ago, and didn’t feel safe or comfortable at first – and now it’s our home.” As for “concrete strategies” for building social mix, some suggested more street fairs and barbecues, and a representative of the Daniels Corporation said there would soon be a street specifically for those – the “pedestrian-friendly mews” that would open beside the Daniels Spectrum (then still known as the Regent Park Arts & Cultural Centre). Others discussed inviting condominium owners to the “tea parties” that one resident held in the lobby of her TCHC building, originally as a means of claiming shared ownership over the space and dissuading criminal activity.

Poor acoustics, language barriers, and a cumbersome meeting structure caused general disengagement. With several groups speaking at once, and simultaneous live interpreting in several languages, it was difficult to hear any one person speak at any time. Many people looked bored and absorbed in their mobile devices, but one condominium owner in particular remained earnest throughout the duration of the meeting. Afterwards, he described having encouraged some of his neighbours to come to the meeting, but none did. Many of them were eager for the redevelopment to progress so that there would be “more people like us around”, he said; as it stood, there were “women with headscarves” everywhere. He also told me he had recently spoken to a woman in “the neighbourhood,” who in his eyes had clearly “had a hard life.” She was resentful of the condominium owners because she felt that after the redevelopment, “it wouldn’t be the same Regent Park.” “Well judging from what I’ve heard,” the man said, “she should be happy that it won’t be the same Regent Park!”

At this stage of the redevelopment, concerns about class-based difference in ‘socially inclusive space’ often appeared through discussion of the Daniels Spectrum, which was at first to be called the Regent Park Arts & Cultural Centre. When someone raised the issue of a lack of free public space in Regent Park during a Community Engagement Task Force meeting, a corporate representative noted that the Arts & Cultural Centre would help meet that need. Frustrated, one tenant explained that when she first came to Regent Park over two decades ago, many things were free – but now “free is over.” One idea to rectify two-tiered access was ticket subsidies for residents, but because individual producers would run their own box office, it would be left up to them. Still, facility management could “do all we can to make sure no one’s left out.”

At the time of writing, ticket prices at the Daniels Spectrum are often comparable to the cost of a night out anywhere else in downtown Toronto. The venue also hosts free, sliding-scale, and fundraising events. Its tenants include organisations that stand outside of the mainstream arts community, such as COBA (Collective of Black Artists), Native Earth Performing Arts, and the Regent Park School of Music, which provides low-cost instrument and vocal lessons to local youth. Black Lives Matter, arguably at the forefront of radical activism in Toronto at the moment, has used the space for a fundraiser for a theatre organisation that operates through a “radical queer Black feminist lens” (Watah Theatre 2016). In 2014, for a side-project after my fieldwork period, I interviewed a local independent hiphop artist, 19 years old at the time, who told me that the Spectrum was “a good, open thing that we’re allowed to be a part of.” He and other young artists used the space to produce works which did not necessarily align with the hegemony of social mix.

Security and Policing

In the summer of 2011, roughly 40 people gathered in the large upstairs meeting room of the Regent Park Community Centre (now demolished) for a meeting for local parents on “summer safety”. The attendees, nearly all of them women, sat in plastic chairs arranged in a circle and listened to presentations by three police and one TCHC security officer. As I arrived, a young sergeant was encouraging participants to call the police to report domestic abuse among neighbours, as well as non-emergencies such as loud parties, loitering, and marijuana smoke. In response, one woman recounted a time when she called the police to report a loud party in her building. Not wanting to be identified, she asked the police to shut down the party without coming to talk to her – in spite of which, they did come to her door. “As a supervisor, that’s unacceptable” the sergeant said, and explained that if this were to happen again she should

complain and action would be taken. Later, he mentioned that a police presence alone usually just displaces crime to another location, so the real goal is to “eliminate the [problem] person from the situation entirely” – following some confused glances, he quickly clarified that this meant arrests and evictions for repeated offences. At other points, the police recommended “taking back space” with tea parties and gardening, and leaving lights on to deter crime, thus calling upon an active citizenry to take on crime prevention as unpaid work.

At a panel I moderated at the 2009 Regent Park Film Festival, a youth worker who had spent his life in and around Regent Park was asked how he expected the redevelopment to affect the state of ‘police-community relations’. Noting that “honest, hardworking citizens want to be protected, but they don’t realise at whose cost”, he expected a more pronounced and heavy-handed police presence in the area, ranging from trespassing tickets to house raids. While I did not hear any stories akin to the “Handlebar Hank” of the 1960s (see Chapter Three) or “Warpo and Wacko” of the 1990s (see Chapter Five), newer iterations of the spectrum of police interventions (with extralegal violence on one end, and ‘community policing’ at the other) did appear in the input I was given regarding 2002-2012.

The youth focus group yielded several anecdotes of heavy-handed and racist police interventions. A young black man described the one time he had spoken to police: being accused of running away from them while playing tag with his friends when he was 13. Keandra started to discuss the experiences of a relative, but then opted not to. At worst, as noted in previous eras, invasive treatment by the police would antagonise people into a negative reaction: “Cops do it repetitively – so when they come to the tenth time, it’s like, how do you expect me to react? ... Like they kinda push you, to like act the way they want you to act, or get that answer out of you.” Janelle described her male friends being “harassed just for standing outside”, and being

searched and asked for identification while “just standing there, like playing dice, listening to music”. Having recounted how a male friend of hers had been badly beaten in a house raid in the late 1990s, she explained that she did not know anyone subjected to this sort of mistreatment in recent years, but that petty harassment remained commonplace: “We’re grown people, we’re just standing outside, maybe we’re having a beer, something – and they just come. And every day, something different. Them just questioning you, and you know, trying to find something wrong.” “Driving while black,” Kordell added.

With regards to ‘community policing’, I asked the group if they had encountered the police doing “outreach” at their schools or other venues. “Yeah, nothing particularly related to Regent Park, but just the idea of playing basketball and volleyball, cops versus students kinda thing,” one participant answered. Others described a “community barbecue” held by the police at a basketball court near the Oak Street boardwalk, with “one of those jumping jungle gym things” for children. Some of the participants had been there to operate an information table for the social service agency, but did not discuss the topic with any great enthusiasm.

The redevelopment has also brought a ‘broken windows’ crackdown of sorts on the part of the housing authority. At one public meeting hosted by housing authority staff, a manager broached the topic of evictions and how tenants can avoid them. He was sympathetic but stern, explaining, “I get up in the morning to house people, not to evict people. Eviction is the last thing I have to do and the worst thing I have to do. I try to avoid having to get to tribunal, but if I get to tribunal, I go to win.” He explained that he does not pursue evictions for arrears, and that the goal is never to criminalise or break up families – ideally, an eviction notice is the first step towards an appropriate social services intervention. He noted, however, that “the areas in which we don’t compromise are guns, drugs, and gangs. I have no problem evicting people for that –

my responsibility is to the neighbourhood.” At the time, staff had been looking through security and police reports for “criminal and antisocial stuff” that might pose a threat to neighbours. Of particular concern, “in areas of redevelopment where we see, to be blunt, there is a gang forming”. As a cautionary example, he described how a man in his fifties was left in a coma after being mugged at a basketball court in the middle of the night. The teenaged assailants were identified via CCTV, and their families subjected to eviction proceedings. In this case, the families were cooperative. Their records with TCHC were noted as such, and one older sibling was allowed to stay in Regent Park.

Around the same time, and in keeping with broken windows theory, the housing authority was also concerned about minor infractions on the part of tenants that suggested shoddiness and disorder. Residents of market housing just outside of Regent Park (built well before the redevelopment) had been complaining to TCHC that tenants of the newly constructed subsidised townhouses were leaving their bins outside for too long after garbage pickup. The complainants disliked Regent Park and its residents at the best of times, and the garbage bin situation was only exacerbating things. “I’m dealing with them – they’re calming down,” the TCHC staffer explained. “But it’s hard for me to say, ‘they’re just like you’, when people aren’t taking their garbage bins in.” Visibly irritated, one resident spoke up: “We need to fight classism too.” “*And we need to bring our garbage bins in,*” the manager replied instantly, as a sort of aphorism. At another meeting several weeks later, he warned attendees that he was planning a “big cleanup” in preparation for Jane’s Walk, so “be prepared”. Tenants leaving their bins out would be warned the first time, and fined the second.

Conclusion: Displacement

As addressed in the introduction to the chapter, the youth I spoke to experienced displacement as an irrecoverable loss, regardless of what the redevelopment is promised to bring upon its completion. Participants were heavily invested in the old Regent Park, and scarcely invested in the ‘participatory’ processes associated with the redevelopment. A local youth worker remarked that it was beneficial to her agency in some ways when it moved into a new space, but in the end, “it’s another change, and kids just want things to stay the same”.

I conclude this chapter with an analysis of young peoples’ experiences with displacement as a result of the redevelopment. To begin, the degree of uncertainty and confusion regarding the process was striking. One especially knowledgeable and outspoken participant, whose family was in a temporary relocation unit, did not know whether her family was planning to return.

Before the redevelopment, according to an ex-resident who continued to work with local youth,

You’d be able to just walk outside and see youth everywhere You know, they’d hang out on the green blocks or wherever ... but now everything’s torn down, there’s construction ... half the people don’t live here anymore. So it’s like a task to get into the community centre, with construction all around it.

Kordell remembered first hearing of the impending redevelopment when he was in Grade 8, and thought it was “a lie”. His family had received their permanent new unit, having “switched from south side to north side”. When I asked him to compare his new townhouse to his old one, he responded, “It’s not the same. It doesn’t hold the same memory. Um, it’s a lot smaller, not the same storage. Other than that it’s pretty modern, and, pretty small,” and remembered that it was “kind of heartbreaking” to see his old building demolished. A young woman remembered her reaction to the news as such:

I thought okay, that’s a good idea because it’s gonna be a nicer place. Like aesthetically or whatever - but when I really started to understand what they were doing, I don’t like it as much because a part of it is like, okay, we’re gonna build

these new places, we'll move you out, but then you can come back later, like we're really not kicking you out; when really they are kicking people out because they're moving people out of like 5 bedroom houses with like a basement and then they want you to come back and move into this little squeezed-up condo apartment. It's just unrealistic. So I think whoever's doing it, they know what they're doing; they have prime real estate, it's downtown, they can make a lot of money. They're not just saying yeah, we'll kick all these people out of their homes, but they make it a lot harder for people to come back to their home.

Janelle, in her mid-20s at the time of our interview, had moved out of Regent Park several years before, for reasons unrelated to the redevelopment. She has worked at different social service agencies serving Regent Park ever since leaving, and stayed in the social circles she had developed as a teenager. These networks were strained by the redevelopment, as many people she informally kept in touch with were no longer in the area. I asked her whether she expected to remain connected to the Regent Park 'community' in five or ten years, and she replied that she would like to, since

... I don't have any reason to stop, but I don't know if it's gonna be the same in five years. Like, do I wanna work with – sorry, but like snobby white people? No. Like I probably won't be as involved if that's the way it's gonna be. Not to say those are the only kind of people that are gonna be involved here, but if it's like all these expensive condos that the people I grew up with can't afford, I'm not probably gonna be involved.

Another participant said he felt like “we’ve been pushed out of our environment”, and another said “They pretty much just disassembled the community – like, it’s kind of hard to rebuild something like that.” Far from social inclusion, Keandra predicted passive aggression and judgement between “us” and “the people that moved in.”

The theme of displacement was addressed bluntly at the seventh annual Regent Park Film Festival, which took place at Nelson Mandela Park Public School in November, 2009, with TCHC and the Daniels Corporation among its many sponsors. As part of my fieldwork, I volunteered at the four-day festival, setting up chairs and ushering children into seats during the

weekday school programs which consisted largely of locally produced short animations. The final day of the festival, a Saturday, began with a breakfast at 9 a.m. that was sparsely attended, despite a free pancake buffet. After volunteering as an errand-runner through the morning, I was then asked by the festival organiser to moderate a panel discussion, following a series of films dealing with theme of “displacement”. They included a documentary on an indigenous language program in northern Canada, and another on an apartment complex in Shanghai; and a montage which interspersed contemporary photographs of Regent Park, images from the colonisation of Canada, and the word “displacement”. This set the stage for our panel discussion, attended by an audience of about 15 people (another 10 had left following the last film).

The panel was comprised of the director of the first film, a social worker at the agency who produced the “displacement” montage, and a lifelong Regent Park resident and agency worker. I asked whether the redevelopment of Regent Park constitutes “displacement” or “revitalisation”. The panelist from Regent Park began by calling the redevelopment a “dance put on by politicians”. He said that the new development “will not be a community,” as memories, multicultural relationships, and a sense of place and groundedness will be lost, especially for youth. By treating the presence of middle class outsiders as necessary for ‘revitalisation’, the plan ignores “the community’s own potential to continually revitalise itself”, the panelist explained. As it stood pre-revitalisation, high-achieving youth from Regent Park were known to stay involved in their ‘community’, know “where they came from” and simultaneously act as role models for local youth and a voice for Regent Park. With Regent Park fading into the background of status-quo Toronto, subsequent generations of young achievers (organic intellectuals, perhaps) would not feel the same rootedness, and the ‘community’ would lack the same leadership and cohesion.

My fieldwork took place too early in the redevelopment process to attempt a final, more authoritative evaluation of its effects. The fact that much of the landscape was taken up by construction and demolition zones had a profound impact on how people used the space, and important amenities such as an indoor pool, the Daniels Spectrum, a new community centre, and the central park had not yet opened. This was, of course, a temporary state, but the temporal gap between the old Regent Park and the completion of the revitalisation is at least two decades long. The land that became the big park was vacant for four years before it opened. Condemned buildings stand fenced off, stripped of recyclables, and with windows smashed for weeks before demolition begins. When one high-rise was demolished in the spring of 2011, the front wall was torn off and the structure then demolished floor-by-floor from the top-down. In the meantime, former residents reported the surreal experience of looking into their former apartment from the street, seeing the walls they had painted and remembering where their furniture used to be. During the time between relocation and return, children become teenagers, and teenagers become adults. As one local youth worker explained, children who take part in the participatory planning sessions will be too old to remember or care about what they had said by the time those plans come to fruition, and may no longer live in Regent Park. For this and other reasons, I contend that the interim effects of the redevelopment merit documentation and analysis in their own right; far from a short-term inconvenience, they are the products of a liminal period in the history of a locality that will likely span a total of twenty years or more.

Throughout my fieldwork, many of my participants spoke wistfully of things from the past that are portrayed as obsolete and/or dangerous in the discourse of ‘revitalisation’. These include the physical (the open space, the car-free sidewalk) and the ephemeral (identities rooted in socioeconomic class, and solidarity based in the locality). The ongoing plan to normalise

Regent Park – or “de-radicalise” it, as the one tour guide described – represent the marginalisation of distinctly working-class means of sharing urban space. This aspect of the redevelopment brings to mind Low’s and Lawrence-Zuniga’s insight that “the assumed neutrality of space conceals its role in maintaining the social system, inculcating particular ideologies and scripted narratives” (2003, 30). At the time of my fieldwork, however, few residents had enrolled in the process of “social inclusion” that is now valorised as the ideal, class-blind means of belonging to a ‘mixed community’, and the new normality that the space is meant to instil.

Though critical of the redevelopment, I do not argue that the living conditions of the modernist public housing project were idyllic, nor even adequate. In spite of poverty and discrimination, generations of Regent Parkers made the place liveable by labouring long and hard to create conditions that residents of more privileged ‘communities’ can take for granted. The fact that social reproduction among Regent Parkers entailed this added set of responsibilities was a function of class-based inequality, and many were well-aware of this. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the work of maintaining a stable and secure ‘community’ was central to the formation of class consciousness among Regent Parkers. Through the redevelopment of Regent Park, class inequality persists while class-based solidarity is diminished. In the process, however, tenants of public housing get access to some of the living conditions and amenities that residents of decent market housing have always been able to count on.

To conclude, I will echo a perspective on the redevelopment provided to me by a lifelong resident in her mid-30s at the time of our interview. “No one should ever have to see what some kids saw here,” she said, referring to the disrepair and instability she had witnessed in

the 1980s and 1990s. “And people should be able to go to the bank, buy good food – everyone deserves that. But why are we only getting that now that people own homes here?” She then expressed anger that the new retail space was completely occupied by corporate chains: a supermarket, a coffee shop, a pharmacy, and a telecommunications provider. Meanwhile, the financial benefits for Regent Park residents have largely been limited to low-wage, blue-collar, and/or front-line social service positions. “Nobody from Regent Park made any real money, while so many people made tons of money off the redevelopment,” she said angrily. In a different conversation, a resident in favour of the redevelopment also noted that many of the jobs created are part-time and low-paying, but emphasised that this is the case for the Toronto job market in general – and at least jobs of any sort were being created. In this regard, Regent Park is indeed becoming “like any other neighbourhood” and blending in with its surroundings.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: “It Wasn't That Bad”

This dissertation is my attempt to do justice to the capacity of working-class people to build and maintain ‘community’ on their own terms and in spite of multiple intersecting constraints. To emphasise that ‘community’-building is structurally necessary, rather than merely benevolent, I have drawn on Marxist-feminist discussions of social reproduction and domestic labour, and proposed an addition to these established concepts to account for the full breadth of unpaid labour that it took for Regent Parkers to turn a stigmatised low-income housing project into a ‘community.’ This is what I have termed extra-domestic labour: unpaid labour done just outside the household, usually in collaboration among members of different households, that (like domestic labour as conventionally understood) is central to social reproduction. Labour of this sort fostered a territorial solidarity and shared sense of ownership that, I argue, was the primary means through which Regent Parkers developed class consciousness. This often took the form of emic class categories which emphasised the locality more than the workplace, and through which people defined themselves and others in relation to the broader society and the social order. These categories built up over time in reference to (or in defiance of) earlier frameworks, usually blending both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strains into a “complex consciousness”, or “metissage”, to use Silverman’s (2001) term.

Contrary to the paradigms of ‘social mix’ and ‘new urbanism’ that are currently hegemonic in the fields of urban planning, design, and social policy, I remain adamant that there is nothing inherently problematic about a working-class enclave, and the fact that Regent Park was such an enclave was the least of its problems. In this regard, I concur with August (2012), who found through interviews conducted with Regent Park tenants in 2010 that “concentrated

poverty,” as unpleasant as the phrase may sound, actually yields important benefits to low-income households: convenient and affordable amenities that cater to their market segment, and “a strong sense of community,” as examples (August 2012, 1317). The observation is relevant both to my own participant-observation research conducted around the same time, and to many of the impressions of everyday life in the past that appeared in my interviews with Regent Parkers of prior generations. More often than not, the fact that Regent Park was a working-class enclave was a positive factor in people’s capacity to create stable living conditions amidst pervasive social inequality. It gave rise to the particular sort of community-building that I have termed extra-domestic labour, and to the territorial solidarity that they developed through this work. As discussed in Chapter Six, the current redevelopment has imposed an apparatus of ‘participation’ initiatives upon Regent Park, which bureaucratises extra-domestic labour and marginalise a longstanding class-based, territorial solidarity in favour of ‘social inclusion’.

Purdy remarked in 2003 that Regent Park at that time “certainly” needed “substantial renovations due to the aging buildings and infrastructure,” and so “improving design may be worthwhile” but it would not address “key reasons for socio-economic marginalisation” (Purdy 2003a, 351-352). These comments reflect fairly accurately what I had found at the conclusion of my fieldwork in 2012. To use a hypothetical example I often cite in conversations about the redevelopment, I would much rather move into a new apartment that was built as part of the redevelopment, than into an old apartment in Regent Park’s original housing stock that was built sixty years ago and residually funded ever since. Regardless, all TCHC tenants continue (to varying degrees) to endure forms of inequity and discrimination, whether they live in new or old units, and that are shared by working-class people (particularly those who are racialised) anywhere else in urban Canada for that matter. Before 2005, the fact that Regent Parkers lived

exclusively among thousands of other working-class people bearing similar burdens was a unique opportunity to develop networks of mutual aid and solidarity. Meanwhile, in my research, the only major threat I found that was arguably caused by concentrated poverty (and a very serious one, I acknowledge) was the fact that Regent Park was disproportionately afflicted with abuse and predation of many varieties. To attribute this to the architecture or demographics of the housing projects would amount to a form of victim-blaming, however: as I argued in Chapter Four in particular, the underlying causes of this abuse were stigmatisation and inequity. Meanwhile, the primary means through which Regent Parkers protected themselves and each other from predatory threats was by community-building through extra-domestic labour – which, I argue, was facilitated by the fact that Regent Park was a working-class enclave.

None of this is to romanticise the working class, working-class communities, or Regent Park. On the contrary, the preceding chapters address some particularly ugly manifestations of territorial solidarity, such as racism, nativism, homophobia, vigilantism, and lateral gang violence. There is nothing necessarily progressive or even hopeful about people banding together to hold territory, and the creation of ‘community’ inevitably entails the delineation of ‘others’ – at the worst of times, in ways that are violent and/or hateful. Still, even these troubling examples also reflect how important Regent Park was to many of those who lived there. This fact constitutes a key aspect of my counter-narrative to the hegemonic view that the social life of modernist housing projects was anomic, disjointed, and something that people merely wanted to escape.

Given the current state of geopolitics (i.e. the “Brexit” vote, the election of Donald Trump, and early signs of a far-right resurgence in Canada), it is troubling that the political left has generally missed how important territory can be to the identities of urban working-class

people, and how strong their resentment can be towards well-off urbanites, both real and imagined. The political right, meanwhile, has deftly exploited this. In 2012, for example, a prominent journalist at The Toronto Sun, a right-wing tabloid, levelled conflict-of-interest accusations at former TCHC executives, the president of the Daniels Corporation, and the city councillor who represents Regent Park for buying condominiums there (Levy 2012a, Levy 2012b). Meanwhile, Levy co-opted some common leftist critiques of gentrification, portraying social mix as a ruse whereby “the upwardly mobile would be living in gleaming high-rises in the middle of the action while the poor would be in separate quarters” (2012b), and recalling how “the social engineers and their media cheerleaders were positively tripping over each other in early 2005” when the redevelopment was announced (2012a). As a result of these reports, TCHC launched an internal review, which in the end concluded that those named had not acted in conflict of interest by buying condominiums (Daly 2013). The scandal unfolded during the mayoralty of Rob Ford, an “authoritarian populist” who won over the low-income inner suburbs, in large part by railing against the elitism of the downtown liberal left (Walks 2015). More recently, Levy has continued to decry the growing public expenditure implicated in the Regent Park Revitalisation, which she derides as a “socialist utopia” (2017). Perhaps now more than ever, it is crucial that leftists, intellectuals, and planners listen to the actual concerns of working-class people and seek to understand what they want and need from urban space.

In the section that follows, I summarise my main findings with regards to the three areas of analysis outlined in Chapter Two: Gramsci’s discussions of hegemony, philosophy, and folklore; Marxist-feminist research on domestic labour and social reproduction; and ‘class’ and ‘community’ as emic constructs. Afterwards, I conclude the dissertation by suggesting some directions for future research on low-income Canadian localities.

“Keeping the Kids Out of Trouble”: A Synthesis

Hegemony and Folklore

This dissertation has highlighted ordinary people’s intellectual responses to structural adversity, and the worldviews that form through these responses. I have treated Regent Park as a local-level context for studying how macro-level socioeconomic phenomena become tangible in everyday life; how people understand their position in society in light of these phenomena; and their ability (limited as it may be) to push back and influence the status quo in turn. I have framed this dynamic, as it played out in Regent Park during a period of roughly 50 years, through an interpretation of Gramsci’s notes on hegemony.

I began from Gramsci’s descriptions of “two major superstructural levels” in an inequitable society: “political society”, also known as “the state”, which carries an authority that can be upheld with violence as needed; and “civil society”, an “ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’”, through which “the function of ‘hegemony’” is exercised by “the dominant group” (2003, 12). With regards to the day-to-day functioning of inequitable societies, state violence is typically a last resort for “moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed” (Gramsci 2003, 12). Far more commonly, the social order is upheld through “the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Gramsci 2003, 12). This is what Gramsci referred to as “hegemony”, and a “hegemonic class” is “one which imposes its own ends and its own vision on society as a whole” (Crichter 2007, 38). Meanwhile, “the masses defend and seek to improve a position” in a “social order” not of their own choosing (Crichter 2007, 38). This formulation is suitable to studying Regent Park, among the poorest and

most stigmatised localities in a liberal-democratic state in which the status quo is predominantly upheld through culture and ideology.

None of the groups or processes outlined in this theory was monolithic. To begin, the relationship between “the great masses” and “the dominant fundamental group” was far more complex than a “struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed” (Silverman 2006, 11). By definition a group of working-class people, residents of Regent Park’s public housing stock were among the “masses”, but like any other grouping of ‘the masses’, they were internally variegated by intersecting factors and so there were significant differentials in power, status, and worldviews among them. For example, in Chapter Three, regarding the 1960s, people whose parents worked for wages tended to disparage families supported by welfare benefits – unless it was decided that those ‘welfare families’ had indeed been left with little choice but to accept benefits, and were also using the funds in respectable ways. Chapters Four and Five, meanwhile, address the growing importance of ethnicity and nationality in defining belonging and allegiance among Regent Parkers, as when hostilities emerged in the mid-1970s between long-term Canadian-born white and black Canadian-born residents on the one hand, and black Commonwealth Caribbean-born newcomers on the other.

A substantial portion of this dissertation addresses media portrayals of Regent Park throughout its history. Along with select policy documents, the media archives generally reflect the dominant ideology of a given day, thus illustrating the hegemonic ‘common sense’ of the time that Regent Parkers variously resisted, adopted, and/or thought through. I also analyse the media archives for their material effects – as noted in each ethnographic chapter, the implications of media-driven stigma appeared in crucial aspects of everyday life for Regent Parkers from the 1960s through to the time of writing. Meanwhile, however, counter-hegemonic portrayals of

Regent Park appeared occasionally through the years, such as an angry letter to the editor of The Toronto Star from 1979, that took issue with the paper's overwrought portrayals of the place as bleak and isolated (Welsh 1979); more letters to the editor of the Star in 1994 that berated the paper for referring to Regent Park as a "jungle" (Acker 1994, Hubbard 1994); and in more recent years, the occasional report or editorial critical of the ongoing redevelopment (e.g. Purdy 2005a, Shufelt 2007). Perhaps more importantly, ordinary Regent Parkers have crafted their own representations of the place over the years, many of which could rightly be described as counter-hegemonic or, in a sense, subaltern. On this note, Chapters Five and Six analyzed a small body of artistic works that used Regent Park as a setting for critical dramatisations of Canadian racism, particularly as experienced by black Torontonians.

Also of particular relevance to the history of Regent Park is Gramsci's emphasis that political consciousness and resistance tend to be fragmented and diffuse. To Gramsci, "philosophy" was a ubiquitous aspect of everyday life in which everyone partakes, deliberately or not. It is contained in "folklore" – "the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and acting" shared by a "subaltern" (non-dominant) group (Gramsci 2003, 323). Gramsci noted that folklore was formed in reference to, and sometimes in defiance of, the hegemonic ideology of a given time and place. This is also of particularly literal relevance to the study of Regent Park – an area that has been redeveloped twice, each time according to plans designed to instil in residents values that were congruent with the social order of the day. Chapter Three addresses how the projects were first designed in the postwar era as an enclave for a clean-living, dutiful, and upwardly mobile working class; Chapter Six addresses how, at the time of writing, they are being redeveloped into a "mixed-use, mixed-income community" where low-income earners and their homes blend seamlessly into a larger cityscape dominated by

condominium towers, and where an imposed notion of “social inclusion” is expected to eclipse class-based territorial solidarity. In both examples, the response from Regent Park residents was diverse and conflicted. Among my participants from the baby-boom generation, hard work and clean living were paramount, and so was a sense of pride in being working-class that entailed a strong resentment of stigmatisation and middle-class paternalism. Among the people I spoke to during my fieldwork in 2009-2012, some were actively involved in creating a new, ‘socially mixed’ Regent Park, adapting theory and methods from business school to the task of community organising among public housing tenants and condominium owners. Others, for the most part young people, resented the concept of social mix and longed for the pre-redevelopment Regent Park.

Class, Community, and Social Reproduction

Much of this dissertation has focused on class and community, and the emic and etic senses of each: “emic” meaning the insider view shared by some, if not all, of the group being studied; and “etic” referring to the outsider / anthropologist’s view. I began this approach from Silverman’s discussion of emic class categories – fixtures in a “status-class hierarchy [that] underlay people’s experiences”, and which form “the bedrock of their common sense, their individual consciousness, and their personal and collective perceptions” (2001, 7). These emic categories “only partially corresponded” to the etic class framework based on one’s relationship to the means of production and labour exploitation (Silverman 2001, 8). Examples from Regent Park from over the decades include the “real Regent Parker”, the “hard worker”, the “bum”, “rich people”, and “snobby white people”. While of course no one who iterated these terms described them as “emic class categories”, when taken together they form an incomplete, at times self-contradictory conceptual system through which people understood their position in

society in relation to others, often in light of social inequality. As such, they did not neatly overlap with etic categories such as the working class, the middle class, and the bourgeoisie, but were localised iterations that loosely corresponded to them, often cross-cut with assumptions and stereotypes drawn from popular culture and tropes from the hegemonic mass media.

Emic class categories were iterations of a complex “class consciousness” – an awareness of one’s place in the social order in part with regards to one’s relationship to the means of production. However, class consciousness tended to be more salient in participants’ memories of what they did in and around Regent Park, than in it did in their memories of what they did at work. In general, building and protecting ‘community’ was a more meaningful pursuit than blue-collar wage labour, to the extent that it was the primary realm of experience in which people’s positions in the social order became apparent and meaningful. To account for the importance of unpaid work in and around the household, in terms of both the necessities of everyday life and the formation of class consciousness, I have drawn on Marxist-feminist studies of social reproduction and domestic labour, and proposed a related concept of ‘extra-domestic labour’ in light of the unique challenges confronted by Regent Parkers over the years.

As addressed in Chapter Two, Marxist-feminist scholars have traced the discussion of domestic labour and social reproduction as far back as Engels’s The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884) which elaborated social reproduction as essential not only to “the production of human beings themselves” (cited in Luxton 1980, 13) but also to the functioning of a capitalist society. In this sense, domestic labour is the set of tasks that replenishes the earning capacity of household members who work for wages, and raises a new generation of wage-labourers. Yet until the 1970s, as Seccombe noted, “one would almost suppose, from reading many Marxists, that a person’s consciousness suddenly appears when they

take their first job” (1974, 15). I began from the point, brought to the fore by Luxton, Seccombe, and others, that in addition to being indispensable to the reproduction of wage-labourers themselves and their earning power (and, by extension, the entirety of a capitalist system), domestic labour is no less central than wage-labour to the formation of class consciousness.

Among various means of defining “domestic labour” and outlining the tasks that comprise it, I found Luxton’s formulation of “the never-ending work” of “making life tolerable for household members” most useful (1980, 17). In this iteration, the specific tasks involved in domestic labour were grouped into four sub-categories: taking care of oneself and other adults in the household; taking care of children; “housework” such as cooking and cleaning; and money management (1980, 18-19). Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that conditions unique to Regent Park have made domestic labour particularly challenging, especially in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The vulnerability that came with living in a place as hyper-visible and heavily stigmatised as Regent Park creates an extra set of challenges for those in charge of their household. To account for this, I have proposed a fifth sub-category to add to Luxton’s inventory, which I call “extra-domestic labour”: unpaid tasks done in public space around the home that are also essential to the functioning of the household, and thus serve the same structural purpose as domestic labour as conventionally defined. Two especially important examples of this from the history of Regent Park are the collective supervision of children, and the shared surveillance of common grounds for suspicious outsiders. Within the category of ‘extra-domestic labour’, I also include unpaid labour done in the public sphere that is more commonly described as ‘volunteering’ or ‘activism’: examples include attending meetings, writing letters and petitions, organising protests. When Regent Parkers took action along these lines, it was seldom (if ever) to simply pass the time, or in keeping with a particular political

ideology: it was because the functioning of the household depended on the ability of domestic labour to create security and stability in the grounds outside of it. With this in mind, I am aware that my articulation of extra-domestic labour combines a diverse set of tasks into one category; I do so deliberately to highlight their shared function of “keeping the kids out of trouble”, and to give them their due as *labour* as opposed to mere volunteerism or neighbourliness.

As noted in Chapter Two, Marxist-feminists have emphasised the importance of domestic labour, in large part, as a corrective to gender bias in mainstream Western society and Marxist theory alike. Domestic labour has traditionally been cast as ‘women’s work’, and to a large extent it is still treated as such. Meanwhile, as McDowell has noted, the social sciences continue to associate class with the public sphere and gender with the private (2006, 826). As a corrective to these biases, the theorists of the 1970s and 80s began by establishing that private domestic labour is indeed labour; in this dissertation, I have sought to further the discussion by adding some tasks done in public to the inventory of those counted as domestic labour. On the balance of the half-century of history covered by this dissertation, women clearly did more extra-domestic labour than men – but these tasks were not as sharply gendered as was domestic labour in the traditional sense. Perhaps because extra-domestic labour takes place in what is traditionally understood as the public sphere, men played a larger role than they did in traditionally-defined, private-sphere domestic labour. It seems that men were more apt to take on tasks requiring physical intimidation, such as confronting unwelcome outsiders – but there were important exceptions to that as well, such as the woman in Chapter Three who searched Regent Park South, butcher knife in hand, for a man who had just exposed himself to her pre-teen daughters in an elevator.

The emic / etic distinction outlined above was also central to my handling of the concept of ‘community’ in this dissertation. To avoid the trappings of the obsolete “community study” approach, which presupposes a measure of boundedness and homogeneity at the local level, I have not referred to Regent Park as a ‘community’ in an etic sense (Silverman 2001, 9). Rather, following Leeds, I treat it (in the etic sense) as a “locality” – an umbrella term for a relatively small and dense conglomeration of people, with boundaries defined as per the needs of the study (1994, 10). In the case of my fieldsite, a rectangle formed by Parliament, Gerrard, River, and Shuter Streets happens to delineate the boundaries of the Regent Park projects, as well as the way that residents (for the most part) define “Regent Park.” For these reasons, it is logical for me to define the locality in the same way. Despite this distinction, Regent Park as a “community” (in an emic sense) mattered a great deal to most of my participants. ‘Community’ was something they themselves created in everyday life, largely through extra-domestic labour and towards the ends of social reproduction.

Implications and Directions for Future Research

The central argument of this dissertation is that extra-domestic labour, as redefined to include tasks done outside the household and towards the end of social reproduction, is the primary means through which Regent Parkers developed class consciousness. Labour of this variety was made necessary by the unique dangers and annoyances that came with living in one of the most stigmatised and marginalised parts of the city: Regent Parkers could not rely on the state to provide the stability and security in ‘the community’ necessary to maintain a livable household, and so they had to create both security and ‘community’ for themselves and each other. While sharing in this labour, generations of Regent Parkers developed a powerful sense of

solidarity that was rooted in emic class-like identities and expressed through a strong allegiance to the community.

There was only so much that extra-domestic labour could accomplish, however, as it was unpaid, informal, and often undertaken by people who already worked a double-day of wage-labour and home-making. Meanwhile, public housing in Ontario was perpetually residualised, Regent Park in particular was increasingly stigmatised, and class-based notions of ‘community’ and solidarity drifted even further from the Canadian political mainstream as neoliberalism became commonsensical. By the beginning of the 21st century, Regent Park was widely seen as a hopeless failure, and surrounded at most points of its perimeter by gentrified and gentrifying residential blocks. Its ongoing redevelopment as a ‘socially mixed community’, as I argued in Chapter Six, represents the restructuring of Regent Park in line with the hegemonic ideology of neoliberal urbanism, and towards the ends of normalising it in relation to its surroundings. At an early stage, this intervention has already undermined longstanding local-level bonds: whether temporarily or permanently, hundreds of households had already been displaced, and extra-domestic labour was directed away from building class-based solidarity and towards an ideal of ‘social inclusion’ with new, higher-income residents.

By identifying problems with the redevelopment, I do not argue that the status quo of pre-redevelopment Regent Park was optimal, or rule out the possibility of new benefits accruing from the ongoing changes, including the continuance of informal networks of mutual aid and the development of new forms of solidarity. Indeed, in the years since my fieldwork, I have personally benefited from some of the new recreational spaces and programming as a local low-income parent, and it is hard to imagine why anyone would argue against free indoor swimming, a new park, and affordable music lessons for children. But I maintain, as did some participants of

this study, that is no legitimate reason why these provisions had to wait until new middle-class residents had moved into the area. In one participant's interpretation, the fact that it did take until this point was effectively a message to TCHC tenants that they were not worthy of new amenities until they were needed to encourage their 'mixing' with the middle class.

The broader point to be drawn from this study is that working-class people can adequately run their own affairs and 'community' if they have sufficient resources to do so. Even with insufficient resources, for that matter, Regent Parkers managed for decades to maintain one of Canada's most stigmatised and poorest localities as a place that "wasn't that bad", as several participants described it. The means by which they did so, I argue, have been under-documented and under-appreciated as forms of labour necessary for social reproduction. Regent Parkers who confronted predators, joined committees, and told children to do up their coats did so not as activists, volunteers, or neighbours, but as domestic labourers handling the tasks it took to make Regent Park safe and livable.

As noted in Chapter Six, I do not attempt to predict the future based on research I conducted during an early stage of the redevelopment. It should be obvious that the total demolition of 69 acres of urban space over a period of at least two decades is inevitably disruptive, no matter how gradually and carefully it is undertaken; and some of my participants emphasised that the process had already fundamentally disrupted their social networks and their 'community'. While I am heavily skeptical that cross-class 'social mix' will mean much more than chance encounters, pleasantries, and sparsely-attended meetings specifically called for the purpose of fostering 'social inclusion,' I remain optimistic that working-class Regent Parkers will find new ways to build 'community' and solidarity in the reconstructed Regent Park. In the meantime, they readily make use of new amenities such as the new park, indoor swimming pool,

and sliding-scale music lessons held in the ‘arts and cultural centre’ named after the condominium developer.

Given the practical constraints of a doctoral program, covering 53 years in the history of a place where at least 7,500 people lived at any given moment inevitably involves some reduction and simplification. I am also regretful of the limitations that resulted from opportunistic sampling, most notably the lack of racialised participants I could consult regarding the earlier history of Regent Park addressed in Chapters Three and Four. As noted in Chapter One, research fatigue was a barrier to recruiting participants for Chapter Six, given the sheer volume of attention the redevelopment has attracted from academics, journalists, and other interlopers with notebooks and cameras. These are all limitations I plan to redress while revising this dissertation as a monograph.

This project underscores the need for more local-level studies which foreground the importance of class in how people engage with each other and with an urban environment, and how allegiance to a locality can be a central component of class identities and class-based solidarity. Further, it points to a need to reclaim histories of modernist public housing projects. The Regent Park Revitalisation was the second redevelopment of a public housing project to be approved in Toronto, and when I planned my research in 2007, only one other “revitalisation” (that of Lawrence Heights) was in the works; since then, three more have been planned. As was the case with Regent Park, these plans have largely been celebrated uncritically in the local media, as if any pleasant or valuable aspect of life that existed in the modernist public housing complex was an anomaly, and as if ‘social mix’ will enable these anomalies to reach their full potential. It is imperative that we challenge this stigmatising discourse by documenting how

working-class people have built ‘community’ and supported one another – on their own terms, and in the absence of middle-class intervenors, for generations.

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Appendix A

Sketch of Regent Park Housing Projects, 1959 – 2005

