1-1-2008

Race, Space and Place: Exploring Toronto's Regent Park from a Marxist Perspective

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RACE, SPACE AND PLACE:
EXPLORING TORONTO'S REGENT PARK FROM A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

by

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A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Regent Park, a multi ethnic immigrant community situated in the centre of downtown Toronto, is the poorest neighbourhood in Canada. Using the spatial triadic theory of French Marxist Henri Lefebvre, Vanessa Rosa's reformulation of his theory and Sherene Razack's concept of "Place becomes Race", the aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Regent Park has become a racially produced space through spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. In addition to Lefebvre, the writings of Frederick Engels, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and David Harvey will also be examined to put into context the historical significance of the existence of Regent Park in a capitalist society. This paper will analyze why Regent Park was built, who developed it, and who were the original residents. And the conclusion, that Regent Park was produced as a marginalized and racialized space within the periphery of the center, will be discussed.

Key Words: Regent Park, marginalization, racialization, spatial triadic theory, Marxism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this research paper would not have possible had it not been for the assistance of a number of people.

Myer Siemiatycki, my incredibly patient supervisor, stuck with me even at times when I doubted if I could continue myself. Over the course of my turbulent research, he remained a sincere mentor and a great friend. This paper would not have been possible without his constructive contribution. I would like to thank him for all his help.

I also benefited greatly from the constructive criticism and encouraging comments of Cheryl Teelucksingh. She opened my eyes and mind to issues which I had failed to realize at first. This is a better paper because of her sound input.

Research for this paper required interviewing a number of Regent Park residents, and I am grateful for their participation. Some of the residents graciously agreed to speak to me while others were more reluctant. For the ones that were reluctant, I am indebted to them that much more. The residents shared with me their memories, miseries, and stories of their experiences of life in the "projects", the mundane life of the proletariat. I can honestly say that I will miss them because for those brief moments when I was physically in Regent Park, I could feel the solidarity among its residents. It was written on their ethnically diverse faces and illustrated on their walls in the form of images, which was their way of silently resisting the destruction of their community. The residents of Regent Park deserve my sincere gratitude.

Finally, my mother Soraya Sahak, with whom I debated many of the issues presented in this paper, and my father Mohammad Sahak, along with my two older brothers, provided much-needed practical and emotional support. I would like to thank them for always being there for me through thick and thin.

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INTRODUCTION

Regent Park is regarded as one of the most documented neighbourhoods in all of Canada. However, although a lot has been written on the geography, economics and politics of Regent Park, little has been documented in regards to the marginalization and racialization of Regent Park from a Marxist perspective. With the exception of Vanessa Rosa (2006), little work has been done linking race and the production of space in Regent Park. This is the central theme of this paper. Using the theories of classical as well as contemporary Marxists, this paper will "unmap" Regent Park and reveal its "unnatural" production. Regent Park was not conceived by accident. It was planned, developed, constructed and maintained through a specific design. The aim of this research is to understand why Regent Park was built, who built it and for whom.

The Regent Park Project first began on September 29th, 1948. H.L. Luftmann, a member of both the Housing Authority and the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, remarked: "This is an historic day – writing the first Canadian chapter in the story of subsidized, permanent, low-rental housing."[1] The media celebrated the construction of Regent Park as a success for city officials and developers. But the celebrations would be short lived.

On February 13th, 2006, the mayor of Toronto, David Miller along with civic officials, developers from the Daniels Corporation and members of TCHC gathered in a makeshift inflatable tent in Regent Park, this time for the official demolition ceremony of Regent Park. Neil Clarke, a resident and vice-president of the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative, said to the audience: "We are thrilled with where we are today. When we see these buildings fall it will show that someone listened and understood that

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we couldn't continue to live in the conditions that we were in."[2] Regent Park is currently undergoing a pivotal moment in its history. The entire project (with the exception of one building in Regent Park South) will be demolished and transformed into a mixed-income community. The revitalization of Regent Park, which began in 2006, will be a 12-year, 6-phase redevelopment project. It is currently in its first phase. However, before Regent Park can be completely demolished and forgotten, it is important to identify and analyze what went wrong.

To understand what led to the drastic change in attitudes towards a once promising project, it is imperative to examine why the "space" which is Regent Park was built, who built it and for whom. This is important because it will give us a greater understanding into how Regent Park was produced as a marginalized space. Hence, examining the history of Regent Park becomes crucial to this endeavor. According to Rosa, "To speak generally about space is to ignore the history behind it, along with its production."[3] Therefore, it is essential to examine how Regent Park was conceived by city officials and developers.

It is equally important to understand that a study relating to Regent Park can be approached from several perspectives and pursue different methods of data collection. For example, in the first book written on Regent Park, *Regent Park – A Study in Slum Clearance*, Albert Rose (1958), a social work professor at the University of Toronto, was concerned with the question, "When a group of people are removed from living conditions considered among the most seriously inadequate in the community and placed in new housing and a new environment…do their health, welfare, social relationships and personal behaviour or standards change positively?"[4] In order to answer this question,

Rose analyzed the state of housing legislation in Canada in 1947, and examined the first five years of Regent Park while conducting interviews with residents. He also provided the reader with the official planning documents and the financial costs relating to the construction of Regent Park. Sean Purdy (2004; 2003a; 2003b), was concerned with the stigmatization of the Regent Park and subsequent negative impact this had on its residents. He also examined the numerous resistance movements among the tenants in the early decades of Regent Park (1950s – 1970s) while also conducting interviews with residents.

This paper will present a different side of Regent Park. The focus of this research is to demonstrate that Regent Park was constructed as a marginalized space of confinement and it will present its findings from a Marxist perspective. Although even this topic can be approached from different angles, for the purpose of clarity, this paper will lay a greater emphasis on the perceived and lived experiences of the residents of Regent Park rather than the different bodies which governed it throughout the years.

This study is not about a particular racial, cultural or immigrant group. Rather, it is about a particular community which has become a periphery within the center of Toronto. Regent Park has been marginalized and consequently racialized as a "hopeless slum". Compared to the rest of Toronto, Regent Park has a higher percentage of immigrants, recent immigrants as well as visible minorities. Currently in Regent Park, 58% of the residents are immigrants, 16% are recent immigrants and an overwhelming 79% are visible minorities.[5] A more detailed breakdown of the racial composition of Regent Park will be presented below, but it is important to understand that Regent Park is

a major immigrant receiving community in the centre of Toronto, which is itself the largest immigrant receiving city in Canada.

Research Question

      This paper will demonstrate, using the social space theory of the French Marxist Henri Lefebvre that Regent Park is a racially produced space. Further, this paper will use Lefebvre's triadic analysis of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces to reveal why Regent Park has become a social failure, especially disliked by its own residents. Although what constitutes a failure can be relative, this paper, through the use of existing literature as well as original research, will demonstrate that Regent Park can be undoubtedly regarded as a failure due to how Regent Park was/is perceived by its residents (spatial practice, "firstspace", mental), conceived by the state and media (representations of space, "secondspace", material) and through the directly *lived* space of everyday experience in Regent Park (representational spaces, "thirdspace", symbolic). A more detailed discussion examining the significance of each will be presented further in chapter two.

      Regent Park, Canada's oldest housing project, was racially produced as an outcome of slum clearance in the 1940s and has since seen deterioration "both in form and reputation".[6] This paper will attempt to examine, using Lefebvre's spatial theory, how Regent Park transformed from a marginalized working-class community of the 1940s to a racialized community home to "the eye-catching space of crime and cultural depravity of the 1990s".[7] Sean Purdy analyzes the manner in which Regent Park was socially constructed as an "outcast space of socio-economic marginalization through a

powerful combination of socio-economic segregation, discriminatory state housing policies, and damaging external stigmatization of its residents"[8], particularly its immigrant youth. Rosa goes even further to claim that not only is Regent Park a racially produced space, "it is a colonial space of confinement."[9] This paper will consider all of these interpretations in relation to Lefebvre's theory in order to examine why Regent Park was built because one thing is for certain, the construction of Regent Park served a specific purpose.

This study will analyze how this space was physically and racially produced and by whom. It is equally important to analyze how the perception of this space has changed over time, what has contributed to this change and what are the consequences of this change. It is necessary to detail the history of Regent Park, outlining what city officials were expecting from the original revitalization plan and what really transpired 60 years later.

This paper will argue that the reason why Regent Park failed was because of the 1) the marginalization of its residents and their perception of Regent Park (spatial practice) and 2) the physical construction of Regent Park, the shift in the state's policies towards it and the consequent negative portrayal of it in the media as a "hopeless slum" (representations of space). How Regent Park was perceived relates to how the space was conceived and interpreted by the state and other special interest groups. Along with the perceived-conceived factors, there is the *lived* element as well (representational space). This paper will also explore how the residents of Regent Park, through community agencies like Regent Park Focus have resisted the negative stigmatization of their space and place through the use of symbols and images.

Theoretical Framework

The critical race theory (henceforth CRT) approach will be used to explore how the dominant White/Anglo culture's constraint racialized peoples and their interactionality with identities of race and gender. There are several interpretations of CRT and it is important to differentiate between them. The theory can be understood primarily in Marxist terminology. For Marx, the idea of critique was not simply a negative intellectual judgment on ideological systems of thought, but a practical and revolutionary activity.[10] Critiquing society was seen as the first step towards changing it, by force if necessary. Marx, and later Gramsci, both emphasized greatly on what Gramsci called the "praxis", which meant the practical application of Marxist theory towards revolutionary change.[11] This concept will be important in outlining the active resistance among Regent Park residents in Chapter 3. Along with this analysis of CRT, which is important, especially from an anti-oppressive framework, for the purpose of this paper, a more contemporary form of critical race theory, which has evolved from legal scholarship, will be applied.

Edward Taylor (1998) writes, "CRT challenges the experience of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color".[12] In order to understand racial dynamics, CRT insists that we take into context the oppression and exclusion of visible minorities. Without their voice, a clear and honest understanding of their struggles would be impossible. "CRT is grounded in the realities of the lived experiences of racism which has singled out, with wide consensus among whites, African Americans and others as worthy of suppression".[13] For

this reason, this paper does not solely rely on the work of second hand literature but contains the voices and experiences of current Regent Park residents.

According to Taylor, CRT is not an abstract set of ideas or rules, it consists of a number of specific themes. The first theme is that racism is a normal fact of life in society. Taylor writes, "It is said that the assumptions of white superiority are so ingrained in the political and legal structures as to be almost unrecognizable".[14] CRT thus acknowledges the inherent racism and utter domination of "whiteness" that exists in society even when it is not named or explicitly pointed out.

Another tenet of CRT that is important towards a discussion of racialization is Derrick Bell's theory of "interest convergence". This principle can be understood in the following way. The interests of minorities in gaining racial equality have been accommodated only when they have converged with the interests of powerful whites.[15] In addition to CRT, this study will also attempt to explain the racial production of Regent Park through the Marxist philosophy of Henri Lefebvre, primarily, his theory of the production of space.

Lefebvre argued that subjects are produced in and through space. The space that surrounds us gives us meaning. Rosa writes, "Without this concept, we are removed from time and exist as ahistorical beings…Everything is spatial, one's life begins, is lived, and ends in and through space."[16] Thus, the space one lives in plays a central role in one's development. "One not only defines space, but is also defined by space".[17] In addition, it is important to understand who produces space and who has the power to change the perception of the space one lives in and what it means for the inhabitants of that space.

If, according to Lefebvre, the space we live in directly effects our development, then the producers of that space and individuals that have the power and access to re/interpret that space have an immediate influence on how we think and therefore live. But the meaning of space is not fixed in time nor is it static; it changes over time through its uses. According to Lefebvre, "spatial practice is produced through everyday routines and interpretations of the space."[18]

It is important to point out the difference between the terms "space" and "place" towards an understanding of Lefebvre's theory and as it relates to race. In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Cresswell writes, "Space is a more abstract concept than place."[19] Cresswell points out that space is empty until we name it and give it meaning and it is at this point when space becomes place. When we give "space" meaning, we make it our own, we personalize it and make it our "place". Cresswell reminds us, "At other times, however seeing the world through the lens of place leads to reactionary and exclusionary xenophobia, racism and bigotry. 'Our place' is threatened and others have to be excluded."[20] To consider a different example, depending on how the state conceives, controls, names, and maintains a space, they can always determine who is "in place" or "out of place" within that space.

For the purpose of this paper then, it is important to understand what role the media and the state's hegemony played in the interpretation and re-interpretation of the space in Regent Park and the subsequent consequence this re/interpretation had on its residents. Rosa writes that, "Subjectivity refers to one's subject position and identity…as subjects we operate in relation to not only other subjects, but also objects. It is through space that these relationships are established."[21] Who can and cannot occupy this space

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becomes a practice exclusively limited to the dominant groups who produce the space in the first place. Cheryl Teelucksingh (2006) also writes about the "mapping" of race. She emphasizes the importance of exploring "how spatial conditions in Canadian cities are simultaneously part of and influenced by racial domination and racial resistance."[22] This applies particularly to new immigrants, who according to Teelucksingh, are being "relegated" and "shunned" and are denied access to the city's resources. Similarly, Rosa argues that the state keeps racialized bodies subordinate by first making them "visible" through labeling and then makes them "invisible" by placing them in isolated and inaccessible areas of the city. This is achieved through the racial construction of space. Lefebvre's theory will be outlined in greater detail in the next chapter.

The focus on who is "racialized" will not be limited to any particular ethno-racial population. Instead "race" will be determined spatially. This paper will demonstrate, using Sherene Razack's notion of "place becomes race", that "place becomes race as spaces are defined in racial terms, which requires marking the bodies each 'place' contains as racialized."[23] In other words, even whites are racialized once they are spaced in a racialized place. "There are specific practices," writes Rosa, "that remove one from whiteness such as marking the body as uncivilized, inferior and foreign."[24] This formulation explains how Regent Park, despite its large Irish population in its first 20 years, can be said to be racially produced. The Irish of Regent Park, although white, were of the working-class. In *Imperial Leather* (1995) Ann McClintock writes, "the white working class is always racialized."[25]

Research Strategy and Methodological Approach

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This paper relies upon both primary and secondary literature for its research. Primary sources include development plans by the city, internet websites of both the Toronto Community Housing Corporation as well as community organizations in Regent Park (particularly Regent Park TV) and also material reported in the media, including newspapers (Regent Park specific and mainstream), magazines, and documentaries. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, books and journals documenting Regent Park. Sean Purdy (2004; 2003a; 2003b) has written extensively on Regent Park, providing a detailed analysis of its history and stigmatization. The earliest source on the history of Regent Park comes from Albert Rose (1958). Rose, aside from detailing the history of Regent Park, presents several key primary sources such as "The Bruce Report" and other developmental plans by the city. Other notable authors who have documented Regent Park include Rosa (2006), Veronis (1999), and Zapparoli (1999).

As for the literature on Marxism, the works of several important Marxists will be presented to demonstrate a Marxist critique of urbanization, housing classism, and racialization. The ideas of Marx, Engels, Althusser, Gramsci, Harvey and of course Lefebvre will be presented. Although Marx himself never presented a detailed analysis of the city or of housing in particular, relevant material can be drawn from some of his writings. In addition to secondary literature, this paper also relies on original research.

For the original aspect of this research, primary face-to-face interviews were conducted with six current residents of Regent Park to get their perspectives on life in Regent Park. This was important for several reasons. First, when studying any space, it is important to interact within that space as much as possible and also interact with individuals who inhibit that space. It is also important because it provides an analysis of

the spatial practice of the residents. This concept will be explained below. The names of the residents interviewed for this paper have been changed to protect their anonymity.

The residents were recruited primarily through snowball sampling, either through Regent Park Focus or other community agencies located inside Regent Park (Dixon Hall, Regent Park Community Health Centre, etc.). It is important to point out here that the method and approach that were used for the interviews were largely influenced by the work of Lance Freeman (2006) who conducted similar interviews with residents from the Clinton Hill and Harlem projects in New York City. A glaring difference between the Clinton Hill and Harlem projects compared to Regent Park is the ethnic composition of their respective populations. Although the Clinton Hill and Harlem neighbourhoods are almost entirely made up of African-Americans (Clinton Hill – 100%, Harlem – 81%)[26], by the 1990s, Regent Park, as we will see, would be home to a vibrant and diverse mix of ethnic identities.

Organizational Structure

The paper will be organized into four chapters, each containing their appropriate sub-sections. Chapter one, "The History of Regent Park from a Marxist Perspective" details the history of Regent Park and its "unnatural" production. This chapter will answer the question, why was Regent Park built and for whom. The significance and impact of the Point System will also be considered here. Chapter two, "Henri Lefebvre's Spatial Theory and the Marginalization of Regent Park" will outline Lefebvre's theory of social space as it relates to Regent Park. In addition, Rosa's claim, that Regent Park is a colonial space of confinement will be analyzed using Sherene Razack's concept of "Place

becomes Race". Chapter three, "Lefebvre's Spatial Theory – The Conception, Perception and Lived Space of Regent Park" outlines how the conception and perception of Regent Park has contributed to its status as a "social disaster". In chapter three, keeping with the CRT tradition, resident narratives will be presented to give a greater insight into what it means to live in Canada's largest housing project. In many ways, Chapter three is the practical application of the theories and ideas presented in chapter two. It is also in chapter three where we will discuss the resistance of Regent Park tenants through the use of images. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the major themes and reiterate the thesis and provide suggestions towards further research into Regent Park.

CHAPTER 1 - THE HISTORY OF REGENT PARK FROM A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

There is wide ranging consensus that the *official* construction of Regent Park was the direct result of the Bruce Report.[27] However, the creation of the Report by the federal government did not happen by accident. In fact, the government was very reluctant to change its position of social housing in the 1940s. Therefore, in order to appreciate the significance of the Bruce Report and the subsequent reforms to federal public housing policies, it is important to contextualize this Report which was a landmark shift in Canada's housing initiative.

"Stifling the Revolutionary Spirit" - Explaining Social Housing in a Capitalist Society

Friedrich Engels first coined the term the "Housing Question" in an 1872 pamphlet by the same name.[28] The "Housing Question" refers to the "significance of

housing in capitalist society."[29] According to Engels, "the big bourgeoisie" is very much interested in the "poor-districts" but only because, "Capitalist rule cannot allow itself the pleasure of creating epidemic diseases among the working class with impunity."[30] In order to rid the working class communities of disease, the "philanthropic bourgeoisie" begins to develop better housing conditions so the capitalist mode of production can remain unchanged. In other words, housing in a capitalist society is meant to give the worker a place of temporary rest before he returns to his mundane life as a proletariat.

Engels goes further and develops how state funded housing programs are constructed. He claims that the locations of the houses are centrally situated in the city and because they are squalid houses which are overcrowded with the undesirable working-class, their presence depress land value rather than increase it.[31] When this occurs, the housing projects are demolished and replaced by luxury apartments, shops and commercial and public buildings. The new houses are targeted towards the gentry, the bourgeois upper-class. The working-class, on the other hand, are forced out of their homes and into the "outskirts" because they can no longer afford to live in their newly developed communities.[32] Engels writes, "Breaches in working class quarters, renews the central city, re-conquers it, turns it into a space of luxury and profit…Yet those breeding places of disease, those insufferable cellars and infamous hovels, aren't abolished: they are merely shifted elsewhere!"[33]

If the tenants were allowed to stay in there dwellings by their bourgeoisie landlords, who artificially raised the value of housing as a commodity, they were forced to pay higher rents.[34] These higher rent fees forced the workers to work longer hours or work in several jobs in order to afford their "space". They were "tied" to their dwellings

and became slaves to the system, according to Engels. "Some workers," writes Merrifield, "become paragons of consenting citizens, stifling revolutionary spirit."[35] Engels largely saw the solution to the housing crisis in Europe as a larger struggle to overthrow the bourgeois elite.

Modern political economists, according to Purdy, significantly built on Engels' ideas by identifying housing as a commodity and as a source of profit and employment. The significance of housing to the development of any society does not need to be stressed. Housing touches on practically every realm in society and in the twentieth century it became a key area of state intervention.[36]

Immediately following the Second World War, the most pressing social issue in Canada was not housing at all. In fact, it was state-funded health care.[37] A 1948 poll confirmed the support for better health care by an overwhelming 80% of Canadians.[38] Commenting on the lack of public interest towards housing, David Mansur, the first president of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation wrote in 1952 that, "in the view of a great number of people in Ontario, housing falls much more into the category of automobiles than it does into the category of hospitalization."[39] Although housing was a serious problem after the war, the opinion of the state and the public, according to Mansur, was that "the individual should make his or her own effort to meet his or her housing needs."[40]

Except for a provincial housing community in Nova Scotia known as Africville, itself a racialized space, there were no other housing programs in Canada.[41] Attempts towards better housing policies were made during much of the early 1940s by veterans returning from the war, including unions and other social groups. They "persistently

demanded more action, putting intense pressure on the state to provide dwellings".[42] The

federal government was repeatedly requested to invest in a comprehensive public housing

program, but to no avail. The federal government was slow to initiate the development of

public housing instead "favouring a corporate-influenced policy agenda that spawned

home ownership plans."[43]

The Curtis Subcommittee (March 24, 1944), which was an investigation presented

to the federal government into housing and community planning, made several

recommendations. As one its key findings, the Subcommittee recommended to the

government "that a very large and long-range program of low-rental housing must be

contemplated."[44] In addition to this report or perhaps a direct resort of it, Mackenzie

King's Liberal government introduced a Green Book entitled *Proposals of the*

Government of Canada in 1945. These proposals would become the building blocks for

Canada's welfare state. Nonetheless, although the proposals did carry with them several

key initiatives, such as universal health insurance, a universal pension program and a

federal plan for the unemployed, according to Finkel, it "failed to commit the government

to a program of social housing."[45]

Although there was no support for public housing in particular, during the late

1940s in Canada, "there was a spirit of optimism that social problems could be corrected

through urban renewal".[46] The housing crisis had hit such a critical level in most urban

centers during the war (and for several years afterward) that the federal government

finally decided it needed to take action. Slum clearance plans were initiated by the federal

government with the intention of removing the most decaying housing neighbourhoods in

Canada and replacing them with affordable housing. It is important to understand, from a

Marxist perspective, that these initiatives were not implemented simply for the good of the working poor, but due to the natural tendency of capitalism to seek higher profits. Slum clearance initiatives not only increase the value of properties near the old slums, but it also secures the bourgeoisie's dependence on the proletariat, a healthy proletariat.

"For a start," writes Merrifield, "[the bourgeois] plainly has more than just a financial stake in the housing question: remedying "bad districts" or "slums" is literally a life and death concern for the rich as well as the poor. Squalid neighborhoods, after all, are breeding places for deadly epidemics."[47] Jane Jacobs (1969) defines a slum as an area which, "because of the nature of its social environment can be proved to create problems and pathologies."[48] As a result, the state needed to find affordable housing for the poor and it needed to find adequate areas to "place" them in. A report for the Toronto Social Housing Connection stated, "Demand for assisted housing always outstripped the limited supply: from the 1950s to the 1990s, applications for a vacancy in Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority family housing rarely dropped below 10,000 and by January 2003 had reached over 67,000".[49] A scarcity of housing is important in a capitalist society, writes Engels. "One thing is for certain: there is already a sufficient quantity of houses in the big cities to remedy immediately all real 'housing shortages', provided they are used judiciously."[50] We will return to the significance of scarcity in our discussion of ghetto formations. One area that was eventually identified to house Toronto's working poor was Regent Park.

Rosa writes that Regent Park came into existence through the "Bruce Report" which was produced in 1934 with the intention of exploring housing conditions in Toronto.[51] In March of that year, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Ontario, Dr.

Herbert A. Bruce delivered an address which led directly to one of the most comprehensive and significant investigations of urban housing conditions in Canada.[52] In his report, Bruce pointed out,

> We have a great and beautiful city…it is a city enviably situated, a city of fine residential areas, of beautiful buildings, of high standards of citizenship. That is how we see it; but I fear, in all candour one must confess that this city, in common with every large city, has acquired inevitable "slum districts". These areas of misery and degradation exert an unhappy environmental influence upon many of our citizens. You will probably say: "But Toronto has few such areas and they are not of great extent!" I say, and I think you will agree with me, that Toronto wants *none* of them, and that the Toronto of the future which we like to contemplate *will* have none of them.[53]

Shortly after the Bruce Report, a committee was appointed to inquire into housing conditions in the city of Toronto. The task of the committee was to discover "what slum conditions existed in Toronto, what advice competent authorities could offer regarding the alleviation of such conditions, and what remedies had been applied to similar conditions in Canada and abroad."[54] In the course of their study, they identified "Moss Park" (roughly from the Don River on the east to Sherbourne Street between Carlton Street and the waterfront) as *the* primary area that needed immediate attention. It was in "Moss Park", in which the Regent Park North project was located.[55]

The "Unnatural" Production of Regent Park

Located from Shuter Street to Gerrard Street East, between Parliament and River Street, Regent Park was identified as the first specific area to be redeveloped.[56] The new development, built over a 10-year period, replaced a working-class Cabbagetown

neighbourhood with a modern, park-like community of low-rise apartment buildings.[57] It was part of the city of Toronto's slum clearance initiative aimed at eradicating the city of its "bad areas".

Regent Park North, completed in 1955, was intended to replace the squalor of the slum neighbourhood with a "modern, car free, spacious and pleasant environment".[58] Regent Park South, which included high rise buildings for larger families, was completed during Phase Two in 1957. All of the 2,083 units had modern plumbing and appliances and were an instant success with the residents who moved in, but this perception would drastically change over time. When the project was completed in 1957, Regent Park North and South combined for an impressive 12 city blocks. The population by 1960, according to Purdy, stood at approximately 10,000 residents. The residents consisted of the "working poor" and had moved from the housing that had been displaced in the neighbourhood.[59] Veronis reminds us that the construction of Regent Park was carried out by "civic-minded groups which are generally led by a well-intentioned, philanthropic elite"[60], in other words, the bourgeois class. The original planners, who became the dominant producers of the space in Regent Park, failed to consult with the residents of Regent Park regarding the construction of their own neighbourhoods. Veronis writes,

> [Regent Park] was designed and planned by experts such as architects, planners and social specialists. All of the above categories are part of the institutions that govern society, and thus represent the dominant group. The construction of Regent Park itself was imposed in the sense that the local population had *no say* in a project that affected it directly.[61] [Emphasis added]

Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to speculate whether or not community input may have yielded better results, this lack of input for resident participation

highlights the government's paternalistic attitude. Albert Rose provides one possible explanation for why the residents were not consulted. He has been accused by Rosa of justifying the state's paternalism:

> The residents of a slum area are by no means as homogeneous as a specific racial or ethnic group or the residents of a middle-class or upper-middle-class neighbourhood. They are by no means adept at settling their problems within the group for there is rarely a unifying force impelling group action.[62]

One almost gets the impression that Rose did not believe the residents of a slum were "good" enough to be consulted and that they somehow needed to be told what was in their best interest. After all, several different social institutions were involved in the construction of Regent Park. Jacobs writes, "Conventional planning approaches to slums and slum dwellers are thoroughly paternalistic. The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossible superficial means for doing so." She continues, "To overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable of understanding and acting upon their own self-interests, which they certainly are."[63]

Instead, the project was built with the assistance of an array of community members, social planners, local politicians, clergymen, and welfare specialists, all part of the upper-class. The need arose to involve a wide array of specialists because of the dominant opinion of the time which held that better housing conditions contributed to better welfare. "It was strongly believed that adequate housing conditions would improve both the physical and the mental health of disadvantaged groups, thus decreasing

socioeconomic problems."[64] However, scholars have pointed out that new housing projects have the exact opposite effect. Jane Jacobs writes,

> Thus a Pittsburgh study, undertaken to show the supposed clear correlation between better housing and improved social conditions, compared delinquency records in still uncleared slums to delinquency records in new housing projects, and came to the embarrassing discovery that the delinquency was higher in the improved housing. Does his mean improved shelter increases delinquency? Not at all. It means other things may be more important than housing.[65]

Nevertheless, this was the rhetoric of the city. "This linguistic technique," writes Rosa "operates to ensure the authority as a caring and kind figure who seeks to aid the uncivilized by providing housing (as opposed to creating a border to keep the uncivilized at a distance)."[66] Thus, race becomes "mapped" both materially and symbolically by the hegemony of the ruling elite. Teelucksingh argues that racial diversity and racial harmony are spatially managed through systems of domination.[67] "By racially producing the space," Rosa writes, "two subjects are secured: the colonizer and the colonized."[68] The media also plays a crucial role in this production, as will be outlined in the next chapter.

Rosa writes that Regent Park's sole purpose was to contain the racially marginalized and being labeled "working poor" constructed one as racially marginalized.[69] However, during the late 1940s (and until the late 1960s), south Cabbagetown (Regent Park North) was home to a large number of low-income white Anglo-Celtic residents.[70] It was originally settled by working-class Irish immigrants during the first half of the nineteenth century who worked primarily in factories and mills along the Don River. So what made them marginalized? Rosa and McClintock would argue that their class and categorization as part of a disenfranchised group produced these

early (white) residents of Regent Park as a marginalized minority. Lefebvre would argue that although they were not "racialized" people of colour, in the process of producing the "other" through a social/spatial hierarchy, the early Anglo-Celtic residents of Regent Park (regardless of their colour) were always marginalized. Therefore, "racialization" is not always concerned with complexion so much as it is concerned with perception and conception. The residents of Regent Park, upon entering a marginalized space of confinement, were marking their bodies as "inferior" in the social/spatial hierarchy. Another way this marginalization is produced and maintained is through the practice of labeling.

Regent Park was named after Regent's Park in London, England which in turn is named after Prince Regent.[71] However, the two communities are only similar by name. Regent's Park in London is an "upper-class area consisting of a park-like setting dotted by a few large, elegant mansions occupied by the very rich".[72] Regent Park, on the other hand, was a working-class community made up of 23 nearly identical low-rise apartment buildings and nowhere near as elegant as its English counterpart. According to the Regent's Park website, it is "the largest grass area for sports in Central London and offers a wide variety of activities, as well as an Open Air Theatre, the London Zoo and many cafes and restaurants"[73] (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Regent Park, Toronto (Top left, bottom right) and Regent's Park, London
Source: http://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/regents_park/ The Royal Park; http://www.regentpark.ca/gallery.htm

Rosa points to the significance of naming Toronto's Regent Park after "London's most civilized park."[74] According to her, naming is part of the colonial practice of extending ownership of land. "Naming this housing project works to support the colonial legacy and serve as a reminder of British Imperial power," writes Rosa.[75] This concept falls under Lefebvre's secondspace, or representations of space, as the name is conceived by the bourgeois state. It is also another example of Razack's second formulation of the national myth (outlined below); Regent Park was constructed by the state, and it therefore has the right to ownership (including the name). Cresswell points out, "Naming is one of

the ways space can be given meaning and become place."[76] By labeling Regent Park and making it their "place", the state controls who can and cannot enter this space.

It is perhaps worth noting here that prior to the Bruce Report; the federal government had no interest or manpower which looked into housing as a social and economic measure. In fact, before the Bruce Report, there was no authority or government agency which was directly responsible for housing. According to Rose, "The Bruce Report remains a classic contribution to the literature of Canadian housing conditions and one of the most important single documents in this field."[77] At the time of the publication of the "Bruce Report", federal housing legislation did not exist. Another major impact of the Report lay in this description of the so-called "bad areas" and the analysis it suggested of the relation of housing conditions to health and social problems.[78] "All of this spurred those bourgeois of a philanthropic bent to act fast, and sometimes nobly, if not always altruistically," writes Merrifield.[79]

Engels would argue that none of these policies solve the housing question because the bourgeoisie does not want to solve the housing question. But Merrifield insists that the bourgeoisie could not let the housing problem get too out of hand. The state had to act out of necessity. According to Engels, the bourgeois state only has one way of dealing with the housing question, that is, "after its own fashion, that is to say, of settling it in such a way that the solution continually poses the question anew."[80] Regardless of the states reasoning, be it for the public's safety or health, no urban policy could rescue the poor. "Rather," writes Merrifield, "it just moved the problem some place else, to another part of town, to somewhere more politically, economically, and hygienically expedient for assorted ruling classes."[81] This was simply a cycle which renewed itself. Althusser

once remarked, "The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production."[82]

Regent Park and the Point System

In 1967, Canada abandoned its racist all-white immigration policy for a more inclusive policy targeting skilled workers. This was achieved with the implementation of the Points System. The factors which led this policy change are not within the scope of this paper, but the Point System had a dramatic impact on Canada's ethnic makeup. For example, in the 1950s, European immigrants made up 84.6% of the total immigration to Canada. By the 1980s, this number had dropped to 28.6% and in 2005 it dropped again to 15%. Meanwhile immigrants arriving from Asia and Africa in 2005 made up over 70% of the total immigration to Canada.[83] Regent Park was also affected by the Point System.

The Parks population as of 2001 was 10,395. The diagram below (Figure 2) illustrates when the immigrants who are currently in Regent Park migrated to Canada. It highlights the gradual increase of immigrant presence in Regent Park from 1961 to 2001. Of a population of 10,395 in 2001, only 3% had migrated to Regent Park prior to 1970. However, following the enactment of the Points System, the increase in immigration to Regent Park is strikingly visible. Of the total population in Regent Park, 88% migrated during 1981 to 2001. This increase in immigration to Regent Park coincides with the increase in negative media coverage of the housing project. The extent and content of this shift in the media will be discussed in chapter 3.

Period of Immigration to Regent Park
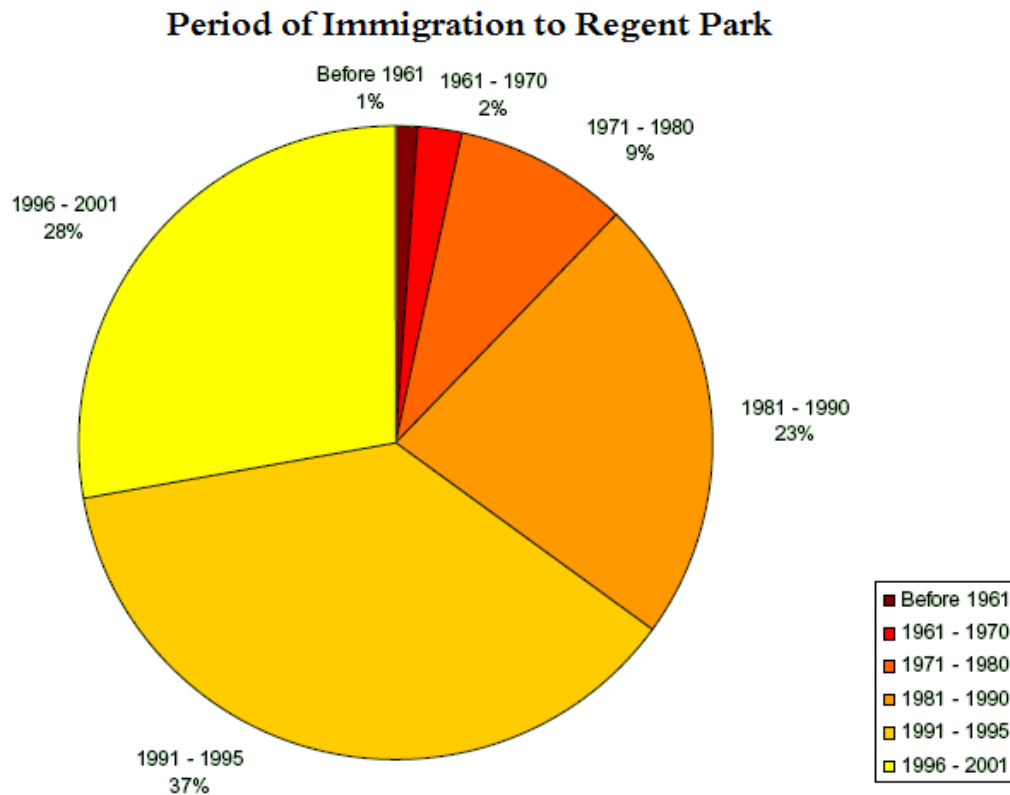
Figure 2 – Period of Immigration to Regent Park
Source: Statistics Canada, (2003) *Land Information Toronto 2001*, City of Toronto

The table below illustrates this in greater detail: At the time of this study, the 2006 Statistics Canada Census data regarding the immigration, ethnicity and language patterns in Regent Park have not yet been made available. However, the 2001 Census data does give us a glimpse into the diverse ethnic makeup of Regent Park. For instance, when analyzing the data, it becomes clear that the current ethnic diversity in Regent Park is not something new. Of the top ten recent immigrant groups to settle in Regent Park in 2001, all are from non-White countries (Table 1). But this is not much of a shift from a decade ago since the 1996 Census paints a similar picture. Rosa points out that in 1951 to 2001, the number of racialized people in Regent Park went from "virtually zero" to 80%. She

points to the comment made by one early Regent Park resident that in his many years of living in project, he only remembers two black families.[84]

Table 1 - Top 10 Recent Immigrant Groups in Regent Park: 2001[85]

Group (Total pop. of Regent Park in 2001 – 10, 395)	Number
China	575
Bangladesh	395
Sri Lanka	155
Jamaica	100
Somalia	90
Vietnam	75
Congo	55
Philippines	45
India	30
Ghana	20

It is important to understand the diverse ethnic make up of this housing community. Regent Park is not home to just one dominant ethnic group, as the above table illustrates, but is in fact home to a dynamic mix of racial backgrounds. In addition to the top ten source countries immigrating to Regent Park in 2001, consider the following graph (Figure 3) which illustrates the number of visible minorities in Regent Park and their diverse ethnic origins.
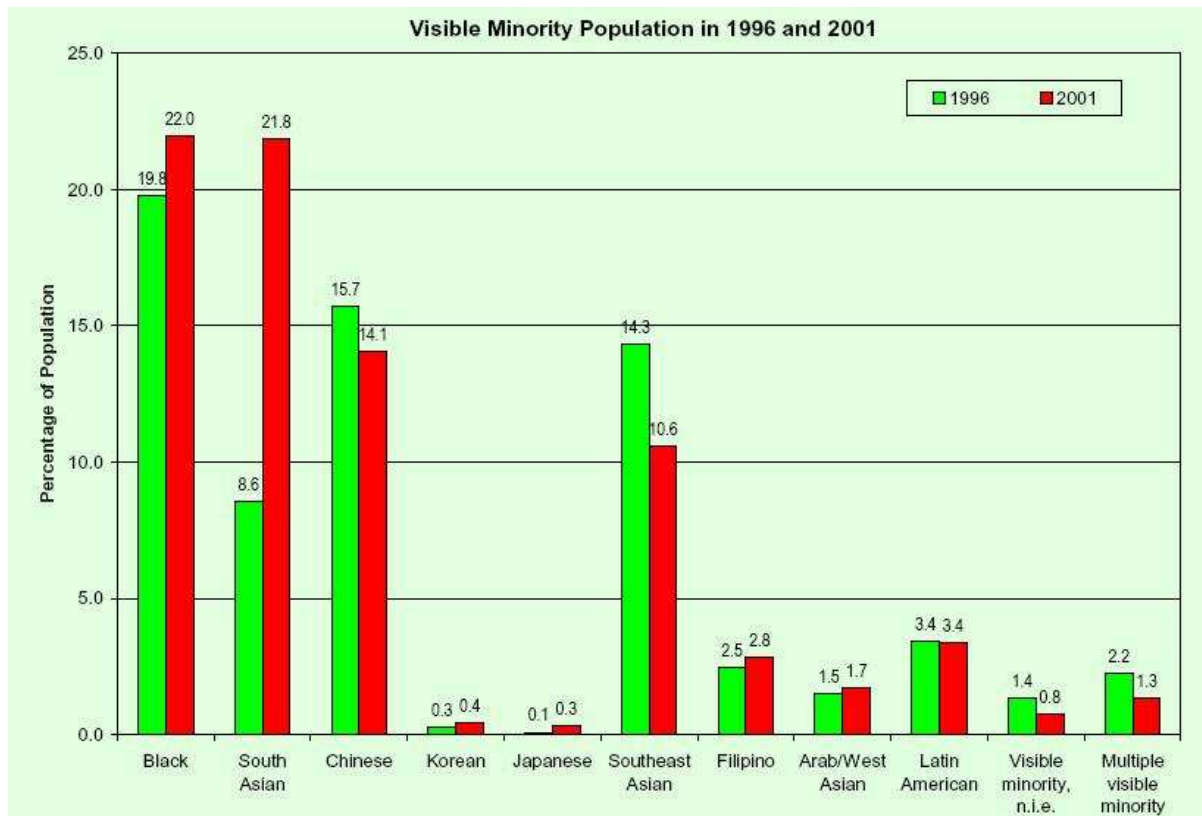
Figure 3– Visible Minorities in Regent Park in 1996 and 2001
Source: Statistics Canada, (2003) *Land Information Toronto 2001*, City of Toronto

In many respects, after 1970, Regent Park came to be regarded as a major immigrant receiving community and these immigrants were changing the racial make-up of this community. It is also interesting to note that Veronis traces the increase in the negative representation of Regent Park as coinciding with the increase in immigration. When immigration to Regent Park from non-white countries increased, so did the negative rhetoric in the media. The influence of the media is an example of Henri Lefebvre's representations of space. The next chapter presents a deeper discussion of his theory.

CHAPTER 2 – HENRI LEFEBVRE'S SPATIAL THEORY AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF REGENT PARK

This chapter will present Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space in greater detail outlining why it is important towards a discussion of Regent Park. This

chapter draws from the work of Vanessa Rosa's Masters Thesis entitled, "Producing Race, Producing Space: The Geography of Toronto's Regent Park" published in 2006. Her interpretation of and contribution to Lefebvre's theory as they relate to Regent Park are central to this paper's discussion. Before Rosa's contribution to Lefebvre's can be outlined however, it is important to understand what Lefebvre wrote about space and why it is relevant towards a discussion of Regent Park.

In his book entitled *The Production of Space* (originally published in 1974), Lefebvre was concerned with the question: How is space produced?[86] Social space, according to Lefebvre does not exist on its own but is in fact part of everyday social interactions, and "works as a network between many spaces, and the subjects who inhibit such spaces."[87] To perceive space on its own would be to ignore all the complexities which go into the history of producing space.[88] It is a social product which holds historical significance. Furthermore, Lefebvre's theory also asserts that, "space is not only produced materially, but also through imagination" where the material world is shaped.[89]

The "Fetishism" of Space

In order to demonstrate that space cannot be considered independently from society, Lefebvre reformulates the conception of "fetishism" offered by Karl Marx in volume one of *Capital*.[90] According to Marx, "commodity fetishism" occurs when we begin to value a commodity only for its monetary worth and ignore its essence or the amount of labour that goes into making that commodity.[91] When we confuse the price of a commodity with its inherent value, we are ignoring its history. For example, if a watch

costs $250, we say that the watch *is* $250. In essence, the watch becomes $250. We ignore the labour which goes into making the watch, the materials that were used to produce it and its place of origin and history. In addition, we forget who made the watch (the worker) and who paid for the labour (the capitalist). Lefebvre reformulates Marx's conception of commodity fetishism in order to present his theory of the production of space. For Lefebvre, it is important to demonstrate that space cannot exist without societal influences. He writes,

> The ideologically dominant tendency divides space up into parts and parcels in accordance with the division of labour. It bases its image of the forces occupying space on the idea that space is a passive respectable. Thus, instead of uncovering the social relationships (including class relationships) that are latent in spaces, instead of concentrating our attention on the production of space and the social relationships inherent to it – relationships which introduce specific contradictions into production, so echoing the contradiction between the private ownership of the means of production and the social character of the productive forces – we fall into the trap of treating space as space 'in itself', as space as such. We come to think in terms of spatiality, and so fetishise space in a way reminiscent of the old fetishism of commodities, where the trap lay in exchange, and the error was to consider 'things' in isolation, as 'things in themselves.[92]

According to Lefebvre, space is not an "empty container" which needs to be filled; it is part of a complex social reality which is influenced by the triadic relationship of three specific factors. The three factors are spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces.[93] Each one of these "moments" is distinctively different but they are all interconnected, one depends on the other. Each factor plays a key role in the production of space in society. For Lefebvre, space is socially constructed and society constructs space. According to Cresswell, "the social and spatial are so thoroughly

imbued with each other's presence that their analytical separation quickly becomes a misleading exercise."[94]

  This is an important concept in Lefebvre's theory. The study of any space therefore must include an analysis of "everyday movements" within that space (internal factors) and the history (external factors) which influence it.[95] Rosa writes, "Through viewing the world spatially, the materiality of lived experience and everyday life is made visible."[96] Lefebvre writes, "When we invoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame."[97]

Spatial Triadic Theory

  Lefebvre argues that space in society is produced through a relationship between spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. Through spatial practice, Lefebvre explains that space is given meaning by the daily, everyday activities which play out within that space. In other words, the way space is used socially defines how it is perceived and interpreted by those who live within it. Lefebvre writes, "'Modern' spatial practice might thus be defined by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project."[98] The spatial representation of a given space can only be evaluated empirically. One would have to directly interact within that space. In the absence of a long term interaction, it is imperative to collect the narratives of individuals who do interact within that space on a daily basis. For this reason, the collections of resident narratives from Regent Park are crucial to this research.

Representations of space refer to how space is constructed by urban planners and other dominant figures in society. "It is representations of space that act as the material producers – mapping, planning and then constructing material space." Representations of space can also be interpreted as the extension of the state's hegemony into the spatial sphere. The way a space is conceived and labeled by the state reflects power dynamics. For example, labeling Regent Park a "project" implies it is simply an experiment and distinct from other neighbourhoods. Jane Jacobs criticizes the use of the term "projects" because it isolates communities from the rest of the city.[99] Another way power is conceived through representations of space is through the physical construction of space. Rosa argues, "[Projects] are often planned in such a way that they are blocked off from the city."[100] As this paper will demonstrate, the physical isolation of Regent Park would have severe negative social effects on its residents. Physically isolating projects is also another way of "othering" the residents which contributes to their subordination. Also, the media plays a role in how space is produced. The media's constant portrayal of Regent Park as a "hopeless slum" and Canada's largest "ghetto" had serious consequences on the community, as this paper will outline.

The third moment in which space is produced is through representational spaces or the direct lived space of everyday experience as it is represented through images.[101] This form of representation is done through the imagination and expressed through vernacular language, symbols and images. Rosa, referencing Eugene McCann (1999) gives the example of editorial cartoons as one form of representational spaces.[102] Indeed, McCann stresses on the importance of visual imagery to the production of racialized

space. According to McCann, space is continually produced and reproduced through imagination in reference to the question of race.

Furthermore, images of representational spaces do not have to be accurate. Their accuracy or inaccuracy "does *not* diminish the power of the image as a representational space which works against dominant discourses by revealing the social divisions they maintain. [Emphasis in the original]"[103] This paper aims to demonstrate that the media, through negative visual representations, contributed to the stigmatization of Regent Park and accelerated its downfall. Conversely, however, residents of Regent Park including community agencies such as Regent Park Focus, produced images in an effort to combat the negative stereotypes of their community. Representational spaces do not have to be accurate nor are they always negative, as this paper will illustrate.

As mentioned above, these three factors or "moments" influence and are dependent on each other. Rosa points out how they are dependent, "Spatial practices (the perceived) can determine how space is imagined, which is literally shaped by how space is conceived."[104] However, neither the representations of space nor representational spaces would be able to co-exist without spatial practices. This is because spatial practices provide a "'space' to allow representations and representational spaces to 'live in dialectical unity'"[105] The figure below illustrates this connection:
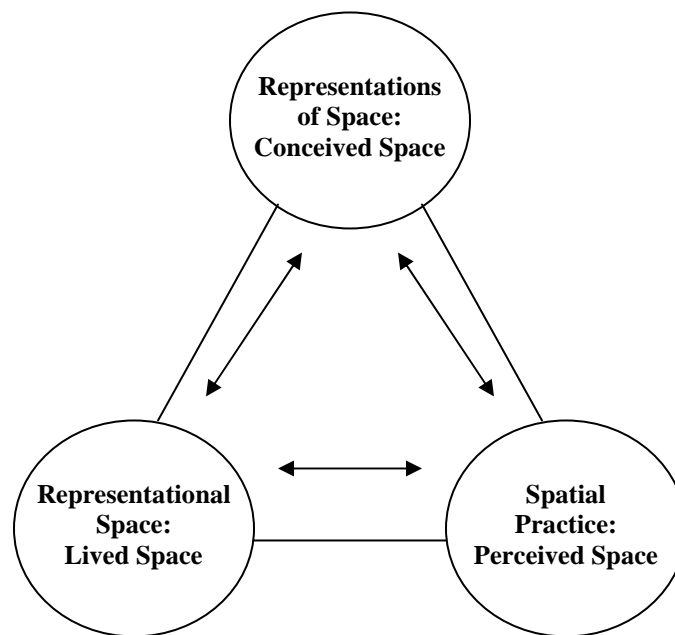
Figure 4 - Lefebvre's Triad for the Production of Space
Source: Rosa, 2006

Lefebvre's theory provides a significant analysis of the production of space. However, his theory has a major limitation. Since his theory is grounded in the Marxist tradition, his primary focus is on class rather than race. This is why Rosa's contribution to Lefebvre's theory is essential. She also acknowledges this limitation in Lefebvre's theory but recognizes its value towards a discussion of how space is produced. She contributes greatly to Lefebvre's theory by analyzing the link between race, space and the development of Regent Park as a racially produced place. Rosa writes, "By making this link, a deeper understanding of the racial production is gained as well as providing examples of the material realities of racism in Canada."[106] It is important to point out that Rosa was not the first to introduce race into Lefebvre's theory of space. Eugene McCann (1999) makes the link in his article "Race Protest, and Public Space: Contextualizing Lefebvre in the U.S. City", and Peake and Ray (2001) establish the racial organization of space in their article entitled "Racializing the Canadian Landscape: Whiteness, Uneven

Geographies and Social Justice". There are other notable works which have also used Lefebvre's theory to discuss race. Nevertheless, Rosa's article is Regent Park specific.

Her article emphasizes the importance of "racing" Lefebvre towards a discussion of Regent Park. She writes, "Racing Lefebvre works to show how the process of racialization operates, marking both bodies and spaces. Finally, racing Lefebvre illustrates how space is produced through a complex set of power relations and works to reinscribe the colonial project."[107] In her article, Rosa adopts Lefebvre's theory and argues that Regent Park is a racially produced space; in fact, she writes it is a "colonial space of confinement".[108] She believes an understanding of the racial production of space in Canada requires a contextualization of Canada's colonial history. The racial production of Regent Park cannot be examined in isolation, but must be done so in the context of Canada's racist and colonial past.

"Place becomes Race"

Sherene Razack too emphasizes on the importance of colonialism in the production of race. Razack is concerned with how place becomes race through the use of the law.[109] In particular, she is interested in how the formation of spaces reproduces racial hierarchies. Further, she is interested in "unmapping" how spaces come to be produced. By "unmapping" she means to denaturalize space and expose it. In the opening chapter of *Race, Place and the Law – Unmapping a White Settler Society* (2002), Razack makes several important points that are relevant to a discussion on the racial production of space in Regent Park. According Razack, there are three phases in the history of Canada's

colonial conquest. These phases are national mythologies which are profoundly spatialized and central to the white settler fantasy.

The first phase is the relationship between law, race and space in the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* or "empty land".[110] This doctrine justifies the conquest and occupation of inhibited land if the original people "were not Christian, not agricultural, not commercial, not 'sufficiently evolved' or simply in the way."[111] Therefore, the Europeans were entitled to the land by law (and sometimes religion, passed off as "divine law" or a manifest destiny). The second phase of the national myth concerns the *development* of the "empty land" by the European settlers. The reasoning here is that although the Europeans were not in Canada first, the land is equally theirs (if not more so) due to the labour they have put into it.

This concept of private property has its origins in the writings of the British capitalist philosopher John Locke.[112] Thus, the land belongs to the settlers because they have done more to preserve it. "Northern" people (white) are identified with progress, the advancement of technology, architecture and agriculture while "Southern" people (people of colour) are "viewed as the opposite."[113] The third spatialized development of the national myth is the re-population of white settler land by Third World refugees and migrants.

It is this formulation of the national myth that is of the greatest significance towards a discussion of Regent Park. Razack writes that the increase in immigration at the border threaten "the calm, ordered spaces of the original inhabitants"[114] This gives rise to anti-immigration rhetoric and justifies the increased policing of the national border and bodies of colour. Peake and Ray (2001) also emphasize racializing bodies based on

who does and who does not belong. The bodies that do not belong (bodies of colour) are subjected to "degenerate zones", or "ghettos", which is a word exclusively reserved for racialized communities. According to Cresswell, when we begin to see the world as "our place" and others are in "our space", it leads to reactionary, exclusionary, xenophobic and racist ideologies.[115] This geographical segregation of the "other" assures that Canada remains a predominately white space. Rosa writes, "The construction of difference keeps bodies of color in bounded spaces in order to secure white spaces of dominance."[116] Nowhere is this truer than in "Canada's largest ghetto", Regent Park.

CHAPTER 3 – LEFEBVRE'S SPATIAL THEORY – THE CONCEPTION, PERCEPTION AND LIVED SPACE OF REGENT PARK

> "Experts travelled to Toronto from around the world to gaze at the marvel that was Regent Park. Now we can't wait to tear it down."[117]

Only a short time after the completion of Regent Park, it came to be regarded as a "social disaster", especially disliked by its own residents.[118] A 1956 article in *The Globe and Mail* quoted a city planner as saying Regent Park is in the "wrong place, for the wrong people in an erratic, unplanned manner which cannot stand up to reasonable examination.".[119] By the 1970s, thirty years after the original tenants had moved in, the project "was considered a model of how pubic housing should not be done".[120] There are specific explanations for why Regent Park began to be considered a "social disaster".

Each factor of Lefebvre's triadic theory of the social production of space will be used to explain why Regent Park began to be perceived as a social failure and what the residents did to counter this image. First, Lefebvre's conception of the 1) *representations*

of space will be analyzed to demonstrate the structural isolation and the physical construction of Regent Park and its subsequent media portrayal as a "hopeless slum" and "Canada's largest ghetto". Negative representations of Regent Park were exacerbated by the popular media, which contributed to and accelerated its stigmatization. The consequent negative media representation of Regent Park as a "slum" would have far reaching and damaging effects on its citizens, particularly its youth. Examples will be provided to explain what effects these images had on the 2) *spatial practices* of the residents of Regent Park. These include an increase in high-school dropouts among its youth and low-labour market participation among its adult residents. Finally, venues of resistance will be explored through 3) *representational spaces* outlining how the residents of Regent Park fought back against the negative stigmatization of their community through the use of images and symbols.

1. Representations of Space

1.1) Regent Park – Within the Periphery of the Center

"Territorial stigmatization has also been one of the most protrusive elements of the lived experience of Regent Park residents."[121]

According to Marx, being "radical" implied "grasping things by the root."[122] This is precisely what Lefebvre did as he set out to understand the root of capitalist society going "beyond the fetishism of observable appearance."[123] Lefebvre wanted to "unmap" capitalist social space and reveal its unnatural production. According to him, spaces are not "innocent" but are produced, controlled and maintained. Razack writes, "If there is anything we have learned about racial projects it is that they come into being and are sustained through a wide number of practices, both material and symbolic."[124] With this

is mind, we can begin to explore the racial production of Regent Park through planning documents and its exposure in the mainstream media.

The marginalization of Regent Park concerns itself with the physical construction of Regent Park itself. We have already established that Regent Park was constructed by the bourgeois elite with no input from the residents. Rosa would argue that the residents were purposely left out of the planning process because the state wanted to construct a space which was motivated by systems of power and which reproduced subordination among the tenants. She writes, "Subjects come to know themselves as racially superior/inferior in and through representations of space."[125] Regent Park residents were kept subordinate by the physical construction of their community. This was achieved by isolating it from the rest of the city. The project, although located in the city center, was in a "periphractic space". According to Weyman, the spatial isolation of Regent Park from the surrounding community created a "unique ghetto-like environment".[126] "Within its confines, many residents feel as if they are under siege by an army of outsiders who are using the Park as a haven for drugs, prostitution and violent crime".[127]

Other authors also raise the issue of isolation in Regent Park. Caulfield points out, St. Jamestown (another racialized community in downtown Toronto) and Regent Park have two common features. "They both represent a kind of suburbanization of the city. The land-use in each is rigidly segregated, and the streets that criss-crossed the old districts were eliminated with redevelopment, so that each area has an insular character, cut off from the city around it".[128] It is even out of place among other neighbourhoods in its vicinity. Repent Park is surrounded by "Victorian Cabbagetown, Toronto's financial district and many of Canada's media headquarters."[129]

This fact makes Regent Park distinctively different from many housing projects in Toronto. The residents of Regent Park are continually reminded of their disadvantaged reality due solely to the location of their project (Figure 5). The high-rise financial buildings, including the CN Tower, which make up Toronto's postcard sky-line, are plainly visible from Regent Park. Though they may be visible, they are also out of reach for the ordinary resident of this forlorn community.

Figure 5 – Regent Park – In the Periphery of the Center
Source: http://www.regentpark.ca/gallery.htm

This is an example of "strategic alienation" by the bourgeois state. The objective here is to make the residents feel as uncomfortable as possible through representations of space. A similar tactic was instigated by the government of Nova Scotia towards the Africville community. "In the formulation of Africville," writes Nelson, "we see an extension of this dialectic in the relationship between power-dominance and the creation

of the slum."[130] Fish and Dennis, in their analysis of low income housing in Canada, demonstrate how housing was purposely constructed to be unattractive and low-quality so they could not compete with private market units." Thus, residents of Regent Park were forced to accept second rate services and were denied access to resources due to their geographical location. Other examples of spatial segregation come from the United States and Europe. The Pruitt-Igoe Project, an all Black community in Downtown St. Louis which was completely demolished in 1976 (it was built in 1956) and the De Bijlmer neighbourhood in southeastern Amsterdam, in the Netherlands (completed in 1975).
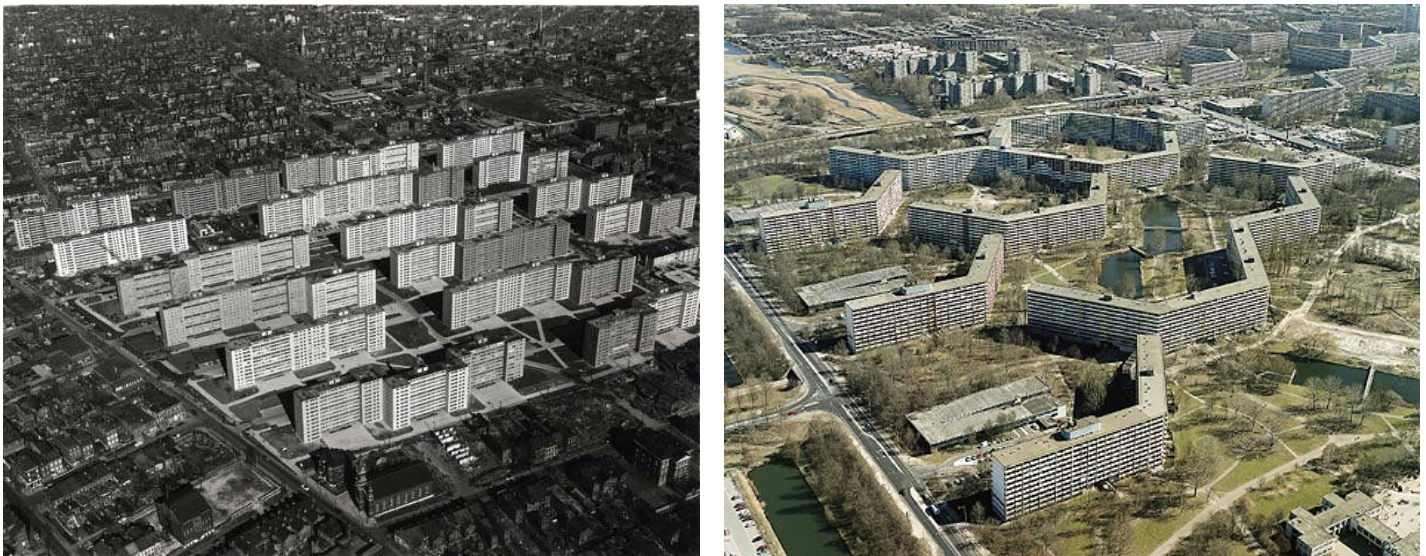
Figure 6 - Spatial Segregation – Pruitt-Igoe, St. Louis and De Bijlmer, Amsterdam
http://affordablehousinginstitute.org/blogs/us/2005/11/fixing_french_h.html

"Periphractic space is relational," Goldberg writes, it does not have to displace residents geographically, but can displace their "access to power, rights, goods, and services." [131] This is also an issue which Cheryl Teelucksingh raises. In the opening chapter of *Claiming Space: Racialization in Canadian Cities* (2006), Teelucksingh gives the example of the redevelopment of Dundas Square in Downtown Toronto and the

subsequent regulations that were passed by the city to determine who can and cannot occupy this space. She writes, "These actions serve to privatize the public space, and to reproduce dominant ideologies about inclusions and exclusion that racialized undesirable people, even in their absence."[132]

One current resident of Regent Park, "Shawna", who has been living in housing project for over 19 years when she emigrated from Jamaica, also points to the isolation of Regent Park and the problem it creates for law enforcement. "Regent Park is like a maze. The young guns can easily escape the police because they are familiar with the way it's designed. The police can't come in with their cars and have to give chase by foot. They need to open up Regent Park."[133] Shawna feels that the way Regent Park is designed allows criminals to hide their activity even though they are in plain sight. Asked how "opening up" Regent Park would improve the current situation, she responds, "There will be more eyes."[134] The importance of surveillance is also something Jacobs stresses. She writes, "Each additional pair of eyes, and every increase in their range, is that much to the good for dull grey areas." However, "unless eyes are there, and unless in the brains behind those eyes is the almost unconscious reassurance of general street support in upholding civilization, lights can do no good."[135]

The fact that the buildings turn inward and "that they sharply contrast with the architecture of the area" isolated Regent Park. The structural design had "segregated" it from the rest of the downtown core.[136] Criticisms of the original Regent Park range from temperate to more extreme depictions. Caulfield, for example, writes, "Surrounded by fashionably renovated neighbourhoods, Regent Park resembles nothing so much as a kind of soft concentration camp for a segment of the city's surplus labour force".[137] Veronis

writes "It is interesting to note that Regent Park's boundaries, in contrast to those of Cabbagetown, are well defined. There is no controversy regarding the physical location of the public housing project. What are the forces that lie behind the creation of these boundaries? What do these boundaries stand for?"[138] Rosa's observation that Regent Park is a colonial space of confinement comes to mind here.

Another way Regent Park was stigmatized was through its portrayal in the media. Rosa writes, "Although planners work as primary producers through mapping and textual representation of space, the media work within this field as well as interpreters supporting state ideology."[139]

1.2) The "Ghetto" Goes Mainstream – Regent Park in the Media

"Would you ask a blind guy to go and drive you to work? No. So don't go to the media about questions about Regent Park, ok?"[140]

The racial production of Regent Park, which began to really gain ground in the 1960s, was fuelled by the media. Regent Park, by its very nature as a social housing project began to be labeled as a racial space. A December 7, 1968 article in the Toronto Star referred to Regent Park as a "high-rise ghetto" [141] By giving it the "ghetto" label, there are automatic racial implications. As Rosa points out, the word "ghetto" is conventionally (if not exclusively) reserved for Afro-Caribbean populations. But it is not limited to just the Afro-Caribbean population, in fact, the word "ghetto" is used to describe *any* predominantly poor, racialized community. Other areas in Toronto like the Lawrence Heights Projects and Alexander Park (the second and third oldest housing projects in Canada, behind Regent Park), Marsh Grassways, the Driftwood Complex and Empringham Drive, have all been described as "ghettos" or trouble neighbourhoods. [142]

They are all poor, working-class communities and the majority of its residents are racialized minorities. But what does the word "ghetto" really mean?

Oxford Dictionary defines it as, "an area of a city where many people of the same race or background live, separately from the rest of the population."[143] Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines it as, "a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure; an isolated group."[144] If we consider the Oxford definition, Regent Park is certainly *not* a ghetto because the residents come from a variety of racial backgrounds.

The second definition is equally problematic because it does not explain who is applying the "pressure" and is shifting the blame on the minority groups. Razack writes, "If the slum or the housing project has a disproportionate number of Black or Aboriginal people, it is thought to be simply because such people lack the education and training to obtain the jobs, and thus the income, that would enable them to live in a wealthy suburb."[145] But this is not the case. How space is produced, either materially or symbolically, determines how its inhabitants are labeled. If the housing of the working class is shaped by capitalism and the class system (which Engels says it is) then space can be understood as the result of unequal economic and power relations.[146] Thus the racialized residents of Regent Park are constructed as "the other" and are seen as a burden on the Canadian social fabric.

In his essay, "Revolutionary and Counter-revolutionary Theory in Geography and the Problem of Ghetto Formation", David Harvey presents a Marxist geography of the city to explain the formation of ghettos in urban cities. Harvey writes, "Ghettos are bad things and that it would be socially desirable to eliminate them without eliminating the

populations they contain."[147] This can only be achieved through a revolutionary geographical theory. Merrifield writes, "Harvey suggests that Engels offered not only a more realistic interpretation of urban land-use, but also provided a revolutionary theory, which, 128 years on, is still far more in touch with hard economic and social realities, with hard ghetto realities."[148] Harvey held firm to the idea that in order to rid cities of their ghettos a meaningful theory had to focus on eliminating the conditions which give rise to ghettos. Some of the conditions he identifies are issues of race, poverty and the *socially* produced problem of land scarcity. Merrifield writes,

> Harvey isn't saying that economics are the only cause of ghettos; racism and xenophobia play obvious parts. What he *does* say, however, is that the foundation of the market – scarcity – actually kills two birds with one stone; it makes racism prosperous and it fosters racism. Scarcity, needless to say, socially, not naturally induced; the market system can't function without it. So if scarcity goes, the market economy, the source of productive wealth under capitalism, will presumably go as well. There would then be no competitive bidding, no dog-eat-dog land and housing market, no incentive or mechanism to prey off or "naturally" segregate the poor.[149]

According to Harvey, the poor live near the city center because that is where they generally find employment. They also have limited funds to spend on transportation and this fact forces the poor to remain in the city center. "The 'natural' outcome," writes Merrifield, "is that the most vulnerable population live where they can least afford it, on the most expensive land." This is remedied by the state through subsidized housing, "enabling poorer people to live more cheaply on peripheral land."[150]

The marginalization of Regent Park was exacerbated by the continued negative portrayal of housing project in the media. Whether it was through newspapers, magazines or the evening news, the city of Toronto was exposed to often negative depictions of

Regent Park. For example, over several decades (1968 to 2008), some of the headlines have described Regent Park as a "hopeless slum", a "failure", a "colossal flop", and "a place to wreck". In fact, according to the Toronto Star, "Living here is like getting kicked in the teeth". Other examples include a headline reading, "Regent Park residents fight to rid housing project of its loser image" [151]. However, this was not the case prior to the 1960s.

For instance, when the project first began, the media was full of praises. On July 22, 1948, the Toronto Daily Star ran a front page story making it the first newspaper to cover the revitalization plan of the Regent Park.[152] The project was seen as a landmark achievement by the city and the Star even referred to it as a "face-lift" for the city. Even more telling was the Star's reference to Regent Park as a "heaven" for its residents.[153] City reports from this period also generally depict Regent Park as a success and the city as a champion of the social ills caused by housing shortages. However, this "honeymoon" between Regent Park and the media would be short lived.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the media began to present Regent Park in a different light. Evans and Swift (2000) write, "The media generally framed its coverage of the project in such a way as to stress anything that ran counter to the accepted social, economic, and moral order".[154] The negative depiction of Regent Park in the mainstream media, especially daily newspapers, began to construct Regent Park as an outlaw space. "The media," writes Sue Ruddick "has a critical place in the production of identity and space. It is one discursive medium through which…images of [subject and object] are generated and maintained, representing interactions to the public at large."[155] It is important to analyze what led to this change in media coverage. As previously

mentioned, social space is not fixed or static, it can be changed depending on how it is conceived (representations of space). Veronis provides a convincing argument as to why Regent Park began to be portrayed negatively,

> It is in the shifts of Regent Park's representation that appears the source for an answer. The images of Regent Park reflect the centre's ideas about public housing and its attitude toward social issues. As the hegemonic ideology changed so did the representation of Regent Park, its image was positive as long as it corresponded to the mainstream welfare programs. It is after the marginalization of Regent Park's image that it became marginal as a physical space as well. In other words, space, be it physical or imagined, is both produced and labeled according to the dominant group's interests.[156]

According to Rosa, representations of space are not fixed, but can change over time. The ways in which social spaces are conceived depend on the hegemony of the ruling classes. To sum up, John Mays (2005) writes, "The decline of welfare-state idealism among our political commissars from the 1970s onward and the decline of Regent Park in the same time frame are surely not coincidental."[157] This sections has outlined how the space in Regent Park was conceived by the state and the media, the next section will outline how this space was perceived by its residents.

2. Spatial Practice

2.1) A Walk in the Park – Daily Interpretations of Racialized Space

"The people of Regent Park are forced to be the way they are because some head of affairs, some big man, is holding the people down."[158]

By spatial practice, Lefebvre means the everyday activities which play out within a given space. In other words, the way space is used socially defines how it is perceived

and interpreted by those who live within it. Therefore, if we take into account the representations of space outlined above, we can determine how they affect the spatial practices of everyday residents of Regent Park. The structural isolation of Regent Park combined with its high-level of poverty and a large racialized population all contribute to the marginalization of Regent Park. Lefebvre explains that the three producers of space (spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces) are interconnected. The way Regent Park is portrayed in the media has a dramatic effect on the everyday lives of its residents.

For example, Purdy writes that many of residents reported being ashamed of their neighbourhoods and shielding from others the fact that they lived in the Park. In Weyman's documentary, one young woman comments, ""Just because you're from Regent Park, people think that you're a nobody."[159] Purdy (2004) quotes Christene Brown, a long time resident, "As a teenager I made a point of not telling anyone where I lived and made sure no one found out. Andy Gorman told people at school he lived "off Gerard St. and that's it."[160] Purdy quotes another resident as saying, ""When you go out to look for a job, I hear a lot of kids say they don't want to put down that they live in Regent Park, not because of what it is, but because of what other people say about it. So many names have been put on the place. They can't be proud of it..."[161] Purdy, who conducted interviews with Regent Park residents, also agrees that the media's negative portrayal resulted in the stigmatization of Regent Park residents. As the next section demonstrates, the interviews conducted for this paper drew similar conclusions.

2.2)   The "Ghetto" Speaks – Voices from Regent Park

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Direct, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 6 residents from Regent Park. The questions were not in the form of questionnaires nor were they pre-written; instead they developed from extensive and deep conversations with the residents. All of the interviews were conducted inside Regent Park where the residents felt the safest. The primary focus of the interviews was on the experiences of the residents. What did it mean for them to live in Regent Park and was the outside portrayal of Regent Park a fair assessment of their community? This is imperative if one wishes to understand the spatial practice within a racialized space.

"Derrick", a six year resident and an immigrant from Jamaica, describes how he was treated in school when other students found out he lived in Regent Park, "They started to ignore me and shun me. Not because they didn't like me, but because they were scared of me. Even the teacher began to look at me weird. I was known as the kid from the 'ghetto'"[163] Another resident, "Ahmad", an immigrant from Somalia who has lived in Regent Park for 4 years describes how he feels about the media's portrayal. "The media does what it does for ratings, that's all. They don't care about the impact on the community. Why don't they ever show the positive things that go down in Regent Park, like the community events and stuff?"[164]

Another long time resident of Regent Park, "Trina", an immigrant from Guyana, also conveyed similar worries about her community. Her primary concern with the housing project is the lack of resources and government funding. "Trina" comments, "I love Regent Park, but I don't wanna live here anymore. There's nothing here."[165] Asked about the media's portrayal, "That's nothing new. When I was younger, we used to see

researchers come by all the time taking surveys and doing interviews like we were animals that needed to be studied. As if we were on the Discovery Channel."[166] "Sumaya", a 22-year-old immigrant from Pakistan, and a student at the University of Toronto, describes her life in Regent Park. "I have never had a problem living here, but I know how my community is portrayed in the media. I just don't understand it. I don't want to live here forever, but I know I will miss it if I move out." Asked what would make her move out, "Just the design of buildings, it feels like you're in a prison sometimes. Like you're in the city, but you're not in the city."[167]

These narratives all have a common theme; they all address the conceived representation of the space in Regent Park. These narratives outline the spatial practices of the residents as a result of the city's planning of Regent Park and the media's portrayal of it. An outsider who is looking in on Regent Park with only the media to guide his judgment may produce a distorted "reality". Leavit and Loukaitou-Sideris (1995) comment,

> In such instances, one uncritically adopts the media's representations and interpretations that rarely go beyond a surface look of the physical and social context. The social meanings often become dematerialized into insubstantial myths and impressions formed by a superficial 'outsiders' look. The effects on the insiders can be substantial. The overt economic hardships of the Regent Park population were severely aggravated by territorial stigmatization.[168]

The most compelling interview was conducted with a 26-year-old immigrant from El Salvador, "Juan", who had lived in Regent Park all his life. "Growing up in Regent Park was scary at times. For example, I live in Regent Park South and there's a swimming pool in Regent Park North. In the 80's we couldn't go to the pool because the

white kids didn't want us there. If you went there you got a beating…Regent Park was built on the basis of segregation. How can you throw together all these poor people and expect something good to come out of it?"[169] Juan was a victim of racism himself. "About 10 years ago, someone sprayed "KKK" on my front door. But I understood that it was not the Klan that lived here, but the mentality. There was a lot of racism here, and there is even today, but not as much as people would think."[170]

3. Representational Spaces

Representational spaces or the direct *lived* space of everyday experience expressed through images is another moment in which space is produced. This form of representation is done through the imagination and expressed through vernacular language, symbols and images. Eugene McCann (1999) provides the example of editorial cartoons as one form of representational spaces. Representational space can also be understood in terms images of "inhabitants" that "overlay physical space, making symbolic use of its objects."[171] Merrifield points out that "representational space might be linked to 'underground and clandestine' sides of social life."[172] In Regent Park, the community agency known as Regent Park Focus would be regarded as the main source for representational spaces.

Focus is a community agencies located inside Regent Park. Their objective is to motivate Regent Park youth to participate in keeping their community healthy and sustainable. They understand that Regent Park is severely marginalized and racialized as an outcast space and they have used several different mediums to counter this negative perception of their community. One way has been through the use of images that capture

the realities in Regent Park according to Regent Park Focus. For instance, racial profiling has been a persistent issue in Regent Park. Racial profiling is a form of discrimination which is usually perpetrated by someone in authority, such as a police officer, against a person from another race (conventionally non-white). The following cartoon (Figure 7) on page 45 depicts a scenario where racial profiling occurs. Lefebvre, Rosa and McCann would all agree that is a form of representational space.

The cartoon depicts three visible Black friends talking about their history homework. In the third frame, one of the Black youths is confronted by a tall white police officer. The youth is told that he simply fits a description and this therefore makes him a suspect. The youth is then told, "You know the drill, get up against the wall" as if to suggest that this is a daily (or repetitive) occurrence. This is also implied by the caption in the first frame which reads, "Your average evening in Regent Park." The final frame depicts a young, helpless Black teen cowering to a white authority figure. The images and symbols in this cartoon are powerful and represent, according to the artist, how the practice of racialization plays out in Regent Park. Racially profiling visible minorities is obviously not acceptable behaviour from a police officer. But as Rosa writes, "The projects provide second-rate services for what the city produces as second-rate citizens."[173]

Regent Park Focus is responsible for numerous other images which depict their interpretations of events within the Park. Several of the images which they have produced are attempts at resisting the current revitalization plan. The productions of these images are a crucial part of Lefebvre's theory, as well as the history of Regent Park. Long after

Regent Park has been demolished and "revitalized", these images will still exist to tell the story of one group's resistance.

Thus, through these images, we can demonstrate the interaction between the everyday experiences of the lived material world of the Regent Park housing project (spatial practice), the planning and media coverage (representations of space), and an editorial cartoon (representational spaces).[174] All three are examples of different, yet interconnected, moments which produce space.

CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrated using the spatial/social theory of Lefebvre that Regent Park was a marginalized space which was transformed into a racially produced space. Further, this paper used Lefebvre's triadic analysis of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces to reveal why Regent Park has become a social failure, especially disliked by its own residents. This paper used existing literature as well as original research, to demonstrate that Regent Park can be undoubtedly regarded as a failure due to how Regent Park was/is perceived by its residents ("firstspace" – mental), conceived by the state and media ("secondspace" - material) and the directly *lived* space of everyday experience in Regent Park ("thirdspace" – symbolic). Regent Park is undoubtedly an immigrant community and it is currently undergoing a significant change. However, due to the scope of this essay and also length restrictions, many questions still remain unanswered. For instance, more work can be done to measure the impact the revitalization plan will have on the residents. Will it benefit the residents or simply displace them into other "projects"? These questions cannot be answered at this moment

because the revitalization plan is still at a premature phase. Also, in the current redeveloped of Regent Park, the city says greater emphasis and care is going towards tenant participation in the decision making process. However, during the course of the interviews, one tenant mentioned that even in the decision making process, not all tenants were included and there were language barriers with other tenants. It would be worthwhile to examine exactly what role the tenants played in the redevelopment process and to what extent their input was considered. This was also an issue that was raised my members of Regent Park Focus.

In addition, some of the residents feel that the city is not telling them everything about the revitalization plan. For example, currently Regent Park consists entirely of subsidized housing, however, after the revitalization, only 44% of the units will be subsidized and the city has failed to properly communicate where the remaining residents will be housed. In addition, the revitalization plan will take 12 years to complete, but the city has not addressed how it will accommodate to changes in family size. Greater transparency on the part of Toronto Community Housing is important if they wish to avoid the same mistakes committed by their predecessors 60 years earlier.

Finally, it is important to mention the solidarity that exists among the tenants of Regent Park. Despite its multi-ethnic make up, Regent Park is known for its strong community spirit and tenant mobilization. Tenant narratives were crucial to this study, but not only the interviews conducted by the author, but also those conducted by Rosa, Purdy and the Toronto Star. Although Regent Park is stigmatized and labeled a slum by many, the narratives tell a different story. Some the residents of Regent Park are aware of how their community is portrayed by outsiders but are nevertheless hopeful that a

positive change will come. Including the voices and stories of the oppressed is a central tenant of critical race theory. To study a space of confinement and not give an opportunity for the confined to express their feelings is a meaningless endeavour. With that in mind, it is only right to conclude with one last hopeful voice.

Lori Harito, a resident of Regent Park, writes in her online blog, "I keep being reminded that apparently there are two *very* different Regent Parks. They are worlds apart, and look very different. And I keep hoping that one day Regent Park, Toronto will look just as beautiful as Regent's Park, London."[175]
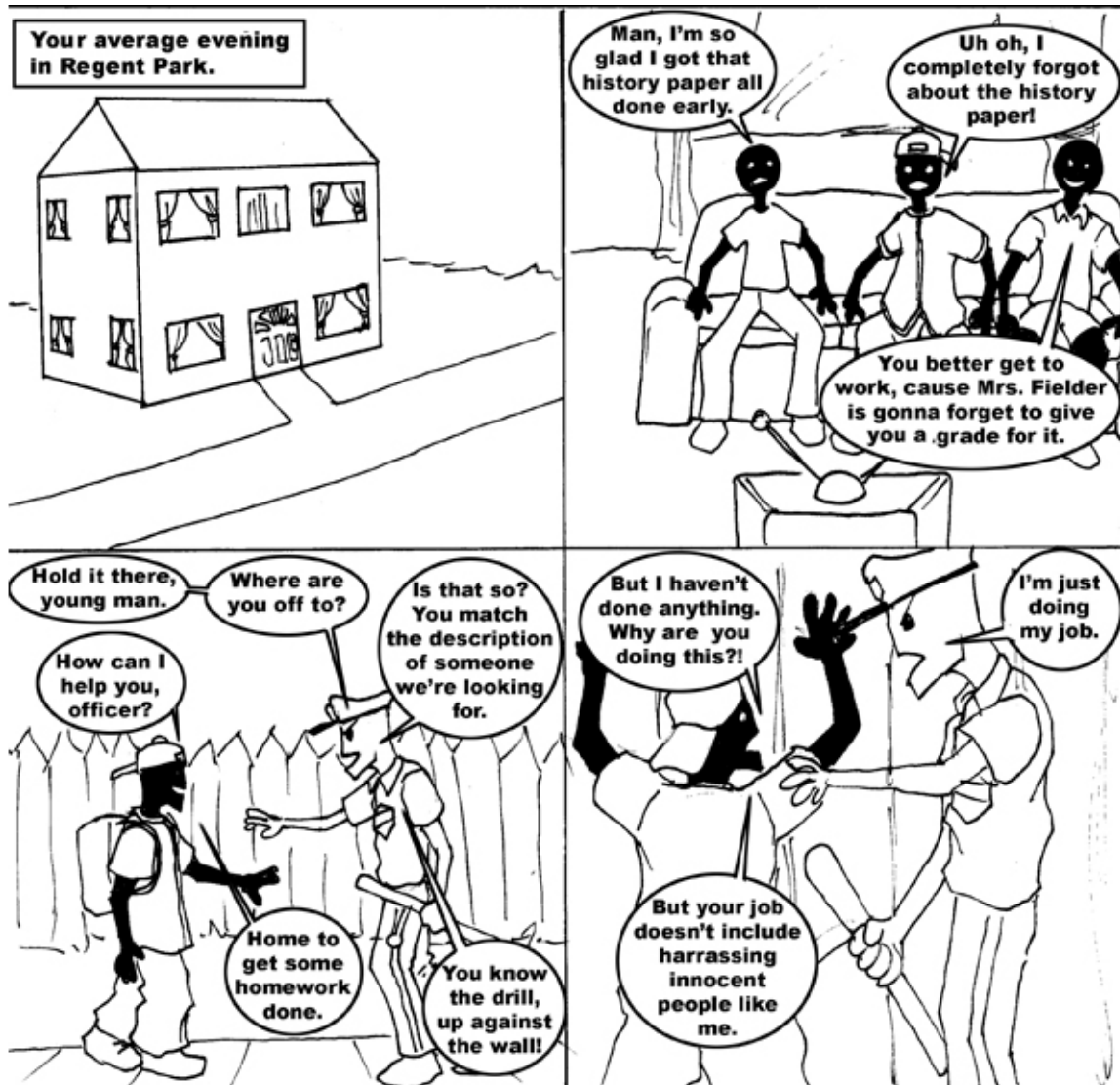
Figure 7 – Racial Profiling in Regent Park
Source: Regent Park Focus, Avaialbe Oncline : http://www.catchdaflava.com/content/comics.php

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