"Ripped Off" By the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991

Sean Purdy

Somebody up there has a structured plan to keep the poor poor. You have to have people to do joe jobs. So you never let them get out of poverty.

Janet Ross, Regent Park tenant activist, 1975.

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.

Ozzie Smith, Regent Park tenant activist, 1975.[1]

UNDER THE PROUD STARES of city officials and the invasive cameras of the Toronto media, Alf and Teresa Bluett and their four children walked up freshly-laid concrete steps into their new row house in Regent Park housing project.[2] The Bluetts were the first family to move into the pioneering Canadian public housing development in 1949. Alf, a car man's helper with the Canadian National Railroad, had served five years overseas in the army. He was the ideal candidate for the new project as housing reform advocates promised that it was a permanent, low-rental housing option for *deserving* workers, many of them veterans, who were unable to manage in Toronto's despairingly tight housing market.[3] As one admiring member

[1] Janet Ross and Ozzie Smith as quoted in Warren Gerard, "Regent Park battles its 'hopeless slum' image," *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1975.
[2] "Bluetts Find New Life Across the Street," *Globe and Mail*, 31 March 1949.
[3] See Albert Rose, *Regent Park: A Study in Slum Clearance* (Toronto 1958), 68, 189, 216-17.

Sean Purdy, "'Ripped Off' By the System: Housing Policy, Poverty, and Territorial Stigmatization in Regent Park Housing Project, 1951-1991," *Labour/Le Travail*, 52 (Fall 2003), 45-108.

of city government said of the project in its first year: "In fact, a sign might well be erected somewhere on that 42-acre site — Good Citizens Dwell Here."[4] A chorus of powerful opinion setters and policy makers — the urban reform movement, government officials, key sections of the business community, and the media — sang the praises of Regent Park as an outstanding initiative to tackle the low-income housing crisis for the city's burgeoning working class.[5] Citing prospective tenants and displaying flattering photos of the new dwellings, the *Toronto Daily Star* described the project as "Heaven."[6]

Barely twenty years later, politicians, reformers, and the media were singing a decidedly different tune. Public housing projects were now regarded as new slums, housing only the rough and rowdy, many of them unruly children and teens, the unemployed, or those on social assistance.[7] Descriptions of Regent Park in the *Toronto Star* shifted radically from "Heaven" to "colossal flop" and "hopeless slum."[8] The report of the 1968 Federal Task Force on Housing blamed housing projects for "breeding disincentive" and a "what's the use" attitude to work and self-improvement.[9] This negative image intensified considerably in the following two decades. By the 1990s, Canada's largest housing project became virtually synonymous with socio-economic marginalization and behavioural depravity. In June 2002, a *Toronto Star* reporter characteristically referred to the housing development as a "poster child for poverty."[10] According to one observer in *Toronto Life* magazine, it had become "thoroughly ghettoized" and had "accumulated a sense of

[4]City of Toronto Archives (hereafter CTA), Housing Authority of Toronto (hereafter HAT), RG 28, B, Box 36, File: Correspondence Board of Control, 1949-55, Unpublished and Untitled Radio Script, CKEY-Toronto, 14 September 1949. As the Regent Park South (hereafter RPS) project was preparing to open in the late 1950s, the Ontario government also emphasized: "Public housing is not a welfare programme." Cited in "Rental Arrears: Whose Responsibility?" *Housing News Letter*, 3 (December 1957), 3.

[5]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 36, File: Regent Park North: Statements by Mayor, Allison Grant, "The Regent Park Housing Project in Toronto," Unpublished Radio Script, CBC-Ottawa, 12 April 1949; "Regent Park Housing, An Investment in Better Living," Radio Script, CKEY-Toronto, 30 March 1948; F.H. Cormack, "Toronto's Regent Park North — A Story of Amazing Success," *Ontario Housing*, 5 (March 1958), 1-3.

[6]Jack Brehl, "Heaven in New Homes, Regent Park Dwellers Sure," *Toronto Daily Star*, 23 July 1948; Harold Greer, "Seven Families Get Preview of 'Heaven' in Regent Park," *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 March 1949; "Bluett's Find New Life Across the Street."

[7]David Allen, *Toronto Star*, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18 December 1968.

[8]David Allen, "Regent Park South called colossal flop," *Toronto Star*, 7 December 1968; Warren Gerard, "Regent Park battles its 'hopeless slum' image," *Toronto Star*, 19 March 1975.

[9]Paul Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* (Ottawa 1969), 53-4.

[10]Kerry Gillespie, "Don't forget the city's poor, summit urged," *Toronto Star*, 21 June 2002.

almost mythical ruin."[11] Indeed, the broader social identity of Regent Park has become the accumulation and escalation of the stigma of its residents.

As the few existing statistical studies of Canadian public housing have shown, public housing residents have exhibited markedly different characteristics from the ideal working-class tenant promised by 1940s public housing proponents. In 1988, average annual income among public housing households was significantly less than one-half that of the average renter household in Canada. Over 96 per cent of public housing households were at or below core need income thresholds — those people who paid more than 30 per cent of their income in rent or less than this for substandard accommodation. Less than one-fifth counted on employment as their major source of income while one-third relied on social assistance. Among those that were able to work however, almost one-half did.[12] Compared to the general Canadian population, family public housing projects contained significantly more children under 15-years-of-age (over 30 per cent in public housing compared to 20 per cent in the general population) and were composed of many more single-parent households (24.1 per cent compared with 10.2 per cent of average renters).[13]

This bleak portrait of socio-economic disparity is closely mirrored in the Metropolitan Toronto area, which holds the largest concentration of public housing units in the country. In a thorough study of the 1971-91 period, Robert Murdie confirms that there has been a marked shift from two-parent families to single-parent households and seniors, as well as from native to foreign-born residents. In particular, he finds a disproportionate number of Caribbean-born blacks among poor, public housing residents. Furthermore, he details an increasing number of long-term tenants and families on welfare in Toronto's projects. He suggests that this pronounced rise in multifarious inequalities is due to wider economic developments such as the loss of central-city manufacturing opportunities and shifting supply and demand factors within the housing sphere. The latter factors include the changing workplace and familial roles of women, varying immigration trends, outright lack of affordable housing, tenant selection and rental policies favouring the most disadvantaged, and a retrenchment of welfare-state commitments.[14]

[11]Don Gillmor, "The punishment station," *Toronto Life* (January 1996), 51.

[12]John Sewell, *Houses and Homes: Housing for Canadians* (Toronto 1994), 138-9.

[13]Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (hereafter CMHC), *Evaluation of the Public Housing Program* (Toronto 1990), 26-7.

[14]Murdie notes that the trend of social polarization between public housing tenants and general populations has also been found in Britain, the United States, France, and Japan. Robert Murdie, "Social Polarization and Public Housing in Canada: A Case Study of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority," in Frances Frisken, ed., *The Changing Canadian Metropolis: A Public Policy Perspective, Volume One* (Berkeley and Toronto 1994), 298. On the British case see Rosalind Edwards and Simon Duncan, "Supporting the family: lone mothers, paid work and the underclass debate," *Critical Social Policy*, 17 (November 1997),

The powerful stigma attached to public housing projects as "neighbourhoods of exile,"[15] where only the jobless and social assistance recipients live, has also intersected with debates in social science circles about the "underclass." According to this thesis — particularly popular among some segments of the media, social scientists, and conservative commentators in the United States — whole groups of people (in the US case, blacks), especially in large public housing developments, are permanently marginalized due to inter-generational social and labour-market exclusion with dissolute behavioural traits that perpetuate poverty and reinforce dependency on the state.[16] Subscribers to the "underclass" theory highlight the assumed social "pathologies" of poor blacks stemming from substance abuse, crime, high school non-completion, teenage pregnancies, unemployment, single-mother status, and reliance on welfare.[17] The theory has faced trenchant disparagement in critical social science and historical circles on theoretical, empirical, and political grounds, not the least of which is that black inner-city dwellers themselves are blamed for their own socio-economic deprivation, which neglects the devastating impacts of long-standing structural racism, neoliberal state policies, and urban economic restructuring that have forcibly constrained, stigmatized, indicted, and punished ghetto residents.[18]

29-49; L.D. Morris, "Is There a British Underclass?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 17 (September 1993), 413-28.

[15]Loïc Wacquant employs this useful term in "Red Belt, Black Belt: Racial Division, Class Inequality and the State in the French Urban Periphery and the American Ghetto," in Enzo Mingione, ed., *Urban Poverty and the Underclass: A Reader* (Oxford 1996), 237.

[16]On the "underclass" and related topics note Michael Katz, "'The Urban Underclass' as a Metaphor of Social Transformation," in Michael Katz, ed., *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History* (Princeton 1995), 3-23; David W. Bartelt, "Housing the 'Underclass'," in Katz, *The "Underclass" Debate*, 119-57; Peter Marcuse, "Space and Race in the Post-Fordist City: The Outcast Ghetto and Advanced Homelessness in the United States Today," in Mingione, *Urban Poverty and the Underclass*, 176-216; David Ley and Heather Smith, "Is There an Immigrant 'Underclass' in Canadian cities?" Working Paper #97-08, Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis, Working Paper Series, Vancouver Centre of Excellence, Simon Fraser University, October 1997, 1-45.

[17]Loïc Wacquant, "Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 21 (June 1997), 348.

[18]For particularly insightful critiques note Wacquant, "Three Pernicious Premises"; Wacquant, "Red Belt, Black Belt"; H.J. Gans, "The dangers of the underclass: its harmfulness as a planning concept," in H.J.Gans, *People, Plans and Policies: Essays on Poverty, Racism, and Other National Urban Problems* (New York 1991); Harald Bauder, "Neighbourhood Effects and Cultural Exclusion," *Urban Studies*, 39 (January 2002), 85-93. The author would like to thank Harald Bauder for generously providing copies of several of his articles.

In Canada, there is a paucity of serious research in this vein, although several studies confirm the manifest rise of urban poverty and inequality since the 1970s.[19] The mainstream media and some government researchers in Canada have certainly made ample use of the "underclass" concept generically to brand poor people as social pariahs, while academic researchers have largely rejected it.[20] David Ley and Heather Smith, for instance, have shown that major Canadian cities contain numerous areas of deep and concentrated poverty, some of it among recent immigrant groups. They reject the notion that there is an "immigrant underclass" on empirical grounds, finding only small spatial pockets of simultaneous, multiple deprivation such as welfare dependency, high school non-completion, and non-labour force inclusion. They document dispersed areas of socio-economic exclusion that are often located close to middle-class and stable working-class neighbourhoods with far fewer indicators of poverty.[21]

I take my cue in this article from the existing statistical studies on Canadian public housing and the broader literature on the rise of urban inequality in advanced capitalist societies. The first half of this article charts the historical escalation of polarization between Regent Park residents and the Metropolitan Toronto population by comparing a series of broadly illustrative statistical traits over a 40-year period: 1940s to the 1970s. This long-term historical perspective allows us to scrutinize the development of socio-economic marginalization both before and after the boom period of postwar capitalism. Regent Park's resident population underwent a dramatic process of socio-economic divergence in comparison to the general Metropolitan Toronto population, which began in the mid-to-late 1960s, before the onset

[19]On the extent of poverty in Canada see Abdolmohammad Kazemipur, "Ecology of Deprivation: Spatial Concentration of Poverty in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, 23 (Autumn 2000), 403-26; Eric Fong and Kumiko Shibuya, "The Spatial Separation of the Poor in Canadian Cities," *Demography*, 37 (November 2000), 453, Table 1.

[20]See Ley and Smith, "Is There an Immigrant Underclass?" 1-5, for the *Calgary Herald's* use of the term. For more ill-informed and often ideologically laden uses of the concept of "underclass" in the Canadian context note *inter alia* David Frum, "Chretién's plan for a Canadian underclass," *National Post Online*, 16 December 2000, <http://www.national post.com> (15 January 2003); Human Resources Development Canada, "Social Outlook: Five Crucial Challenges for Canadians," *Applied Research Bulletin*, 2 (Summer 1995), <http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sp-ps/arb-dgra/publications/bulletin/vol1n2/e/v1n2_01e.shtml> (15 January 2003); and Michael Hatfield, "Concentrations of Poverty and Distressed Neighbourhoods in Canada," Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada, Working Paper 97-1E (Ottawa 1997). Well-intentioned advocates of the poor also frequently misuse the term. For instance Maude Barlow, "Globalization and the future of work. Speaking Notes, National Consultation on Career Development Conference," 26 January 2000, <http://www.canadians.org> (July 7, 2002); Canadian Council on Social Development, "Open Letter to the Prime Minister," 16 January 2001, <http://www.ccsd.ca> (7 July 2002).

[21]Ley and Smith, "Is There an Immigrant Underclass?" 23.

of outright assaults on the welfare state. I also flesh out the stark statistical portrayal by considering various qualitative sources such as oral testimony, letters to the author by former tenants, rare resident case files, and internal and public documents from the various housing administrations.[22] This empirically-grounded combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence helps us to more accurately navigate through the complex social, political, and economic dynamics of work, welfare, and social exclusion.[23]

In the second section, I explain the rise of socio-economic inequality. In contrast to the damning "blend of generalizations and stereotyping with little evidential support,"[24] which blame tenants themselves for their predicament, I directly point the arrow of responsibility for rising poverty, inequality, and effective "loss of entitlement"[25] at state housing policies including wider urban renewal strategies, internal public housing practices, and neoliberal economic restructuring. In the third section I focus, unlike most studies, on the potently deleterious effects of stereotyping Regent Park as an *outcast* space. The unruliness of public housing residents and their immorality, criminality, and cultural "inbreeding," feature prominently in the narratives of outside commentators on Regent Park. Stigmatizing renderings by external observers were not free-floating ideological representations but real reflections and shapers of spatial and social divisions with concrete economic and social consequences for tenants.[26] I briefly discuss, moreover, what residents themselves thought about their homes and how they coped with stigmatization and material deprivation. Sometimes accepting and internalizing negative external representations or projecting these labels onto their neighbours, while at other times resolutely battling against these brutalizing depictions, Regent Park residents were active players in building a meaningful living space.

[22]In compliance with Access to Information Guidelines, the real names of non-public persons in items of correspondence from all archival collections that may be used to identify them have been given abbreviations in the notes and pseudonyms in the text. The exceptions are people whose names appeared openly in published materials or the names of public officials. The real names of oral informants and those who wrote letters to the author have been used unless they specifically asked for a pseudonym. In the latter case, abbreviations have been used in the citations.

[23]On the benefits of this approach in studying families note Cynthia Comacchio, "'The History of Us': Social Science, History, and the Relations of Family in Canada," *Labour/Le Travail*, 46 (Fall 2000), 189.

[24] This quotation, from Diane Reay and Helen Lucy, refers to the similarly skewed public discourse about British council housing residents. See their path-breaking article, "'I don't really like it here but I don't want to be anywhere else': Children and Inner City Council Estates," *Antipode*, 32 (October 2000), 411.

[25]Norman Feltes, "The New Prince in a New Principality: OCAP and the Toronto Poor," *Labour/Le Travail*, 48 (Fall 2001), 136.

[26]See Gerry Mooney, "Urban Disorders," in Steve Pile, Christopher Brook, and Gerry Mooney, eds., *Unruly Cities?* (London 2000), 54-99.

Data Sources

The statistical analysis that follows is based primarily on two different sources of information. The first data set comprises project-level statistics generated by researchers for Toronto's public housing administrations and other state bodies. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Housing Authority of Toronto, which built and managed the northern section of Regent Park until 1968; the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, responsible for the southern section of the project under a Federal-Provincial funding agreement until 1964; and the Ontario Housing Corporation, which took over the management of all public housing in Ontario in 1968, carried out numerous statistical studies on the tenants under their auspices. These data sets are valuable since they were based on 100 per cent data collection and not on samples, allowing a precise look at various social indicators. Unfortunately, the archival repositories only contain selective and inconsistent project-level data from the 1950s to the late 1960s. Where possible and appropriate for comparison, I utilize direct project-level data.

The second source of statistical information is the Census of Canada enumeration area (CEA) data from 1951 to 1991. Enumeration areas are the smallest spatial units for which data are available in the census; some of the economic and cultural data that the CEA's contain were based on 20-33 per cent samples, while household and family variables were usually based on 100 per cent data.[27] They are imprecise, but do allow for historical comparisons over regular time intervals on a wide range of social, economic, and cultural variables. The 1951 CEA data used for the Regent Park area include data on the tenants in Regent Park North (constructed from 1947 to 1957) as well as other residents living in adjacent private rental housing and owner-occupied units. Some of the latter tenants moved into Regent Park North as it expanded in the 1950s and into Regent Park South during its construction from 1954 to 1959. The Regent Park CEA for 1951 thus allows a broad look at the wider populace from which a sizable proportion of tenants from both sections of the project originated. In 1961, the Regent Park CEA data includes both sections of the project and a small area of private market housing: households in the total project comprised 84 per cent of all households in the Regent Park CEA for this year.[28] In 1971, Statistics Canada split the 1951 and 1961 areas into two separate CEA's. One CEA comprises a close match with Regent Park North: 80 per cent of the 1,615

[27]One of the key aims of the Census of Canada in constituting enumeration areas is homogeneity "in terms of economic status and social living conditions." Statistics Canada (hereafter Statscan), Bulletin 95-977," *Census of Canada, Selected Population, Dwelling, Household and Census Family Characteristics, For Census Tracts, 1981* (Ottawa 1981), iii. Also consult Murdie, "Social Polarization," 309.

[28]Household numbers based on Dominion Bureau of Statistics (hereafter DBS), *Census of Canada, 1961 - Census Tracts - Toronto* (Ottawa 1961), 32; Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority (hereafter MTHA), *Annual Report 1959* (Toronto 1959); Housing Authority of Toronto (hereafter HAT), *A Review of Progress, 1947-1964* (Toronto 1965), 9-10.

households in the CEA lived in the project. In the Regent Park South CEA, the match is less exact: 72 per cent of the households lived in Regent Park South while 28 per cent lived in adjacent private market housing. There is no absolute test of statistical reliability, yet, as Murdie shows, an approximate comparison between the CEA data and public housing data for the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority as a whole, demonstrates that the census data can be taken as reasonably representative of the public housing population, especially for larger projects such as Regent Park.[29] The data presented here offer us sound indications, if not exact measures, of the socio-economic profile of Regent Park residents.

To underscore the differences between those dwelling in Regent Park and other inhabitants of Metropolitan Toronto, census data for the Central Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Toronto, which includes the whole built-up region of the City of Toronto and its suburbs, provides a consistent comparison. Where possible, Murdie's data was also used to formulate comparisons between tenants in Regent Park and in Metropolitan Toronto Public Housing as a whole, and other low-income people living in private market housing represented by the Lower-Status Enumeration Area Subset data.[30] The general characteristics of the various spatial units used in the statistical figures, tables, and analysis are included in Appendix 1.

Regent Park and Postwar Social Reconstruction

Public housing in Canada was originally cast within the broader interventionist impulse of governments at all levels during post-World War II social and economic reconstruction. Housing shortages were grave in most cities during the war and for several years afterwards. Veterans' groups, unions, and other social groups pressured the state to provide low-income dwellings for their constituents.[31] In addition to concern about increased class conflict, there was a wider opinion in policy circles in Canada, as in other Western countries, that the postwar economy would fall back into depression as it had in the 1930s.[32] While the vast majority of Canadian government assistance in the housing field after the war was directed to homeowners, financial institutions, and developers, there was a constrained political space in the late 1940s through the 1960s in which limited state investment in low-income housing was considered a viable option.

[29]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 312.

[30]Murdie, "Social Polarization," Tables 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5.

[31]On the general situation note John Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montréal and Kingston 1993), 174-75; more particularly on veterans' housing see Richard Harris and Tricia Shulist, "Canada's Reluctant Housing Program: The Veterans' Land Act, 1942-75," *Canadian Historical Review*, 82 (June 2001), 252-83.

[32]For similar developments in Australia note Mike Berry, "Unraveling the 'Australian Housing Solution': the Post-War Years," *Housing, Theory and Society*, 16 (October 1999), 106-23. The author would like to thank Mike Berry for providing a copy of this article.

Photo 1. Two children crossing the street at the Dundas-River Street intersection. Note the apartment towers of Regent Park South and the old "slum" house in the background. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1231, Item 1603B.

Photo 2. First tenants of the brick rowhouses in Regent Park North, April 1949. City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 2028, Item 132.

Regent Park was the ground-breaking project in Canadian slum clearance and urban renewal efforts. It was built in a long-standing Anglo-Celtic working-class neighbourhood in downtown Toronto known as Cabbagetown, which had for some time been singled out as a dangerous "slum" by those who Seán Damer aptly calls "slumologists."[33] Regent Park North — composed largely of three-story walk-up apartments, six-story elevator buildings, and some row houses — began accepting low-income families and some senior citizens in 1949 and was completed by 1957.[34] Five fourteen-storey apartment buildings and some family townhouses comprise Regent Park South, completed in 1959 to exclusively house families. By 1960, the two sections of the development contained approximately 10,000 people.

Tenant Selection Policy

Since both sections of Regent Park were the result of slum clearance and redevelopment schemes, those on the top of the priority list for rehousing in the 1940s and 1950s were families of low and moderate income who were living in the "slum" areas at the time of clearance. The Housing Authority of Toronto estimated in 1948 that 80 per cent of residents in the area cleared for the northern section would apply for rehousing in the new projecty. By the time the project was fully constructed, however, more than half of the apartments and houses were occupied by families who had not lived in the area before.[35] Only 23 per cent of the original 638 families in the southern section of the redevelopment area relocated in the project by completion date.[36]

Families in need of affordable housing who did not live in the area cleared for redevelopment faced a longer residency requirement in the City of Toronto, a maximum-minimum income cut-off rate, and a point system that was developed to rate eligibility on a number of social and economic factors. For both sections of the housing development, eligible applicants from outside the redevelopment area had to be residents of Metropolitan Toronto for at least one year previous to application. All families, including those who had previously lived in the area, also had to fall

[33]On "slumologists" in the Scottish council housing context see Seán Damer, *From Moorepark to 'Wine Alley': The Rise and Fall of a Glasgow Housing Scheme* (Edinburgh 1989). Also note the fine work of Kevin Brushett, "'Blots on the Face of the City': the politics of slum housing and urban renewal in Toronto," PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 2001.

[34]See the classic liberal work on the project by Rose, *Regent Park*. On postwar social reconstruction note Kevin Brushett, "'People and Government Travelling Together': Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Post-War Reconstruction, 1943-1953," *Urban History Review*, 27 (March 1999), 44-58.

[35]On HAT's estimate see Alderman Shannon cited in *Toronto Daily Star*, 22 July 1948. On tenant families from the clearance area note Rose, *Regent Park*, 151.

[36]MTHA, *South Regent Park: A Study* (Toronto 1962), 10. On the early development of Regent Park South, consult Brushett, "'Blots on the Face of the City,'" 205-32.

below a gross income of $4,200-a-year in 1952 to live in Regent Park North, a figure significantly higher than average earnings in the metropolitan area as a whole,[37] theoretically allowing all but the most highly-paid workers access to the project. These figures were periodically readjusted to take into account changing incomes, inflation, and policy objectives. For example, in 1964 the income ceiling was raised to $4,900, the upper level of the lowest one-third income group in central Toronto, demonstrating a clear shift toward targeting low-income families.[38] The income thresholds were more restrictive in Regent Park South due to the stricter Federal-Provincial requirements under which the project was built and managed: $4,500 was the maximum annual gross family income figure in 1961, approximately 75 per cent of the average annual family income in Metropolitan Toronto as a whole in that year, suggesting that it was aimed more directly at low-income earners from the outset.[39] From its inception, the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority also explicitly attempted to limit the number of families receiving public assistance to 20 per cent expressing "the desirability of developing a balanced community."[40] There was no formal policy in the Housing Authority of Toronto to curb families relying on social assistance, but officials told the *Globe and Mail* in 1965 that they attempted to keep them at 10 to 15 per cent.[41]

When a family applied for either section of Regent Park who resided within Metropolitan Toronto and did not earn more than the maximum income figures, they received a personal home visit by a staff member of the respective housing authority who inspected their present accommodation and assigned a point rating. The point systems designed for both sections in the 1950s and 1960s were similar with some minor exceptions. Inadequate accommodation (overcrowding, substandard dwellings) accounted for approximately 30 points and scores from 10-15 points were awarded for a total of 100 in the following categories: a disproportionate amount of income spent on rent, number of dependents, unfair eviction, health factors, family separation due to housing, and veteran status.[42] Applicants to Regent Park North were also subject to a five-point category entitled "Suitability as a

[37]DBS, *Census of Canada, 1951 - Population and Housing Characteristics - Census Tracts - Toronto* (Ottawa 1953-1955), 36, 42.

[38]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 33, File: Housing Registry, 1958-1963, Minutes of the HAT, No. 6156, 19 March 1964.

[39]On Regent Park North (hereafter RPN) see Rose, *Regent Park*, 151. For RPS consult MTHA, *South Regent Park*, 17-18. Central Metropolitan Area figures from DBS, *Census of Canada, 1961 - Census Tracts - Toronto* (Ottawa 1961), 48.

[40]MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-61* (Toronto 1961), unpaginated. Also see "Rental Arrears: Whose Responsibility?" 3.

[41]Sheila Kieran, "Regent Park North 18 Years Later," *Globe and Mail*, 18 February 1965.

[42]The Inspection report for RPN is reproduced in Rose, *Regent Park*, 234, Appendix VIII. For RPS, MTHA, *South Regent Park*, 17.

Tenant" and a section for personal comments by the home investigator.[43] Despite claims to the contrary by housing officials, the archival records reveal clear personal, political, and moral considerations on the part of housing managers with regard to tenant selection.[44] Finally, extraordinary applicants were submitted to a tenant selection committee presided over by Board members of the respective housing authorities.

This eligibility scheme prevailed from the 1940s until the 1970s when low incomes were accorded more weight. The rent to income ratio now valued 20 points in total, the full amount awarded for those paying more than 50 per cent of their income in rent. The category "Abnormal financial commitments" was added and scored out of fifteen with a graduated scale of points established for years of residence in Metropolitan Toronto and time spent on the waiting list.[45] By 1987, income accounted for one-half the total points awarded and a number of previously excluded groups were granted access to public housing including people who had a physical or developmental disability, refugees, parents under eighteen, and victims of family violence.[46] In 1988, the Ontario Housing Corporation shifted its income determination procedure from gross to net income, allowing applicants to claim employment-related expenses such as day care and transportation, thereby providing a greater incentive to the working poor to move into public housing.[47]

The Rent-Geared-to-Income System

The rental scale for Regent Park North was designed by "public housers" Humphrey Carver and Alison Hopwood in 1947 as part of the Toronto Metropolitan Housing Research Project undertaken at the School of Social Work of the University of Toronto.[48] They studied rental policies in British, Australian, and

[43]Rose, *Regent Park*, 234. These categories were far from precise and could measure a variety of overlapping causes of housing hardship. Prospective applicants rarely scored above 60 points. Moreover, the average number of points increased as the size of the family increased. Thus, it took fewer points for a two-person family to obtain a one-bedroom unit than an eight-person family to secure a four-bedroom apartment. Paul Ringer, "Tenant Selection in Metro Toronto," *Ontario Housing*, 9 (August 1963), 11.

[44]This topic is thoroughly investigated in Chapter 5 of my forthcoming dissertation. Sean Purdy, "From a Place of Hope to Outcast Space: Territorial Regulation and Tenant Resistance in Regent Park Housing Project, 1949-2001" PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 2003.

[45]OHC Tenant Eligibility system reproduced in OHC Applicants Grievance Committee, *The Ontario Housing Corporation: Cure or Cause of Your Housing Problems?* (Toronto 1974), 8-9.

[46]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 302-03; and Nancy Smith, "Challenges of Public Housing in the 1990s: The Case of Ontario, Canada," *Housing Policy Debate*, 6, 4 (1995), 911.

[47]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 303.

[48]Humphrey Carver and Alison Hopwood, *Rents for Regent Park: a rent-scale system for a public housing project* (Toronto 1947).

American public housing and the family incomes of area residents in 1947 before clearance, and worked up a rental scale that was specific to the project's needs. The scale was based principally on the ability of families to pay rent, with variations for different family size and income. From the 1940s to the mid-1960s, rents were supposed to be approximately 20 per cent of total monthly family income; by the early 1970s, they reached a maximum figure of 30 per cent for employed families and up to 50 percent of income for social assistance recipients.[49] For families receiving social assistance, rents were calculated on a more fixed scale according to the shelter allowance portion of social assistance payments and not on a percentage of income.[50] In the Carver-Hopwood scheme, total family income was originally based on the full gross wages of the chief breadwinner in addition to a small, fixed charge for each other family member who worked. Special reductions were included for dependents but not employed family members or those receiving pensions. In addition, there were monthly utility service charges and a security deposit required when the lease was signed, which amounted to one-half of one month's rent. The rental scale applied to Regent Park South, designed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was based on the general principles of the Carver-Hopwood scheme, but was slightly more onerous, reflecting the more penurious attitudes of the federal government regarding the proportion of income to be used to formulate rent.[51] In any case, this system was adopted by housing authorities across the country and remains to this day with modifications in the rates of reductions and allowances due to inflation and provincial peculiarities.[52] Homer Borland, a top Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation manager, described this rental scheme as "to each according to his need, and from each according to his ability," with no intended humour or apparent knowledge of the source of the quotation.[53]

[49]For the history of rental scales see CMHC, *Compendium of Rent to Income Scales in Use in Public Housing and Rent Supplement Programmes in Canada* (Ottawa 1980). For the figures for social assistance recipients note RPCIA, *A New Deal for Ontario Housing Tenants* (Toronto 1972), 6.

[50]HAT, *A Review of Progress, 1947-1964* (Toronto 1964), 9-10.

[51]On the internal debate over the rental scale see CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 4, File: CMHC Rent Scale 1949, David Mansur, President, CMHC to Mayor H.E. McCallum, 16 April 1949 and CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 5, File: R.P.H. Project, Memo from Chairman, THA to City Council, September 1958.

[52]Sewell, *House and Home*, 140. There were slight differences between RPN and RPS in minimum rental rates and the policy on service charges. Moreover, family allowances, which all families received from the federal government, were included in the income formula until 1962. See CMHC, *Compendium of Rent*, 2.

[53]Homer Borland, "Rent to Income Formula for Public Housing," *Ontario Housing*, 15 (1970), 19. The quotation is from Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875; Moscow 1970), 17.

Summary of the Research Findings: Children and Families in Regent Park

I am trapped
in a clean bright place
warm
but I can't get out

And all the doors
are prison grey
what was my crime

Only
too much love
on too few dollars
too fruitful, my love

Be warned, my children
Be warned, and
Be sterile

Dorothy O'Connell, "A Modern Sonnet for Public Housing Tenants," 1974[54]

Regent Park North and Regent Park South were intended primarily for families with children even though a small part of the northern section was reserved for elderly couples and singles. Early supporters of public housing repeatedly stressed the benefits of public housing for children.[55] By the late 1960s, the "delinquent" habits of children in public housing projects themselves became a key object of concern.[56] Larry Quinto, who grew up in the southern section in the 1960s and 1970s, remembers being "overwhelmed by the presence of so many kids ... seemed like every family had more than three children ... children were everywhere!"[57]

The moral and social health of children figured prominently in the point-rating system. The category with the single highest number of points in the early years was "Family Separated Due to Housing." Families with children of different sexes

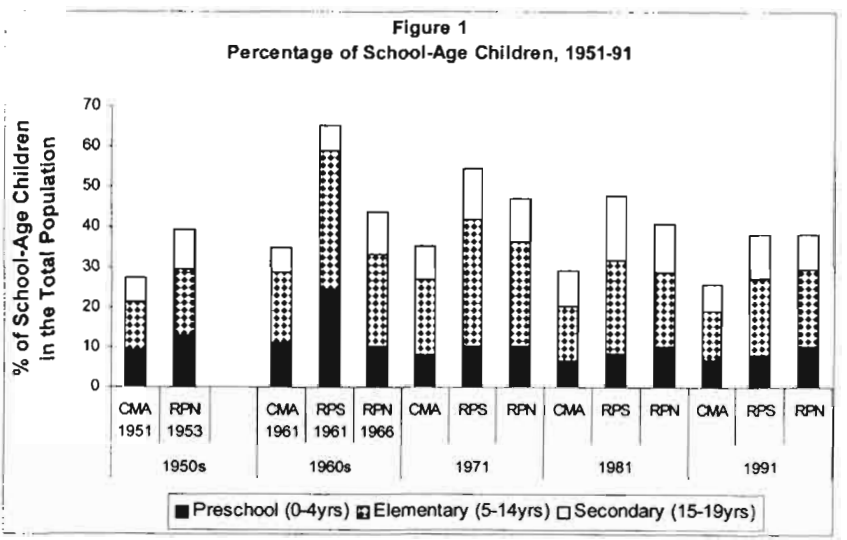
[54]Published in Canadian Organization of Public Housing Tenants, *The Raised Roof*, 3 (November-December 1974), 2.

[55]For examples see Rose, *Regent Park*, 217-20; HAT, *Review of Progress*, 4, 11-14, 18; and MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-61*, unpaginated. For a useful survey of government propaganda on families and the nation at the time see Annalee Golz, "Family Matters: the Canadian Family and the State in the Postwar Period," *Left History*, 1 (Fall 1993), 9-50. On the historiography of family history in Canada see Comacchio, "'The History of Us,'" 167-220.

[56]David Allen, "To its youngsters Regent Park South is a place to wreck," *Toronto Star*, 9 December 1968.

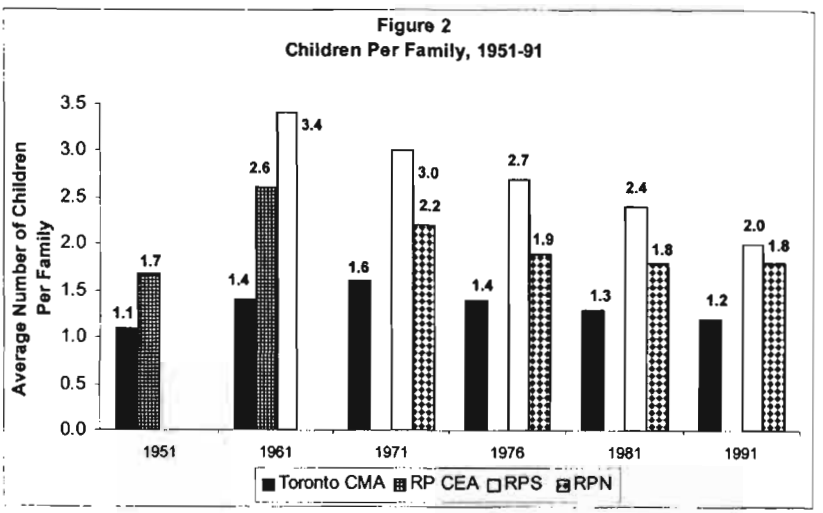
[57]Larry Quinto, letter to the author, 2 January 2002.

who slept in the same room were awarded additional points.[58] The first units in the northern section of the project were occupied by large families — a highly-publicized, symbolic gesture to demonstrate the City's commitment to the younger generation.[59] Low-income families with children, of course, had higher shelter and general living costs and, in a consistently tight housing market, were also more likely to suffer from overcrowding and dilapidated housing, contributing to the housing hardship deemed sufficient to secure a vacancy in public housing.[60] It comes as little surprise then that both sections of Regent Park throughout the period had consistently higher numbers of school-age children and children-per-family than the general population, as Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate for 1951-1991.



Compiled from CMA 1951-91 and RPN-RPS 1971-91: DBS and Statscan, Census of Canada, Population Characteristics by Census Tracts, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1991; 1953 RPN: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 41, File: Tenancy Information, Breakdown of Families, 1 January 1953; 1961 RPS: MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-1961* (Toronto 1961); and 1966 RPN figures used the age groups, 0-4, 5-12, 13-16: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority-Statistics, 1965-1968, HAT, Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966. All adaptations and necessary calculations by the author for all the following figures and tables.

[58]"How they decide if you will live in public housing," *Toronto Star*, 19 August 1969.
[59]Rose, *Regent Park*, 83.
[60]Bartelt finds that large numbers of children is an important complicating factor in the growth of black poverty in the United States. "Housing the 'Underclass,'" 121-2.



Compiled from 1951-1991 CMA, RP CEA, RPS, RPN: DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Dwelling, Household and Family Characteristics*; and 1961 RPS: MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-1961*.

It is obvious, yet important to emphasize, that given the social stigmatization of young people in public housing projects, family housing projects, by their very definition, would not include people in the full range of life-cycle stages that a private market housing neighbourhood would potentially include. The larger proportion of children emerged as a key issue during the late 1960s and 1970s due to the woefully inadequate level of recreation facilities for young people and the political struggles that it sparked for tenants.[61]

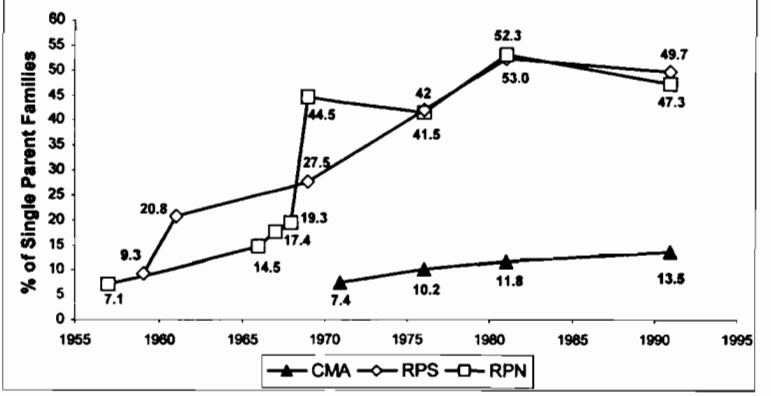
One of the most noticeable elements in the defamation of public housing projects has been the spotlight on the high incidence of sole-support parent families. The vast majority of these families were headed by women who were widowed, divorced, separated, or abandoned by their male partners, and were probably at the very lowest rung of the societal ladder in terms of material deprivation and attendant social stigma.[62] Given the lack of affordable childcare, the difficulties of making ends meet on one income, and the generally larger expenses of families with children, single mothers — a growing phenomenon due to shifts in the socio-economic status of women and less restrictive separation and divorce laws in the postwar period — tended to qualify first for public housing. As Figure 3 demon-

[61] RPCIA, *By the People: Evaluation of Regent Park Community Improvement Association, 1969-1973* (Ottawa 1973).

[62] On sole-support parents see Margaret Little, "A Litmus Test for Democracy: The Impact of Ontario Welfare Changes on Single Mothers," *Studies in Political Economy*, 66 (August 2001), 9-36.

strates, in the mid-1960s the percentage of single parents climbed spectacularly in both sections of Regent Park, reaching a peak of more than 50 per cent of all families in 1981. Four to five times higher than the Metropolitan Toronto population and the Lower-Status Enumeration Area Subset data, the rates of single parents were also consistently higher than public housing as a whole in Metropolitan Toronto, which rose from 25.2 per cent in 1971 to 41.5 per cent in 1986.[63] Interestingly, there was a slight drop in these numbers for Regent Park in 1991, perhaps due to the incentives provided by the Ontario Housing Corporation for two-parent, working couples in 1988.

Figure 3
Single Parent Families, 1957-91



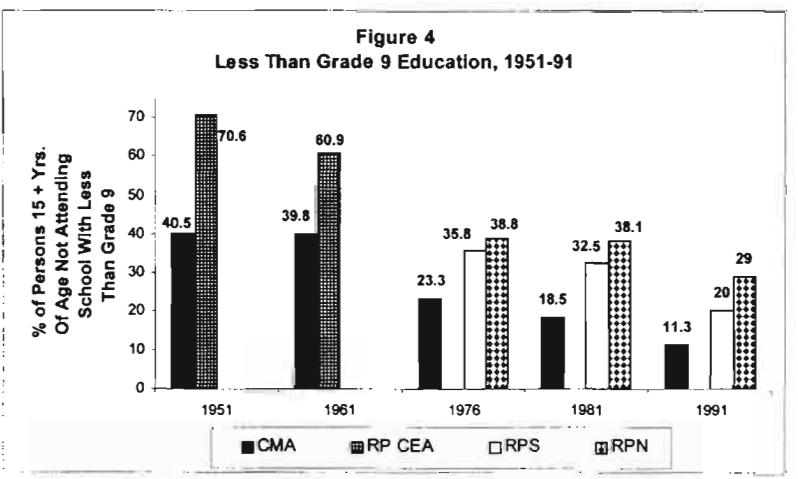
Compiled from 1957 RPN: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 41, File: Population/Density, HAT, Statistics Re: Regent Park (North) Housing Project as of 1 May 1 1957; 1959 and 1961 RPS: MTHA, *Annual Report 1959* and *Annual Report 1960-61* (Toronto 1961), unpaginated; 1966-1968 RPN: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority-Statistics, 1965-1968, HAT, Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966, 1967, 1968; 1969 RPN and RPS: Provincial Archives of Ontario (PAO), OHC Papers, RG 44-19-1, Box 10, File: B1-20-1, Ontario Housing Corporation Statistics found in Regent Park Community Improvement Association Grant Application, 20 August 1969; and 1971, 1976 CMA and 1976, 1981, 1991, CMA, RPN, and RPS figures in Statscan, Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto 1976, 1981, 1991.

Formal Schooling

Formal educational achievement is one of the key indicators of life chances in modern capitalist society. Notwithstanding the crucial and neglected sphere of "informal learning" among the working class and poor, it is a truism that there is a strong

[63]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 318, Table 9.5.

correlation between the level of formal education, economic attainment, and social mobility.[64] Figures 4 through 7 present data on levels of formal schooling among Regent Park residents and the Metropolitan Toronto population. The schooling of tenants improved overall from the 1950s to the 1990s but was significantly lower than the general population in Metropolitan Toronto. Persons with little or no schooling were over-represented in the project throughout the postwar period. High school graduation rates improved slightly in Regent Park North from 1981 to 1991, but were only approximately one-half of the Metropolitan Toronto level in 1991. Regent Park South residents only reached two-thirds of the Metropolitan Toronto level in the same year. Regent Park tenants attained proportionately better levels of post-secondary education even though in all types — college, university, and technical training — they still achieved considerably less significant rates than the general population throughout the 40-year period.[65] Formal recognition of the socio-economic and educational difficulties of the neighbourhood prompted the Toronto Board of Education to designate the two elementary schools serving the Regent Park population, Duke of York Public School and Park Public School (recently renamed Nelson Mandela Park Public School), as the first of Toronto's "in-

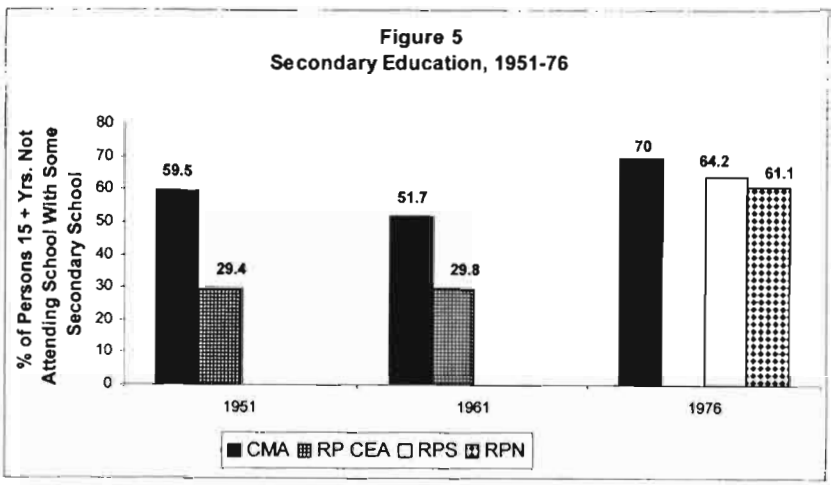


Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951-91.*

[64]D.W. Livingstone and Peter H. Sawchuk, "Beyond Cultural Capital Theory: Hidden Dimensions of Working Class Learning," *The Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, 22 (June 2000), 121-46.

[65]Livingstone argues that Canada leads the world in levels of post-secondary education even though the benefits of educational achievement are disproportionately reaped by the affluent. See D.W. Livingstone *Working and Learning in the Information Age: A Canadian Profile* (Toronto 2000).

ner city" schools in the 1960s.[66] This special status justified the allocation of extra resources and special programmes.



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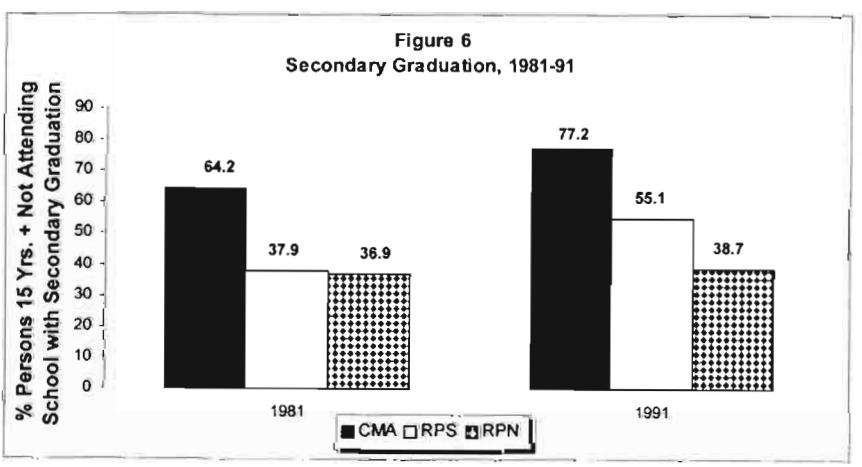
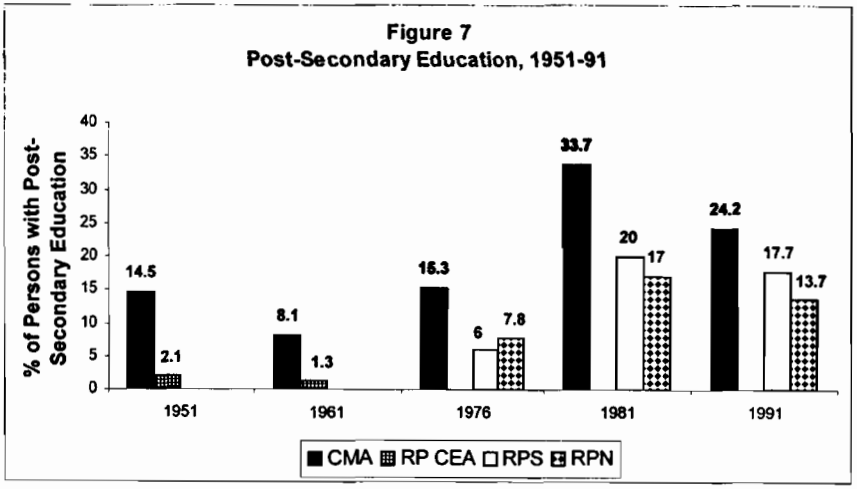


Compiled from Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1981 and 1991.*

[66]"Children peer into selves in frank study," *Toronto Star*, 14 March 1966.



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1976, 1981, and 1991*. 1951 figures based on the census variable "13 years and over" education; 1961 figures based on "university"; 1971 figures include "some university" and "university degree"; 1976 figures based on "Post-secondary non-university," "Some university," "With" and "Without post-secondary non-university," and "University Degree"; and 1981 figures include "Trades certificate or diploma," "Other non-university education with" and "without certificate," and "University without degree" and University with degree."

Work, Incomes, and Unemployment

The jobs that Regent Park residents held tended to be in the lower-paying and less stable service and manufacturing industries. Tables 1 and 2 present occupational indexes for men and women, showing the proportional differences between the types of jobs that people had in the project and the Central Metropolitan Area during the postwar period. In the occupational categories "Managerial," "Professional," and "Clerical/Sales," which tend to offer higher wages, salaries, and benefits, the percentage of persons in the Central Metropolitan Area was divided with the percentage of the three separate Regent Park areas in the same job categories to create a simple index. The more an index value exceeds 1.0, the greater the number of Central Metropolitan Area people who worked in these jobs compared to Regent Park area residents.[67] Conversely, in the categories Manufacturing and Services, the index figure shows the greater number of Regent Park tenants who worked in these categories in comparison with the Metropolitan Toronto population as a whole. While there are some slight anomalies for the Regent Park South

[67]The form of the indexes are based on Murdie, "Social Polarization," 314.

Table 1
Male Occupational Index, 1951-91

	1951	1961	1971	1971	1981	1981	1991	1991
	CMA/RP CEA	CMA/RP CEA	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN
Managerial	3.2	5.5	13.3	7.2	1.4	3.6	1.5	3.5
Professional	8.5	4	1.9	1.4	1.7	4.3	0.8	1.4
Clerical/Sales	1.5	1.1	1.3	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.1
	RP CEA/CMA	RP CEA/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA
Manufacturing	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.1	1	1.3	0.8	1.4
Services	1.8	1.8	2.2	1.6	2.5	2.4	2.3	1.4

Table 2
Female Occupational Index, 1951-91

	1951	1961	1971	1971	1981	1981	1991	1991
	CMA/RP CEA	CMA/RP CEA	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN	CMA/RPS	CMA/RPN
Managerial	2	6.5	2.7	3	1.8	2.1	0.9	7.8
Professional	6.1	3.6	10.3	1.2	1.5	1.6	1	1.3
Clerical/Sales	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4
	RP CEA/CMA	RP CEA/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA	RPS/CMA	RPN/CMA
Manufacturing	1.6	1.2	1.6	0.6	1.6	1.8	1.4	3.3
Services	1.3	1.6	2.6	2	2.1	2	1.5	1.5

Compiled from DBS and Stascan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.*

data in the later years, probably due to the gentrification of a part of the same census tract, the indexes generally exhibit evidence of substantially lower numbers of better-paying jobs among Regent Park residents as a whole.

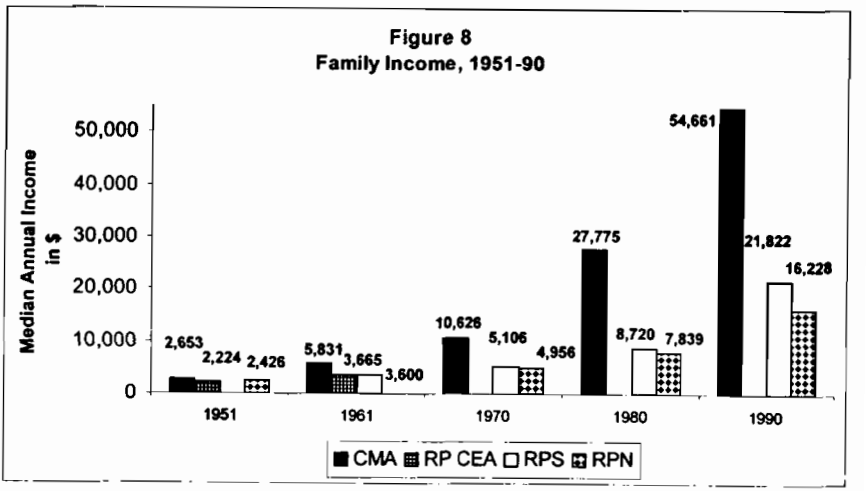
The census data does not allow an accurate comparison of the particular types of jobs *within* these categories, which could indicate higher-paying, stable, unionized manufacturing jobs, for example. They do, however, indicate a much greater number of people working in service occupations that are demonstrably more insecure and poorly paid.[68] It is easy to understand Regent Park resident, Ozzie Smith, who summed up the job opportunities for residents in 1975: "If they want a laborer they know where to get a laborer. They just come down here and pick him up."[69] The employment and family income statistics in Figures 8, 9, and 10 also illustrate clearly that working people in Regent Park fared noticeably poorer in relation to the Metropolitan Toronto population as the second half of the century progressed. In 1951, median family income and average/median employment income for women and men reveal a small variation between the comparison areas. In 1961, however, and especially from 1970 to 1990, the gap widened radically between public housing residents and the general population in Metropolitan Toronto: family income figures in Regent Park South were less than half that of Metropolitan Toronto from 1970 to 1990 while wage earners in Regent Park North earned less than one-third of Metropolitan Toronto wage earners in 1980-90. Even compared to other low-income earners in private-market housing, Regent Park residents took home significantly less pay.[70]

Lower levels of formal education, the more casual and unstable nature of service and unskilled manufacturing employment, as well as the more general economic climate, set the backdrop for high levels of unemployment among residents. In the full-employment context of the 1950s and early 1960s, Figures 11, 12, and 13 reveal relatively low levels of men and women out of work in Regent Park. These figures also reflected public housing selection policies that favoured employed tenants. In the more precarious economic climate of the 1970s to the 1990s, however, unemployment levels jumped to substantial *absolute* levels in both sections of the housing development. While marginally better than other public housing residents in Metropolitan Toronto, unemployment was higher among Regent Park residents than other low-income earners in the Metropolitan Toronto area as shown by the Lower Status Enumeration Subset data for 1971 and 1986. As in other spheres of economic activity, the situation worsened considerably in the 1980s. Among young people in Regent Park, moreover, unemployment was found in an even more extreme form.

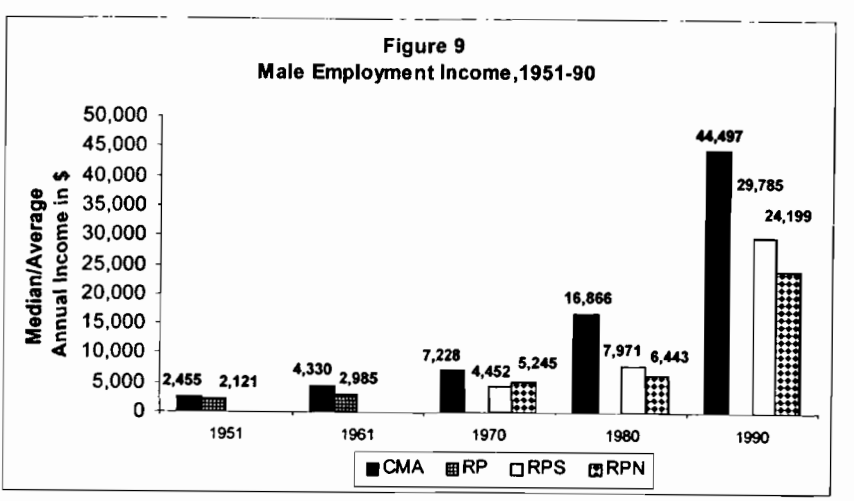
[68]On the loss of stable, well-paid manufacturing jobs and their replacement by various forms of casual and part-time work in Canada consult Henry Veltmeyer and James Sacouman, "The Political Economy of Part-Time Work," *Studies in Political Economy*, 56 (Summer 1998), 115-44.

[69]Gerard, "Regent Park battles its 'hopeless slum' image."

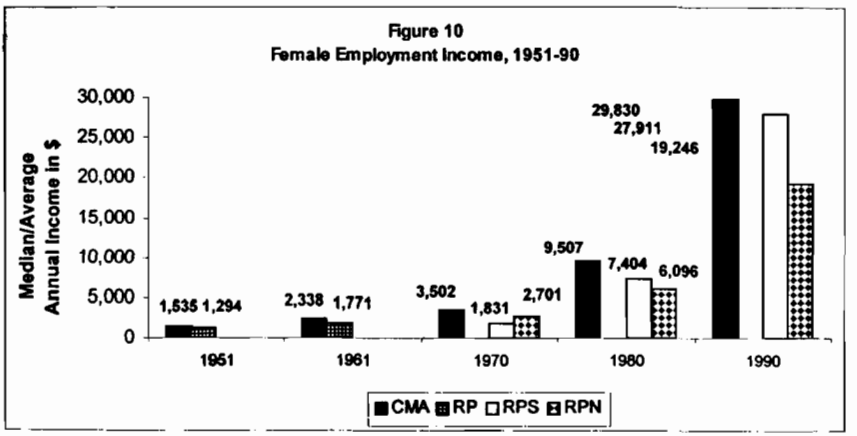
[70]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 318, Table 9.5.



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991*. 1951 RPN is actually 1952 average family income figures for the first 333 units of the project: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 41, File: Tenancy Information, Summary of Income and Family Size, 1 May 1952; and 1961 RPS: MTHA, Annual Report 1960-61, unpaginated, 1961 figures for CMA and representative are average family income not median family income.



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991*. 1961 and 1990 figures are average earnings.



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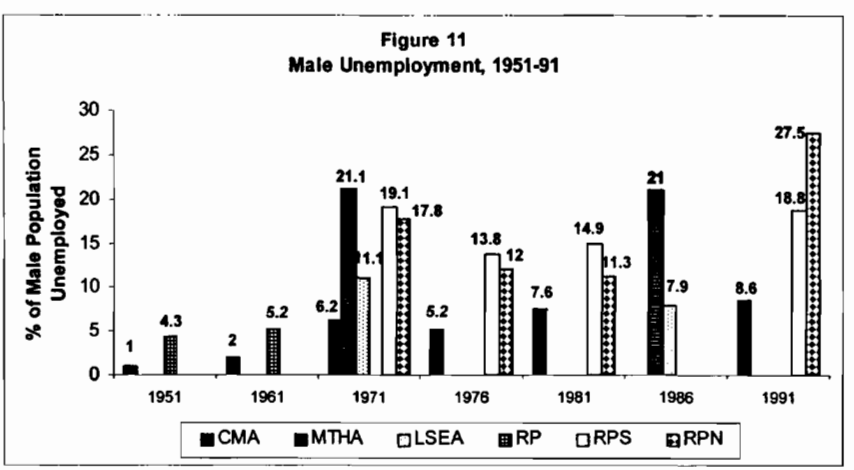
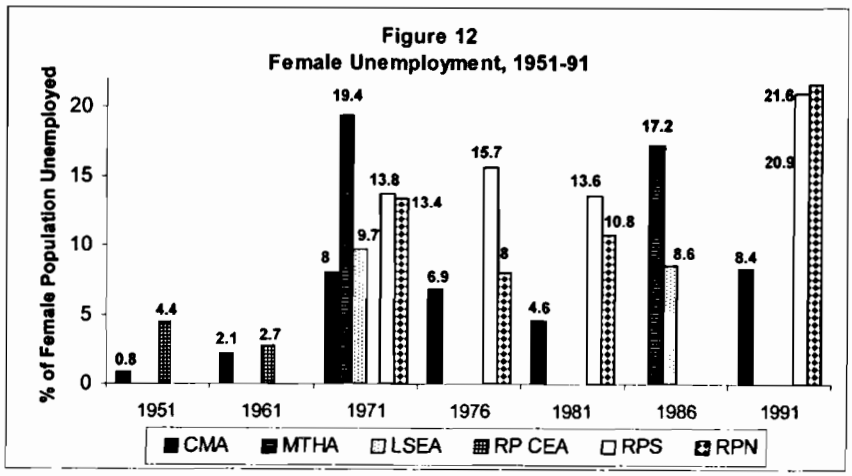


Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991*. 1971 and 1986 figures for MTHA and LSEA from Murdie, "Social Polarization," Tables 9.4 and 9.5, 316 and 318.



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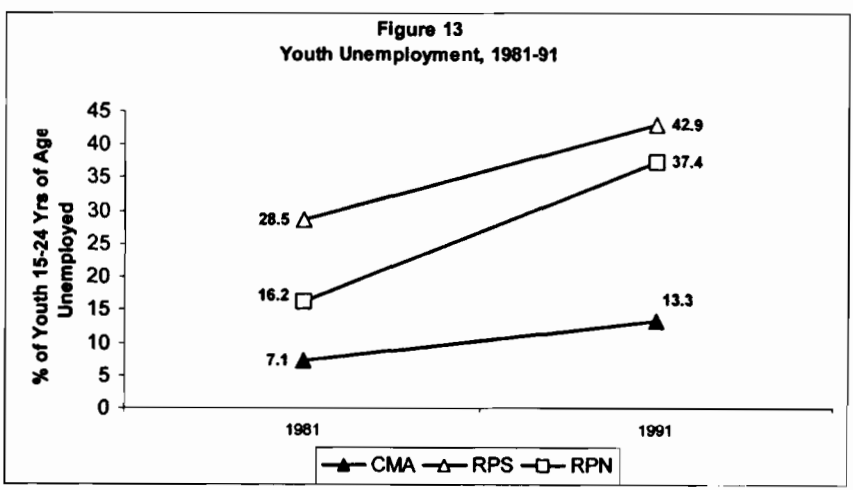
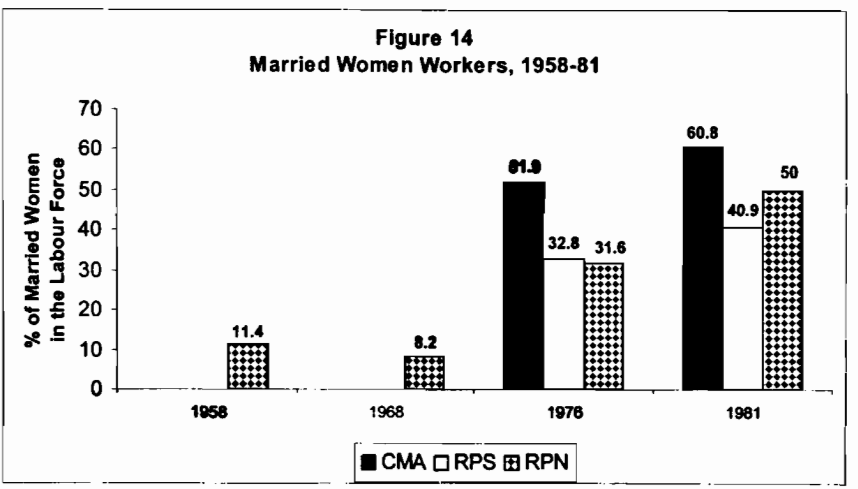


Compiled from Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1981, and 1991.*

Despite extra charges applied to secondary wage earners and the dominant ideology of the role of the male as the chief family breadwinner, it was not uncommon for various members of the household to contribute to the material welfare of the family in Regent Park.[71] In partially completed Regent Park North in 1952 (333 units), 64 per cent of families had secondary wage earners, which included working wives, teenage children, and other members of the household such as in-laws.[72] A survey by the author of 40 case files of prospective tenant families whose housing was being demolished to build the northern section revealed 32 secondary wage earners.[73] These approximate percentages were maintained until the late 1960s.[74]



Compiled from 1958 RPN: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 26, File: Rentals, 1947-61, Questionnaire of the Committee to Study the Federal-Provincial Rental Scale, 1 October 1958; and 1968 RPN: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing authority Sttatistics, 1965-68, HAT, Regent Park (North) Statistics 1968. All other figures from Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1976 and 1981.*

[71]On the economic "strategies" of working-class families in the late 19th-, early-, and mid-20th centuries see Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto 1993); Suzanne Morton, *Ideal Surroundings: Domestic Life in a Working-Class Suburb in the 1920s* (Toronto 1995); and Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto 1997).

[72]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 41, File: Tenancy Information, Summary of Income and Family Size, 1 May 1952.

[73]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 36, File: Board of Control Correspondence, 1949-55, Survey of Families Whose Housing Was Being Demolished to Make Way for Buildings 5-7, 7 June 1949.

[74]See the tables for 1965-68 in CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority Statistics, 1965-1968, HAT, Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966, 1967, and 1968.

As Figure 14 demonstrates, a small proportion of married women were members of the formal labour force in the 1950s and 1960s, which soared significantly in the 1970s and 1980s, as in the rest of Metropolitan Toronto. Even within the limits of rent policy, the family economy in the Regent Park area was often comprised of more than the chief male breadwinner. It is important to emphasize, however, that even those women or single mothers who did have work, generally earned considerably lower wages than men and had fewer opportunities for advancement in education and job training.

The statistics do not include those tenants who did not officially report their income. We know from evidence of those who were discovered and punished that some families managed to gain extra income "under the table" by learning and using the system. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, some wives worked in retail establishments for short stints during the holiday season; others supplemented or earned incomes through prostitution and the illegal sale of alcohol, drugs, and stolen consumer goods — practices revived by some in the 1980s and 1990s.[75]

We also know from oral testimony that it was common for teenagers in Regent Park, whose parents were unable to afford allowances of spending money, to engage in informal and casual work such as babysitting for relatives and family friends, part-time retail jobs in stores, shining shoes, and selling newspapers on the street.[76] This was income that was donated to the family or kept, without the knowledge of the authorities.[77] It is likely that some of these practices were curtailed after the tragic 1977 murder of Emanuel Jacques, a twelve-year-old boy from Regent Park, who shined shoes with his older brother on the nearby Yonge Street "strip" of sex clubs and bars. The two often made $10 a day after school and deposited it di-

[75]For details on evictions for failing to report income in RPN consult CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 25, File: 1957-1966 Regent Park North, Analysis of Vacancies from 1 January 1961 to 1 May 1961 Inclusive. For evictions in the 1950s for a variety of reasons see Rose, *Regent Park*, 176-7; and for memories of this from Cabbagetown residents see the memoir "Law and Disorder in Cabbagetown," *Cabbagetown Chronicles Website*, <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Club/7400> (18 October 2002). On claims that some residents were involved in "fencing" stolen goods see "This boy has risen above the slum life," *Toronto Star*, 9 December 1968. On claims of tenant bootlegging — the illegal sale of alcohol — see CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 29, Case File No. 50. See the documentary film of the National Film Board of Canada (hereafter NFB), Bay Weyman, dir., *Return to Regent Park* (Montréal 1994) for evidence of illegal activities in the 1980s and 1990s.

[76]On lack of money for allowances see Ellie Tesher, "But Dad, a kid can't live on 50 cents a week," *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 February 1977.

[77]On babysitting see the memoirs of Patricia Crofts-Lagree, "My Time In Cabbagetown," *Cabbagetown Chronicles Website*, <http:///www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Club/7400/cab-contribute.html>; Thelma Pilkey, interview by the author, tape recording, Lakefield, Ontario, 21 March 1996. On babysitting and part-time work in stores see Taida Hambleton, letter to the author, 18 January 1996.

rectly in their mother's bank account.[78] Some young people were particularly inventive in raising extra income. Larry Quinto remembers:

> Spearing suckers and carp, then selling them to the Italians who were working on the grades. I remember climbing underneath the many bridges and collecting the pigeon chicks out of their nests to sell to the Chinese downtown ... earning extra money was a must, because of our financial situation ... I used to shine shoes on week-ends, outside of the Brown Derby on Yonge and Dundas St. I had to give a cut to the bouncer after each night.[79]

Such practices were supplemented by domestic economic strategies such as using older siblings to babysit younger children, wearing "hand-me-down" clothes, making home-made foods such as pickles and jams, purchasing items from thrift shops, and even growing vegetables in a common allotment on the project grounds.[80] Chris Reading, who lived in Regent Park in the 1960s and 1970s, remembers that in addition to shopping at the local supermarket, he would go to a damaged goods store to buy inexpensive canned goods and purchase day-old bread at the bakery for a nominal price. He also found a way to shop in several different places using only one streetcar ticket.[81] Residents took advantage of any opportunity to receive free food. In early 1975, a Toronto food distribution company donated five tons of frozen fish that it was unable to sell to project residents. Five hundred Regent Park tenants lined up in freezing January weather to collect the free food.[82] When tenants suffered tragic deaths in the family, fires, or other calamities, moreover, residents relied on informal networks of neighbours to donate food, clothes, and furniture.[83] In the bleak economic situation of the 1990s, tenants also engaged in permanent "yard" sales on the fringes of the projects, adjacent to busy intersections.[84] In addition, there were a plethora of charitable organizations and

[78]See Gwyn Thomas and Bob Graham, "Body Was Drowned in a Sink," *Toronto Star*, 2 August 1977; "Friction Disappears as Regent Park cheers its police," *Toronto Star*, 6 August 1977.

[79]Taida Hambleton, letter to the author.

[80]See Taida Hambleton, letter to the author; Thelma Pilkey, interview with the author; AG, interview with the author, tape recorded, Toronto, 18 May 1995; Chris, Jackie, and Susie Reading, interview with the author, tape recorded, Toronto, 27 November 1994. On the use of "hand-me-down" and second-hand clothes in Regent Park note Stasia Evasuk and Bonnie Cornell, "Big Families Find Clothing Eats Up Baby Bonuses," *Toronto Daily Star*, 12 July 1971. On vegetable growing see Peter Rickman, "Single mothers harvest pride with city-grown vegetables," *Toronto Star*, 19 August 1984; Paula Todd, "Moms in Regent Park celebrate harvest of joy," *Toronto Star*, 14 August 1987.

[81]Chris Reading, interview with the author.

[82]"500 families catch 5 tons of fish," *Toronto Star*, 23 January 1975.

[83]See for instance the story of resident Carol Walsh in Michelle Osborn, "Regent Park celebrates 50 years of caring about its neighbours," *Toronto Star*, 4 July 1998.

[84]Personal observations by the author from 1992 to 1999.

churches, and in the 1980s and 1990s, food banks and soup kitchens, which provided various forms of direct and indirect aid.[85] Duke of York Public School and Nelson Mandela Park Public School are among the minority of schools in Toronto that have had state and community-supported breakfast and lunch programs since the early 1970s. In 1972, volunteers from the Regent Park Services Unit (organized by tenants themselves), began to provide hot lunches for students for a fee of one dollar per week.[86] Duke of York has also relied on a privately-supported winter milk and soup program.[87] At least among some tenants, therefore, family economies comprised a diverse combination of formal and informal economic activities complemented by state assistance, support from social agencies, and forms of mutual aid.[88]

Figures 15 and 16, which chart the major source of family income in both sections of the project, point to the same pattern of social schism as in other economic variables. In the late 1960s there was a significant increase in families relying on the state for the major portion of their income — a trend that would increase until the 1990s, as Murdie reveals.[89] Some recipients of various forms of state assistance such as Mother's Allowances and pensions were eligible to work within strictly-defined limits, resulting in a small portion of families who combined employment and state income. Due to the way the data were collected by the housing authorities, Figure 16 combines employment income with state assistance. Families on full welfare in Regent Park North never exceeded 16 per cent in the period

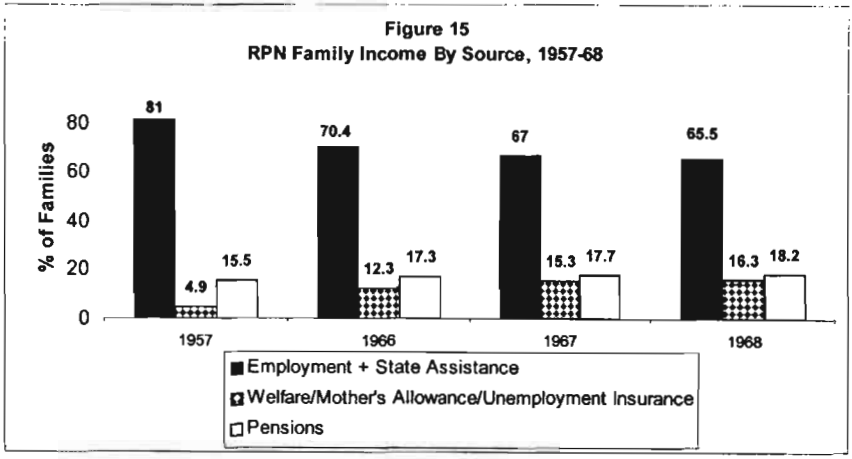
[85]"Soup kitchen in Regent Park serves up first meal," *Toronto Star*, 14 August 1985. For a sampling of social service agencies active in Regent Park see various issues of the *Regent Park Community News*, 1969-1978. For recent activities see Kerry Gillespie, "Don't forget the city's poor, summit urged," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 21 June 2002, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003).

[86]"Services Unit Celebrates Second Anniversary," *Regent Park Community News*, 1 (December 1972), 5.

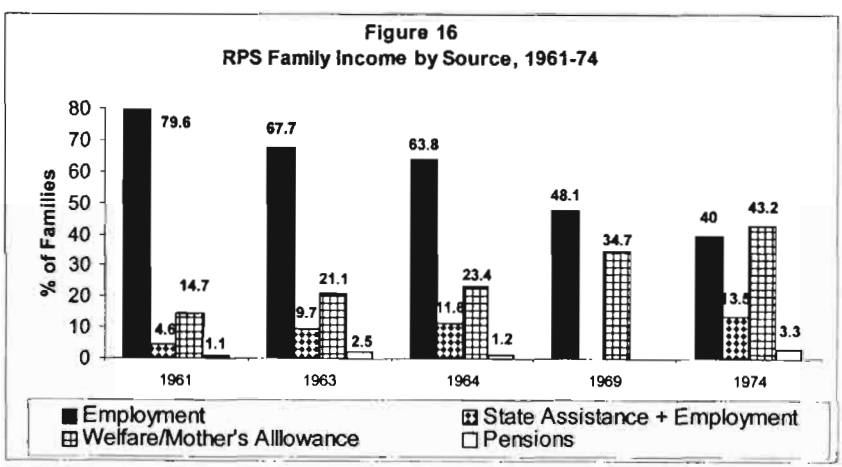
[87]Toronto Board of Education Archives, Reports File, Duke of York School and Community, "A Brief to the Toronto Board of Education Regarding Future Program Development at Duke of York School," undated, probably late 1970s; Richard Harris and Michael Mercer, "A test for geographers: the geography of educational achievement in Toronto and Hamilton, 1997," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 44 (Fall 2000), 217.

[88]On this typical mixture of various forms of economic activity among poor urban dwellers in major American cities see Loïc Wacquant, "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 107 (Spring 2002), 1468-1522. For a suggestive theoretical discussion of how households manage to use both cash and non-cash sources to meet their shelter needs see David Hulchanski and J.H. Milchalski, "How Households Obtain Resources to Meet Their Needs: The Shifting Mix of Cash and Non-Cash Sources," Unpublished Paper, Housing New Canadians, Research Working Group, 1995.

[89]Murdie, "Social Polarization," 297-298.



Compiled from CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, File: Rentals, 1947-61, Statistics Re: Regent Park North Housing Project As of May 1, 1957; 1966-68: CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority-Statistics, 1965-1968, Housing authority of Toronto, Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966, 1967, and 1968.



Compiled from 1961: MTHA, Annual Report 1960-1961; 1963: CTA, Harold Clark Papers (HCP), SC 61, Box 1, File: Minutes of the MTHA, 1963, MTHA, Welfare and Unemployment Statistics, 1963; 1964: CTA, HCP, Box 2, file: MTHA - Correspondence and Minutes, 1962-64, Welfare and Unemployment Statistics, 1964; 1969: 1969 RPS PAO, OHC, RG 44-19-1, Box 10, File: B1-20-1, Ontario Housing Corporation Statistics found in Regent Park Community Improvement Association Grant Application, 20 August 1969; 1974 figures cited in Donald Drackley, "Public Housing and Related Juvenile Delinquency in the Province of Ontario," BA thesis, Urban Planning, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, 1975.

before 1968.[90] It may suggest, as Margaret Little and Ian Morrison argue, that "movement back and forth between welfare and work is common for sole support mothers," the majority of whom receive social assistance.[91] Nevertheless, the most startling fact is that in Regent Park South, and to a lesser extent in the northern section, there were a soaring number of families whose main source of income was a government transfer of one sort or another.

Ethnic Composition of Regent Park Families

Accompanying the changes in economic and educational status, the ethnic composition of families in Regent Park shifted in the 1970s and 1980s due to the changing origins of immigrants, their socio-economic status, and the importance of the area as a prime "reception area" of recent immigrants to Toronto. Figures 17, 18, 19, and Table 3 demonstrate a clear trend toward disproportionately higher numbers of persons born outside of Canada, families of Asian and African origin, and a decrease in families of "British origin" from the 1960s to the 1990s. The diverse nature of the project population has certainly become a central feature of public discourse. As Don Gillmor writes, the project represents "poverty, crime and a radical experiment in multiculturalism — roughly 10,000 people sharing thirty-five home languages, a Babel defined by ten square blocks."[92] Bitter relations between police and youth, especially young Black men, and the special educational, employment, and cultural needs of immigrants have been two of the most pressing issues in the Regent Park community in the last two decades.

Length of Occupancy and Reasons For Leaving Regent Park

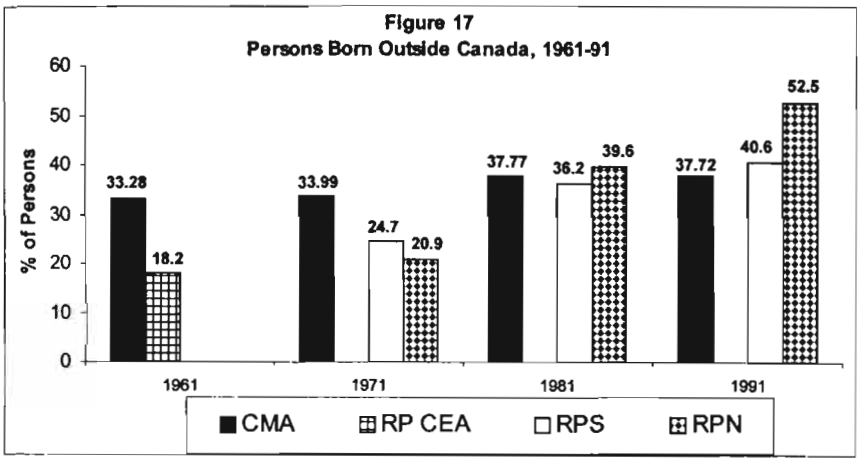
The one countervailing element in the statistics is that families in Regent Park did not stay in the project for inordinate amounts of time until the 1980s — a finding that contrasts with the "longitudinal entrapment" suggested by "underclass" theorists.[93] Figure 20 reveals that the extent of non-movers (those who had not moved in 5 or 6 years) in both sections of Regent Park was roughly similar to the Central Metropolitan Area (from 28 to 44 per cent from 1961-81) until the 1991 census. Other numbers, not included in Figure 20, confirm this: in the 1981 census, median length of occupancy was three and four years in Regent Park South and Regent Park North respectively, which compared favourably to the four year figure in Metropolitan Toronto and the standard assumption that the average tenant moves every three

[90]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority-Statistics, 1965-1968, "Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966, 1967, 1968."

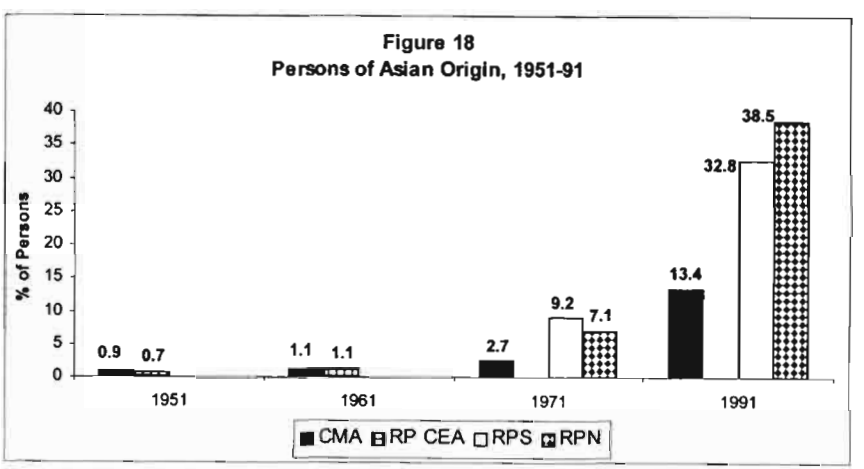
[91]Margaret Hillyard Little and Ian Morrison, "'The Pecker Detectors Are Back': Regulation of the Family Form in Ontario Welfare Policy," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 34 (Summer 1999), 112.

[92]Gillmor, "The punishment station," 51.

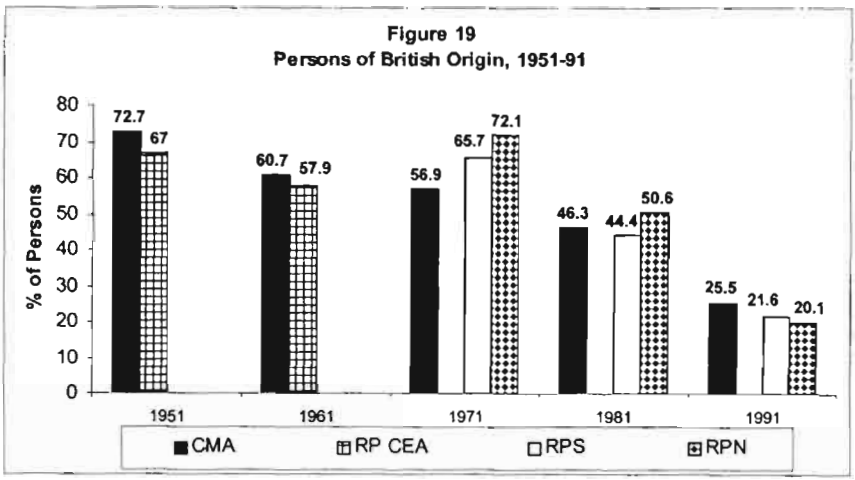
[93]Ley and Smith, "Is There an Immigrant Underclass?" 35.



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.*



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.* In 1951 and 1961, the census category used was "Asiatic"; in 1971 "Asian"; in 1991, the figure Asian included Chinese, East Indian, and Vietnamese. The latter figures were adapted from Mark Edward Pfeifer, "Community, Adaptation and the Vietnamese in Toronto," PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999, Table 6.2. Available online from the Joint Centre of Excellence on Immigration and Settlement, <http://ceris.metropolis,net/Virtual%20Library/community/pfeifer2/pfeifer2frontchap6a.html>



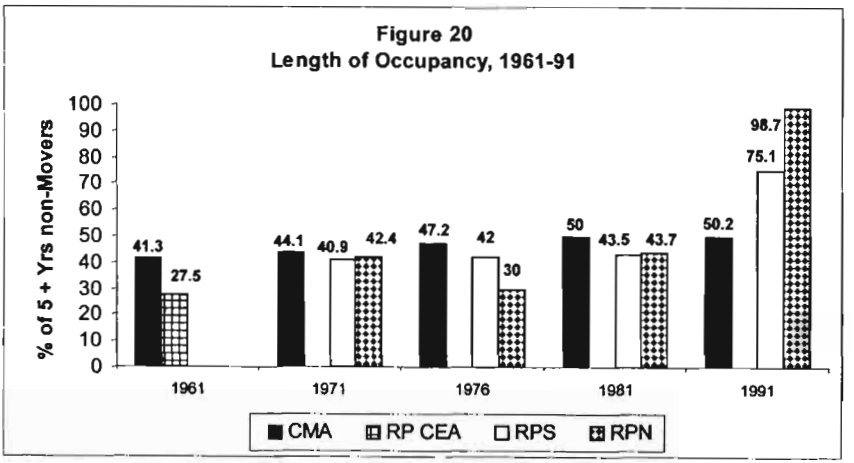
Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.*

Table 3. Ethnic Composition %

RPS, RPN X CMA , 1991

	CMA	RPS	RPN
British	25.5	21.2	20.1
French	1.8	4.1	0.9
Italian	10.6	0	0.6
Canadian	9.1	6.2	5
Chinese	7.9	23	25.4
East Indian	4.8	1.8	2.4
Black	4.3	15.3	8.4
Vietnamese	1	8	10.7

Compiled from Statscan, Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1991; and Pfeiffer, "Community, Adaptation and the Vietnamese in Toronto," Table 6.2. The figures include those who specifically stated single ethnic origins and therefore does not include those who stated multiple origins.



Compiled from DBS and Statscan, *Census of Canada, Census Tracts - Toronto, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991*. The figures represent the percentage of people who lived in the same dwelling for six years or more at the time of the 1961 and 1971 censuses and five years or more at the time of the 1981 and 1991 censuses.

years.[94] In 1971, non-moving rates were slightly higher than the Lower-Status Enumeration Area Subset figures, approximately 40 per cent in both projects compared to 34 per cent among low-income earners in the private market.[95]

Where did people go after leaving the project? Unfortunately, we only have limited and selective data from the early to mid-1960s on this question. In Regent Park South, a thorough study of "voluntary move-outs" in 1960-61 revealed that those most likely to move were higher-than-average income earners with smaller-than-average families, a beneficial combination that increased the chances of finding suitable accommodation in the private market. Almost 33 per cent were able to purchase homes while the remainder re-rented — both groups in "improved" neighbourhoods in terms of physical quality. Forty-five per cent of those who left the housing development moved back to the same area from which they originally applied for public housing. According to the study, families left for a variety of reasons, but it seems that desire to live in a house (whether owned or rented), frustration with the rental scale, and, to a lesser extent dissatisfaction with the "social environment," especially in regards to raising children, were the chief

[94] Statscan, "Bulletin 95-936" *Census of Canada, 1981 - Selected Population, Dwelling, Household and Census Family Characteristics, For Census Tracts* (Ottawa 1981), Table 1-22; Sewell, *Houses and Homes*, 140.
[95] Murdie, "Social Polarization," Table 9.5.

reasons. Nevertheless, three out of four families who left the project would have recommended public housing to those facing housing difficulties.[96]

Albert Rose reported that in the first 8 years of Regent Park North, 100 families left to buy homes.[97] In the first quarter of 1961, a survey of 54 families who left this section of the project revealed 10 families who bought houses[98]; in 1965 of 142 families surveyed, almost 40 per cent became owner-occupiers; and, only 9 per cent of 188 tenant families who left in 1967 bought their own homes, 75 per cent re-rented in the private market, and 15 per cent transferred to other public housing projects.[99] It is therefore likely that a small percentage of those who are regarded as "movers" in the census data from 1961 to 1991 moved to other public housing projects.

Explaining Social Polarization in Public Housing

To understand why there was such a remarkable swelling of socio-economic polarity between families in Regent Park and other people in Metropolitan Toronto we need to look at both larger social and economic trends, specific supply and demand factors within private and public housing markets, particularly the role of the state in determining the structures of public housing provision, and the social relations of public housing. It is first crucial to situate social marginalization among public housing tenants within the general economic and political context of state housing in the postwar period. The main decision makers at the federal and provincial levels of government judged public housing to be a temporary political concession within the postwar urban restructuring juggernaut that aimed to revitalize the central-city tax base and support a concomitant service-based economy.[100] The vast majority of state assistance in the housing realm was thus directed to home buying assistance programs, a policy in tune with the widespread ideology of the "ideal" dwelling, not to mention the profits it brought to private builders and developers. As Susan Fish and Michael Dennis famously revealed in 1972, the federal government purposely intended to construct low-quality, unattractive public housing that would not compete with private market units.[101] Richard Harris aptly concludes that work-

[96]Paul Ringer, *The Social Implications of Public Housing in Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto 1963), chapters 4 and 5.

[97]Rose, *Regent Park*, 224.

[98]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 25, File: 1957-66 Regent Park North, General File, "Analysis of Vacancies from 1 January 1961 to 1 May 1961 Inclusive."

[99]Statistics from 1965-67 found in CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 32, File: Housing Authority-Statistics, 1965-1968, "Regent Park (North) Statistics 1966, 1967, 1968."

[100]Brushett, "'Blots on the Face of the City,'" Chapters 4, 5, and 6; Marcuse, "Space and Race," 189; and Richard Harris, "Housing," in Trudi Bunting and Pierre Filion, eds., *Canadian Cities in Transition* (Toronto 1991), 372.

[101]Susan Fish and Michael Dennis, *Programs in Search of a Policy: Low-Income Housing in Canada* (Toronto 1972), 174. Paul Ringer, who worked in various professional capacities in

ing-class tenants in Canada have effectively subsidized the rich as a result of the greatly disproportionate monies spent on various home ownership plans by the state since the 1940s.[102]

By the early 1970s, moreover, public housing became an albatross around the pro-private housing market neck of the state. Both the federal and provincial governments were faced with general economic instability, prompting them to start belt tightening with regard to housing policy in general as well as physical and social investments in the existing projects.[103] After a brief stint of pumping limited monies into recreation facilities and slightly upgrading the physical infrastructure of older projects such as Regent Park North in the early 1970s, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation began to scale back interventions in public housing. The Ontario Housing Corporation, which relied on transfers from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, shifted its discourse of "fairness" in rents for public housing tenants to an economic defence based on amortization, operating costs, municipal taxes, and maintenance charges.[104] Always penurious, half-hearted supporters of public housing, the state housing officialdom was reluctant to concede meaningful improvements in the wealth redistribution of public housing tenants, persistently demanded by social housing activists and public housing residents themselves, since they were effectively beginning to financially, ideologically, and politically question their already limited welfare state commitments. Effective withdrawal from assisted housing mirrored developments in other forms of social assistance and reflected a more general shift in the balance of power "between those claiming a wider distribution of the benefits of economic prosperity and those in dominant positions with the state and the economy resisting such claims."[105] The

the HAT and MTHA in the 1950s and 1960s, including tenant selection officer for RPN and RPS, told the author that he felt design considerations were determined by the desire to build units that were not "too nice." Paul Ringer, interview by the author, tape recording, 12 November 1996.

[102]Harris, "Housing," 356-7, 361, 372.

[103]As Kevin Brushett notes, concern about escalating costs was one of the reasons for the Hellyer Task Force. In the same period, the Federal government began to cut back on its urban renewal and housing investments. See Brushett, "'Blots on the face of the city,'" 595. By the mid-1970s, there was great concern over the minute details of the costs of assisted housing. See the Metropolitan Toronto Planning Department (hereafter MTPD), *Assisted Housing Study* (Toronto 1977), Tables T.22.1- T.24.

[104]J.B.S. Rose, "Change to Rent Scale?" *Regent Park Community News*, 2 (June 1972), 5; Sewell, *Houses and Homes*, 162-63.

[105]The quotation is from Marcuse, "Space and Race," 189-90. On cutbacks to public housing subsidies by CMHC see David Hulchanski and Glen Drover, "Housing Subsidies in a Period of Restraint: The Canadian Experience," in W. Van Vliet, ed., *Housing Markets and Policies Under Fiscal Austerity* (New York 1987). For a thought-provoking analysis that links capitalist restructuring responses and overall economic crisis to the larger context of government restraint see Alan Sears, "The 'Lean' State and Capitalist Restructuring: Towards a Theoretical Account," *Studies in Political Economy*, 60 (Summer 1999), 91-114.

few amenities and services that Regent Park tenants do enjoy such as the Community Health Centre and recreation facilities and the limited victories in improving the rent scale, maintenance upgrades, and tenant management initiatives were won only through hard-fought struggles by the tenants themselves.[106]

As a result of the market-oriented approach of postwar housing policy, there were only 33,000 rent-geared-to-income units in Metropolitan Toronto's public housing system by the end of the century, representing a minuscule 5 per cent of total dwellings in the region. 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.[107] There was an uninterrupted crisis in affordable housing for low-income families in the period after World War II that was not matched by public housing construction nor private-market dwelling opportunities. The twenty-year period after the war witnessed absolute shortages of rental units, poor quality housing, and outright lack of affordable dwelling space for low-income families caused by the anarchic nature of the private housing market as well as a poorly conceived state urban renewal and rehousing programme that actually exacerbated housing shortages.[108] By the 1960s, working families with rising incomes were able to leave Regent Park and find suitable accommodation in the private market. Indeed, as their incomes increased, rents became progressively higher, providing an incentive to move. The desperate affordability problem, however, endured for low-income families. While there were fluctuations throughout this period, rental unit vacancy rates were constantly low, rents and house prices were high, and by the 1990s, there was an almost complete lack of rental unit construction.[109] From 1964 to 1974, the number of applications for fam-

[106]See Neil Tanner, "From the Desk of the President," *Regent Park Community News*, 3 (March 1973), 2; and RPCI, *By the People*, 67-73. These struggles are discussed at length in Sean Purdy, "By the People, For the People: Tenant Organizing in Toronto's Regent Park Housing Project in the 1960s and 70s," *Journal of Urban History*, (forthcoming 2004).

[107]For selective figures see CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 1, File: A-B 1948-1959, Frank Dearlove to Gordon Ames, 10 February 1956; MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-61*, unpaginated; MTHA, "Report on Survey of Family Housing Applications on File, (Toronto 1969), 1; John Sewell, "Trapped by Inaction," *Now Magazine*, 299 (29 Sept-5 Oct.1988), 11; and Housing Connections Central Registry Report cited in Jack Lakey, "22-year wait for some low-cost housing," *Toronto Star*, 13 July 1998. For the most recent figures consult Toronto Social Housing Connections, "Monthly Report," *City of Toronto Website*, <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/toronto_housing/connections.htm#stats> (1 March 2003).

[108]Brushett, "'Blots on the Face of the City,'" 49-59 and 353-65; and Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace*, 55-57, 126, 163, 169, and 174-78.

[109]For the extremely well-documented housing affordability problems of low-income families in Toronto from the 1970s to 1990s see Jeffrey Patterson and Patricia Streich, *A Review of Canadian Social Housing Policy* (Toronto 1977); Sewell, *Houses and Homes*, 34, chapters 2 and 11; and Robert A. Murdie and Carlos Teixeira, *Towards a Comfortable Neighbourhood and Appropriate Housing: Immigrant Experiences in Toronto* (Toronto 1999).

ily housing in Metropolitan Toronto saw a precipitous increase of prospective families relying on welfare (30.4 to 48.1 per cent) and a concomitant decrease of working families.[110] The constant need for affordable housing, the slum clearance policies that limited cheap dwelling options for low-income families in the downtown area, and the prior decisions by governments not to build adequate numbers of public housing units goes a long way in explaining why only the poorest of the poor were accommodated in public housing by the late 1960s.[111]

Figure 21
Public Housing Waiting Lists - Metropolitan Toronto/Toronto
No. Of Families

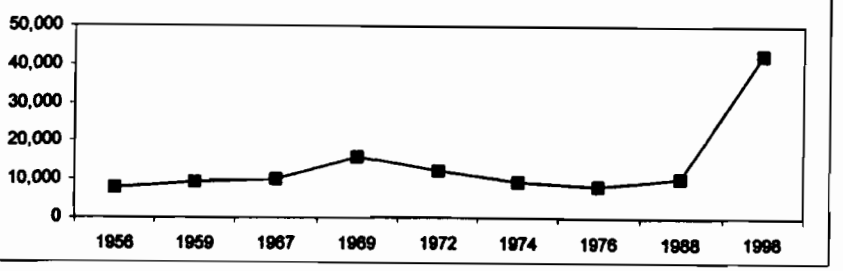


Chart adapted from the following figures: 1956, RG 28, Series B, Box 1, File "A, B 1948-1959," Frank Dearlove to Gordon Ames, 10 February 1956; 1959: MTHA, *Regent Park South Annual Report* (Toronto: MTHA, 1960), unpaginated; 1967 and 1969: MTHA, "Report on Survey of Family Housing Applications on File, (Toronto: MTHA, June 1969), p. 1; 1972 and 1974: MTA, RG 5.1, Box 6, File 2.02, Vol. 9, summary of Family Applications Dec. 72-Jun. 74; 1976: MTA, RG 5.1, Vol. 16, Box 4, File 2, Establishing a Central Registry for MTO, 1976; 1988: John Sewell, "Trapped by Inaction," *Now Magazine*, number 299 (29 Sept-5 Oct. 1988): 11; and Housing Connections Central Registry Report cited in Jack Lakey, "22-year wait for some low-cost housing," *Toronto Star*, 13 July 1998, p. B5.

[110]CTA, HAT, RG 28, Box 27, File: Housing Registry of Metropolitan Toronto, 1967-68, "Quarterly Report of Family Housing Applications," 31 December 1964; CTA, HAT, Box 27, File: Housing Registry of Metropolitan Toronto 1969, "Report of a Survey of Family Housing Applications on File with the Housing Registry of Metropolitan Toronto and Ontario Housing Corporation," 1 May 1969; and MTA, MTHA, Box 6, File 2.02, Ontario Housing Corporation Housing Registry, "Second Quarter 1974, Applications by Income Source," Table III.

[111]I would like to thank Alvin Finkel for clarifications on this particular point.

The particular politics, ideologies, and practices of public housing providers themselves also explain why projects became "last resorts" for those in housing hardship. Policy makers were relentlessly apprehensive that public housing tenants would become reliant on the largesse of the state and thus restricted opportunities for tenants to advance while living in public housing. The graduated rental scale in public housing, based on a portion of the salaries of working wives and children as well as the chief breadwinners, including bonuses and overtime, proved a strong disincentive for chief breadwinners to gain extra income or for other family members to find employment. "Initiative," the tenants' political association, the Regent Park Community Improvement Association, argued in 1969, "is killed to earn extra money or improve standard of living."[112] Interestingly, after a tenant fight-back campaign to improve the rental scale, Ontario Housing Corporation conceded some improvements to working families but not those on fixed incomes who were still saddled with temporary 30-day leases and a high proportion of their social assistance income going towards shelter costs, thereby impoverishing them further.[113]

On the housing demand side, the labour market geography of Toronto also played a role in restricting decent job opportunities for public housing residents in the downtown area. The census data on occupations and work presented earlier is consistent with Kevin Brushett's findings that the central-city area from which many tenants of Regent Park were drawn contained long-standing unskilled and casual labour markets that "drew workers and their families to inner-city neighbourhoods for reasons of both convenience and necessity" such as transportation costs and public transit routes.[114] Project-level data for 1949,[115] 1953,[116] and 1961[117] show that numerous Regent Park North residents worked at large industrial estab-

[112]Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO), Ontario Housing Corporation Files (hereafter OHCF), RG 44-19-1, Box 10, File: B1-7-2A1, RPCIA to H.W. Suters, 12 May 1969.

[113]"New Rent Scale: Opportunity to Earn Additional Money Without Paying Higher Rent," *Ontario Housing*, 15 (Summer 1970), 5, and 20.

[114]Brushett, "'Blots on the Face of the City,'" 158-9, 276.

[115]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 36, File: Correspondence Board of Control, 1949-55, Survey of Families Whose Housing Was Being Demolished to Make Way for Buildings 5-7, 7 June 1949.

[116]A 1953 thesis on public housing and health interviewed what was considered a representative sample of 62 tenants in Regent Park North. The majority were manufacturing workers. Helena Toews, "The Relationship of Public Health and Public Housing in the Regent Park Housing Project," MSW Thesis, University of Toronto, 1953, 63.

[117]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Boxes 29-30. These two archival boxes contain 118 detailed, if inconsistent case histories of tenants who left Regent Park North in 1962. The files in these boxes, labelled by personal names in the archival boxes, were coded by numbers according to their order in the boxes. The names were not recorded. Thus, File No.1 is the first file and so on. They will subsequently be cited as "Tenant Case File," with the number of their placement in the archival boxes.

lishments, which would be gradually caught up in suburban industrial decentralization and high contraction and plant closure rates from the 1950s to 1980s. As Pierre Filion and Dennis Mock explain, the locational shift and contraction or loss of large, unionized, and relatively well-paid manufacturing industry employment in postwar Toronto limited the possibilities of finding well-paid work close to the downtown Toronto location of Regent Park, especially with the majority of families in the project unable to afford a car.[118] The overall high-unemployment context of the late 1970s to the 1990s proved to be another hurdle in the already gruelling employment predicament for those at the bottom of the social ladder.

If the affordability crisis and contraction of decent jobs distressed the working poor during this period, it hit sole-support parents and families on social assistance the hardest.[119] Largely the result of continued postwar economic growth and mounting demands from social activists, the Canada Assistance Plan, introduced in 1965, saw the expansion of notions of "deserving" and consequent increases in the number of programs and recipients.[120] Nevertheless, James Struthers has meticulously demonstrated that welfare benefits were always less than adequate in Toronto even in the 1960s and 1970s during the federal government's US-inspired "War on Poverty." Large numbers of welfare recipients, including those in Regent Park, were paying unusually high proportions of their monthly cheques for shelter since "the actual financial requirements of families, particularly for shelter, were

[118]Pierre Filion and Dennis Mock, "Manufacturing in Canadian Cities," in Bunting and Filion, *Canadian Cities in Transition*, 417, Table 16.1, and 413. Automobile ownership never surpassed 30 per cent of families in Regent Park before 1971 and the vast majority of workers in both sections of the project worked within the City of Toronto, often within 3 to 5 miles of the project. Automobile ownership figures for Regent Park can be found in DBS, *Census of Canada, 1951 - Population and Housing Characteristics - Census Tracts* (Ottawa 1953-1955), 25; DBS, *Census of Canada, 1961 - Census Tract - Toronto* (Ottawa 1961), 32; Statscan, *Census of Canada, 1971 - Census Tract - Toronto* (Ottawa 1971), 52. On location of employment for RPS residents in 1961 and RPN residents in 1968 see MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-61*, unpaginated; City of Toronto Development Department, *Regent Park North: Canada's Premier Housing Redevelopment Project* (Toronto 1971), 17. In 1961, 67.2 per cent of workers in RPS used public transportation to travel to work. MTHA, *Annual Report 1960-1961*, unpaginated. On the changing labour markets of inner-city Toronto note David Ley, *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City* (New York 1996), Chapters 3 and 4; and James Lemon, *Liberal Dreams and Nature's Limits* (Toronto 1996), 249-50.

[119]In the 1960s, more and more applications for public housing appear to have been motivated by the desire to escape from abusive men. Robert Bradley, Regent Park North manager, claimed that applications from "broken families," 98 per cent of them women and the majority fleeing abuse, increased over 100 per cent in 1965. CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 8, File: 1965-1968 C, Robert Bradley to ADM, 25 August 1965.

[120]Margaret Little, *'No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit': The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997* (Toronto 1998), 142-3.

bureaucratically manipulated to fit within preset provincial maximums."[121] Single parents were particularly more likely to require public housing in a context of rising rents and shortage of affordable shelter options. Labour market discrimination against women meant low salaries and an absence of opportunities for job training or career advancement. Moreover, affordable day care was so scarce that many single women with small children had little option but complete dependence on social assistance with few prospects for employment.[122] Margaret Little's study of single mothers on welfare confirms that this bleak situation prevailed into the 1990s and was aggravated by cutbacks to welfare such as the de-indexing of baby bonuses.[123] Put simply, those most needing public housing were mother-led families and those on social assistance, which explains the particular social composition and abysmally low incomes of tenants in the project.

The shift in ethnic composition in Regent Park can similarly be explained by shifting factors of housing demand since the 1960s. Some recent immigrant groups and refugees, such as Afro-Caribbeans, Chinese, and Vietnamese immigrants, generally had larger families and/or lower incomes and, moreover, often coped with racial discrimination in labour and housing markets.[124] Afro-Caribbean immigrants, for example, with a larger proportion of single-women headed families, suffered a double burden in the housing market: subject to the oppressive racial and gendered positions of landlords (public and private), they also faced "constrained choice" in housing due to their low incomes.[125] Furthermore, substantial numbers of refugees and immigrants from Vietnam, many of them ethnically Chinese who fled religious and ethnic persecution, faced severe housing difficulties when they arrived in Toronto. In addition to negligible incomes, they faced critical problems of adaptation to a new language and culture. As Mark Edward Pfeifer writes: "Regent Park was attractive as a reception neighbourhood because of the low rents of buildings in the

[121]James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Toronto 1994), 235. For a personal story about the inadequacy of welfare benefits for one Regent Park family note Bonnie Cornell, "Jobless family of five has to eat on $16 a week," *Toronto Daily Star*, 27 May 1970.

[122]On lack of affordable daycare opportunities in Regent Park see Susan Anderson, "Volunteers will teach skills to bored mothers in hostel," *Globe and Mail*, 15 December 1967. In 1971, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto complained that there was a substantial waiting list for the meagre daycare offered in Regent Park South. MTA Archives, RG 5.1 86.4 vol.3, File: "Nursery and Day Care Centres — Regent Park South Day Care, January 1963-March 1971," Donna Snipper to John Anderson, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, 24 March 1971.

[123]Little and Morrison, "The Pecker Detectors Are Back," 112. On baby bonuses see Bill Schiller, "Planned baby bonus curbs worry single moms," *Toronto Star*, 7 July 1985.

[124]Murdie and Teixeira, *Towards a Comfortable Neighbourhood*, 35.

[125]Robert Murdie, "'Blacks in Near-Ghettos?' Black Visible Minority Population in Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority Public Housing Units," *Housing Studies*, 9 (October 1994), 435-57.

vicinity, and its proximity to settlement agencies and other social services as well as two nearby Chinatowns accessible a short distance away either by walking or streetcar."[126]

"All I know is that I live in Regent Park": Territorial Stigmatization and Tenant Reponses

An everytime yu slam de door
sey no job
discrimination injustice
a feel the whip lick An its
the same boat
the same boat
the same boat
Oh Lawd, Oh Lawd, Oh Lawd, eh ya.

Lillian Allen, "Rub a Dub Inna Regent Park."[127]

Urban geographers and historians have established that "places" are sites of both material and social relations as well as culture, ideology, and "structures of feeling."[128] Slum representations singling out certain urban working-class and poor neighbourhoods as socially, culturally, and morally inferior have had a tenacious hold on the imaginations and practices of 20th-century urban reformers, the media, and state officials in the Western world.[129] By the late 1960s, Regent Park would be labelled a new "slum" similar in many respects to the Cabbagetown neighbourhood that was destroyed to build the project. Condemned as too large and badly designed by academics, as a haven of single mothers, welfare families, and deviants by governments and the media, a magnet for crime and drug problems by police and law and order advocates, and the site of potentially explosive "racial" problems by many popular commentators, Regent Park had come full circle in the public mind from the "ordered community" of the 1940s. 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.[130] Thus, in both "hard" news

[126]Mark Edward Pfeifer, "Community, Adaptation and the Vietnamese in Toronto," PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 1999, 86-97.

[127]Lillian Allen is the foremost representative in Toronto of dub poetry — a form of politically themed poetry set to reggae music. The lyrics cited are from Lillian Allen, "Rub a Dub Inna Regent Park," *Revolutionary Tea Party* (Toronto 1986), compact disk.

[128]Harald Bauder, "Agency, Place, Scale: Representations of Inner-City Youth Identities," *Journal of Economic and Social Geography*, 92 (August 2001), 281.

[129]David Ley, "The Inner-City," in Bunting and Filion, *Canadian Cities in Transition*, 277-81.

[130]Patricia M. Evans and Karen J. Swift, "Single Mothers and the Press: Rising Tides, Moral Panic, and Restructuring Discourses," in Sheila M. Neysmith, ed., *Restructuring Caring La-*

stories concerning politics and economic issues and "soft" news exploring "human interest" issues, Regent Park was "tagged" as a site of poverty, behavioural problems, and crime.[131] The wider population, with little or no direct relationship with public housing or its tenants, was only presented with the "bad" and the sensational, which would shape opinions on the project and its tenants. As Jacqueline Leavitt and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris comment:

> For most people, the public housing territory falls outside the cocoon of their immediate, familiar space and is foreign to their understanding. As places dominated by other subcultures the developments seem alien and remote to outsiders. 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.[132]

Such popular renderings reinforced stigmatization by obscuring the complex realities of what Sudhir Venkatesh calls "project living," downplaying structural explanations for poverty and masking the agency of tenants.[133]

bour: Discourse, State Practice and Everyday Life (Toronto 2000), 73-77; Graham Knight, "Hegemony, the Press and Business Discourse: News Coverage of Strike-Breaker Reform in Québec and Ontario," *Studies in Political Economy*, 55 (Spring 1998), 93-125; Pfeifer, "Community, Adaptation and the Vietnamese in Toronto," chapter 10; and Robert M. Entman, "Blacks in the news: Television, modern racism and cultural change," *Journalism Quarterly*, 69 (Summer 1992), 341-61.

[131] For some examples note Richard Mackie, "Public housing code will stress privacy," *Toronto Telegram*, 23 May 1968; "Prejudice in Ontario Housing," *Toronto Telegram*, 19 November 1971; "OHC houses not ghettoes," *Toronto Telegram*, 4 March 1971; "Evictions from public housing," *Toronto Star*, 21 March 1974; Arnie Hakala, "Regent Park new world when you reach 10," *Toronto Star*, 20 October 1976; Dick Beddoes, "Return Fire on vote front," *Globe and Mail*, 3 December 1976; Yves Lavigne, "Black families suffer culture clash," *Globe and Mail*, 11 June 1981; Kathy English, "Regent Park residents fight to rid housing project of its loser image," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 9 April 1989, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003); Heward Grafftey, "There must be a better way," *Canadian Business*, 45 (September 1972), 40; Robert Fulford, "The making of a neighbourhood," *Toronto Life* (March 1995), 27-8, 30-2; Jeb Blount, "In praise of shantytowns: Beyond the crime and grime, Third World slums get it right," *The Next City, Online Edition*, July 1997, <http://nextcity.com/main/town/2shanty.htm>; and Gillmor, "The punishment station," 46-55.

[132] Jacqueline Leavitt and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "A Decent Home and a Stable Environment: Dilemmas of Public Residents in Los Angeles," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 12 (August 1995), 224.

[133] Sudhir Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA 2000).

Residents had a vivid consciousness of the damning stereotypical image of their homes and neighbourhood. Speaking to the Hellyer Task Force in 1969, one young woman regretted: "Just because you're from Regent Park, people think that you are a nobody."[134] A little girl told the Task Force, "all I know is that I live in Regent Park."[135] Larry Quinto believes that "we were considered second class by most, and shunned by many. We were labelled as 'no goods' and 'hoodlums'." "When will people realize," Nancy Green lamented in 1971, "that we are not second-class citizens, but human beings who are just trying to make it through life same as everyone else."[136] Even Nina Corfu, who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s and lived in a middle-class family in a housing cooperative across the street from Regent Park North, pointedly remembers being characterized by the parents of school friends as "different" simply since she lived in the general area, pointing up the powerful ideological hold that the housing project had on external observers.[137] It was all but impossible for residents to avoid stigmatizing attitudes since they pervaded many aspects of daily life — dealings with relatives, friends, and acquaintances outside the project and relationships with social workers, police, teachers, and employers.

The overt economic hardships of the Regent Park population were severely aggravated by territorial stigmatization. By the late 1970s, the dismal reputation of the project and the low incomes of area residents led most of the local supermarkets, banks, and other affordable shops to close, including all but one convenience store within the development itself, adding additional economic burdens to the local population.[138] One 74-year-old pensioner thought it "criminal" that a growing portion of her fixed budget for food was going towards public transportation costs. Mary Hudson complained: "There used to be all kinds of good markets, also banks, in walking distance. Now I pay for TTC and carrying those bags on the street is not safe for me."[139] As the larger Cabbagetown area gentrified and became home to an affluent middle-class population, luxury shops crowded out the affordable stores that residents had long relied on.

Even more directly, as Harald Bauder has established in the American context, the pernicious effects of cultural and social stereotyping of poor and ethnic minor-

[134]Cited from film footage of a 1969 public meeting. See NFB, *Return to Regent Park.*

[135]Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force*, 54. Note as well Grafftey, "There must be a better way," 40.

[136]"OHC Houses not ghettoes," *Toronto Telegram*, 4 March 1971.

[137]Nina Corfu, letter to the author, 2 March 2002.

[138]Letter from the president of the Ontario Federation of Food Co-Operatives and Clubs Inc., Doug Holland to the *Toronto Star*, 25 June 1980; "Regent Park residents try out co-op shopping," *Toronto Star*, 20 February 1983; Janice Turner, "Regent Park mothers seeking more full-service grocery stores," *Toronto Star*, 11 June 1984.

[139]Cited in Bob Pomerantz, "We're short on service, Regent Park residents say," *Toronto Star*, 30 March 1981.

ity neighbourhoods strongly impaired employment success.[140] Loïc Wacquant notes in the case of similarly large and stigmatized French state housing complexes that residential discrimination "hampers the search for jobs and contributes to entrench local unemployment since inhabitants ... encounter additional distrust and reticence among employers as soon as they mention their place of residence."[141] As early as 1968, residents related stories of the stigma of Regent Park affecting job chances and social status among friends and relatives.[142] One Regent Park mother stated in 1982: "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 ... The way they cut it up, you're embarrassed, and there's no need to be embarrassed, but you are."[143] A 1978 survey of 86 unemployed youth in Regent Park by Canada Manpower found an earnest desire to work destroyed by cynicism over lack of jobs and stigma.[144] Many residents internalized the downgraded job aspirations partially produced by external stigmatization. Clement Virgo, an outstanding filmmaker who grew up in Regent Park, articulated this sentiment clearly: "I didn't pick up a camera until 1989. The arts were never encouraged, it was always 'get a job in construction.' I figured people like me didn't make films, there were no role models for me."[145]

Young people felt the damning image of Regent Park tenants as social "outcasts" especially hard. Insidious neighbourhood-based stereotyping can have an excessively harmful impact on young people who are often more physically and emotionally bounded to their home area than adults. Clement Virgo remembers "when [he] lived in Regent Park, the world was very small ... the world *was* Regent Park." Lori Stubbs, a resident in the 1970s and 1980s, recalled that her "view of the world, I think, was pretty petite. It was very small."[146] The streets surrounding Regent Park — Parliament, Gerard, River, and Queen — marked not only the physical but also the ideological boundaries of Regent Park for many young people, beyond which a different world resided. Considerable research on identity formation

[140]Bauder, "Neighbourhood Effects and Cultural Exclusion," 85-93.

[141]Wacquant, "Red Belt, Black Belt," 240.

[142]Allen, "Regent Park called colossal flop," *Toronto Star*, 7 December 1968; Glen Allen, "'Cures' for Regent Park range from rebuilding to adult-only policy," *Toronto Star*, 14 December 1968; Quinto, letter to the author; and Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force*, 61.

[143]"Park School's time running out," *Toronto Star*, 22 May 1982.

[144]Margaret Mays, Felies Einhorn, and William Barlow, *Buddy, Can You Spare A Job?: Youth Unemployment in a Low-Income Area of Toronto* (Toronto 1978); "Regent Park Study says at least 70 percent out of work," *Toronto Star*, 11 July 1978.

[145]Carolyn Bennett, "Black like Clement Virgo," *Eye Magazine: Online Edition*, 19 May 1994 <http:www.eye.net> (August 15, 2002).

[146]Stubbs and Virgo are interviewed in *A Way Out*, Christene Brown, dir., (Toronto 2000). Also see the story of ten-year-old Jesse in Lindalee Tracey, *On the Edge: A Journey Into the Heart of Canada* (Vancouver and Toronto 1993), 109.

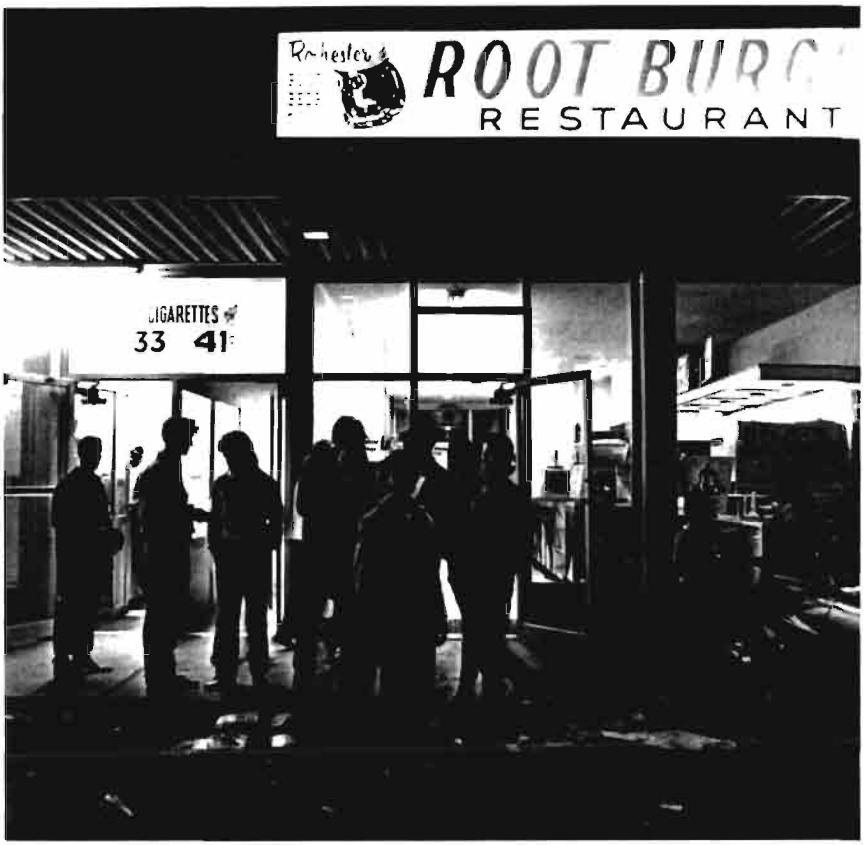


Photo 3. Teenagers in front of a fast-food restaurant located in Regent Park South in 1964. The original caption in the *Toronto Telegram* read: "Regent Park gang," Toronto Telegram Photograph Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, Negative Number 0-0230.

among inner-city youth has found that ideas about employment, education, and relationships with other groups are crucially shaped by internal spatial contexts such as neighbourhood.[147] Certainly, they were also influenced by the stigmatizing representations articulated by "outsiders."

Teenagers frequently responded to stigmatization by consciously avoiding mentioning that they lived in the project. Mark Thurman recollected that when he first arrived to study art at the prestigious Central Tech High School in the 1960s, the school had

[147]Harald Bauder, "Work, young people and neighbourhood representations," *Social and Cultural Geography*, 2 (December 2001), 465; Bauder, "Agency, Place, Scale," 279-90.

a well-respected art program, kids went there from all over the city. They showed up with beautiful portfolios. They had all these expensive paint brushes, paints and drawing tools – everything. Their parents dropped them off in expensive cars. I showed up with a couple of pencils and an inexpensive drawing pad. I didn't tell anybody I was from Regent Park. There was a stigma even then.[148]

Residents who grew up in the project in the 1970s and 1980s tell a similar story. Christene Brown noted: "As a teenager I made a point of not telling anyone where I lived and made sure no one found out."[149] Andy Gorman told people at school he lived "off Gerard St. and that's it."[150] David Zapparoli said he "was very aware of the stigma attached to Regent Park."[151]

Stigmatization had harmful affects on the educational outcomes of many Regent Park children.[152] Christene Brown remembers a high school French teacher who "told me that she thought I would be better off in a trade school when she found out that I was from Regent."[153] Chris Reading recollected the "real negative view of Regent Park" held by some teachers at the schools he attended. He relates that when he was in grade 8 at St. Martin's Catholic school, all the boys were pushed to go to a technical high school to learn trades. His teacher put pressure on him to pursue this route but his father insisted that his son wanted to go to university.[154] There were, of course, numerous success stories of people who made it through the educational system and developed prosperous careers and fulfilling lives, yet stigmatization was always a conspicuous barrier to overcome.[155] In 1968, Wally Seccombe, then a youth worker with the YMCA in Regent Park and later a prominent sociologist,

[148]Interview with Mark Thurman from David Zapparoli, *Regent Park: The Public Experiment in Housing* (Toronto 1999), 58. On general stereotyping of kids see a quote by a Regent Park mother on her son being singled out as a "Regent Park kid" in Grafferty, "There must be a better way," 39-40.

[149]Christene Brown, letter to the author, 5 August 2002.

[150]AG, interview with author.

[151]Cited in Christopher Hume, "Regent Park: At 50 it's still going strong," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 15 March 1999, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003).

[152]For a discussion of how working-class children were frequently denied a decent education through biased "streaming" see R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto 1999), 42-43. On the adverse health conditions among poor people see the comments by Alan Tai-Wai Li, one of the staff doctors at the Regent Park Community Health Centre: "It surprises me every day — the complexity of the human condition and how nonclinical conditions affect health" cited in Ann Silversides, "An activist in practice and politics," *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 165 (August 2001), 512.

[153]Brown, letter to the author.

[154]Reading, interview with author.

[155]For instance see the story of Ainsworth Morgan, a retired professional football player (CFL), who after retirement became an elementary school teacher in Regent Park. Andrew Stawicki, "Welcome back, Morgan," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 26 May 2001, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003).

Photo 4. St. David's Square Wading Pool. One of the fruits of tenant activism for improved recreational facilities in the project. Photograph by David Zapparoli, silver print, 1990.

noted that children in the project were often labelled as failures by teachers and the school system more generally. He concluded: "They haven't dropped out of school. They've been pushed out."[156]

Inequity was exacerbated throughout the period by the unequal distribution of classroom and schoolyard resources among public schools. Parents from more affluent areas donated money to their children's schools ensuring that they had better resources than poor schools whose parents were unable to contribute.[157] The occasion of Nelson Mandela's visit to Park School in 2001 to officially rename the school to Nelson Mandela Park School, provided a poignant glimpse of these inequities. A young Black student interviewed during the visit "paused from his excited banter about his hero Mandela to make an important point ... the kid was frustrated by fact that the school building had been in such bad shape for so long and that only a visit by a celebrity merited its renovation."[158] Park schoolteacher, Roberta Clarke, was not exaggerating when she argued in 1979 that local kids were effectively being "ripped off" by the system.[159]

Inner-city parents, including a core contingent from Regent Park, organized a vibrant political protest group, the Park School Community Council, to combat these alarming trends in the early 1970s. They argued that their children were treated differently in the school system solely because they were poor and lived in public housing. They battled to counter opinions such as those expressed by several Toronto Board of Education Trustees, who argued that the innate disabilities of deprived children were to blame for poor school performance.[160] According to education activist and York University social science professor, George Martell, who worked in collaboration with the "Park Mothers," as they were popularly known, the School Board showed contempt for the learning abilities of poor children. The Council organized a number of large community meetings, publicly protested at Board meetings, produced a scathing report on bias in the education system, and

[156]Cited in Allen, "To its youngsters, Regent Park south is a place to wreck."

[157]Irene Atkinson, chair of the TBOE, admitted in 2001 that such schoolyard inequities have been "ever thus." Sean Fine, "A Tale of Two Cities," *Globe and Mail: Online Edition*, 2 July 2001, <http://www.globeandmail.com> (15 January 2003). On teachers in Regent Park using their own money to buy supplies for their students see Louise Brown, "Rescue our schools, task force told," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 28 Sept. 2002, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003).

[158]This story is told in Nina Corfu, letter to the author.

[159]Howard Fluxgold, "All teachers at city school seek transfers," *Globe and Mail*, 29 May 1979. For more recent cutbacks, see David Crane, "Mindless Tories hurt preschoolers," *Toronto Star Online Edition*, 3 November 2002, <http://www.thestar.com> (15 January 2003).

[160]"Reading problems at public school blamed on parents," *Toronto Daily Star*, 30 April 1971. On the struggles of Regent Park mothers see *Brief to the Management Committee of the Toronto Board of Education, 16 November 1971* as cited in Judith M. Newman, "Downtown Kids Aren't Dumb: They Need A Better Program," in George Martell, ed., *The Politics of the Canadian Public School* (Toronto 1974), 39-68.

Photo 5. Commemorative quilt for International Women's Day made by elementary students at Duke of York Public School in 1993. Photography by Sean Purdy.

undertook a concerted campaign to oppose the streaming of area elementary children into vocational high schools and introduced teaching assistants for those with learning difficulties. They worked closely with teachers and their unions to improve education and build solidarity to push the School Board for better programs. Martell believes that the Park Mothers had a galvanizing effect on community organization in the period and "ignited a remarkable amount of real protest in other communities," "energized" the anti-streaming movement, and "filled the minds of many communities."[161]

These struggles won extra teaching assistants in local schools, a beefed-up special resources program, and attracted a large private donation from the Donner Foundation to fund like-minded programs. Despite positive evaluations of pilot

[161]George Martell, interview with the author, notes taken, 22 January 2002.

Photo 6. Regent Park children demonstrating for a new swimming pool, 14 August 1969. Toronto Telegram Photograph Collection, York University Archives and Special Collections, Negative Number 0-0228, "Regent Park Pool Protest Aug. 14/69."

programs, however, the provincial government cut funds to inner-city education programs throughout the 1970s leading to the loss of extra personnel such as teachers and teaching assistants and a reduction in special educational resources.[162] By 1979, 60 per cent of students from Park School went to vocational high schools, the highest percentage in the city. The Board admitted that students who graduated from occupational high schools, the vast majority of whom were from poor families, stood little chance of entering post-secondary or even technical apprentice programs.[163] Regent Park residents experienced negative school outcomes in general. It is salient to note, however, that racist attitudes and practices within the school system have also contributed to high dropout rates and poor performance among black students in Toronto, including those in Regent Park.[164]

The negative spatial association of the project with social dysfunction compounded structural constraints to employment opportunities, education chances, and social mobility, and was yet another roadblock in the strenuous path to "make it." Yet Regent Park could also be an affirmative association for some tenants — a comfortable place where people experienced a sense of belonging, shared informal services, and offered personal assistance to those in need. A 1965 survey found "a

[162]On the program note Anne Moon, "Private $82,000 grant to train, pay parents as teachers' aides," *Toronto Daily Star*, 15 November 1971; Margaret Daly, "A Rich Foundation helps out poor citizens' groups," *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 April 1972. For evaluations see Guy Cable, *Park School: The Donner Project* (Toronto 1974), 5-8; Alan Pomfret, *Parental Intervention and the Process of Planned Social Change in an Inner-City School: Final Evaluation Report on the Donner Project at Park School* (Toronto 1974), 85-6. On tenants' views of the success of the program see "Park School," *Regent Park Community News*, 1 (May 1972), 4. On the general political climate and the effects of cutbacks note Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 113-5. On the continuing struggles of Regent Park parents and teachers in the late 1970s against cutbacks see "Parents, teachers fight for jobs," *Seven News*, 4 May 1979; and "Teachers at Park School can too hack it," *Seven News*, 29 June 1979.

[163]Howard Fluxgold, "Joblessness forecast for Park School pupils," *Globe and Mail*, 19 October 1979.

[164]See the comments by black Regent Park teen Marsha Ng-You on the racism she faced in local schools in Zapparoli, *Regent Park*, 48-53. Henry Clarke, John Woodroof, and Lois de Shield, *A Study of Cultural and/or Racial Conflicts in Regent Park* (Toronto 1976), 41, also discusses complaints by Black Regent Park students against racist teachers but stresses that such educators were few. Later reports, however, stressed that some teachers had not fully embraced multicultural practices in the classroom leaving some Regent Park parents upset. "Teachers under fire from immigrant parents," *Globe and Mail*, 22 May 1978. A more general study of how racism shapes the educational outcomes of Black students in Toronto can be found in George J. Sefa Dei and Irma Marcia James, "African-Canadian Youth and the Politics of Negotiating Racial and Racialized Identities," *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 1 (March 1998), 91-110. I would like to thank Professor Sefa Dei for providing a copy of this article.

high degree of socialization and mutual aid. The corridors were meeting places for friendly talk." Paul Ringer, a long-time housing research officer in Toronto, exclaimed that social workers were "horrified" to find one family on welfare in the housing development sharing food with a family next door who needed assistance.[165] In 1965, Mrs. Chatten, who had lived in Regent Park South for five years, confirmed: "You can be dying in Scarborough and places like that and nobody will lift a finger but here the people will do anything to help a person."[166] Ken Dear, a United Church minister, who lived in the project for a short period in the mid-1960s, recalled his neighbours as "warm and open, caring about each other."[167] This self-affirmation and pride of place is also reflected eloquently in the themes of solidarity, friendship, and community in the face of economic devastation found in the films of Clement Virgo.[168]

This sense of community is also evidenced in positive memories of living in the project and criticisms of media stereotyping, especially among activist women. "Growing up in Regent Park," Janice Bowen reminisced in 1991, "one got a sense of living in a small town where everyone knows one another."[169] "There's a tight intimate community here that you don't find on the outside," Sharon Carter, single mother, said in 1989. "People bend over backwards to help each other out,"[170] said Shirley Mintz, a community activist who has lived in the project for more than three decades, "I love it here. If I need something, I know I don't need to go without. I really wouldn't want to be living anywhere else."[171] Carol Walsh, an activist with single mothers in the 1980s, expressed: "When it comes to my kids, I'd do just about anything to fight for them, that's why I work to make this a better place. What angers me is when people think I'm a dummo just because I live in Regent Park.

[165]"Terms poor ill at ease among richer neighbours," *Globe and Mail*, 10 September 1966.
[166]"Will Ask 13 Families to Move to Suburbs From Regent Park," *Globe and Mail*, 30 September 1965.
[167]Ken Dear, interview with the author, tape recorded, Toronto, 20 March 1996.
[168]*Rude* (Toronto 1993) and *The Planet of Junior Brown*, dir. Clement Virgo (Toronto 1997).
[169]"Letter to the Editor," *Toronto Star*, 18 April 1991. For other positive memories and experiences of the Regent Park community see Quinto, letter to the author; the interviews in Zapparoli, *Regent Park*, 34-58; CTA, SC 302, Box 9, File: Regent Park, 1965-1970, PB to Mayor Dennison, 10 December 1968; Keiran, "Regent Park North 18 Years Later"; David Allen, "6,000 words later, Regent Park still Needs Help"; Gerard, "Regent Park battles its image as 'hopeless slum'"; RPCIA, *By the People*, 93-103; and Tracey, *On the Edge*, 108-12. For similar sentiments among women on welfare living in private market housing in Toronto see W.E. Mann, "The Lower Ward," in W.E. Mann, *The Underside of Toronto* (Toronto 1970), 33-64.
[170]English, "Regent Park residents."
[171]Cited in Michelle Osborn, "Regent Park celebrates 50 years of caring about its neighbours," *Toronto Star*, 4 July 1998.

Photo 7. Woman Cooking. Annual "Bloc-o-rama" festivals in the 1980s and 1990s included the sharing of multicultual foods. Photography by David Zapparoli, silver print, 1990.

Maybe I don't have higher education, but I have experience in life that can beat any education."[172] Julie, a staff member at the Christian Resource Centre, who was in daily contact with Regent Park tenants, reflected on such women in Regent Park, saying they exemplified a "legacy of courage."[173]

Community pride was sometimes expressed with a hostile "us versus them" edge, especially in relation to media and social work incursions in the neighbourhood.[174] A 1965 Central Neighbourhood House study found great resentment toward media stigmatization of the project. It also discovered an "innate distrust of authority" and outsiders. "Many tenants derive vicarious satisfaction from seeing the teenagers thwart the police and the Administration [and] ... although tenants, argue, criticize and gossip among themselves, they present a united front against pressures from outside the community."[175] One interviewee challenged *Toronto Star* reporter David Allen, who penned a sensationalist exposé of Regent Park South in 1968: "You've been conditioned. You won't even try to meet the good people here." Pegged as a stranger in the area, he was asked by a young boy: "Are you a cop or a social worker?"[176] Sandra Langille, a tenant political activist, argued cynically that Regent was the "oldest, largest and most surveyed and social-worked project in the country...."[177] Norma Penner, coordinator of the tenants' political group, the Regent Park Community Improvement Association, recalled one memorable line of a play written by a resident: "Regent Park is held up by an army of social workers." Penner emphasized how tenants begrudged social work interventions even if they were often reliant on the aid offered by the state and outside agencies.[178] Resentment towards such belittling interlopers was a recurrent

[172]English, "Regent Park residents."

[173]"Lives Lived: Bette Tupling," *Toronto Christian Resource Center Website*, <http://www.tcrc.on.ca> (September 14, 2002).

[174]Cited in Glen Allen, "One day in the life of RP South." For similar critiques of the sensationalist media by public housing residents in Chicago see Studs Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel About the American Obsession* (New York 1992), 107-9. On public housing residents and the struggle against stigma see Rhonda Y. Williams, "'We're tired of being treated like dogs': Poor women and Power Politics in Black Baltimore," *The Black Scholar*, 31 (Fall-Winter 2001), 31-41.

[175]AO, OHC, RG 44-19-1, Box 10, File: Tenant Associations in Metro, Central Neighbourhood House, "Assessment of Youth Problems in Regent Park South, June 1965," 13, 10. On the "us versus them" attitude also see Quinto, letter to the author; AG, interview with the author; and Clarke, Woodroof, and de Shield, *A Study of Cultural and/or Racial Conflicts in Regent Park*.

[176]Allen, "Regent Park South called colossal flop."

[177]"Letter to the Editor," *Seven News*, 7 October 1978.

[178]Norma Penner, interview with the author, tape recorded, Toronto, 14 November 1996.

feature of residents' relationship with the media and social workers, especially among political activists.[179]

Positive internal representations of place expressed by residents found its most constructive expression in united political organization, especially in the 1968-1977 period. During those years a sizable, well-organized, and representative tenants' organization — the Regent Park Community Improvement Association — struggled to improve the physical and social infrastructure of the project as well as the schools, combat racism, and battle the project's slum image and "criminal" reputation. Tenants organized around economic and political issues as well as for recognition and dignity in the face of intense social exclusion and marginality. They won a number of significant victories around recreational, service, and maintenance issues, and succeeded in modifying some aspects of the rental system.[180]

Yet the cumulative effects of material deprivation, state neglect of project facilities, and the powerful external representation of the project as a "branded space" also led to divisiveness and blaming "others" for problems.[181] While outsiders tended to view Regent Park as a physical and social totality, for instance, many of its inhabitants actually elaborated a spatial "micro-hierarchy" between the North and South sections. The latter project, home to more family housing and thus many more children, was usually regarded as the site of disproportionate numbers of "problem" families. "People from the North," Christene Brown recalled, " always thought that the South was rougher than the North — South was where the real troublemakers lived. We were always really apprehensive about going to the South."[182] Jackie Reading observed that some residents in the "North looked down on South, considering it 'poorer' and 'rougher'."[183] Conversely, some residents from the southern section took the opposing position, believing, as David Zapparoli remembers, that "their accommodation was superior. In some ways it was because there was a higher ratio of single-family dwellings. It even had a suburban feel to it in some parts. But the people in north felt that they were the original 'Parkers'."[184] Some tenants had thus internalized notions of "rough" and "respectable" workers long characteristic of "slumology."

[179]See Zapparoli in Hume, "Regent Park: At 50 it's still going strong"; Allen, "One day in the life of Regent Park"; Allen, "6,000 words later, Regent Park still Needs Help"; any issue of the *Regent Park Community News*; NFB, *Return to Regent Park*; Gerard, "Regent Park battles its 'hopeless slum' image."

[180]See Purdy, "By the People, For the People."

[181]On this point in the French public housing experience consult Wacquant, "Red Belt, Black Belt," 242-5.

[182]Brown, letter to the author. Also note Kieran, "Regent Park North 18 Years Later"; Corfu, letter to the author; Zapparoli in Hume, "Regent Park: At 50 it's still going strong"; and Reading, interview with the author.

[183]Jackie Reading, interview with the author.

[184]David Zapparoli, letter to the author.

This divisive, place-based territoriality was heightened by racist attitudes among some tenants as immigrants from the West Indies began to move into Regent Park in the 1970s. Relations between black and white tenants do not seem to have been particularly conflict-ridden in the project or more problematic than in the city as a whole. There have been few recorded incidents of outright violence or confrontation. Former tenants, black and white, remark that relations were generally smooth if at times distant in the 1970s. As Christene Brown reflected: "I think the problems I encountered while growing up had more to do with classism ... [R]elatively speaking people in Regent Park got along with others from different backgrounds."[185] The cadre of the Regent Park Community Improvement Association included numerous West Indian immigrant residents and the organization took an active role in opposing incursions by white supremacists in the project in the 1970s and 1980s and participated in larger anti-racist movements.[186] Nevertheless, racism against black and South Asian residents was evident in the 1970s.

Certainly some racist attitudes were related to perceived injustices in tenant selection and placement in public housing. In the context of increasing need for affordable housing and a dwindling public housing portfolio, a minority of white tenants mistakenly believed that visible minority immigrants were getting favourable treatment, sensationally claiming that they were purposely bringing children in from the West Indies to bolster their qualifications for public housing.[187] Ontario Housing Corporation responded to these concerns by implementing a more restrictive policy for West Indian families until 1979 when tenant protest forced a policy change.[188] Housing management thus worked to reinforce racist attitudes and deflected attention away from the woeful shortage of affordable housing.

Yet wider racist ideas in society, bred by acute economic misery, were found among tenants and could lead to blaming blacks for perceived increases in crime, violence, the palpably deteriorating project facilities, and even a lack of recreation programs for teens. A much-publicized "race riot" in June 1976 saw intense physical skirmishes between black and white teens, centring initially on conflicts over the use of a baseball/soccer field.[189] Media reports in the aftermath of the "riots" re-

[185]Brown, letter to the author. For similar sentiments see Chris, Jackie, and Susie Reading, interview with the author; and Simon Mielniczuk, letter to the author, 2 February 2002.

[186]Simon Mielniczuk,letter to the author. See the letters by the RPCIA and the Regent Park Services Unit condemning the rise of white supremacists in East End Toronto in 1980. RPCIA "Letter to the Editor," *Seven News*, 26 September 1980.

[187]On the racism and "constrained choice" that has led to a disproportionate number of blacks in MTHA see Murdie, "Blacks in Near-Ghettos," 435-57. On racial tensions caused by deprivation consult Dorothy Quann, *Racial Discrimination in Housing* (Ottawa 1979), 33-4.

[188]Racist practices by the OHC were criticized by human rights advocates in the late 1970s. See Quann, *Racial Discrimination in Housing*, 33-4.

[189]The *Globe and Mail* portrayed the brawls as blacks against whites. The *Toronto Star* saw it more as a territorial conflict between youths, citing local police to that effect. Arthur John-

vealed both the existence of racist ideas among white tenants, deeper analyses by white and black tenants that pinpointed socio-economic deprivation, and superficial opinions largely expressed by the media and the police. Both the police and the *Toronto Star* maintained that the violence "was not racial in origin," and instead simply blamed bored, young people.[190] Alton Keane, however, whose house was attacked by a gang of white youth during the mêlée, forcefully contested this analysis: "They [whites] call me nigger all the time. They call us all niggers. They are just lucky I wasn't home at the time. They won't call me nigger no more."[191] Florence Ferguson, alleged: "New people who are moving in seem to be taking over the place. I feel like a stranger in my own building." Shirley Chevalier disagreed saying: "These boys and girls need jobs. If they had jobs we wouldn't have this trouble."[192] After the situation had settled down, the tenants' association and local community and church groups seemed to have recognized that there was indeed real friction among tenants. They organized a number of anti-racist meetings to discuss the incidence, propagandize against racism, and built a successful anti-racist festival to bring different groups together. The Regent Park Community Improvement Association also secured funding from the federal government to hire white and black youth workers to organize recreation and community programs.[193] Simon Mielniczuk, coordinator of the group at the time, believes that the tenants' association played a valiant and successful role in defusing the conflict in the following years.[194]

In addition to the role of divisive state policies, then, the 1976 events point up both the strength of a divisive territoriality and the existence of racist attitudes in the project. Both white and Canadian-born black tenants expressed particular enmity toward Jamaican immigrants for being "too aggressive."[195] General lack of cultural awareness and inter-racial dating were also singled out as areas that created tension by the three studies conducted in the aftermath of the clash. Yet they all came to the conclusion that material conditions were the paramount motive for conflict, underscoring high unemployment among teens, deep-seated despair about future education and work chances, perceived injustices over tenant selection and placement

son and Darryl Dean, "Eight charged in Regent Park fights," *Globe and Mail*, 9 June 1976; and "Youths go on rampage in Regent Park," *Toronto Star*, 8 June 1976.

[190]"Boredom, heat led to violence, Regent Park residents say," *Toronto Star*, 9 June 1976; and Editorial, "Cooling tempers," *Toronto Star*, 9 June 1976.

[191]"Boredom, heat led to violence, Regent Park residents say," *Toronto Star*, 9 June 1976.

[192]"Regent park youths on rampage," *Toronto Star*, 8 June 1976.

[193]Untitled Article, *Regent Park Community News*, 6 (June 1977), 2.

[194]Mielniczuk, letter to the author; "Regent Festival to Combat Racism," *Seven News*, 23 October 1976; CTA, Sewell Papers, SC 306, Box 7, File: Regent Park, 1972-1977, RPCIA Agencies meeting, 1 September 1976, and, in CTA, Sewell Papers, SC 306, Box 7, File: Regent Park, 1972-1977, John Sewell and Janet Howard to Janet Ross, 8 September 1976.

[195]Clarke, Woodroof, and de Shield, *A Study of Cultural and/or Racial Conflicts in Regent Park*, 8; and Christene Brown, letter to the author.

procedures, and conflicts over the few recreation facilities. These had created the volatile climate "upon which suspicion and division have been fostered."[196] Nevertheless, there has never been a repeat of the racialized incidents of the 1970s among tenants; multicultural programs flourish in the project and political struggles and attitudes that have surfaced have focused on opposition to police brutality and racism, architectural redesign, security concerns, and socio-economic deprivation.

In the same context of dire economic circumstances, social opprobrium could be unjustly focussed toward neighbours on welfare, single mothers, parents who failed to properly discipline their children, and project "rule breakers" in general.[197] Cathy Norris remarked that her Dad, who had just secured a decent job after a stretch of unemployment, would talk about "the welfare people" and how his family was distinctly "not one of them."[198] Suzie Reading says that those without work were known and labelled as "welfare cases" even within the larger stigmatized atmosphere of the project.[199] The strength of welfare-bashing ideology is reflected in astonishing statements, based on myth, about the deviant habits of those on social assistance. Andy Gorman claimed that "some people got their welfare cheque, took a cab around the city until it ran out" and wasted all their money on alcohol and partying.[200] David Blackmore heard about young girls getting pregnant just to secure a welfare cheque.[201] Private "snitching" on the supposed misdoings of fellow tenants — such as having an unregistered man in the house, wild children, undeclared income, among others — was similarly not unknown.[202] As Wacquant writes: "It is as

[196]The quotation is from Iain Ferguson and Michael Lavalette, "Beyond Power Discourse: Alienation and Social Work," *European Journal of Social Work* (forthcoming 2003). The author would like to thank Iain Ferguson for providing copies of several of his publications. The three studies conducted after the 1976 "race riot" were Clarke, Woodroof, and de Shield, *A Study of Cultural and/or Racial Conflicts in Regent Park*; CTA, John Sewell Papers, SC 306, Box 7, File: Regent Park, 1972-1977, Ontario Human Rights Commission, "Report and Recommendation Regarding Regent Park Incidents," July 1976; and CTA, Sewell Papers, SC 306, File: Regent Park, 1972-1977, RPCIA Agencies meeting, 1 September 1976. A more detailed 1981 study lists the same tensions, including media stigmatization and exaggerated treatment of racial conflicts. "Cultural awareness not always racial, says expert," *Ontario Housing*, 25 (January-February 1981), 6-7.

[197]See various comments by residents in NFB, *Return to Regent Park*; and Taida Hambleton, letter to the author.

[198]Cathy Norris, interview with the author, tape recorded, Kingston, 27 October 1995.

[199]Suzie Reading, interview with the author.

[200]AG, interview with the author.

[201]David Blackmore, interview with the author.

[202]CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 8, File: 1965-1968 Special Committees, GA to Robert Bradley, 7 September 1965; Box 7, File: 1964-1968, Members of the City and Metro Councils, Alderman Helen Johnston to Robert Bradley, 3 November 1967; CTA, HAT, RG 28, Box 7, File: 1964-67 Mayor W. Dennison, HN to Robert Bradley, 7 November 1967; and "Welfare Workers Accused of Humiliations." For evidence of snitching see CTA, HAT, RG

if [tenants] can gain value only by devaluing their neighbourhood and neighbours and by castigating the latter as undeserving."[203] This inward-looking castigation bred bitter divisions, undermining any hope to build the solidarity required to change the miserable circumstances shared by all.

In sum, the same conditions of material deprivation and negative stereotyping that encouraged solidarity also led to feelings of demoralization and resentment that undercut local collectivity and bred a profoundly distrustful environment. Petty theft, vandalism, and physical rowdiness created an atmosphere of "uneasiness," and fear for some residents, especially women and children.[204] The only convenience store in the neighbourhood outfitted its windows with special wire-meshing to prevent break-and-enters and closed at nine o'clock each night for security reasons.[205] The resolute "turf allegiance" expressed by young people facing stigmatization and material misery served as a means to defend one's dignity in the face of social condemnation.[206] It could also lead to an aggressive physical bravado within the project that precipitated confrontations over perceived slights and indignities — paradoxically strengthening negative portrayals of Regent Park youth.[207] As the socio-economic situation deteriorated in the 1980s and 1990s, and accompanying drug problems increased, especially in relation to the crack cocaine trade conducted by some blacks (largely from outside the project), racist ideas de-

28, B, Boxes 29-30, Tenant Case Files 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 24, 41, 44, 50, 58, 75, and 101; and on "unsigned letters" from tenants complaining about other tenants see CTA, HAT, RG 28, B, Box 7, File: 1965-1968 General Housing Authority Information, Robert Bradley to William Dennison, 30 August 1965. See as well the comments about "snitches" in another housing project in Toronto by W.R. Delgran, "Life in the Heights," in Mann, *The Underside of Toronto*, 81; and the discussion of the contradictions of social life in public housing by June Pankevich Austin, "Women's Sorority: Social Life Among Women in Low-Income Housing," PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1981, 28.

[203]Wacquant, "Red Belt, Black Belt," 244.

[204]"Uneasiness" was the word used by Nina Corfu to describe the feeling of walking in the area. Corfu, letter to the author. Also see Corfu, letter to the author; NFB, *Return to Regent Park*; and *Toronto Star* articles cited in footnotes 7 and 8. Also note Shahid Alvi, Martin D. Schwartz, Walter S. DeKeseredy, and Michael O. Maume, "Women's Fear of Crime in Canadian Public Housing," *Violence Against Women*, 7 (June 2001), 638-61; and Regent Park Community Redesign Study, "Regeneration Through Innovation: Final Report," December 1989.

[205]Peter Moon, "North York Plaza Like a Ravaged Section of New York," *Globe and Mail*, 4 June 1979.

[206]For turf allegiance see Peter Marcuse, "What's So New About Divided Cities," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 17 (September 1993), 360-1.

[207]AO, OHCF, RG 44-19-1, Box 10, File: Tenant Associations in Metro, Central Neighbourhood House, "Assessment of Youth Problems in Regent Park South, June 1965. See also Taida Hambleton, letter to the author; Chris Reading, interview with the author; AG, interview with the author; and Glen Burkett, interviewed by Zapparoli in *Regent Park*, 35-7.

veloped. As Larry Quinto remarked: "It wasn't until the Jamaicans started moving into Regent South in the early 80's, when the sparks began to fly."[208]

Anti-social and violent behaviour led many tenants to a profound pessimism and an overwhelming desire to escape the project. As one tenant remarked on a proposal to redevelop a section of the project in the early 1990s: "You're gonna change the housing, but you ain't gonna change the people."[209] Others emphasized the positive traits learned in the project, which allowed them to move out of Regent Park. Christene Brown, who interviewed former residents for a documentary project entitled *A Way Out*, eloquently voiced these sentiments: "All the former Regent residents that I spoke to all agree growing up in a place like Regent was responsible for many of the positive traits that they now have — such as resilience, perseverance, determination etc. All these characteristics came about as a result of wanting to escape Regent — to rise above and move beyond the stigma of living in a Ghetto."[210] Thompson Egbo-Egbo seconded this yearning for escape: "Society and the media thinks that everyone in Regent Park will end up a failure without hope or vision," he said, "I have to prove them wrong. I don't want to end up how they say I will end up."[211]

Conclusion

Regent Park underwent a rapid and spectacular process of social polarization from the 1950s to the 1990s. Not all Regent Park residents suffered equally, nor did tenants remain anchored in these positions permanently. Relatively low moving rates until the 1980s suggest that many families were able to leave the project for ostensibly better dwellings and surroundings. Yet from the late 1960s onwards, a whole host of social indicators unmistakably reveal an increasingly marginalized population with disproportionate numbers of poor single-parents, families subsisting on welfare with meagre educational levels. The most recent figures point to even more extreme inequality, social exclusion, and long-term entrapment in public housing since fewer families have been able to cope in the marked low wage, high unemployment, and dwindling social service context of the 1990s. An ominous trend toward further disengagement from and abandonment of low-income housing policies and wealth redistribution policies at all levels of government do not bode well for families facing housing hardships in Metropolitan Toronto in the new millennium.

[208]Quotation from Quinto, letter to the author; Clarke, Woodroof, and de Shield, *A Study of Cultural and/or Racial Conflicts in Regent Park*, 7-9.
[209]NFB, *Return to Regent Park*.
[210]Brown, interview with the author and the interviews in Brown, *A Way Out*.
[211]Brandi Costain, "Youth in action: Egbo-Egbo Thompson strives for excellence," *Catch da Flava*, 16 April 2001.

Contrary to the "blame the victim" conjectures of "underclass" theories, the causes of the socio-economic inferiority of Regent Park tenants rest squarely on state housing practices and the inability of a profit-oriented economic system to adequately attend to the employment and shelter needs of low-income families. Regent Park residents became trapped, not by the welfare or public housing system itself, but by the glaring lack of affordable public and private shelter spaces, subdued investment in project facilities and services, moralistic assumptions about proper tenants, low welfare benefits and related social services, and a shrinking labour market.[212] Territorial stigmatization has also been one of the most protrusive elements of the lived experience of Regent Park residents. The powerful demonization of Regent Park as a site of social depravity and behavioural deficiency became a central feature of tenants' lives in the country's largest housing project, helping to explain their stark material and social marginalization and featuring prominently in strategies of coping, resistance, and escape.

I would like to thank Bryan Palmer, Alvin Finkel, and the anonymous readers of Labour/Le Travail *for many helpful suggestions. Doralice Meloni Assirati provided much-needed assistance with the construction of the figures.*

[212]My conclusions about tenant agency in the face of material deprivation echo recent United States studies on public housing tenants. See Venkatesh, *American Project*; Jane Roessner, *A Decent Place to Live, From Columbia Point to Harbor Point, A Community History* (Boston 2000); and Rhonda Y. Williams, "Living Just Enough in the City: Change and Activism in Baltimore's Public Housing, 1940-1980," PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1998.

Appendix 1 –Abbreviations in the Figures

CMA — Toronto Central Metropolitan Area. Data from 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, and 1991.

DBS — Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Census data from 1951 and 1961

HAT — Housing Authority of Toronto, responsible for building and managing Regent Park from 1949 to 1968

LSEA — Lower-Status Enumeration Subset; a data set of some variables from the lowest decile CEA's in the CMA according to average household income distribution. Data from 1971 and 1986 from Murdie, "Social Polarization." See Tables 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5

MTHA — Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority, 125 projects of varying sizes and types, comprising 33,000 units. Data from 1971, 1986, and 1991 from Murdie, "Social Polarization." See Tables 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5

OHC — Ontario Housing Corporation. Responsible for RPS from 1964 to 1978 and RPN from 1968 to 1978

RP CEA — Regent Park Census Enumeration Area, comprising 2, 021 units in RPN and RPS. Data from 1951 and 1961

RPN — Regent Park North Census Enumeration Area, comprising 1,289 units in RPN. Data from 1971, 1981, and 1991

RPS — Regent Park South Census Enumeration Area, comprising 732 units in RPS. Data from 1971, 1981, and 1991

Statscan — Statistics Canada.