Prioritized: That ghetto dude from Malvern

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Abstract: Malvern, a neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario, was turned into a designated area for affordable housing during its transformation into a modern community in the late 20th century. Any positive connotation that was once attached to ‘affordable housing’ as an idyllic space for hard-working residents quickly disappeared, however, and Malvern has repeatedly been labeled one of Toronto’s most dangerous neighbourhoods, in dire need of improvement. In this essay, I borrow from Omi and Winant (2015) to argue that the neighbourhood of Malvern is a racial project – that is, Malvern’s representations assign meaning to race, created not only through racist and classist planning, but also through the ways that Malvern is shared in the larger public, through media representations of Malvern, and the complex experiences and realities of its residents. Populated almost entirely by visible minorities, the mapping of criminal deviance alongside racialized individuals has ensured that Malvern and its residents continue to be marred by stigma and stereotypes, leaving residents feeling conflicted with internalized and arguably perverse understandings of themselves, and without the necessary support that disadvantaged neighbourhoods should receive. Today, Malvern is the product of purposeful, structural violence, with the people of Malvern perceived as lacking the civility to maintain the ideal space that was created for them. Using the work of Henri Lefebvre, this paper provides a detailed analysis of the way that Malvern was conceived and perceived to exist and the way that it continues to be lived as a racial project. Malvern, like other inner-city neighbourhoods in North America, has remained at a disadvantage since its inception. In this essay, I explore how the perception of Malvern came to be and how first-hand experiences within Malvern’s borders differ from those which are negatively portrayed in the media.

Keywords: Race, class, racial project, Scarborough, Malvern, priority neighbourhoods, Toronto, inner-city

Figure 1. Malvern neighbourhood profile. (Photo credit: City of Toronto, 2012)

Malvern is the space I call home. My parents moved to Malvern three years after arriving to Canada, in 1989. They continue to be working class members of this society, but were once wealthy Sri Lankan citizens, fleeing from war. They bought their first house unaware of the neighbourhood's past and present—looking at the space without a lens that provided any sort of bias, as do most families who move into Malvern. I completed my elementary and secondary education in Malvern, and was employed at various times while I lived in the neighbourhood. I completed my Honours Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education, and now embark on a Master of Arts degree—all at Toronto's most elite university, the University of Toronto. In 2009, 2014, and 2015, I received scholarships for my work in inner-city neighbourhoods, and continue to be a passionate advocate for individuals and families who live in marginalized neighbourhoods such as Malvern. Malvern, then, has been part of the reason I am perceived as deserving of additional funding—that is to say, I do not fit the Malvern stereotype and have somehow managed to succeed despite the odds.

Malvern is the neighbourhood where I developed friendships lasting over 25 years. It is also the neighbourhood that my family and I left for three years, only to return home to excited neighbours who happily welcomed us back. And, Malvern is the neighbourhood that has awarded me with enormous academic accolades and institutional forms of recognition. Yet, I cannot help but feel as though my deservingness of financial and symbolic awards is in part due to the fact that I seem to counteract a narrative that is often told about Malvern—that is, Malvern is a disadvantaged neighbourhood, and those who live within are simply not expected to be successful.

In 2007, Evon Reid, a young man from Malvern with a strong resume, applied for a position in the government. Shortly thereafter, he received an email for which he was not the intended recipient, reading “this is the ghetto dude that I spoke to before” (Diebel, 2007) addressed from the woman who was handling his file. In the media, Reid explained, “I’m from Malvern ... the community I live in has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in Canada. I’d hate to think that this [memo] accounts for that” (Diebel, 2007). In these anecdotes, it is clear that Evon Reid and I have experienced differential treatment from important, higher realms of society based partly on our addresses. Malvern is bombarded with portrayals of violent Black residents who lead “uncivilized” lives, even if this story is much more complicated than it is presented. Neither of us fit the stereotypical description of individuals from Malvern, but that, in of itself, creates problems.

Malvern, a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the northeast corner of Scarborough, is an administrative district and former city in Toronto, Ontario. Importantly, it is also a racial project that continues to be vigorously maintained by institutions, governance, media, and the people within. Cole (2017), following Omi and Winant (2015), suggests that racial projects occur:

simultaneously [through] an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines [which] connect what race means in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon the meaning. (Cole, 2017)

Essentially, meaning is assigned to race through such representations. According to Omi and Winant, racial projects are not created for the sole purpose of representing people of colour and/or their experiences, but rather to define race/racial experiences and profit from them. Residents of Malvern, therefore, occupy a space that is defined by a network of actors (i.e., the media, politicians, urban planners, etc.) who each stand to benefit from the symbolic and material practices that racialize Malvern.

Home to over 45,000 residents of diverse backgrounds (City of Toronto, 2011), the neighbourhood of Malvern offers solace to working class members of society who are able to live in this community, but also presents its residents with challenges that are unique to underserved neighbourhoods. Malvern, at face value, can easily be equated to other Toronto neighbourhoods like Jamestown (a neighbourhood in Etobicoke) and Jane-and-Finch (a neighbourhood in North York). Each of these Toronto neighbourhoods are commonly believed to be faced with crime, populated by immigrants, and comprised of low-income earners. Malvern, in other words, is not unique in its reputation for being an unsafe or generally undesirable Toronto neighbourhood; however, the way Malvern has been constructed and continues to be viewed highlights the ways in which these perceptions continue to build negatively from the way that Malvern was conceived. As such, Malvern and Toronto neighbourhoods of a similar ilk struggle to lose the pathologizing reputations cast upon them, regardless of what actually happens within their borders. That is, Malvern has historically been imagined as full of crime and poverty, and continues to be constructed in this way such that these understandings often stand in place of Malvern's complex reality. Though smaller and relatively unknown compared to boroughs like the Bronx and Brooklyn in New York City, Toronto is comprised of neighbourhoods that are also inaccurately known for its *unruly* bodies who take up space, and whose boundaries both discourage the privileged from entering as well as the residents from leaving.

In 2012, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) shared crime statistics collected and reported by the Toronto police from 2011, spanning across Toronto's 140 neighbourhoods (Strashin, 2012). The Toronto police, however, advised that the data should not be taken at face value, stating that there were many complicating factors that needed to be considered in order to get the full picture. The police's caveat on the need for analysis and critical consumption of their report was interesting, particularly because of what the data revealed. The report used data on occurrences of crimes like murder, theft, and assault to rank neighbourhoods from most dangerous to most safe. Surprisingly, the "crime-filled" neighbourhoods do not show up as expected (as illustrated in Figure 2). In this image, the darker the shade of the neighbourhood the more dangerous it is, while the lighter shades depict safer neighbourhoods. Malvern is the same medium-light shade as Jane-and-Finch and Rexdale—also generally assumed to be dangerous neighbourhoods. The darkest shade (black), however, is found in the Financial District. Similarly, the neighbourhood surrounding the University of Toronto is also quite dark, despite its reputation for being a beautiful sprawling space in the coveted downtown, featuring impressive architecture and privileged bodies.

Figure 2. Neighbourhood Crime Map, CBC. (Photo credit: Freisen & Rajagopalan, 2012)

In terms of the data on murder and robbery, Malvern ranked somewhere in between 28th and 31st out of the 140 Toronto neighbourhoods included in the report; between 62nd and 84th for assaults, sexual assaults, drug charges and stolen vehicles; and between 119th and 131st for break and enter crimes and theft over \$5000. The closer the neighbourhood is to the number one spot, the more dangerous it is, under each category. Examining these data, then, Malvern does not fit into the category of most dangerous neighbourhoods. In fact, if taken alone, these data suggest that Malvern is one of the safest neighbourhoods in terms of theft-related crimes, and is somewhere in the medium range for assault, drug charges, and stolen vehicles. While Malvern certainly ranks more dangerous in terms of serious crimes such as murder and robbery, it is not in the top 10, but instead one of the top 30 most dangerous Toronto neighbourhoods. In the police report, however, the following caveat is provided:

The murder section of the crime map should be interpreted cautiously, considering there were only 45 homicides in the city in 2011. With this relatively small sample size, it is not advisable, for instance, to conclude on the basis of murder data, that a given neighbourhood is significantly more prone to murders than another. Moreover, there were no murders at all in 100 of the 140 neighbourhoods. (Strashin, 2012)

Relying solely on these data, Malvern does not stand out as a dangerous neighbourhood, while the Financial District, also known as the Bay Street Corridor, is ranked as the most dangerous in terms of assaults and robbery. The financial district of any large city is lined with tall

buildings, wide sidewalks, and the (pedestrian) traffic of employees, customers, tourists, and local residents which becomes momentarily tempered in the evenings and weekends. Indeed, this is where some of the wealthiest people find themselves on a daily basis. And yet, even though the data suggests that it is incredibly unsafe, the image of this neighbourhood remains one of bustling space that is much safer than neighbourhoods like Jane-and-Finch or Malvern. By virtue of its affluence, the financial district would appear to be much safer than the poverty-stricken neighbourhoods that are often assumed to be unsafe. To make sense of the way these stereotypes help construct the reality of a neighbourhood or space, it is useful to turn to Henri Lefebvre's understanding of hegemony:

Hegemony implies more than an influence, more even than the permanent use of repressive violence. It is exercised over society as a whole, culture and knowledge included, and generally via human mediation: policies, political leaders, parties, as also a good many intellectuals and experts. It is exercised, therefore, over both institutions and ideas. The ruling class seeks to maintain its hegemony by all available means, and knowledge is one such means. (Konzen, 2013, p. 71)

Regardless of its criminal activity, the Bay Street Corridor is a space where hegemony operates through knowledge, power, culture, and an elite class; it is where policy works to improve rather than repress; and it is how hierarchy is consecrated. This reiterates the notion that what has happened in Malvern is a long, purposeful process of the creation of a ghetto. As the hierarchy is maintained through the rising of the abstract space, there is less focus paid to spaces like Malvern. It also serves as a stark contrast between the rich and the poor. It is Malvern's ghetto attributes—its poor housing, its lack of resources, and its demographic differences that allow abstract spaces to continue to thrive, regardless of statistics proving otherwise. The fact that these abstract spaces are not subject to the same surveillance as Malvern, or blamed in the same way for their faults is a maintenance tool for hegemony.

In her analysis of Africville (a Halifax slum populated by Black Canadians which was eventually torn apart by governing forces because of the subpar living conditions that were upheld), Jennifer Nelson (2002) considers the importance of legal regulations in the making of racial projects. In this case, residents were blamed for the demise of Africville, rather than the institutional decisions which dictated the way the space would be utilized and inhabited. She notes that only some forms of resistance were accepted by authorities, and violent laws were implemented like those which prevented garbage pick-up, creating a slum full of trash. She also identifies the ways that liberal values often rule spaces because they are put in place by the elite class, and maintained by power dynamics (Nelson, 2002). Following Nelson, I do not mean to suggest that Malvern was created as a racial project with that explicit intention.

Instead, I argue that Malvern was made to be, and continues to be maintained as a ghetto. My argument relies on Lefebvre's conceptual triad as discussed by Lefebvre (1974) and by McCann (2007), as well as theories of Blackness (Mbembe, 2004; Mohanram, 1999; Razack, 2002) to make sense of the oppressive construction of racialized, working class bodies in Malvern. Firstly, I focus on the way that Malvern was conceived through planning and policies that prescribed how the space could be used. Secondly, I consider the ways Malvern is perceived through criminalizing representations in visual and print media in order to maintain the difference between the ghetto and the abstract space. Finally, I focus on the lived constraints of those who call Malvern home, despite it being a neighbourhood that has been maintained for the conceived lifestyle of a group that does not fit into the prescribed culture of the ruling class, and is not understood for its complexity but for its difference.

Theoretical Framework: Personal Narratives, Produced

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1974) argues that there is room to view space as collective and active, combining the theoretical and practical. Lefebvre sees space as a living concept which was, at the time of his writing, vastly different from the way geographers and scientists previously understood space as an empty container. Acting as a living and malleable thing, Lefebvre's conception of space requires scholars to merge physical, mental, and social space in order to create "unity between fields" (Lefebvre, 1974, p.11). He was focused on the production of space rather than the products that came out of spaces. In this paper, I am not only interested in the way space (in this instance, Malvern) is produced but also in what that space produces.

Lefebvre uses hegemony to understand the bourgeoisie's continued attempts to maintain superiority: "the ruling class seeks to maintain its hegemony by all available means" (Lefebvre, 1974, p.10). Following Gramsci, Lefebvre understands hegemony as those attempts to control society through things like culture, knowledge, policy, and politics. He pays particular attention to the ways that these controlling attempts create spatial practices that shape how spaces are used. I understand Lefebvre's notions of hegemony as a descriptor for the way that policies are created to stigmatize and maintain hierarchy in an explicit (in that the decisions made are purposely meant to protect some and not others) and yet discrete manner. Lefebvre focuses on the way that the ruling class represses in a permanent manner, speaking to the way oppression is consecrated through policies which are available for all to see, but only for some to understand thoroughly.

Lefebvre's (1974) conceptual triad consists of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. Each of these three realms give meaning to the way that space is produced, highlighting space as an active and cultivated phenomenon. Representations of space, otherwise known as conceived space, identify the way that space is physically mapped. Lefebvre (1974) articulates:

Conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, [these positions are all...] of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. (Lefebvre, 1974, p.38)

Lefebvre suggests that various personnel manage to effect policy and formal aspects of the space (such as how it will be utilized) through means of mapping, based on expert opinion as to how a space should be used. In this essay, I am specifically interested in the ways Malvern has been planned, and thus conceived, to uphold marginalization, including the planning of modern Scarborough, the designation of priority neighbourhoods and neighbourhood improvement areas, and the spatial layout as ways for the state to mark the space and separate it from abstract space.

In contrast to conceived space, spatial practice or perceived space “secretes ... society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it ... revealed through the deciphering of its space” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.38). Here, he argues that the way that a space is understood is a purposeful process of meaning-creation. It is an empirical representation which juxtaposes “daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality, the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.38). He adds, “social practice presupposes [every movement that is not] unrelated to work” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.40). For Lefebvre, there needs to be some level of connection between the way that spaces are perceived and lived but he does not argue that it is necessarily logical. It is the way that the space, used outside of purposes of employment and service, is perceived to function. Perceived space, then, is how an area is viewed through connotations that are attached to the space—which is developed, often, from the way it is planned (conceived). Seen from the perspective of Lefebvre, Malvern might best be perceived as violent and Black. The media, specifically, has much to do with this special practice of Other-ing Malvern.

Finally, representational space, or lived space, is the way that “space [is] directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ ... it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.39). For Lefebvre, lived space constitutes the embodied experience of being in a given space. Lefebvre

makes the distinction between representations of space and representational spaces to show that there are some people who are active in creation and then those who must experience it, passively. He argues that the users of space are generally placed into “or justified by” (Lefebvre, 1974, p.44) their lived space which suggests that people within become what the space allows. Thus, Lefebvre’s concept of representational space can help describe how Malvern residents experience the neighbourhood, how they are (not) permitted to move through the space, and how the prescribed space may or may not meet their needs.

Essentially, the way that the space is conceived is the way that it permits residents to live. I argue that the conceived and perceived spaces can create the type of resident who lives within it. Michel Foucault’s (1984) understanding that spaces regulate people’s actions leads me to understand that the lived space, in Malvern, is incredibly limited and surveilled, and that this, in turn, serves to criminalize the population. In the case of Malvern, perceived space gives meaning to the combination of conceived and lived experiences. Together, these representations of the space have worked to develop a neighbourhood which continues to be criminalized.

Using Lefebvre’s theoretical insights, Eugene McCann (1999) writes about the downtown and Bluegrass-Aspendale centre in Lexington, Kentucky. As a space created largely by Black residents (but not acknowledged as such), McCann notes one of the limitations to Lefebvre’s thinking in the context of Lexington; that is, Lefebvre does not consider race. Nevertheless, McCann also suggests that the work of Lefebvre can still be used to argue that racialized spaces are purposefully produced in the USA. McCann’s argument lends itself well to this essay, because Malvern is not simply a class project that separates the rich from the poor. Additionally, Malvern is a racial project that is purposefully segregated and produced as marginal. Canadian spaces are not exempt, in this regard. McCann goes on to explore the way that Lefebvre’s framework can make clear that “the production and maintenance of “safe” public spaces in American cities is fundamentally related to representations of racial identities and to an ongoing process in which subjective identity and material urban spaces exist in a mutually constitutive relationship” (McCann, 1999, p. 164). He relies heavily on Lefebvre’s notion of abstract space as “space represented by elite social groups as homogenous, instrumental, and ahistorical in order to facilitate the exercise of state power and the free flow of capital” (McCann, 1999, p. 164) to argue that when abstract space is automatically understood as safe space, other spaces—especially racialized spaces—only become dangerous through comparison. Following McCann (1999), I consider the way that Torontonians perceive the financial district (i.e. Bay Street Corridor)—an abstract space—as safe, and Malvern as violent, despite research and statistics suggesting otherwise (Strashin,

2012). McCann goes on to explain that the homogeneity found in abstract space is paradoxical as homogenous spaces must identify difference in others in order to identify sameness among the elite. I use McCann's argument, similarly developed by Radhika Mohanram (1999) to argue that Malvern is consistently made the Other against which the elite class acknowledges but separates itself from. This further reproduces the social conditions and racial hierarchies in these spaces through a logic that both individualizes and pathologizes Malvern's residents. According to this logic, the space is not the problem but rather problems lie with those people who do not beat the systemic barriers in place. This is the creation of the ghetto. Furthermore, public spaces in Malvern constrain the actions of residents such that it becomes a necessity to overcome these barriers, whereas such barriers to success simply do not exist in many other neighbourhoods. Malvern was planned with these obstacles in mind.

Malvern, Conceived

In this section, I focus on the way that key individuals and institutions create the space of Malvern. Originally, Malvern was planned to be "a 'model community' of affordable homes" (Wikipedia, 2014). In 2012, the Toronto Star described Malvern as:

Designed in the '70s to be a model suburban community but deprived of that potential due to poor planning and paucity of public services ... by the mid-'90s, local youth were selling drugs, carrying guns and assaulting and robbing people while hanging out in groups named after area streets. (Powell, 2012)

In this description, the author suggests that planners originally set out to create an idyllic working class community with affordable housing, beautiful design, and opportunities for success. But, what standards did planners understand as great *for* the working class? The way that the space was conceived purposefully marked a difference between Malvern and abstract spaces (Lefebvre, 1974).

It is also important to consider who was involved with planning and developing Malvern. Sherene Razack (2002) describes the settler society as created on non-European soil, removed from its history so that European settlers could "*become* the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship" (p.2). Luxuries, in this regard, belonged to the ruling European class, and those who did not fit that criteria did not receive such indulgences. Scarborough, the city in which Malvern is situated, was marked as working class from its inception and was planned by Oliver Crockford (Fulford, 1995). Fulford argues that Crockford prided himself on being the only local planner creating neighbourhoods for the

working class. As Fulford elaborates, the municipality was “sometimes pitiful [essentially making ‘working class’ the] character of early Scarborough” (Fulford, 1995, p.109). The neighbourhoods were understood as undesirable. A joke that was prevalent in the 1990s arose from the way Malvern was conceived, “Q: What’s the difference between Scarborough and a bus shelter? A: If you really had to, you could live in a bus shelter” (Fulford, 1995, p.103).

Fulford argues that the early years of modern Scarborough were marked by a densely populated non-British and non-French-Canadian faction referred to as “ethnics.” Racism, therefore, became central to the experience of many Scarborough residents: “prejudice outweighs experience and an artificial construct becomes more potent than reality” (Fulford, 1995, p.109). For Fulford, the racism that permeated Scarborough’s modern history was an example of imposed superiority in politics. I extend this argument to articulate that Scarborough was built for the ethnic, lower class—and was imagined for humans who needed less than the elite. Razack points to the way that identity is “imagined or projected onto specific spaces and bodies” (Razack, 2002, p.5). Useful to this argument is her notion that the racialized are made Others and kept “in *place*” (Razack, 2002, p5) through the way that white citizens confirm and reiterate the way they identify themselves. The imagined bodies that would reside in a neighbourhood like Malvern were very different from white citizens, and thus perceived to require much less to live.

Crockford purposefully built a city that was substandard. The assumptions that these working class individuals would be happy with less room, less cleanliness, and less opportunity was an assumption made upon the status and assumed needs of the marked body. Today, Scarborough, and specifically Malvern is home to the racialized-working class. Crockford, a policy maker, had the power of knowledge that Lefebvre focuses on. He was able to hold power over the city based on his understanding of the people who would move into it. These representations of space Other those who do not fit into the ruling class, and maintain the power differential already in place.

Once Malvern was built, developers and planners continued to conceive the neighbourhood in and through their policy directives. In 2004, The City of Toronto in conjunction with the United Way, began to conceive priority neighbourhoods in response to rising crime rates in the city. The mandate of priority neighbourhoods was to “reduce crime, increase opportunities for young people and improve services for people in underserved areas” (Toronto Star, 2008). Along with 12 other neighbourhoods, Malvern was labeled a priority neighbourhood and thus received public funding, as well as public stigma and a sense of redlining—a term used to describe neighbourhoods as dangerous, unpleasant, or otherwise unappealing (Goldberg, 2008).

The conception of Malvern as a violent space is enacted through sources of knowledge and authority—through a blaming of individuals for their social conditions. This became even more complex in 2014, when Malvern was relieved of its priority neighbourhood status after failing to meet the criteria to be recognized as a neighbourhood improvement area (NIA).¹ Considering that Malvern received similar funding and services from the City of Toronto and United Way in the ten years prior, and only scored one point above the numerical value reserved for designated neighbourhood improvement areas, I can suggest that the resources offered to this neighbourhood have not done enough to equitably support the systemic barriers that continue to limit residents. In fact, the removal of Malvern's designation on the neighbourhood improvement list presents a confusing dilemma that does not consider the complexity of spaces such as Malvern, and can result in the quick blaming of residents. It is easy to misconstrue the complex situation. When resources and supports are in place but systemic barriers continue to oppress spaces, it can be seen as the fault of the residents that things have not improved more drastically. Unfortunately, the resources and supports do not fix the ways that Malvern has been marginalized and this can mean that residents are held responsible for “ruining” their neighbourhoods with problems that cannot be fixed through additional services and funding. Systemic inequities continue to plague Malvern; however, with the Band-aid solutions of resources and funding in place, it is easy for onlookers to suggest that the system cannot be blamed for the persistent problems encountered by residents, regardless of how far from the truth this is.

Recently, Toronto and much of its surrounding area has undergone a boom in the real estate market. The rapid development of high-rise condominiums and homes of various sizes have become increasingly profitable investments for some, while making the cost of renting or owning a home unaffordable for others. Location, however, continues to influence the Toronto real estate and housing market in ways that organize the Greater Toronto Area across axes of race and class. Homes just outside of Malvern's borders, for example, can be priced much higher from right across the street because location is meaningful in real estate. A home that is not found within the Malvern neighbourhood does not hold the same stigma as a home within Malvern's borders. As such, the redlining of this former priority neighbourhood has impacted Malvern's residents in ways that affect the property values of homes, rental fees, and public perception. These market forces play an important role in restricting Malvern residents' geographic and economic mobility.

Mobility, in fact, has been a central concern for residents of Malvern, who have (unsuccessfully) pushed for greater accessibility and transportation reforms since the 1970s.

¹ The term “priority neighbourhood” had been changed to the NIA at this time.

For example, in 1977, the mapping of the proposed Light Rail Transit (LRT) was planned and approved for funding; however, it never became a reality. Today, the push for some sort of train service from Malvern remains a discussion, without any finalizations or breaking of ground. In fact, “Metrolinx ... stopped working on the Scarborough LRT plan in 2013” (Toronto Sun, 2017). Although, the LRT is once again up for debate, there is no funding in place for the “3.34 billion, six-kilometre extension of the Bloor-Danforth line to Scarborough Town Centre [but] the cost of continuing to neglect and indifference towards transit in the city’s east end is unacceptable ... Scarborough is a transit ghetto” (Toronto Sun, 2017). The author of this Toronto Sun article goes on to argue that unemployment is higher in Scarborough than it is downtown which means that transit is even more necessary. Here, Malvern is not just separate from, but is also essentially cut off from, the major arteries of the city in the same way William Julius Wilson (1987) argued that Southside Chicago was designed in a manner that isolated it from downtown. Interestingly, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) recently created a new line into Vaughan (located outside of The City of Toronto), but Scarborough still battles with mediocre transit despite being situated within Toronto’s borders. In his original conception of Scarborough, Crockford did not consider that people would not have their own vehicles (Fulford, 1995). Clearly, he did not imagine Malvern’s people would enjoy access to other parts of the city reaching into the downtown core. And, based on an understanding of the downtown core (including the financial district) as abstract space, Malvern appears separate from that area. The inferior and superior, then, only meet from afar. The assumption that working class individuals would be able to own their own vehicle, and only those who had cars could/should be traveling outside of neighbouring areas reeks of hegemonic rule. These policy makers and city planners who are creators of space not only decide what will be understood about spaces, but also how that space will be used, and in this case, contained.

Each of these policies has worked towards the marginalization of neighbourhoods like Malvern. Authoritative groups like planners, municipal governments, and transit teams have, in this case, contributed towards the creation of the space of Malvern as a slum, and have thus contributed to the oppression of residents who are viewed as the problem, rather than individuals who must live *in* the problem.

Malvern, Perceived

On July 23rd, 2017, a local newscast reported that gun shots rang out at a birthday barbeque. Three people were shot: two men were murdered and the birthday girl was shot but

survived. Initially, the broadcaster claimed that “investigators told reporters that all three victims were ‘known to police’” (D’Amore, 2017), but the truth was that only the men were known to police. Nonetheless, it was easily summarized and easily believed that police had prior knowledge of the birthday girl, too. Her family “deplore(d) this loaded and morally presumptive chorus [which] prods the audience to refrain from empathy for the victim [and instead] adopt this stance of dismissing the victim as a criminal who got what was coming to him or her” (D’Amore, 2017). Malvern’s inhabitants are perceived as criminal—this same narrative was even shared explicitly, in a news conference, from investigators. Generally, we would expect these statements to be factual in nature and as objective as possible. Instead, it carried the same story about criminalized Malvern. A completely false statement was made at a press conference because this is, ultimately, how Malvern residents are imagined.

Criminalized and demonized, Malvern residents are constructed and perceived through a bombardment of mediated images associating Blackness with violence. Just as C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute (a secondary school) cannot be uttered in the news without having the media remind audiences of the unfortunate school shooting of Jordan Manners, Malvern is held to a similar stereotype of crime. The media plays a central role in popularizing relatively small spaces such as Malvern or C.W. Jefferys Collegiate Institute, and helps manufacture a type of fear that prevents outsiders from permeating their respective borders/walls. Without any necessity of logic (Lefebvre, 1974), the media continues to oppress Malvern through its publications. In a 2015 internet search for “Malvern, Scarborough” using Google to search across the big news broadcasting networks in Toronto (including the CBC, CTV, CITY TV, and GLOBAL), 75% of the news stories about Malvern revolved around crime. These search results, I contend, provide a lens through which to understand the general public’s perception of Malvern. In those instances where media coverage did not revolve around crime, stories tended to focus on issues of housing, new plans for light rail transit, outsiders helping Malvern, or items that affected all of Toronto. The newspapers, also, overwhelmingly discussed and focused on the things that are wrong with Malvern, but rarely offered any critical analysis into structural forces that might have contributed to its decline. It is especially important to note that the crime stories reported on Malvern (especially those where victims and suspects were known to police) disproportionately featured Black people. Despite losing its priority neighbourhood ranking in 2014, Malvern’s reputation as an unsafe space thus persisted thanks in large part to the media’s coverage. In these symbols, storylines, and images, audiences are provided with decontextualized portraits of Malvern that do little to understand the historical inequities purposefully designed therein, and instead encourage readers to form individualized readings of crime that place blame on residents themselves.

Residents of Malvern, then, are perceived to take on the stagnant position of the problem, regardless of the space's supposed betterment, which reifies the notion of Blackness (Mohanram, 1999), especially in comparison to whiteness, in its inability to cross over or even move towards whiteness. Moving towards whiteness here simply means moving towards the opportunities that some bodies are afforded systemically. Here, McCann's (1999) argument can be used to understand the way that identity has been merged to urban space, creating a problematic relationship. Black bodies, in this instance, must work much harder to move towards "whiteness"—that is, towards neighbourhoods and expectations that are upheld among the elite class. These representations do more to just solidify the neighbourhood and residents in this negative way.

It is important to consider the way that marked bodies of Malvern are prescribed in the media, particularly from a Lefebvrian perspective that emphasises knowledge as a key determinant in how individuals are perceived. One example of such a representation is Michael de Adder's 2012 editorial cartoon, published by the Toronto Star, entitled "Injuries to Expect Before They Are Two." The image was released soon after the Danzig shooting, which is sometimes cited amongst the worst mass shootings in Canada. The shooting, which injured over 20 barbeque attendees and killed two, took place in the Kingston-Galloway priority neighbourhood which is thought to be home to one of Malvern's own rival gangs. According to reports, gang rivalry is said to be the cause of the shooting. A 22 month old child, Devontae, was present with his family at the event, when he was grazed by a bullet and wounded. The political cartoon, featured below, includes an image of a girl whose experience is meant to mirror the highly publicized experience of Devontae. In the image, a little black girl stands with her hands behind her back as arrows point to various scars that cannot be seen, including injuries from a high chair, a tricycle, and a bullet.

Figure 3. Injuries to Expect Before They Are Two. (Photo Credit: Michael de Adder, Toronto Star)

It is rare to see cartoons in any of Toronto's popular papers feature diverse bodies. As such, the cartoon's rarity combined with its marking of the toddler's body as Black and marked by violence, created an uproar amongst Torontonians attuned to the image's stereotypical and racist undertones (i.e. the culture and behaviour of Black Torontonians is pathological and criminal). This image defines what Black bodies in Malvern, Kingston-Galloway, or Jane-and-Finch should expect given the routines and traditional lifestyles practiced therein. From a theoretical standpoint, therefore, de Adder's image provides a commentary on the Black body (Mohanram, 1999), and is used as a way to maintain hegemony by separating superiority from the marginalized. Mohanram (1999) argues that it is through the unmarked body's indication into Blackness and then the move back into whiteness that the superior can truly be created. At the time of the cartoon's publication, Toronto's broadcasting stations were overwhelmingly focused on the chaos of Danzig. This cartoon was a shortcut; it gave those that did not really experience it and those who were not really connected a chance to create space between themselves and the Other who did or *could* experience it. Without having to think critically about Malvern, this cartoon allowed outsiders to enter the zone of Blackness (Mohanram, 2012). Materially, it was a way in which the unmarked body entered the marked space, feeling the pain that could have happened in their own backyard. Nonetheless, viewers were ultimately turned away from that pain and forced to acknowledge that this could not actually happen in every neighbourhood, whilst even poking fun at the complex social conditions that create victims out of children. All the while, the crime remained unresolved.

When this editorial came out, I found myself having two kinds of conversations with people from Malvern. On the one hand, we were outraged: “How dare someone represent our neighbourhood in this manner? How could we possibly be minimized to this racist and simplistic view that ignores the ways that the system has made victims out of children?” However, there were those that completely bought into the cartoon, suggesting that we can be angry but the truth cannot be ignored. “This is, essentially, what Malvern is,” I heard residents say in its various forms. We forget how much we internalize when we are bombarded by the same messaging from institutions, media, and ourselves.

The racialization of Toronto’s inner-city neighbourhoods is further evidenced through a particular episode of the TVO series, “The Agenda with Steve Paikin.” The show is a popular TVO broadcast that aims to broadcast intellectually stimulating discussions. The show’s motto, “makes you think” (Dunseath & Paikin, 2008) allows viewers to feel as if they are getting the truth about various topics from different experts in the field, and across divergent viewpoints. In 2008, “The Agenda” aired an episode titled “Inner City Problems—Guns and Gangs” with the goal of focusing on reduced rates of gun violence in Toronto between 2005 and 2007. Commentating alongside Paikin was a panel of seven experts in their respective fields who were also members of the Toronto community, had experience mentoring youth, and (with the exception of one) grew up in a similar neighbourhood experiencing some of the structural hardships and obstacles of inner-city neighbourhoods. Furthermore, six of the seven panelists were Black, implicitly drawing a connection between the problems of inner cities and the problems of Black youth. TVO made a very purposeful decision in their selection of this very qualified panel. That is to say, the appearance of Black community members who had been working to support these communities was important for the optics of validity. These individuals argued that community projects were the reason for reduced violence in Toronto neighbourhoods. The panelists also discussed the issue of Black youth without fathers, without explaining the complicated reasons for the statistics that support this, and poor guidance in schools, among other things. Essentially, TVO’s 2008 broadcast reduced the issues of guns and gangs to a problem with the Black community. The Black experts that were called upon to speak, in this case, were used as native informants whose epistemologies could be used to psychologize the problem. In this way, TVO’s broadcast participated in the making of social issues into individual issues specific to racialized people. The panelists confirmed that the inner city was an issue of Blackness that could be resolved from within using Black-focused community centres, implying that such a method was favourable compared to the disruption of systemic containment.

The non-Black individual on the panel, a white woman named Sally Spencer, identified herself as the executive director of “Youth Assisting Youth.” She noted that she often shared advice with the youth to assist them in becoming accepted into society; if “they dress differently, and hang out in smaller groups [when on the street], they’d be perceived differently [they should] say hello to [people] as [they] pass” (Dunseath & Paikin, 2008). Other panelists were quick to respond and dismiss Spencer’s claims for her loaded assumptions, yet her remarks revealed a very important truth. That is to say, the popular perception of inner city spaces, like Malvern, is one of angry residents that do not share the common politeness of “civilized” society. The very suggestion that these youth need to be told to say ‘hi’ to strangers because it is respectful, reproduces the idea that neighbourhoods such as Malvern are uncivilized. It goes on to suggest that many of the problems those children face can be remedied with something as simple as good manners. Of course, these simple, polite gestures might offer the potential of making others feel welcome and safe in a space within which residents do not necessarily feel welcome themselves, but those who fit in the ruling class and their perceptions are essentially what matters in the development and understanding of space. In this particular 2008 TVO broadcast, Spencer contrasted the good young man of the ruling class with the ghetto young man from the racialized space.

More statistics that do not support the representation of space of Malvern consist around the perceived demographics of the marked bodies within the space. Today, images of the perceived reality of Malvern’s Black criminal-residents bombard the media; however, Malvern is quite diverse. In the City of Toronto’s 2012 census, the top five visible minority groupings were listed as follows: “South Asian—19,225; Black—8,365; Filipino—4,685; Chinese—3,400; and visible minority not included elsewhere—1,805” (City of Toronto, 2012). According to this data, there are far more South Asians than any other minority grouping in Malvern. And yet, Black bodies seem to dominate the media’s depiction of Malvern as a violent and aggressive space. There is simply no truth to the portrayal that Malvern is Black, yet Blackness serves an important function in the media as a racial signifier, standing in for messages of criminality and violence. Regardless of what crime statistics actually say about Malvern, Blackness appears to communicate a much more powerful and perceptible message to viewers about the reality of Malvern.

Representations of housing and schools are also much more complex than they are acknowledged to be. Malvern is perceived to be overwhelmed by housing projects and apartment buildings, yet Malvern residents were identified as mostly living in detached, semi-detached, and row-homes—even more often than residents in the City of Toronto (City of Toronto, 2012). Also, schools in Malvern continue to receive below average grades from the

country's ranking authority, the Frasier Institute. In the 2015-2016 school year, Lester B. Pearson Collegiate Institute and Blessed Mother Theresa Catholic Secondary School were placed at 544th and 541st respectively (out of 740 high schools in Ontario) (Frasier Institute, 2016). Taken on their own, these poor grades speak to a problem in Malvern without actually addressing the systemic problems that produce it. The fact that these statistics are not analysed to further understand why these students are falling through the institutional cracks in schools, and at such an alarming rate, speaks to Lefebvre's argument that what is perceived and conceived does not have to be logical in order for it to be more powerful than the lived experiences of individuals who fall under hegemonic rule. Instead, what seems to gain traction in the media are those discourses that attribute negative statistics to moral failures on the part of individuals, rather than problematic social structures and systems that create barriers and limited opportunities.

Malvern, like other neighbourhoods, is home to violence. This fact cannot be disputed. What can be disputed, however, is the simplifying narrative that Malvern's racialized individuals are to blame for the problems of violence, housing, and education. When these aspects of failure are understood as individual problems in the community—rather than structural—then the responsibility for violence is automatically placed on the shoulders of individuals who occupy the space. Malvern's people are blamed for their supposed inability to maintain a safe space, do well in school, behave appropriately, etc. Moreover, Malvern's people are equated with the issues of Malvern and the planners, policy makers, and media are believed to have no hand in it. Essentially, Malvern's people are conflated with racist planning measures, policies, and representations that were not of their own choosing. The way the space was conceived as a space that is not abstract, created the issues that are currently plaguing the neighbourhood today. It is treated as if all neighbourhoods were created equally; however, making it easy to blame the residents, as the Toronto Star did when comparing the idyllic Malvern of the 70s and the violent Malvern of the 90s (Powell, 2012).

Malvern, Lived

The narratives that have been created about people like myself and Evon Reid do not include the way that we use and experience the space. My experience in Malvern is one that can only be thoroughly understood through difference. I never really knew about the disadvantages I experienced until I began my university career, when I began noticing what other neighbourhoods had (e.g., beautiful, sprawling homes and elite education) and read

about myself as either the criminal or victim of inner-city neighbourhoods. Malvern's community has many public parks, schools, and homes that could be found just about anywhere. Without the persistent onslaught of negative stereotypes, one could look at many of Malvern's well-kempt yards and assume that there are no issues here. The fact that there are only two high rise apartment buildings in Malvern speaks to my experience as not understanding the gap between Malvern and wealthy spaces. I grew up learning that low-income high-rises are, in contrast, a predominant feature of downtown inner-city neighbourhoods; however, this is simply not true of Malvern. The neighbourhood, even the subsidized housing complexes, are generally well kept. Residents take pride in their homes. The community rallies together when awful things happen. If one were to map the neighbourhood without any preconceived notions of negativity/stereotypes/stigma, Malvern looks like many other spaces that are deemed safe and desirable. I never believed that I lived in a wealthy neighbourhood, although I had not understood myself as living in a "ghetto," either.

One thing that Malvern does lack, however, are public buildings and businesses that enable residents to participate in leisure activities. Scholars have drawn attention to what they term the "Starbucks effect," arguing that these commercial spaces create a difference in communities by moving spaces towards abstract space (Vishwanath & Harding, 2000). According to Lobosco (2015), "between 1997 and 2013, home(s) closer to the coffee shop increased in value by 96% ... Starbucks is usually a harbinger of good times for a locality. A new Starbucks gives a sense to developers that the neighbourhood is on the rise." Malvern does not even boast a single Tim Horton's café, with seating, or any other well-known coffee shop in which the people of Malvern could sit down and enjoy a coffee (possibly with peers) besides the Malvern mall, which has security within. With the funding that came as a result of being labeled a "priority neighbourhood," Malvern updated its community centre and library; but the minimal restaurants and lack of recreational centres such as arcades and museums discourage many residents from having public fun. Thus, if residents want to have fun, they have to create space for such experiences on their own—often through private gatherings or by venturing beyond the neighbourhood's borders. Malvern was not conceived with leisure in mind. In this way, residents are not permitted to *be* (i.e., live freely), and when they attempt to create such spaces, they are often regarded as violating the space.

Allan King recognized this tension between being at home and not being permitted to live freely in his 2006 documentary "EMPz 4 Life," which focused on life in the Empringham neighbourhood, a subsidized housing complex known for especially high crime within Malvern. King's film took the perspective of youth and one of their mentors who went about

their daily experiences, showing that the needs in the community were often overlooked by city officials and systems of authority (including the police) because they had the wrong idea of what Malvern was all about.

In one clip, a car of Black males featuring a young adult in the passenger seat and three teenagers in the back, experience being pulled over by several policemen. Unable to move through their own neighbourhood, the man in the passenger seat shares a glimpse of his frustration of having to passively accept his space. The young adult passenger pleads with the police, articulating the victimization and criminalization he experiences for being Black. The officer who speaks explains that a series of shootings have taken place and that he is only doing his job in stopping anyone who fits the description of Black male. He explains that he would be foolish to stop the car alone, attempting to justify his additional back-up through a racist lens that frames Black men as always already dangerous and threatening. The passenger accepts the officer's explanation but ends by saying "you've got to let us live" (King, 2006). In this moment, the passenger alludes to the constant surveillance that waits for Black men, such as himself, to make mistakes in Malvern and give police the authority to act based on racist perceptions. It did not matter how he—or others in the car—felt, because the authority figures were just doing their job. Simply put, they were just working to ensure that the space was safe from the violent residents who lived within it. These institutionalized forms of surveillance will always have the *right* to target these bodies.

Marked as Black, male, and thus criminal, the individuals depicted in King's "EMPz 4 Life" are denied their personhood, and even more, are meant to prioritize the viewpoints of the superior over their own. This whole scene occurred with the police officers understanding that they were being documented on camera. Aware of the video recording, we can assume that officers chose to behave in accordance with their mandate regardless of how obviously racist those behaviours might be. We can imagine that these interactions could be more explicitly racist when cameras are not present. These young males must live in a space of delirium (Mbembe, 2004). In Mbembe's delirious city, the people are always psychotic and unable to "hold it together." The racialized individual in these spaces is viewed as paranoid, although the real problem here is the way that the space is managed through aggressive surveillance. This critical lens is integral to understanding the way Malvern is conceived and perceived as criminal through its stronger-than-necessary police presence.

Most unfortunate, King notes, is the fact that we—as Malvern residents—find it difficult to accept that we are not what other people think of us, especially when we are reminded of their (mis)understandings in multiple ways, every single day. King's film is important in that it shows how police presence and racist surveillance practices are critical

features in the production of criminality in Malvern. King goes on to say that “no matter how bright these men are, how talented and how cherished [they are] by their families, they can’t transcend being defined by their race, their gender, and their neighbourhood” (King, 2006). In creating a hegemonic abstract space, and identifying the difference that maintains that elite space, other spaces are violently oppressed and the people within it are forced to take the blame. This cultivated space produces people who are aware that they face stigma because they are marked as problematic, and knowledge and culture each work against them. Residents are aware that they are marked, and that causes a lot of frustration. We, more often than not, share a strong dislike for the police and such authority. As such, we further reproduce and maintain the notion that crime happens in Malvern. These negative experiences with powerful authority figures, who are granted the right to treat individuals as less than human under the guise of public safety, can affect the trajectories of Malvern’s residents. Malvern, again, was conceived in such a way that it paved the way for the contemporary policing, regulation, and surveillance of bodies within.

Conclusion

The complexities involved with the making of Malvern into a racial project has resulted in a ghetto that has, to date, escaped scholarly critique. In planning a space for the ethnic working class, Crockford and the other planners, policymakers, and culture producers who followed suit, did not necessarily intend to make Scarborough into slums, but did manage to create spaces that could not meet the needs of the middle or especially the elite class. As social conditions began to take effect, Malvern was remembered for its model beginnings which lacked the necessary upkeep, essentially placing the responsibility for the space’s failure on residents. The narrative that is told and re-told about Malvern—the ghetto—reproduces the same effect of the racial project. And, because of the perceptions that are so prevalent in our minds, the realities of Malvern residents are made more difficult with the addition of a heavy police surveillance. This ignites and maintains a tension that restricts residents while reifying the racial project. The people within Malvern’s borders, then, are expected to move passively through a space which they understand as flawed. Residents must accept that outsiders, and even residents within, view Malvern’s inhabitants as the Other. Being from Malvern, then, is a reality that is far from simple. Just identifying as being from Malvern, because of the negative understandings we have developed about the space and the bodies within, creates an inaccurate narrative in the minds of those involved in the

conversation, and more often than not, this *simple* statement further reproduces the racial project.

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