

Social problems in  
rexdale: the  
neighbourhood effect,  
economic inequality  
and rac...



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*SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN REXDALE*

Social problems are defined as, “ harmful social conditions”

(Best, 2011, pg. 38). There are a range of social problems that can impact a community. In this essay the social problems impacting Rexdale in Toronto will be explored. The three main problems that will be explored are the neighbourhood effect, economic inequality and racial profiling. It will be argued that Rexdale is a community in Toronto that experiences a negative neighbourhood effect. The community is one of a number of neighbourhoods that experiences the negative effects of income inequality, crime and racial profiling. These problems in turn can cause a lot of stress in families that lead to family conflicts. These factors contribute to moral panics and the stigmatization of the neighbourhood. These factors reinforce and amplify each other due to the neighborhood effect.

To begin this essay it is necessary to look at Rexdale in general. Grimaldi (2016) explains that Rexdale is a neighbourhood northwest of the city core of Toronto. It was built in the 1950s when the industry was booming and most people had cars. When the industries really did not come, the community declined. The people left in the area had to deal without many amenities like subways (pg. 76-77). The fact that Rexdale failed to develop along expected lines has meant that it is now an area that is experiencing a range of social problems. According to Grimaldi

(2016), Rexdale is plagued by a host of social problems including a high percentage of single parent families, unemployment, poverty, crime, gangs, drugs and isolation. As a result Rexdale has become a shorthand for social  
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problems and gang violence (pg. 76-77). What this suggests is that the social problems in Rexdale have feed off of each other and multiplied. This has led the community to develop a negative reputation.

The growing social problem in Rexdale can be seen as a good example of the neighbourhood effect. Oreopoulos (2018) defines the neighbourhood effect as the effects of social interactions and conditions in a neighbourhood on individuals (pg. 238). The neighbourhood effect in this sense is just another way of saying the social environment within a community impacts the individuals in it.

Rexdale is a community that is experiencing a negative neighbourhood effect. This negative neighbourhood effect comes from many sources. One of these sources is a high level of economic inequality. Bapuji (2015) defines economic inequality as the result of the uneven distribution of economic resources. These distribution issues can take three different forms. They can take the form of uneven resource endowments. They can take the form of uneven access to productive resources. They can also take the form of uneven access of rewards from labour (pg. 1061). There are different types of economic inequality that can be seen in Rexdale. Census statistics for Rexdale and the City of Toronto indicate that Rexdale has a lower average household income, a higher unemployment rate and a lower employment rate. The average household income in Rexdale was \$58 341 compared to \$70 945 for the City of Toronto. The unemployment rate in Rexdale was 11 percent compared to 9 percent for Toronto. The employment rate in Rexdale was 54 percent compared to 58 percent in Toronto. The distribution of earning after-tax household income demonstrates a range of problems in <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-in-rexdale-the-neighbourhood-effect-economic-inequality-and-racial-profiling/>

Rexdale. Rexdale had more households making under \$20 000 a year. They also had a lower number of households earning incomes in the middle of the earning range and significantly fewer people in the high income range (City of Toronto, 2011, pg. 5). This would suggest that low-incomes and poverty are significant problems in Rexdale.

The economic inequality could be a consequence of the concentration of poverty in particular neighbourhoods. Oreopoulos (2018) explain that one manifestation of the neighbourhood effect is the concentration of poverty. A number of studies have noted that a number of cities in the United States and Canada demonstrate a concentration of poverty into neighbourhoods. For example, Regent Park is a community in which poverty has been concentrated. The concentrations of poverty appears to be related to a range of social problems within Regent Part (pg. 239). The concentration of poverty in Toronto does not just occur in Regent Park. Instead it appears to be a common feature of many outer suburbs within Toronto. Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) argues that Toronto is becoming three different cities based on income. There is a stable city of rich in the city core, a shrinking middle class city outside of the core. Then there is a growing city of concentrated poverty in the out suburbs (pg. 141-142). The suggestion is that many of the suburban neighbourhoods outside of the city core are areas in which poverty is being concentrated. This would certainly appear to apply to neighbourhoods like Rexdale that are on the fringe of the city.

The growing spatial inequality can be seen as a result of inequitable distribution of economic resources within the city. Lehrer and Wieditz (2009) notes that there has been a great deal of reinvestment in the inner city of <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-in-rexdale-the-neighbourhood-effect-economic-inequality-and-racial-profiling/>

Toronto due to gentrification. This is contributing to the inner and outer suburbs getting fewer city resources (pg. 141-142). This suggests that economic resources are pouring into the inner city and the outer suburbs like Rexdale are receiving very little. Grimaldi (2016) explains how community leaders in Rexdale believe that there are a lack of hubs in Rexdale. There is a lack of hubs that would aid in keeping children away from gangs and drugs. The lack of hubs is largely a result of a lack of economic investment in the area (pg. 77). In other words not enough is being invested in the area so it does not have enough resources to deal with many of the social problems in the overall area. The economic inequalities can also be seen in the fact that people in Rexdale often lack access to economic resources that could help them economically. For example, there is a general lack of investment in education that results in lower levels of educational attainment. Davies, Maldonado and Zarifa (2014) argues that socioeconomic factors impact the university choices and destinations of students in Toronto. There is a hierarchy of universities in Ontario based on a variety of rankings. Students from more affluent background tend to apply to and attend higher ranged universities. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often do not end up going to the higher ranked universities (pg. 28). What this suggests is that socioeconomic resources do seem to impact the access to educational resources. Rexdale is one of the communities in which students are less likely to end up in a higher ranked university. According to Davies, Maldonado and Zarifa (2014) students from Rexdale are grouped among students from areas of Toronto with lower socioeconomic status. They were found to almost never end up attending higher ranked universities (pg. 28). The argument that is being made is that socioeconomic status and access to <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-in-rexdale-the-neighbourhood-effect-economic-inequality-and-racial-profiling/>

educational resources are closely connected. People with lower social economic statuses like people in Rexdale are less able to access educational resources. This can drastically impact their educational and employment opportunities later in life. This can demonstrate how factors like poverty and a lack of economic resources in Rexdale can contribute to the economic inequalities. These economic inequalities in turn contribute to the negative neighbourhood effect in Rexdale.

The lack of economic resources can be seen in the limited employment prospects within Rexdale. There are very few places within the neighbourhood where people can find well paying jobs. Many of the jobs that people in the area hold would be considered precarious jobs or low-paying service jobs. Their employment opportunities are also limited by the fact that the neighbourhood has a negative reputation (Grimaldi, 2016, pg. 141-143). Studies indicate that the reputation of neighbourhoods can have major impacts on employment opportunities. Zaami (2015) notes that employers often apply the reputation of a community to potential employees. If the potential employee comes from a neighbourhood with a negative reputation employers are more likely to view them as low skilled, possessing poor work ethics and being incompetent. As a result they often will not hire potential employees from these neighbourhoods (pg. 73). This employment discrimination can be seen as another way in which employment opportunities for people in neighbourhoods like Rexdale are limited. They often find it difficult to find employment opportunities in their community and employers in neighbourhoods outside of their neighbourhood are often reluctant to hire them. The employment difficulties experienced by people in

Rexdale can be seen as yet another example of the negative neighbourhood effect. A lack of resources means that there are few employment opportunities. This contributes to unemployment and low-incomes when people manage to get jobs. They also contribute to other social problems like crime and gangs. As a result the neighbourhood gets a negative reputation. The negative reputation hinders employment opportunities outside of the neighbourhood. This means that many people in Rexdale end up being spatially segregated in a neighbourhood with few resources or opportunities. This creates a vicious cycle of limited resources and social exclusion.

All the economic inequality causes poverty that can contribute in a lot of family conflict. Banovcinovaa, Levickaa and Veres (2014) notes that poverty and other problems caused by economic inequality places a lot of stress on families. This stress often leads to disrupted family functioning (pg. 148). The economic inequality in this sense can be seen as a stressor that makes the negative neighbourhood in Rexdale worse.

These arguments about the negative neighbourhood effects in

Rexdale can also be seen to contribute to the apparent problems with youth in the neighbourhood. Strohschein and Matthew (2014) found that there was a relationship between the social capital of youth and behavioural problems. Youth with lower levels of social capital were found to have higher levels of behavioural problems (pg. 143). There are a number of factors that impact the social capital and behaviour of youth. Strohschein and Matthew (2014) found that community disorder resulted in lower levels of social capital and higher levels of problematic behaviour in youth (pg. 143-144). In other words

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the social problems in neighbourhoods like Rexdale are evidently contributing to common problematic youth behaviour.

Rexdale has gained a reputation as a neighbourhood associated with youth crime and gang violence. Grimaldi (2016) notes that Rexdale was become associated with gangs and youth crime. It was also a community that received a reputation for drug related crimes due to the fact it was the area in which former mayor Rob Ford got his crack. (pg. 77-78).

The negative reputation Rexdale has for youth, gang and other types of crime has contributed to a moral panic. Leon and Brent (2016) defines a moral panic as periods of exaggerated concern over a particular threat to a community. This threat is linked to various deviants who end up being targeted within the community (pg. 90). Black Youth in Rexdale have become linked to crime, drugs and gang violence. This can be seen to result in race related moral panics focused on Rexdale and surrounding neighbourhoods. This has often been linked to racial profiling. Meng (2017) explains that racial profiling is when the police and or other law enforcement agencies focus their attention on people from particular racial groups due to their supposed connection with crime. In Toronto racial profiling is something that is often experienced by Black youth. Black youth are often monitored, stopped, questioned, detained and arrested by police (pg. 6). Racial profiling in Toronto appears to have a spatial component. Meng (2017) found that Black youth were more likely to experience racial profiling in Toronto if they were in more affluent predominately white communities. This was especially true if they were in predominately white communities surrounding racially segregated neighbourhoods (pg. 16-17). What this would seem to indicate is <https://assignbuster.com/social-problems-in-rexdale-the-neighbourhood-effect-economic-inequality-and-racial-profiling/>



that racial profiling is being justified by the moral panic surrounding Black youth in neighbourhoods like Rexdale. This contributed to the social isolation of many people in the community. They fear that if they leave the community they will be targeted by the police.

Now in regards to my personal experience while on my field trip entitled the "street-walk" that we undertook, I observed a heavy, blatantly visual segregation of upper and lower class neighbours that you couldn't help but sadly comprehend the reasons for. On one end was the area known as Regent Park, a location ravaged by poverty and a sense of unhappiness, and most apparent drug use and or mental illness. Next to it, there was the area known as Cabbagetown South which was the complete opposite with a booming day time business establishment with tons of retail stores/ patrons and a more vibrant community with a lack of interpersonal communication like most major cities such as New York. In your heart you could feel the difference between the two and ponder why? I know understand that economic inequality has played a massive role in this clearly visual polarization that is evident between two neighbours so close together, yet so different. The rich get richer and the shrinking of the middle class, not to mention the vast majority who are struggling to get by or that define themselves as being in relative poverty. There have been studies that try to explain why, like studies such as the Gini Coefficient, but this doesn't fully tell the reasons for this vast difference. Is it the governments fault? Like allowing things such loan- debt solutions, or money marts for existing? The over spending that occurs, with no repayment, thus putting a strain on the economy roughly every 5 to 8 years. I understand that there isn't a one

solution fits all that could explain the sadness I got to see, like homeless shelter, safe injection sites and lavishing upscale residents, how could one explain this profound experience. To me you cant, sure you can do a study and make an objective quantitative answer, but to live there and experience it first hand would perhaps better the understanding that is being searched for, thus making the most accurate, reasonable solution, hopefully for the best.

In conclusion, this essay explored the social problems being experienced in Rexdale. The community is a fringe neighbourhood on the outskirts of Toronto. It is also a community that experiences a high level of isolation and a lack of city resources. This results in a range of social problems that contribute to a negative neighbourhood effect. This negative neighbourhood effects are the result of income inequality, crime and gangs. These factors contribute to moral panics regarding Black youth that justify racial profiling. As a result Black youth are targeted by the police inside and outside of the neighborhood. This helps to cement the reputation of Rexdale as an impoverished crime-ridden neighbourhood. These factors reinforce and amplify each other due to the neighbourhood effect. Also my experiences while on the street walk have been an eye opener to just how different a community can be, I once lived in tough neighbourhood but fortunately my life changed, but I've never encountered such a disaster like the one Regeant park is emerged in right now. There is no telling how much worse it could become.

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