White Minds, Red Lines:
The University of Chicago and Racial Capitalism from 1925 to 1940

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Presented to the Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the BA Degree

The University of Chicago
April 5, 2019

Abstract

This thesis examines the University of Chicago's relationship to its neighbors from 1925 to 1940. During this period, the "Chicago School" sociologists Ernest Burgess, Robert Park, and Louis Wirth published research on the city which legitimized stereotypes that associated Black homeowners with declining property values. These theories, which were produced under the pretense of "objective" scientific sociological study, had lasting effects on how the University administrators used real estate policy to maintain segregation on the South Side of Chicago. In particular, the University of Chicago financially supported homeowner associations in their legal defense of restrictive covenants. Drawing on University administrators and academics' archive as well as local newspapers, I attempt to demonstrate how University administrators selectively applied sociological theories as justification for their support of restrictive covenants. Furthermore, I use the framework of racial capitalism to highlight the economic incentives of the University to perpetuate the confinement, restriction, and suffering of Black Chicagoans.

Acknowledgements

I extend my sincerest thanks to Destin Jenkins for the time he put into advising and teaching me. Special thanks to my preceptors Jessa Dahl and Allen Louis Linton II for reading and giving feedback on my work throughout the process. Thank you to Professor Guy Emerson Mount who encouraged me to pursue this topic and taught me how to think about reparations and transformative justice. I could not have completed this project without the support of my friends Anjali, Kathryn, and Katie. Finally, thank you to classmates, graduate students, and professors who have challenged me to think critically about whiteness, power, and systems of subjugation.

Introduction

In 1937, Carl Hansberry, a Black real estate broker, secured a lease in the Washington Park Subdivision, a neighborhood adjacent to Chicago's Black Belt and the University of Chicago campus.[1] The Woodlawn Property Owners League, a homeowner association, sued Hansberry, claiming he violated the restrictive covenant that covered the neighborhood and prohibited Black people from purchasing property in the area.[2] The lease was invalidated in court and Hansberry and his family were ordered to leave their property within ninety days.[3] With the help of the NAACP, Hansberry contested the covenant, eventually making his way to the Supreme Court where the covenant was rejected on a technicality. Until then, however, the homeowner association spent more than three years defending the covenant in court, amassing thousands of dollars in legal fees—no small sum considering the lingering impact of the Great Depression. The homeowner association benefited from their partnership with one of the largest property owners in the neighborhood, a reputable partner who shared their interest in racial segregation. Throughout the legal process, the University of Chicago financed the expenses of the Woodlawn Property Owners League as they defended the restrictive covenant, totaling approximately $2,250.[4]

At the crossroads of the Great Migration and the Great Depression, legal defenses and property values were the sanctioned, monetary barriers that made upward mobility for Black

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[1] Lionel Kimble, "Black Belts Insult Us," In *A New Deal for Bronzeville: Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights in Black Chicago, 1935-1955* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 19.
[2] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 11.
[3] "Hansberry v. Lee, Interlocutory Appeal from Circuit Court of Cook County," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[4] L. R. Steere to the Committee on Community Interests, April 27, 1939, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Americans nearly impossible. Sociological claims to the "natural" organization of the city legitimized the maintenance of these barriers and were diffused through a network of power relations which included academics, administrators, homeowners, and government officials. Racist theories that associated property values and race were adopted by university administrators and used to rationalize the university's housing policy under the guise of neighborhood "protection." Hansberry's story is just one instance of the University of Chicago's role in maintaining housing segregation on the South Side of Chicago.

During the first Great Migration, which began in the late nineteenth century and continued until the 1930s, over 200,000 African Americans arrived in Chicago.[5] Migrants lived primarily on the South Side and usually lived among white Chicagoans. African Americans like Carl Hansberry and his wife Nannie Hansberry moved from the South to Northern cities like Chicago in search of improved social and economic conditions and to escape the violent racism they experienced in the South.[6] Migrants found more employment and education opportunities in these cities, leading more and more African Americans to join them.[7] As the number of migrants increased, white racists used violence, zoning laws, and racially-determined rent prices to keep non-white people out of their neighborhoods. By 1900, the concentrated residential area of Black migrants known as the "Black Belt" was roughly three miles long, barely a quarter mile wide, and surrounded by railroad tracks on all sides.[8] Communities of middle- and upper-class African Americans formed in Hyde Park, Woodlawn, Englewood, and Morgan Park.[9] The Black Belt continued to expand over the next three decades.

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[5] Horace R. Clayton, "Negroes Live in Chicago," *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 15, no. 12 (Dec. 1937): 366.
[6] Kimble, "Black Belts Insult Us," 14.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940 – 1960* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998), 3.
[9] Allan H. Spear, "The Rise of the Chicago Black Belt," in *The Rise of the Ghetto,* ed. Bracey Meier Rudwick. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company: 1971), 58.

The economic expansion in the aftermath of World War I drew migrants to Chicago and led to a rapid growth in the stock market. At the same time, however, production declined, the unemployment rate continued to grow, and housing foreclosures and evictions increased. The 1929 stock market crash exacerbated these conditions and initiated the decade of economic downturn known as the Great Depression. Declining property values and limited employment opportunities resulted in heightened anxieties around the politics of home ownership. White homeowners worried about "racial invasion," the spread of Black Chicagoans into "white neighborhoods," because they associated their race with property deterioration.[10] While this sentiment existed before the economic turmoil of the 1930s, the severe decline in housing options during the Great Depression worsened concerns about property values. Adding to the economic tension, racist white Chicagoans felt threatened by the increasing population of African Americans during the Great Migration, which they viewed as a "mass invasion."[11] In response, white homeowners in Hyde Park, home of the University of Chicago, and other nearby neighborhoods began forming homeowner associations.[12] These associations often formed for the purpose of "neighborhood improvement" and their work included promoting cleanliness, expelling "vice," and implementing restrictive covenants. Historian Arnold Hirsch describes racial restrictive covenants as "contractual agreements among property owners that prohibit the purchase, lease, or occupation of their premises by a particular group of people, usually African Americans."[13] By limiting housing options for Black people, homeowner associations further

[10] Kimble, "Black Belts Insult Us," 16.
[11] St. Clare Drake and Horace Clayton, *Black Metropolis* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 177.
[12] Daria Roithmayr, "Racial Cartels," *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 16 (2010): 70.
[13] Arnold Hirsch, "Restrictive Covenants," Encyclopedia of Chicago, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1067.html.

contributed to the Black Belt's lethal housing conditions while ensuring that the ideal of homeownership, and the capital it represented, remained in the hands of whites.

Enrollment at the University of Chicago grew in the early twentieth century as more people moved into the city. The ability to house students and faculty became an increasingly pressing issue for the administration. In addition to tuition, the university also accumulated capital through its off-campus property management which usually housed these affiliates. When making decisions about their real estate, administrators frequently drew on the expertise of the Sociology Department, which developed in the 1920s and specialized in urban sociology. During this period of academic growth, the university gained the reputation as a liberal research institution that championed objective, empirical research.

Fearful of declining property values, the university administration funded homeowner associations and worked with government agencies in order to control the surrounding neighborhood's racial and class composition. At the same time, the University of Chicago School of Sociology published academic works that naturalized segregation and reinforced the stereotype that Black homeowners would decrease property values. Through an examination of this relationship between academics and administrators, this thesis explores the sociological underpinnings of the university's investment in housing segregation and the unbalanced power dynamic apparent between academics and administrators. I argue that administrators at the University of Chicago used the theories of Chicago School sociologists to legitimize their involvement with homeowner associations for the sake of profit-enhancing property management.

Chicago School theories of urban sociology were essential to the making of segregation, a dynamic largely unexamined by historians of early 20th century housing. Scholars such as

Davarian Baldwin and Sudhir Venkatesh have outlined the impact of the Chicago School of Sociology and its contributions to the study of the city.[14] Chicago School sociologists rejected scientific racism in favor of a socio-historical conception of race, labeled race conflict and racial traits as "natural" elements of society, and conceptualized assimilation as an inevitable force.[15] This model reinforced a pre-defined norm of whiteness, against which the behavior of Black Chicagoans was measured and blamed in the case of social dysfunction.[16] The distinction between academic and urban planner was blurred as sociologists worked with politicians and real estate firms to create boundaries within the city that secured political majorities and secured property values.[17] Scholars of urban sociology, however, do not address the relationship between the academics in the Department of Sociology and the administrators at the University of Chicago. This is an important intervention because it stresses the interconnected roles of universities as both knowledge producers and property managers.

Historians of housing segregation have examined how public policy, real estate interests, and homeowner associations contributed to the exclusion of Black people from certain neighborhoods. Federal agencies like the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) exacerbated segregation by working with mortgage lenders to evaluate city areas based on "desirability." Areas with new buildings where white, affluent people lived were given the highest grade (A), and areas with predominantly working-class Black residents were given the lowest grade (D).[18] Those areas with a D grade were colored red, giving rise to the term "redlining," which the

[14] Sudhir Venkatesh, "Chicago's Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community," *Social Science History* 25 (2001); Davarian Baldwin, "Black Belts and Ivory Towers: The Place of Race in U.S. Social Thought, 1892-1948," *Critical Sociology* 30 (2004).
[15] Davarian Baldwin, "Black Belts and Ivory Towers: The Place of Race in U.S. Social Thought, 1892-1948," 400.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Venkatesh, "Chicago's Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community," 291.
[18] Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) Residential Security "Redlining" Map and Area Descriptions, Hartford, Connecticut, 1937.

Encyclopedia of Chicago describes as "the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods."[19] Although the agency claimed to assess areas based on a variety of factors like housing quality, historians emphasize how race trumped all other considerations.[20] Federal Housing Agency (FHA) appraisers rewarded mortgage applications with high ratings if there were no Black people living in or nearby the development, and lowered risk estimates for properties with racially restrictive language in their deed.[21] Scholars such as Thomas Sugrue underline how federal housing policy legitimized the discriminatory practices of banks and real estate firms which used HOLC's evaluations to determine lending ability and property costs.[22] The partnership between public policy and private enterprise worsened the effects of redlining. This thesis adds to this history by shedding light on the shared logics behind large-scale federal policy and localized university policy. The revolving movement of actors between public government officials and private University of Chicago administrators shows how sociological theory was diffused throughout national and local housing policy.

There is some debate about the relationship between real estate agents and homeowner associations as secondary causes of segregation, after the federal government. Histories of housing segregation that center real estate agents emphasize how they standardized and encouraged the use of restrictive covenants. The professionalization of the real estate industry in the early twentieth century contributed to the significant influence brokers had on segregating neighborhoods. While previously property negotiations were handled between buyer and seller, the growth of the real estate business introduced the position of the property "expert" who

[19] "Redlining," *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1050.html.
[20] David Freund, *Colored Property* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), 112.
[21] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 83.
[22] Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton University Press: 2005), 44.

controlled the vocabulary and logic of the real estate business.[23] The Chicago Real Estate Board (CREB) facilitated the expansion of covenants. In 1924, CREB released a code of conduct which prohibited real estate agents from selling to buyers of any race or nationality whose presence would decrease neighborhood property values.[24] Soon after, the Board issued a standard covenant to be applied to properties, expediting and legitimizing their use. One such standardized "property agreement" included "the restriction that no part of said premises shall be sold, given, conveyed or leased to any negro or negroes [*sic*], and no permission or license to use or occupy any part of therof shall be given to any negro except house servants or janitors or chauffeurs employed thereon as aforesaid."[25] Other historians seem to imply that real estate agents acted as puppet-masters of homeowner associations. In neighborhoods thought to be "safe" from "invasion," real estate firms helped organize homeowner associations and required members to write restrictive agreements into their deeds which brokers hoped would result in stable property values.[26] In this debate, however, historians often lose sight of how homeowner associations were the critical mechanism through which restrictive covenants were diffused and defended.

Unable to purchase homes in predominantly white neighborhoods due to high housing costs, mob violence, and restrictive covenants, most Black migrants were forced to move into the already crowded Black Belt. Those with financial means searched for homes in adjacent neighborhoods where real estate agents were quick to take advantage of their willingness to pay

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[23] Paige Glotzer, "Exclusion in Arcadia: How Suburban Developers Circulated Ideas about Discrimination, 1890-1950," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2015).
[24] Kimble, "Black Belts Insult Us," 17.
[25] While many Black people during the time did refer to themselves as "Negroes," the use of a lower case "n" was commonly understood to be offensive. "Supplemental Agreement," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[26] Kevin Fox Gotham, "Urban Space, Restrictive Covenants and the Origins of Racial Residential Segregation in a US City, 1900-50," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24.3 (2000): 628.

higher prices.[27] Although some of these areas were covered by covenants, the legal expenses required to defend the covenants were not worth it to many homeowners. Instead, when Black neighbors moved in, white homeowners moved out, and the Black Belt expanded.[28] With the funds of the university on their side, white homeowners living near the University of Chicago stayed put, confident the administrators would be there to defend the covenants. Historians of housing segregation rarely acknowledge the position of universities as property owners that are invested in maintaining property values and have the financial means to fund homeowner associations in their legal defense of restrictive covenants. This thesis attempts to bridge the gap in the histories of sociology and housing segregation through an examination of the relationship between the university's academics and administrators at a distinct historical moment at the convergence of the first Great Migration and the Great Depression.

The first source base I work with in this thesis is located in the Special Collections of the University of Chicago Library. These sources are part of private, personal collections as well as public, official collections belonging to University of Chicago administrators and sociologists. Given that these sources are curated by and physically located at the University of Chicago, they represent a narrative cultivated by the very institution I intend to critically examine. Keeping this in mind, I attempt to reread these documents against the grain in order to uncover what these sources can show us about the university's relationship to its neighbors in the 1920s and 1930s.

My other source base includes newspaper articles from the *Chicago Defender* and the *Hyde Park Herald.* Articles from the *Chicago Defender* are authored by Black men, many of whom lived in the Black Belt nearby the University of Chicago. The *Hyde Park Herald* is a local paper that serves the Hyde Park neighborhood. These sources provide insight into the

[27] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 31.
[28] Susan O'Connor, *Chicago's Historic Hyde Park* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013), 251.

perspectives of non-university affiliated people who were affected by the university's position on the South Side. Due to the time and education level required to write an article for a newspaper, the breadth of perspectives accessible through the examination of newspaper articles is limited. However, this limited perspective is representative of the segment of the Black population which were able to purchase homes in predominant white neighborhoods and are the focus of this thesis. These sources act as a counterweight to the university archives, balancing the abstract, intangible character of the university's documents against the real, lived experiences of its neighbors written about in the newspapers.

For this project, I was unable to access archives that would represent the voices of Black women and working-class white people living near the university at the time. The scope of my thesis is thus limited to the actions of the University of Chicago administrators and sociologists and the publicized responses from neighbors. Black women living near the university played an important role in organizing against segregation and provided invaluable support to many of the men who wrote for the *Chicago Defender*.[29] Unfortunately, the erasure of Black women in history is reproduced in my sources and therefore a significant missing piece in my thesis.[30] Furthermore, lacking in my thesis is the positionality of working-class white people in the neighborhood who rented homes in the areas around the university and were considered "undesirable," yet were not restricted by covenants. Rather, my thesis is a story of the wealthy,

[29] See Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle: African-American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York University Press, 2001) and Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
[30] Crystal Moten describes the removal of working-class Black women from the collective memory, which she terms "dismemory." Moten argues that Black women's narratives complicate the traditional historiographical trends and often do not use the language that historians are familiar with to construct historical narratives. Moten emphasizes the importance of oral history as a means of accessing the voices of Black women. Given the time constraints of my paper, I was unable to use oral history as a source; Crystal M. Moten, "'Fighting Their Own Economic Battles': Saint Charles Lockett, Ethnic Enterprizes, and the Challenges of Black Capitalism in 1970s Milwaukee," *Souls* 18.1 (2016): 106-125.

white University of Chicago, its upper- and middle-class, white neighbors, and Black Americans of similar socioeconomic levels who also lived near the university.

In my thesis, I attempt to understand the university's actions through the lens of racial capitalism. Drawing on the work of Cedric J. Robinson, I define racial capitalism to be the mode of capital accumulation that emerged from feudalism and is inseparable from racialism.[31] My analysis is also influenced by historians N.D.B. Connolly and Thomas Sugrue, who have contributed to the scholarship of racial capitalism by zooming in on how private and public actors in the housing market systemically exploit non-white people for the purposes of capital accumulation.[32] Racial capitalism is a useful lens because it centers the ways in which the University of Chicago's economic interests in the 1930s were tied to racialized conceptions of property value. This lens challenges previous historians who use either a racial or class analysis to interpret history. In addition to being an analytical tool, racial capitalism can be used as a descriptor to portray the way sociological theories of race and the university's capital accumulation through property management developed through interlaced processes.

I chose to study the University of Chicago in particular because I am a white student who pays to attend the university. I am complicit in the harm the University of Chicago continues to enact on its neighbors, the techniques of which have transformed, but not decreased, since the 1940s. I hope that my research will add to current efforts by University of Chicago students, faculty members, and community activist organizations to highlight these patterns of mistreatment throughout the history of the university. [33] While my identity drew me to the

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[31] Cedric Robinson, "Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development" in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 10.
[32] N.B.D Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (University of Chicago Press, 2014); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis.*
[33] See Reparations at UChicago Working Group, Assata's Daughters, Good Kids Mad City, and BYP100, to name a few.

subject, it also shapes how I read and analyze my sources. I engage with the sources with the motivation of bringing attention to the histories of white supremacy from which I benefit and which the university's administration continues to disregard. Furthermore, I am using the University of Chicago as a case study, but the conclusions drawn from my thesis about the position of private Universities in urban spaces can be applied to many other academic institutions in the United States.

The first section of this thesis will cover the contributions of sociologists Ernest Burgess and Robert Park as two of the earliest scholars of urban sociology. Their work, which theorized the natural and inevitable organization and disorganization of the city, remained at the center of discourse around property values and race, influencing their students as well as the University of Chicago administrators. One student of Burgess and Park, Louis Wirth, was explicitly called upon by administrators to offer guidance on university real estate management. In section two, I analyze Wirth's suggestions and their relation to the foundational ideas of Burgess and Park. I then demonstrate how administrators selectively applied Wirth's advice and highlight the university's perceived economic stake in supporting restrictive covenants. Given the association of race and property value outlined by Burgess and Park, administrators believed that restrictive covenants were essential to preventing property value depreciation. Finally, in the third section I cover the story of the Hansberry family, who faced the effects of the university's politics in both their daily lives living south of campus, and in the courts where Carl Hansberry challenged the restrictive covenant established by the Woodlawn Property Owners' League. I conclude by placing the themes of theory, power, and racial capitalism within a broader history to underscore the pattern of harm perpetrated by the university and the lack of recognition or redress on the part of the University of Chicago towards its Black neighbors.

I. The Chicago School

Kitchenettes
With no heat
And garbage
In the halls.

Who're you, outsider?

Ask me who I am.
-Langston Hughes, "Visitors to the Black Belt"

In the late nineteenth century, the discipline of sociology was criticized by academics for being the "bastard child of philosophy," "sloppy economics," and "history by snooty philosophers."[34] Scholars at the University of Chicago attempted to legitimatize sociology within this hostile academic environment.[35] While other prominent universities offered ten to twenty sociology courses, the University of Chicago offered one hundred.[36] By the 1920's, the university's commitment to the Sociology Department and its unique focus on urban sociology allowed the department to carve out its own place in academia, known as the "Chicago School of Sociology." However, scholars have pointed out the problematic labeling of the "Chicago School" as it suggests a monolithic collection of sociological ideas. Instead, the "Chicago School" was comprised of various sociological theories that often did not originate at the University of Chicago, although they are credited to the "Chicago School."

Sociologist Aldon Morris notes that the Chicago School of Sociology is frequently referred to as the first school of "American empirical sociology."[37] In reality, however, W.E.B. Du Bois founded the first scientific school of sociology at Atlanta university in the early

[34] Jonathan Turner, "The Mixed Legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology," *Sociological Perspectives* 31, no. 3 (1988): 327.
[35] Ibid., 328.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, (University of California Press, 2017), 19.

twentieth century.[38] Moreover, the methods attributed to the "Chicago School," which emphasized the importance of going out into the field to gather first-hand observations of populations, were first practiced by Du Bois.[39] The work of sociologists like Burgess and Park drew heavily on the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, despite their rejection of political sociology, which Du Bois stressed.[40] In *The Philadelphia Negro,* Du Bois writes about his study of African Americans living in Philadelphia to "ascertain something of the geographical distribution of this race, their occupations and daily life, their homes, their organization, and, above all, their relation to their million white fellow citizens."[41] Like Du Bois, Burgess and Park were interested in studying the relationship between racial dynamics within the city; however unlike Du Bois, whose work contributed to a larger critique of racial subjugation, Burgess and Park believed sociological research should remain apolitical, even though this belief in itself was political. Du Bois was known for how he "recognized the agency of the racially subordinated" and was also among the first scholars to challenge theories of race based in biology.[42] While considered radical at the time, once these ideas were appropriated by Burgess and Park, they entered the sociological mainstream under the heading of the "Chicago School."[43]

Burgess and Park thought they were developing a sociological methodology that used the lived experiences of real people to foster a scholarship separate from politics. According to the "Chicago School," sociology was not a disciple rooted in historical and subjective research. Rather, it was backed by interviews and census data and displayed through maps and charts: a "value-free" methodology.[44] This insistence on empirical, objective research, however, only

[38] Ibid., 19.
[39] Ibid., 20.
[40] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (Routledge, 2014), 26.
[41] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 1.
[42] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 27.
[43] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 28.
[44] Turner, "The Mixed Legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology," 331.

reinforced the political underpinnings of the work. Burgess and Park helped standardized the white, heterosexual middle-class subject as the basis against which other behaviors were measured. Their theories further positioned white heterosexual masculinity as the normative, hegemonic foundation of subjectivity.

There were Black sociologists working alongside Burgess and Park, although their legacy is often overshadowed. Franklin Frazier absorbed the theories of Burgess and Park and turned them on their head, making class, not culture, the basis of organization in urban space.[45] In *Black Metropolis,* Horace Clayton and St. Clair Drake presented nuanced descriptions of the various cultural expressions of Chicago's Black community, unlike any produced by their white colleagues.[46] While these sociologists often challenged the inherently racist theories of Burgess and Park, much of their work reproduced the sociological emphasis on "objective" research and continued to measure behavior against a predefined norm, whether that be based on race, class, or sexuality.[47] In the history of sociology, these sociologists are often recognized more for their presence in the "racially diverse" Chicago School than for their significant contributions to urban sociology. Furthermore, the theories published by Black sociologists which humanized Black Chicagoans were not adopted by white homeowners, the government, or university administrators in the same way as Burgess and Parks' because they undermined justifications for maintaining segregation.

While Burgess and Park were only two of the several prominent Chicago School sociologists at the time, their published work and methodology had some of the most lasting effects and they are commonly recognized as two of the most significant contributors to the

[45] Baldwin, "Black Belts and Ivory Towers: The Place of Race in U.S. Social Thought, 1892-1948," 426.
[46] Ibid., 430.
[47] Ibid., 400.

sociology of the Chicago School. Despite being grouped together in history, their research was distinct. Burgess concentrated his studies on the structure of urban space, while Park was more inclined toward studying the relationships of the people in that space. One of the most widely acknowledged sociological works of Park and Burgess is *The City.* This book offers broad insight into the sociological theories of the Chicago School at the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideas about race and urban space published in the work influenced public discourse on the matter and in doing so shaped the future of the city of Chicago.

In 1925, Burgess, Park, and Roderick McKenzie published *The City*, a canonical sociological work that represented the Chicago School's theory of urban sociology.[48] In their sociological work on the city, Burgess and Park came to conclusions not only about urban space, but about how humans "naturally" relate to each other. In the first chapter, Park writes, "The city is not merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction…it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature."[49] By beginning the book with this statement, Park frames his sociological findings as descriptions of the natural processes of the city, rather than prescriptive statements which shape how individuals, institutions, and the government engage with the city of Chicago.[50] He continues to make claims about the ecological characteristics of "great cities," which he never defines but seems to include all industrial, densely populated cities of the time. He writes that "every great city has its racial colonies," and that "in the great city the poor, the vicious, and the delinquent, crushed together in an unhealthful and contagious intimacy, breed in and in, soul and body, so that it was often occurred to me that those long genealogies of the

[48] Ernest Burgess et al., *The City* (University of Chicago Press, 1925), 8.
[49] Ibid., 1.
[50] Park used the term "natural" to mean "uninfluenced by culture or administration," leaving "the impression of a primordial social solidarity which existed apart from social convention"; Gerald Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (University of Chicago Press, 1972), 8.

Jukes and the tribes of Ishmael would not show such a persistent and distressing uniformity of vice, crime, and poverty unless they were peculiarly fit for the environment in which they are condemned to exist."[51] Making these claims about "the great city," rather than just Chicago, emphasizes his point about the natural processes that occur in all cities. In doing so, Park does not acknowledge the particularities of Chicago's history which would uncover how "racial colonies" are not, in fact, natural occurrences, but are rather the result of intentional efforts to segregate the city. Additionally, his comments suggest that the "vice, crime and poverty" attributed to certain "racial colonies" are a result of the people who live there, rather than external political circumstances. Park's association between people and their environment underscores the stereotype that associated Black people with "deterioration" and thus lower property value. His claim is also characteristic of his theory of race relations which would develop in the following years.

Park's theory of assimilation known as the "race relation cycle" consisted of four stages: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.[52] The cycle was grounded in the spatial configuration of the city, the formation of "racial colonies" being an important step in the process of assimilation. Park, and later his students, theorized that the "natural" processes of the city paralleled a "natural" process of assimilation in a causal manner. The cycle of movement within the city and the cycle of race relations worked to reinforce each other and support Park's claim to inevitability and naturality. According to this theory, the city's "racial colonies" were a physical component in the process that led to assimilation.[53] The colonies were unstable areas

[51] Park's reference to "the Jukes and Tribes of Ishmael" show that he did not reject biological determinism completely, but that some of his theories were often still grounded in eugenics; Burgess et al., *The City*, 45.
[52] Although Park's race relation cycle was not officially published in 1950, six years after his death, Park began developing his theory in the early twentieth century; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 26.
[53] Ibid.

that would inevitably "invade" adjacent communities and become stable through the process of assimilation.[54] Park's race relation cycle reduced all race conflict to cultural relations, denying the political factors that shape constructions of race.[55] His language of the racial *colony,* then, is peculiar because of its allusion to the age of empire, a clearly political reference. While thinking of a city's residential areas with a high concentration of non-white people as "racial colonies" was not common before Park, the term "colony" was adopted by later generations of Chicago School sociologists like St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton, who used the term in their 1962 seminal work *Black Metropolis* to describe the Black Belt.[56] In *The City,* Park uses the term to highlight the way the area was culturally distinct from its surroundings to further his argument that connects the physical space of the city to the cycle of race relations. His analysis, however, misses the rather obvious connection of racial subjugation apparent in Chicago's "colonies" and the colonies of Empire.

In the second chapter of the book, Burgess explains his theory about the organization of Chicago, which he argues could be applied to other cities as well. His theory involved five concentric circles radiating from city center. Each circle described a different aspect of the city's population. The city expanded from the central business district, which in Chicago was known as the Loop (I), to the "area in transition" (II), which were being "invaded by business and light manufacture." Burgess also referred to this area as the "area of deterioration." Industrial workers who "escaped" Zone II lived in the third area which was located close to their work. The fourth zone was the "residential area" (IV) of upper-class apartment buildings and single-family homes. Beyond the city limits were the suburban areas (V). Burgess theorized that cities expanded

[54] Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities,* 46.
[55] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States,* 27.
[56] St. Clair Drake and Clayton, *Black Metropolis,* 174.

outwardly, following this structure, in an inevitable process of "invasion" and "expansion." This claim of inevitability is particularly problematic during the period of suburbanization in the twentieth century, caused by white flight.[57] Under Burgess' theory, the movement would be considered a natural process of the city, clearly missing the important point that white people fled because they did not want to live near Black people, although in terms of Park's theory of race relations, this example would serve to prove that race conflict was natural as well.[58]

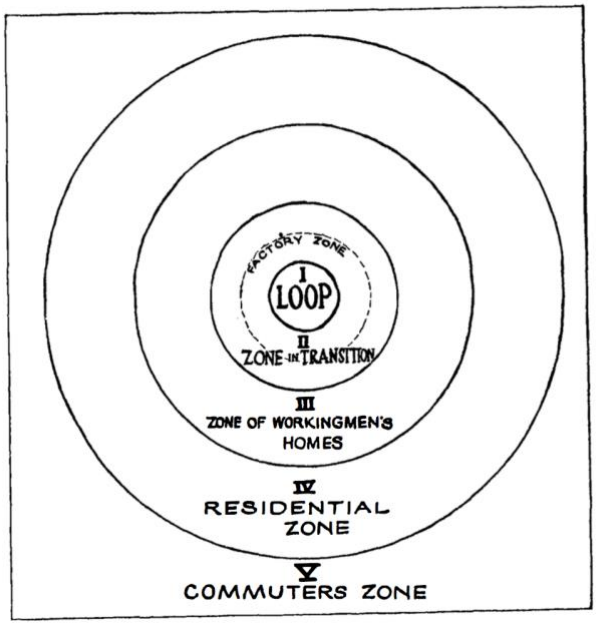

Figure 1 Burgess, Ernest, Roderick Duncan McKenzie, and Robert Park. *The Growth of the City.* In *The City.* University of Chicago Press, 1925.

Additionally, Burgess divided the city into communities and sub-communities based on physical dividers such as the Chicago River, the Drainage Canal, the elevated railroad lines, parks, and boulevards.[59] Burgess claimed that these neighborhoods were inevitable divisions that

[57] While "white flight" is commonly periodized as a post-WWII phenomenon, Wirth's description of the white people's movement to the "peripheries" can be considered an early instance of "white flight."
[58] Burgess et al., *The City*, 51.
[59] Ernest Burgess, "One Hundred Years of Growth of the Local Communities of Chicago," Undated, Burgess, Ernest. Papers, Box 13, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.

resulted from the physical layout of the city. He did not address the fact that railroads, parks, and boulevards were purposefully built as "barriers" to further segregate communities.[60] Burgess argued that his mapping of the city was a descriptive endeavor. His claim that the social organization of the city was a natural and inevitable process masked the political and social efforts enacted to manipulate the city landscape. In fact, Chicago School sociologists worked with politicians and real estate firms to create boundaries within the city that secured political majorities and stabilized property values.[61]

Burgess imbues the city with humanistic traits that reinforce his claims about natural processes and inevitability. Burgess defines mobility: "like the pulse of the human body, it is a process which reflects and is indicative of all the changes that are taking place in the community, and which is susceptible of analysis." His concern for "mobility" was representative of the time—immigration, urbanization, and industrialization were at the forefront of public discourse. The influx of migrants and the rapid change in industry was perceived as a threat to white middle-class masculinity, making "mobility" a pertinent point of study. Burgess argues that "areas of mobility" are "the regions in which are found juvenile delinquency, boy's gangs, crime, poverty, wife desertion, divorce, abandoned infants, vice"—all troubles that would threaten white middle-class masculinity. By associating mobility with "vice" and at the same time claiming that mobility is as natural as a human pulse, he suggests that these regions are inevitable components of the city. This is a dangerous association because it obfuscates the root causes of these problems. Furthermore, Park's "racial colonies" fell under the category of "areas

[60] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 58.
[61] Venkatesh, "Chicago's Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community," 291.

of mobility," thus racializing spaces of mobility and fortifying the white middle-class prejudice against new migrants. [62]

Burgess claims that land values are an effective measurement of mobility "since they reflect movement."[63] In the following decades, land values become a central concern of the University of Chicago in their decision to defend restrictive covenants. In the following sections it becomes apparent how administrators fixate on the "stability" of the neighborhood. Much of their reasoning is grounded in Burgess' argument that "mobility," movement within neighborhoods, leads to vice and deterioration, and consequently decreased property values. His implicit association between race and land values is the foundational logic behind the future actions of homeowner associations and the university.

A look into the history of so-called "vice districts" uncovers the extent to which these regions were not "natural" at all. Before the criminalization of sex work in 1912, city authorities would designate certain regions in Chicago as the "vice district," hoping that the concentration would make it easier for police and government officials to surveil.[64] These districts were purposefully picked to be far from commercial and white residential areas and were frequently placed in or near predominantly Black neighborhoods.[65] The intentional designation of "vice districts" debunks the "natural" association of vice with certain "areas of mobility," as Burgess posits. Burgess' claims in *The City* erase the ways in which cities are constructed by contrived processes like municipal zoning.

During their time working on *The City,* Burgess and Park were actively working with government officials to make decisions about the layout of Chicago. In reaction to the changing

[62] Burgess et al., *The City*, 59.
[63] Ibid., 61.
[64] Spear, "The Rise of the Chicago Black Belt," 66.
[65] Ibid.

demographics and organization of the city, the two sociologists formed the Local Community Research Committee (LCRC) in 1923 as an interdisciplinary research collective dedicated to studying Chicago city policy.[66] One of their guiding research questions was "What happens in Chicago when a Negro community impinges on a white community?"[67] As they conducted their research on local communities, the distinction between scholar and urban planner was blurred. The communities outlined by Burgess were adopted by City Council, Chicago residents, and local businesses.[68] Using the research produced by the LCRC, city government made decisions about zoning and funding allocations.[69] Burgess and Park laid claim to "apolitical" research while at the same time communicating with politicians about city policy. The sociological claims reified through this relationship undermines the descriptions of "natural" organization outlined in *The City.*

The late 1920s represented a period of immense change in cities across the nation. The wave of post-War immigrants coupled with the first Great Migration brought questions of race and property to the national stage. In 1926, the Supreme court case *Corrigan v Buckley* changed how white Chicagoans attempted to segregate the city. Previously, zoning laws and violence were the most common modes of keeping Black people out of predominantly white neighborhoods. In 1917, the Supreme Court case *Buchanan v Warley* established that government-instituted residential segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment. However, *Corrigan v Buckley* ruled that courts did not have jurisdiction to judge the constitutionality of private contracts such as racially restrictive covenants.[70] These covenants provided white people

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[66] Venkatesh, "Chicago's Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community," 281.
[67] "Local Community Research," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 134, Folder 5, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[68] Venkatesh, "Chicago's Pragmatic Planners: American Sociology and the Myth of Community," 276.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Jeffrey Gonda, *Unjust Deeds* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 5.

a convenient means to segregate the city and supposedly maintain property values. One study of Chicago showed that forty percent of all the covenants on the South Side were created in the three years after *Corrigan v Buckley.*[71]

By 1929, Burgess and Park's theories were engrained in mainstream understandings of race, property, and the organization of the city. Real estate agents, white homeowners, government agencies, and the University of Chicago operated under the assumption that Black homeowners would inevitably cause land values to decline. Reproduction of these theories by later generations of Chicago School sociologists strengthened this association. The author of *The City's* bibliography, Louis Wirth, who was a sociology graduate student at the time, went on to advise the university's administration about how to manage the off-campus property in relation to the expanding Black Belt. Wirth was a member of the Social Science Research Council (previously the LCRC) and was frequently called upon by administrators to give his opinion on issues related to the university's real estate holdings. His sociological background, shaped by the teachings of Burgess and Park, meant he was considered an expert in the realm of all urban matters.

II. The Administration

> In the beginning was the deed
> And the deed was death
>
> And the honkies are getting confused
> peace be still
> --Nikki Giovanni, *The Great Pax Whitie*

[71] Ibid.

Following the publishing of *The City*, the economic downturn in the agricultural sector during the Great Depression drew more laborers into Chicago, exacerbating the housing shortage. Restricted from buying homes in predominantly white neighborhood, Black Americans coming to Chicago had particularly few options. In 1934 there were over 200,000 Black people living in Chicago, but there was only housing available for 150,000.[72] The Black Belt was dominated by absentee landlords who were not invested in the maintenance of their properties because of the high demand for housing, causing infrastructure to deteriorate.[73] As more Black people moved into neighborhoods adjacent to the Black Belt, developers converted apartments into kitchenettes in order to maximize profits. A seven-room apartment would be converted into seven one-room apartments by installing an oven and sink into each room. The seven-bedroom apartment, which was once rented to white families for $50 a month, was then rented to seven Black families for $24 a month, per room.[74] The landlords' neglect caused rodent infestations, leaky piping, and exposed electrical wiring.[75] Poor ventilation and congestion in the kitchenettes meant fire was a constant threat.[76] Overcrowding contributed to higher crime, death, and infant mortality rates.[77] Author Richard Wright, who lived in the Black belt from 1927 to 1937, described the kitchenettes as "our prison, our death sentence without a trial, the new form of mob violence that assaults not only the lone individual, but all of us, in its ceaseless attacks."[78]

[72] Clayton, "Negroes Live in Chicago," 366.
[73] Ibid., 367.
[74] Richard Wright, *12 Million Black Voices* (Basic Books, 2002), 104.
[75] Rashad Shabazz, "Our Prison," in *Spatializing Blackness: Architectures of Confinement and Black Masculinity in Chicago* (University of Illinois Press, 2015), 41.
[76] Shabazz, "Our Prison," 42.
[77] Clayton, "Negroes Live in Chicago," 366.
[78] Wright, *12 Million Black Voices,* 106.

Figure 2 Lee, Russel. *Back of multi-family dwellings rented to Negroes. Chicago, Illinois.* April, 1941. Farm Security Administration, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

The decreased employment and housing opportunities during the Great Depression disproportionally affected Black people because of established discriminatory practices. White people also faced these problems to a lesser degree, limiting their ability to move out of the neighborhood once Black people moved in. Instead, white homeowners increasingly formed homeowner associations that could facilitate the implementation of restrictive covenants, which acted as a preventative solution to changing neighborhood demographics. As the Black Belt

expanded further South, it moved closer and closer to the University of Chicago campus. White homeowners felt they only had two options in the face of "racial transition": either move out of the neighborhood, an increasingly unavailable choice given the housing shortage, or prevent Black people from entering the neighborhood in the first place. The university did not have the means to move locations, but they believed that having white neighbors was essential to maintaining property values and accumulating profit, and therefore did not want the homeowners to leave.[79] The administration thus had a shared interest with white homeowners to defend restrictive covenants and could supply the financial backing required to defend them in court. This mutually beneficial partnership between the university and its white neighbors was a powerful force in the exclusion of Black people onto the South Side.

Since moving campuses from Bronzeville to Hyde Park in 1890, the University of Chicago had gradually been expanding their property assets in the areas surrounding the campus. From 1926 to 1933, the campus size nearly doubled.[80] Along with official university buildings, the university bought property that it then rented to students and faculty. Sources from the administration's archive demonstrates the university's obsessive concern with property values in the area. Like many of their white neighbors, the university believed deterioration of neighborhoods was a product of its racial composition, rather than overcapacity, landlord negligence, and lack of public funds. Complicating this were the university administrators and white members of the Hyde Park community who were concerned with being perceived as politically liberal.

[79] Wilburn Munnecke to Robert Hutchins, August 21, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 153, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[80] O'Connor, *Chicago's Historic Hyde Park*, 247.

Despite its history of violence, the Hyde Park neighborhood was known for its liberal-leaning politics. The University of Chicago was also frequently recognized as a "liberal institution" in the press. These politics were a source of pride for the community members and the university administration. This created tension, however, when activists pointed out their defense of restrictive covenants, leading to the emphasis on the politically "neutral" concept of property values as opposed to racial exclusion. Robert Hutchins, who was president of the university from 1929 to 1951, felt conflicted about the University's position as an academic institution and property owner. While he publicly supported the admission of Black students to the university, he expressed skepticism about the "distinction among the admission of students, the use of our hospitals, and the preservation of our property."[81] He believed that "a university is supposed to do what is right, and damn the consequence," yet he remained "perplexed by the problem of property on the south side."[82] Hutchins' preoccupations demonstrate the way administrators separated the university's academic and real estate policies. His confusion also indicates that the university administrators were more than just the public leaders. University officials such as W.B. Harrell, Robert Mitchell, Lloyd Steere, George Fairweather, and W.C. Munnecke were much more explicit in their racism and support of restrictive covenants and encouraged Hutchins to maintain that separation between academics and real estate management.[83]

The university's involvement in maintaining restrictive covenants began in 1933 when Frank O'Brien, an alumnus and Vice President of McKay and Poague Realtors, asked the university to support property owners in their "efforts to stabilize the neighborhood south of the

[81] Bob to Willie, August 26, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration, Records, Box 153, Folder 7, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Munnecke to Robert Hutchins, August 21, 1944, Box 153, Folder 7, Hutchins Administration Papers.

midway."[84] Specifically, O'Brien and other property owners needed help financing the expensive legal defense of restrictive covenants and promoting their interests in the community.[85] Given Burgess' claims about "areas of mobility" in *The City*, the "stability" of the neighborhood was of upmost importance to the university. Mobility threated the university's profit produced through property management. The next year, members of the Board of Trustees established the Special Committee on Community Interests "for the purpose of safeguarding the university's interests on the South Side and of cooperating with local organizations in efforts to maintain, improve and protect the residential communities in the vicinity of the University."[86]

In their attempt to control real estate values on the South Side, the university administrators drew on the expertise of sociologist Louis Wirth. In March 1936, Wirth spoke at the university's Committee on Real Estate. Shortly after Lloyd R. Steere, a member of the Board of Trustees and Business Manager, requested that Wirth summarize his comments in a memorandum. Wirth writes that he assumes "that the Committee is not interested in the theoretical problems of urban growth, land values, and segregation." Rather, he will summarize his research because of its "immense practical significance." Wirth understood the implications of his research outside of the theoretical framework of academia. His conclusions about race and land values informed the policies of the real estate committee and would therefore have a real effect on the housing market of the South Side.[87]

Speaking as an academic, rather than as a member of the university's administration, Wirth infers the university's interests in his consultation. He writes, "I suppose it can be taken

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[84] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.
[85] Ibid.
[86] University of Chicago, Board of Trustees, Minutes, May 11, 1939, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 120.
[87] Louis Wirth to Lloyd R. Steere, March 30, 1936, Louis Wirth, Papers, Box 54, Folder 2, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.

for granted that, other things being equal, the University, like other operators or owners of real estate, prefers the maintenance and enhancement of property values and property incomes to depreciation." In his memorandum to Steere, Wirth views the university in one dimension: as a property owner. However, he recognizes that unlike other property owners in the area, the university's property holdings outside of the campus also serve the purpose of "[providing] income for the operation of the University."[88]

Wirth's comments reproduce the theories of his mentors Burgess and Park. He describes what Burgess labeled a "tidal wave" in *The City,* writing that the population at the center of the city are moving to the peripheries "where tax rates are lower, congestion, crime, noise and other deleterious influences less in evidence."[89] Similar to Burgess and Park, Wirth's writing suggests that this is a natural process, common to all cities. This sense of inevitability which Wirth describes contradicts his proposed solutions, which include "slum clearance, low cost subsidized housing projects, zoning laws, and city plans."[90] Wirth states that these "unnatural" processes have the ability to "stabilize" the natural volatility of the city, however by not recognizing that similar artificial institutions were the cause of this movement to the suburbs, he misses how racism shaped the city and therefore must be considered in order to find a solution to the housing problem.

Wirth also alludes to *The City's* nature metaphors when he describes the movement of Black Chicagoans on the South Side. He writes that it is necessary to "examine some of the

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[88] Ibid.

[89] In describing the recent increase of migrants into the city, Burgess wrote that, "their invasion of the city has the effect of a tidal wave inundating first the immigrant colonies, the ports of first entry, dislodging thousands of inhabitants who overflow into the next zone, and so on and on until the momentum of the wave has spent its force on the last urban zone." Burgess et al., *The City*, 58; Wirth to Lloyd R. Steere, March 30, 1936, Louis Wirth Papers, 3.

[90] Wirth to Lloyd R. Steere, March 30, 1936, Louis Wirth Papers, 3.

reasons why specific measures to stem the tide have failed."[91] Here, "the tide" refers to "the expansion of the Negro population" which "has made them competitors with whites for dominance in the Southern Sector of the city."[92] According to Burgess and Park, competition illuminated the differences among people, which led to residential segregation and unstable "racial colonies."[93] Wirth's appropriation of this language of competition speaks to the influence of Burgess and Park.

Next, he moves to the matter of restrictive covenants. He writes that "as long as real property is predominantly owned in small individual parcels, it is unlikely that such agreements will be effective for more than a short period, for inevitably the temptation of higher bids for land and rent will cause some of those, who did not consent, to capitulate and put an end of the agreement." Wirth argues that restrictive covenants do not work because they do not cover enough land. The university's investment in segregation was not to be underestimated, however. Rather than working to remove restrictive covenants, following Wirth's suggestions, the university administrators increased their involvement with homeowner associations and continued to purchase property in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Wirth offers a qualified solution: "the only measures that property owners can take to preserve themselves from invasion by a group they do not welcome would be collectively to create such barriers by buying up property along the border in sufficient quantity to produce a form of physical insulation."[94] Wirth suggests that this is an unreasonable solution for neighborhood homeowners. The university, however, did have the means to create such a barrier. The university had begun development on the South Side of the Midway just a few years prior,

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[91] Ibid., 4
[92] Ibid.
[93] Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities,* 46.
[94] Wirth to Lloyd R. Steere, March 30, 1936, Louis Wirth Papers, 5.

meaning the Midway no longer acted as a "natural barrier."[95] In its place, the university devised plans to build a "buffer state" between the Woodlawn and Hyde Park neighborhoods.[96]

Wirth goes on to describe the two groups that comprise the "vanguard of the invading Negro group into a white area." He notes that the "culturally and economically advanced" African Americans who are able to "escape the undesirable and unwholesome conditions in the 'Black Belt' are often of a "higher standard of living, higher incomes, and higher demands for themselves and their children." Wirth writes that it is this group that "is usually subjected to discrimination, civic lethargy and ostracism." Conversely, African Americans who are "definitely dependent upon the whites through the services they render in menial occupations or through their preoccupation with vice…[encounter] no resistance at all because the white neighbors across the street with whom they mingle are essentially on the same level with them and do not have fixed inhibitions to fraternization." Wirth's analysis of the "vanguard" demonstrates his understanding of the relationship between race and class. He claims that racism, which he refers to as "fixed inhibitions to fraternization," is a consequence of the unbalanced economic standing of African Americans in relation to the white people who live in the neighborhoods into which they are moving. [97]

Finally, Wirth comes to his final solution: "the improvement of the conditions of life in the Negro area." He writes explicitly that the university should "lend its support in every legitimate struggle of the Negroes to gain for themselves all the privileges of citizenship and community membership." Wirth frames this solution as the only way to ensure that the neighborhoods around campus will remain segregated. While he was known as an anti-restrictive

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[95] Ibid., 7.
[96] Horace Clayton, "No Friendly Voice," *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 16, no. 1 (Jan. 1938): 12.
[97] Wirth to Lloyd R. Steere, March 30, 1936, Louis Wirth Papers, 5.

covenant activist in later years, Wirth was not anti-racist and the sociological theories that rationalized segregation still guided his consultation to the university. [98]

Wirth notes that the university administrators have expressed interest in increasing their involvement with homeowner associations that intend to work to keep Black people out of their neighborhoods. In response, he writes, "I seriously question whether the University as an enlightened educational institution can afford to participate in any overt or covert effort to prevent the free assertion on the part of citizens of their right to move and to compete freely in the economic and social sphere." Along with the theoretical ability to "afford" this participation, Wirth also makes the claim that consolidation of the university's property holdings would offer a possible solution and be cost-effective. He proposes that the university purchase nearby "deteriorated property" and develop it for "faculty members and employees." In doing so, the university will "erect a stable bloc which is capable of resisting deteriorating threats from the outside." This process of clearance and development, according to Wirth, "would in the long run be the most feasible and effective measure for conserving and enhancing the real property values of the University."[99]

Throughout his memorandum, Wirth presents the various "solutions" in terms of economic benefit or loss for the university. Even his suggestion to improve the conditions of the Black Belt is only considered because it would maintain segregation and prevent Black people from moving near the university. Wirth's suggestions make it clear that maintaining property values is the most important factor to the university. Speaking at the Committee of Real Estate meeting and then writing the memorandum places Wirth at the crossroad of the perceived division between administration and academia. By acting as this bridge, Wirth legitimizes the

[98] Ibid., 6.
[99] Ibid., 9.

university's actions. Wirth, a supposed expert on urban sociology, is making suggestions to administrators regarding their role in the urban space around them. Subsequently, administrators and outsiders view the university's actions as grounded in the famous "apolitical sociology" for which the university is so well known. In doing so, they use economic stability as a rationalization for how the university maintains the dire conditions of the segregated Black Belt.

The university's actions following Wirth's letter demonstrate the unequal power distribution between administrators and academics. Administrators chose which aspects of Wirth's argument to implement, and which to ignore. Specifically, they employed his rhetoric of land values, race, and deterioration and largely disregarded his practical solutions.

In 1937, a group of administrators at the university formed the Committee on Community Affairs. The committee was led by Robert Mitchell, who was hired by the University of Chicago to study the neighborhoods surrounding the campus. Before working for the university, Mitchell worked in Washington, DC as Chief of the urban section of the National Resources Planning Board where he specialized in urban planning.[100] In a summary of his report to the committee, Mitchell outlines their objectives. His rhetoric exemplifies the wording the university would use for the next thirty years. The objective of the committee was the "protection" and "benefit" of the university.[101] In particular, this included maintaining or increasing property values and "improvement of social values" in areas occupied by university-affiliates.[102] In order to attain these objectives within the university district, Mitchell writes that the community should have "a stable, white population of high character," as well as community pride, successful businesses,

[100] Interview with Robert B. Mitchell, March 5, 1975, Box 7, Folder 35, Walter Massey Phillips Oral Histories, SCRC 128, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
[101] "Summary of Report to Committee on Community Affairs," Jan. 22, 1937, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.
[102] Ibid.

new buildings, adequate parking, a beautiful appearance, a plan for the future of the neighborhood, and a good relationship with the city.[103]

By framing segregation in terms of "protection," Mitchell positions the university as under threat. Throughout their work on "community interests," the university emphasized its "protective" role in the community. The university's investment in restrictive covenants for its own profit-seeking motives is presented as a matter of protection, and the covenants are frequently referred to as "protective agreements." According to the administration, keeping the surrounding areas white was central to its standing as a university.[104] In this way, the university did act as a protector: it protected white supremacy. Meanwhile, the university's actions contributed to the severe conditions of the Black Belt that resulted in homelessness and death. The university maintained that their worries about the changing neighborhood were not motivated by racial prejudice but were instead driven by concerns about property value.

Later in the report, Mitchell outlines the current conditions of the neighborhoods surrounding the university. The way in which he describes the area based on neighborhood divisions and their characteristics demonstrates how Chicago School theories saturated administrative projects. To the north of campus is Kenwood, with "old homes mixed with less desirable uses," and Oakland, a community which has "already felt the impact of adjacent slum conditions." Due to its "deterioration," Oakland is "susceptible to racial invasion." To the east of the university district is a neighborhood which Mitchell describes as a "comparatively stable residential area." To the west is Washington Park and Washington Park subdivision, which Mitchell reports has relatively new building but "is in danger of rapid deteriorations, for it is adjacent to Negro areas on two sides." He also notes that many of the "better families" have

[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

moved out of the area "to be replaced by much lower grade of white occupancy." Finally, to the south of the university is Woodlawn, which Mitchell states is adjacent to a majority Black neighborhood. These descriptions emphasize Mitchell's understanding that "deterioration" and Black homeownership were associated. Furthermore, it demonstrates how a distinction was acknowledged between socioeconomic levels among white people, but not among Black people, despite the fact that usually, only Black people with significant wealth were able to purchase homes in majority white neighborhoods due to high barrier to securing loans and increased prices set by landlords and speculators.[105]

Michell's language demonstrates how the relationship between administrators and academics is a space where theoretical knowledge is reified. Drawing on Burgess' notion of the city and Park's race relation cycle, Mitchell takes for granted the neighborhood division of the city and association between race and land values. The theories of *The City* are reproduced as fact in Mitchell's report, and moreover the implications of his statements reinforce those theories. This is even clear in Mitchell's cyclical claim that areas of deterioration are "susceptible to racial invasion," and that the areas near predominantly Black neighborhoods are in danger of "rapid deterioration."[106] He is suggesting that Black people are more likely to move into deteriorated areas and are at the same time causing that deterioration. It is a chicken-or-the-egg question whose only answer is in grounded in racist theory. Like those of *The City*, Michell's points gloss over the causality of deterioration through the self-referential cycle. In doing so, racist discourse is reproduced and the root cause of Chicago's housing problems are neglected.

The final section of the summary, entitled "Program of Work," describes three possible ways to accomplish the objectives set out in the first section, and draws from the solutions

[105] Ibid., 2.
[106] Ibid., 2.

propositioned by Wirth one year earlier. First, Mitchell recognized the "first line of defense" to be restrictive covenants. He acknowledges, however, that this method "tends to be impermanent and will necessarily break down in the long run unless it is feasible economically for the owners." The "second line of defense" is "the demolition or modernization and repair of any building in the area which are likely to be rented to less desirable persons." Finally, Mitchell offers a "positive action," which is "to improve living conditions" in the Black Belt and "provide some decent housing for those people." This final option is present as effective because it will "lessen the pressure for expansion." To accomplish these goals, Mitchell writes that "it is assumed that the policy of the university will be to take very little direct action but to work through stimulation of certain organizations and interests already established in the various neighborhoods and to incubate other forces that may be needed as instruments." While Mitchell does not explain why this is "assumed," one explanation lies in the university's concern with its public image.[107]

First, Mitchell's framework for the various "lines of defense" against "invasion" highlight white property owners' anxiety about the impermanence of restrictive covenants. Since Black people were willing to pay higher prices in areas outside of the Black Belt, real estate owners frequently attempted to sell to Black buyers, at times despite restrictive covenants in place. Since the covenants required costly legal fees if they were challenged in court, some Black people did successfully purchase property in neighborhoods covered by covenants.[108] The university and homeowner associations continued to defend and implement restrictive covenants despite understanding their relative ineffectiveness and temporality, speaking to the deep-seeded rhetoric of race and property values. Unlike other modes of maintaining segregation, restrictive

[107] Ibid., 4.
[108] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 30.

covenants were the most obvious manifestation of property "protection." While building physical barriers or investing in Black communities to indirectly maintained segregation, restrictive covenants were direct solutions to the perceived threat of declining property values.

Second, Mitchell references the "desirability" of the renters. This normative judgement reflects how Mitchell, as a representative of the university and previous employee of the federal government, conceives of real estate and the housing market. The term "desirability" transcends the notion of a free market composed of rational actors. Rather, he presents potential renters as either desirable or undesirable. The "desirability factor" is rooted in concerns about vice and deterioration that harken back to the theories of Burgess and Park. Park's theory of assimilation in the framework of his race relations cycle is closely linked to this idea of "desirability." Park assessed the value of new immigrants on their ability to "assimilate" into whiteness, which parallels Mitchell's understanding of a "desirable" renter. Residents of "racial colonies" were unassimilated and thus undesirable, a notion irrespective of a person's employment status or financial background.

In December of 1939, Robert Mitchell left the University of Chicago to work for the Home Owners Loan Corporation.[109] His professional rotation from government to private university and back to government complicates the distinction between federal and local efforts to segregate cities. Mitchell moves seamlessly from public to private, back to public office, highlighting the shared motivations of the institutions and the way in which logic is transmitted through networks of power. It is no coincidence that he organized the effort to keep Black people

[109] Steere to The Committee on Community Interests, March 13, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

out of the neighborhoods surrounding the university campus only to move on to work at HOLC where he could apply those models on a national level.

Moving forward, the Committee on Community Interests focused its efforts on promoting and defending restrictive covenants, rather than attempting to improve the conditions of the Black Belt.[110] The university administration's blatant disregard of this solution, proposed by both Wirth and Mitchell, speaks to their investment in white supremacy and racialized capital accumulation. The university willfully decided to spend money on defending restrictive covenants and building physical barriers rather than improving the quality of housing for Black Chicagoans, despite it being presented as the most effective "solution." Following Mitchell's suggestion, the university exerted its force through existing homeowner associations. Arnold Hirsch notes that "from 1933 to 1947 (with the exception of a single year for which data could not be found), the university spent $110,923.27 on 'community interests,' $83,597.46 of which was apparently used in defending restrictive covenants."[111] A large proportion of these funds went to the Woodlawn Property Owners' League (WPOL), which was financed one-half by the contributions of the university.[112] Other property associations which the university supported included the East 63rd Street Council and the Federation of Neighborhood Associations.[113]

Through the Woodlawn Property Owners' League, the university fueled the promotion and legal defense of restrictive covenants. In the League's 1944 annual report, the President, John Sharpe, discusses its work regarding restrictive covenants. He writes that at the time, 65 percent of the blocks in the community were "protected" by racially restrictive covenants, and

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[110] W.B. Harrell, "Memorandum Re Special Meeting of the Committee on Community Interests Held in Mr. Bond's Office 4-27-39," May 4, 1939, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[111] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 145.
[112] Steere to The Committee on Community Interests, March 13, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers.
[113] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 145.

that the League would work "day by day without interruption until the entire community is strongly protected by bother the older area agreements, and the newer, more easily enforced block agreements." Attempting to mask their racist prejudices, Sharpe emphasizes that they desire to keep property values high, rather than keep Black people out of the Woodlawn neighborhood. He follows this claim, however, by stating that "it is unfortunate and regrettable that a large majority of Chicago's 360,000 negro [*sic*] population are underprivileged persons with unassimilable economic and social standards." Once again, the ability to "assimilate" marks the "desirability" of property owners. Sharpe assures the white community that "so long as Woodlawn property owners support the League, there is no danger of a negro [*sic*] invasion of the neighborhood." [114]

The university corroborated the League's promise in its Statement on Community Interests. As listed in the Statement, the accomplishments of the Woodlawn Property Owners' League included delaying the conversion of the Washington Park Subdivision from a majority white to majority Black neighborhood for approximately seven years.[115] The League, and thus the university, was particularly involved in defending the restrictive covenant that Carl Hansberry allegedly violated when his family moved into the Washington Park Subdivision.

III. The Hansberrys

> the whites got to clutching their pearls.
> built picket fences taller, whiter. Guarded
> them with ordinances nobody voted for
> & bombs that burst in Black homes freely
> as the 4th of July.
>
> -Kevin Coval, "Hansberry vs Lee"

[114] "Woodlawn Property Owners' League: President's Annual Report for the Year 1944," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 3-4.
[115] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers, 3.

Carl Hansberry, his wife Nannie Louise Perry, and their four children were no strangers to the fight for equal housing. Carl, originally from Mississippi, was a real estate agent and the secretary of the Chicago Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).[116] His wife Nannie was a school teacher who grew up in Tennessee and was active in local politics.[117] The Hansberrys were relatively successful financially, granting them the means to move into a predominantly white neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. Lorraine Hansberry, the youngest of their children, wrote, "Our Southside is a place apart: each piece of our living is a protest."[118] Certainly, for the Hansberry family, their very homeownership was an act of protest: a protest against segregation, against white supremacy, and against the University of Chicago.

Carl Hansberry worked with James Joseph Burke and Harry Pace in his struggle for housing justice. Burke was the former secretary of the Woodlawn Property Owners' Association, a previous incarnation of the Woodlawn Property Owners' League, and was seeking revenge by working with Hansberry after his falling out with the Association.[119] Pace was a fellow member of the NAACP and president of the Supreme Liberty Life Insurance Company, which helped

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[116] Patricia C. McKissack and Frederick L. McKissack, *Young, Black, and Determined: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry* (New York: Holiday House, 1998), 6; Hansberry to Robert Hutchins, March 28, 1936, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 153, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[117] McKissack, *Young, Black, and Determined: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry*, 16.

[118] Lorraine Hansberry and Robert Nemiroff, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine in Her Own Words* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 17.

[119] This "falling out" was a result of the university threatening to withdraw from the Woodlawn Property Owners' Association because they found Burke "unable to develop any plan or recommendation for an intelligent understanding and treatment of what was glibly called the colored problem," which resulted in his termination and the restructuring of the organization into the Woodlawn Property Owners' League; Fairweather to Woodward, August 10, 1937, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 153, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library; "Hansberry v. Lee, Interlocutory Appeal from Circuit Court of Cook County," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.

finance the legal battle.[120] Together, they planned to violate restrictive covenants on the South Side and place Black people as owners or tenants of properties within restricted areas. [121] Despite an initial ineffective law suit, their undertaking would successfully culminate in the 1940 Supreme Court case *Hansberry v Lee.*

In October, 1936, the Hansberry family moved into 549 East 60th Street, a building just southwest of the University of Chicago in an area known as the Washington Park Subdivision.[122] The subsection of the greater Woodlawn neighborhood was bounded by 60th and 64th Streets, south Park and Cottage Grove Avenues and fell under a black restrictive covenant, which was created in 1928 and required that 95 percent of the homeowners signed on.[123] Less than two weeks after the Hansberrys moved in, the receiver of the building sued them for violating the covenant. After months spent fighting the case in court, on April 20, 1937, the Appellate court made a definitive ruling. The Hansberrys were evicted from their home on May 25, 1937. They remained determined to challenge the covenant. Two days later they moved two blocks south, to 6140 South Rhodes Avenue, a three-story brick building with an inviting front porch.[124]

Figure 3 Lorraine Hansberry House, 6140 S. Rhodes Ave. City of Chicago, Chicago Landmarks. Accessed April, 2019. https://webapps.cityofchicago.org/landmarksweb/web/photodetails.htm?phoId=6705

[120] "Hansberry v. Lee, Interlocutory Appeal from Circuit Court of Cook County," Hutchins Administration Papers, 2.
[121] Ibid.
[122] "Trace Hansberry Case in Chronological Order," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, Nov 23, 1940, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492645568?accountid=14657.
[123] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers, 10.
[124] "Trace Hansberry Case in Chronological Order."

It took only a week for representatives from the Woodlawn Property Owners' League to file suit against the Hansberrys, perhaps due to their sense of security knowing that the university was covering the legal fees.[125] In fact, over the three-year battle in court, the university financed the legal expenses of the Woodlawn Property Owners' League as they defended the restrictive covenant, totaling approximately $2,250, which today would be about $40,365.[126] Without this money, the Woodlawn Property Owners' League could not afford to sue the Hansberrys and attempt to evict them from their home.

The case gained publicity from the beginning. During the trial at the Cook County Circuit court, Judge Michael Feinberg justified his decision to invalidate the lease by stating, "I don't go where I'm not wanted," a comment which sparked outrage among Black people across the nation.[127] Hansberry and his partners appealed the decision, but the Appellate Court of Cook County and the Illinois Supreme Court both sustained the Judge's ruling in 1938 and 1939.[128] All three courts upheld the legality of the restrictive covenant, citing *Burke v Kleiman,* the 1934 case which ruled in favor of restrictive covenants, as a representative suit.[129] Hansberry and his wife were ordered by the court to leave their property within ninety days, but the fight was not over.[130] Throughout the legal proceedings, Carl Hansberry maintained that the restrictive covenant was invalid because it did not become effective unless signed by 95% of the property owners in the covered area.[131]

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[125] Ibid.
[126] Steere to The Committee on Community Interests, March 13, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers.
[127] "'NO PREJUDICE AGAINST RACE,' SAYS FEINBERG," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Apr 29, 1939, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492564409?accountid=14657.
[128] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers, 11.
[129] Allen R. Kamp, "The History Behind *Hansberry v. Lee," University of California, Davis Law Review* 20, no. 481 (1987): 491.
[130] "Hansberry v. Lee, Interlocutory Appeal from Circuit Court of Cook County," Hutchins Administration Papers, 3.
[131] Ibid.

In 1939, a letter from Alexander Bisno, a local real estate broker, to President Hutchins supported Hansberry's claim. Bisno wrote that a lawyer did a detailed investigation of the Washington Park Subdivision and came to a "definite conclusion that the restriction not only is not legal, but never was legal, for the reason that the 90% consents were never obtained."[132] Additionally, his letter shed light on the significance of the university's financial contributions to the legal fund. Bisno contacted Hutchins because as a broker, he was interested in selling property to Black people in the Washington Park Subdivision, and he was "informed that the only serious opposition to colored people moving into this section is the University of Chicago, and the University of Chicago only, and thru [*sic*] its various agents, either directly or indirectly, it finances the law suits against occupancy by or sale to 'colored.'"[133] In response to Bisno's letter, Hutchins corrects him, writing that the required percentage of properties conforming to the agreement is 95 percent, not ninety percent, and iterates the Court's ruling which upheld the legality of covenant.[134]

In 1940, Carl Hansberry appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which overturned the lower courts' ruling after finding that the required 95 percent approval was not fulfilled.[135] The ruling opened 500 new homes to Black buyers.[136] Despite their adamant belief in the covenant's legality before the Supreme Court case, five years after receiving the letter from Bisno the university reported that the original covenant "was carelessly done and recorded with

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[132] Bisno to Robert Hutchins, April 5, 1939, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[133] Bisno to Robert Hutchins, April 5, 1939, Hutchins Administration Papers.
[134] "Comments on statements in letter of Alexander Bisno addressed to Hutchins," University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 106, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[135] Kamp, "The History Behind *Hansberry v. Lee,"* 482.
[136] Enoc P Waters Jr, "Hansberry Decree Opens 500 New Homes to Race," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, Nov 23, 1940, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492644719?accountid=14657.

total frontage less than the required 80 per cent with many defective signatures and invalid acknowledgements."[137] This report failed to mention how the university neglected to investigate this at the time of the trial while it supported the defense of the covenant financially. Despite their public image as a prominent research institution, the university's commitment to truth and objective fact was selectively disregarded in this case, an egregious display of its priorities.

During the trial, Carl Hansberry spent most of his time in Washington fighting the case. It was a grueling battle. As one news article reported, Hansberry had "the running and powerful influence of the University of Chicago, bred on Rockefeller's millions and the Bible, to buck against."[138] Meanwhile, Nannie and her children continued to live in what Lorraine Hansberry later described as "a hellishly hostile 'white neighborhood' in which literally, howling mobs surrounded our house."[139] One day in June of 1937, eight-year-old Lorraine and her sister sat on their front porch when a mob gathered around the house.[140] The girls ran inside, and someone threw a brick through their window "with such force it embedded itself in the opposite wall."[141] The brick just missed Lorraine.[142]

The policy of the University of Chicago to support restrictive covenants could be protested through legal means, but the everyday violence that resulted from the university's legitimization of racist stereotypes had fewer institutionalized means through which to protest. While the university concerned itself with the finances of the Woodlawn Property Owners' League, blocks away from the campus white people threatened the lives of the Hansberry family.

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[137] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers, 10-11.
[138] Lucius C. Harper, "DUSTIN' Off the NEWS," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Nov 30, 1940, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492631594?accountid=14657.
[139] Hansberry and Nemiroff, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine in Her Own Words*, 20.
[140] Lillian Ross, "Playwright," *The New Yorker,* May 9, 1959, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1959/05/09/playwright.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

Nannie Hansberry patrolled her house all night with a "loaded German luger, doggedly guarding her four children" while her husband "fought the respectable part of the battle in the Washington court."[143] Lorraine Hansberry expressed the tension between her father's insistence on using the law as a means of resistance and her own experience with violence from white neighbors. She wrote that her "memories of the 'correct' way of fighting white supremacy in America include being spat at, cursed and pummeled in the daily trek to and from school."[144]

The university's defense of restrictive covenants did not go unnoticed by the public. A 1937 article in the *Chicago Defender* reporting on the Hansberry case read: "It is well known in Woodlawn that this university is the motive power behind Restrictive Covenants. In fact, many of the real estate owners in that area refer to the Restrictive Covenants as 'the University of Chicago Agreement to get rid of Negroes.'"[145] The article later calls on Hutchins to clarify his position on the matter of restrictive covenants, prompting President Hutchins to write a letter in response on behalf of the university.

In his statement, Hutchins declares the university's benevolent presence in the neighborhood and claims to "[take] satisfaction in doing things as a good neighbor." Hutchins highlights the fact that the University of Chicago's "doors are open to colored students on precisely the same terms as to white." He continues, stating, "the attention of the public has recently been called to the interesting fact the youngest member of our present freshman class is a colored boy 13 years of age." Not only do Hutchins' comments have no relation to the matter at hand (restrictive covenants), his use of the example of the young Black student exemplifies

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[143] Hansberry and Nemiroff, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine in Her Own Words,* 21.
[144] In her later writings, Lorraine Hansberry criticized her father for his insistence on "respectable" forms of protest. Mainly, legal challenges and legislative lobbying; Hansberry and Nemiroff, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black: Lorraine in Her Own Words,* 21.
[145] "BUILDING GHETTOES," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Oct 02, 1937, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492505119?accountid=14657.

how the university exploited the fact that they accepted Black students for publicity. Through such cultivation of their image as a "liberal institution," the university amassed donations and increased enrollment and thus tuition dollars.[146]

Hutchins writes that "some of our social scientists, recognizing the difficult social and economic problems which have resulted from the rapid growth of the colored population in Chicago, have devoted a great deal of thought and energy to their intelligent solution." By citing the research of social scientists, Hutchins legitimizes his claims by grounding them in supposedly objective research. He fails to mention, however, that social scientists such as Wirth were explicitly against the university's support of restrictive covenants, demonstrating his power to selectively use sociological work for the administration's purposes.[147]

In another attempt to divert attention from the university's support of restrictive covenants, Hutchins discusses the involvement of the university in the proposed housing project at 39th and Cottage Grove. This too, however, is a falsity. He presents the university as a proponent who "actively assisted in the projected development." [148] A letter from George Fairweather, the Assistant Business Manager at the university, sent to Hutchins later that November, however, shows that Fairweather actively opposed the site at a meeting with the Director of Federal Housing.[149]

Finally, Hutchins' letter turns to restrictive covenants, simultaneously attempting to remove blame and defend the university's intention. He writes, "the university has contributed to the work of the neighborhood associations. One of the associations to which the university

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[146] Robert Hutchins, "U. OF C. HEAD OPPOSED TO SEGREGATION," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, Nov 13, 1937, https://searchproquestcom.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492525550?accountid=14657.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Fairweather to Robert Hutchins, November 17, 1937, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 153, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1.

belongs has defended restrictive agreements. These agreements were entered into a long time ago, and although many people doubt their social soundness, they are legal in this state and the association has the right to invoke and defend them." [150] Hutchins explanation makes it seem like the university's support of restrictive covenants is a coincidental result of their homeowner association membership. In reality, the university gave money to the associations specifically for the purpose of "legal defense."[151] He goes on to defend the theory behind restrictive covenants, writing that "however unsatisfactory they may be, they are thought to be the only means at present available by which the members of the association can stabilize the conditions under which they desire to live."[152] The irony of his statement grows as he continues, writing that "we [the university] appreciate the difficulties of our colored people."[153] Hutchins' failure to grasp the causal relationship between the restrictive covenants and these "difficulties" demonstrates the emptiness of his claims to racial liberalism.

His article provoked a response later than month which laid out the myriad ways in which the university discriminated against Black people.[154] In the article, entitled "U. of C. Head Criticized on Segregation," Irvin Mollison, one of Hansberry's attorneys, describes Hutchins' piece as "wholly unsatisfactory, evasive, cowardly and unworthy of a great lawyer and president of a university in placing dollars above human rights."[155] Mollison rejects how Hutchins implied that the university is not complicit in the actions of the organizations it funds, writing that "the fact that the university belongs to an association does not mean that it has to stay in that

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[150] Hutchins, "U. OF C. HEAD OPPOSED TO SEGREGATION."
[151] Steere to The Committee on Community Interests, March 13, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers.
[152] Hutchins, "U. OF C. HEAD OPPOSED TO SEGREGATION."
[153] Ibid.
[154] Irvin C. Mollison et al., "U. OF C. HEAD CRITICIZED ON SEGREGATION," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967)*, Nov 20, 1937, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492503060?accountid=14657.
[155] Ibid.

association if it engages in activities which are undemocratic and will lead to serious and unfortunate social consequences."[156] By 1944, after multiple other media attacks, the administration began sending personal checks to the Woodlawn Property Owners' League, rather than official university payments.[157] The negative publicity, however, was not enough to stop the funding all together.

Discussion of the Hansberry case in the media highlighted the tension between property rights and human rights, the former of which the United States government tended to prioritize. Those that supported restrictive covenants framed their argument around the right to protect their property. White homeowners pushed the narrative that the covenants were an economic security measure. The theories of Burgess and Park were self-prophesizing. Engrained in the white American psyche, the origins of the racist logic that Black neighbors would inevitably lower property values were lost, and thus the association was naturalized. Opponents to restrictive covenants understood them to be explicitly racist mechanisms of segregation causing unlivable housing conditions for Black people. One *Chicago Defender* article argued, "It is a covenant against Race people, no matter how good they are, no matter how wealthy they are, no matter what they are if they are black."[158] In their support for restrictive covenants, the government, white Americans, and the University of Chicago demonstrated that they prioritized private property over human lives.

After the Hansberry case, administrators became increasingly concerned with the particularities of the covenants which they endorsed in order to avoid another battle in court and

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 314.
[158] "A SUBVERSIVE COVENANT," *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jul 10, 1937, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/492486312?accountid=14657.

the publicity that accompanied it.[159] During the 1940s, the administration began laying the groundwork for a new mode of racial capitalism known as urban renewal. In the following decades, the university lobbied against the construction of public housing and advocated for large-scale "slum clearance" projects that displaced working-class Black people on the South Side. Carl Hansberry would not live to see the 1948 Supreme Court case *Shelley v Kraemer* that ruled restrictive covenants unconstitutional. In one interview, Lorraine Hansberry said her father died due to "a cerebral hemorrhage, supposedly, but American racism helped kill him."[160]

Conclusion

From 1925 to 1940, the assertion of "apolitical" research at the Chicago School of Sociology legitimized white supremacist notions of property values and race which were adopted by university administrators and used to rationalize the university's housing policy. The University of Chicago defended restrictive covenants through their financial support of homeowner associations, claiming to act in the interest of neighborhood "protection." By maintaining housing segregation on the South Side, the university attempted to maintain stable land values and continue to accumulate profit through property management. Their actions contributed to the overcrowded, unhygienic, and at times lethal living conditions of the Black Belt. The violence perpetrated by the university during this time was not limited to its role as property owner. The sociological theories of the Chicago School legitimized racist claims that associated Black homeowners with declining property values. The administrators selectively used sociologists' expertise to rationalize their policy of supporting restrictive covenants. This culminated in a legal battle between local Black businessmen, led by Carl Hansberry, and the

[159] "Statement on Community Interests," August 16, 1944, Hutchins Administration Papers, 11.
[160] Ross, "Playwright."

University of Chicago, which covered the legal expenses of the covenants' creator, the Woodlawn Property Owners' League. The lived experiences of the Hansberry family exemplified the violent effects of the racist logics of segregation and the way Black Chicagoans resisted the injustices committed by the University of Chicago.

This thesis is the story of how a theory, an abstract idea, can have real, devastating implications. The position of universities in histories of housing segregation are an important line of investigation, and their role as property owner *and* idea generator must be considered together. At times, the distinction between academics and administrators is stark. The university administrators had the power to selectively apply sociologists' advice. Other times, however, the division is blurred as the rhetoric of sociological theory seeped into the language of the administration. Through this transference, theories of the city entered discourses of real estate firms, the government, and the white homeowners.

There are several avenues for further research given the limitations of my thesis. First, as mentioned in the introduction, my thesis does not delve into the contributions of Black women to fight against segregation and the University of Chicago. Research committed to centering these voices is imperative to understanding the potential avenues for redress. Scholarship on the history of racial capitalism often glosses over the role of gender and sexuality, and this line of study would help fill those gaps. The intimate tie between white heterosexual masculinity and the ideal of homeownership briefly mentioned in this thesis would also be a fruitful point of entry to examine the gendered dynamics of racial capitalism.

Next, comparative histories of the University of Chicago and similar academic institutions could offer insight into the factors that effect a university's relationship to its neighbors and to urban space. Was the relationship between academics and administrators

particular to the University of Chicago? I would hypothesize that the stature of the Chicago School did not make the administrators' appropriation of its theories about race and property values to justify segregating the surrounding neighborhoods distinct from other universities. Communication between academics and administrators is not predicated on the reputation of the scholars. Other universities located in urban areas such as Columbia, Yale, and Harvard may not have relied specifically on sociologists, but their histories of property management are similar to that of the University of Chicago and they may have legitimized their actions through non-sociological research. However, the particular emphasis the Chicago School placed on "apolitical" research may have contributed to the broad adoption of its theories. Claiming objectivity contributes to dominant narratives that label certain people as "desirable" and others as "undesirable" in the name of science. Had Burgess and Park not argued that the processes of the city were "natural" and "inevitable," perhaps there would have been more room in scholarship to examine the artificial mechanisms that segregate cities.

This thesis fits within the timeline of the University of Chicago's history of racial capitalism. Extensive research by the Reparations at UChicago Working Group (RAUC) uncovered that that the university's history of exploitation and harm extends as far back as its founding. In 1857, Steven Douglas donated ten acres of land to start the University of Chicago. His ability to make this donation is a direct result of the fortune he amassed as a slave holder. RAUC sums up it up nicely: "the University of Chicago owes its entire presence to its past with slavery."[161]

After the ruling of *Hansberry v Lee* and *Shelley v Kraemer,* more Black people moved into the neighborhoods near the university campus. In 1940, there were 573 Black people living

[161] Caine Jordon, et al., "A Case for Reparations at the University of Chicago," May 22, 2017, *Black Perspectives,* https://www.aaihs.org/a-case-for-reparations-at-the-university-of-chicago/.

in Hyde Park. A decade later, there were 1,757.[162] As Wirth and Mitchell had predicted, restrictive covenants were not effective given the economic incentives against them. In 1944, in a report to the Board of Trustees, the Special Committee on Community Interests wrote that while the efforts to "protect" the neighborhood "for the past eleven years has postponed the deterioration of the surrounding neighborhoods" it has "not improved nor even held in status quo the neighborhood situation."[163] Because of this failed attempt at exclusion, the Committee wrote that "it is now a matter of grave concern and the University should enter upon a much enlarged program if its efforts are to be effective." The university, determined to maintain property values, established a revolving fund of $500,000 to "purchase properties which are deteriorated and neglected, occupied as especially undesirable rooming houses, or whose ownership, use or condition of title constitutes a threat to future desirability of neighborhood, and to rehabilitate and resell them."[164] This marked the beginning of the university's commitment to urban renewal as a new way to keep Black people out of the South Side.

Today, the University continues to expand its property holdings, displace Black South Side residents, and gentrify the neighborhood. In 2017, the university commissioned a private developer to build a new apartment building on 53rd street. The developer built the complex on university-owned property and the administration proceeded to fill it partially with university students who pay much higher prices for university housing than they would for non-affiliated housing. The rent prices for those apartments available to the public are two to three times higher

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[162] Hisrch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* 139.
[163] Special Committee on Community Interests, "Report to the Board of Trustees," September 14, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.
[164] "Joint Meeting of Committees on Business Affairs and Budget," October 4, 1944, University of Chicago, Office of the President, Hutchins Administration. Records, Box 58, Folder 6, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

than surrounding options. Within walking distance of the dorm are a Whole Foods Market and a CorePower Yoga studio. Not only do these corporate businesses displace local Black businesses, they are unaffordable for most residents. In 2018, the university announced its plan to build a new dormitory south of the Midway. This building, which is accessible only to the predominately white student body, is eerily reminiscent of the "barrier" that Wirth suggested the university build between campus and the predominantly Black Woodlawn neighborhood. The university continues to expand its presence in the neighborhood, whether it be through construction of campus building or promoting corporations to develop in the neighborhood. The displacement and gentrification caused by this expansion cannot be understood outside of the history of the University's position on the South Side.

What does a future for the university look like considering this pattern of abuse? The answer to this question should be up to the community harmed by the university, which has continued the Hansberrys' legacy of resistance to the university's injustices. Bringing attention to the university's historical and continued commitment to protect white supremacy begins the discussion and opens space for further resistance.

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