

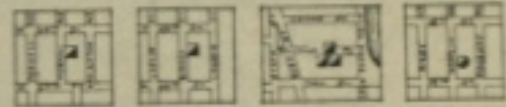
# HOMES BOMBED

IN RACE CONFLICTS OVER HOUSING

JULY. 1, 1917 – MARCH, 1, 1921

HOME OF NEGRO —●—  
" " " REAL ESTATE DEALER —■—  
" " " WHITE —●—  
" " " REAL ESTATE DEALER —■—

BOMBINGS IN AREAS NOT SHOWN ON MAP



## A CITY WITHIN A CITY THE CHICAGO COMMISSION ON RACE RELATIONS AND ITS MAPS OF BLACK CHICAGO

During the interwar years of the twentieth century, Chicago, like many northern American cities, experienced profound social change and prolonged racial strife as a result of the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North. After one particularly violent incident in this dramatic history, the Chicago race riot of 1919, a Chicagoan Commission on Race Relations was formed from black and white community members to examine the underlying causes of, and potential solutions to, this racial tension. In this paper, Emily Xiao, JE '18, reveals how the Commission's singularly impressive use of accurate maps in its culminating report served as a political instrument to advance a pro-integration argument. In demonstrating the importance of spatial representations of social and cultural issues, Xiao points out a larger phenomenon: subjective arguments can be found even in the seemingly objective.

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Chicago is the known city; perhaps more is known about it, how it is run, how it kills, how it loves, steals, helps, gives, cheats, and crushes than any other city in the world.<sup>1</sup>

– RICHARD WRIGHT, 1945

On a scorching hot Sunday in late July, during what would become known as the Red Summer of 1919, a riot broke out at Chicago's 29th Street Beach. A black boy named Eugene Williams had drifted across an invisible line in the water dividing the "white" and "black" swimming areas. White youths spotted Williams from shore and hurled stones at him, causing the seventeen-year-old to drown. Within hours, a destructive riot – sparked by the police's refusal to arrest the white man who had instigated the stoning – was in full sway. It lasted from July 27 to August 8, with the majority of violence against people and property concentrated in Chicago's "Black Belt" on the South Side. By the time the violence subsided and the state militia withdrew, 537 people had been injured and 38 people had died, 28 of whom were black.

On August 1, the city's civic and business leaders gathered at Chicago's prestigious Union League Club and drafted a letter to Illinois Governor Frank Lowden, urging that he appoint an "emergency state committee to study the psychological, social, and economic causes underlying the conditions resulting in the present race riot."<sup>2</sup> In response, Governor Lowden formed the Commission on Race Relations, which was led by twelve prominent Chicagoans – six white men and six black men. Three years later, the Commission presented its report, *The Negro in Chicago*, to the public. Among the earliest reports dedicated to race relations in the city,<sup>3</sup> it comprised nearly 700 pages and provided a multifaceted analysis of race relations in the city. Significantly, it contained 59 recommendations for city agencies, local businesses, the press, and the public.

One of the most striking features of *The Negro in Chicago* – and the subject of this study – is its eighteen maps, which depict sites of interracial encounter and exchange. The maps encompass a broad, nearly all-inclusive range of subjects: population, public transit, acts of violence (such as bombings), social agencies, and recreation, among others. It may come as no surprise that the Commission would use cartographic mapping to elucidate what had become such a spatial conflict. Since the start of the Great Migration, after all, interracial contests over finite resources for housing, labor, and leisure had grown far more tense and geographical in nature. For example, a policy of block-by-block segregation, es-

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1 Richard Wright, introduction to *Black Metropolis*, by Horace R. Cayton and St. Clair Drake (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945), xviii.

2 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 1922), xv.

3 Horace R. Cayton and St. Clair Drake wrote that *The Negro in Chicago* was "the first formal codification of Negro-white relations in Chicago since the days of the Black Code," in *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945), 69.

tablished by the Chicago Real Estate Board in 1917, served to maintain and reinforce racial and social distances. Yet the Commission's maps were not simply a matter of graphic convenience, nor were they secondary to the text of the report. Analysis of spatial conceptions necessitates map-making as a specific and deliberate way of conceiving space. Maps embed arguments about space in visual terms using scale, color, and other cartographic conventions. What makes the Commission distinctive for its time is not only that its members understood race relations in spatial terms, but also that they used maps to advance a framework for visualizing these explicitly racial categories. Through these maps, racial disparities in the urban environment were made visible.

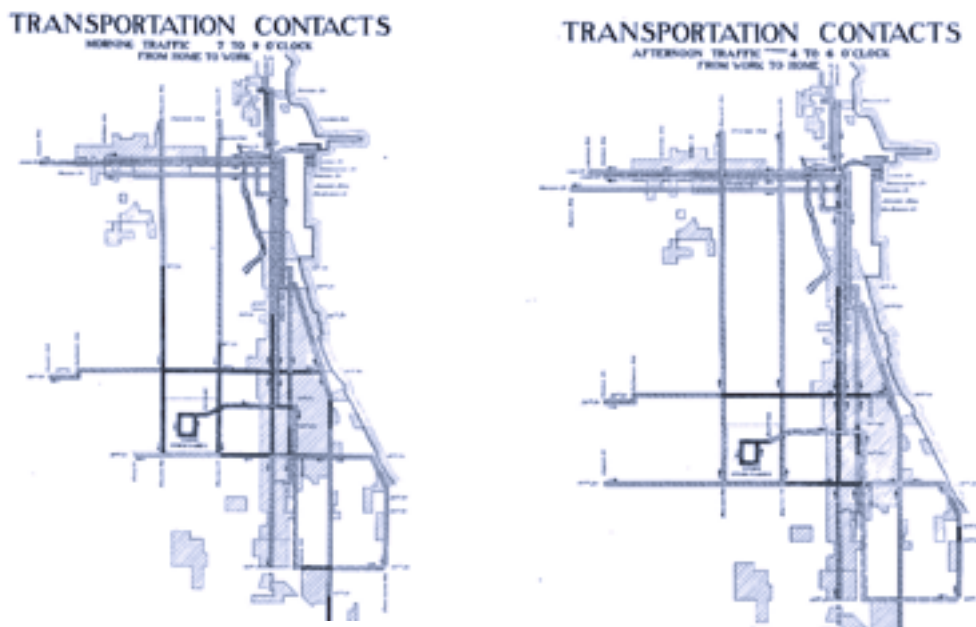


Figure 1. The Commission's map of transportation contacts in morning (right) and afternoon (left) traffic. The different levels of shading indicate the proportions of black passengers to total passengers. Spaces marked with diagonal lines indicate black residential areas. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 300.

The urban maps of *The Negro in Chicago* served as more than a simple description of space. Though the maps embed meticulous statistics within the visual language of cartography in order to achieve a sense of scientific objectivity, it should be understood that they were inherently political in nature. In order to elucidate the effects of municipal policies on black residents, the Commission on Race Relations used mapping to foreground the relationship of Black Chicago – the “city within a city” – to the city as a whole. Advancing the Commission's integrationist and politically accommodationist paradigm (which favored compromise with prevailing white social norms and politics), the maps did not consider Black Chicago in isolation. Rather, they made black-white racial politics – the points of contact, the shared sites, the fractures – visible on the scale

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of the entire city of Chicago.

Much has been written about the Chicago race riot of 1919 and the Commission on Race Relations (particularly its sociological methods), but few have evaluated the Commission's mapping impulse or approach to spatial representation. Naomi Farber touches briefly upon the significance of the maps in her analysis of Charles S. Johnson. Johnson was central to the Commission and was a student of Robert E. Park, a pioneering figure in the Chicago school of sociology.<sup>4</sup> Farber identifies *The Negro in Chicago* as a characteristic monograph of the Chicago school.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Martin Bulmer notes that the Commission's use of maps, a research method in its own right, was consistent with the Chicago urban sociology of the period.<sup>6</sup> Yet, based on B. Robert Owens's study of the historical and theoretical origins of maps produced by University of Chicago sociologists between 1920 and 1934,<sup>7</sup> the maps of Johnson and the Commission appear to have been ahead of their time and quite distinctive for their context.

This essay will begin by locating the urban maps of *The Negro in Chicago* within their sociological milieu. After tracing the formation of the Commission and its institutional and academic grounding, the essay will then discuss the production of the maps and identify the cartographic influences that shaped them. Finally, individual maps from the report will be subject to close visual analysis in order to illustrate the Commission's view of tense race relations in Chicago, and its proposed remedies.

### THE REFORM IMPULSE: THE COMMISSION AND ITS FORMATION

To understand the maps in *The Negro in Chicago*, it is necessary to examine the background of the Commission and to survey the mapping traditions upon which it drew. This section will situate the Commission within the broader reform elements of Chicago, as well as the academic discipline of sociology at the University of Chicago. The Commission's mapping venture was dependent upon the nature of its institutional and academic grounding. The resources, financial and otherwise, that the Commission had at its disposal had a direct bearing on the maps it was able to produce.

The formation of the Commission itself exhibited the influence of the city's municipal reform leaders and movements.<sup>8</sup> Before the Great Migration, few reformers in Chicago

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4 Naomi Farber, "Charles S. Johnson's 'The Negro in Chicago,'" *American Sociologist* 26 (1995): 84.

5 Ibid.

6 Martin Bulmer, "Charles S. Johnson, Robert E. Park and the Research Methods of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1919-22," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4 (1981): 300.

7 B. Robert Owens, "'Mapping the City: Innovation and Continuity in the Chicago School of Sociology, 1920-1934.'" *The American Sociologist* 43 (2012), accessed November 23, 2016, doi: 10.1007/s12108-012-9160-7.

8 Bulmer, 292.

had been concerned primarily with racial issues.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that there were no black Chicagoans before World War I; on the contrary, their presence in the city dated back to the 1840s. The mass migration during and after the war, which brought in hundreds of thousands of black migrants from the South, strengthened principles like the systematic exclusion of black residents from white areas of the city, principles that had already been in place in the city since the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> The riot was regarded gravely by reformers as a sign of racial strife when it broke out in the summer of 1919.<sup>11</sup> The problem of racial tension on this scale was relatively new to them, but the reform leaders' demand for a commission to study this tension was a characteristic element of the Progressive repertoire—it was a familiar solution. Yet the Commission's composition and eventual response was anything but familiar, and its argument should be distinguished from other attitudes toward the riot. Law enforcement, for instance, had brought twice as many blacks than whites to trial, and both the Grand Jury of Chicago and the press proposed increased segregation as the solution to the city's racial problems.<sup>12</sup> *The Negro in Chicago* would firmly repudiate such suggestions.

The Commission was not only racially integrated but also comprised members, black and white alike, who were prominent supporters of the welfare of African Americans. It was chaired by Edgar A. Bancroft, a prominent lawyer and a trustee of the Tuskegee Institute, established by Booker T. Washington. Other white members included Edward O. Brown, the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Victor F. Lawson, the owner and editor of the *Chicago Daily News*; and Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck & Company and a trustee of the University of Chicago and the Tuskegee Institute. At the time, Rosenwald had funded the establishment of hundreds of schools in the South for black students and was a prominent advocate for black education.<sup>13</sup> The black members of the Commission included Robert S. Abbott, the founder and editor of the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper; Lacey K. Williams, a minister of the Olivet Baptist Church of Chicago, described as the largest Protestant church in America; and George C. Hall, a physician and surgeon at Provident Hospital.<sup>14</sup> Hall was also a friend of Booker T. Washington and the vice president of the Chicago Urban League, whose mission was to assist black migrants to Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

Though it was state-appointed, the Commission did not receive major funding

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9 Allan Spear, *Black Chicago: Making of a Negro Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), ix.

10 Ibid.

11 Bulmer, 290.

12 Ibid.

13 Carl Sandburg, *The Chicago Race Riots* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1919), 68.

14 Provident Hospital was an interracial medical institution for black patients. It is described in *The Negro in Chicago* as one of the social and civic agencies serving the black community.

15 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 652; Bulmer, 295.

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from the state government. Therefore, it had to be financially self-sufficient. Financial loans from Julius Rosenwald allowed the Commission to meet its payroll dues, and campaigns were relied on to raise funds from the public.<sup>16</sup> The Commission's finances limited its ability to collect data and maintain a staff of investigators; this, in turn, determined the type and scale of maps that the Commission could prepare. For instance, the committee had hoped to secure block-by-block data showing the expansion of black residential areas and the relative density of black and white residents. It could not afford to do so, however, given its meager financial means. Instead, the Commission looked to population enumerations from the 1920 federal census.<sup>17</sup> Workers for the Commission had some difficulty securing the cooperation of the Census Bureau, but they finally succeeded in March of 1920 after making some compromises. They had to agree, for example, to use data for census enumeration districts rather than more detailed data for individual blocks, which would not be available until the summer. The executive secretaries also consulted the Chicago Telephone Company, which had received data from the bureau showing the boundaries of the enumeration districts. The Telephone Company agreed to provide the Commission with its figures, along with a map depicting South Side black residential areas in 1916 and 1919.<sup>18</sup> The Commission's two executive secretaries were essential to its work. The first, Graham Romeyn Taylor, was a white man and the son of a leading reformer in Chicago's settlement house movement. The other was Charles S. Johnson, a black graduate student in sociology at the University of Chicago. He was employed in records and research work at the Urban League.<sup>19</sup> Johnson had "made a favorable impression upon the Commission" with his proposed outline for investigating the riot, a plan which was based on his experience in investigative work. He called attention to the available material that already existed in other agencies, including original source material at the Urban League.<sup>20</sup> Ernest W. Burgess, a colleague of Robert Park, the pioneering Chicago sociologist and professor at the University of Chicago, wrote years later:

[*The Negro in Chicago*] was, of course, a joint effort of the Commission, the executive director, the associate executive director, and of an able staff. But it bears the stamp of the characteristics which distinguish the work of Charles S. Johnson as a social scientist. It has scientific objectivity, it relies on both personal documents

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16 Letter, Julius Rosenwald to Graham R. Taylor, December 31, 1919, box 6, folder 3, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL.

17 Letter, Graham R. Taylor to the Honorary James R. Mann, February 12, 1920, box 6, folder 3, Julius Rosenwald Papers

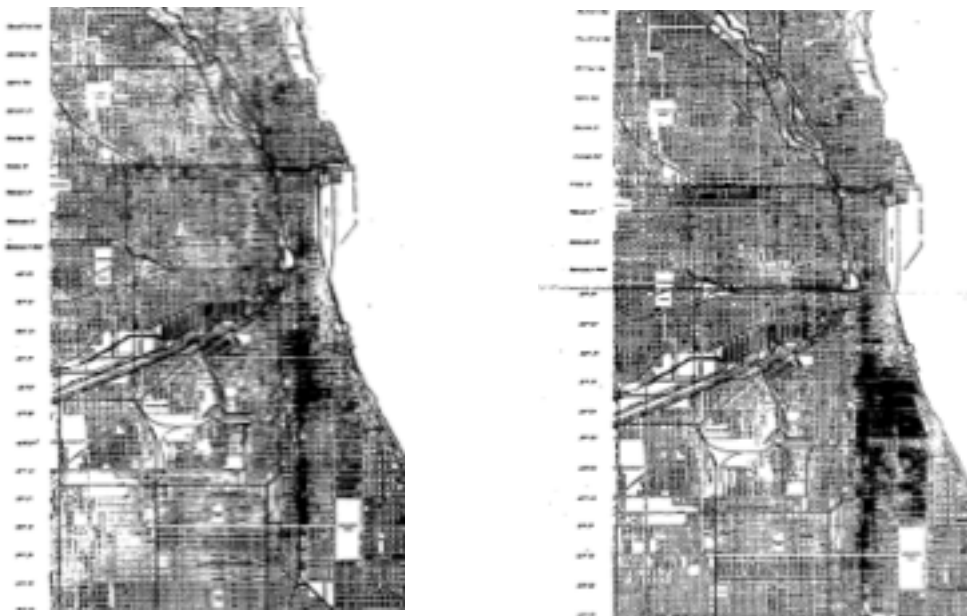
18 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, March 12, 1920, box 6, folder 4, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

19 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, October 9, 1919, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

20 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, November 20, 1919, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

and statistical data, its findings are marshalled for practical application in the solution of a problem, its main objective is to obtain understanding of the factors and processes in human behavior.<sup>21</sup>

As a student of Park, Johnson brought methods of academic sociology to the Commission's work. Park himself, a former secretary of Booker T. Washington, had been considered for the position of executive secretary.<sup>22</sup> The Commission frequently consulted both Park and Burgess in its research plans,<sup>23</sup> and the research staff included several graduate students enrolled in Park's course on public opinion.<sup>24</sup> The significance of the maps, then, should be appreciated in the context of the Chicago school of sociology and its early aims.



*Figure 2. Distribution of Negro Population, 1910 (left) and 1920 (right). These maps are based on federal census data, with each dot representing 40 black residents. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 106 & 110.*

## LOCATING THE MAPS: CARTOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES

Before situating Johnson and the Commission within the Chicago school, it is important to note that sociologists at the University of Chicago did not in fact regard themselves as a single school. Rather, the term was applied retrospectively by scholars evaluating the

21 Ernest W. Burgess, "Charles Spurgeon Johnson: Social Scientist, Editor, and Educational Statesman," *Phylon* 17, no. 4 (1956): 318.

22 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, October 9, 1919, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

23 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, January 8, 1920, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

24 Letter, G. Taylor to Julius Rosenwald, February 18, 1920, box 6, folder 3, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

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Chicago sociologists' legacy as a whole.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Owens argues that the various mapping schemes of the Chicago school cannot be treated as facets of a single theoretical outlook, nor even steps toward the linear progression of one.<sup>26</sup> This caveat also applies to the maps of *The Negro in Chicago*. As we shall see, Johnson's decision to include maps in the report was novel within the context of the school at the time. However, this innovative format did not necessarily mean the maps were more progressive or scientifically objective in nature than other available representations of urban data. Rather, they should be recognized as serving a specific goal: a distinct and deeply political interpretation for observing the reality of the city, commensurate to Johnson's own aims and civic outlook.

Bulmer identifies the first two major empirical studies of the Chicago school as *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, published between 1918 and 1920, and *The Negro in Chicago*.<sup>27</sup> *The Polish Peasant*, by Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas at the University of Chicago, featured personal documents such as letters and diary entries to piece together sociological life histories. However, it appears not to have included maps. Interestingly, the study argues that the Polish community was shaped less by broad policies than by internal social ties and organization.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, *The Negro in Chicago* and its maps were concerned with highlighting the tensions between black Chicagoans and their social environment. By no means did the study repudiate the effects of cultural background and ties, but it was primarily interested in highlighting the spatial and social effects of broad municipal policies on Chicago's black residents.

The Chicago school's cartographic mapping of the city did not begin until 1923, when Ernest Burgess published his scheme of concentric zones based on a theory of urban "ecology."<sup>29</sup> This idealized model took economic forces alone to be the primary social movers.<sup>30</sup> Later, between 1924 and 1930, the Local Community Research Committee delineated 75 "community areas" of Chicago constructed around ethnic group identities. This scheme was more empirically grounded and offered a less deterministic and biological view of social communities.<sup>31</sup> Thereafter, as technical advances in data collection and analysis allowed for more precise empirical study, Chicago sociology gradually turned toward census

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25 "Mapping the Young Metropolis," Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/webexhibits/mappingtheyoungmetropolis2/index.html>.

26 Owens, 266.

27 "Mapping the Young Metropolis."

28 Eli Zaretsky, introduction to *Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Classic Work in Immigration History*, by Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1996), xxii.

29 Owens, 270.

30 Ibid., 273.

31 Ibid., 266.



tract mapping.<sup>32</sup> Published in 1922, *The Negro in Chicago* predated all of these mapping schemes. It thus seems inappropriate to describe its maps as altogether characteristic of the Chicago school's cartographic efforts and methods, as these had not yet been established.

Still, we can look to some of Park and Burgess's early writings to get a sense of the sociological attitudes Johnson brought to the Commission. In 1915, Robert E. Park wrote in his foundational essay, "The City," that "physical and sentimental distances reinforce each other,"<sup>33</sup> a view consistent with Johnson and the Commission's mapping of social relations between racial groups. Park and Burgess's classic 1921 *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* does not discuss maps, but provides some insight into the authors' racial attitudes. In one essay, Park describes the racial temperament of the Negro as "a disposition for expression rather than enterprise and action," though he argued that this disposition could change with environment.<sup>34</sup> Park would later be credited for showing that the social disorganization of urban immigrant culture had social and cultural, rather than biological, roots.<sup>35</sup> In 1918, however, he was still writing about his doubts as to "what extent so-called racial characteristics are actually racial, i.e., biological, and to what extent they are the effect of environmental conditions."<sup>36</sup> Importantly, Robert Park did recognize that there was "one profound difference between the Negro and the European nationalities, namely, that the Negro has had his separateness... thrust upon him because of his exclusion and forcible isolation from white society."<sup>37</sup> Whatever Park's eventual theoretical evolution on the matter, Johnson's own stance in the heredity-environment debate was already apparent through his maps, which emphasized the importance of social and cultural environment. Crucially, in other words, Johnson's maps took an inherently social, rather than biological, attitude toward race and racial discrimination.

What models, if any, did the Commission have at the time to guide its mapping venture? Though the Chicago school had not yet begun mapping in earnest, another source of cartographic influence existed outside the academy. Progressive municipal reformers, including those in the settlement house movement, which primarily served ethnic white immigrants, had long been mapping the city. Between 1890 and 1920, the urban studies

32 Ibid., 286.

33 Robert E. Park, "The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment," *American Journal of Sociology* 20, no. 5 (1915), 582.

34 Robert E. Park, "Education in Its Relation to the Conflict and Fusion of Cultures," in *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, ed., Burgess and Park (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 139.

35 Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution: The Heredity-Environment Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 150. The intellectual stance of Park and other sociologists was significant in an era when ethnocultural conflicts had become increasingly divisive, and at a time when academic sociology sought to liberate itself from the natural sciences.

36 Park, "Education in Its Relation to the Conflict and Fusion of Cultures," 140.

37 Park, "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups," in *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, 632.

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that emerged from the Social Survey Movement often utilized visual representations and large-scale, foldable maps, even though it was considerably expensive to include such maps in publications.<sup>38</sup> In 1895, Jane Addams' Hull House published the *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, a collection of maps and essays by residents about Chicago's Near West Side. Their ultimate goal was to mobilize the public toward social reforms. Taking Charles Booth's maps of London as a model, the Hull House residents hoped their reports would be "of value, not only to the people of Chicago...but to the constantly increasing body of sociological students more widely scattered."<sup>39</sup>

It is likely that Johnson and the Commission were inspired by the Hull House investigation, which sought to marshal statistical data and first-hand observations toward practical ends. Some personal connections existed between the two groups: the Committee's chairman, Edgar Bancroft, set aside one of his personal copies of the first edition of *The Negro in Chicago* for Jane Addams.<sup>40</sup> They also shared certain methodological affinities. The Hull House residents' painstaking research relied upon personal inquiry and home visitations, with "each house, tenement, and room visited and inspected."<sup>41</sup> Their efforts were evident in the publication's detailed, color-coded maps of individual housing units in a "congested district of Chicago." The Commission's investigative staff similarly enlisted local participation in gathering first-hand empirical data for their study of race relations. For example, newspaper announcements, such as those found in the *Chicago Tribune*, solicited communications from members of the public.<sup>42</sup> Although Park regularly taught a course on the social survey at the University of Chicago, such large-scale survey work was unconventional for Chicago school monographs.<sup>43</sup> The published housing maps in *The Negro in Chicago*, like the Hull House maps that derived information from home visitations, were also key results of investigators' first-hand observations in the city (Figure 3).

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38 Owens, 276.

39 Agnes Sinclair Holbrook, "Map Notes and Comments," in *Hull-House Maps and Papers* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 11.

40 Letter, University of Chicago Press to Edgar Bancroft, November 3, 1922, box 104, folder 6, University of Chicago Press Records, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.

41 Holbrook, 11.

42 "Chicago News in Brief," *Chicago Tribune*, December 13, 1919, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

43 Bulmer, 298.

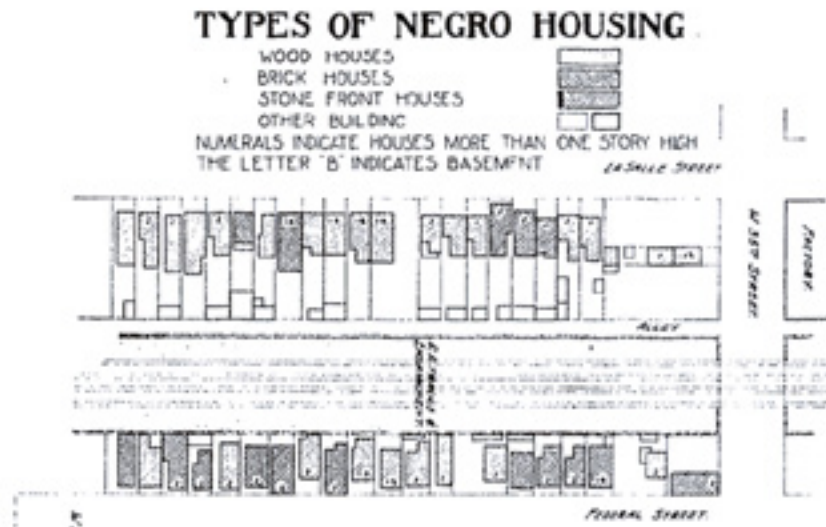


Figure 3. A housing map by the Commission, showing an area bounded by La Salle Street, Federal Street, W. 35th Street, and W. 36th Street. Individual houses are shaded according to building material and marked by number of stories. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 184.

## DESIGNING MAPS FOR THE PUBLIC

The Commission began preparing its maps as early as December 1919, five months after its formation. By then, the executive secretaries had requested from the City Club of Chicago the use of their base map of the city, which they called “far and away the best and most accurate map on a large scale for the purpose of plotting data secured by the Commission.”<sup>44</sup> The City Club, an organization of civic and business leaders interested in urban development, was eager to help the Commission address the race “problem.”<sup>45</sup> With its own committee on city planning and zoning ventures, the City Club sought the “improvement of the physical framework of the City,”<sup>46</sup> selling prints of a comprehensive set of Chicago maps for use by social and civic organizations.<sup>47</sup> In these maps, the city was divided into sections and shown at a scale of 1/8 inch to the mile. The Commission evidently believed in the potential of such maps, with their ability to represent the city at a greater level of detail, for scientific objectivity and the accurate presentation of data in the service of their project.

By December, the Commission also had a tentative scheme of at least twelve maps. Some intriguing maps were ultimately not made or not included in the published report, such as a map of the United States showing the geographic origins of black Americans who

44 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, December 11, 1919, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

45 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, January 8, 1920, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

46 “The City Club and Zoning,” *City Club Bulletin* XII, no. 51, December 22, 1919.

47 “City Map,” *City Club Bulletin* XIII, no. 11, March 15, 1920, 65.

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had migrated to Chicago between 1916 and 1919 and a housing map showing fluctuations in rents and real estate value in relation to black occupancy.<sup>48</sup> The latter map surely intended to address white homeowners' fears of property depreciation in areas occupied by black Chicagoans. Given the Commission's financial limitations, these maps were likely infeasible due to the type and sheer quantity of data they would have required. All told, however, the final maps in *The Negro in Chicago* more or less matched the initial list drawn up by Johnson and Taylor.

The maps for the report were designed "to present most effectively data collected by the Commission" under the supervision of Frederick Jehnck, an employee at the architectural office of George C. Nimmons & Company.<sup>49</sup> A November 23, 1920 progress report indicates that 43 maps were under preparation at the time and were set to be completed in December.<sup>50</sup> With twenty-two such maps in the works, by far the greatest number were being prepared by the housing committee, attesting to the centrality of housing conflicts in the city's racial tensions.<sup>51</sup>

The Commission eventually chose eighteen maps for publication in *The Negro in Chicago*. Six were printed as large fold-out maps: a map of the 1919 race riot, several maps of population distributions, and maps of vice resorts. There were also eleven single-page inserts and one two-page insert, printed on enamel paper.<sup>52</sup> During the publishing process, the executive secretaries took great care (and incurred great expense) to ensure that the maps could be printed at a high quality. Executive Secretary Graham R. Taylor even consulted Barnes, Crosby & Company, the engraving company that handled the Commission's maps and photographs, regarding the best method of making zinc line cuts from the maps.<sup>53</sup> Initially, the Commission had intended to publish the maps of recreation and industrial plants as fold-out sheets as well,<sup>54</sup> but the cost was likely too large. Given the high cost, it is notable that the Commission chose to include the maps it did.<sup>55</sup>

The Commission evidently took some pride in its maps and later regarded them as suitable for exhibition. In September 1921, after the committee had finished compiling its

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48 Minutes, Commission on Race Relations, January 8, 1920, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

49 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, xviii-xix.

50 Progress report, Commission on Race Relations, November 23, 1920, Julius Rosenwald Papers, box 6, folder 3.

51 Ibid. By then, the Commission had obtained the federal census data and were in the midst of computing the figures and proportions for graphic presentation on maps.

52 Book specifications for *The Negro in Chicago*, June 23, 1922, University of Chicago Press Records, box 104, folder 6.

53 Letter, Graham R. Taylor to Edgar Bancroft, July 6, 1922, University of Chicago Press Records, box 104, folder 6.

54 Ibid.

55 Letter, University of Chicago Press to Edgar Bancroft, November 26, 1922, University of Chicago Press Records, box 104, folder 6. For 1000 copies of *The Negro in Chicago*, a regular page cost \$2.45, whereas a single map cost \$3.70 and a folded map cost \$6.80.

material, Graham R. Taylor suggested to Francis Shepardson, the acting chairman, that the maps should be placed on display rather than being turned over permanently to the Union League. “I sometimes have a little feeling,” Taylor wrote, “that the maps particularly...are the sort of thing that ought to be in a place like the University of Chicago Library, or the Crerar Library.”<sup>56</sup> In his response, Shepardson concurred that the maps would be “of greater value to students, particularly if the Library would display the maps somewhere where they might be observed by visitors.”<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether the maps were indeed ever displayed, but the exchange is telling. Though they were designed for inclusion in a print book, they were also regarded as independently comprehensible to students and the general public alike. As Christian Topalov has written in regard to Charles Booth’s influential map of poverty in London, the social map “stands in a tradition in which things are shown rather than said.”<sup>58</sup>

## MAKING BLACK CHICAGO VISIBLE

This section will analyze specific maps in the report that are particularly representative of Johnson and the Commission’s cartographic approach. These maps both reflect and elucidate the remedies that the Commission proposed to the public in response to racial strife. They seek to present an “objective” evaluation of race relations in Chicago, guided by a deliberate awareness of broad social policies and their disparate effects on urban residents. Scientific objectivity, freed from the distortions of racial prejudice, promised to see what others had not. In reality, the maps advance their own, quite specific political outlook, ultimately constructing an accommodationist vision of racial integration.

### *The Chicago Riot: July 27 to August 8, 1919*

The Commission members were not the only ones to map the 1919 race riot, but their published map (Figure 4) is notable for its meticulous sensitivity to racial categories. Accompanied by detailed counts of casualties and property damage in the text of the report, the map uses different symbols for black and white residents to mark the deaths, injuries, and residences of those harmed during the riot.

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56 Letter, Graham R. Taylor to Francis Shepardson, September 12, 1921, Julius Rosenwald Papers, box 6, folder 3.

57 Letter, Francis Shepardson to Graham R. Taylor, September 20, 1921, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

58 Christian Topalov, “The city as *terra incognita*: Charles Booth’s poverty survey and the people of London, 1886-1891,” *Planning Perspectives* 8 (1993): 418.

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Figure 4. The Commission's map of the 1919 Chicago riot. Note the different symbols used for white and black deaths, injuries, and residences. The inset depicts numbered areas, indicating the temporal spread of the riot. Both the larger map and the inset mark the site where seventeen-year-old Eugene Williams was drowned. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 8.

The map poses a stark contrast to other maps of the riot, such as those published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. The *Tribune* maps, of which there were at least three, depicted sites of rioting and arson over the course of the riot, but they specified neither the racial composition of the properties affected nor the race of individuals injured or killed (Figure 5). The concentration of property damage, injuries, and deaths in the black community, readily apparent in the Commission's map, was thus made ambiguous in the *Tribune* maps. Certainly, the Commission had had more time to conduct a thorough investigation of the riot conditions. However, the maps pointed to a fundamental difference in political outlook. The *Tribune* tended either to report the misdeeds of black rioters, or not to specify race at all. For example, the caption accompanying one of its maps related that black prisoners on the North side had broken out of jail in a "violent attack on the guards and white prisoners."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 30, 1919, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 2.

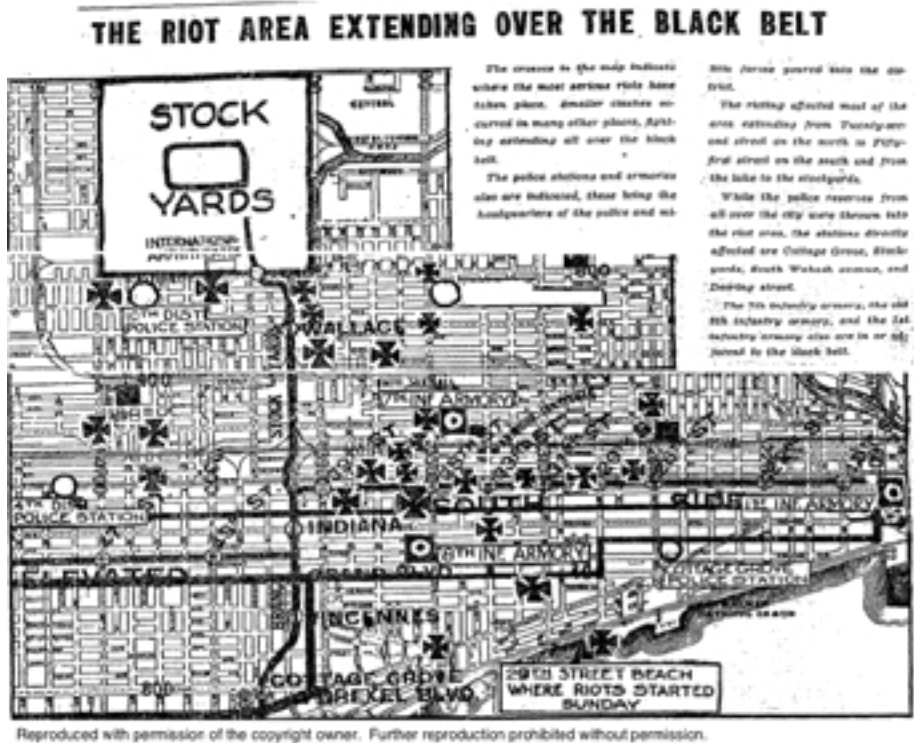


Figure 5. “The Riot Area Extending Over the Black Belt” in the *Chicago Tribune*. The black crosses show the locations of the “most serious riots” without any specifications regarding race. Armories and police stations are highlighted on the map, as well as the location where the riots began. Unlike the Commission’s maps, the *Tribune* maps do not mention the death of Eugene Williams. Published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922), July 29, 1919, p. 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

In contrast, the Commission sought to combat the vagaries of public opinion with what it saw as objective analyses and graphical representations. Its official report criticized the circulation of “wild rumors” in the press, rumors which had provoked numerous clashes during the riot. On July 29, for instance, the *Chicago Tribune* had reported the deaths of twenty people, thirteen of whom were white and seven black. Yet the true figures were exactly the opposite (that is, thirteen of the dead were black and seven white).<sup>60</sup> According to the Commission’s own findings, there was no record of police captains’ having warned white residents to arm or prepare for invasion by black mobs, as was also reported by the press. Rather, it was overwhelmingly black residents who were alerted to the threat of white violence in their neighborhoods.<sup>61</sup>

As seen in the case of the *Chicago Tribune*, a map itself is not “objective” solely because it is a map, a visual description of a given space. This principle also applies to

60 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 598.

61 *Ibid.*, 599.

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the Commission on Race Relations, which did not necessarily create a more scientific or broadly appealing graphic representation of the riot. What the Commission's report did accomplish was to advance a visual framework by which individual occurrences (i.e. injuries, deaths, and property damage) were classified and made visible according to clearly stated racial categories. *The Negro in Chicago* argued that "the riot was merely a symptom of serious and profound disorders lying beneath the surface of race relations in Chicago,"<sup>62</sup> and the Commission hoped to show the underlying causes of the riot partly through the graphical argument above.

### *Population of Negroes, 1910 and 1920*

To prepare its population maps, the Commission carried out a preliminary survey to delimit the main areas where black Chicagoans lived. For these areas, they used federal census data showing the total populations and Negro populations by census enumeration district in 1910 and 1920. Each enumeration district comprised a few city blocks in the more crowded portions of the city, allowing the Commission to, by its own evaluation, "prepare maps showing with a fair degree of accuracy where Negroes in Chicago lived."<sup>63</sup> The population maps showed that the large influx of black migrants had not established new areas of residence since 1910, but rather increased the size and density of existing communities (Figure 6).

One of the more remarkable aspects of the Commission's approach to population mapping was that it analyzed the black population in relation to total population, rather than studying the black population in isolation. This framework allowed the Commission to make novel observations about the ecology of the city. For instance, in its report, the Commission pointed to a surprising absence of friction within the "Black Belt" in 1920. Though the area was home to most of Chicago's black population, they found that one of the most densely populated sections comprised roughly equal proportions of black and white residents (Figure 7), who coexisted in relative peace.<sup>64</sup> This so-called "adjusted" neighborhood contrasted with the "non-adjusted" ones toward the south and north, where outright hostility toward the incursion of non-white residents into predominantly-white neighborhoods had led to acute housing shortages for black homeowners. West of Wentworth Avenue, for example, Irish working-class neighborhoods, such as Bridgeport, were home to youth gangs (formed from athletic clubs) who often instigated racial violence.<sup>65</sup>

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62 Ibid., 602.

63 Ibid., 106.

64 Ibid., 606.

65 Ibid., 608.



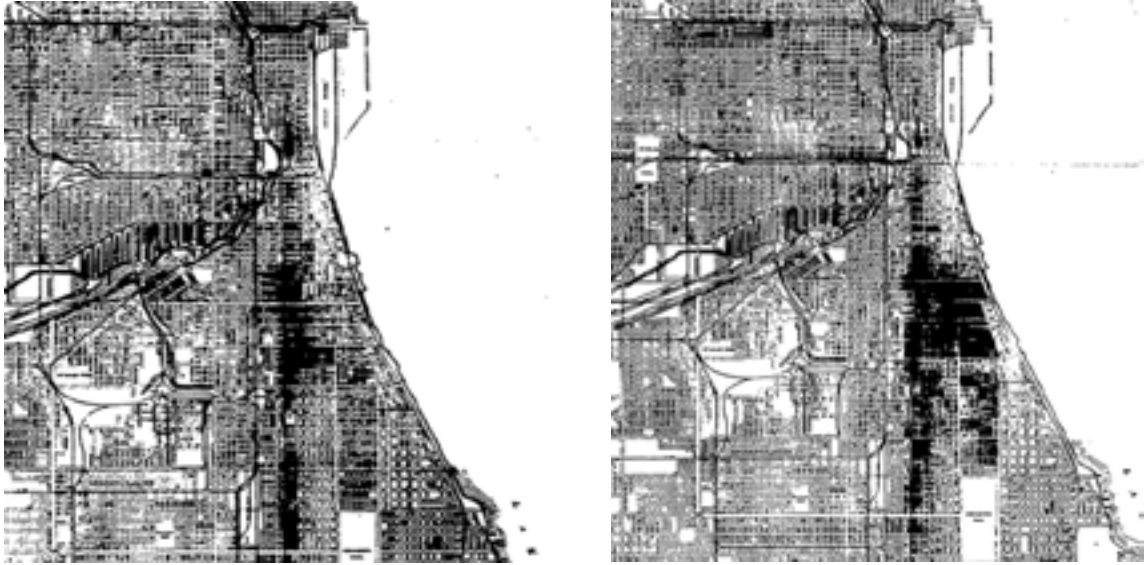


Figure 6. Details from *Distribution of Negro Population, 1910* (left) and *1920* (right). These maps are based on federal census data, with each dot representing 40 black residents. Black residence areas expanded and became denser, though new communities were not necessarily established. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 106 & 110.

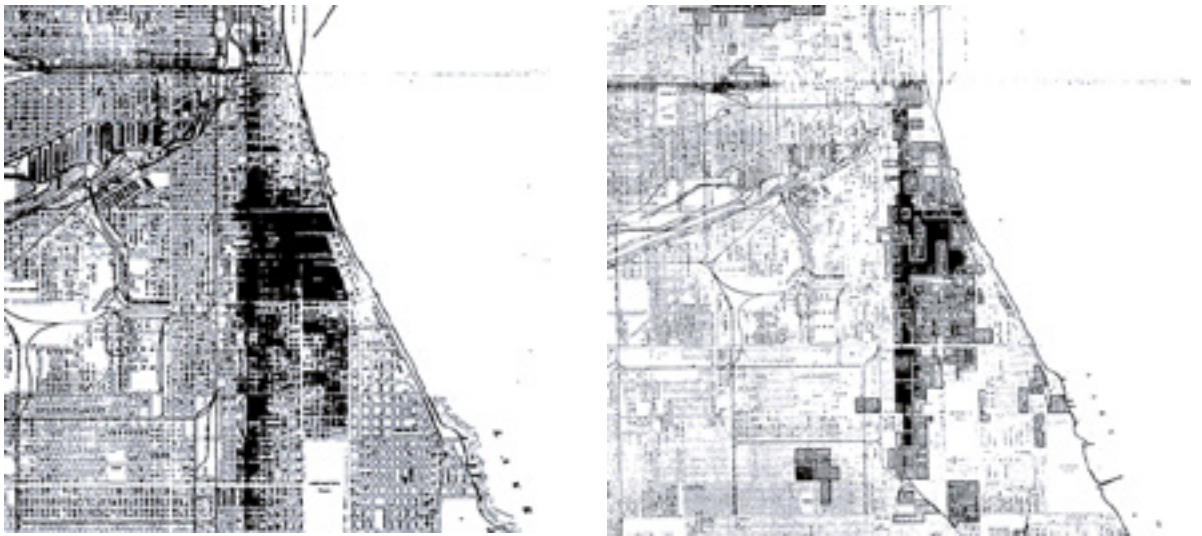


Figure 7. Details from “*Distribution of Negro Population, 1920*” (left) and “*Proportion of Negroes to Total Population, 1920*” (right). The data for both maps was obtained from the federal census. In the map on the right, darker areas indicate a higher proportion of black residents, with the darkest sections containing 80 to 100% black residents. Unshaded areas have fewer than 1% black residents. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 110 & 120.

At the University of Chicago, Park and Burgess were particularly interested in looking at the city as an “aggregation of many small territorial groupings,” an attitude that neces-

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sitated meticulous study of the individual, discrete social environments thought to comprise a single city.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, the Commission did not take such a reductionist view of the city's residence areas. They mapped white and black Chicago as interdependent and existing in the same space, rather than depicting the black community as a homogeneous and internally coherent geographic area with clearly delineated boundaries.

Urban neighborhood boundaries were not, after all, clearly demarcated. Rather, they were the nebulous zones of interaction between black residents and their ethnic white neighbors that engendered the greatest tensions and physical violence. The Commission's mapping approach, which views Black Chicago in context, is consistent with the report's declaration that the "Negro community in Chicago is virtually a city within a city. It affords opportunity to observe how it is accomplishing its own *adjustment to the larger community, and how it attempts to function in its own behalf and for the betterment of the community at large*" (emphasis mine).<sup>67</sup> In other words, the black community in Chicago was not a city within a vacuum. It could be understood only in relation to the community at large – how it was shaped and challenged by, as well as how it responded to, broader society. According to Johnson, such group efforts at adjustment to the larger city included civic organizations such as the Chicago Urban League and Provident Hospital.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, these social organizations were separately mapped in relation to black residence areas (Figure 8).<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, Johnson and the Commission viewed the lives of black Chicagoans – where they resided, worked, or sought recreation – in the context of the city as a whole. As Farber has noted, subsequent research on urban life tended to focus on the internal life of black communities, emphasizing their separation from the larger society.<sup>70</sup> In addressing race relations, the Commission advocated a specifically integrationist, as opposed to separatist, paradigm. The maps of social organizations reflected this focus on racial adjustment. It was necessary for the Commission's maps to show the stubborn limits (which were presented as a matter of cultural adjustment) and the possibilities of assimilation, a prospect for which Johnson was optimistic. As he wrote in 1925 in Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, "a common purpose is integrating these energies born of new conflicts, and it is not at all improbable that the culture which has both nourished and abused these strivings will, in the end, be enriched by them."<sup>71</sup>

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66 Owens, 274.

67 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 612.

68 *Ibid.*, 613.

69 *Ibid.*, 148.

70 Farber, 86.

71 Charles S. Johnson, "The New Frontage on American Life," in *The New Negro*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 298.

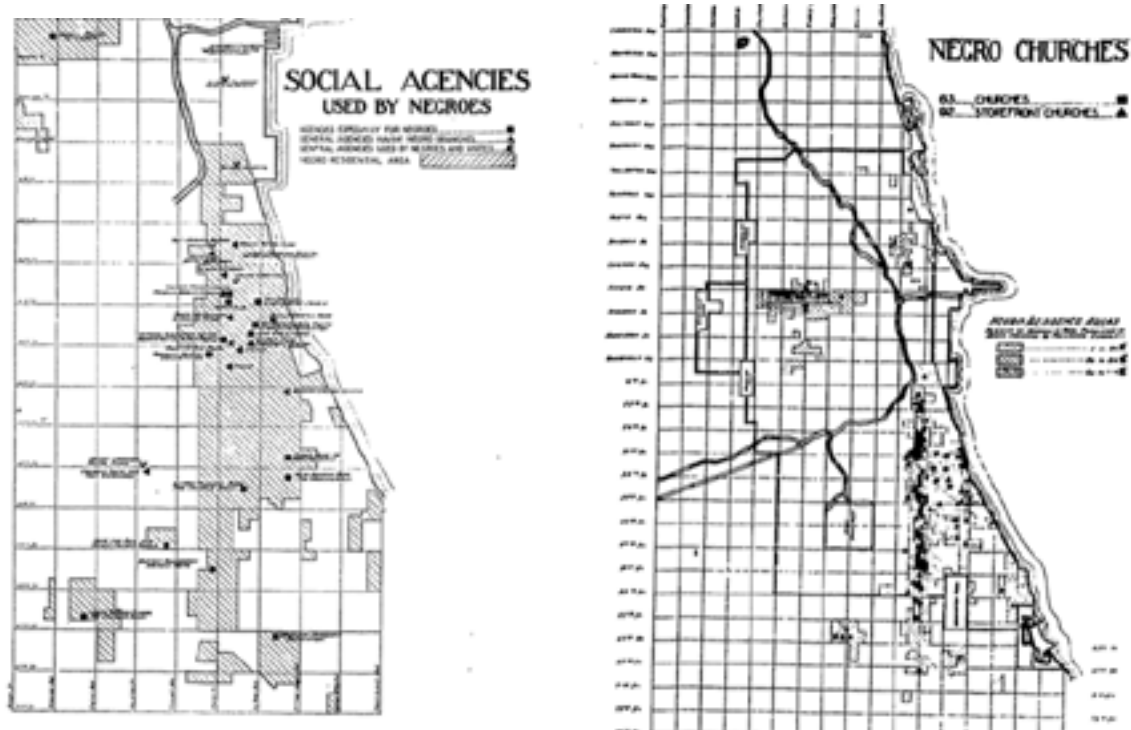


Figure 8. Maps of social organizations, with “Social Agencies Used by Negroes” on the left and “Negro Churches” on the right. Both are plotted relative to black residence areas; the map of Negro churches shows black population by density. The map of social agencies specifies whether the agencies are intended exclusively for blacks, have branches serving black residents, or serve both blacks and whites. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 144-148.

#### *Houses of Prostitution, 1916 and 1918*

By 1913, at the height of American social Progressivism, vice reformers across the country were mobilizing to shut down red-light districts.<sup>72</sup> In Chicago, for example, the Committee of Fifteen served as a private organization primarily targeting prostitution. Another such organization, the Chicago Vice Commission, related to the Committee of Fifteen, even published a report on prostitution in 1911 called “The Social Evil in Chicago.” Reformers subsequently acted on the Vice Commission’s conclusion that the segregated vice districts should be abolished altogether, rather than be subjected to a European style of regulation.<sup>73</sup> Progressive reformers crusaded to remove prostitution from public view and to strike it from the perspective of an agenda concerned with “white” social issues – in other words, to remove it from white spaces. As a result, vice was driven into black neighborhoods.<sup>74</sup>

Several years later, Johnson and the Commission on Race Relations grappled with this legacy in their discussion of vice in black residential areas. *The Negro in Chicago* con-

72 Kevin J. Mumford, *Interzones* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 20.

73 Historical Note, Chicago Committee of Fifteen Records, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL.

74 Mumford, 44.

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tains three maps depicting “the environment of the South Side Negro”: the first two maps show the location and prevalence of prostitution in 1916 and 1918 (Figure 9), while the third map shows resorts—saloons, gambling halls, cabarets, and brothels.<sup>75</sup> The “Social Evil” was now firmly established in Black Chicago.

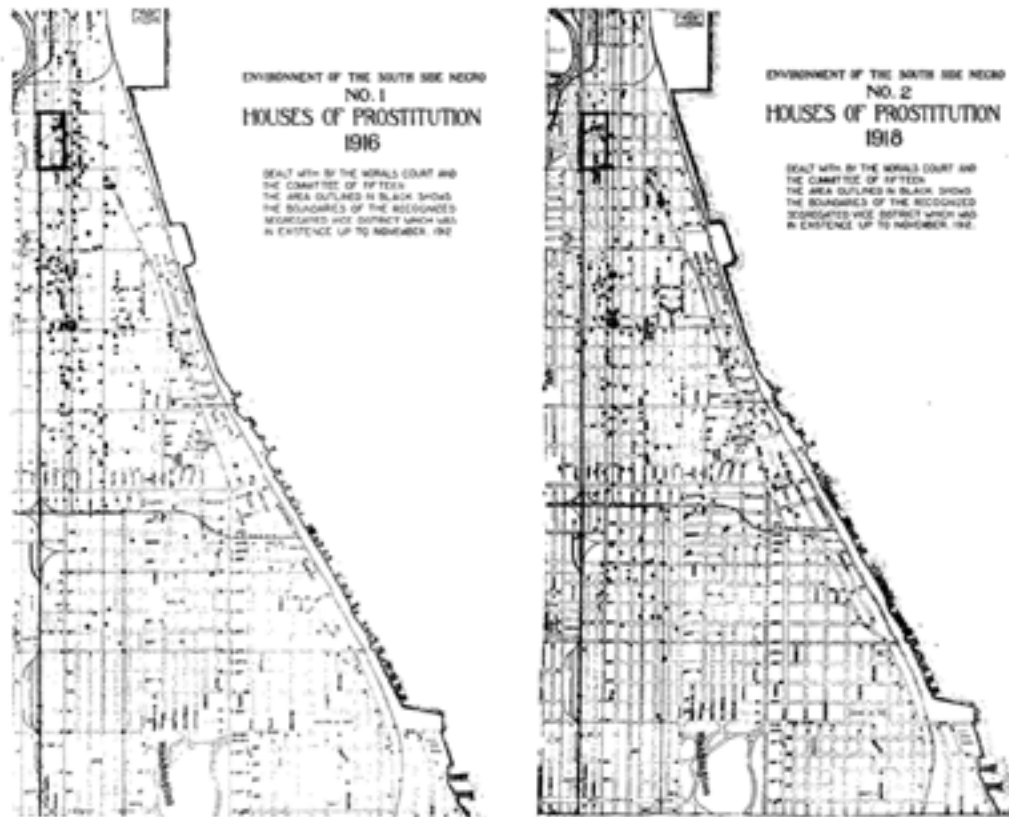


Figure 9. Maps showing houses of prostitution in 1916 (left) and 1918 (right), dealt with by the Chicago morals court and the Committee of Fifteen. On each map, the rectangular area outlined in black shows the boundaries of the segregated vice district, which was abolished in November 1912. Published in *The Negro in Chicago*, 342.

*The Negro in Chicago* sought to present “the danger inherent in the vicious environment in which Negroes are forced to live,”<sup>76</sup> arguing that black residents lacked sufficient power to protest against the encroachments of vice.<sup>77</sup> The maps showed that prostitution had gradually drifted southward since the segregated vice district was abolished in 1912, a movement that coincided with the expansion of the main areas of black residence. The maps thus rest on the implicit claim that vice is best understood not as a general rate within a neutrally defined population, but rather in terms of distinct and harmful processes affecting specific

<sup>75</sup> Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 346.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 621.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

populations. Rather than being an inherent feature of black morality, the maps argued, vice was historically and socially contingent and specifically detrimental to black residents.

The Commission on Race Relations was not fundamentally antithetical to the Vice Commission – after all, Julius Rosenwald had been a member of the Vice Commission, and both groups relied on first-hand investigation and had a certain impulse toward reform. But the prostitution maps did make apparent the long-ranging effects of a pre-war municipal reform policy on Chicago’s black neighborhoods, which had now become a significant part of the city. In essence, by making visible the people it now affected, Johnson and the Commission put prostitution back on the map.

The maps were a subtle reminder, too, that race and class were not always aligned in physical space. Ninety percent of the black population in Chicago – which included lower-, middle-, and upper-class residents alike – lived in the “Black Belt” near the city’s former segregated vice district, partly because they had been excluded from white neighborhoods.<sup>78</sup> The report complained that the “entire population, good and bad, [was] thrown together.”<sup>79</sup> In its concluding recommendations, the Commission urged black members of the public to “vigorously and continuously protest” the presence of vice in their communities.<sup>80</sup>

In this implicit appeal to moral rectitude, the Commission advocated a perspective that was not uniformly shared among advocates for racial justice at the time – namely, one that promoted assimilation into capitalist, white norms of social conduct, industriousness, and efficiency.<sup>81</sup> This was consistent with the group’s strong ties to figures like Booker T. Washington, as opposed to W.E.B. Du Bois. In the Commission’s opinion, the black folk culture and mannerisms of recent migrants needed to be reformed according to urban norms of the North.<sup>82</sup> The Commission attributed many of the clashes in public transit, for example, to the “blundering efforts of migrants to adjust themselves to northern city life.”<sup>83</sup> The Chicago Urban League, whose influence had come to bear significantly on the Commission’s work, devoted itself to “rehabilitating” such migrants into industrial workers and campaigned against barriers to their inclusion into the workforce.<sup>84</sup>

At the outset of *The Negro in Chicago*, the Commission wrote that the black race must develop “from lower to higher planes of living; and must base its progress upon

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78 Ibid., 621.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., 646.

81 Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007) 35.

82 Ibid.

83 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 621.

84 Johnson, 294.

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industry, efficiency, and moral character.”<sup>85</sup> The report’s accommodationist argument also led it to criticize black Chicagoans who expressed “race pride,” warning them that “thinking and talking too much in terms of race alone” would interfere with racial integration.<sup>86</sup> While the Commission argued for an understanding of race relation in terms of environmental and cultural factors, its specific response was one of social assimilation and remodeling at the individual level.

## FROM CARTOGRAPHIC INTENT TO POLITICAL IMPACT

Proposing a vision of interracial harmony and “active opposition...to the spirit of antagonism and hatred,” *The Negro in Chicago* urged both races to pursue dispassionate and objective consideration of each other’s needs and aims.<sup>87</sup> The work received wide publicity and acclaim. Advertisements appeared in periodicals like *The Crisis*, the official NAACP publication,<sup>88</sup> and the *Chicago Defender* featured a full-page summary of the book and its recommendations. The newspaper commended the report’s “fair, wise and impartial” suggestions and applicability “to every state and city in the United States.”<sup>89</sup> Equally positive reviews appeared in *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. The first edition of the book, issued by the University of Chicago Press, sold out within three months despite high prices. Equally positive reviews appeared in *The New Republic* and *The Nation*.<sup>90</sup> The first edition of the book, issued by the University of Chicago Press, sold out within three months despite high prices.<sup>91</sup>

For twenty years after the report’s publication, the Commission’s suggestions guided the activity of social agencies like the Urban League and the YMCA.<sup>92</sup> Yet, over the next few decades, racial boundaries became only more rigid as the color line became inscribed into property law and other areas of social and legal containment. For instance, racially restrictive covenants – enforceable contracts, rare in Chicago before the 1920s, that prohibited the sale of property to racial or ethnic minorities – became widespread.

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85 Chicago Commission on Race Relations, xxiv.

86 *Ibid.*, 647.

87 *Ibid.*, 644.

88 Augustus Granville Dill, *The Crisis* 24, no. 3, January 1923, The Modernist Journals Project, Brown University and the University of Tulsa.

89 “Commission on Race Relations,” *The Chicago Defender*, October 7, 1922, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

90 Letter, Walter White to Edgar Bancroft, November 2, 1922, University of Chicago Press Records, box 104, folder 6.

91 Letter, G.R. Taylor to Francis Shepardson, March 14, 1923, University of Chicago Press Records.

92 Drake and Cayton, 69.

The Commission had gone to great lengths to incorporate an ethos of spatial accuracy and statistical science in its maps, hoping to combat public prejudice and seek practical solutions to issues of race relations. Even in the short term, however, the proclaimed objectivity of the Commission's maps did not necessarily translate into political action. As early as 1924, Arthur Evans noted in the *Chicago Tribune* that, despite the Commission's recommendations, housing for black residents remained a pressing issue.<sup>93</sup> As Christian Topalov writes, "If people and the spaces they occupy are reclassified, the aim is to reform them in new ways."<sup>94</sup> Had *The Negro in Chicago* been unsuccessful in this respect? Perhaps it had. Perhaps the report had overestimated the power of objective analysis, or underestimated the difficulty of inducing those in power to enact necessary social and political changes.

Still, the maps of Johnson and the Commission represent a unique approach that responded to the exigencies of a city in transformation. The diverse maps of the Commission under Charles S. Johnson were not so much simple descriptions of the city as racially conscious, inherently political, value-laden classifications of space and social relations. They made racial disparities, as well as attempts at racial adjustment, visible in the city. Moreover, they focused on race as a social and cultural, rather than biological, phenomenon. Whatever their shortcomings, the maps offered Chicago – an increasingly contested space – a different mode of understanding itself.

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93 Arthur Evans, "Housing Still Chief Problem of Negro Here" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 25, 1924, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

94 Topalov, 420.

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### TITLE IMAGE

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