Death by Abandonment: Understanding North Lawndale's Historically High Homicide Rate

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THESIS

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SUMMARY

A study of community stakeholders' perceptions of the causes of North Lawndale's historically high homicide rate was conducted utilizing a critical research paradigm. This research is a case study that investigates the ways structural racism relates to high levels of violence in the city of Chicago. Community stakeholders were asked in semi-structured, in-depth interviews about their perspectives on North Lawndale's continued high rate of homicide, what the community is doing to address it, and what policies they would like to see implemented. This interview data was supplemented by secondary demographic and descriptive data (both current and longitudinal) to understand North Lawndale's homicide rate in the context of abandonment and to provide policy solutions that are reflective of community needs.

From these interviews, abandonment emerged as the fundamental condition that explains the historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale. Respondents differentiated four forms of abandonment: physical abandonment, abandonment of care, state abandonment and disinvestment, and the dissolution of traditional gangs. This research data suggests that North Lawndale's high homicide rate is significantly connected to the racial project of abandonment, including the idea that Blackness is violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, avoidance, and abandonment. The most fundamental finding from the interview data was that the residents and stakeholders in North Lawndale believe that this abandonment, not gangs, poverty, or drugs, was the fundamental condition that explains the historically high homicide rate in the neighborhood. Thus, this dissertation details ways in which North Lawndale can be embraced by Chicago rather than continuing to be abandoned and argues that North Lawndale can be revitalized as a Black community through the city's "embracing" of the community.

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on twenty-seven interviews with community stakeholders in the North Lawndale neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago, this research attempts to add context to the neighborhood's historically high homicide rate. North Lawndale serves as an example of how neighborhood abandonment creates an environment that increases the possibilities of homicide. This abandonment comes in 4 larger forms: physical abandonment, abandonment of care, state abandonment and disinvestment, and the dissolution of traditional gangs. Through an in-depth qualitative study, this dissertation examined how these forms of abandonment of and in North Lawndale can best be understood as results of the dominant racial project. It finds that North Lawndale's high homicide rate is significantly connected to the racial project of abandonment, including the idea that Blackness is violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, avoidance, and abandonment.

I.   INTRODUCTION

This is a dissertation about the Chicago neighborhood of North Lawndale and the implications of its abandonment. North Lawndale serves as an example of how neighborhood abandonment creates an environment that increases the possibilities of homicide. Abandonment comes in many forms, including State abandonment and disinvestment, capital abandonment, white flight, mass incarceration, school closings, and the dissolution of traditional gang structures. North Lawndale is complex and layered on numerous levels: geographically, it is a predominantly Black neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago; politically, is a racial project (Omi and Winant, 2014) that equates historically high neighborhood homicide rates with Black poverty; and socially, it is the home to multi-generational residents who have created their own responses to the broader racial project of the neighborhood through resilience and pride. Race has emerged as central to the two competing racial projects: (1) violence is Black and Black is violent and (2) the violence is high because the neighborhood was abandoned because of its Blackness. The high homicide rate is racialized as part of the community's characteristics and used as a justification for abandonment and isolation. In essence, North Lawndale's high homicide rate is significantly connected to the racial project of abandonment, including the idea that Blackness is violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, avoidance, and abandonment. This dissertation will use interview data from community stakeholders to contest this mainstream idea by exploring the dichotomy of the two competing racial projects and the complexities of abandonment in North Lawndale. While the former dominant narrative is armed with immense political power and purpose, the latter is armed with resilience and community pride.

Chicago has the reputation of one of America's most deadly cities. However, news articles like the NBC article titled *Tale of Two Chicagos: Violence Plagues City's South, West Sides*

more accurately reflect the racialized reality of the narrative of Chicago's violence as concentrated in pockets of Chicago's South and West Sides. North Lawndale is one of Chicago's 77 community areas and is located on the West Side. As of August 2021, there have been 771 homicides in Chicago in the last 12 months. Of those 771, 55 were in North Lawndale. This community homicide statistic is only second to Austin, which had 72 homicides in the last year (Chicago Sun Times Homicide Tracker). Austin is also on the West Side of Chicago, just north-west of North Lawndale. The south-east corner of Austin borders the north-west corner of North Lawndale. Just in one week in July of 2021, there were two mass shootings in North Lawndale. A quick google search of North Lawndale highlights dozens of articles about its violence. North Lawndale's narrative within the city centers its violence and the consequences of this narrative are costly. North Lawndale sits just ten minutes west from my office at the University of Illinois at Chicago, yet the neighborhood differs wildly in its current and historical experience within the city of Chicago.

While billions of tax dollars have gone into developing Chicago's Loop since the 1980s, the West Side has been largely abandoned. However, there has been a recent shift to a focus on violence prevention on the South and West sides at the city level. Three years ago, in 2018, the city committed less than $1 million to violence prevention (Block Club Chicago). But in 2021, the Block Club of Chicago reports that "$36 million is going to violence prevention and related programs, on top of at least $38 million from private organizations" (Blockclubchicago.org). Chicago has elected a Black mayor whose focus is on community revitalization and violence reduction. After decades of abandonment, there are many questions to raise about this shift of focus to neighborhoods like North Lawndale, as the community has continuously experienced a

profound gap between the stated goal of policymakers and the realities of those policies to those whom the policies impact most.

Through an in-depth qualitative study, this dissertation will examine how the many forms of abandonment of and in North Lawndale can be best understood as results of the dominant racial project. A racial project is "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant, 1994, pg. 56). Racial projects connect what race means, what it looks like, how we understand it, and the ways our social order and everyday experiences are organized based upon those racialized meanings (Omi and Winant, 2014). In our social world, complementary, competing, and contradictory racial projects compete to define race and its role in society. They do this at the community, academic, and institutional levels that result in the development of everyday common sense about race and its meaning. While racial projects can be progressive or even anti-racist, many are racist and dangerous to the racialized groups; racial projects which portray racial groups as deviant or violent have important implications for the structure of society. The dominant racial project in North Lawndale racializes the violence as Black to show that Black people are violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, and abandonment. Both North Lawndale *and* its violence are racialized as Black. Through the popular narrative of urban, poor Blacks as inherently violent, abandonment practices are rationalized and justified. However, many interview respondents substituted this essentializing racial project for an alternative project of community pride and resilience that demands the city and elites to stop abandonment practices and, instead, fully embrace the neighborhood as a Black community.

North Lawndale, itself, is a racial project and abandonment is at the core of the project. Abandonment links the micro processes of neighborhood violence with the macro processes of racism and the racial project. This dissertation will argue that North Lawndale's high homicide rate is a function of these many forms of abandonment. The violence in North Lawndale has been understood in popular sociological studies in many ways (Kozol, 1992; Wacquant, 2008; Wilson, 1996) but one variable that has not been sufficiently explored is abandonment. Instead, popular narratives of violence look inward and blame the violence on the community with the result being narratives centering Blacks as inherently more violent. This dissertation critiques these cultural deficit theories and the positivist tradition in violence reduction literatures as both explicitly and implicitly racist and argues that these, too, are racial projects. Instead, it will integrate neighborhood theories of violence with Critical Race Theory and specifically Omi and Winant's notion of a racial project to explain the uniqueness of Black poverty and violence in North Lawndale.

Therefore, this analysis particularly rejects mass incarceration, gentrification and "black urban removal" as answers to address high rates of homicide, as they are all forms of abandonment that lead to even more neighborhood violence. Rather, this dissertation details ways in which North Lawndale can be embraced by Chicago rather than continuing to be abandoned and argues that North Lawndale can be revitalized as a Black community through the city's "embracing" of the community. "The role of the government is to offer forms of protection that enhance lives and shield bodies from foreseeable and preventable dangers" (Hill, 2016). North Lawndale is one of Chicago's 77 neighborhoods, but has been neglected, abandoned and abused. Interviews captured the opinions of local stakeholders of the different forms of

abandonment as well as the strengths of North Lawndale and how they can be used to support the embracing of the community, its revitalization and a resulting reduction in homicide.

A. **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to add abandonment as a variable worth exploring when studying neighborhood homicide rates. Chicago's homicide data show that its comparatively high levels of violence are enduring, suggesting that the city's approach to violence prevention needs to be adjusted. The homicide report from the Great Cities Institute (Hagedorn et al., 2018) shows that these homicide trends are similar to other Rust Belt cities. The report proves a strong correlation between homicide levels and both race and concentrated poverty, with 75% of all homicides in Chicago occurring between Black people in predominantly Black neighborhoods. This dissertation will attempt to address the connection of race to homicide in North Lawndale by focusing on the racial project that includes the city's racial policies, disinvestment, and abandonment. The larger purpose of this study is to replace the blame-the-victim narrative of neighborhood homicide with a condemnation of the sustained racial project of abandonment with a responsive progressive response by the community. This dissertation seeks to understand homicide in context and as a result of neighborhood abandonment on many levels and argue that this abandonment is an important variable in the historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale. Interview data will contest the mainstream narrative by substituting for this essentializing racial project an alternative progressive racial project of community and community pride and resilience. To develop policies to lower the homicide rate, we must address the racialization of violence, decades of abandonment, and the community's awareness of this betrayal.

The framing of a Black, poor neighborhood as a racial project has an important theoretical purpose. Urban policy research has historically been occupied with the life conditions and culture of the most violent communities, often to argue the idea that these communities may actually inhibit their own social advancement. Therefore community-level anti-violence strategies center social programs or policies that might alleviate the conditions of urban poverty to address high levels of community violence. Omi and Winant would call the racialization of community-level urban violence as Black a racial project with a greater economic and political purpose. Racialization signifies difference and structures inequality. A racialized social structure where violence is understood as Black serves the function of defining race the way it was intended—i.e. racial formation. The dissertation's framing of North Lawndale as a racial project serves a larger purpose of interrupting explicitly and implicitly racist cultural narratives of neighborhoods like North Lawndale, which happen to be both Black and poor. By adding context to the homicide rate and providing an alternative progressive response, this dissertation hopes to replace the narrative of violence in North Lawndale and connect the micro forces of neighborhood violence to macro forces of racism.

Without proper variables, diagnosis, research questions, and a focus on the community's strengths, policy responses will continue to be off-course and even detrimental to North Lawndale. More on-the-ground, community level (useful) notions/questions about the sources of violence in North Lawndale are needed to implement effective policies to interrupt this racial project. A methodological approach that centers the community's views to understand different forms of abandonment and their connections to homicide also highlights community strengths (i.e. what already works) and what is needed promotes asset-based neighborhood research. More specifically, the larger question is how historically Black communities like North Lawndale can

remain Black communities, revitalize, and reduce the homicide rate without forced displacement. This is not only the story of North Lawndale, but the story of similar racial projects taking place in many poor, Black neighborhoods in the Rust Belt.

B. Study Overview

This dissertation research utilized an exploratory case study approach to achieve in-depth community perspectives on the context of homicide in North Lawndale. It also seeks to highlight community strengths, resistance efforts, and potential solutions to address the high homicide rates. Information from historical documents, longitudinal neighborhood and city census data, local news sources, and past research were combined with community field observations and interviews (N = 27) in North Lawndale of community residents and stakeholders to understand the homicide rate in context. After analyzing data and coding for themes, psychology literature on abandonment was applied to the interviews' descriptions of abandonment in and of North Lawndale. The descriptions of abandonment, racial and community pride, and resilience in the interviews were understood as the community's responsive, progressive response to the historical racial project of North Lawndale. This responsive project hopes to counter the more common, racist, inward-looking violence narrative of the neighborhood.

I write this dissertation as a witness and outside observer—a white, female, middle-class PhD candidate largely immune to the forms of racism and neighborhood dynamics I describe. I do not reside in the North Lawndale neighborhood. My insights stem from work on the South and West Sides of Chicago as well as formal research in North Lawndale. I have conducted 27 individual interviews with community stakeholders and residents of North Lawndale. The data was analyzed to understand (1) myriad factors that contribute to high homicide rates in North

Lawndale and (2) community views on what should be done to address it. I have used a strength-based methodology that uses a critical neighborhood lens to study the intricacies of the intersection of race and homicide trends.

C. <u>Research Questions</u>

My in-depth qualitative study explores two primary research questions—*What historical and current community dynamics account for the historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale? Based on this analysis, what do community members view as responsible shifts in policy and implementation to address the high homicide rate?* I address these questions by comparing interview data to existing neighborhood-level theories of violence. I then supplement conclusions with longitudinal demographic neighborhood data. The data support the argument that North Lawndale, itself, is a racial project. Violence can be (and has been) explained in many different ways, but one variable that has not been sufficiently explored in the context of neighborhood homicide is abandonment. Abandonment links the micro neighborhood processes of violence to macro processes of racism and the racial project. The racialization of high homicide rates as Black then justifies the abandonment of poor, Black neighborhoods like North Lawndale.

Based on the North Lawndale neighborhood analysis, what policy changes should be made to address the high levels of violence? If abandonment is indeed the problem, then one of the possible solutions could be "embracing" the North Lawndale community rather than relying on increased incarceration and policing. North Lawndale needs to become a more integral part of the city of Chicago. City Hall has decades of abandonment to overcome and it begins by recognizing the community's awareness of their betrayal. Interview data from those who are most impacted by the realities of violence reduction policies/strategies are utilized to highlight

what already works in the neighborhood and what needs to be developed and/or expanded to positively affect North Lawndale subsequently reducing its homicide rate.

D. <u>**North Lawndale Snapshot: Community Data and Homicide Rate**</u>

North Lawndale has been used as a case study for many important sociological studies of urban, concentrated, Black poverty (Kozol, 1992; Wacquant, 2008; Wilson, 1996). The neighborhood served as Wacquant's example of the urban "hyperghetto" (Wacquant, 2008) due to its drastic levels of racial homogeneity, exclusion from the formal economy and larger social isolation, levels of violence, deteriorated infrastructure, and the confluence of spatial and racial stigmatization. North Lawndale's high rates of violence, poverty, racial homogeneity, joblessness, and involvement in the criminal legal system are persisting. It sits just ten minutes west of Chicago's loop, yet its physical landscape differs greatly from the skyscrapers and high end residential and commercial properties; North Lawndale's landscape is distinguishable by its vacant lots and abandoned storefronts.

FIGURE 1. Neighborhood Map of Chicago
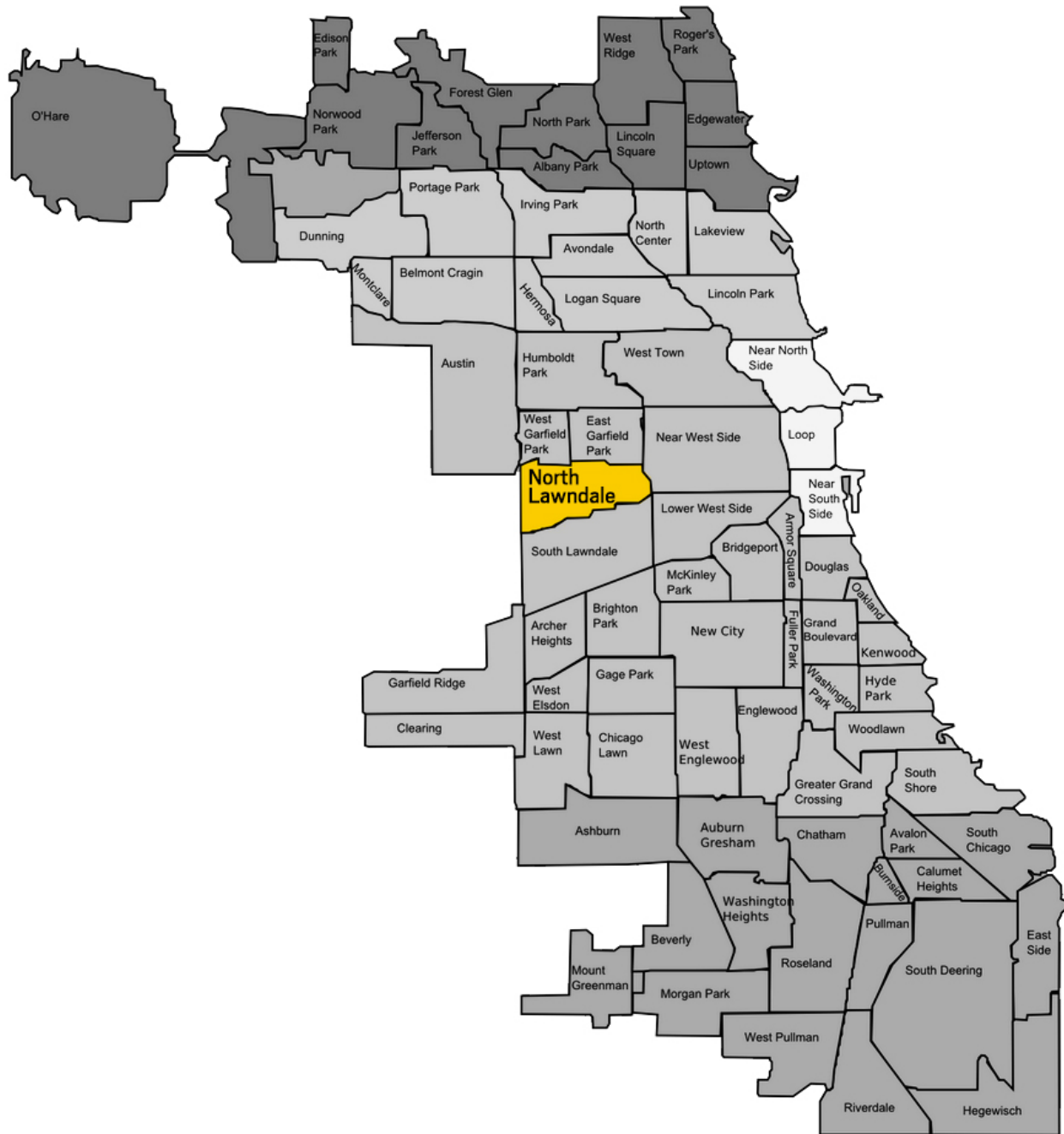
FIGURE 2. North Lawndale Map
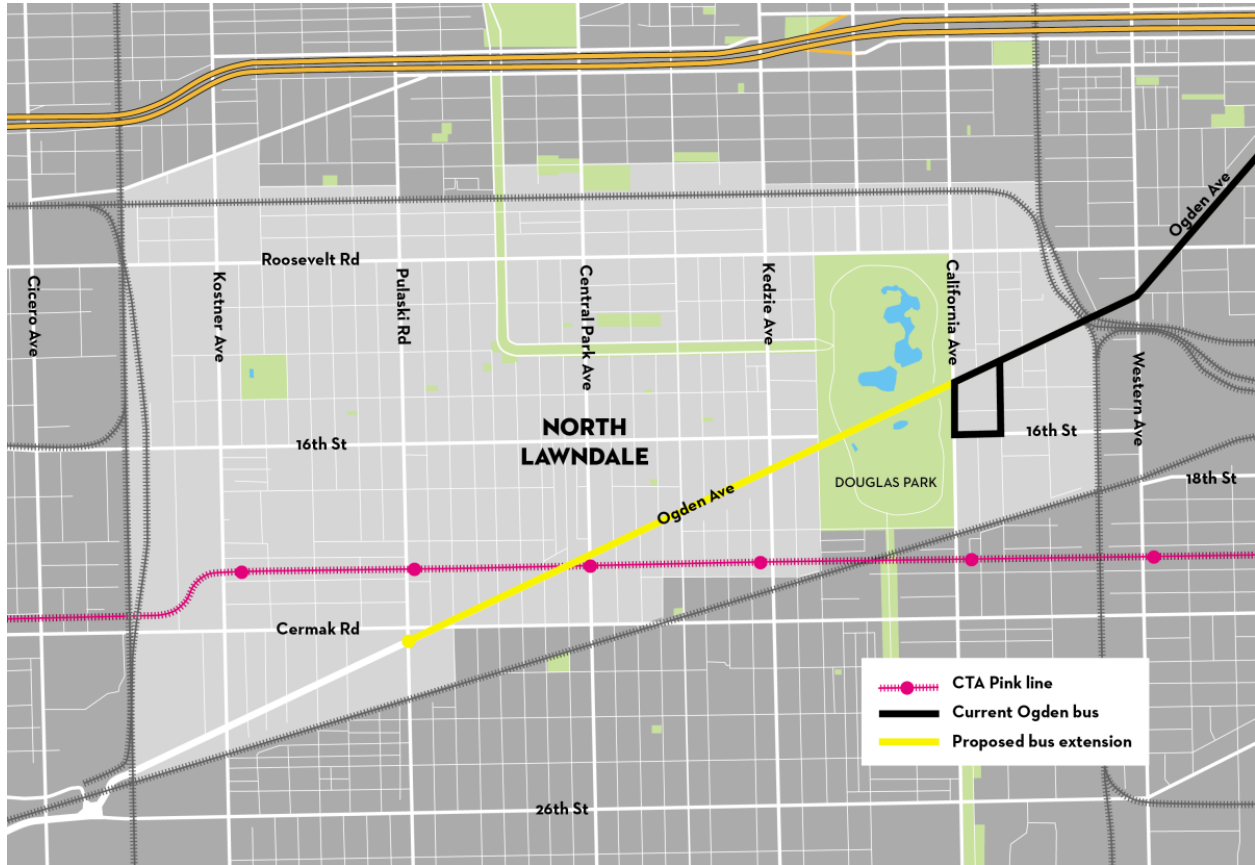
TABLE I. General Population Characteristics, 2015-2019

	North Lawndale	City of Chicago
Total Population	32,073	2,709,534
Total Households	11,075	1,066,829
Average Household Size	2.8	2.5
Percent Population Change, 2010-2019	-10.7	0.5
Percent Population Change, 2000-2019	-23.2	-6.4

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates

TABLE II. Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2019

	2000 (%)	2006-2010 (%)	2015-2019 (%)	City of Chicago, 2015-2019 (%)
White (Non-Hispanic)	0.9	1.7	3.6	33.3
Hispanic or Latino	4.5	5.3	9.2	28.8
Black (Non-Hispanic)	93.8	92	85.8	29.2
Asian (Non-Hispanic)	0.1	0.2	0.2	6.5
Other/Multiple Races	0.6	0.8	1.2	2.2

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates

TABLE III. Age Cohorts, 2015-2019

	North Lawndale (%)	Chicago (%)
Under 5	6.5	6.3
5 to 19	23.6	17.1
20 to 34	24.6	27.3
35 to 49	18.4	20.2
50 to 64	16.3	16.7
65 to 74	6.3	7.2
75 to 84	3.2	3.7
85 and Over	1.3	1.5
Median Age	31.6	34.6

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates

TABLE IV. Educational Attainment*, 2015-2019

	North Lawndale (%)	Chicago (%)
Less Than HS Diploma	23.2	14.9
HS Diploma or Equivalent	32.1	22.5
Some College, No Degree	25.3	17.3
Associate's Degree	7.0	5.8
Bachelor's Degree	8.2	23.3
Graduate or Professional Degree	4.2	16.2

*Highest degree or level of school completed by an individual
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019
American Community Survey five-year estimates

TABLE V. Household Income, 2015-2019

	North Lawndale (%)	Chicago (%)
Less than $25,000	46.1	24.3
$25,000 to $49,999	25.8	19.9
$50,000 to $74,999	11.2	15.1
$75,000 to $99,999	9.9	11.2
$100,000 to $149,999	4.5	13.8
$150,000 and Over	2.6	15.7
Median Income	$28,327	$58,247
Per Capita Income	$15,383	$37,103

→ Median Income in 2006-2010 (in 2019 Dollars) was $30,406
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019
American Community Survey five-year estimates

TABLE VI. General Land Use, 2015

	Percent
Single-Family Residential	5.5
Multi-Family Residential	17.1
Commercial	3.5
Industrial	10.9
Institutional	6.2
Mixed Use	1.0
Transportation and Other	32.7
Agricultural	0.0
Open Space	14.9
Vacant	14.9

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2000 and 2010 Census, 2015-2019
American Community Survey five-year estimates

E. **Abandonment**

Homicide in North Lawndale is a function of abandonment on many levels, yet abandonment

is a variable that has not been sufficiently explored. Most abandonment literature falls within the

field of psychology—the more micro effects of abandonment on a child. Lawndale's racial

project must be viewed historically to include all forms of neighborhood abandonment— State

abandonment and disinvestment, capital abandonment, white flight, mass incarceration, school

closings, the dissolution of structured gangs, abandonment by other Black neighborhoods and the

South Side, and emotional abandonment. While the most common forms of abandonment are

from the State, there are also more internal forms of abandonment from those within the

community. These are also part of the racial project, as the violence becomes a justification for

the abandonment that leads to more violence. There are also multiple ways that the community

has fought back against these differing forms of abandonment—some successful, some

unsuccessful. Respondents substituted the mainstream racial project for a responsive racial

project or racial and community pride and resilience. This responsive project responds by saying

that we are not inherently violent; we have been abandoned. While this dissertation will ultimately argue that one result of abandonment is a high homicide rate, the results of abandonment from the interview data will be analyzed as either emotional, behavioral, or rational/cognitive responses to abandonment.

There are many ways that respondents described the impact of abandonment. The neighborhood is resilient and people fight back; there is a long history of resilience in North Lawndale. Pride is one of the positive results of abandonment. Through this pride, there are generations of families who remain in North Lawndale and develop strategies (and official/unofficial organizations) to combat the abandonment and violence. There is even a deep pride in North Lawndale that appears through competition with the South Side and other historically Black neighborhoods like Bronzeville. However, the racial project in North Lawndale should be considered intentional and strategic. Due to the profound roadblocks in the community struggle against inequality, disinvestment, and mass incarceration, there is a level of despair that is key to understanding how abandonment impacts violence and homicide. Culture of Poverty and Social Disorganization theories should be considered racial projects themselves, as they deny agency to the Black residents of abandoned communities like North Lawndale. A cornerstone of the racial project in North Lawndale is the racialization of violence—blaming poor, Black communities for the high homicide rate rather than paying attention to the rationales of abandonment on multiple levels.

F. **Defining Race**

This dissertation is a critical case study of neighborhood violence. I affirm that violence has significant racialized dimensions and a neighborhood study with race and racism at the center should be addressed from a critical perspective. I argue that race must be discussed openly

because racism continues to have very real consequences in society at both the individual (micro) and the institutional (macro) levels. Race is viewed by this research as central to people's lives and to the development of neighborhoods, so race will be at the center of this study. This study will highlight the importance of analyzing both the historical and contemporary contexts of race and racism. This research understands race as a variable that cannot be controlled from other societal variables. Therefore, it focuses on the real impact that racism has had historically and continues to have currently on U.S. society, particularly on neighborhood development, characteristics, and homicide trends.

Omi and Winant (2014) developed a critical theory of race and racial formation that is concerned with the way people have come to categorize themselves into "races," historically, culturally and politically. Central to Racial Formation Theory is the idea that race is developed, via racial projects, to signify difference among people; these differences affect the larger social structure and organization of society. Therefore, race is as an active element that defines our social structure, not a passive element within it. The basic definitions of race describe physical differences among people. However, in American society, race also symbolizes cultural and behavioral differences that justify economic positioning. The way we understand, describe, and represent race has very real social, political and economic consequences. In the context of this dissertation, race is used to understand neighborhood violence. Omi and Winant want readers to discount essentialism and to get beyond the idea that race is fixed. The meaning of what race signifies is always going to change based on the interest of the powerful. Instead, we should be concerned with race and meaning-making, i.e. the way meaning is found in physical differences. For Black communities, Blackness can be viewed as a source of pride as opposed to deficit. In many non-Black communities, Black is often viewed as a mark of danger and violence, a no-go

area, and worthy of abandonment. This meaning-making is centered in power; it signifies social conflict and interest. Despite how much cultural ideals change, race will always play a critical role in explaining our social world.

Consistent with Omi and Winant and the social-constructionist perspective, "race" is used throughout this dissertation to refer to socially constructed categorizations only loosely based upon physical distinctions. This research views race as more significant to the distribution of status and power within the larger society and the city of Chicago. This research urges the reader to challenge his/her own vision of race and what race looks like on the ground, in practice, and in communities.

G. Potential Contribution

The issue that this dissertation will address and attempt to understand is the factors that impact high homicide rates in North Lawndale, a predominantly Black neighborhood on the West Side of Chicago. This violence is often misunderstood in day-to-day rhetoric/discourse (e.g. community members are inherently violent) about that violence. This "misunderstood" rhetoric is part of the racial project that does the ideological "work" of relating poor, Black neighborhoods to violence and homicide. Without proper diagnosis, research questions, and a focus on the community's history of resistance, policy responses will continue to be off-course and even detrimental to North Lawndale. This research is important because (1) people are dying and 75% of all homicide victims in Chicago are Black, (2) North Lawndale serves as a racial project that informs outsiders' problematic understanding of Black violence on the West Side of Chicago, (3) policies must be informed to positively affect neighborhood conditions, (4) the violence is a deterrent to capital investment in North Lawndale, (5) current understandings about violence in North Lawndale have led to policies that have had a negative effect on residents—i.e.

incarceration, increased surveillance, gentrification, etc., (6) most neighborhood-level violence studies describe the prevalence/causes/theories of violence without allowing community members to review the findings, describe their resistance efforts and strategies, and provide policy solutions, and (7) North Lawndale should not be conceptualized as an "American Millstone," but as a dynamic Black community whose residents are tirelessly working to reduce violence and improve their beloved neighborhood.

The theoretical contribution of this research will be the combination of structural analysis of neighborhood, race, violence, and policy. This research is centered around the idea that Black poverty and violence is fundamentally and qualitatively different than other groups' poverty and violence because of the racial project that racializes neighborhood violence solely as Black. The Black experience in Chicago must be understood through a historical lens that centers adaptive forms of racism and racial projects the connection to intentional abandonment of resources and institutions. This dissertation critiques cultural deficit theories and the positivist tradition in violence reduction literature as both explicitly and implicitly racist— effectively operating as an academic racial project. Instead, it utilizes abandonment psychology literature and applies it to a community to argue that North Lawndale's homicide rate is a function of many forms of abandonment. This abandonment links the micro processes of neighborhood homicide to the macro processes of racism and the racial project.

Through this theoretical contribution and framing, the racial project taking place in North Lawndale (and other poor, black Rust Belt neighborhoods) can be interrupted and replaced by responsive, progressive strategies. Neighborhood and city policies can then be informed by this data. Overall, this research hopes to explain the structural, neighborhood, and racial correlates of violence that do not blame the victim but instead expose a racialized history of abandonment in

North Lawndale. Centered around the voices of the community, policy suggestions will have the explicit goal of reducing violence within the context of a vibrant, Black North Lawndale.

H. <u>Dissertation Outline</u>

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter reviews the literature about urban, Black poverty and violence. The theories reviewed include social isolation, culture of poverty, underclass, social disorganization, psychological theories, and subculture theories—some academic racial projects themselves. Theoretical arguments are presented in order to understand what is going on in this space. Psychology theories on abandonment will also be presented, as this is a variable that has been determined to be worth examining.

The third chapter explains the history of abandonment in North Lawndale. This includes a more historical, quantitative look at the neighborhood, including a history of resistance. The results make a case for why abandonment needs to be examined when understanding the development of North Lawndale as a "hyperghetto" (Wacquant, 2008) and its historically high homicide rate. This historical abandonment is show in white flight, abandonment of capital, and joblessness.

The fourth chapter describes the methodological approach of this research study. Quantitative neighborhood statistics were collected on the many different forms of abandonment in North Lawndale's history to add context to the interviews of twenty-seven community stakeholders and residents. The methodological approach is critical and strength-centered, and my positionality statement as a white woman is an important aspect of my data collection.

Chapter five and six utilize the data collected in my twenty-seven interviews to show how people described different forms of abandonment in North Lawndale as a cause for the high homicide rate. The chapter lists and describes these different forms of abandonment and the results of the abandonment are analyzed as either emotional, behavioral, or rational/cognitive responses to abandonment. The chapter also highlights the resistance efforts to the abandonment described in the interviews, as these efforts are important in recommending policies that positively affect North Lawndale.

Chapter six lists the complex ways that the different forms of abandonment affect the neighborhood and increase the likelihood of homicide. The results of abandonment include media portrayals of the neighborhood as dangerous, community organizations filling in the gaps left by abandonment, community anti-violence strategies taking place at on a small scale, varying mindsets, and alternative avenues for success.

Chapter seven presents the conclusions, implications for the study, and policy recommendations. The chapter will answer the following question: What would it mean to embrace and not abandon North Lawndale? These policy recommendations will be compared to Mayor Lori Lightfoot's antiviolence and revitalization strategies in North Lawndale.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation is attempting to understand continued high rates of homicide in North Lawndale. My theoretical perspective ties neighborhood homicide to structural conditions to understand the depth of racism, yet it diverts from more mainstream sociological cultural theories and strictly economic analyses. While there is truth to structural explanations of homicide, the concept is layered. In these layers we must consider racial formation. There is something going on in North Lawndale that is much more insidious and long term—all which are related to the pressures of racism. Structural conditions should be viewed as part of a racial project. A key variable in understanding violence across the country is an analysis of segregated poverty, but the process of segregated poverty must be understood structurally *and* critically, and not in terms of people who are rationalized as violence-prone. This dissertation acknowledges structural analyses of violence but argues that structural factors need to be viewed as part of a broader racial project.

Exploring North Lawndale as a racial project (Omi & Winant, 1994) in the context of abandonment clarifies the ways in which racial formation produces the violence that fuels a racial project. By introducing Critical Race Theory and Racial Neoliberalism as important supplemental theories to Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory, the larger goal of the racial project is made apparent, with the city's white elite stakeholders as the ultimate beneficiaries. These stakeholders benefit immensely from the racial project, which includes the "justified" abandonment of marginalized populations like North Lawndale through narratives of racialized violence. For the purpose of this dissertation, North Lawndale is a case study to demonstrate how racial formation can be a product of historically specific geographies that are

racialized through racial projects. Profit-centered objectives, racism, joblessness, social isolation, and the penalization of poverty overlap, yielding racial projects that benefit privileged actors while intensifying the struggles of those already in precarious positions. In North Lawndale, the racialization of the neighborhood and its homicide rate are used to justify the redistribution of city resources along racial lines and the multiple forms of abandonment practices that increase the possibilities of homicide. The racial project makes the following idea common sense: Blackness is violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, isolation, and abandonment.

Although it is exceedingly important to scrutinize the range of hardships generated from the racial project, it is equally crucial to explore the ways in which individuals and community organizations are resisting in North Lawndale. Racial formation theory allows us to explore how individual and collective actions in North Lawndale have (1) recognized the racial project and (2) contested it by responding, "We've been abandoned!" The larger question becomes—is there the political will to think about North Lawndale as a space to approach holistically through a process that embraces equity as opposed to one that normalizes containment, paternalism, and abandonment? This becomes a question of social fabric and how we address racial projects like North Lawndale within the larger racial formation process in Chicago. While this dissertation acknowledges the existence of a high homicide rate in North Lawndale, the theoretical approach described in this chapter moves beyond arguing the racial stereotypes of North Lawndale as flawed representations. Instead, the research asks where these representations come from, why the public believes them, and how they come to appear as truths. By addressing these questions, we are able to observe the emergence of important power relationships emerge throughout the city.

This dissertation understands the abandonment of North Lawndale as critical to the larger racial project of Chicago. North Lawndale serves as an example of how neighborhood abandonment creates an environment that increases the possibility of homicide. Abandonment comes in many forms, including State abandonment and disinvestment, capital abandonment, white flight, mass incarceration (the abandonment of large portions of the population and the abandonment of care), school closings, and the dissolution of traditional gang structures. The details of these different forms of abandonment will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter five with interview data from the community. The remainder of this chapter will look at the literature on racial projects, neighborhood violence, and abandonment as it connects to the topic of homicide.

A. Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory

"*To study race in the United States is to enter a world of paradox, irony, and danger. In this world, arbitrarily chosen human attributes shape politics and policy, love and hate, life and death. All the powers of the intellect—artistic, religious, scientific, political—are pressed into service to explain racial distinctions, and to suggest how they may be maintained, changed, or abolished*" (Omi & Winant,1986, p. xiii). In their incredibly important book, *Racial Formation in the United States*, Omi and Winant (2014) introduced a critical theory of race and racial formation that is concerned less with what race *is* and more with the way people are categorized into "races," historically, culturally, and politically. According to this theory, race is central to all social relations, yet the way it shows itself and its meaning are consistently changing. Omi and Winant (2014) define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interest by referring to different types of human beings" (Omi and Winant, 2014, p. 55). Thus, we should think of race not as a biological fact but as a social construct that is an important

element of our social structure. The authors want their readers to discount essentialism and to get beyond the idea that race is fixed. Omi and Winant are thus concerned with race and meaning-making, i.e. the way meaning is found in the physical differences we attribute to racial categories. To the authors, this meaning-making is about power; it signifies social conflict and interest. The meaning behind race will always change based on the interests of the powerful (the Racial Neoliberalism discussion below points to who these people are). Despite how much cultural ideals change, race will always play a critical role in explaining our social world.

Omi and Winant's (2014) theory of race centers around their concepts of racial projects and racial formation. They define racial formation as the "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55). As discussed previously, race is "unstable" and regularly being altered by political struggle (p. 110). However, although unstable, race has very real meaning and consequences in our social structure, but it has historically been fluid in the evolving process of constructing racial categories and the resulting meaning attached to those categories. Therefore, everyone is racialized and everyone performs race. "U.S. society is so thoroughly racialized that to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity" (Winant 1994, p. 14). While race has always been incredibly important in structuring our social world, what continues to change historically are the meanings and the material benefits we attach to race and particular racializations.

Racial formation processes function between how race is represented, how it is ultimately understood by larger society, and how it organizes our larger social order. Racial projects do the ideological "work" of helping us make these connections. The authors define racial projects as an "interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (p. 56). These racial projects help us

understand what race means and what it looks like; our social world and everyday experiences are then organized based upon those racialized meanings. Racial projects do the work to guide us in our interpretations of race so that racial formation can function as intended. Because race is not a fixed category and is constantly being "created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (p. 55), racial formation takes place and changes through these projects. This involves a racialized discourse that shapes our "common sense" understandings of race, ultimately influencing particular personal (micro-level) interactions as well as larger institutional (macro-level) attitudes and practices. The framing of race in a particular way is essential to racial projects because it legitimizes the "distribution of power, income, wealth, and life chances between racialized groups" (Sbicca 2017).

If a racial project "is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to re-organize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 56), then under this formulation, North Lawndale should be understood as a racial project because it is a representation of the racial dynamics of a hyper-segregated, poor, Black neighborhood as inherently violent in an effort to distribute the city's resources along particular racial lines. This redistribution is then explained falsely as the restoration of a distribution that is objective, neutral, and meritorious, rather than as a return to a racial preference hierarchy that primarily benefits whites (and the central business district or the Loop). The racial state that Omi and Winant describe, the state responsible for a majority of racial definitions and management, is "as heavily committed to securing territory and resources as it is to the reproduction of a society organized by white supremacy" (Razack, 2012). This dissertation identifies North Lawndale itself as a racial project through the recognition that racial meanings are geographically and historically specific. North Lawndale should be viewed as a

form of enabling technology (Delaney, 2002) through which race is produced in the city of Chicago. Both North Lawndale *and* its violence are racialized as Black. Regarded as inherently prone to violence, the image of poor, Black residents of North Lawndale demonstrates that race is guided by the notion that "the truth of race lies in the terrain of innate characteristics of which skin color and other physical attributes provide only the most obvious, and in some respect the lost superficial indicators" (Razack, 2012, pg. 221). Omi & Winant situate racial projects as technologies of segregation, abandonment, and marginalization. By altering the most pertinent images associated with North Lawndale residents, violence discourse then actually operates as "race-making" mechanisms within the city of Chicago. As public discourse obsesses about homicide in North Lawndale and other hyper-segregated neighborhoods, images of violence become more fundamental to the prevailing meaning of Blackness itself. The process behind North Lawndale becoming defined by the city (and the city's stakeholders) as "violent and dangerous" is itself racialized.

Competing and convergent theories have advanced our understanding of and conversation around race since Omi and Winant's publication of *Racial Formation* in 1986. In analyzing North Lawndale's historically high homicide rate, Omi and Winant's work should be supplemented by developments in Critical Race Theory, Racial Neoliberalism, and women of color theories of intersectionality.

1. **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides the overarching theoretical framework for how we should draw our understandings of space within the city and how that space becomes racialized. "No geography is complete, no understanding of place or landscape comprehensive, without

recognizing that American geography… as the spatial expression of American life, is racialized" (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 392). CRT serves as both an analytical framework for understanding social order and a methodological approach that centers the roles of race, racism, power, and white supremacy in the examination of the geographic, cultural, political, and social space of North Lawndale (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT and Omi and Winant's Racial Formation Theory combine to shift the focus away from a description of the racial plight of North Lawndale to a more spatial examination of how larger structural factors affect the homicide levels that shape understandings of race within the city of Chicago and the power associated with those racial dynamics over time.

In recent political news, Critical Race Theory has become a stigmatizing term; it is part of a moral panic that ironically proves the theory's main tenets about race in this country. This theory is central in understanding this dissertation's theoretical perspective, as there is a beating heart to Critical Race Theory—there are real material outcomes based on racial lines and the way we think about those lines. Critical Race Theory developed in the mid-1970s out of the need for new theories and strategies to resist the more subtle, contemporary forms of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As defined by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), Critical Race Theory is more of a movement than a theory; it is an assemblage of activists and scholars interested in "studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; p. 3). CRT's approach is different from previous movements for civil rights because contemporary racism looks different, so the approach must be different. More traditional civil rights approaches stressed incrementalism and step-by-step progress to legal changes; CRT "questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, pg. 3).

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) lay out the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory: (1) Racism is ordinary, not aberrational— "it is the usual way society does business"; (2) "our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material"; (3) the "social construction" thesis holds that "race and races are products of social thought and relations"; they are not objective/real in a biological or genetic sense but are, instead, "categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient"; (4) the voice-of-color thesis holds that "because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, people of color are best able to communicate to whites any issues of race" (pp. 7-10). Like race, the law is also a social construction that exists as a tool of the elite to maintain power and white supremacy. "The law represents only one kind of truth, often an unsatisfying truth, and ultimately not the truest of truths" (Hill, 2016, p. 10). The law reflects white supremacy and therefore does not curb neighborhood violence in non-white communities—in fact, the very opposite is true.

A Critical Race Theory spatial analysis provides a critical lens for understanding how communities like North Lawndale are often bounded by physical barriers like streets and freeways that symbolize differences in power, opportunity, and the institutional practices of racial exclusion (Lipsitz, 2007). North Lawndale should be viewed as a form of enabling technology (Delaney, 2000) through which race is produced in the city of Chicago. Therefore, race "is what it is and does what it does precisely because of how it is given spatial expression" (Delaney, 2000, pg. 7). The "critical" analysis that is important in viewing North Lawndale as a racial project requires paying attention to power, social relationships, inequality, political institutions and the way they show up in interactions with the community to better understand the social conditions that produce these very actions (and homicide). This dissertation's theoretical perspective on North Lawndale is in line with geographical theories that stress how

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social dynamics and spatial dynamics mutually constitute each other. This takes into account that the social dynamic of race does not exist in space (i.e. the neighborhood), but is reinforced and constituted by it (Delaney, 2002).

a. <u>Intersectionality</u>

Competing, merging, and supplemental theories have added to our understandings of and conversations around race since Omi and Winant's publication of *Racial Formation* in 1986. Proponents of intersectionality and Black Feminism would argue that the analysis of Racial Formation Theory, like Critical Race Theory, privileges race as "the primary axis of disadvantage in the U.S" (Prince 2009, p. 151), subsuming gender. The language of intersectionality has its origins in Women of Color Feminism (Black Feminism, Chinana Feminism, etc.). As mentioned in the section above about racial neoliberalism, despite the centrality of race in North Lawndale's racial project, the neighborhood's multiple forms of abandonment cannot be fully understood without a thorough analysis of gender and class. Omi and Winant and CRT's work should be supplemented by developments in theories of intersectionality, as there are noteworthy effects of both class and gender in the North Lawndale racial project. This intersectional lens highlights the ways multiple forms of oppression function simultaneously within the neighborhood to affect the homicide rate, the way we understand it, and justify the subsequent abandonment of the neighborhood. The ideological processes mentioned in this paper have been strongly tethered to race (and class), but these processes are also true for groups similarly marked as divergent from society's desired level of conformity in terms of religion, gender, familial structure, and sexuality. Poverty, race, *and* family and gender nonconformity are positioned as "moral failings so rich that there is no need to recognize the

rights, the citizenship, or the humanity of those so identified" (Hill, 2016). These attitudes are most visible in the way North Lawndale is abandoned and policed, but they are also pervasive in the power that arms the racial project. Several forms of oppression conspire with structural racism to produce an environment that increases the possibilities of homicide in North Lawndale.

Viewing race as unstable, changing, and historically produced (Omi & Winant, 1994) should not be taken to mean that racial projects and racial formation develop in seclusion, away from other categories of difference. Race is essentially indivisible from the gendered, classed, and sexualized contexts in which our ideas of race and racial categories advance through racial projects. Rather than seeing race, gender, class, and sexuality as distinct categories that overlap, Kadaswamy (2012) rejects the imagined singularity of these structures, instead arguing that they are intrinsically conjoined. She explains "both how racial formation is a gendered and sexualized process and how the theoretical framework of intersectionality might better account for the dynamic processes through which racial categories are constructed" (Kadaswamy, 2012, p. 20). The lack of attention to gender in Omi and Winant's work on race parallels a similar lack of attention to gender in neighborhood studies of homicide—both ignore Black women. It can be argued that this is part of a more generalized tendency of ethnic studies as a field to center men of color in its analyses, as well as of women's studies to center white women. Critical Race Theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) developed the term intersectionality in 1989 to illuminate the specific ways women of color were absent in these activist and legal frameworks that centered either race or gender.

Because discussions about neighborhood homicide center Black men, the state and its solutions have consistently neglected the emotional, physical, psychological impact of high homicide rates on the Black women and girls in North Lawndale. A majority of the population

that supply women's prisons and urban welfare programs are poor women of color; these women then become the racialized images that motivate policies that enforce work, personal responsibility, and heteronormative familial structures (Haney 2004; Hancock 2004) and justify the abandonment of neighborhoods with those who do not conform. "The civic-incorporation efforts directed at poor women today depend greatly on constructed images of blackness that frame poverty governance as a whole and underwrite its variations" (Soss, 2011). The iconic images of the dependent Black single mother and the Black criminally violent man become the symbolic faces of danger, social entitlement, and government reliance in North Lawndale. This racial project encourages the taxpayers of Chicago to think about poverty governance and crime control in the neighborhood as a matter of the deviant others—through what Joe Soss (2011) calls a "politics of disgust." Representations of *both* gender and race work together to convey and create racial categories and thus gender also operates as a racial project. In the contemporary context of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), the language of gender deviance often stands in for explicit discussions of racial inferiority, with the failure to perform heteropatriarchal norms at the center of the deviance. Therefore, racism should be viewed throughout this dissertation as produced through other forms of differentiation such as gender and class.

In terms of how well neighborhood theories of violence literature address violence by and against women, the short answer is not very well. As argued, Black women are left on the outside of most racial and accepted feminist analyses. A majority of the literature surrounding Black violence assumes the male perspective and the male as a subject. To be fair, violence studies have consistently confirmed that men are more violent than women, so the focus of these violence studies has been men. CRT's concept of intersectionality reminds us that when talking about Black women, their gendered and racial forms of oppression are not easily divorceable.

Beth Richie (2012) talks about the "trap of loyalty" that many black women feel when they are forced to choose between their racial and gender interests. The rhetoric surrounding racial solidarity can be used to manipulate Black women, particularly in situations of violence by Black men (Richie, 2012). Along the lines of racial solidarity, Richie notes a pattern of discrediting Black women as victims of violence because of the disadvantages and risks that Black men face at the hands of the criminal justice system (Richie, 2012). Violence against Black women by Black men should be understood within this "trap of loyalty" framework. Cornel West (2017) adds to this conversation by criticizing what he calls a "vulgar form of racial reasoning," described through a portrayal of a chain of events: "Black authenticity → Black closing-ranks mentality → Black male subordination of Black women in the interest of the Black community in a hostile white racist country" (p.38). Black women's victimization is sacrificed and ignored as a result of the intersection of their gender and race. Violence against Black women by Black men could be analyzed through a combination of Cornel West's Black Nihilism, Beth Richie's trap of loyalty, and women of color feminist's intersectionality. As North Lawndale's racial project focuses on the neighborhoods' men, the women and their needs are ignored entirely or viewed as part of the problem rather than a site that holds potential solutions.

b. **Strength-Centered Methodology**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) serves as both an analytical framework for understanding social order and a methodological approach that centers the roles of race, racism, power, and white supremacy in the examination of the geographic, cultural, political, and social space of North Lawndale (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The methodological framework promotes an academic activism that identifies and challenges racism and white supremacy within the research and

publishing space as one part of the larger goal of identifying and challenging the multiple forms of racial subordination. An important part of this methodology is paying attention to the strengths of the community as they resist these, i.e. a strength-centered methodology rather than a deficit-centered methodology. To CRT, the methodology and implementation of a study should be just as important as the ultimate purpose and research goals (Hylton, 2012). CRT contains an activist dimension; one of the primary goals of research is the pursuit of justice.

There are decades of academic work in sociology and social work from a "deficit lens." However, there is an important trend that acknowledges the hardships but turning focus to what the communities are doing— a more strength-centered methodology. Eve Tuck is one of the leaders of this academic trend. In her open letter to communities, researchers and educators, Tuck (2009) argues that "damage-centered" research, intended to document pain in order to acknowledge oppression, actually upholds racial projects that portray community members as hopeless and in need of saving. Instead, Tuck urges researcher to rethink the way community research is framed, from damage-centered to strength-centered, so that findings may be used by the community. In terms of North Lawndale violence research, Tuck would call for research that describes what the community is already doing to address the homicide rate. By doing this, solutions will be more community driven rather than City Hall driven, where the city is positioned in a paternal, caregiving manner. For those doing important (official and unofficial) anti-violence work in the community, solutions would call for resources to assist with what is already working rather than the state "taking over."

Carol Stack (1974) describes the strategies and networks developed that support basic daily survival in Black communities in the United States. She argues that Black communities are often based on an "ethic of cooperation." "They share with one another because of the urgency

of their needs. Alliances between individuals are created around the clock as kin and friends exchange and give and obligate one another" (Stack, 1974, p.32). Black neighborhoods like North Lawndale have adapted to race, class, and gender dynamics in a city that has historically excluded them. This adaption includes networks and strategies of survival that develop bonds of trust, friendship, and solidarity. By focusing on the strategies in North Lawndale, CRT methodology that calls for activism and a strength-centered methodology are satisfied.

2. **Responses to Racial Projects**

The literature identifies several responses to racial projects, including social isolation, mass incarceration and the racial state, hopelessness, and resistance.

a. **Social Isolation**

Elijah Anderson (2015) notes that spaces are often conceived of as white (e.g. downtown's public spaces, middle-class or white-collar workplaces, gated communities, etc.) or Black (e.g. service profession spaces, jails, urban ghettos). While geographic space is separate from race, racial projects do the ideological work of connecting the two. The racialization of space mainly exists to create barriers and to socially construct particular bodies as unwanted in certain spaces. Unless they display middle-class, white, heterosexual, gender-conforming culture, they are barred from certain areas of the city, where their skin color has been racialized as violent. This social construction relies on racist racial projects for this definition, as white bodies are not barred from public spaces in the same manner and to the same degree as non-white bodies. The narratives used in descriptions of North Lawndale that describe its community members as violent is the framing language that is part of the racialized ideology that creates and maintains this color-line. Neighborhoods like North Lawndale make visible the ways that race

and racism affect community members' worlds, through these barriers that are both constructed and maintained. These barriers limit North Lawndale's access to social, political, and economic justice. The narrative that relies on the neighborhood's homicide rate to explain or justify the multiple forms of neighborhood abandonment reinforces the idea that Black neighborhoods are inferior and rationalize their social isolation and abandonment.

Critical Race scholars have argued that society is organized with the main goal of protecting white interest. Black poverty can be understood within this framework, which has an economic twist (i.e. North Lawndale being viewed as an "excess reserve army of labor" (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979)). According to Charles Mills (2001), "white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today" (pg. 1). Mills provides an economic argument for protecting white interest, one aimed at economic exploitation: the larger purpose of creating a society with laws and enforcement of those laws, is to protect what whites have accumulated (Mills, 2001). This is related to both the whiteness as property and racial neoliberalism discussions in this chapter. Social isolation is critical to this equation. What is needed in the analysis of Black poverty is a "recognition that racism (white supremacy) is itself a political system, a particular power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties" (Mills, 2001, p.3). When talking about societal organization, to Mills, the purpose of establishing morality while organizing society according to race is to "secure and legitimate the privilege of those designated as white and the exploitation of those designated as nonwhite" (Mills, 2001, p.32). As Neely Fuller (1984) argued, if you do not understand white supremacy, everything else will confuse you. Exclusion and social isolation are fundamental to

the racial contract, white supremacy, and the racial project. Black poverty should be viewed through this lens of exclusion—both morally and economically.

There is extensive research on the effects of isolation and segregation on access to resources and middle-class "culture and values" (Wilson 1996) but this social isolation also has very real effects on the way the residents of North Lawndale view their positionality within the social world of Chicago. In his research on the way marginalized Black men think of themselves within the larger social world, Alford Young (2011) found that men who had contact with people outside of their Near West Side Chicago neighborhood showed a greater capacity to understand social stratification and to understand the centrality of race and class within this system. Therefore, they were able to understand their social situation as a result of that very system. Those who were more socially isolated within the neighborhood had a harder time framing their own life circumstances in terms of broader structures of race and class and, therefore, pointed to more individual characteristics. Based on this research, experiences of high levels of social isolation in North Lawndale may cause residents to actually internalize and believe the larger racial project—one that portrays them as inherently violent worthy of abandonment. The result of this is feelings of hopelessness and Black Nihilism (West, 2017) described later in this chapter.

b. <u>**Mass Incarceration & The Racial State**</u>

Black poverty and criminalization go hand-in-hand in the United States. Omi and Winant would argue that North Lawndale's racial project justifies the heightened levels of social control, policing and surveillance in the neighborhood. Loic Wacquant, who actually studied under Julius Wilson in Chicago (to be discussed below), also conducted research in urban, poor,

predominantly Black neighborhoods, which he referred to as "the hyperghetto" (Wacquant, 2008). However, Wacquant connects Black poverty to social control through the "institutionalist conception of the ghetto as a concatenation of mechanisms of ethnoracial control" (Wacquant, 2008, p. 3). Wacquant discusses the historic transformation from the *communal ghetto* of the mid-twentieth century to the more contemporary *hyperghetto* and connects this shift to the transformation of the forms of social control of the black people living in these hyperghettos. In his description of the hyperghetto, Wacquant connects black poverty to social control by the penal system:

> "Hyperghetto: a novel, decentred, territorial and organizational configuration characterized by conjugated segregation on the basis of race and class in the context of double retrenchment of the labour market and the welfare state from the urban core, necessitating and eliciting the corresponding deployment of an intrusive and omnipresent police and penal apparatus" (Wacquant 2008, p. 3).

Going against the Chicago School tradition of natural development of neighborhoods and urban areas, Wacquant argues that "urban space is a historical and political construction" (Wacquant, 2008). CRT and Omi & Winant would agree and add that the historical and political construction of poor, Black neighborhoods serves a purpose—one of social control.

Criminal justice policy, law enforcement and policing strategies, the production of new laws, and development of mass incarceration systems are strategically used together as part of a larger social agenda aimed at maintaining the power of elites through the social control of marginalized groups like those living in North Lawndale (Richie, 2012). The deployment of these public policies relies on the social construction and racial project of a "crime problem" that is poor and Black, which the public easily accepts (Omi & Winant, 2014; Richie, 2012). The history of "slavery to Jim Crow to mass incarceration" is something that Wacquant (2009), followed by Michelle Alexander (2012), points to as a distinguishing factor between Black poverty and other groups' poverty. The government use of punishment is a tool of social control. According to

Michelle Alexander (2012), the "current system of control permanently locks a huge percentage of the Black community out of the mainstream society and economy"; "this system operates through criminal justice institutions" (pg. 13). Viewed from Alexander's perspective, North Lawndale would be better understood as an *undercaste*—"a lower caste of individuals who are permanently barred by law and custom from mainstream society" (Alexander, 2012, p.13). These authors (CRT scholars, Omi & Winant, Wacquant, Alexander) would agree that the social control of Black bodies has always existed, yet transformed, and is a major factor distinguishing Black poverty.

The attribution and perception of dangerousness attached to stigmatized and socially isolated minority groups, like those living in North Lawndale, are believed to increase the intensity of perceptions of social disorder (Sampson, 2009) and also the decisions to rely on incarceration for punishment (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Sampson and Loeffler (2010) argue that arrest rates in communities like North Lawndale are a more direct measure of the area's production of criminal offenders, not criminal offenses. They show that communities that experience high disadvantage experience "incarceration rates *more than three times higher* than communities with a similar crime rate". Their research confirms that it is not about the amount of crime committed, but it is instead about social control. Therefore, "mass incarceration" is a misnomer; it should be "concentrated incarceration" (Cooper & Luglia-Hollon, 2018). According to Robert Sampson (2009), the incarceration levels for the most disadvantaged parts of Chicago's predominantly Black West Side are "hundreds of times higher than Chicago's white community" with the highest-incarceration rate.

The reliance on mass incarceration and policing as a strategy to reduce violence in North Lawndale should be presented along with its parallel topic-- the racial state. Omi and Winant's

(2014) notion of a "racial state" is important because it is embodied in both current and past public policy. To Omi and Winant (2014), "through policies which are explicitly or implicitly racial, state institutions organize and enforce the racial politics of everyday life" (p.83). Race must be understood within the racial state as occupying various degrees of importance in different government institutions and at different historic moments (p. 83). To Omi and Winant, any policy response (i.e. increased policing and surveillance) cannot be separated from race. They argue that the entire "racial order is equilibrated by the state—encoded in law, organized through policy-making, and enforced by a repressive apparatus" (i.e. mass incarceration) (p. 84).

CRT and Omi & Winant would argue that however democratic the United States may appear in many respects, its treatment of racial minorities has historically always been oppressive. Homicide rates in North Lawndale cannot be properly analyzed without understanding oppression. Racial formation is related to politics through the concept of hegemony. Gramsci (2007) defines hegemony as "the conditions necessary, in a given society, for the achievement and consolidation of rule," absent the use of force (pg. 67). "Ruling groups must create, elaborate, and maintain a popular system of ideas and practices" (pg. 67); the key to hegemony is conditioning (Gramsci, 2007). Omi and Winant argue that racial projects build hegemony and this hegemony operates by structuring and signifying our racialized society. Gramsci (2007) talks about the connection between oppression and the creation of relatively safe homogeneous minority communities through his concept of "war of maneuver." Omi and Winant include Gramsci's idea in their analysis of the racial state and describe it as "a situation in which subordinate groups seek to preserve and extend a definite territory, to ward off violent assault, and to develop an internal society as an alternative to the repressive social system they confront" (p.81). Omi & Winant and CRT scholars would agree that throughout America's history, the

state's main aspiration in its racial policy was the constraint and exclusion of certain racialized groups through hegemony. Mass incarceration *is* repression and exclusion, in its most extreme form. The key to hegemony is the conditioning for consent, so hegemony must be understood as a subtle enforcer. Gramsci says that we are trained and conditioned under these systems, so there is no way to be impartial. If society is conditioned to understand Black violence as normal, we are consenting to the existence of mass incarceration tactics that incarcerate disproportionate amounts of poor, Black people. This creation and maintenance of mass incarceration cannot be understood without understanding Omi and Winant's racial state and Gramsci's hegemony.

c. <u>Hopelessness</u>

While being cautious of a deficit-lens, hopelessness is an important topic when talking about neighborhood level theories of violence in Black communities. Derrick Bell urges us to think less about the source of poverty and more about "the status of men and women who, despised because of their race, seek refuge in self-rejection" (Bell, 2008, p.4). When speaking about heightened rates of homicide, community feelings of hopelessness must be discussed as a distinguishing factor. In terms of theories of violence, many theories connect hopelessness to increased levels of violence (Bolland, 2001; Durant et al., 2001; Stoddard et al., 2011). Cornel West (2017) argues that there is a level of hopelessness that is unique to Black communities; he labels it "Black Nihilism." "Black nihilism speaks to the profound sense of psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair so widespread in black America" (West, 2017, p.20). West argues that the structural issues and oppression that Blacks in America experience are not their biggest threats, but rather the nihilistic threat—how the combination of these factors result in hopelessness and an absence of meaning (West, 2017). West (2017) noted

that the threat of Black Nihilism is more influential now than before because of the intensity of the market forces of neoliberalism. The cumulative effects of the "black wounds and scars" endured in a white-dominated society is a "deep-seated anger, boiling sense of rage, and a passionate pessimism regarding America's will to justice" (West, 2017, p.28). This type of hopelessness should be viewed as the result of the racial project of abandonment in North Lawndale. There is no lack of strategies and resistance in North Lawndale, but there also needs to be a political will, otherwise feelings of hopelessness and rage will continue to exist in the neighborhood.

Omi & Winant would highlight the power of racial projects in the creation of hopelessness in North Lawndale. As long as racial reasoning controls responses to Black action and thought, the white-dominated society will maintain its power. This analysis of hopelessness cannot be separated from Omi and Winant's racial formation theory because a system of race-conscious people and practices connects Blackness to violence. Blackness is both a political and an ethical construct that has real consequences for the Black psyche. When discussing North Lawndale and its homicide rate, we must acknowledge that political/social structures and behavior (both perceived and real) are inseparable from larger institutions. Along with a willingness to resist, despair, hopelessness, and Cornell West's "Black Nihilism" are consequences of the racial project and variables that distinguish North Lawndale from Chicago's non-Black communities.

d. <u>Resistance</u>

Multiple projects are taking place at the same time—some complementing one another and others contradicting. Racial projects compete with one another with the goal of ensuring that their racialized narratives and visions of society become "common sense" to the larger society.

The racial formation process is a process of "historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized" (Omi and Winant, 1994). Precisely because racial projects pursue any number of ideological objectives, Omi and Winant argue that there are projects we should embrace and nurture and those we should vigorously reject and oppose. Carbado and Harris (2008) argue that racial projects hail from all ideological corners (p.184). Thus, there are racist racial projects and progressive racial projects. Therefore, not all racial projects are developed by elites, but some are popular, community originated. Not all racial projects characterized as racist have the same normative demeanor or distributional consequences (Carbado & Harris, 2008). The harm each racist racial project causes must be assessed relative to their role in pushing forward "the dominant hegemonic" framework on race (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.73).

The North Lawndale's racial project of abandonment was largely recognized by the stakeholders in North Lawndale. The community members consistently responded to questions about the high homicide rate with responses demonstrating different forms of abandonment in and of the neighborhood that increases the possibility of homicide. The literature shows that North Lawndale's response could either be categorized as a racist racial project or a progressive racial project. This dissertation will argue that the community's response is resistance to the larger, racist racial project. As discussed previously, racial projects are where race is represented, deployed, and institutionalized. North Lawndale's larger racial project connects an interpretation of Black as violent, while the everyday experiences of unemployment, female-headed households, criminality and gangs are rationalized as mundane. In this instance, the racial project justifies the multiple forms of abandonment that created an environment that fuels increased levels of homicide. It is a cyclical process. The community response should be viewed as a

resistance to the larger racial project rather than a progressive racial project, as the primary source of power still lies in the larger racial project. However, there is a system of community organizations whose efforts should be viewed as a progressive racial project.

There is a significant amount of literature that resists racial projects like the one taking place in North Lawndale—literature that dares to consider poor Black men and women as something other than menaces to society who are inclined toward violence and who move through the world with brutality and insensitivity. A premise of white supremacy is to deny certain groups the nuance and heterogeneity that we afford white populations. A form of "racial lumping" predicated on the idea that Blacks think alike is a view that "creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.71). Poor, Black neighborhoods and their residents are all very different—expressing different ideas, views, resistance strategies. Research that documents processes of the racial project should also document the wide variety of responses to that very project. In her research on the demolition of the Henry Horner public housing complex on Chicago's West Side, Catherine Fennell (2015) writes about how an ambitious effort to demolish and rebuild the distressed housing projects actually inspired citizens to create pathways for caring for themselves and their families and neighbors far better than any failed welfare bureaucracy ever had. In her study of Black families in the poorest section of a Midwest community, Carol Stack (1974) found that the families developed strategies and networks that were the basis for survival. She argued that Black communities are often based on an "ethic of cooperation" (p. 32). This literature all shows the resistance to the distributional consequences of the racial project.

There are many institutions in North Lawndale that promote positive social organization and social life. These are progressive racial projects, as mentioned previously. Klinenberg (2015)

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says that throughout North Lawndale, there are two main sources of formal community

participation: the church and the block club (p.105). He cites a local directory of services from

1998 that lists 120 churches in and around the North Lawndale area and 73 block clubs within it

(North Lawndale Family Network, 1998). While the churches in North Lawndale are small in

size, they hold significant historical and cultural value in the neighborhood, as they are able to be

more responsive to the local community's needs. There is good reason to look closely at the roles

that churches play in the social support systems in both North Lawndale. African American

churches have historically been one of the main anchors of social life in Black urban

communities in general (Frazier, 1961; Lincoln, 1960), and of Black Chicagoans in particular

(Drake & Clayton, 1945, 1993; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998; Spear, 1967). North Lawndale's churches

are active in many realms of community social life.

Klinenberg (2015) argues that block clubs are another major institution that helps support

positive social networks. Albert Hunter (1974) also discussed block clubs in his community

study and found that they "appear to be more prevalent within Black communities in Chicago"

(p.187). Klinenberg (2015) says that these clubs have become more popular in recent years, as

the local government has actively promoted them. Residents organize the clubs themselves as a

means of asserting local control and establishing standards for community-related topics like

public behavior and property management (p.107). Like churches, block clubs can be a key

resource in building social cohesion in neighborhoods and should be discussed in any

institutional analysis of North Lawndale. Block clubs can also be an indicator of social cohesion,

as they require a core group of active residents who are committed to their block and community

to the extent that they are willing to spend time and energy to be successful. In terms of

examples of progressive racial projects in North Lawndale, block clubs and churches seem to be good examples, along with many other important community-based organizations.

B. Neighborhood-Level Theories of Violence

Neighborhood level violence studies are concerned with examining patterns of social interaction within confined geographic locations in order to theorize how these patterns affect rates of violence and, thus, derive from an ecological perspective as a theoretical basis—the idea that there is an important connection between people, their environment, and levels of violence.

Urban policy research has historically been occupied with the life conditions and culture of the poor to show how they may actually inhibit their own social advancement and upward mobility. Therefore, solutions from this school of thought rely on the kinds of social programs or policies that alleviate the conditions of urban poverty. Cultural theories of violence look inward rather than outward to explain the violence and show how the lifestyle of the urban poor is self-perpetuating. Race is a common theme within urban policy research but Omi and Winant would say that is because the immediate vision of urban poor in the United States is racialized as Black and Latino. Rather than race and racism being discussed as factors that contribute to poverty for Blacks and Latinx, race is used to describe what poverty looks like, ultimately racializing the entire word. When poverty is racialized as Black, the existence of Julius Wilson's "underclass" (described below) does not shake our collective conscious. Instead, it becomes common sense. This dissertation argues that cultural theories of violence and poverty and Wilson's underclass are academic racial projects, as they fuel and continue to fuel the Black violence narrative that this paper hopes to disrupt.

1. **<u>Cultural Theories</u>**

   a. **<u>Social (Dis)organization and Collective Efficacy</u>**

Social disorganization theory argues that spaces with weaker social integration and unanimity on cultural norms may display higher levels and frequency of violence (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925; Shaw & McKay, 1942). Elijah Anderson (1999) utilizes this theory within his argument that living in structurally and socially disorganized communities contributes to the adoption of a cultural value system and attitude that is more likely to tolerate crime and violence. However, neighborhood studies that rely heavily on social disorganization theories (Carr, 2005; Suttles, 1968; Shaw & McKay, 1942) often assume that all communities have similar dynamics and use the same variables to distinguish between social organization and disorganization. The Chicago School has argued "space, not race" when determining the focus for studying communities and accounting for certain neighborhood dynamics. The fact that neighborhoods in Chicago are not just affected by race, but defined by race and as this dissertation argues, define race itself, is not considered by these applications of social disorganization theory. If this race-neutral view of neighborhood functioning is true, then North Lawndale is shaped primarily by social dynamics within the neighborhood rather than outside structural factors and the racial project that are based on the community's racial makeup and the racialization of its very "social disorganization."

Anybody who attempts to responsibly describe social life in an urban neighborhood must describe the distinctiveness of that place while also noting the larger forces that have shaped the area. Neighborhoods like North Lawndale may not suffer from social disorganization it at all but may be organized *differently* in response to the "relentless press of economic necessity, generalized social insecurity, abiding racial hostility or indifference, and political denigration"

(Wacquant, 2008, p.50). "Black spaces in the city have historically been centered around daily survival, consciousness of solidarity, and a politics of resistance" (Haymes, 1995, pg. 117). These forms of organization should be understood from a strength-centered lens of organization, rather than the deficit-centered lens of disorganization that is part of the racial project. What might look like social disorganization to an outsider might be the exact opposite—a form of resistance, adaption to poverty, etc.—to someone living in the neighborhood.

Social disorganization theorists who follow Bursik's "systematic" social disorganization theory argue that community control/organization means control over resources. It is certainly accurate to say that residents living in white, middle- and upper-class communities in Chicago have historically used their ties to the public sphere to address their community problems. Neighborhoods like North Lawndale will naturally have different looking social controls because they do not enjoy the same access to the public sphere. If social control is indeed tied to a community's ability to access goods from the public sphere, it might be true that community tension varies directly with this ability as well, as communities like North Lawndale fight for and fight over the limited public resources tied to place (i.e. anti-violence funds and social programs). Therefore, neighborhoods with fewer social ties may likely still be capable of utilizing useful amounts of control over the causes of violence depending on the ease with which they have access to political and institutional resources outside of the neighborhood. Neighborhoods where residents experience the consequences of the racial project of abandonment, or where citizens have not had the same access to public goods as their counterparts in better-off neighborhoods, are especially likely to encounter difficulty in initiating new organizational strategies.

The assumption embedded within social disorganization theories that there is a direct relationship between social organization and informal social control could be misleading. Instead, we should perhaps ask whether a high level of social organization necessarily leads to higher levels of social control. Robert Sampson and William Wilson (1995) argued that one of the key components of local organization is the extent to which residents of a neighborhood assume personal responsibility for neighborhood problems and the extent to which local youth are collectively supervised. *Collective efficacy* is both the level of social cohesion and the willingness to act for the common social good that exists within a community (Jean, 2008). Scholars have shown that high levels of collective efficacy, even in communities with high levels of social disorder, are effective in reducing both crime, disorder, and violence (Hill, 2016). Therefore, these scholars would argue that collective efficacy is a more important indicator of an ability to control violence than social disorder. The high levels of residential turnover and low number of property owners in North Lawndale could indicate an overall lower level of personal responsibility for the neighborhood, or it could indicate high levels of poverty. The racial project does the ideological work of pointing to the former conclusion and also creating the picture of North Lawndale as social disorganized rather than organized around forms of survival and resistance. North Lawndale has developed an adaption to race, class and gender dynamics that have historically excluded them. The larger society that has excluded them is the same society that creates the description of neighborhood organization to which North Lawndale does not identify—this is a racial project.

Community studies link social and cultural heterogeneity within a group to an increase in violence. Hawkins, et al. (2017) add their ideas of *affinitive ethnocentrism* and *conflictive ethonocentrism* to the list of etiological factors that social scientists have offered for social

disorganization—two factors that are worth mentioning to the North Lawndale conversation. The authors introduce these ideas to connect ethnic heterogeneity and social disorganization to violence. *Affinity groups* are defined as the "social, social psychological, and institutional ties among people that are grounded in their perceptions of cultural homogeneity, homogamy-centered group identities and allegiances, and emotional and social psychological ties" (Hawkins et al., 2017, p.85). *Affinitive ethnocentrism* describes the "other-imposed or self-imposed attachments to one's group or homophily"; *conflictive ethnocentrism* describes the patterns of "intergroup conflict that frequently arise when culturally diverse groups come into contact" (Hawkins et al., 2017, p. 84). The authors basically argue that divisions within the Black community could be the cause of high levels of violence; researchers have to avoid treating the Black communities as undifferentiated wholes. Community studies that have also acknowledged the heterogeneity within Black communities include Jargowsky (1996) who researched the hidden economic diversity within black "disadvantaged" neighborhoods, Anderson (1999) who differentiated between "street folk" and "decent folk" in Philadelphia, and Robinson (2014) who discussed rural-versus-urban and regional differences within Black America. Klinenberg (2015) mentions heterogeneity in residential transience and stability among the blocks in North Lawndale and says that some have relatively high levels of home ownership and residential stability while others have high levels of vacancy, tenancy, and turnover (Klinenberg, 2015, p. 104). When applying this concept of heterogeneity to North Lawndale, it is important to acknowledge any particular divisions within the communities that affect larger social life dynamics. While Hawkins et al.'s ideas about intra-group heterogeneity were not particularly well clarified and seem to be the effects of social isolation, divisions (cultural, class, religious, etc.) within the North Lawndale are important, because it disrupts the racial project. However, it

is always important to acknowledge heterogeneity in studies of Black neighborhoods, as it interrupts the project of "racial lumping" described earlier.

b. <u>Academic Racial Projects: Julius Wilson's Underclass & the Culture of Poverty</u>

Urban policy research has historically been occupied with the life conditions and culture of the poor, which ultimately point an academic finger to the ways in which the poor may actually inhibit their own upward mobility. It could be argued that Julius Wilson is the late 20th century's most important social disorganization theorist—one that relies on analyzing the cultural pathologies of the Black underclass. Wilson became an advisor to Bill Clinton; his policy prescriptions were jobs and community development. The term he uses—"underclass"— suggests that "changes have taken place in ghetto neighborhoods after the 1960s and the groups that have been left behind are collectively different from those that lived in these same neighborhoods in earlier years" (p.8). Wilson's larger theory and the main argument in his book is that Black poverty is fundamentally and qualitatively different than other groups' poverty and the difference revolves around experiences of joblessness. This is an important distinction, as Omi and Winant and CRT would agree, but have completely different reasons. Not all poverty is the same. Julius Wilson is specifically talking about the *Black* underclass and, thus, develops a theory to address the causes. Wilson's (1996) thesis argues that the manufacturing economy turned to a service economy which caused a disproportionate effect on urban minorities, leading to a drop in the number of desirable marriage partners, a rise in female-headed households, and an out-migration of both middle-class whites and Blacks from poor, urban communities. He argues that because of this chain of events, there was a growing concentration ("concentration effects") of poor Blacks in urban cities, within which dysfunctional, flawed social behavior and

culture was produced and became contagious. This analysis is where Wilson diverges from Omi & Winant and CRT. Wilson points to a lack of middle-class role models, local job opportunities, sufficient public service, and community institutions that support "traditional" family values as reasons why underclass neighborhoods become "breeding places" for "sexual promiscuity, crime, violence, drug addiction, and alcohol abuse" (Wilson 1991, pg. 460-62). *This is an academic racial project* for the reasons listed in this chapter. It positions neighborhoods like North Lawndale as deviant from a social norm dictated by white, heteronormative men and it blames a culture of poverty for its position in the social and economic world.

To Wilson, the answer to what makes Black poverty different from other groups' poverty lies in their social disorganization. Wilson focused on the shift from organized urban communities prior to 1960 to their fall into disorganization. He also claimed that urban communities prior to 1960 displayed features of social organization, including a "sense of community, positive neighborhood identification, and explicit norms and sanctions against aberrant behavior" (Wilson, 1996, p.3). However, Wilson says that changes took place in these neighborhoods and the groups that were left behind and socially isolated were altogether different from those that lived in those same neighborhoods in earlier years. Throughout *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson (1996) at best removes agency from the Black underclass and worst, blames them for their plight. He boldly proclaims that the conditions of the "underclass" are even worse today and that there is a "sharp increase in social pathologies in ghetto communities" (pg. 12). Wilson believes these "pathologies of the underclass" are not properly accounted for in more standard or race-neutral designations of the *lower-class* or *working class* (p.13). Wilson's analysis relies on the racialization of those living in extreme poverty and uses his academic power to describe the meaning of that racialization. Wilson claims today, the

underclass "differ[s] markedly" from the past and "contrasts sharply with that of mainstream America" (p.7). This concept mirrors Milton Gordon's "Anglo-conformity" which assumes the presence of a supposedly unitary majority culture and the desire for non-white ethnicities to assimilate to that culture (Gordon, 1964).

The distinction between the underclass and more mainstream society is something that CRT would critique and is an ideology that is central to the racial project in North Lawndale. Many (primarily urban) communities are not studied in their own right with the goal of truly *understanding* the community, in terms of their own views and social order, cultural vernacular, or lifestyle. Instead, they tend to be compared to a standard that is non-Black and not poor and are subsequently viewed as deviating from some standardized norm. Wilson's cultural analysis gives validity to the middle- and upper-class, Christian, heteronormative prejudices of whites that believes they are the mainstream, and all others deviate from their norms. CRT and Black Feminism urge readers to rethink the use of the word "mainstream"—a race-neutral word that really means middle-class white values. While Wilson and CRT would agree that the circumstance of the urban poor is largely related to the norms of the society to which they belong, those who Wilson labels as "mainstream" do not embrace those who he labels the "underclass." Implicit in Wilson's academic project is the following question: how can Blacks avoid judgment that, at best, is created by standards not of their own and, at worst, by standards created to help justify the racial project?

Omi and Winant might argue that the creation of the idea of a mainstream culture and hegemony regarding a desire to assimilate are part of the larger racial project that promotes assimilation and justifies that abandonment of those who do not. It also distinguishes the "good" from the "bad" based on assimilation to these mainstream norms. Creating hegemony around a

desire for assimilation while simultaneously constructing structural barriers to assimilation grants

society the ability to "blame the victims" of Black poverty for their plight. Omi and Winant

(2014) discuss this concept in terms of group norms:

> "The key factor in explaining the success that an ethnic group will have in becoming incorporated into majority society (a goal whose desirability is unquestioned) is the values or 'norms' which the group brings to bear on the general social circumstances it faces just as all other minorities have done. Since the independent variable is the "norms," the idea that 'differences in status' could be affected by factors outside or even unrelated to the group is ruled out at the level of assumptions" (p.21).

Under Wilson's theory, everything is mediated through norms external to North Lawndale. In the

case of the Black underclass, if North Lawndale experiences high levels of homicide, this is not

directly due to terrible environmental or structural factors; instead, it has to do with Black culture

and values. This is an intricate racial project that is directly related to Black poverty--one that

allows society to view the Black underclass as one with poor values-- values that make them

worthy of their abandonment.

Discussions about larger structures breeding a particular culture is popular in criminology

and sociology (Wilson, 2012; Wacquant, 2008; Anderson, 1994). Elijah Anderson (1994)

connected structural issues to violence and argued that desperate poverty, widespread joblessness

and lingering racial tension accounted for violence more than any other "social pathology."

Structures and culture should not be viewed as mutually exclusive and CRT would urge us to

always ask who gets to define a particular culture. Wilson's work centers around Black poverty

as a cultural adaption to concentrated poverty. Wilson criticizes the liberal perspective for failing

to "address straightforwardly the rise of social pathologies in the ghetto" (Wilson, p.12).

Conservative perspectives on the underclass revolve around applications of Oscar Lewis's

(1969) culture-of-poverty arguments that similarly argued that there is a culture specific to

poverty that is "both an adaption and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in a class

stratified, highly individuated, capitalistic society" (Lewis, 1969, p.188). Wilson (2012) argues

that "culture is a response to social structural restraints and a lack of opportunities"; however, his

crucial theoretical concept is not a "culture of poverty," but social isolation (p.61). He argues that

this social isolation and Black poverty concentration is linked to the out-migration of nonpoor

Blacks (p.50). Wilson then introduces two of his main contributions to understanding urban

Black poverty: concentration effects and social buffers. Concentration effects are explained

within his argument regarding the uniqueness of Black poverty:

> "If I had to use one term to capture the differences in the experiences of low-income families who live in inner-city areas from the experiences of those who live in other areas in the central city today, that term would be *concentration effects*. The social transformation of the inner city has resulted in a disproportionate concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the urban black population, creating a social milieu significantly different from the environment that existed in these communities several decades ago" (Wilson, p. 58).

He attributes this extreme concentration of poverty to the exodus of middle-class and well-

educated Blacks (p.56). Not only are these populations leaving inner-city Black communities,

but the remaining residents in the neighborhoods have become progressively socially isolated

from more "mainstream" patterns of behavior, or "social buffers." Wilson (2012) defines *social*

buffers as the "presence of a sufficient number of working- and middle-class professional

families to absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven growth and periodic recessions in

inner-city neighborhoods" (p.56).

Violence theories speak directly to this conversation by looking at structural issues within

the Black underclass as structural *violence* (i.e. Bourdeiu's Law of the Conservation of Violence,

mentioned above). Wacquant (2008) challenges the assumption in Wilson's theory that we need

to observe collective structural/economic policies and their effects "from below" (i.e. in regards

to cultural adaptions) rather than "from above," thus removing the responsibility from the Black

underclass for their poverty. However, Wilson's discussion of the causes of concentration effects

and social buffers is eerily similar to Wacquant's (2008) main three components of structural

violence: mass unemployment, relegation to decaying neighborhoods, and heightened stigmatization. The stigmatization attached to concentration effects is an important addition to Wilson's concepts and adds to Cornel West's concept of Black Nihilism (discussed below). CRT would warn against treating the ghetto as a "dumping ground" and Omi & Winant would agree and list the purposes behind this racial project (gentrification, outside decision making, etc.). What's important about Wacquant's (2018) addition to this discussion is his treatment of Wilson's list of structural issues with the black underclass—joblessness, incarceration rates, lack of education—as structural *violence*.

CRT would point to the fact that Wilson's argument blames (middle-class and well-educated) Blacks for Black poverty. Omi and Winant would agree and argue that this is a racial project—one that racializes poverty, cultural adaptions to poverty, and blames more economically successful Blacks for the creation and development of the Black underclass. When Wilson speaks of concentrated poverty breeding social *pathologies* within the Black underclass, he is associating a word describing disease to black underclass culture. Concentration effects and social buffers are racialized concepts that CRT would probably reject as they are presented by Wilson. However, they would agree that these are important topics in analyzing Black poverty, but would want to rethink the description. Racial dynamics must be understood as the impetus of the class relationships discussed by Wilson as well as class identities, not as minor consequences (Omi & Winant, 2014). Racial projects, racism, and racialization are active factors in Black class identities; Wilson does not give enough attention to the heterogeneity of Black culture, attitudes, and adaption strategies.

Cultural theories of violence and poverty and Wilson's description of the underclass should be viewed as academic racial projects. They racialize extreme poverty as Black and give

power to racialized notions of a culture of poverty. By doing this, Black poverty is associated with larger structural forces and the resulting cultural pathologies, so the poor are portrayed as responsible for their pathologies that are actually adaptations to deindustrialization and economic restructuring. There were other very high rates of violence for groups similarly adapting to economic restructuring, but Wilson attributes these behaviors to an oppositional, Black underclass culture (reviewed next). The result is that the existence and mistreatment of Wilson's underclass do not shake our collective conscious—an element important to the racial project.

c. The "Underclass" in Other Cities

Wilson's argument is based on the theory that structural factors are the fundamental cause of a culture of pathologies and violence in the urban Black underclass. The dissertation's theoretical perspective agrees that violence is a function of concentrated Black poverty, but it is not just Wilson's simple explanation of deindustrialization that forms cultures. There are dynamics that are much more long term that began prior to Wilson's 1960 that are all related to the pressures of racism. Racial formation makes a stronger case for understanding high rates of violence. What happened in other Black neighborhoods in other cities after deindustrialization? The key variable to understanding increased levels of violence in other cities is high levels of segregated poverty—this should be viewed through a critical lens of a racial project rather than the effects of strictly economic forces. There is racism involved in the development of Wilson's socially isolated Black underclass neighborhoods—deindustrialization is not a sufficient answer.

Historically persisting homicide trends in Chicago are more like other Rust Belt cities (i.e. Milwaukee, Detroit, and Cleveland) than more "global cities" (Los Angeles and New York) (Hagedorn et al, 2019). The homicide rates in Rust Belt cities are strongly correlated with Black

concentrated poverty; in Chicago, 75% of homicides take place between Blacks, despite

relatively equal populations of Blacks, whites, and Latinos (Hagedorn et al, 2019). The "Rust

Belt" is a label that describes American industrial cities in the northeast and midwest that

experienced deindustrialization (Wilson, 2012) *and* widespread urban economic abandonment

(Hagedorn et al, 2019). What Wilson's analysis misses are the nuances of urban abandonment

that accompanied the deindustrialization. This is where racial formation and its elements of

racism and intentionality theoretically fill in the gap.

FIGURE 3. Chicago's Homicide Trend as Compared to New York and Los Angeles
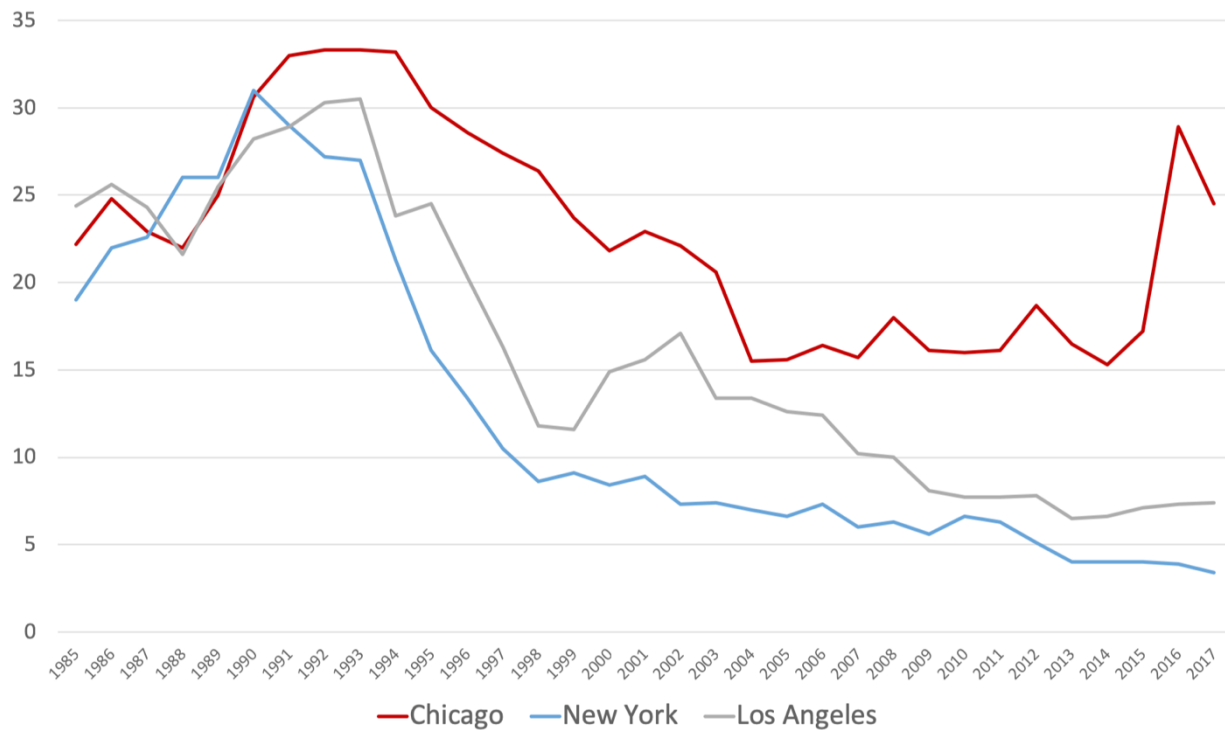
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting data compiled by John Hagedorn.

So what does this homicide report attribute to the difference in homicide rates between Rust Belt

cities and "global cities?"

> "Even though Chicago is transforming to an information economy, a substantial portion of its African American population continues to live in what William Julius Wilson called "concentrated poverty" and what Teresa Cordova and Matthew Wilson document as conditions of "chronic and concentrated joblessness," particularly among 20-24 year old males (2017). As an illustration, these distressed areas of concentrated poverty and joblessness in Chicago and other Rust Belt cities contain a much higher percentage of the city population than do similar areas in New York or Los Angeles, which also have lower homicide rates" (Hagedorn et al., 2019, p. 5).

TABLE VII. Distressed Statistics by City

CITY	Pop. In Distressed Zips	% of Pop. In Distressed Zips	Ratio of City in Distressed
New York, NY	1,328,870	15.9%	0.85
Chicago, IL	1.064,510	39.2%	2.09
Houston, TX	712,140	32.8%	1.75
Detroit, MI	688,080	98.9%	5.28
Philadelphia, PA	669,990	43.3%	2.31
Los Angeles, CA	661,170	17.1%	0.91
Phoenix, AZ	456,310	30.6%	1.63
Memphis, TN	437,090	66.6%	3.55
San Antonio, TX	403,640	29.1%	1.56
Baltimore, MD	344,080	55.3%	2.95

Source: Economic Innovation Group, https://eig.org/dci (Report shows data from 2016)

Out of the top thirteen cities with the highest homicide rates for 2021, nine are on USA

Today's list for the most segregated cities in America (highlighted below). This is not just about

poverty but segregated Black poverty and its connection to increased homicide rates.

TABLE VIII. Most Segregated Cities in America

City	Homicide Rate (per 100,000) in 2021	Black Population in Black Neighborhoods	Black Poverty Rate
St. Louis, MO	69.4	38.3%	26.4%
Baltimore	51.1	41%	17.7%
New Orleans	40.6	39.1%	29.3%
Detroit	39.7	52.4%	29.9%
Cleveland	33.7	42%	32.3%
Las Vegas	31.4		
Kansas City	31.2		
Memphis	27.1	46.4%	26.8%
Newark	25.6		
Chicago	24	48.2%	26.5%
Cincinnati	23.8		
Philadelphia	20.2	30.2%	23.5%
Milwaukee	20	35.2%	33.7%

Data collected from World Population Review on 10/22/21 for 2021. Data about Black poverty collected from USA Today—also reflects data from 2021.

The homicide rate among Blacks in Chicago in 2015 (47 per 100,000) is almost exactly the homicide rate among Blacks in 1930 (46 per 100,000) (Hagedorn et al, 2019). This data does not support the timeline of Wilson's theory of deindustrialization, but rather one that points to

racial oppression—manifested in high concentrated poverty, high unemployment, low upward income mobility, low rates of home ownership, inadequate education, crumbling infrastructure, inferior health care, reliance on police and the resulting police misconduct, overrepresentation in the prison population-- as an important factor in homicide trends. This dissertation acknowledges structural factors as important variables that lead to increased levels of homicide, but argues that these structural factors should be viewed critically as part of the racial project. While there is a higher quantity of Blacks living in New York City than Chicago--2,046,878 versus 802,460 (World Population Review, 2021)-- New York does not experience the high levels of violence *or* Black segregation as Chicago. While New York put resources into public housing and focused on improved, heterogeneous communities, Chicago built rows of public housing in the Black Belt (Sattler, 2009), causing dense, segregated poverty. Some poor neighborhoods were upgraded by housing reforms in New York City but abandoned in Chicago. While this discussion will continue in the chapter about the history of abandonment in Chicago, this is important in thinking about the structural variables that are part of the racial project—racial formation theory must fill in the gaps of purely structural analyses of neighborhood homicide.

2. **Racial Invariant**

The racial invariant thesis addresses current popular structural explanations of violence that claim that racial variation in homicide rates are primarily due to "structural differences among communities, cities, and status in economic and family organization" (Sampson and Wilson, 1995, p.41). This thesis provides a more conclusive test of the racial invariance assumption as progress towards discovering whether the high homicide rate within Black communities like North Lawndale is explained entirely by structural disadvantage. It attacks the assumption of

many leading macro-level structural explanations of homicide that there are similar effects of structural disadvantage across racial groups. This could be considered a modern-day version of ecological theory—the community area and its organization as a decisive indicator of crime. Shaw & McKay (1969) argue that crime rates within neighborhoods stay the same as various ethnic groups "succeed" each other. In his test of racial invariance, Ousey (1999) found that "if white communities featured the same degree of concentrated structural disadvantage that currently plagues Black communities, homicide rates in white communities would mirror those observed in Black communities" (pg. 406). Therefore, he concludes that "the racial gap in homicide offending cannot be explained entirely by the stark differences in poverty, unemployment, income inequality, and female headship currently observed in Black and white communities" (Ousey 1999, p. 421). He provides an explanation that connects structural issues to culture and race: "One potential explanation suggests that the extreme and long term social and economic disadvantage experienced by many urban Blacks has resulted in cultural and normative adaptions that have removed important social constraints on violence" (Anderson, 1994; Rose and McClain, 1990). This sounds similar to Wilson's theory that there are certain Black cultural adaptions to concentrated poverty and that the focus should be on these adaptions rather than race.

CRT would argue that Ousey's conclusion is lacking a deeper explanation that ties racism, an increased strain due to this historic racism, and concentrated poverty as factors that affect Black violence. Omi and Winant would point out that if all structural variables were the same and white homicide would be the same as Black homicide, then violence is not a "race" issue but a structural issue. However, portraying homicides and violence as a Black issue and focusing on

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statistics without context is a racial project that serves a purpose in societal organization, surveillance, and policing.

3. **Bourdieu & Richie—The Conservation of Violence**

Bourdieu's law of the conservation of violence is critically important when analyzing North Lawndale's homicide rate. Bourdieu's law states that violence never disappears—it can reform but violence on and within a community will always come back and appear again. Therefore, the structural violence currently and historically inflicted on North Lawndale will not disappear; one avenue it can reappear is a high homicide rate. This is critically important, because the conversation about the high homicide rate is not about hyper-violent youth. It becomes a conversation about an extension of structural violence on North Lawndale in the form of the racial project, colonial project and slavery that continues to create open air cages for those who have been deemed disposable to kill themselves in. The structural violence and the racial project of abandonment *directly relate* to the neighborhood's high homicide rate, as that violence never disappears, it just reforms itself into violence within the community. If we think about North Lawndale's homicide rate from Bourdieu's perspective, it changes up what it is that we're seeing on the ground and in our homicide statistics.

Cornell West (2017) utilizes a similar conservation-of-violence approach when he wrote about violence against women by men who experience the frustrations of Black poverty (i.e. structural violence). He argues that "the combination of the market way of life, poverty-ridden conditions, black existential angst, and the lessening of fear of white authorities has directed most of the anger, race, and despair toward fellow black citizens, especially toward black women, who are the most vulnerable in our society and in black communities" (West 2017, p.

28). Cornel West's argument works well to conceptualize Bordieu's law within the framework of Black poverty, the Black experience, and violence against women. Beth Richie (2012) created a tool that shows how the invisibility of violence against women in neighborhoods like North Lawndale is linked to society's broader inability to understand the linked and cyclical nature of harm (i.e. the conservation of violence). Her violence matrix (Richie, 2012, p.133) shows that the more socially disadvantaged a black woman is, the more likely she will be stigmatized by or punished for her victimization (p.133). The matrix distinguishes between forms of violence (physical assault, sexual assault, and emotional manipulation) and arenas of abuse (intimate households, community, and state). Through this matrix, she argues that many forms of violence are connected in ways that lock violence in place, keeping women of color especially exposed to systematic abuse. This is incredibly important because it deepens the conversation of the conservation of violence to include the multiple forms of violence against women that are not necessarily addressed in the male violence discussions.

The structural violence and the racial project of abandonment *directly relate* to the neighborhood's high homicide rate, as that violence never disappears, it just reforms itself into violence within the community. If we think about North Lawndale's homicide rate from Bourdieu's perspective, we turn away from pointing our fingers to individual hyper-violent youth in the community. Instead, we view the high homicide rate as reflective of the high level of structural violence historically and currently directed at North Lawndale. Abandonment is a form of structural violence and through Bourdieu's theory, it is directly related to the high homicide rate.

C. **Economic Explanations of Neighborhood Violence**

   1. **Neoliberalism**

   The conditions in North Lawndale should also be viewed through an analysis of broader structures of society, i.e., economic and political systems. The economic abandonment in North Lawndale is an incredibly important factor connected to homicide and can be understood as one result of global economic restructuring. A more economic, historical analysis of North Lawndale's homicide rate would ask how globalized capitalism has affected on-the-ground activities like neighborhood violence. Contextualizing North Lawndale's homicide rate within a restructured economic system and the current neoliberal policy regime (Córdova, 2016) provides a lens for understanding the larger forces affecting neighborhood violence. By providing a more economic contextual framework, I do not intend to make the argument that class is a more significant variable than any other or argue that theories absent of this economic analysis are irrelevant in the discussion of North Lawndale's homicide rate. Instead, I am arguing that analyses of neighborhood violence can benefit from highlighting the logic of contemporary global economic imperatives and the ideological projects that support them.

   The economic restructuring that tailed the economic crisis of the mid-1970s gave rise to today's neoliberal policy regime (Córdova, 2016). Economic policies following the Great Depression and World War II established conditions for capital expansion but eventually inflation, rising oil prices, and a decline in the rate of profit led to an economic crisis that showed its head and became an emergency in the mid-1970s (Castells, 1980; Córdova, 2016). Global elites used the crisis as an opportunity to restructure the global economy in their favor, expanding markets, creating ways to control capital, and ensuring minimal regulation of their activities (Córdova, 2016). The resulting corporate and government policies and practices

reinforced the restructuring process by increasing labor exploitation, pushing for a withdrawal of the state in regulating capital and providing social benefits, and globalizing economic systems (Castells, 1989; Córdova, 2016).

The term neoliberalism refers to this set of strategies and policies designed by global elites during the restructuring of capitalism that include a reduction in the value of labor, trade liberalization and global market expansion, deregulation of capital, reduction in social benefits, and privatization of governmental functions (Córdova, 2016; Pena, 1997; Petras, 1997). These policies include a change in the role of the state, a shift away from support services by the government, and increased international economic activities. The direct result of this neoliberal policy regime in North Lawndale was the decline of American manufacturing (deindustrialization), unemployment, and the increased "social isolation" (Wilson, 1987, 1996) of its Black residents. The economic currents swept factory jobs from Chicago to the global South (Córdova, 2016). Neoliberalism exacerbated disparities in wealth and created high levels of despair in communities like North Lawndale in the United States and all over the world (Harvey, 2005, 2010). A sample of scholars who have connected these larger economic, social, and political forces with urban poverty in America includes Duneier (1992, 1999), Patillo (1999), Venkatesh (2006), and Wacquant (2008). The important ideological component of neoliberalism is a preoccupation with free-market logic and a culture that promotes individualism and private interests over public good (Hill, 2016). The ideological "apparatus" that support these globalized capitalist imperatives is the social messaging and mechanisms of social control that shift the blame for poor economic conditions on the poor themselves (Córdova, 2016). Neoliberal ideologies and policies rely on an ahistorical focus on the market for solutions to current social issues (Córdova, 2016). To understand the economic and capital abandonment of North

Lawndale is to understand economic restructuring, neoliberalism and its ideological project, and the resulting joblessness.

a. **Racial Neoliberalism**

Critical Race theorists would argue that objective, race-neutral claims justifying the abandonment of North Lawndale serve as a "camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society" (Yosso, 2005, pg. 7). Racial neoliberalism provides an important framework for understanding the larger purpose in a structured racial order. Over the last decade or so, the term "racial neoliberalism" has been used to describe the relationship between racism and neoliberalism. Critical race scholars would argue that neoliberal theories largely ignore a more racial analysis of the enduring impact of racial logic embedded in the forms of extraction, exploitation, dispossession and appropriation at the core of neoliberalism in practice. Racial neoliberalism explores the intersection of racism and neoliberalism and shows how both reinforce one another. As both neoliberal and racial logic/practice have become hegemonic (Gramci, 1971) over recent decades, the term "racial neoliberalism" explains how we come to have common-sense understandings of North Lawndale, its racial dynamics, homicide rate, and its subsequent abandonment. Racial neoliberalism provides a lens to understand how North Lawndale's high homicide rate is viewed as a threat to the public good in Chicago rather than the result of the larger racial project of abandonment.

Neoliberalism has become an organizing principle of governing poor neighborhoods like North Lawndale in a way that ensures that they do not become troublesome to larger society; the poor exist persistently as a population who must be governed (Soss, 2011). Racial projects connect poverty to Black and Latinx populations—a critical (racial) part of "othering" that is

separate from class. Poor people of color are greatly affected by neoliberalism because as the state is privatized, so are the social and economic problems of the populace (Soss, 2011). With the growth of neoliberalism in the 1980s, the state began to withdraw as an active actor in addressing race and racism, and instead relegated the market to advance diversity (Dumas, 2009). Racial neoliberalism obscures the political, social, and racial dimensions of social problems by characterizing them all as matters of individual, personal choice. If "the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her actions," then "a 'mismanaged life' becomes a new mode of depoliticizing social and economic powers" (W. Brown, 2003). Under this ideology, the "problems" within a neighborhood (i.e. its high homicide rate) are viewed as problems created by the residents of that area. Any solutions, therefore, should come from within the community, in terms of changed behavior, rather than from the state and elites, particularly capital. And, most importantly, policy responses that have resulted in the removal of that population in the forms of abandonment, social isolation, segregation, and incarceration are viewed as objective and justified because the population represents bad choices. What is particularly detrimental to poor communities is that resources offered in the marketplace are deceivingly situated as being equally accessible to everyone, so poor people of color are often blamed for their not accessing them.

The ideological processes involved with neoliberalism, that blames certain groups of people for a lack of merit and success, is important when thinking of the racial project and racial neoliberalism. The state is duty-bound to invest in people and neighborhoods, but because of an obsession with a free-market logic that promotes private interests over the common good, neighborhoods that are represented as Black, violent, and poor are positioned as a threat to that common good. These ideological positionings are part of North Lawndale's racial project. Race

no longer functions as a straightforward justification for abandonment, but through the ideological processes of the racial project and racial neoliberalism, it operates as a more indirect means for the production of and justification for abandonment practices. The state takes a "hands-off" approach to race and neighborhood equity, but a "hands-on" approach to creating a free market that prioritizes certain people—a contradiction of racial neoliberalism.

A classic Critical Race Theory concept, introduced in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1993 by Cheryl Harris, is whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). In the influential article, Harris argued that race and property are deeply interrelated in a way that benefits whites. She examined how whiteness has been manufactured as a form of racial identity but has emerged into a form of property—one that is secured by American law. Harris described four rights of whiteness as property: the right to (a) disposition, (b) use and enjoyment, (c) the status and property, and (d) exclude. This concept shows how racism is not strictly a philosophy of prejudice and power, but that it results in very real material disparities between whites and Blacks (Brown et al., 2003; Lipsitz, 1995) and their neighborhoods. The idea that society values white lives over Black lives—what Princeton academic Eddie Glaude calls "the value gap"—continues to influence every aspect of our lives and is so strong that whiteness is something to be protected in the same way property is protected. Under this concept, North Lawndale is positioned as something that is dangerous and worthy of exclusion, as it is a danger to both whiteness in the city and its property. Whites are assumed in this very process to be good intentioned (Harris, 1993), and the racial project and racial neoliberalism ideologies are crucial to the justifications that allow whites to be positioned as good intentioned in their abandonment of North Lawndale.

However, now that Chicago has elected an openly-gay Black mayor, where does Chicago's political landscape, under Mayor Lori Lightoot, fall into this conversation? For those

critical of her politics, neo-colonialism might be the answer. Neo-colonialism stresses the need for Black politicians to serve as a front for white control (Allen, 2005). In a time of national political upheaval following the election of Donald Trump, neo-colonialism theorists would argue that the development of a class of Black politicians like Lori Lightfoot was actually a buffer that could be absorbed by the larger white power structure to act on its behalf in controlling activist communities (Allen, 2005). In Chicago, the Democratic Party has a history of corruption, racism, and control. Through policies of this larger white power structure, Black officials become politically and economically dependent upon and accountable to them, rather than accountable to the Black community (Allen, 2005). While resistance to racism was a large part of her political agenda and base, it is likely that this power relationship within the city has controlled her work as mayor, as she is compelled to cater to the interests of those whose economic patronage she needs. This is one face of neo-colonialism—one that fits the political landscape in Chicago. It does not seem like Lori Lightfoot's actions within the city have disrupted racial projects in neighborhoods like North Lawndale.

2. **Deindustrialization and Joblessness**

Economic restructuring (mentioned above) had widespread impacts across Chicago, as rapid job loss and declining wages left behind devastated households and communities like North Lawndale. The "process of economic restructuring, resulting in the overseas relocation and automation of manufacturing jobs and a shift to a service economy" (Córdova, 2016), has greatly impacted the U.S. labor market; it has also impacted various racial, economic and age groups differently. To understand the economic and capital abandonment of North Lawndale is to understand deindustrialization and joblessness as results of economic restructuring and neoliberal

policy regimes (Córdova, 2016). The closing and offshoring of the factories that provided so many neighborhood jobs to Chicagoans is a smaller-scale example of larger macro-level trends of economic restructuring that devastated Black communities across Chicago, the Rustbelt and America. By the 1970s, deindustrialization forced many unskilled and semi-skilled workers out of the labor market (Kasarda, 1990), including a disproportionate number of Black men (Wilson, 1987, 1996). The shift in the economy to white collar-service industry jobs (Kasarda, 1990) resulted in positions requiring more formal education. By the late 1980s, jobs that required some college rose by 44 percent and those that required a four-year university degree increased by 56 percent (Kasarda, 1989; Stuart, 2020). Lacking this required level of education, access to opportunities, and white-collar skills, many once well employed Blacks found themselves unemployed or in low-paying, low-skill jobs. Black male joblessness increased in inner-city neighborhoods and many Black families were pushed into more concentrated poverty (Sampson, 1987; Wilson, 1987). When the economy shifted in a city that appealed to large numbers of people looking work in its industrial jobs, those most affected by the shifts were not incorporated into the new economy. Thus, a more rooted form of joblessness remains evident in neighborhoods like North Lawndale that are artifacts of a once vibrant industrial era.

Joblessness continues, especially for young Black men and women (Great Cities, 2017). The Great Cities Institute's (GCI) 2017 report on current youth joblessness in Chicago finds that joblessness is systematic and related to the departure of industry from neighborhoods: "youth joblessness continues to be disproportionately felt by young people of color, especially Black males; it is *chronic and concentrated*; it is tied to long term trends in the overall loss of manufacturing jobs; and most notably, that joblessness among young people is tied to the emptying out of jobs from neighborhoods" (*Abandoned in their Neighborhoods: Youth*

Joblessness amidst the Flight of Industry and Opportunity, pg. iii*)*. Many neighborhoods like North Lawndale have economies that were built around industrial manufacturing and the surrounding mills and factories. This GCI report shows that in Chicago, the loss of manufacturing led to an economy relying on retail trade and a more professional service sector— "both of which, in 2015 paid lower wages to 20–24-year-olds than manufacturing did in 1960" (pg. iv). "20- to 24-year-old males fared worse in Chicago in 2015 than in 1960" (pg. v). For 20- to 24-year-old males in Chicago, Black and Latino joblessness rates in 2015 were almost double their 1960 rates, while white 20- to 24-year-old males "slightly increased their out of work and out of school rate" (pg. xiii). In conclusion, this report shows us that the employment opportunities and earnings of 16- to 24-year-old Black males in Chicago have greatly deteriorated by cause of economic restructuring.

In their 2016 report, the GCI found that joblessness among youth in Chicago was directly "tied to conditions in their neighborhoods and cannot be seen as distinct from what is happening in neighborhoods themselves." Joblessness today is systematic and related to the departure of commerce and manufacturing from neighborhoods. With the destruction of manufacturing in Chicago came the exodus of employment opportunities from neighborhoods to the city's downtown area, the Loop (GCI, 2017). As this dissertation highlights, many neighborhoods like North Lawndale in Chicago have been economically abandoned following the tragic loss of industry and the resulting gainful local employment opportunities. The GCI's 2016 and 2017 joblessness reports reveal a "downward and long-term trend of economic abandonment in many of Chicago's neighborhoods" like North Lawndale. In their examination of joblessness trends from 1960 to 2105, they found *continued* rising joblessness for young men and women in Chicago, particularly Blacks and Latinos (GCI, 2016, 2017). Joblessness disproportionately

remains an issue and social/economic barrier for young people of color and is concentrated

geographically within pockets of the city. The roots of joblessness are structural and have an

incredible impact on the residents of North Lawndale, their households, and the neighborhood's

homicide rate. Today's level of joblessness in the neighborhood is a direct result of "structural

changes in the economy that date back several decades" (GCI, 2016, 2017).

Neighborhoods with the highest homicide rates also have high youth joblessness rates

(Córdova & Wilson, 2018). One explanation of this is the need for young people to find solutions

to this economic abandonment, many of which are illegal and increase the likelihood of violence.

Many scholars have done the difficult work of researching the complex connections between

joblessness and violence. Sampson (1987) found that Black male joblessness rates were

positively associated with rates of violent crime among Black adolescents. Anderson (1999) also

found that violence is a result of alienation and marginalization from mainstream labor

opportunities that pay a living wage. The high rates of joblessness among teens and young adults

in North Lawndale can provide context to the historically high homicide rate but also give a

potential explanation for the jump in homicides during COVID. The depths of neighborhood

fragmentation due to joblessness should be understood as the backdrop for not only historically

high neighborhood homicide rates, but the loss of population and the near despair plaguing North

Lawndale, which greatly suffers the pains of economic abandonment and restructuring.

3. **Disinvestment & Abandonment**

Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2008) concept of "organized state abandonment," Elizabeth

Povinelli's (2011) "economies of abandonment," and the Great Cities (2017) report on youth

joblessness are important literature outlining the economic rationale behind the intentional

government abandonment of certain populations. Under these concepts, market deregulation, in combination with the continued manifestation of colonial dispossession and the global market, have hallowed out the state. Because of this retreat of the state, abandonment is a strategy of racial capitalist state formation to exploit vulnerable communities like North Lawndale. The concept of organized abandonment is the process of governing populations through the heartless yet purposeful neglect, framing certain people as surplus to the contemporary political economic order, and implementing increased policing and prison. Gilmore (2015) says that where organized abandonment has taken place, people have lost the resources and thus their ability to keep their individual selves, families, and communities together. The resulting loss of security from this abandonment is supplemented with security through policing and prison. She points to the organized way the state and capital abandon people. Those abandoned people who are not absorbed into the political economy are then directed and shaped through prison.

"Persistent disinvestment and concentrated poverty amounts to an assault on the dignity and self-worth of Black youth and is correlated with violence" (Hagedorn et al, 2019). However, this disinvestment shows up in the neighborhood in different ways. There is a significant amount of literature that connects the physical environment of a neighborhood to violence and crime. This dissertation argues that North Lawndale's physical environment is the result of the racial project of abandonment. Anyone who visits North Lawndale will notice the empty lots and commercial spaces. Jane Jacobs stresses the importance of studying city architecture, the physical environment, and their connections to crime (Jacobs, 1961). She argues that streets and sidewalks are the city's "most vital organs," but if they lose their animating institutions, they become sources of violence, insecurity and fear (Jacobs, 1961). Gerald Suttles agrees that street life is an important variable when comparing neighborhoods and says, "Street life is a vital link

in the communication network of the [neighborhood] and, as a result, governs much of what the residents know of one another beyond the range of personal acquaintance" (Suttles, 1969, p.73). These community studies connect vibrant streets and physical environments to a healthy social life. Eric Klinenberg (2105) compares the physical environments in North and South Lawndale in his study of the 1995 heat wave. He says that in North Lawndale, there is a "dangerous ecology of abandoned buildings, open spaces, commercial depletion, and degraded infrastructure" (p.91). Klinenberg says that South Lawndale has an active street life compared to North Lawndale whose "depleted infrastructure" has affected every aspect of neighborhood life (p.97).

"The first thing to understand is that the public place- the sidewalk and street peace- of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by people themselves" (Jacobs, 1961, p.40). A street that is regularly used is more likely to be a safe street and a more neglected city street is more likely to be unsafe (Jacobs, 1961, p.44). In his research on the Addams area of Chicago, Gerald Suttles argues that "[s]treet life is a vital link in the communication network of the [neighborhood] and, as a result, governs much of what the residents know of one another beyond the range of personal acquaintance" (Suttles, 1968, p.73). Klinenberg found that health workers working with elders in North Lawndale found it difficult to get older residents outside to exercise because the seniors felt vulnerable walking outdoors on sidewalks that were not nearly as well-used as the sidewalks described in South Lawndale. Commercial activity plays a role in sidewalk use, the physical environment, and the social life in North Lawndale. Klinenberg found that most North Lawndale residents left their neighborhood to shop—typically to the suburbs or to South Lawndale's

vibrant commercial area—as North Lawndale is considered a food desert. The area lacks commercial attractions to draw people outdoors. While commercial activity brings an obvious economic benefit to a neighborhood, it also brings constant foot traffic, which neighborhood studies relate to a positive social life and lower amounts of crime (Jacobs, 1961). Because of the racial project of abandonment, North Lawndale has a significant amount of vacant housing, vacant land, and open space—variables that these community studies connect to fear, crime, insecurity, poorer communication networks, and an overall strained social life.

Jane Jacobs (1961) argues that deserted streets lead to crime and violence but many community studies (Anderson, 1999; Klinenberg, 2015; Seligman, 2005; Wilson & Taub, 2007) argue for the reverse relationship-- that crime is the main cause of deserted streets. Elijah Anderson (1999) says that social avoidance and reclusion have become crucial defensive strategies for Philadelphia's urban residents who live in socially isolated, geographically concentrated neighborhoods with high levels of crime. Sally Engle Merry (1981) studied a high-crime, multiethnic housing project and found that as residents become increasingly fearful of crime in their neighborhoods, a dangerous cycle begins: fear causes people to spend more time at home and less time socializing with neighbors, which increases the social distance between community members, creating a community of strangers that breeds even more fear. The National Crime Victimization Interview Survey (Federman, et al. 1996) reports that people living in poverty are significantly more likely than non-poor populations to be afraid of leaving their house to socialize within their community. Klinenberg (2015) shows in his interviews of seniors that fear of crime was a common factor affecting their decisions to go outside, but the combination of this fear and empty, unused streets and sidewalks caused seniors in North Lawndale to resort to social reclusion and avoidance while their senior peers in South Lawndale

were much more likely to engage in their neighborhood's bustling street and social life. High

crime levels and the racial project attached to them in North Lawndale make it hard for the

overwhelming majority of people who live in the area to feel secure (Klinenberg, 2015, p. 99)

"Local conditions directly affected residents of the two community areas by constraining (North

Lawndale) or creating (Little Village) the possibilities for social contact" (Klinenberg, 2015,

p.91). The local conditions that include street life, commercial activity, and physical environment

are hugely important factors that both lead to violence but also show the consequences of the

racial project of abandonment.

III. HISTORY OF NORTH LAWNDALE

Chicago sits on the traditional indigenous homelands of the Three Fire People: the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi Nations, and the Illinois Confederacy: the Peoria and Kaskaskia Nations (Encyclopedia of Chicago). Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood sits five miles west of the Loop, along the Eisenhower Expressway that connects the West Side and west suburbs to the Loop. The neighborhood was added to Chicago in stages: the eastern sections in 1869 and the remaining sections in 1889 (North Lawndale Collection Records, Chicago Public Library). North Lawndale is one of the 77 official neighborhoods that make up Chicago (North Lawndale Collection Records, Chicago Public Library). The homicide rate in the neighborhood should be understood historically through the particular lens of abandonment. North Lawndale serves as the perfect example of why history matters.

A. State Abandonment and Disinvestment

1. Housing and White Flight

While the Chicago housing market has been surging, this good economic luck hasn't been felt in all neighborhoods. Median home sales prices in Chicago were projected to keep rising in 2021 (Illinoisrealtors.org) as the demand for housing in Chicago exceeded supply. However, in a news conference in June 2021, Chicago's mayor, Lori Lightfoot, said that in North Lawndale, approximately 20 percent of the land is vacant and the city owns 950 of the vacant parcels. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) reports 23.9% of North Lawndale's housing units and 14.9% of its land are vacant (based on 2015-2019 data). Only 3.5% of its land is commercial; a large majority (32.7%) is used for transportation (CMAP community data). How did North Lawndale get to this point, where the city is selling off vacant

lots in the neighborhood for $1 each in a city whose real estate market is booming? The short

answer is disinvestment and capital abandonment after white flight in the 1950s (see chart

below) and the following complete abandonment after the Martin Luther King Jr. riot in 1968. A

more complicated answer is the racial project that has historically worked to portray North

Lawndale as violent and undesirable. As Alphine Jefferson argued in his dissertation in 1979 for

Duke University, North Lawndale is a community area whose racial composition was

deliberately altered from white to Black. That intentionality is present throughout North

Lawndale's history.

After the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, North Lawndale became a working- and lower-

class neighborhood of mainly Dutch, Irish, and German workers who lived in the area to work at

the McCormick reaper plant and later Sears Roebuck. The community grew slowly until the

Douglas Park Elevated Railroad was extended westward following the settlement of large

industries like Western Electric (in 1903) and Sears Roebuck (in 1906), who moved their plants

west from the inner city (Rosenthal, 1960, pg. 68). 8,000 people worked at the Sears Roebuck

plant when it opened in 1906 (Seligman, 2005); to serve those employees, the Sears complex

included medical facilities, a public library, a YMCA and five restaurants (Seligman, 2005).

Polish and Russian Jews began to move into the area in the 1910s, largely unwelcomed.

Lawndale's Irish and German residents refused to rent to them, so the Jews purchased most of

the community's vacant land, constructing larger buildings than the two-flats that existed in the

area. The result was an immense population increase in North Lawndale—from 46,000 people in

1910 to 112,000 in 1930 (Satter, 2009). Charles Bowden and Lou Kreinberg (1981) wrote that by

1930, "North Lawndale achieved the dubious distinction of having the highest population density

of all local communities in Chicago save one, Grand Boulevard, in the heart of the Black Belt"

(pg. 168). A great majority of this population was Jewish; by 1930, Lawndale housed roughly forty Orthodox synagogues (Satter, 2009, p. 18).

Between 1910 and 1970, hundreds of thousands of Black southerners relocated to Chicago to evade racial violence and segregation, and to gain access to greater economic opportunities. As Chicago's Black population grew quickly, so did white hostility, causing the creation of Black areas, particularly the Black Belt on the South Side. The geographic concentration of Chicago's growing Black population "was not the result chiefly of poverty; nor did Negroes cluster out of choice. The ghetto was primarily the product of white hostility" (Spear, 1967, pg. 221). In 1910, 78 percent of Chicago's Blacks lived in the Black Belt, a chain of declining, neglected housing that stretched for approximately 30 blocks along State Street on the South Side of Chicago (Spear, 1967). Black migration to Chicago from the South relaxed in the 1930s but picked back up when WWII created new job opportunities in the North. The city of Chicago, as a whole, suffered a severe housing shortage in the 1940s, as no new residences were constructed after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 (Satter, 2009). For white Chicagoans, the housing crisis began to ease by the late 1940s as new suburban properties were constructed but Black Chicagoans were excluded from these new suburbs and also barred from renting and buying outside of the Black Belt or Near West Side, regardless of their income (Satter, 2009). The racialized cultural discourse about suburban ascent and urban decline became a powerful part of American culture, causing many people moving to Chicago to head directly to the suburbs.

TABLE IX. Chicago Racial Demographics
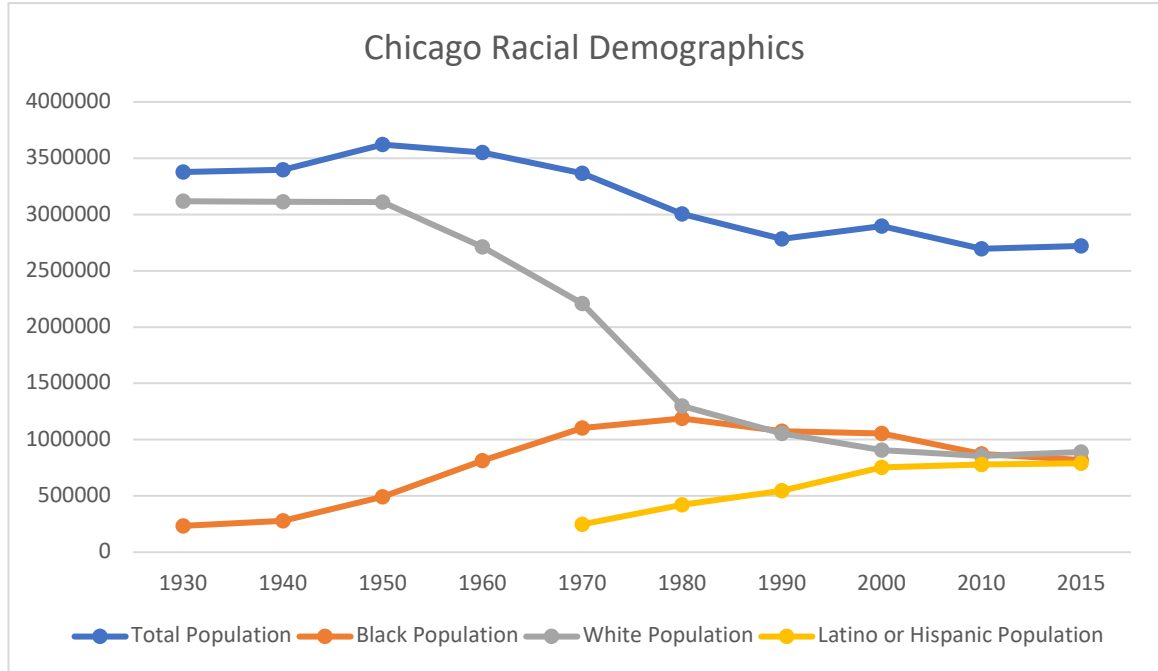
Chicago Racial Demographics

Source: 1930-2010 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey

Note: In 1970, Persons of Spanish Language were also counted in Asian, Black, White, and Other race categories

Between 1940 and 1960, Chicago's Black population increased rapidly from 278,000 to 813,000 (Spear, 1967) (see chart below). Only a small percentage of this population found their way into Lawndale by the 1940s, notably without any major racial incidents (Satter, 2009). Satter (2009) reports that Lawndale's original Black families were actually encouraged to move into the area by Jewish friends (p. 28—important to note that Satter writes from a Jewish perspective). He argues that this was because they were viewed as the ideal neighbors, as many of these Black families were middle-class, Chicago-born families who purchased their homes with hefty down payments. He says that the Black residents of Lawndale didn't just maintain their buildings, they upgraded them (pg. 28). As the Black population started to grow and the

white population started to drop in Lawndale, the Jewish People's Institute (JPI) shaped the North Lawndale Citizens Council to address residents' needs, revive businesses and local institutions, and position Lawndale as a "pilot community for interracial living" (Satter, 2009; Jefferson, 1979).

However, by the early 1950s, once the postwar economy and housing shortage improved and allowed them to leave, Jews began abandoning the overcrowded Lawndale. Several researchers note that North Lawndale stands out in the absence of inter-racial violence and the speed with which the population exchange took place (Rosenthal, 1960; Satter, 2009—both Jewish researchers). "In 1946, North Lawndale still had an estimated Jewish population of 65,000; yet, in 1956, it would have been difficult to enumerate 500 Jews in non-institutional, private residences" (Rosenthal, 1960, pg. 1). By 1955, North Lawndale became a Black community. 1955 marked an important year for the neighborhood's changing demographics: the Blacks who moved into North Lawndale before 1955 were mostly Chicago-born but from 1955 onward, they tended to be migrants, mainly from Mississippi (Satter, 2009). Many of North Lawndale's residents, both Black and white, pointed to the arrival of this population for the cause of the neighborhood's decay (Satter, 2009, pg. 30).

TABLE X. North Lawndale's Racial Demographics

North Lawndale Racial Demographics

Source: 1930-2010 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey
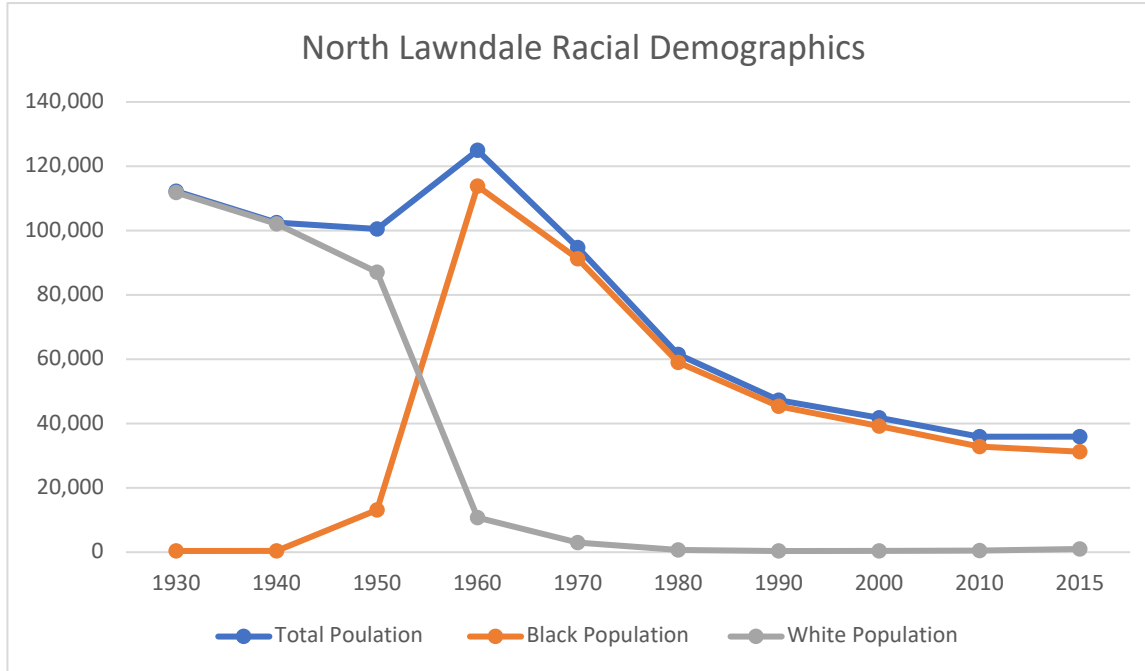
As seen in the statistics of the changing racial demographics in North Lawndale, the departure of white residents was swift, taking less than a decade for the entire neighborhood, and only a few months for some individual blocks (Seligman, 2005). While the word "flight" implies that whites moved out of North Lawndale the minute they saw a Black face, it ignores the white resistance to the changing neighborhood demographics. "Some white West Siders sought to keep African Americans out of the neighborhood with mobs and threats; others, rejecting violence, tried to use legal means to keep their white neighbors around while directing African Americans elsewhere in the region; still others endeavored both to welcoming African Americans and also encouraging whites to stay" (Seligman, 2005, p. 214).

Analyses of the process that allowed aging urban neighborhoods like North Lawndale to deteriorate once their populations shifted from white to Black has largely been blind to the intentionality of the racial project of containment, abandonment and racial neoliberalism. Chicago became the nation's most segregated city by 1957 by pioneering methods of Black containment that would be copied nationally (Brownlee, 1958). These methods include red-lining, guerilla warfare at the boundaries of Black neighborhoods, public housing developments, neighborhood improvement associations, and restrictive covenants. If a neighborhood had Black residents, regardless of how many or their social class, U.S. appraisers rated them "red" according to a scheme used to determine a neighborhood's investment risk. This red-lining marked the area as unprofitable or likely to decline, thus banks would not loan money for either purchasing or upgrading properties in the area (Satter, 2009, pg. 41-42). Whites also used restrictive covenants as a type of contract among all owners within a neighborhood in purchase and rental agreements that prevented the sale of property to non-whites. Restrictive covenants were introduced in 1920 and by the 1940s, Chicago was a leader in their use (Braden, 2020). Roughly half of the city's residential neighborhoods were covered by restrictions based on race (Braden, 2020; Satter, 2009, pg. 40-41). The FHA not only embraced these tactics but often required them as a condition for granting mortgage insurance (Satter, 2009, pg. 42). In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that racial covenants were legally unenforceable. However, "neighborhood improvement associations," many organized by the Chicago Real Estate Board, pressured homeowners to refuse to rent or sell to non-whites (Spear, 1967, pg. 12). Along with these official and unofficial policies enforcing strict racial boundaries in the city was the threat of violence. The 1919 report on the race relations in Chicago following that summer's

riot reported "a kind if guerilla warfare" taking place at the boundaries between Black and non-Black neighborhoods (Spear, 1967).

The history of housing in North Lawndale, and Chicago in general, is a history of segregation, politics, and public housing projects. It is critically important to pay attention to the role that the Chicago Housing Authority has played in determining the demographics of certain Chicago neighborhoods. This history of public housing in Chicago is one of segregation and politics, as public housing projects have almost exclusively served Blacks. Arnold Hirsch (2009) calls Chicago public housing the making of the "second ghetto" to highlight the intentionality in creating it. Natalie Moore and Lance Williams (2011) talk about the role that public housing played both in the creation of Black communities and eventually the displacement of the members of those Black communities after the 1999 implementation of the billion-dollar Plan for Transformation (p.255-56). This Plan was considered the largest revitalization effort of public housing in the United States and claimed to be an effort to dismantle concentrated poverty (Moore & Williams, 2011). It called for demolishing or rehabilitating 25,000 CHA units (Popkin, 2010). Many of Chicago's high-rise projects came down; skeptics saw it through a lens of racial neoliberalism—an effort to remove Blacks from prime land. Ogden Courts was a housing project in North Lawndale that was constructed in 1953 and consisting of 7-story buildings with ten units on each floor (Hunt, 2009). Ogden Courts was demolished through the Plan for Transformation. Residents got their first notice from the CHA in February of 2005 that they had 90 days to vacate the building (Canabeth Cross, *We The People Media*).

Public housing and Mayor Daley seem to be synonymous in literature about the history of public housing in Chicago. Arnold Hirsch (2009) argued that Daley's role in the notorious segregation of Chicago's public housing was more of a caretaker than a creator, as he only had

the power to veto and not the unlimited power to create. The community studies literature does

confirm, though, that Daley played an active role in the intentional abandonment of North

Lawndale, as had the ability but chose not to channel available city resources to the West Side of

Chicago (Seligman, 2005), ultimately aiding in the neighborhood's white flight. Seligman (2005)

argues that White West Siders did give up their neighborhoods to escape the Blacks who were

moving in, but also to escape from their political "powerlessness" in attaining resources for the

neighborhood during postwar urban development (p.11). Mayor Daley's city revitalization

efforts were focused on protecting downtown from the "decaying" south and west sides. "The

city used the bulk of the money authorized for conservation and urban renewal during the 1950s

to build a protective ring around downtown business interests" (Seligman, 2005, p. 78).

Racial policies in which the government was inextricably involved created income and

access to housing disparities that ensured residential segregation in North Lawndale (and other

Black neighborhoods) that continue to this day. Beryl Satter (2009) points to the historically

significant racial project as she describes the differing views on urban neighborhood

deterioration following white flight:

> "In the 1950s and 1960s, mainstream thinking was divided between those who blamed
> Blacks for their pathological behavior in destroying their own residences and those who
> blamed racist whites for hysterically fleeing long-established neighborhoods at the first
> sight of a black face. By the 1980s and 1990s, the division had shifted only slightly, to
> one between those who blamed the devastation of urban black neighborhoods on the
> "culture of poverty," or the degraded culture of inner-city blacks, and those who argued
> that such conditions were the product of "deindustrialization," or the flight of industrial
> jobs overseas. Up to the present, even commentators who are sympathetic to the plight of
> inner-city residents frequently blame "the riots" for the eerie emptiness they observe
> there—seemingly unaware that they are fostering yet another variation of "blacks destroy
> their own communities" theme. At best, all of these interpretations point to a lack—of
> culture, of jobs, of resources, or of courage to fight one's racist impulses and stay put in a
> racially mixed area" (pg. 6).

This racialized thinking is critical for Chicago's more recent shift to a corporate model of housing policy. As David Stovall (2013) points out, Chicago's housing and education policies are actually concerned with marketing the city as a global city and attract domestic and foreign investment (Stovall, 35). The Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere Act (HOPE VI) was passed in 1992, transferring responsibility for public housing from federal to local authorities and privatizing its management (Lipman, 2011; Popkin and Cunningham, 2005). These neoliberal public housing reforms represent the local government's increasing divestment from and abandonment of Chicago's poorest communities of color, as they do not make Chicago more marketable to investors.

Following this neoliberal trend, in 2000, public housing in Chicago changed forever. The Plan for Transformation (PFT), an extension of HOPE VI, proposed the demolition of thousands of Chicago's public housing units without any obligation for housing replacement (Allweiss et al., 2015; Wilson and Sternberg 2012, 988). This was a $1.6 billion plan, with a publicized goal of redeveloping the areas that once housed the high-rise public housing buildings as mixed-income communities (Stovall, 2013, pg. 37). Years later in 2018, most families uprooted by the demolition of the housing projects still were unable to find renewed housing in the same community they once lived in (Allweiss et al., 2015). Many also did not receive the housing vouchers for private housing promised by the city. Those who did actually receive housing vouchers complained that it difficult to find places that accepted them (Allweiss et al., 2015; Popkin and Cunningham, 2005). The Act broke up many communities of color and put many of Chicago's most vulnerable families in even more vulnerable situations.

2. <u>Capital Abandonment</u>

There was not always a strong need for economic development from the city on the West Side. As mentioned, the original population of North Lawndale followed the development of commercial enterprises in the area. Following the Great Fire of 1871, the McCormick Reaper company relocated to the area at 27th and Western Ave. The Western Electric plant opened in the neighboring suburb of Cicero in 1903 and Sears, Roebuck and Company opened its national headquarters building in North Lawndale in 1906 (Yu, 2015). The headquarters was huge—four city blocks long, occupying forty acres—costing $5.6 million (Seligman, 2005, p. 20). It also operated the largest mail-order distribution center in the world, which Ron Grossman referred to as "the Amazon of the 20th Century" in his 2017 Chicago Tribune Article about the company. In 1925, Sears expanded into retail stores, and one of its first experimental stores opened in the tower section of its headquarter building in North Lawndale (Seligman, 2005). By 1957, 14,000 people, including two thousand company executives, worked at Sears in North Lawndale (Seligman, 2005, p. 81). "West Side factories made candy, telephones, and plastic cups and other disposable products that were sold across the globe, as well as to other industrial cities such as Pittsburgh and Cleveland" (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018, p. 31). In 1968, near the peak of the manufacturing era, the unemployment rate for Blacks in Chicago was only 7.6 percent, as they were often employed by factories like the ones mentioned in North Lawndale (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018).

"Sears represented one of the most significant corporate investments on the West Side and exercised a corresponding influence on local affairs" (Seligman, 2005, p. 80). Their primary concern about the area was the migration of Blacks into Lawndale, ultimately leading to their abandonment of their urban headquarters and North Lawndale, along with their capital:

Sears officials associated African Americans with blight and feared that the recent crowding of blacks into the neighborhood was spurring the deterioration of Lawndale into 'a rock-bottom slum,' Because of the facilities that Sears provided within its headquarters, company employees did not have to spend much money or time in other Lawndale commercial enterprises. But the company's white employees were increasingly reluctant to come to work in an area inhabited by African Americans. A decade after the company moved its headquarters to Chicago's downtown, a journalist studying the company learned that employees believed that 'the neighborhood surrounding the plant had become so dangerous that Sears employed the third-largest police force in the state of Illinois. The three-block walk from the elevated-train station to the red brick complex had become a picket line of uniformed policemen.' Significantly, Sears executives did not see in Black Lawndale residents a pool of potential employees (Seligman, 2005, p. 81).

Following Daley's plan to develop downtown at the expense of other Chicago areas, Sears struck a deal with Daley to build the world's tallest building, the Sears Tower, just west of the loop in the early 1970s. Amanda Seligman (2005) discusses Sear's capital abandonment of North Lawndale as a major turning point for the neighborhood: "Even though only a few African Americans were ever hired in the Lawndale offices or store, the retailer's departure from the area signaled a new phase in the West Side's transformation and was a potent symbolic blow. During the 1970s and 1980s, North Lawndale's population declined both numerically and economically" (pg. 97). Deindustrialization, in general, caused extreme capital abandonment of the area as factories closed across North Lawndale. Between 1972 and 2003, West Side factories went from having a workforce of almost 60,000 to a workforce of just 12,000 (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018). By 2012, the official unemployment rate for Blacks in Chicago was 19.5%, nearly triple the rate during the manufacturing era of the 1960s. Unemployment in North Lawndale soared and median household income dropped (see chart below). Currently, 15.9% of North Lawndale's population is unemployed and 54.8% is either not in the labor force or unemployed (American Community Survey, 2018).

TABLE XI. Median Household Income

	North Lawndale	Chicago	Median Income Ratio
1970	$39,135	$52,046	75.2%
1980	$29,807	$50,148	59.4%
1990	$24,968	$52,241	47.8%
2000	$28,080	$59,130	47.5%
2010	$25,747	$52,652	48.9%
2015	$27,175	$54,822	49.6%

Note: Median income data are adjusted to 2019 dollars
Note: Average Median Income Ratio for the nation's distressed communities in 2016 = 68% (Distressed Communities Index, Economic Innovation Group)

Capital abandonment also resulted from the riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. While his efforts to fight housing conditions in North Lawndale is discussed below as part of the community's history of resistance, the riots are an important part of the community's history that served as an excuse for the capital abandonment of and disinvestment in the neighborhood. Following the assassination of Dr. King, people across the United States vented their anger with vandalism, looting, arson, and gunfire, particularly in Black neighborhoods. The morning after Kings death, students from high schools around Chicago walked out of their classes in protest. By the early afternoon, looting of and fires set on businesses began on Madison Avenue. "Observers noted the selectivity of looters, who targeted stores and buildings owned by whites but bypassed black-owned businesses. A riot participant later explained to an investigator that they were trying to hurt what whites 'valued most—[their] property'" (Seligman, 2009, p. 218-19). However, the fires could not distinguish between Black and white businesses. Seligman (2009) cites a piece of a young woman's letter that she wrote during the riot, describing the scene: "Right now my sister and I are watching West Madison burn down. Pulaski and Roosevelt have already gone. All we can do is sit and watch the smoke, clouds, and flames, and the troops move in" (p. 219).

The Illinois National Guard responded to the riot on Friday, April 5, 1968 and by Saturday, the governor requested federal troops. The riot and its fires continued through the weekend. The physical damage to the West Side totaled $14 million. Nine people died; forty-six civilians and ninety police officers were injured (Flanery, *Chicago Newspapers' Coverage*). But where was Daley? After the riot, Mayor Richard J. Daley criticized the restraint of the police officers in what journalist Mike Royko called "the most famous utterance of his career" (Royko, 1971). He told Chicago's police superintendent "to shoot to kill any arsonist or anyone with a Molotov cocktail in his hand in Chicago because they're potential murderers, and to issue a police order to shoot to maim or cripple anyone looting any stores in our city" (Royko, 1971). He eventually backed away from his statement but the riots severely damaged his reputation and North Lawndale's landscape.

The riots destroyed many of the stores along Roosevelt Road. This accelerated a decline that was already taking place in North Lawndale and resulted in a loss of approximately 75% of the business in the community by 1970 (North Lawndale History). The industries that abandoned the area include International Harvester in 1969, Sears (partially in 1974 and completely by 1987), Zenith and Sunbeam in 1970s, and Western Electric in the 1980s (North Lawndale History). Many of the commercial enterprises in North Lawndale were destroyed and never reopened. Blocks and blocks of residential properties were left vacant. North Lawndale was completely abandoned—by businesses, the city, and its own population. Over the years that followed, its population dropped dramatically. Only twelve years following the riot in 1968, the population had dropped more than 50% (see chart below) and continued to drop.

TABLE XII. North Lawndale's Population, 1930-2015

	Population	Percent Change
1930	112,261	
1940	102,470	-8.7%
1950	100,489	-1.9%
1960	124,937	+24.3%
1970	94,772	-24.1%
1980	61,534	-35.1%
1990	47,296	-23.1%
2000	41,768	-11.7%
2010	35,912	-14.0%
2015	35,947	+0.1%

Source: Census Data

For North Lawndale, the riot completely changed the neighborhood and served as an excuse for the exodus of corporate capital and the earlier stages of neighborhood abandonment and disinvestment. The once-dynamic 16th street, alive with retail, restaurants and beauty shops, became a neighborhood with vacant lots and ravaged buildings. "Friday, April 5, 1968, may well be the day Chicago's West Side died" (Halperin, 1996). While death is a metaphor that potentially (although cynically) portrays the neighborhood's decline after the riot, it is more accurate to say that if North Lawndale died that day in 1968, it was because it was refused CPR. However, the cracks in North Lawndale already existed by the time rioting broke out in the

1960s. Seligman (2009) argues that the riots represented frustration to the very neighborhood issues that spurred white abandonment.

The racial project that racializes the violence in North Lawndale is historical. The fires, looting, gunshots, and presence of the National Guard associated with the riot threw North Lawndale and the West Side into the national spotlight. "In contrast to the 'era of hidden violence' of the 1950s, when white Chicagoans mobbed against the real or imagined presence of African Americans in their neighborhoods, the West Side riots and their aftermath were widely covered by the city and national press" (Seligman, 2009, p. 215-16). The West Side's four major riots in 1965 in Garfield Park, 1966 on the Near West Side and the large MLK riot in North Lawndale in 1968 disrupted life on the West Side and pointed negative attention to the area, ultimately contributing to the West Side's violent reputation in Chicago. The South Side did not experience the same degree of these large-scale violent events (Seligman, 2009).

a. **Resistance**

Riots are a form of resistance. Energized by the rise of the civil rights movement, racial tension brewed and urban uprisings took place throughout the United States between 1963 and 1968, particularly in the summer of 1967. "The long, hot summer of 1967" alludes to the 159 race riots that broke out across the United States that summer (McLaughlin, 2014, p.1). Chicago's riot that summer took place in July, but the most destructive riots took place that same month in Newark, New Jersey and Detroit, Michigan (Sugre. 2020). These protests grew out of the accumulated anger and decades of grassroots organizing against racial segregation, discrimination, and injustice in employment, social services, housing, the law, transportation, and business (Sugre, 2020). These riots would continue on for the next several years, drawing

motivation from the Black Power Movement which called for "Black pride, self-defense against racist attacks, and self-sufficiency" (Sugre, 2020). What made Chicago's riots in the 1960s different from the race riot of 1919 and those during the Great Depression and WWII was the fact that they were Black led. Chicago's infamous race riot of 1919 and the attacks on Black workers during WWII were instigated by white mobs (Tuttle, 1970; Sugre, 2020).

Martin Luther King Jr.'s presence represents resistance to the living conditions Blacks were experiencing in North Lawndale and across the city (*King in Chicago*). On January 26, 1966, after ensuring the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., his wife Coretta, and their four children moved to a third-floor apartment in North Lawndale at 1550 S. Hamlin (Lawndale Christian Development Corporation). Dr. King wanted to bring the movement to "the heart of the ghetto" in Chicago, as he later wrote, to bring attention to the disgraceful living conditions, poverty, and segregation of Blacks in housing in the urban north. From North Lawndale, Dr. King began the "action phase" of his activist agenda with the larger goal of demonstrating racism as a national issue, not just a southern one. He led protesters into Marquette Park and through the Cicero area of Chicago and famously declared, "I have never in my life seen such hate… not in Mississippi or Alabama" (*King in Chicago*).

After several months of protesting the lack of fair and affordable housing for Black Chicagoans, then-mayor Richard J. Daley signed a "summit agreement" with King, generally agreeing to take steps against discrimination in Chicago in exchange for King's leading his activists out of the city (Nitkin, 2016). A year after signing the agreement, Daley had done nothing that he promised and Dr. King declared the agreement "a sham and a batch of false promises" (Nitkin, 2016). However, Martin Luther King's time in Chicago was not a waste. The Chicago Freedom Movement, led by King, has been generally acknowledged for influencing the

Fair Housing Act of 1968, "which made it illegal to restrict access to housing on the basis of race, religion, sex or national origin" (Nitkin, 2016). Lyndon B. Johnson signed the act into law on April 11, 1968, exactly one week after the assassination of Martin Luther King (Nitkin, 2016).

The brick building on Hamlin Avenue in North Lawndale where Dr. King and his family lived was damaged during the riots that followed his assassination and the city flattened the building in the 1970s (North Lawndale Development Corporation). After failed attempts at restoring the area, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s historic address eventually became one of the approximately 2,000 vacant lots in North Lawndale (NLCD). In 2006, the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (LCDC) began to implement their plans to develop the 4-acre plot at 16th and Hamlin "into an area worthy of Dr. King's legacy" (Lawndale Christian Development Corporation). The area is now called the MLK Memorial District, which includes the Dr. King Legacy Apartments (completed 2011) and the MLK Fair Housing Exhibit Center (also completed 2011) (LCDC).

It is important to note that resistance to these housing conditions was also taking place outside of Dr. King. In the late 1960s, thousands of Black homeowners who had bought their buildings on contract—many of them Lawndale residents—organized the Contract Buyers League (CBL) (Satter, 2009). Their goal was to stop exploitative contract sales, renegotiate their existing contracts, and open new lines of credit to Black home buyers, who had been barred from bank loans by federal-level decisions about credit flows (Satter, 2009, pg. 13). They picketed realtors and banks, drawing national media attention to the role that the Federal Housing Association played in the creation of urban ghettos (Satter, 2009).

In the early 2000s, two nonprofit community development organizations, the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation and United Power for Action and Justice, implemented a plan they hoped would revitalize North Lawndale without gentrification. They took on a home building project, constructing 100 new homes on empty lots in North Lawndale donated by the city. As reported by the Washington Post, they also worked with community members to organize around other local issues, holding homeowner workshops about insurance, mortgages, and what to look for in an inspection. The North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, a group of North Lawndale stakeholders, meets regularly to discuss neighborhood revitalization and has created a neighborhood plan. While Mayor Lori Lightfoot has included North Lawndale as one of her ten priority communities for investment, many of the community organizations are developing plans outside of hers.

B. <u>Politics</u>

All Chicago institutions must be understood as working within a particular political framework of Chicago politics; it is extremely difficult to separate Chicago's gangs, housing, education, and policing from its politics. Within the Chicago politics framework, the "state" is often mentioned as an abstract concept, but seems to be interchangeable with "the machine," i.e. the Democratic machine, whose supporters receive patronage as reward for their efforts. Many Chicago historians openly use "the machine" when talking about local politics, as opposed to community histories grounded outside of Chicago that use more objective terms like "the state," "the government," and "politics." In his work, Gerald Suttles (1968) illustrates the strength of localized control on the near-West side of Chicago while also identifying the constraints experienced by neighborhoods that lack strong political ties. Hagedorn's (2015) more critical

version of Suttle's work would argue that it was less about strength of political ties as an abstract concept and more about ties to Chicago's political Democratic machine. The Italians and Blacks were important forces in Chicago's Republican politics, but the Irish controlled the Democratic political machine and claimed most of the patronage which included most of the city's government jobs (Hagedorn, 2006). This trend of Irish patronage was cemented by the Democratic sweep of 1932 (Hagedorn, 2006).

The 24th ward, which encompasses most of North Lawndale, was once called "the greatest Democratic ward in the country" by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was referring to the neighborhood's ability to "deliver" for Chicago's Democratic machine (The Chicago Tribune, 1986). The ward was also the first West Side ward to elect a Black alderman, committeeman, and state representative (The Chicago Tribune, 1986). For the 1983 election of Chicago's first Black mayor, Harold Washington, the ward delivered 99.5 percent of its vote (The Chicago Tribune, 1986). Amanda Seligman (2005) also openly equates Chicago's politics to the Democratic machine in her description of the recruitment of Black votes into the machine on the West Side of Chicago: "As African Americans moved to the West Side, the Democratic Party made a concerted effort to bring these thousands of new voters into the political machine. West Side wards were soon represented by Black servants to the Democratic Party, known collectively as the 'silent six' for their steady obedience to the dictates of their political bosses" (Seligman, 2005, p. 36). However, the stakes were high in the political ties to the machine-- the first Black alderman of the West Side, Alderman Benjamin Lewis of the 29th ward, was found assassinated in his office in 1963 in a murder that remains unsolved (Seligman, 2005, p. 36). Police quickly gave up on the investigation, citing "too many motives." This same political machine that recruited Black voters was responsible for racial politics that were extremely detrimental to

Black communities-- segregation, repression, abandonment, and discrimination as well as the distribution of resources to some neighborhoods and not others (Hagedorn, 2015). For a community that has had such an impact on polls, it has showed few signs of benefitting in return, experiencing abandonment more than patronage. To understand the political history of North Lawndale is to understand its unique historical relationship to the Democratic Party, or the machine.

The development of isolated neighborhoods like North Lawndale were the result of intentional political projects, aimed at protecting the city's assets. One of the most powerful "political bosses" in modern U.S. history, Richard J. Daley, began his relentless climb in the Chicago Democratic machine "as a gang chieftan and racist provocateur during the 1919 riots" (Hagedorn, 2008, p. xii). The encyclopedia Britannica calls him "the last of the big city bosses" to regulate and organize a large American city. Daley's election as Chicago's mayor in 1955 coincided with both the redevelopment of the city and the population shifts in many previously-white neighborhoods. Richard Daley was in charge of receiving and distributing federal urban renewal funds. Following WWII, and continuing into the early 1970s, "urban renewal" referred to public efforts at revitalizing inner cities—mass demolition and slum clearance, although critics argue that urban renewal primarily meant "Black removal" or the removal of Mexican and Puerto Rican residents on the Near West Side. Daley implemented a series of infrastructure projects in Chicago during his administration, including the reintroduction of commercial skyscraper construction, the erection of high-rise public housing, the opening of O'Hare airport, and the construction of major highways linking the city's downtown to its suburbs following mass white flight (Seligman, 2005). He also put his political weight behind Chicago's new housing code, which passed in 1956. West Siders were excited about the new housing code, as

they were alarmed by the physical deterioration of their neighborhoods since the Great

Depression (Seligman, 2005). However, rather than the revitalization of neighborhoods like

North Lawndale, the housing code's major function in the 1960s was to justify the city's

demolition of deteriorating buildings, leaving large amounts of vacant lots that still exist today.

The city used the housing code to force the demolition of deteriorated buildings in

neighborhoods not designated for urban renewal, showing Daley's commitment to rebuilding the

city over its rehabilitation. Daley used the housing code to reorder the city's space and to

abandon areas that were considered "blighted." Through the housing code of 1956, the city had a

federally-funded means for improvement that it wielded only selectively, favoring the city-

stakeholders and elites. In the late 1950s, parts of Chicago were busy with redevelopment, but

the city's West Side and North Lawndale were entirely absent from the agenda, illustrating their

lack of influence in Chicago's political power structure. Instead, the city used a bulk of the

federal money authorized for conservation and urban renewal to build a protective ring around

downtown's business interests (Seligman, 2005), a practice still relevant today. Daley's

investment in the West Side was moving the University of Illinois at Chicago just west of the

Loop, in the mid-1960s, despite residents' displacement. The abandonment of areas outside of

the Loop was a political project that resulted in the neglect and decay of North Lawndale's

infrastructure. These political policies and decisions forced Blacks to seek housing in one of the

most physically deteriorating neighborhoods in Chicago.

C. Gangs

The history of Chicago's politics and gangs go hand-in-hand. Most gang literature is

ahistorical and focuses on street culture without pointing to the ways that gangs are an essential

part of big city politics. This is especially the case in Chicago, where gangs have become institutionalized (Hagedorn, 2008). Instead, race has most often been at the center of explanations of delinquency and gang membership, i.e. the racial project. Race is truly at the center of gang development and functioning within the city; John Hagedorn (2008) points to the effects of race in political positioning within Chicago's political scene. He argues that while Chicago's white gangs were welcomed into the city's positions of power, the Daley machine undermined every effort by Chicago's Blacks gangs to convert themselves into legitimate prosocial community organizations (Hagedorn, 2008). There is both this direct intentionality but also an indirect intentionality in the creation of gangs in North Lawndale. Where state actors cannot be trusted, non-state actors will step forward and exercise authority and control outcomes in an area (Strange, 1996). Chicago's history of gangs must be viewed from a critical racial lens; the violence in North Lawndale (as well as other South and West Side neighborhoods) is often attributed to Chicago's gangs but the story is much more complicated and must be understood historically. An alternative narrative to criminality as a racial characteristic "emphasizes how Chicago's gangs have been influenced by deep-seated racism, racial politics, real estate speculation, segregation, police brutality, and white supremacist terrorism" (Hagedorn, 2006).

Gang literature also shows how the lineage of gangs is almost coeval with the history of Chicago and has served as one of the building blocks of Chicago machine politics (Hagedorn, 2008, 2015; Dawley, 1992, Keiser & Keiser, 1969; Moore and Williams, 2011). Gangs are portrayed in this literature (Seligman, 2005; Moore & Williams, 2011) both as the hands of the machine and as mobilized by reform agents against repressive machine politics:

> "Chicago's first gangs consequently formed along ethnic lines. They were well known for their
> involvement in bootlegging, extortion, and murder. These gangs were particularly prominent among the
> Italians, Irish, and Polish and served as farm systems for Chicago's well-established crime syndicate. Irish
> communities, politicians and businessmen sponsored gangs and christened them "athletic clubs"—for
> example, the Hamburg Club, Ragen's Colts, and the Old Rose Athletic Club. These so-called clubs stuffed

ballot boxes and intimidated voters. Ragen's Colts, organized by a Democratic alderman, were involved in the 1919 Chicago riot. They attacked blacks in the Black Belt neighborhood because the community had helped a Republican win a mayoral race, which was perceived as an open attack on the Democratic machine" (Moore & Williams, p.18).

It seems more likely that the gang story in North Lawndale is more about a collaboration between gangs and the machine rather than a story of gang leadership being won over by the machine. The gangs, energized by the Black Power Movement, had autonomy and political will.

The early story of Chicago's gangs is of white gangs—(1) second-generation immigrant youth struggling to assimilate and fighting with police and other ethnic groups and (2) white "voting gangs" (Thrasher, 1926). Lawndale had Polish and Jewish delinquent groups organized for fierce gang fighting (Short, 1963, Keiser & Keiser 1969). The latter white gangs, "social athletic clubs" (SACs), were organizations supported by politicians (Hagedorn, 2006); Thrasher (1926) estimated that there were 243 of these conventionalized gangs in Chicago in the 1920s (p. 74). "Beneath the external earmarks of a club, gang characteristics often persist" (p. 64). Thrasher calls these gangs conventional, as opposed to criminal. Conventional gangs are distinguished by their becoming conventionalized or incorporated in some way into the larger social structure of the city. The SACs were crucial components of Chicago's political life, where local politicians often blurred the lines between conventional and criminal when ensuring the election of their candidates (Hagedorn, 2006). Many second-generation ethnic whites saw the SACs as a "way out" of the streets by getting city jobs as policemen, firemen, etc. through their Democratic Party sponsors.

Outside of offering white members political and class ascension, as Blacks moved into Chicago at a rapid pace, these SACs also enforced racial lines across the city using violence and terror. Chicago's race riot of 1919 saw the strength of these white gangs and the extent of their racial hostility towards Blacks in areas bordering white neighborhoods, particularly near the Irish

neighborhood of Bridgeport just west of the Black Belt (Hagedorn, 2006). The violent racial

conflict was started by white gangs after a Black teenager crossed a racial boundary in the lake

and ended with 38 people dead (23 Black and 15 white) and 537 people injured (Sandburg,

2005). Richard J. Daley, future mayor of Chicago, was a 19-year-old member of the Hamburg

Athletic Club in 1919 and later became the club's president for 15 years (Hagedorn, 2006).

Although Daley never spoke publicly about his actions during the riot, the Hamburgs were one

of the riot leaders (Hagedorn, 2006; Cohen & Taylor, 2001). In his interview with CNN's Lisa

Ling, John Hagedorn says that it was in these riots that the white gangs likely invented the drive-

by shooting, as they drove into Black neighborhoods, fired, and drove away (*This is Life*, CNN,

2022). However, trained and fresh out of WWI, many Black residents were armed and returned

fire.

After the riot, the governor appointed the Chicago Commission on Race Relations to

investigate the cause of the riots and make recommendations to prevent future race riots in the

city. The group published their 672-page sociological study in 1922 and concluded that "white

ethnic gangs and their activities were an important factor throughout the riot. But for them, it is

doubtful if the riot would have gone beyond the first clash. Both organized gangs and those

which sprang into existence opportunistically seized upon the excuse of the first conflict to

engage in lawless acts" (Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1922). The commission also

concluded that "there are no gang organizations among Negroes to compare to those found

among whites" (p. 11-12). Hagedorn (2006) argues that unlike the Irish gangs with political ties

to the Democratic machine, young Black gang members had no way of becoming

conventionalized by integrating into the Chicago's political system:

> "In Chicago, the Irish gangs were not merely "voting gangs" or "social athletic clubs,"
> but violent racist tools to enforce segregation, and they would continue in that role, in one

form or another, for decades. As Irish gang members aged, they were incorporated into the patronage machine controlled by Irish politicians. Black gang members had no such conventionalized opportunities. Former Irish gang members would become cops, firemen, and yes, even the mayor of the city. The Irish gang, in effect, was reinvented as the Chicago Police Department" (p. 198).

The Capone era of the 1920s and 30s represents the rise of the Italians in Chicago's rackets, but the Irish still maintained political dominance. As Blacks worked to gain political power and a collective Black vote, the Irish Democrats viewed them as the enemy (Hagedorn, 2006). The Blacks also had a growing numbers racket, "the Policy," and eventually struck a deal with Al Capone during Prohibition: the Blacks wouldn't get involved with bootlegging and the Italians wouldn't get involved with the policy (Lombardo, 2002). The policy, similar to today's lottery, was a Black institution, providing jobs and revenue to Black neighborhoods. The early Black gangsters in Chicago made their money as Policy Kings in the number-running business. But when Prohibition ended in 1933, Capone and the Italian gangs shifted their "greedy eyes" to the Policy, ignoring their deal with the Black Policy Kings. Capone's outfit plotted how to snatch the policy racket from the Black millionaires and the Blacks were forced out of the Policy, blocked from the opportunity structure that they created; the Policy became dominated by the Italians (Lombardo, 2002; Moore & Williams, 2011; Hagedorn, 2006). Thus, the Blacks were even blocked from the illicit opportunity structure in Chicago. Within a few years of the end of the Black Policy Kings' era, the era of the Black street gangs began (Hagedorn, 2006).

Historian Arnold Hirsch (2003) calls the 1940s and 50s the era of "hidden violence," referring to the segregation of Black Chicagoans through threats of violence, as discussed in the history of housing. Because Mayor Daley and other politicians concentrated the development of public housing in Black neighborhoods, Black segregation and concentrated poverty grew, followed by the development of Black gangs (Hagedorn, 2006). Armed with racist fears, white

gangs were instrumental in the attempt to contain growing Black neighborhoods like North

Lawndale. The "explosion of black youth gangs" in the 1960s can be attributed to Black

migration to Chicago following WWII and the need for protection from white mobs (Perkins,

1987; Hagedorn, 2006). Black gangs imitated the behavior of their white gang counterparts and

formed multi-neighborhood branches. Some of the early Black street gangs on the West Side

were the Coons, the Dirty Sheiks, and the Wailing Shebas. These groups gave rise to the 14th

Street Clovers and the Imperial Chaplins, who eventually morphed into the Vice Lords and

Egyptian Cobras (Moore & Williams, 2011, p. 20). The Vice Lords and the Egyptian Cobras

were influential in the development of the Blackstone Rangers. The connection between the two

groups turned into an alliance called "People," which had its origins in the Vice Lords' adoption

of Black Nationalism and Islam. The Disciples and their affiliates adopted "Folks" as their

alliance name (Moore & Williams, 2011). "The change from a single neighborhood gang to

multi-neighborhood chapters was the first step in Black gang institutionalization" (Hagedorn,

2006).

One of the early Black fighting gangs in Lawndale was the Clovers. It is generally stated

that the Vice Lord Nation, referred to by many Vice Lords as a "club," originated in 1958 in the

Illinois State Training School for Boys (Keiser & Keiser, 1969). The club was started in

Lawndale in the fall of 1958 after the release of several members. When these Vice Lords

returned to Lawndale, the Clovers were breaking up—they were aging out and experiencing

pressure from a new club called the Egyptian Cobras. The members of the newly created Vice

Lords moved into a section of the Clovers' old neighborhood vacated during the decline in

Clover power. They decided to continue the group as a small club organized for social purposes,

i.e. sponsoring lucrative parties. Slowly, the group grew and, almost inevitably, fighting started

between them and the Cobras to the west in K-Town and the Imperial Chaplains to the east. The

Vice Lords realized they needed to increase their membership to withstand the other gangs in

Lawndale. Keiser & Keiser (1969) show the ways in which the Vice Lords became

institutionalized following their growth in membership:

> "Groups of Vice Lords from various parts of the West Side formed into distinct
> subgroups called "branches" which were joined in a loosely knit federation; (2) within
> each branch leadership became institutionalized in specific positions; (3) age categories
> were set up which crosscut the branches; and (4) within branches, particular groups were
> given specific duties" (p. 6).

There were at least twenty-six branches and eight to ten thousand Lords. Together, they made the

Vice Lord Nation (Dawley, 1992, p. 33).

While the gangs were involved in various illegal activities, they were also attracted to the

national political scene, primarily the Black nationalist and civil rights campaigns (Hagedorn,

2006). The Vice Lords and other Black gang members met with Martin Luther King, Jr. when he

moved into North Lawndale in 1966, where he asked them to join his movement and provide

protection (Hagedorn, 2006). His apartment on 16th and Hamlin sat just two blocks away from

the Lords' pool room. The Black Panther Party, led by Fred Hampton, also met regularly with

the leaders of Black gangs in Chicago (Hagedorn, 2006). The three major gangs in Chicago—

Lords, Stones, and Disciples—formed a coalition, "LSD," to fight for jobs, civil rights, and

collective Black vote. In North Lawndale, "the 24th Ward Democratic organization had long been

the single largest source of machine votes, but the 1968 election saw a drastic fall off in the

Democratic machine's margin of victory" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 202). Chicago saw Black gangs

enter the political scene and affect votes and the machine did not like it.

After the MLK riots caused fires and destruction throughout the West Side, Daley gave

his infamous "shoot to kill" orders of the police and then later strategically declared a war on

gangs. "In Chicago, one lesson gangs have drawn from their attempts to enter the political

process is that it may be better to mind your own business" (Hagedorn, 2007, p. 38). For the Vice

Lords in North Lawndale, their involvement with politics caused targeting by both the police and

the political machine (Hagedorn, 2006). In his biography of Richard J. Daley, Mike Rokyo

(1971) wrote:

> "It wasn't surprising, then, that Hanrahan, after the 1968 elections, declared war on the young black street gangs and on the Black Panther Party. The black gangs frightened Daley, and it wasn't because they shot at each other, or because some of them committed murders in their membership drives and wars over territories. One of the gangs, the Black P. Stone Nation, had grown to a loose-knit membership of several thousand and was beginning to show signs of political and economic awareness and the use of such power. Black politicians were currying its favor, and private social agencies were making effort to channel it into legitimate business activities. Daley had seen the same thing happen before. He recalled Ragen's Colts, the Irish thieves who became the most potent political force in neighboring Canaryville, and his own Hamburgs, who got their start the same brawling way before turning to politics and eventually launching his career. There lay the danger of the black gangs" (p. 210).

Daley's war on gangs in 1969 moved gang leadership from the streets to prison. A 1970 City

report, "Organized Youth Crime in Chicago," estimated a total of "300 indictments against

members of the three largest gangs in Chicago" (Losier, 1999; Jacobs, 1977, p. 143). By the

early 70s, almost all major leaders of Chicago's Black street gangs were incarcerated, including

Bobby Gore of the Lords, Leonard Sengali and Jeff Fort of the Stones, and David Barksdale of

the Disciples (Perkins, 1987). However, Hagedorn (2006) argues that in prison, Chicago's Black

gangs only grew stronger. The arrests and convictions led to a brief reported decrease in reported

gang activity in Chicago but it did not mean the death of Chicago's Black gang organizations.

Instead, they restructured and spread within the Cook County Jail and the Illinois prison system

(Losier, 1999; Jacobs, 1977, p. 173).

a. <u>Resistance</u>

Gangs are more than just criminal organizations. In 1964, the Lords vowed to do something constructive in Lawndale so that the community and children would have a chance at success. The Conservative Vice Lords reportedly stopped gang wars from 1964 to 1967 and began building a new kind of Vice Lord Nation that included several businesses and community programs (Dawley, 1992, p.106). A meeting was called to discuss the club's future direction. They decided that instead of Black clubs on the West Side fighting amongst themselves, they should instead united against the whites (p. 9). Between 1967 and 1969, the Lords opened several businesses and community programs including their business offices on 16th street, just west of 16th and Lawndale, staffed by both whites and Blacks (Keiser & Keiser, 1969). The club became a legal corporation and received a grant from the government to initiate "self-help projects" (Keiser & Keiser, 1969). They opened a restaurant called "Teen Town," an employment service, and a recreation center named "House of Lords" (Keiser & Keiser, 1969). "The Vice Lords were strongly involved in Black pride and Black consciousness programs" (p. 9). Other Black gangs were making similar changes across the city. The leader of the Black Gangster Disciples (BGD), Larry Hoover, introduced what he called "the new concept," calling it "Black Growth and Development" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 204). Through this new concept, he "reorganized the BGD into a more corporate-style business and social organization" (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 204). David Dawley (1973) describes this transition from criminal organization to community organization, complicating the narrative about Black gangs in Chicago: "Most people still considered us a gang, but we were trying to get over to them that we were becoming an organization to help our brothers and sisters and that we were no longer out for killing and jive.

If somebody don't straighten this shit out, then our kids are going to be misused" (p. 105). Black gangs started to turn their attention to civil rights, realizing their enemy was not Black.

One of the attempts to help the North Lawndale neighborhood was started during the summer of 1967. According to Dawley (1992), Commander Simms and Alderman Collins helped the CVL form Operation Bootstrap, a West Side coalition of street groups and industry. "The street groups were the Lords, Egyptian Cobras, and Roman Saints, and the business members included Sears Roebuck, which had national headquarters on the West Side, Ryerson Steel, Illinois Bell Telephone, Western Electric, and many others" (p. 112). The goal of the group was to stop any future riots. Black gangs were invited to political conversations as city stakeholders realized that many civil rights groups often did not reach those in the poorest communities. In December 1967, the CVL sent a proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation, asking for money to put together programs for the summer of 1968 (p. 115). The Rockefeller Foundation gave them the money to develop new goals and programs to meet the goals; they had six months to develop a plan for CVL in North Lawndale. However, the timing coincided with the MLK riot: "We got the Rockefeller money in February 1968 and this provided salaries for Al, Bobby, Goal, J.W., and Dave. We were ready to move into our new office on April 4, 1968, the same day we held a press conference to announce the opening of Teen Town, and the day Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. One day later the West Side burned" (ibid, p. 117). To this day, the CVL provide social services in the North Lawndale community. As John Hagedorn often says in his teaching and writing, gangs are more than one thing.

D.   <u>Mass Incarceration</u>

Loic Wacquant (2003) argues that the spaces of prison and the ghetto coincide. "Sociologists have frequently observed that governments use punishment primarily as a tool of social control,

as the extent or severity of the punishment is often unrelated to actual crime patterns"

(Alexander, 2010). Though it has largely failed in eradicating gang violence or drug use and

sales, the criminal justice system has been the prevailing approach to neighborhood control since

the 1980s (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018). The growth of mass incarceration over the past

decades has disrupted millions of American families, nearly all of whom are poor people of color

(Alexander, 2010). Black and Latinx populations, together, constitute "59 percent of the nation's

prisoners, though they make up roughly a quarter of the entire U.S. population" (Carson, 2014).

Without question, the expanded reach of mass incarceration policies and practices have greatly

affected North Lawndale.

The roots of mass incarceration were firmly planted by national policymakers two decades

before Reagan's War on Drugs. Thus, "expansion of the carceral state should be understood as

the federal government's response to the demographic transformation of the nation at mid-

century, the gains from the civil rights movement, and the persistent threat of urban rebellion"

(Hinton, 2016). Following the riots in American urban cities in the 60s, policymakers turned to

expanded enforcement of the law in poor urban Black neighborhoods to extinguish the disorder

and chaos, where contempt for authority seemed to be growing (Hinton, 2016, p. 12). On March

8, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson declared a national "War on Crime," shortly after he declared

a War on Poverty. However, uprisings only increased their fury and frequency across the

country. The Johnson administration believed that young Black men, influenced by the civil

rights activists, were primarily responsible for the unrest and thus became the target for federal

policymakers (Hinton, 2016, p. 13). President Johnson armed law enforcement with new

military-grade weapons and surveillance technology (Hinton, 2016). In the 1960s, police began

establishing themselves in arenas that were left vacant by War on Poverty programs (Hinton, 2016).

Nixon's policies of decentralization and disinvestment fostered the dissolution of the War on Poverty's liberal welfare state and its programs. Yet ironically, the abandonment of poor communities in terms of social programs was coupled with highly coercive federal intervention in those same segregated urban spaces. The Nixon administration had selective abandonment policies, abandoning social welfare views of poor communities for increased policing and surveillance. Nixon's New Federalism did not apply to the War on Crime; federal policymakers invested $2.4 billion into law enforcement and criminal justice institutions under Nixon, a vast majority going to local police departments. Nixon rejected for president Johnson's notion of poverty as the root cause of crime. Early in his presidential bid, Nixon said, "If the conviction rate were doubled in this country, it would do more to eliminate crime in the future, than a quadrupling of the funds for any governmental war on poverty" (Hinton, 2016). Nixon asserted himself as the first president to undertake a major overhaul of the American prison system, overseeing the construction of hundreds of new prisons (Hinton, 2016, p. 138). He simultaneously removed the social safety net and grew the criminal justice system.

TABLE XIII. Percent Income Below Poverty Level
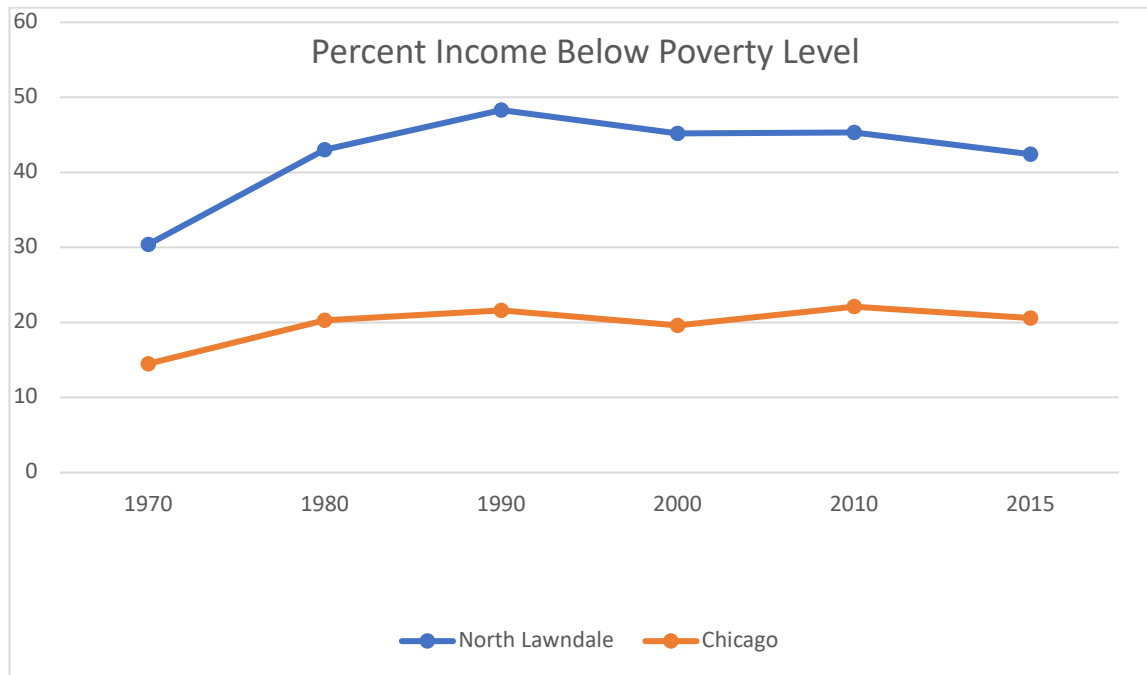
Source: 1970-2000 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey
Note: Poverty data are not available prior to 1970.

As deindustrialization caused unemployment rates to soar throughout the 1970s and 1980s, displaced workers often became the person on the corner facing arrest (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018). The dramatic decrease in legitimate employment opportunities for poor, unskilled urban residents boosted incentives to navigate more illegitimate employment opportunities like selling drugs—most notably crack cocaine. Crack appeared in 1985, only a few years after Reagan announced his War on Drugs (Alexander, 2010). Many of the unemployed became criminals and with a racialized campaign against criminality and drugs, society no longer cared about the astronomical unemployment rate in neighborhoods like North Lawndale.

Unemployment and the resulting poverty became issues for the criminal justice system to manage. Since the 1970s, imprisonment has been the fastest growing of all public investments in Illinois (Peck & Theodore, 2008; Alexander, 2010).

TABLE XIV. State Expenditures on Corrections in Billions, 1985-2019

State Expenditures on Corrections in Billions, 1985-2019

Data source: National Association of State Budget Officers.
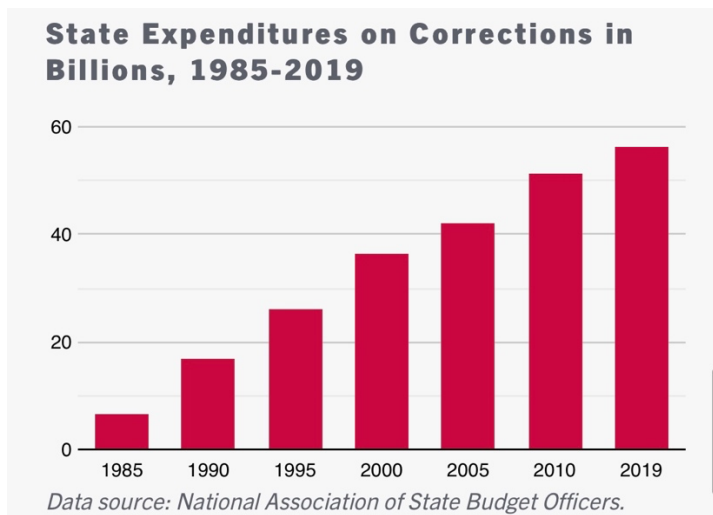
"Starting in the 1970s, rather than double down on the War on Poverty, the United States had prioritized a parallel war in high-poverty communities like those on the West Side, a war that fundamentally changed the ways society understood disadvantaged urban areas, even as the racial composition of those areas continued to shift" (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018, p. 29). This war was the War on Drugs which targeted the distribution and use of illicit drugs, primarily in communities of color. The Great Migration, coupled with discriminatory housing policies and a growing share of foreign white law enforcement officers, already created disparities between

North Lawndale and non-Black Chicago communities, but the War on Drugs would make sure these disparities continued through the twentieth century. The Nixon administration launched drug raids across the country, predominantly arresting Blacks (Whitford & Yates, 2009).

Reagan turned the heat up on the war dramatically when he became president. In 1981, he declared, "We're taking down the surrender flag that has flown over so many drug efforts; we're running up a battle flag" (Whitford & Yates, 2009, p. 58). His administration appropriated billions of new dollars to fund the War on Drugs and shift policy and practice, passing the new property forfeiture laws for drug offenses and pushing a dramatic expansion of mandatory-minimum sentences. One particular sentencing standard that affected poor, Black communities like North Lawndale was the differential standard that punished crack cocaine offenses one hundred times more than powder cocaine. Crack is pharmacologically almost exactly powder cocaine, but cheaper (Alexander, 2010). Not only were Blacks sentenced more harshly, but they were also arrested more; by the close of the twentieth century, Blacks were far more likely to be arrested for drug offenses than any other group in the country (Whitford & Yates, 2009). "These disparities around drug crimes help to explain why 20 percent of African American men in the United States born between 1965 and 1969 have been imprisoned before reaching their early thirties" (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018). It is important to note that none of these efforts stopped the spread of drug addiction across the country. The larger issue is this reliance on the criminal justice system to uproot violence in communities, something criminologists have since proven ineffective, at best. Criminologist Todd Clear (2009) has demonstrated through decades of research that incarceration is actually a primary driver of crime and disorder.

As the War on Drugs raged on, fundamental shifts occurred in how policymakers saw poor, urban Blacks. With the goal of maintaining the voting public's support of the unprecedented

expansion of law enforcement, the Reagan administration launched a media campaign that justified the War on Drugs (Alexander, 2010). The campaign sensationalized the rise of crack cocaine in poor inner-city neighborhoods of color—communities already devastated by deindustrialization and unemployment (Wilson, 1987). "Thousands of stories about the crack crisis flooded the airwaves and newsstands, and the stories had a clear racial subtext. The articles typically featured black 'crack whores,' 'crack babies,' and 'gangbangers,' reinforcing already prevalent racial stereotypes of black women as irresponsible, selfish 'welfare queens,' and black men as 'predators'—part of an inferior and criminal subculture" (Alexander, 2011, p. 52). Crack had become a scapegoat distracting the public from more important causes of the social problems of the time, those that would leave politicians on the hook: failed schools, the broken welfare system, and poor, segregated neighborhoods (Alexander, 2011). "The War on Drugs, cloaked in race-neutral language, offered whites opposed to racial reform a unique opportunity to express their hostility toward blacks and black progress, without being exposed to the charge of racism" (Alexander, 2011, p. 54). Reagan's successor, President George Bush Sr. followed suit, "opposing affirmative action and the aggressive enforcement of civil rights while accepting the drug war with tremendous enthusiasm" (Alexander, 2011, p.55).

An attitude of "toughness" toward the social problems associated with poor communities of color was strong in the 1960s, as progress with the Civil Rights Movement had white Americans feeling like they were losing power. Politicians knew they could take advantage of white racial antagonisms by promising to be tough on crime in communities like North Lawndale, where its population was becoming more Black and fighting for their rights within the city. By the late 1980s, both Democrats and Republicans were fighting over who could be more tough on crime in an effort to win "swing voters." The results were immediate—budgets for law enforcement

increased dramatically, as did the incarcerated population. "In 1991, the Sentencing Project reported that the number of incarcerated people was unprecedented in world history; one-fourth of young Black men were under control of the criminal justice system" (Alexander, 2011, p. 55-56).

FIGURE 4. U.S. State and Federal Prison Population, 1925-2019
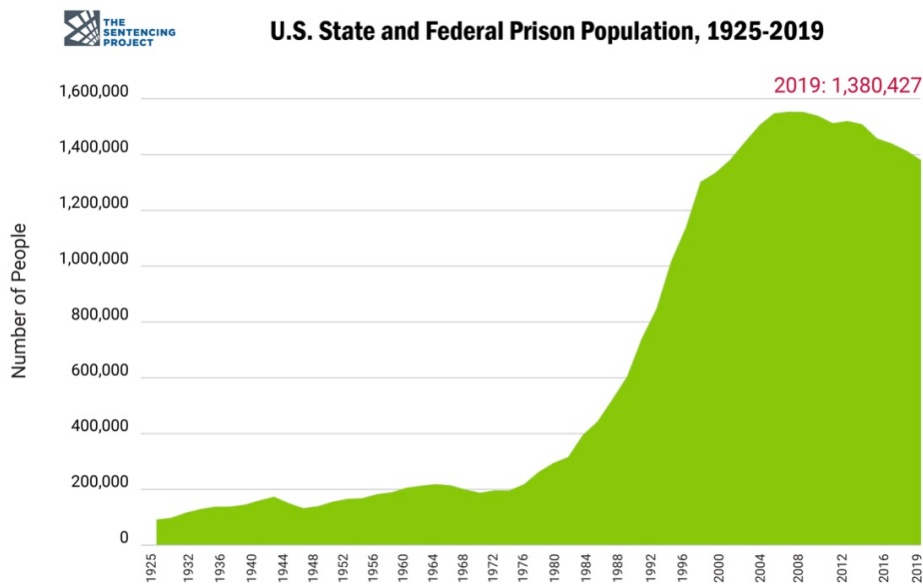
Following popular opinion, in 1992, Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton affirmed that no Republican candidate would be tougher on crime. Once elected, he endorsed the federal three strikes law and escalated the drug war. (Alexander, 2011). "The Clinton Administration's 'tough on crime' policies resulted in the largest increases in federal and state inmates of any president in American history" (Justice Policy Institute, 2008). His "get tough" rhetoric and policies also applied to his racialized agenda on welfare; he ended welfare as we know it

(Alexander, 2011). While the justification for these changes was fiscal conservatism, the money spent on the poor was not actually reduced—it just shifted public resources from aid to criminalization. For example, public housing funding was redirected into prison construction: $17 billion was cut from public housing and $19 billion was directed to corrections (Wacquant, 2010). This funding shift "effectively ma[de] the construction of prisons the nation's main housing program for the urban poor" (Wacquant, 2010, p. 77). However, this abandonment trend was taking place before Clinton; nationally, from 1980 to 2013, the growth in prison spending far outpaced the growth in preschool-through-high school education (Lugalia-Hollon, 2018, p. 111). Clinton forced people out of social programs, making public assistance (public housing, welfare, food stamps, etc.) unavailable for people with a criminal history, an incredibly harsh policy after years of the War on Drugs on communities of color. More than 2 million people were incarcerated at the turn of the twenty-first century and millions more were barred from public social services, relegating them to extreme poverty and helplessness (Alexander, 2011). Currently in Illinois, "more than half of the prison population is Black, although only 14.6% of the state's population is Black" (Sentencing Project).

Chicago followed this national trend. In a speech in 1992, mayor Daley declared, "We are putting the gangbangers and drug dealers on notice. For too long you have made the community a target. Now you're the target" (Lugalia-Hollon, 2018; Kass, *Daley Enlists US in War on Drugs*). Under Daley, Chicago incarcerated Black men for drug offenses at one of the highest rates in the country (Lugalia-Hollon, 2018, p. 47). Building on this momentum, there were thirteen enhanced drug laws enacted from 2000 through 2011 (Lugalia-Hollon, 2018, p. 43). One example of these changes that greatly affected North Lawndale was mandatory prison time for anyone selling more than five grams of heroin, which was later dropped to three grams (Lugalia-

Hollon, 2018). North Lawndale sits right off of the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway, also known as the "Heroin Highway," where drugs enter Chicago. The Chicago Police Department estimated that of all the heroin sold in the city, 60 percent was sold along the Eisenhower (Lugalia-Hollon, 2018). Drug sales in the area continue to be a problem, as heroin use has grown rapidly in Chicago's suburbs. In the 1980s and early 1990s, much of the West Side that sat along the I-290 was overtaken by the drug market; the punitive drug policies greatly affected these areas.

Both Republicans and Democrats supported tough crime policies, actually fighting over which side could be tougher to gain political support. The law-and-order perspective had become hegemonic and depended on racialized images of the urban poor. Because of this, the humanity of those who lived in North Lawndale, who were struggling economically, marginalized racially, and living in a place known for drugs, was called into question. These policies were incredibly detrimental to communities like North Lawndale and the psychological impact of "othering" still functions today. The biggest division in our politics today is the role of public spending. At the core of this fight is a question about the role of government in improving neighborhoods for those who already live there, those who have been deemed unworthy by the racial project. These racialized narratives justify the complete abandonment of neighborhoods like North Lawndale with social programs while justifying increased policing, surveillance, and incarceration.

a. Resistance

Resistance to the criminal justice system comes in many forms, including complete avoidance and the use of street justice. Avoidance is particularly true of violence against Black women by Black men, as the women are distrustful and reluctant to call the police (Richie, 2018). They cater to their loyalty to their race over their victimization. In situations where

someone has become a victim of some kind, police officers are often not trusted intermediaries. Instead, victims either directly avoid the police or turn to an alternative, "street" justice. Instead of the government, "the social group steps in as the advocate for justice, either supporting the individual's pursuit of respect or taking action on the person's behalf" (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018, p. 69). These actions replace state action. However, the two approaches obviously feed one another—street justice drives up arrests and the failing of the formal justice system ensures street justice will continue (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018, p. 69).

Restorative justice is becoming another alternative to mass incarceration and the utilization of the criminal justice system in North Lawndale. It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by a wrongdoing and is concerned with the community as well as the victim. Under this model, the victim and the offender work together to come to a solution to fix the harms that have been done, without using the criminal justice system. The North Lawndale Restorative Justice Hub (RJ Hub) was launched by the Lawndale Christian Legal Center (LCLC) in collaboration with thirty community-based stakeholders and organizations in North Lawndale. The RJ Hub collaborated with the Circuit Court of Cook County to create the first ever Restorative Justice Community Court (RJCC) in North Lawndale (LCLC). "Since 2017, the RJCC has negotiated peace within the community and helped a significant number of emerging adults find a more constructive solution to repair harm than incarceration" (Lawndale Christian Legal Center). For communities with a long history of distrust in the criminal justice system, restorative justice approaches are a form of resistance. This shift is becoming more popular across the city of Chicago, as powerful leaders and policymakers like Judge Colleen Sheehan, County Commissioner Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, and State Representative Juliana Stratton, have backed a restorative justice agenda (Lugalia-Hollon & Cooper, 2018, p. 70). Building

community capacity for healing is essential for violence prevention and law enforcement should no longer be looked at as the sole solution to crime and violence.

E.   Education

The U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown v Board of Education* in 1954 was a landmark decision, decided unanimously, that the racial segregation of students in public schools was unconstitutional. While angry white southerners resisted by standing in front of schools and protesting the few Black children integrating previously all-white schools, white resistance in the North was seen through the practice of requiring children to attend their neighborhood public school (there was also angry protesting as well). White Chicagoans recognized that as long as children were required to attend their local public school, residential segregation did the job of school segregation and thus they focused their attention on policies surrounding the neighborhood schools. Benjamin C. Willis became Chicago's school superintendent in 1953, supported by white parents whose children he "buffered from some of the effects of population changes in schools" (Seligman, 2005, p. 124).

Population increases across city made class size a major issue in Chicago. Because of the Great Migration and racist housing policies, Blacks were moving into North Lawndale in the 1950s quicker than whites were leaving, causing alarming overcrowding in the neighborhood's schools. When the Bryant School in North Lawndale enrolled more students than it could handle, it was forced to use the gymnasium and book storage rooms as classrooms (Seligman, 2005, p. 125). Many (primarily Black) schools split their school days into two shifts where students attended school for a portion of the day. Parents of students on a split schedule worried that their students were not learning enough and that extra time away from school would increase juvenile delinquency in the neighborhood. The Willis administration insisted that students were still

receiving a full education despite the split schedule, telling one audience, "I am convinced that

lack of proper health clinic facilities is more of a problem than is double shift in Lawndale"

(Seligman, 2005, p. 127). The administration and the school board adamantly refused to consider

busing, citing many reasons other than the obvious—it would affect the segregated school

system that was in place. Students were not permitted to transfer to schools outside of their

neighborhood. Gregory Elementary School, which served Lawndale students, became so

crowded that school administrators considered implementing a third shift to the school day

(Seligman, 2005). Seligman (2005) explains how white students were able to avoid this

overcrowding disaster—the "neutral zone" policy:

> In subsections of several school attendance zones, parents were permitted to choose between
> adjacent schools. Because white and Black children attending a temporarily integrated school
> did not usually live side by side, the policy worked differently for each group. White children
> on the West Side could transfer to a school to the west or north, where African Americans
> had not yet reached. Black children in neural zone areas, by contrast, were offered the choice
> between attending a newly crowded resegregating school or a recently crowded Black
> school. Further, principals had the discretion to permit or refuse transfers, allowing the
> whimsy of school staffs to reinforce existing segregation (pg. 128).

Accumulated racist and intentionally segregationist policies trapped Black children in

underperforming, crowded schools while allowing white children to navigate the education

scene. With the help of an independent researcher's work, the Greater Lawndale Conservation

Commission showed that if the board of education authorized appropriate transfers for Blacks

like they had whites in the public school system, the use of the double shift could be eliminated

"twice over" (Seligman, 2009, p. 132). School officials responded by disputing the researcher's

statistics and responding with their own. Instead of agreeing to the requested transfers, the board

of education began using mobile classrooms, known as "Willis Wagons." By 1964, there were

250 portable classrooms in use in Chicago (Seligman, 2009, p. 132).

Protests about the disparities between the facilities offered to white and Black students took place around the city of Chicago. In 1964, the University of Chicago sociologist Philip Hauser reported in his Houser Report that Chicago Public Schools were thoroughly segregated, with almost all Black students attending schools with almost no white classmates (Seligman, 2009, p. 133). The board's first experimentation in integration grew out of the Houser Report. Willis and the head of his subcommittee, Frank Whiston, drafted the Willis-Whiston plan, which permitted fifth- through eighth-grade students at schools with more than thirty-five students per classroom to transfer to schools will fewer than thirty students per classroom (Seligman, 2005, p. 135). However, Willis adamantly refused to help fund transportation for students who attempted to take advantage of the plan so very few students actually transferred via the Willis-Whiston option. The proposal to bus children met intense opposition, yet no white school would become more than 11 percent Black as a result of busing (Seligman, 2005, p. 146). Protesters met bused students with signs like "Goodbye Chicago, Elmwood Park here we come" (Seligman, 2005, p. 148). White parents would rather abandon the city altogether than have their children in class with Black students.

The victory of busing was not long lived; segregation and overcrowding continued as more Blacks settled in North Lawndale and the last whites abandoned the neighborhood. Chicago Public School policies surrounding neighborhood schools combined with the high levels of white abandonment of the neighborhood preserved a consistent pattern of segregation in education in North Lawndale. The population of public schools in the area went from all-white, to temporarily integrated and overcrowded to all-black over the course of just a few years. Not until 1981 did the board of education in Chicago negotiate a school desegregation consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice (Hess, 1984). However, because neighborhood schools

remained at the center of the city's education policy, the degree of segregation in schools was tightly linked to the degree of segregation in neighborhoods.

In 1995, Mayor Richard M. Daley "brought all Chicago Public Schools under his complete mayoral control" (Allweiss et al., 2015). The mayor currently has the exclusive authority to appoint the school board, which approves all school-related issues, and the CEO (who was previously the superintendent) (Dixson et al. 2015; Stovall, 2013; Lipman 2011). The mayor also has the power to reverse any decision made by the board, giving him the last say on all education-related issues (Stovall 2013, 35). The "board membership largely consists of people from business, legal, and philanthropic sectors" (Stovall, 2013, 35). The public justification for complete mayoral control was the mayor's desire to address the continued "failures" in Black and Latinx neighborhood public schools. Mayoral control of public education is a neoliberal policy change; it represents a move to a corporate model of education that prioritizes the city and its stakeholders.

One of the most recent neoliberal education policies/reforms in Chicago is the neighborhood public school closings. In 2004, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) rolled out a plan called Renaissance 2010 (Stovall, 2013). The plan called for CPS to "target up to 70 'chronically underperforming' schools for 'transformation' into 100 schools with the designation of charter, contract, or performance school" (Stovall, 2013, p. 36). Former Mayor Rahm Emanuel's notorious extensive closure of fifty CPS schools included two in the North Lawndale neighborhood (Chicago Sun Times, 2020). More recently, the city's school board voted to close Frazier Preparatory Academy Charter in North Lawndale (Chicago Sun Times, 2020). The plans to discuss the closure of three more public neighborhood elementary schools and the opening of

a new one in North Lawndale have paused as community groups and stakeholders are "looking to hammer out their differences" (Chicago Tribune, 2020).

These school closings "must be understood within the histories of social exclusion and government policies in Chicago, especially those of Chicago's Black and Latinx communities" (Alweiss et al., 2015). One representation of public disinvestment in poor communities of color is Chicago's education policy because Black and Latinx students represent the majority of students in Chicago Public Schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010-11). The recent school closures affect 87% of Chicago Public School's students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010-11). These statistics, while shocking enough, do not account for the more qualitative effects like the dissolving of community cohesions and increased violence/concerns for safety, as students are sent to schools outside of their neighborhoods.

A federal policy change is worth noting, as it has significant effects on Chicago's schools: No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Created and implemented during the Bush administration, No Child Left Behind was the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Wunn, 2014). In her article connecting No Child Left Behind to the racial formation of Black youth as problematic "others," Connie Wunn (2014) argues that "during a period in which an array of governmental institutions was being refashioned to meet the demands of an increasingly complex economic and political context," and to satisfy a neoliberal agenda, "the NCLB Act of 2001 has altered the entire public educational system in the United States." No Child Left Behind's Statement of Purpose is to "clos[e] the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers." This policy required federally funded schools to be governed by an accountability system

"equipped with standards, measurements and yearly progress reports," designed by the federal government. (Wunn, p. 468). No Child Left Behind represents the conjunction of educational policy with the racial formation of African American and Latinx students as problematic "others" within the United State's symbolic racial order. By identifying and quantifying a racial achievement gap in education and incorporating narratives about disenfranchisement and inequality in the public justifications for educational policy reform, policies like NCLB actually extend the logic of racism to the American education system. Since the implementation of NCLB, "the role of police in certain public schools has expanded the school-to-prison pipeline" (Advancement Project, 2011) for populations of students who already experience high levels of police surveillance, criminalization, and incarceration. The Advancement Project (2011) argues that "NCLB has not only facilitated an environment that narrows the curriculum and stigmatizes students of color, it has actively propelled schools to filter out students who fail to meet the strict, federally-assigned school standards."

Free public education, long viewed as the ladder for climbing out of poverty, prejudice and deprivation, is currently failing and, as the history of education shows, has been set up to fail in North Lawndale and other poor communities of color in Chicago.

a. **Resistance**

All of these detrimental educational policies have met resistance from North Lawndale residents at every step. More currently, neighborhood organizations and community members have been engaging in a long, collaborative fight against Chicago Public Schools' plan to close more schools in North Lawndale. "The North Lawndale Parent and Community Coalition (NLPCC) has provided the most forceful pushback to the plan with support of the Chicago

Teachers Union" (Chicago Sun Times). This group told the school board that they would rather the schools be given proper resources than closed, arguing that the school closures would further destabilize the community. This resistance is also in opposition to the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council's proposal to close three community schools (Sumner, Lawndale Community Academy, and Crown Community Academy of Fine Arts) and merge them into a new North Lawndale STEM Partnership Academy. The Chicago Sun Times reported that in their effort, the NLPCC "knocked on hundreds of doors, gathered over 1,300 petition signatures, and had over 200 parent and teachers attend organizing meetings" to save the neighborhood schools in North Lawndale.

Another important act of resistance within North Lawndale is the shift to social justice curriculum within the neighborhood schools. Born out of the nineteen-day hunger strike demanding a new high school in the South Lawndale neighborhood (just south of North Lawndale), the Little Village Lawndale High School opened for students in 2005. The school serves both North Lawndale and South Lawndale is made up of four autonomous smaller schools, each with its own curriculum, teaching staff, and principal. The School for Social Justice was created out of parents' desire to "keep the values of peace and equity" that came out of the hunger strike (LVHS website). The curriculum focuses on the history and tenets of social justice. Another local neighborhood school, the Village Leadership Academy in North Lawndale, leaned on their social justice curriculum to effect change in their neighborhood. In 2017, the students started their fight to change Stephen Douglas Park (a former slaveholder) in North Lawndale to Fredrick Douglass Park (Black abolitionist). For three years, the city largely ignored their efforts until they agreed in 2020 to implement the name change. Their efforts are the documented in the film, "Change the Name" by Cai Thomas.

TABLE XV. North Lawndale Housing, 2013 to Present

	Total Housing Stock	Percent Owner Occupied
1930	24,306	24.5%
1940	25,209	16.2%
1950	27,613	22.0%
1960	28,878	18.7%
1970	22,589	17.9%
1980	17,182	21.5%
1990	13,986	23.4%
2000	12,402	26.1%
2010	10,852	24.1%
2015	11,295	25.8%

Source: 1930-2000 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey

TABLE XVI. Percent with no High School Degree

	North Lawndale (% Above City Average)	Chicago
1940	84.1% (8.6%)	75.5%
1950	72.2% (7.2%)	65.0%
1960	79.3% (14.5%)	64.8%
1970	70.7% (14.6%)	56.1%
1980	60.9% (17.1%)	43.8%
1990	51.9% (17.9%)	34.0%
2000	39.5% (11.3%)	28.2%
2010	27.6% (8.1%)	19.5%
2015	24.9% (8.7%)	16.2%

Source: 1940-2000 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey
Note: Data are for persons 25 years and older.
Note: Average percent with no High School Degree for the nation's distressed communities in 2016 = 23% (Distressed Communities Index, Economic Innovation Group)

(CMAP reports that 54.8% of NL residents 18 and older are not in the labor force or are unemployed—based on 2015-2019 data. Only 3.5% of those employed work in NL. 40.3% work outside of the city.)

TABLE XVII. North Lawndale Racial Demographics, 2000-2019

NL POPULATION	2000	2006-2010	2015-2019
Black	93.8%	92% (-1.9%)	85.8% (-6.7%)
Latino	4.5%	5.3% (+17.8%	9.2% (+73.6%
White	0.9%	1.7% (+88.9%)	3.6% (+118%)

Source: 1940-2000 data are tabulated from the Decennial Census, 2008-2012 data are tabulated from the American Community Survey

IV.   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Although there have been incredibly important and compelling ethnographies chronicling life and the effects of marginalization in neighborhoods like North Lawndale, there is less about the ways these topics fit into our larger social fabric and how we engage with that to get viable solutions. The purpose of this dissertation is to complicate the narrative about violence in North Lawndale and to provide specific solutions by (1) theoretically examining the continued high rates of homicide and (2) interviewing community members and stakeholders for historical context, highlighting the community strengths and resistance efforts, and including their voice in recommendations for policy changes. This research employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore community stakeholders' perspectives on North Lawndale's continued high rates of homicide, what the community is doing to address it, and what policies they would like to see implemented. To avoid working from a deficit lens (Tuck, 2009), this dissertation acknowledges what people are doing and what they would like to see done in North Lawndale to address the high homicide rate. The larger question is whether there is a political will to think about North Lawndale as a space to embrace and approach holistically as opposed to one centered on containment and abandonment. This research questions, purpose, and paradigm require a qualitative approach for gathering and making sense of information and developing a theory of neighborhood violence. Data collection methods include qualitative semi-structured interviews, secondary demographic data, observations, site analyses, and a final member-check. Interviews of North Lawndale community members and stakeholders area supplemented by secondary demographic and descriptive data (both current and longitudinal) to understand North Lawndale's homicide rate in the context of abandonment and to provide policy solutions that are reflective of community need.

A.   Research Paradigm and Strategy of Inquiry

This study is a critical qualitative neighborhood violence case study. Research paradigms are "a set of beliefs and feelings about the work and how it should understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001, p. 26). This research employs a critical research paradigm, as it views the neighborhood in relation to larger social strata (i.e. race, class, gender) and critically examines these larger structures that differentiate groups of people in society. I affirm that a neighborhood with race and racism at the center should be tackled from a critical paradigm. This research utilizes grounded theory and case study research traditions as its strategies of inquiry. "Methodologically, grounded theory structures inquiries so that relationships among factors can explain patterns of social problems" (Durdella, 2017). Charmaz (2006) discusses grounded theory as "a set of methods that guide inquiry as systematic, yet flexible for collecting and analyzing data," which offered me the proper framework to generate theory. As such, the grounded and critical approaches reject positivist notions of a universal, objective reality that forces research data into an imposed, preexisting theoretical framework. The notion of objectivity implies that researchers should not become subject to any personal bias during their research. However, researchers arrive with and cannot separate themselves from values or belief systems that serve to guide both their research and research agendas (Diaz-Cotto, 2000). While more objective scholars might view this as a bias, critical scholars view it as an engaged interest that benefits the research. This study's strategy of inquiry is rooted in a pragmatic interactionist epistemology that assumes the position that "knowledge is created through action and interaction… of self-reflective beings" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 19). Thus, "generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited for its supposed uses" (p. 3).

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Grounded theory the appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study because of its inductive nature. An inductive approach matched well with the exploratory aims of the study—to understand the historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale. More importantly, it placed the perspectives, views, and experiences of the study participants squarely in the center of the analysis, which is consistent with the study's overall methodology and view on who are the knowledge-holders. Grounded theory's inductive approach allowed me to develop a theory—a "plausible explanatory framework" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.264)—for the phenomenon under study: continued high rates of homicide in North Lawndale. As data collection and analysis proceeded, it became clear that an explanation of a larger project of abandonment was needed to explain the homicide rate. Stakeholders acknowledged the high homicide rate but responded in many different ways that said, "We've been abandoned!"

This research should be understood as a case study that investigates larger patterns of abandonment, segregation, and marginalization within the city of Chicago. North Lawndale serves as an example of how neighborhood abandonment creates an environment that increases the possibilities of homicide. The focus is on a unit of analysis, the North Lawndale neighborhood in Chicago—which Merriam (2009) and Creswell (1996) describe as a "bounded system." This bounded system is a "key distinguishing characteristic of a case study and should be viewed as a specific, complex, functioning thing" (Stake, 1995, p.2). North Lawndale is used as a case to explore a poor, Black neighborhood as a racial project in the context of abandonment.

B. **Site Selection**

The overall frame for this research is the neighborhood. Though imperfect, a neighborhood within a larger city offers important ways for framing the history and culture of

place in relation to the larger unit, i.e. the city. I selected the Chicago neighborhood, North

Lawndale, as the site for this research. This selection succeeds the long tradition of urban

neighborhood-level sociological inquiry both in Chicago, but also in North Lawndale. While

firmly a part of the larger pattern of Black settlement on the South and West Sides of Chicago

following the Great Migration, the North Lawndale neighborhood has its own unique history

within the city. Its current and historic housing stock, gangs, politics, schools, and social

institutions are all very much its own, though they are surely interlaced with the West Side,

Chicago, and the Rust Belt. Moreover, as shown below, North Lawndale has historically had one

of the highest homicide rates in the city of Chicago.

FIGURE 5. North Lawndale Homicide Trend, 1966-2016
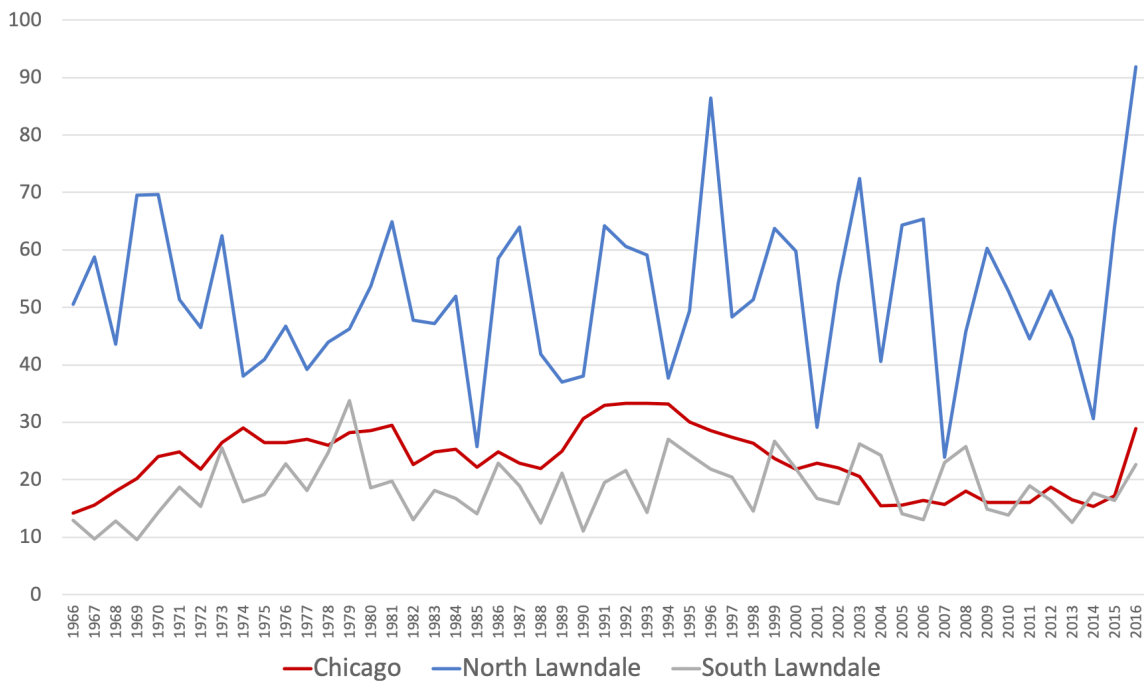
Source: Uniform Crime Reporting data compiled by Hagedorn. 2017 data from Chicago Tribune: Crime in
Chicago: Tracking Homicide Victims

This chart shows North Lawndale's homicide rate from 1966 to 2016 as compared to the city of Chicago and its neighbor, South Lawndale, a predominantly Latino neighborhood. North Lawndale currently has the second highest homicide rate in the city, only second to Austin, another predominantly Black West Side neighborhood. As of November 15, North Lawndale has 48 homicide victims in 2021, 47 of those 48 were Black (Chicago Sun Times Homicide Tracker).

My selection of North Lawndale as the site for the study of homicide as a result of abandonment succeeds the long tradition of urban neighborhood-level sociological inquiry in Chicago. Julius Wilson (1996) describes the importance of this academic history:

> "Since the early twentieth century, Chicago has been a laboratory for the scientific investigation of the social, economic, and historical forces that create and perpetuate economically depressed and isolated urban communities… The Chicago social scientists recognized and legitimized the neighborhood—including the ghetto neighborhood—as a subject for scientific analysis" (p. 17).

Not only do I live, work, and study in Chicago and come into this research with extensive formal and informal knowledge of the city, but the city is cited one of the most segregated cities in the United States (Iceland, Weinberg, & Steinmetz, 2002). This provides the optimal site for investigating the inherently racial processes of hyper-segregation, abandonment, and uneven development; North Lawndale is one of Chicago's neighborhoods that has historically experienced high rates of homicide as a result. The neighborhood has served as the case study of these racialized processed by several influential urban sociologists -- Jonathan Kozol (1992) studied inequality in education, Julius Wilson (1996) the effects of deindustrialization on Black concentrated poverty, and Wacquant (2008) the processes of "hyperghettoization." While the findings of this study are derived from a specific localized context and are not overly

generalizable, similarly localized racial projects that enforce larger social systems are taking place across the world. Centering this research in a neighborhood that Fremon (1998) described as "the embodiment of the urban black ghetto" (p. 157) shows how these labels and narratives often serve a larger purpose, from academia to city hall to the streets.

I have personal experience in North Lawndale that affected my neighborhood selection. I worked on a policy research team in North and South Lawndale and later, with middle school students at the Johnson School of Excellence in North Lawndale. In college, I worked as a researcher on the University of Chicago's Policy Research Team and was placed in Lawndale-- both North and South Lawndale, where I conducted interviews, field observations, and focus groups. Our project goal was to study 5 Chicago neighborhoods (Englewood, Lawndale, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn) as potential "Promise Neighborhoods," to evaluate how the Harlem Children Zone could be implemented in each, and then to recommend one neighborhood based on the data collected. Our client was the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) and our policy report was eventually published (*Chicago Promise: A Policy Report on Reinventing the Harlem Children's Zone)*. At the Johnson School of Excellence, I began as a guest speaker at the annual student-athlete day and then later, along with the school's athletic director, started a bi-weekly lunch with a group of the middle school girls. The goal of the lunch was to provide a safe space where the girls were free to talk about and ask me anything. Many of those lunches included conversations about local violence and I started keeping field notes about my experiences, feelings, and "take-aways" from my time with the girls. I did not know at that point that I would select North Lawndale as the topic of my dissertation—I was not even a PhD student. As a former involved observer (Clark, 1965) in the

North Lawndale neighborhood through both experiences, I had prior knowledge and interest in the neighborhood and was able to rely on my connections to gain access.

C. Research Plan

1. Data Sources/Study Sample

The study sample population for this research was North Lawndale community members and stakeholders over the age of 18. To determine eligibility, I asked potential subjects about their relationship to North Lawndale to determine if the subject lives in or has a self-identified interest in the community. I specifically targeted community stakeholders who have lived in North Lawndale for enough time to recognize patterns and recall the neighborhood's history. The sample was diverse in gender (11 women, 16 men) and in their stated relationship to North Lawndale. The sample included (not all categories are mutually exclusive) long-time residents, politicians, business owners, community organizers, ex and current gang members, violence prevention workers, a homicide detective, a youth sports coach, and educational and social service staff.

The stakeholders were identified through my personal connections in the neighborhood, internet searches of active community members/organizations/stakeholders, and snowball sampling. I ended each interview by asking the subject who else would be important to talk to and who might have thoughts/sentiments different from the subject. Thus, in accordance with the snowball sampling approach, information inclusion criteria was initially determined through the familiarity of referrers with potential participants and subsequently confirmed by the subjects through self-report prior to participation in the interview. I also recruited subjects through community events inside and outside of North Lawndale.

Theoretical sampling was also used as a sampling method. "Theoretical sampling is a central tenet of classic grounded theory and is essential to the development and refinement of a theory that is 'grounded' in data" (Breckenridge, et al., 2009). The definition of theoretical sampling is:

"the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.45).

This sampling style was used to focus data collection by highlighting variation and identifying gaps in the data that required elaboration and thus recruiting interview subjects who could fill in those gaps. An example of this was when a theme was emerging about the disconnect/distrust between community members and neighborhood organizations. By noticing this theme, I then recruited people from both groups who could provide further details.

One major rationale for recruitment in this study was the potential for policy change. Teresa Cordova, the director of the Great Cities Institute (GCI) and the chair of the Chicago Planning Commission, is on my dissertation committee, so subjects' opinions may be heard in city policy discussions.

a. Qualitative Interviews

I conducted twenty-seven (N=27) semi-structured interviews with North Lawndale community members and stakeholders from August 2020 through February 2021. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were the primary means of my data collection, which allowed me to develop an "understanding [of] the lived experience of [the participants] and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Each participant completed one interview but were asked for their consent to be contacted for a follow-up member check (details below). Each participant agreed and provided contact information. Interviews were conducted both in-person

and virtual, depending on the subject's preference. For in-person interviews, the participant chose the location. Interviews ranged from 35 to 125 minutes. Interview participants were informed that this was research on homicide in North Lawndale, offered background information about study, and told how their contribution relates to the overall purpose and aim of the study. For those who wished to participate, I explained that their participation was confidential and their voice in the study would be anonymous. To protect this confidentiality and anonymity, I used pseudonyms and code words in my transcription and the final dissertation to protect each participant's identity, as recommended by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995). Participants signed an informed consent document for in-person interviews or gave verbal consent for virtual interviews; all participants were provided a copy of the document. If granted permission by the participant, the interviews were audio recorded for data analysis. For those who did not grant permission to record, I took notes during and immediately following the interview. No financial compensation was provided for the participation in the study.

The interview questions were created to evoke the participants' thoughts about the continued high rates of homicide in North Lawndale. They were open-ended and asked about the current conditions that increase the possibilities of homicide and also the history of North Lawndale (particularly housing, business, religion, politics, prison, gangs, and drugs) to add context to that homicide rate. Questions were adapted to the subject's particular area of expertise. The goal of the interview was to understand what is going on in this space, particularly with violence, and to identify in which efforts the community members are already engaged. Participants were asked historical questions, contemporary questions, and questions centered around the community's strengths and anti-violence efforts. Lastly, they were asked what policies they would like to see

implemented in the neighborhood to address the violence and to target neighborhood revitalization.

After conducting, coding, and analyzing twenty-seven interviews, I determined that I had reached the point of saturation. I had developed properties and dimensions of the study's concepts and themes and was able to explain their conceptual relationships to one another (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I began to see that the new cases were not producing changes in the themes and thus determined that the interview data collection portion of my grounded theory study was complete.

b. **Neighborhood Demographics and History**

I utilized archival research of statistics from public records to supplement the qualitative interviews. The term *archival data* refers to existing information that I did not actually collect myself. This archival data investigated historical variables that were brought up in interviews. I acknowledge that descriptive, demographic variables alone cannot account for the neighborhood's continued violence, so the study viewed empirical data as a valuable supplement to the interview data. With the goal of highlighting the importance of the history of North Lawndale, I examined secondary sources of empirical census demographic data for North Lawndale and compared the longitudinal demographic changes in the neighborhood to the same demographics in city of Chicago. This historical research allowed me to study the changes in neighborhood variables (housing stock, race, income, employment status) over time and compare it to what was taking place across the city. This longitudinal comparison speaks to the larger structural issues particularly affecting North Lawndale, also defending it as a worthy case study of the causes of abandonment on neighborhood homicide rates. A historical treatment of the empirical data demonstrated macro-level societal changes that had clear ramifications for the

neighborhood's homicide rate and also set the stage for a conversation about whether we should expect the trajectories to perpetuate or even intensify.

c. **Data Analysis**

Participant interviews were recorded using the "voice memos" app on my cellphone. The interview files were immediately uploaded and saved onto my personal laptop, which is password protected and to which only I have access. The laptop is located in a locked office, in a locked department at the university. Once uploaded, I immediately deleted the voice memo from my cellphone. I then prepared a transcript that contained a full and accurate word-for-word written rendition of the interview questions and responses. One interview was not a transcript and instead consisted of notes that I took during and immediately after the interview because the respondent did not want the interview to be recorded. These transcripts and notes were saved on a password-protected computer, in a locked office, in the same manner as the audio files. I grounded my work in a careful examination of these written words, rather than relying on memory, to avoid a bias in my results. All transcriptions were done by me. By doing this, I was able to write down my thoughts that occurred to me as I transcribed; I wrote memos that noted a response in an interview that made me think about a book or article and memos that referenced another interview with a similar theme/response.

After transcribing and reading the interviews, I uploaded the transcripts into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis software to develop codes and identify recurring themes to collapse them into theoretically relevant categories. The data were analyzed inductively using a constant comparative process largely based on the methodology outline by Corbin and Strauss (2008). Data gathered from the interviews were coded for recurring themes. I used a constant comparative method of data analysis, which allowed for a flexible assessment and integration

with existing theoretical approaches and academic literature. It was a continuous strategy of coding the interviews in as many categories as possible and comparing the previous instances in the same category until theoretical properties of the category emerged (Glaser, 1965; Stauss & Corbin, 1994). I then was able to identify patterns across interviews. By using a constant comparative analysis technique with respect to these larger themes, I was able to draw together seemingly discordant concepts (and their properties and dimensions) under broader themes. Memos written during this latter stage of data analysis were more integrative in nature, linking higher-order themes and categories together and to existing theories.

In the last phase of analysis, I worked out explanations for what my data was showing, looking for a set of related concepts and themes that, together, answer my research question(s). Thus, the themes and categories were conceptually integrated around a core category in order to "construct a plausible explanatory framework" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 264) for continued high rates of violence in North Lawndale. In doing so, I examined the coded themes to see how they might be linked. In the interview data, the core category that emerged from the analysis process was abandonment, the nature of which will be discussed in the following chapters. As I began to develop my theory of abandonment, I tested each proposed new theme or causal mechanism by reexamining my coded data to make sure the data supported the theme and that the examples were consistent with it. I also checked my emerging ideas by testing them against alternatives. I looked through my coded examples not just for evidence for my explanation of continued high homicide rates but also for evidence against my emerging theory.

d. __Member Check__

After analyzing my data and writing my two findings chapters, I created a shortened, bulleted version of my findings. I distributed the shortened version to ten of my interview participants

who consented to follow-up questions and a member-check. Of the ten, I heard back from eight. All eight agreed with my findings and the way I described the forms of abandonment in North Lawndale. No one objected to the publishing of my findings.

D.   <u>Limitations</u>

Ideally, I would have liked to spend additional time in North Lawndale to more fully understand the nature and extent of the neighborhood conditions as well as their resistance efforts. Secondly, I would have liked to attend more community events and just be present in the neighborhood—to meet people, build relationships, and take field notes. However, COVID-19 restrictions limited my ability to do these things. Community events were either cancelled or moved online. More natural interactions and introductions were severely limited. Additionally, as a white female outsider, my introductions to and interactions with interview participants were greatly shaped by both my race and gender. It is possible that participants were less likely to agree to interviews and also less candid if they did, as a result of my "out-group" status in a neighborhood that is almost exclusively Black. While I view my race as a significant limitation for this study, there were several instances where participants mentioned that they wanted to share their thoughts with me because my being white could "get things done." In these scenarios, when I finished the interviews by asking which policies they would like to see implemented in the neighborhood, they often would say "Tell them…" before they shared their thoughts because they believed that I had the ability to reach city hall and the mayor. This speaks more to the racial project of abandonment that left them feeling unheard than my interviewing skills, but it is an important note.

My research was approved by the university's IRB in July of 2020, after I submitted changes to my originally proposed research due to COVID-19. I had to incorporate virtual interviews into my proposed methods. While in-person interviews were going to be the primary source of my data, virtual meetings became the alternative because my data collection period fell in a time where the city of Chicago was completely closed and meeting participants face-to-face was not feasible. I read articles about research interviewing strategies for Zoom interviews and the benefits of virtual interviews (Gray, Lia M, et al., 2020). The research showed that "researchers who compared face-to-face interviews to virtual interviews found that the quality of the interviews did not differ from face-to-face interviews" (Cabaroglu, Basaran, & Roberts, 2010; Deakin & Wakefield, 2013) and that online participants were actually more open and expressive than in-person participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Mabragana et al., 2013). However, in my data collection, I found relying on virtual interviews to be a significant limitation, not a benefit. I do not believe my research participants were as open and expressive on virtual interviews and the rapport felt much more formal than conversational. In addition to these obstacles, outside of the research participants who worked for community organizations, many potential research participants did not feel comfortable (for many reasons) engaging in a virtual interview and many did not have a zoom account. I believe I lost several potential interviews when I explained that interviews would be virtual unless we found a comfortable, safe spot to meet in person. It is likely that my sample and my data would look different if I was not forced to use virtual meeting spaces for interviews.

The second issue I encountered in my data collection was finding a location to meet with participants who agreed to an interview but preferred to meet face-to-face. These participants mentioned they did not have a Zoom account and/or a reliable computer or in multiple cases,

they just did not trust Zoom. A few said that they felt like the government listens in on Zoom. For my entire data collection period, COVID restrictions affected my ability to find a location for these interviews. Libraries, coffee shops, and offices were closed. I met two people at their home and one person came to mine. I conducted two interviews from my car while driving around North Lawndale. For those who worked for community organizations and had the ability to open their office, we met there. However, this was a significant limitation to my data collection. It is likely my sample includes more community organizations than community members because of this limitation. For the interviews with members of a community organization, because we met at their organization's office, it is likely that the responses were filtered and affected by the location.

Lastly, there are some fundamental limitations to relying heavily on interview data as interview responses should not be illustrated as objective reflections of reality in North Lawndale. Interviews are a form of human interaction and responses do more than simply relay information; responses should be understood as an action with intention closely rooted in context. Human beings are constantly aware of the ways in which they are likely to be judged in interactions, and thus self-present in ways informed by that awareness (Goffman, 1959). This is especially true when my identity as a white, female researcher may affect the statements of the interviewee. Thus, conducting interview studies has the possibilities for all sorts of biases, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies, all worth noting.

E. <u>Worldview, Positionality, and Self-Reflexivity</u>

I approach this research with the acknowledgement that I have a stake in and will personally benefit from the outcome of this work. Therefore, I have a responsibility to make sure the research is mutually-beneficial, and have attempted to create a methodology that does so. My

observations over my fifteen years of living, studying, and working in Chicago have guided my interest and informed the values that I bring into this research. I also approach this research with a recognition that the experiences of North Lawndale residents who feel the effects of city and neighborhood policies the most are often left out of the conversations that develop those policies. While there is plenty of research that describes the day-to-day life in hyper-segregated, poor neighborhoods like North Lawndale, less research frames these micro events to an intentional macro racial project and describes the community's resistance to these projects. Therefore, I advance this qualitative research study using a social constructivism paradigm and a critical race theory framework with a commitment to critical self-reflexivity. Reflexivity is viewed as an important tool for a researcher to identify and anticipate her own impact on the research subjects and the research produced to develop a research strategy that upholds the best interests of the participants (Case, 2017; Gildersleeve, 2010). The member-check in my study design, my methodology that highlights the community's efforts and resistance, and my policy chapter that centers the community's desires are my efforts to uphold the interests of my participants and to make the research mutually-beneficial.

Regardless of study topic or research design, a social scientist must ask an important question about her work: in which ways do my worldview and position in society influence my study? Answering this question requires the researcher to interrogate her own perceptions of the world and the implications for the way she is perceived by the world. It acknowledges that the researcher's own perceptions shape how she asks questions, interprets facts, values voices, and determine findings. For example, if I am critical of racial neoliberalism and the way society has been racialized, I must be aware of the bias I take into the field that may lead me to misrepresent or overemphasize these racial neoliberal processes in my findings. Therefore, in my study, I

attempted to establish a research design that limits improper personal influence on the interpretation of findings and the general conclusions. I also engaged in periodic self-reflexivity memos during the data collection process to reflect on my experiences, thoughts, and results. This reflexivity included my observing North Lawndale and my observing myself observing North Lawndale.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that the purpose of qualitative research is to interpret the world and to make sense of the meanings that people make within that world (p. 3). Qualitative research generally occurs in the natural environment (i.e. the neighborhood in this study) and relies on the senses of both the researcher and the participants as well as the personal interaction between them (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The task of the qualitative researcher, then, is to appropriately interpret the experiences of the participants and the world around them. This requires the researcher to be mindful of how her own lived experience and assumptions interface with the data collection process. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is strictly the instrument (Case, 2017); the data does not speak for itself, but is interpreted through the lens of the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 34). Therefore, my own perceptions and values greatly influence which questions I ask and how I interpret data, value voices, represent the findings, and more.

An important implication of a feminist methodology is that all conversation occurs in a political context which raises questions for scholars about whether it is appropriate for a privileged academic to interpret the voices and opinions of groups from less privileged social positions. A question that I continually asked myself was-- is this my story to tell? As a scholar born into historically dominant positions in terms of race, class, citizenship status, education level, sexual orientation, and physical ability, feminist methodology suggests "sustained

reflection on the purpose and possible impacts of my research" (Case, 2017). In this research, I have tried to do this responsibly by utilizing a methodology that relies on the voices of the community and their resistance while relying on my academic knowledge to complement their words with academic theory. I acknowledge that there is a need to advance critical racial frameworks through which neighborhood homicide rates should be analyzed, but I take important steps to directly center the voices of my research participants, minimizing my own interpretive influence to prioritize their original meaning.

I view my role in this research as the author who centers the neighborhood's voices and supplements these voices and experiences with academic theories. The community is the knowledge-holders that refer me to the important academic literature. Before I started collecting data for this dissertation, I spent considerable time in the North Lawndale area and spent several years reading relevant academic literature to prepare myself for this role. During the data collection period, I had a research fellowship on the South Side of Chicago. I was the Predoctoral Research Fellow for the Neighborhood Initiative with the Chicago Humanities Festival from January to November of 2021. I worked with organizations from a cluster of South Side neighborhoods to bring humanities programming to the South Side that reflected community desire and need. I critically documented the process, conducted interviews with organizations and neighborhood partners, and wrote my findings in a final research report. This experience allowed me to reflect on the intricacies of the South Side-versus-West Side dynamic, the discrepancies in resource allocation, and the uniqueness of the Black experience on the West Side. Ultimately, it aided in my theoretical understanding of North Lawndale's particular dynamics.

In my research design, I have purposely located narratives and voices within a theoretical structure that can help illustrate the layered, nuanced explanation of North Lawndale's continued high homicide rate. In doing so, I respond to concerns about my positionality through an intentional focus on the inductive construction of theory in regards to neighborhood homicide. My goal was less about humanizing the research subjects by relying on a deficit-lens, but to challenge the categorical structures through which these subjects and the overall community are understood by society at large and apply those categorical orders to homicide. This dissertation aimed to be explanatory, practical and normative—to "explain what is wrong with the current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation" (Bohman, 2005).

V.   FINDINGS 1: WE'VE BEEN ABANDONED!

After background questions asking participants to describe their relationship to North Lawndale, the first substantive question on the interview guide asked participants to explain the causes and context of the neighborhood's historically high homicide rate. This question was strategically open-ended and allowed participants to provide an invaluable framework for understanding both current and historic neighborhood-level factors that increase the likelihood of homicide. The theme of abandonment came directly from the interviews with community members and stakeholders which led to the development of a theory of homicide in North Lawndale from that data. In short, these data proved essential in fashioning the theory of North Lawndale as a racial project, with its high homicide rate a result of multiple forms of abandonment. The sample representing North Lawndale's stakeholders in this study was diverse —gang members, police officers, community activists, long-time residents. Everyone had his/her own opinions on the causes of violence in North Lawndale and those opinions varied greatly. However, what emerged from the interviews was the common theme of abandonment as the source of historically high homicide rates in the neighborhood. This chapter reports on their views on abandonment as well as on other emerging topics (gangs, guns, drugs, etc.).

The most fundamental finding from the interview data was that the residents and stakeholders in North Lawndale believe that abandonment, not gangs, poverty, or drugs, was the fundamental condition that explains the historically high homicide rate in the neighborhood. There was a diversity of opinions on what abandonment looks like and how that abandonment increases the likelihood of homicide, but most interview participants explicitly mentioned abandonment in the interviews. Participants presented several forms of abandonment but all fall

under the four categories discussed in this section: physical abandonment, abandonment of care, state abandonment and disinvestment, and the dissolution of traditional gangs.

Outside of the abandonment of the neighborhood, there were several other important insights learned from the interviews. All but one interview participant say that they do not support the defund the police movement, which they view as a decreased police presence in the neighborhood. However, they see the police often as more of a problem than a solution. Most respondents say that the gangs in North Lawndale have fractured into cliques, causing significant changes in the context of homicides. Outside of a lack of respect for the rules, community members mention the following effects of the dissolution of traditional gangs: younger shooters, increased drug use, distrust between old and young gang/clique members, and more random violence. According to the respondents, homicide is not about making money but about cliques, respect, and identity. The trauma and tension are passed down through generations. Residents want continued investment in North Lawndale, often considering it reparations, but want those programs to be accountable to the community. North Lawndale is a proud community with incredibly important assets working together to address the violence.

Participants describe many different causes of high levels of neighborhood homicide but all identify some form of intentionality in the creation and development of the neighborhood with conditions that increase the likelihood of homicide. The participants recognize the racial project, pointing to media stigmatization of the neighborhood as evidence. Several respondents even mention certain neighborhood dynamics/phenomena as the afterlife of slavery, particularly the consistent devaluing of Black life, which creates an environment for those deemed disposable and unworthy to kill each other in. This is the racial project and *race is at the core of a vast majority of the explanations for violence.* The neighborhood has experienced multiple forms of

abandonment that prove the population's apparent disposability, leading to generational distrust and increased tension and violence. According to the residents and stakeholders in North Lawndale, *the historically high homicide rate must be understood not as the expression of the senseless "pathology" of the residents but as a by-product of the policies of abandonment.*

A.   Physical Abandonment

The physical abandonment of North Lawndale by certain populations was mentioned in interviews as one of the reasons for an increased homicide rate. The groups that were identified by interview participants as those who have abandoned North Lawndale are whites, businesses and their capital, and the incarcerated (through involuntary abandonment of the neighborhood and their families). The neighborhood's population continues to drop. One participant jumped right into the neighborhood's population decrease as an important factor leading to elevated homicide rate:

> "Well you talk about a population, a community that had a population of over 100,000 people and you look at it now, and I don't know the exact number but maybe 30,000 in this community. I think that has a lot to do with it. People leaving and lots are vacant. Because why would they stay? And then you have to talk about who leaves and who stays. Not everyone can leave or wants to leave but the people who have opportunities somewhere else definitely gone leave."

Within this physical abandonment explanation is an element of comparison. The participants notice that not every population in the city is treated the same way, and this is how the population is deemed disposable: "Anywhere else you go in the city, there are no vacant lots. Every space is occupied. It's really just us that gets left like this." The vacant lots become reminders of both the physical abandonment by large portions of North Lawndale's population and the neighborhood's lack of worth within the city.

The physical abandonment mentioned in the interviews comes in several forms—the

neighborhood has experienced white flight, the resulting capital abandonment and loss of jobs,

population decreases from mass incarceration policies, and the abandonment of positive role

models. Several participants even mentioned the division between South Side Black

communities and West Side Black communities, as they feel like the South Side gets more

resources and attention and therefore attracts a different, more economically heterogeneous

Black population. Participants included these forms of physical abandonment in their

explanations of a high homicide rate, because through this abandonment, the neighborhood is

deemed disposable.

1. **White Flight & Capital Abandonment**

"In the 50s, North Lawndale was populated with about 125,000 folks, which was the largest
community in the city of Chicago. And again, it's because of all of those same things. There
were jobs here. So when folks started coming from the Sunbelt-- Black folks started coming
from the Belt, they would come here because they heard of all the promise, all the jobs that
were here. That caused a lot of angst for the folks who were here because at that time, it was,
you know, Eastern European and Jewish community, primarily. And those folks started to
move out… it caused white flight around the 50s… early 60s… and a community that was
90% immigrant had become 90% African American. And then that white flight was when
jobs started to leave and this is when a lot of that push to move downtown kind of
happened…. in terms of businesses. The white people left and then all the jobs followed."

This more historical explanation for homicide describes the abandonment of a community by its

white population and the resulting abandonment of businesses, capital, and jobs. As businesses

left the neighborhood, so did capital and jobs. What isn't explicitly stated in this quote but is

implied (and explicitly argued by other interview participants) is that once the white population

left, the neighborhood lost its economic value so the businesses followed the whites. While a

race-neutral economic argument can be and has been made about the movement of businesses

and jobs to other neighborhoods following the white flight and population loss, *the explanation*

felt by the community was completely grounded in race and the resulting message is one of

disposability.

Shortly after the neighborhood shifted from a white immigrant community to a Black

community, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. While capital and businesses followed the

white population out of North Lawndale, the riots that followed MLK Jr's assassination pushed

out most of the remaining businesses and their capital and the neighborhood never fully

recovered. *Many interview participants point to these riots as the critical turning point in the*

neighborhood's economic activity, physical attractiveness, and social cohesion.

> "Honestly, I think historically, it goes back… the West Side, most people know, was at one point, a very thriving area for Blacks. A lot of Black owned businesses, a lot of Black owned homes, and so forth and so on. But around '68, when King was assassinated, the riots just really destroyed a lot of this West Side area. Obviously I wasn't born but my father told me… living in that area during that time… he was like—it just destroyed the whole continuing vibe of that area. Like, when you have an area that people are thriving in, and it just kind of comes to a stop with those, you know, small businesses that they had and things like that… a lot of people didn't have the money to recover and *the city didn't see the West Side as an area worth helping.* It was a total loss and we never really recovered."

> "And the riots of '68 happened… the assassination of Martin Luther King. And the community kind of tore itself up. The African Americans who live in this community tore up Roosevelt, 16th Street, Ogden, which were all commercial corridors… were all torn up… And so it has not come back to flourish the way that it did back then. And my thought is *the city made an intentional non-investment to a community.* And it has continued to grow and grow and grow and of course exacerbate itself and to… you end up where you are now."

> "We never recovered from it. We never recovered from it. Then you've got that going on that you haven't recovered from and those buildings wasn't being maintained… so they was eventually torn down. And nothing else was ever built back in its place. So people really living in no-man's land where buildings are torn down and empty lots were left. And you wonder why people mad. *laughs*"

According to the interviews, if businesses stayed in North Lawndale after the population started

to drop and become Black, they couldn't or didn't want to invest in recovering within the

neighborhood after the riots. In all three quotes, the participants describe the disinvestment in

North Lawndale after the riots as intentional: the city didn't view the West Side as an area worth helping, there was an intentional non-investment in the community, and the buildings were torn down and never rebuilt. North Lawndale went from a thriving Black community to a neighborhood that never recovered from the riots of 1968, resulting in empty lots and the loss of businesses, commercial corridors, jobs, and a large portion of the population.

2. **Mass Incarceration**

Interview respondents say that mass incarceration policies have greatly affected North Lawndale, especially when discussing its demographics and the abandonment (i.e., forced removal) of the neighborhood by certain populations. The neighborhood has been abandoned by the State in many ways (to be described later in this chapter), but the State has heavily relied on the criminal justice system as the dominant approach to violence and neighborhood governance since the 1980s. *Rather than uproot poverty and disadvantage in North Lawndale, mass incarceration has been the State's attempt to manage it, which in turn has actually exacerbated the conditions that increase the likelihood of homicide. Mass incarceration policies are criminogenic.* Interview participants point to the many ways that these punitive policies hurt the community and cause the tension that increases violence. While white flight was discussed as the voluntary abandonment of the neighborhood by the white population, the abandonment of North Lawndale by a large number of people has been involuntary and at the hands of the criminal justice system. Participants describe a ripple effect of carceral punishment in North Lawndale—families and bonds are broken, residents experience increased depression, distrust, and anxiety, the neighborhood is viewed as dangerous and thus not worthy of investment, and the population has a much more difficult time lifting itself from poverty.

"So what I think happens is… you have concentrated poverty, people try to find their way out of concentrated poverty. When you have concentrated poverty and… and you know, we're going through this now and people are talking about racism and systemic racism. I think that is all part of systemic racism. And then you flood a community with drugs and narcotics, and you intentionally break up families. And all of those things, I think, kind of happened in the early 70s… all the way up into, you know, the 2000s where there was an assault on black men, imprisoning them, you know, flooding the communities with drugs and then creating a war on drugs… not investing in this community. And then they're being intentional, I mean-- poverty at very high levels, concentrated here, and then again, you got to find your way out. And then if you go to jail, you have an "X" on your back now. And so you can't get a job and then families are destroyed. And that has happened, in terms of a cycle. And then when that happens, it means you got to find a way to get money.... If you're not raised correctly, you're out on the street, and you got to figure out a way. And the street life creates that violence. And so all of those things kind of create the perfect climate for a high propensity for homicide, a high propensity for violent crime, a high propensity for exactly what you see in North Lawndale."

Policies aimed at making the world safer through punitive measures are criminogenic and increase the likelihood of violence in neighborhoods like North Lawndale, trading one group's apparent safety for another. This interview participant describes an intentional effort to destroy Black communities and families with drugs and punitive carceral policies, a combination that "create[s] the perfect climate for a high propensity of homicide." Like this participant, multiple other participants showed resistance to the racial project by identifying the elements of and the intentionality behind mass incarceration policies. *The racial project and the devaluing of Black life in the neighborhood are identified as the afterlife of slavery* and people in North Lawndale recognize it and cite directly it in their explanations for high levels of homicide.

"… during slavery, folks and families were intentionally ripped apart from each other and Black men were made to be less than. Even less than women. It was an intentional way to kind of deconstruct the family. And they would allow them to have children and then pull the father away so that they could continue to breed folks and then have them went away. And then they don't see a father growing up and so they don't know how to be men. Very intentional. And I think that a lot of that kind of carried over and it is a way to break… systematically break down a race. Systematically keep them subjugated to another race. And I think that continues to play out in society even today. And even though even we don't… it may not be overt. It is still done and things like that, you know, taking Black men and putting them in jail. And pulling them away from their children. Making sure

that they're on drugs and in jail so that they can't raise their children. Breaking up Black families."

"You know, the rate in which a person goes to jail in this community, I believe there's one of four, one out of every four males, above the age of 18 have had some kind of brush with incarceration, which means that you're putting folks away, you're taking them away from their families. You happen to have children young, children are growing up without families, without parents, without men. How are you going to be man if you don't have a man around you?... And I think that is a systematic thing that's been going on since racism and it's just… you got me all onto conspiracy theories! *But to me, it is so intentional. And it's been that way since slavery.* If you see that's a way to keep people's subjugated to you, then you continue to do it. And it continues to keep you on a mountain and you continue to do it."

"Our family structure was ripped apart. It's one of the basic reasons why all of this violence is going on. The fathers are in jail and aren't home raising their families. And it's a perfectly designed plan for it to be that way. The structure is not in the household."

All three participants quoted recognize the intentionality behind mass incarceration policies, specifically in the breakdown of Black families. A common narrative surrounding violence in Black neighborhoods is one of bad parenting. The participants seem to agree that absent fathers are one of the causes of a high homicide rate, but these participants argue that the notion that it is the voluntary abandonment ignores the fact that generations of Black men (and women) have been forcibly removed from families and neighborhoods due to mass incarceration. They point out that the intentionality behind this project is the afterlife of slavery. The forced abandonment of North Lawndale by Black parents has a lasting ripple effect on youth in the neighborhood that spans generations and greatly affects the neighborhood's homicide rate.

The participants specifically talk about the removal of men from the community through carceral policies, not women. They mention mass incarceration's effect on women as the need to maintain a single-person household and the difficulties with "women raising men," but don't speak about women themselves being incarcerated. Mass incarceration is viewed throughout the interviews as a male phenomenon.

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3. **Abandonment by Positive Role Models**

Interview participants mention the abandonment of North Lawndale by more "successful" populations in their explanations of high levels of homicide. This abandonment leads to feelings of hopelessness and alternative avenues for success that increase the likelihood of violence.

> "Let me show you what's going on here but using school as the example. […] when they changed the way the school systems were, and we were testing to get into particular schools […] they removed all of the youth that were doing average or above average. So now what you do is you concentrate all the individuals who have challenges, IEPs, struggle academically, and you create an atmosphere of hopelessness or struggle that's normal because everybody in the school is below reading level…. everybody in the school is challenging. Everybody in the school got an IEP, and not only that… a lot of people tend to argue about the importance of academics or formal education, but just the maturity of one's thinking and rationale is lower in those spaces than in other spaces, so what it does… when they have a particular conflict, they don't have the capacity or the mentality to be able to rationalize and to think it through and look at the consequences because this is what they see. And also, you remove hope by… ain't nobody successful over here. Ain't nobody doing good. And then mediocrity becomes celebrated just to get through eighth grade, even if I'm failing it… even if I'm struggling, I didn't hit the benchmark for whatever the standard was, I'm still celebrated so then they see they only way out is something that's in the subculture market which is drugs or some other type of crime because everybody I know or who… my network, all my classmates, all my friends… 'cause you develop friendships… or your community… everybody felons… so they try to find their place in society by saying, okay, we're not going to succeed in this field—it's obvious-- so we gon' go into this field because that's our only way to achieve some level of success, whatever that might look like."

This participant uses an educational example to show what interview participants say is a larger trend in the community—people who are successful must leave for opportunities, draining the community of their experience, rationale, excitement, mentorship, etc. In this particular example, the school system in the community does not provide the proper educational opportunities for the student who is performing above average, so that student must leave. This participant says that this is an example of a larger phenomenon—not a lack of willingness or desire to stay in the community, but a lack of development of community assets, resources, and jobs. This leads to the abandonment of more positive role models in terms of work, as people must leave to gain

access to better employment and educational opportunities. Embedded in this conversation is a dangerous concept: everyone wants out. The interview data show that it is not true. Participants say that people want to remain in North Lawndale but want the same resources, jobs, and attention given to other communities. Many interview participants themselves are stakeholders who have the ability and means to leave the community but have remained because of pride, family history, and love for the community.

There is an element of comparison in interviews that discuss the devaluation of human life in North Lawndale—I can see that *we* are worth less to society because of how we are treated compared to how *they* are treated. Interviews identify the need for more "successful" individuals to escape North Lawndale to follow certain opportunities because another community can provide what this community cannot. The result is an environment lacking more positive role models.

> "And if you live in this neighborhood, as opposed to Hyde Park or something like that, you see, like, you know, you might be able to talk to somebody and say, so what do you do? You know, and you might have somebody that can mentor you, but if you're in North Lawndale and you talk to someone and say, "What do you do?" Well, I sell drugs. And you're 12 or 13… I can get you in and I can get you $50 a day, $100 a day. And if you get arrested, they won't do nothing to you. So don't even worry about it. I mean, it just breeds criminality and violence, unfortunately, because that's just a way of survival here. But in other neighborhoods they don't have to see that."

> "The Black experience in North Lawndale is homogeneous… obviously in race but also in class whereas the Mexican experience is heterogeneous in class. So you might have one Mexican as a business owner, one might be a doctor, a lawyer... all of these different people live in Little Village and Pilsen. So a person could ascribe or desire to be something great because guess what? I live next door to a doc. The window of possibility is wide open because I'm around people that's doing everything whereas in most impoverished African American communities, in particular North Lawndale, everybody's struggling."

Both respondents compare North Lawndale to another area/population when explaining high levels of violence. To feel disposable, someone must be portrayed as valuable. The racial project

would support the idea that anyone who can leave North Lawndale would abandon the area. The interview data show that what is taking place in North Lawndale in terms of the abandonment of positive role models is more complicated. Many of the community stakeholders interviewed are proud residents of North Lawndale, although they are upwardly mobile and have the ability to leave the neighborhood. North Lawndale residents show a strong desire to redevelop rather than leave the community. *The hopelessness cited in the interviews as a result of the abandonment of positive role models is actually the result of the portrayal of North Lawndale as disposable compared to other more valuable neighborhoods.* North Lawndale has not been drained of positive role models—the interview sample includes many examples of positive role models who proudly remain in the community and call for the same attention and resources awarded to other Chicago neighborhoods.

B. **Abandonment of Care**

Interview participants argue that *North Lawndale does not have a homicide problem as much as it has a white supremacy problem centered on devaluing Black life.* The abandonment of care is a common theme in the many explanations of the high homicide rate in North Lawndale. The abandonment of care is most often experienced in North Lawndale in the devaluing of Black life and in the punitive responses rather than more proactive caretaking steps to address poverty and violence.

1. **Devaluing Black Life**

The devaluation of Black life in North Lawndale was described as a cause of historically high neighborhood homicide rates. A large secondary question that emerged through the coded data is—what does it mean to live under the particular conditions in North Lawndale? Interview participants identify the continuing forces of institutional racism functioning in the community

and directly relate those forces to the historically high homicide rate. Many participants argue that there are conditions in North Lawndale that are unique to the Black experience that increase the likelihood of homicide. The devaluation of Black life leads to distrust (generationally) and ultimately increased tension and violence. *This theme of devaluing Black life was present in every single interview.*

> "Everything for us is sub-standard. I have to go to the suburbs to get groceries because there's a lack of stores and what they do have is terrible. The produce has bugs in it and the meat is colored to look edible. And it's expensive! Hospitals are sub-standard. Offices are sub-standard. Schools. Sidewalks. Parks. You name it. And when you really think about it, the message y'all sending us is powerful. You don't care about my life but you want me to care about the lives around me. It's really something."

> "Community stuff just doesn't happen in a bubble. Messages are sent back to Black people about their low status and it's felt in North Lawndale in the violence. Just a disregard for life."

Through consistent messages devaluing the lives of residents in North Lawndale, people are deemed disposable. This directly relates to homicide through the disregard for life. Therefore, according to interview participants, this is less about a homicide problem and more about white supremacy problem centered on devaluing Black life.

> "It boils down to a form of white supremacy. It's white supremacy and it's years in the making and it's so fine-tuned that you won't even be able to tell that it exists without a keen eye. You would not even know that it exists. And even worse, it's set up to feel normal. Like it's normal to be treated like this. Like that's our worth. They make it make sense even to me. And it really messes people up in the head, I'm telling you."

> "But it's really… it is, to me, it's white supremacy at its finest. It's fine-tuned. It's refined. It's a well-oiled machine."

This is the racial project. Racism shapes the ways this population has been kept vulnerable. *What's powerful about this interview data is the fact that it was not coded to apply Critical Race Theory or to identify institutional racism and white supremacy within the data.*

Community members explicitly identify these larger forces themselves and are resisting it through this identification. They are acknowledging the high homicide rate but saying, "We've been abandoned!" *The consistent devaluing of human life in North Lawndale creates an environment for those deemed disposable to kill each other in. "The system was intentionally designed for us to hurt one another. If we were taught to be animals for 400 years and then left abandoned and intentionally hurt, what happens? Violence."* A second interview participant almost said this same thing, word-for-word: "I just feel like… if you're told you're an animal, you're going to act like an animal."

Participants connect the devaluing of Black life to the afterlife of slavery to argue that these are experiences at the neighborhood level that are uniquely Black experiences.

> "I know it's intentional in North Lawndale. I think it's been intentional for Black communities as a whole. You know, we've been duped and tricked into our votes don't count. We shouldn't be registering and talking about the census. We aren't a part of the larger city of Chicago. We have been tricked that, you know, the government should be giving us money as opposed to us trying to do businesses amongst ourselves. We've been brainwashed over so many years and it started back in slavery."

> "It can't be that we just so violent. Because if you think about Black folks as a whole, we haven't been violent to white folks. We were in slavery but we still continue to move along like we still are and kind of acclimate into society with them like that…"

Both quotes are speaking to the internalization of white supremacy, the white power structure, and the devaluing of Black life as the afterlife of slavery. In the second quote, the participant is arguing against the idea that people in North Lawndale are naturally more violent by citing that the violence doesn't cross over to white people. According to this person, the internalization of white supremacy (or the "brainwashing") is so powerful that the response of violence still only takes place among Black people. To participants, this devaluing of Black life is at the core of understanding the historically high homicide rate.

Access to guns, liquor and drugs was cited in interviews as an example of the devaluing

Black life. While community members do not have access to good jobs, schools, grocery stores,

hospitals, etc., they do have access to guns, liquor and drugs. Community members see the

intentionality behind this, as the negative institutions replace the more positive institutions.

> "The drugs, the guns… anything, anything… like things being readily available. Like you notice there's a liquor store on every corner, you know what I'm saying? It's drugs on every corner. In the open. It's everything that is supposed to be bad for you and is bad for you, so readily available. If you really cared about me, I wouldn't have access to the things that I have access to."

In terms of devaluing Black life, both access to drugs and the effects of drug use on the

population must be mentioned, as both are quite out in the open and very much part of daily life

in the area. In my time in the area, I saw people using drugs in the open, outsiders coming to the

neighborhood to buy drugs and leave, and drug pass-outs where dealers gave samples of their

product and had a line wrapped around the block. The easy access to drugs was framed by

participants as an alternative economy, source of income, and the devaluing of Black life.

Several interviews mentioned how easy it is to get a gun in North Lawndale. And because

more people have guns, more people feel like they also need guns for protection.

> "I think it's way more guns on the street now than it was back in the day. And I wasn't even really too knowledgeable about guns back as far as people having guns like that. It was just the "big dogs" having the guns, but now, you know, they changed the law to where you can have a gun now. So, I feel like, of course it's going to be more guns. You know, like when I could be at the gym and all the hoopers got guns, because it's legal. And you know, we're ball players so what you think about dude and them that's really on the block. They got guns illegally. But that's just more guns. And I need one because they got one. That's a lot of guns!"

The number of guns in the area is affected by social media because people openly advertise their

weapons to show bravado and that they're not to be messed with so people in the community

become more aware of the number of guns in the neighborhood and feel the need to be armed as

well. Before social media, interview participants claim that people were less aware of the number of guns in the neighborhood and thus felt safer. Social media was also cited as an easy way to get a gun. One interview participant said, "It's easy to get a gun. You can get on Facebook and post, like, 'Who got a gun for sale? I'm asking for my friend' and you'll have people in your inbox responding. It's that easy." Easy access to guns and knowledge of the number of weapons in the neighborhood have also changed the context of altercations in the neighborhood. Because more people have access to guns, participants said that altercations often turn deadly because there's always a fear of getting shot-- people are hesitant to fight or be the last one to pull out their gun. Respondents who reported this were of all ages, not just the younger participants.

> "Like when I grew up in high school, if you get whooped, you get whooped. You just chalk it up. When I was 13-14, shooting wasn't even an option. When I was 13 or 14, I couldn't even… unless I was gonna get my mom's gun, I couldn't even tell you where to go find a gun at. And you weren't scared at that altercation that someone's gonna pull out a gun, either. I didn't have a fear or that. Now, it's the first thing you think of. Yeah, and I clearly carry a gun. And I think that. Somebody used to cut me off… I used to, like, pull up on the side of them, blow the horn. Now you just be like, I'll fall back. I'm just going to fall back."

Several participants echo this idea that easy access to guns greatly affects the homicide rate because altercations that don't have to turn deadly often do because of the constant fear that people around the neighborhood are armed. Access to guns symbolizes the devaluing of life in the area and the overuse of those guns stems from the fear of the number of weapons in the neighborhood.

Poor schooling and school closings in North Lawndale were cited as another example of the devaluing of Black life in the neighborhood that increases the likelihood of homicide—both from the message it sends and from the very real realities of school closures. Participants said that messages are sent to kids at an early age through their schooling that their lives don't matter

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as much as other lives around the city. One participant said, "They take our kids for a joke. They take our kids for a joke. Our kids aren't being educated properly." Many participants describe the school environments in the neighborhood as overcrowded, underperforming, and uninspired.

> "You go to school that is probably not even going to be desirable to even go to. You know you go to school, it's not even clean, it's a lot of chaos going on… it's not an environment to learn, so eventually, you know, you may not continue to go. But if you do, you may continue your chances to be successful somewhat, I guess, but the dropout rate in CPS is terrible. I mean, it's like 30-40%. It's crazy. And these schools ain't really teaching shit. Basically babysitting. If that. It's crazy. I mean, it's like everybody's failing everybody."

While similar comments were made throughout the interviews, two interview participants who are associated with education agree that the education provided in North Lawndale's neighborhood schools is of poor quality but recognize that this language is dangerous, as it has been weaponized and used by city officials to justify school closings across the city. However, it is important to note that these poor learning environments send messages to the children in North Lawndale of their apparent worth within the city as compared to other neighborhoods whose neighborhood public schools are maintained at a high-quality level. Not only is this message important as the devaluing of life greatly affects the likelihood of violence, but it also eliminates a path of upward social mobility through education. Community members in the interviews desire a positive educational environment for students in the already-existing public schools in North Lawndale. Several asked for a curriculum that includes the community's history—a history that they believe North Lawndale students would be proud of. Other participants said that neighborhood schools are lacking a curriculum that includes nonviolence and social skills:

> "You're not educating them on the smallest things that are important for the community. Self love. Self love. How can I teach you nonviolence when I already know that all you know is violence? So now I gotta teach you about loving yourself. Let's start there."

> "So it's like, not only are the books important in education but also the morals, respect, the understanding of life, or how to treat people, you know…the correct way to conversate with people. You know, those things should be taught."

Overall, poor schooling was mentioned as a reason for the high homicide rate and addressing the schools was often cited as a way to address the violence, through investing in the physical infrastructure, a new curriculum or development of afterschool programs. Not one participant agreed with the city's stated rationale for school closings and several cited school closings as both an example of the devaluing of Black life in the area and a reason for an elevated homicide rate.

> "I mean the school closings is a perfect example. I mean, if you're looking for a perfect example of racial policies. That's the root of it, right? I mean, you're talking about the foundation of human life. You're talking about kids being displaced from home, from their home schools at the age of seven. I mean, that's the core of it. Education is… I mean, obviously that's where we're shaping minds and creating… we're creating that whole human aspect at that age and to be displaced at such a young age is to show that kid that he doesn't really matter. I mean, we've seen the result of that in Chicago, for sure."

This participant is aware and critical of the message that school closings send to the students. For those who mentioned school closings, many acknowledged that school closings mostly affect poor, Black and Latino students in Chicago. *Rather than putting money and effort into making neighborhood schools better, "underperforming" and "underutilized" neighborhood schools were abandoned, sending the message that the population wasn't worth the educational investment.* This is powerful when reflecting on the devaluing of Black life, but other participants mentioned other very real effects of school closings that affect North Lawndale's homicide rate: students/families crossing gang territories and an increase in the number of school drop-outs. Students who used to attend school down the street now must travel much farther, often traveling through two or three different gang areas to get to school and back. This increases the likelihood

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of violence for the student and their families, as family members often have gang ties but serve as the primary source of transportation for the students in the family. One participant mentioned the issue of sex-trafficking in the area, as predators victimize the students who now must walk a mile and a half to school. When students finally make it to the school for the day, their brains are too worried about safety to focus on learning. "There's no way possible I'm going to go in there and be productive because I had to go in there and be on security. And that's if I even go! A lot just stopped going." *School closings was a popular topic within many explanations of the neighborhood's high homicide rate—both for the message it sends and for the very real effects that increase the likelihood of violence.*

2. Punitive Responses vs. Caretaking

The interview data show that punitive responses to issues in North Lawndale are criminogenic. The logic of the racial project justifies punitive neighborhood responses that rely heavily on the police, mass incarceration, and the removal of those deemed problematic from the neighborhood. *The alternative to these punitive responses would be a caretaking approach-- a long-term neighborhood investment that would include mental health services to address neighborhood trauma. The punitive response to North Lawndale's homicide rate should be understood as the abandonment of care in North Lawndale.* Rather than uproot the poverty and disadvantage known to increase the likelihood in violence, mass incarceration has been a perverse attempt to manage it, causing a generational ripple effect of punishment in North Lawndale. The interview data reveal that the implementation of mass incarceration policies and individual violent actions in North Lawndale might be more connected than most policymakers would like to admit.

Interview participants echo the voices of academics and activists who have shown that we cannot arrest our way out of high levels of neighborhood violence. Not one community member interviewed called for a stronger police presence in the neighborhood; only the homicide detective prescribed more police and a mayor that supports policing efforts. Punitive measures in the community have only left North Lawndale more isolated and the city of Chicago more divided. Several interview participants blame the resulting missing parents and further fragmentation of families for high levels of violence in the city. Therefore, the same punitive measures used to address neighborhood violence are increasing the likelihood of violence in the community; high rates of incarceration have become criminogenic and a self-fulfilling prophecy. Crime statistics and homicide rates are used as justification for a lack of investment in solutions to meet the social and economic needs of North Lawndale residents. This is the abandonment of caretaking in the neighborhood. The investment in mass incarceration and punitive policies represent an abandonment of caretaking to the interview participants, as policymakers have been willing to ensure absence (or forced abandonment of the community) and loss rather than revitalization.

As previously stated, interview participants point to parental absence and the fracturing of families as a cause of the high homicide rate. Schools, then, should play an important role in the lives of youth who need safe spaces and positive guidance from adults. However, neighborhood schools are cited in the interviews as failures rather than caretaking spaces. One interview respondent said, "I know kids on this block who haven't been to school in over a year. And they're in grammar school. One got expelled and just never went back and I don't think anyone checked on him." In terms of the alternative to formal education, another respondent said, "They learn everything on the street. And the street gone teach you what the street wants to

teach you." Interview participants reported that both shooters and shooting victims are getting younger, many not even teenagers. However, rather than investing in safe, pro-social spaces for youth in North Lawndale, police officers, media, and politicians dismiss troubled youth as "gang involved." A majority of respondents say that the current spike in homicide isn't about gangs at all. However, with that label, society can deny any responsibility for their trauma, fragmented family, poor schooling, hunger, and sense of hopelessness and instead justify punitive measures. The preference for that label is a perfect example of the abandonment of care in North Lawndale.

Interview participants were asked their opinions about policing in North Lawndale as well as the Defund the Police movement and the responses varied but most echoed the idea of abandonment of care. Police were often described as the arm of the larger power structure in Chicago.

> "You got the police that… if anybody in the community is a person of power who can actually gather… do something for a lot of people, they use the police and hit you with RICO. They lock you up because you're dangerous to them. Not to the community though but to them. Because of your power… if you're powerful in the neighborhood, you're only going to become more powerful and they don't want you being equal to them so there you go. The police come in."

In this quote, the respondent clarifies the idea that police respond to danger in the community by arguing that danger isn't about danger to the community but danger to a larger power structure. There is a clear them-versus-us theme in this particular quote but also in many of the other interviews when referring to the relationship between the neighborhood and the police or the neighborhood and the city government.

There was an obvious distrust of the police present in a vast majority of the interviews and that distrust is generational. Respondents talk about police inciting wars in the community

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and between communities, redistributing drugs and weapons, and leaking information to gangs and cliques. Despite vocalized distrust of the police, surprisingly no one interviewed supported the idea of defunding the policing or a decreased police presence in the neighborhood. Many understood corrupt police as "the way things are" and three said the same thing—"there are good cops and there are bad cops." Two respondents specifically said that they want to keep police in North Lawndale but they just want them to be Black. When asked to elaborate further, one said that even if the Black cop is from the suburbs and has never spent time in North Lawndale, he/she will address any altercation with more understanding because the color of his/her skin. The second said that she would only involve police in a situation if she knew she could talk to a Black officer. According to this data, it's not the presence of the police but the individual police officer's racialized view or lack of understanding that affect police strategy and tactics in the neighborhood.

Other respondents show distrust in the police's ability and willingness to solve homicide cases in the community and connect that inability/unwillingness to the high homicide rate.

> "Because if you're giving me a pass to go out and do something and you're telling me I got an 80% chance to get away with it, what are the chances I might even try that? You know what I'm saying? You're only clearing 20% of the murders with all the technology and resources you have. But let it be a case that goes public… then you solve it immediately."

However, a homicide detective in the area disagreed that the low clearance rate is about an unwillingness to solve cases and instead blamed it on the lack of community cooperation and "no snitch" rules. However, he agreed with the participant in the previous interview that the knowledge of the police's inability to solve murder cases increases the likelihood of more homicides: "You need cooperation from your victim mainly. Obviously, you would love some

witnesses and evidence to corroborate some of the stories but a lot of times you don't get that. So

unfortunately, a lot of offenders know that it's a great possibility they can get away with doing

the things they do." He says the main factor stopping people from cooperating with the police is

fear of retaliation. When asked if that fear is valid, he responded quickly and said, "Absolutely."

According to this data, residents don't trust the way the police function within the community

but show a desire for their maintained presence. Some see the benefit of the police presence

while others have accepted a (sometimes corrupt) police presence as a permanent fixture of life

in the neighborhood. A common strategy for improving community and police relations is

making sure the police officers in North Lawndale are Black. However, the community's distrust

in the police reduces their willingness to work with police to solve homicides and thus increases

the likelihood of an individual making the rational decision to carry out a violent act.

The role of public spending continues to be a contentious political issue at every level of

government and in North Lawndale. At the core of this conversation in the neighborhood is a

question about the role of government in improving the lives of people and neighborhoods. The

punitive response to neighborhood conditions hides the issue, distracts the public, and vilifies the

community. Residents desire a more caretaking approach that is proactive and treats the

contributing factors of high rates of violence in North Lawndale rather than responding to the

violence that results from those factors and blaming the neighborhood's residents. Punitive

strategies have been carried out in North Lawndale by relying on the broken logic and tools of

the law to respond to generational trauma and PTSD in the neighborhood with confinement. One

interview participant voices his frustration about this broken logic:

> "But we always trying to put a band aid on trauma opposed to-- how do we prevent this
> shit? Like, let's work on a plan to prevent it. Like, you know what, we might lose some
> people. But if we keep doing it this way, we will continue to gang people into that mental
> health issue. And those people have issues because we're not trying to prevent the

trauma… like, we're ignoring that. Like, let's give them more therapists in the school. Well, why don't we have therapists in the schools? That's the school… that's supposed to be for education. Like, I just don't understand the logic."

The interview data shows that *trauma is very real in North Lawndale: individual, community, racial, and generational.* There is historical tension between families, cliques, and gangs in the community that has never been addressed and continues to play a part in neighborhood violence. A caretaking approach would address these multiple forms of trauma and historical tension in the community, as a majority of the interview participants argue that this would greatly affect the neighborhood homicide rate.

Throughout the interviews, a common theme is generational tension. This is the idea that a lot of violence takes place now because of situations that happened previously—sometimes even before the person involved was born. Participants describe this in the following ways:

"So now a lot of the killings are really for either historical… like you did some to my family, I'm on this block, I'm a part of this community and now you know, it is what it is. A lot of people don't know-- you kind of, like, born into this stuff. Cuz, like, if I'm just saying I'm related to you when one of your guys killed my uncle when I'm born, I don't like y'all. I don't like y'all. And y'all don't like me… you know, that's that so-and-so nephew. You don't know my personality, we ain't never had no altercation but I'm associated with them. I'm associated with the enemy… it's the same… if you look in a macro perspective, like, when America has conflict with somebody, they don't name individuals, they name the Russians, Iraq… so that's anybody Iraqi that's within this framework… that's they enemy. We don't just say my problem was with Osama Bin Laden. We was… at first we was bombing Afghanistan, we wasn't looking for one people… so it's the same on a micro level with clicks and really even families here. I don't like y'all."

"… once the blood is shed, you know, it's on. So some of this stuff is not traditional, but it's history. You know, past history or, you know, some guy killed this kid's dad when he was seven and now he's 15-16 and he's heard all these stories about this and that and, you know, one night he's out and he's off some drugs, you know, and it could just happen like that-- revenge."

"You know, that's exactly what violence is. That's what violence is. Violence is, to me, in North Lawndale… violence is anger that has been built up and passed down from generations."

The historical tension described isn't about just about gangs—most of the data says that it isn't about gangs at all. It could be familial or personal as well. One interview respondent describes this and its effects in North Lawndale:

> "It's historical, right? So I want to set a premise first or a foundation so that you understand like, by being set up like this, it's been loss of life for people that live in K-Town in North Lawndale… and even after the deconstruction of gangs and the displacement and the removal of gangs, it doesn't change the fact that you killed my brother or y'all killed my brother. Even though you change the name, you don't change the historical facts that this group of people did something to me… so we could never be allies or friends because you might have killed my father or my uncle. And… and it's been literally thousands of deaths over, just say over a decade… thousands of deaths. So think about the amount of people mad and holding on to that. And then it became more violent or complicated once the dividing lines were removed and now you can go into this space, and I can go into this space. So now, if we had historical challenges where you killed my father or my uncle or grandfather, or y'all did that, now I could easily come into this space and do something to you, or you could come up here and do something to me."

This participant is arguing that even though the traditional gang structure has changed and there are more cliques, the historical tension remains. The tension is often personal rather than gang related. However, because the gang structure changed, people can move around the community and get revenge easier without strict gang lines and the protection of gangs. Social dynamics change within a community, but tension remains and it's generational.

Trauma is described in many ways and through many examples in the interviews:

> "I know we're talking about Chicago but that's global. Trauma—that shit real. For real. So we're all programed, right? Like when you come out, you know, from your mother's womb… you don't know shit. Right? But then you get programed by your parents. They teach you this, teach you that. You're programmed by the TV. Programmed by the phone, your friends, school, whatever. All this programming. A lot of time, that programming doesn't teach us how to deal with that trauma. Because, to be honest, like, how could you? You really don't want your child to go through no trauma so why would you be trying to program and teach them how to, you know, get through trauma? No. And that even assumes that the parent knows how to because most don't. And once it happens, it's kind of, you know, not too late, but it's kind of, like, if you don't have someone around you that is constantly aware, that like that really knows how to get your mental back to a place of sanity.

It could be bad. Like, I was able to walk out my back door and just one block north, I see my best friend, like, laid out broad daylight, like you know I'm saying? Like, in broad daylight. Laid out. That moment, that picture is, like, so vivid in my head. At the time, I'm not even really understanding the trauma that it's creating for me. So it's crazy."

Interview participants describe dozens of events where they witnessed or experienced violence. Many could verbalize and identify the trauma that resulted from those events, but others described them in a more nonchalant way. What often compounds the trauma from experiencing violence is the trauma associated with being Black, poor, and socially isolated: "The trauma is violence trauma but also Black trauma and what you deal with on a daily basis." Interview respondents say that people respond to the multiple forms of trauma in North Lawndale in many ways—from seeking help and meditating to involving themselves in drugs and violence.

> "See, like, I honestly think we take the drug to, like, escape… to, like, get a different feeling because we're not constantly aware enough to be able to get present to get that feeling so we be stuck… so we be stuck in the past… like they've just seen their homie get smoked like two days ago so now a MF just stuck because he don't know how to, like, meditate or do yoga and, like, get back. They'll be stuck… that trauma. So to get away from that, he'll get high, drink, pop a pill, whatever… whatever his choice of drugs that allow him to escape from that. But meanwhile, I feel like the drug is removing him even far away from reality that allows him to make those decisions with that gun, because he's not even there. It's crazy."

This interview respondent describes drug use as a form of escapism from the feelings that result from trauma. However, both the trauma and the drugs increase that person's likelihood of committing a violent act. The theme of community trauma affecting an individual's likelihood to commit violence was also common in the interviews:

> "Because I can't take it. And the fact that… okay… not only can't I take it, I don't know how to digest it. So it's still on the top of my brain. So whichever person I go out the door and see… it could be I'm trying to go into the store and somebody's coming out of the store and bumps me. That sets me off. Now you done just shot two people that didn't have nothing to do with it and you done lost your life to the system. Over an argument. Well really over the fact that you couldn't digest your feelings. You don't know how."

"You've got so many people reacting on impulse that when the rush comes down, it's too late... you done shot and killed somebody and shot an innocent bystander or you done killed the wrong person and killed a child... or you done shot through somebody's window and killed the baby sitting on the couch watching tv. These things really happen because people angry and don't know what to do with that anger. Now they got to deal with the consequences."

These participants describe individual processes of dealing with trauma that often result in violence. This directly relates to the abandonment of care in North Lawndale as the frame is a high violence area, not an area experiencing generational trauma. To rely on a caretaking approach rather than a punitive approach in North Lawndale would mean recognizing and addressing community trauma through more pro-social alternatives to violence-- emotional counseling, yoga and meditation, boxing programs, etc. It also means realizing that a young person's arrest often means the need for a stronger support system (mentors, tutors, counselors) rather than complete removal from society.

"Violence comes from not having no other outlet. Not having no support. I think that having support, a support system is big... even if it's just one or two people. Just having somebody that you can go to, that you feel like they know you, they trust you, that you can depend on them... that's big. Sometimes, when you don't have that... it's bad. A lot of people out here don't have that."

Community members showed a strong desire for more mentors, particularly male mentors, in the community to work with young men and relate the absence of these mentors to increased levels of violence:

"Like, when I was younger, the guys I gravitated to was cool and out the way. Like, even if you grew up in fatherless homes, you had, like the park district, where there was a role model if you lacked that at home. That stuff is important. Because it's stuff that I say now that I learned form a guy at the park playing basketball when I was just a shorty. They don't have that no more."

In terms of the abandonment of care, mentorship is a piece that the participants say is often missing. Combining the number of men removed from the neighborhood through incarceration

with the strong need for alternatives to violence as a response to trauma, respondents say that the youth need positive male role models to demonstrate those alternatives.

North Lawndale is a racial project that racializes its violence as a community characteristic to justify multiple forms of abandonment, including the abandonment of care. Interview respondents described multiple examples of the abandonment of care in the neighborhood from devaluing Black life to utilizing punitive strategies versus proactive, caretaking strategies for providing safety. Respondents argued that these forms of abandonment of care directly relate to the creation of an environment in North Lawndale that increases the likelihood of homicide.

C. <u>State Abandonment and Disinvestment</u>

Community stakeholders in North Lawndale recognize State abandonment and disinvestment in their explanations of the neighborhood's historically high homicide rate. They recognize state abandonment of the neighborhood through concentrated poverty, the absence of social programs, a lack of jobs, school closings, and poor neighborhood maintenance. They argue that this abandonment leads to violence: "People expect action. And by them not taking that action or by disappearing, it makes the tension worse in the community."

North Lawndale's schools—both poor schooling and school closings-- have been discussed as examples of the devaluing of life but are also viewed by the community as examples of State abandonment. Few organizations are more revealing to the degree of institutional abandonment suffered by North Lawndale than its public schools. To stakeholders in North Lawndale, this poor schooling does not just result in the youth's lack of preparation to function

in society but it signals the collapse of public institutions in the racialized West Side

neighborhood, deepening the marginality of its population as a result of policies of abandonment.

The term "concentrated poverty" was prevalent in the interviews, as respondents often cited

it as a reason for the high homicide rate. "But what I do know is all over the world, where there

is concentrated poverty, and there is a lack of investment from one's government in things,

you're going to see a high propensity of drug use, high propensity of families being broken up,

and a high propensity of violent crimes. All these things occur in places like that." Those who

used this term in the interviews were exclusively associated with community organizations or

local politics. The category of "concentrated poverty" seemed to be used in interviews strictly to

denote North Lawndale's economic positioning within the city. Participants used the term to

literally talk about the level of poverty in the neighborhood, while also connecting that economic

positioning to race and institutional racism.

"Before any other reason for violence it is concentrated poverty. So everybody poor."

"At the root of the violence is concentrated poverty and institutional racism from red lining and a lack of opportunity to shutting out African Americans when they try to evolve out of the gang experience the way the Irish did, and all the other ethnicities… they evolved out of this gang culture into the workplace, but African Americans was shut out and weren't given the opportunity. So now there's concentrated poverty and they went deeper into the subculture."

"And even as elected officials have attempted to push resources this way, unless there is a… you know, when you have concentrated poverty, you know it's really hard to move a community out of the lot in which they're in."

"So what I think happens is… you have concentrated poverty, people try to find their way out of concentrated poverty. When you have concentrated poverty and… and you know, we're going through this now and people are talking about racism and systemic racism. I think that is all part of systemic racism. And then you flood a community with drugs and narcotics, and you intentionally break up families. And all of those things, I think, kind of happened in the early 70s… all the way up into, you know, the 2000s where there was an assault on black men, imprisoning them, you know, flooding the communities with drugs and then creating a war on drugs… not investing in this community. And then they're being intentional, I mean, poverty at very high levels, concentrated here, and then again, you got to

find your way out. And then if you go to jail, you have an "X" on your back now. And so you can't get a job and then families are destroyed. And that has happened, in terms of a cycle. And then when that happens, it means you got to find a way to get.... If you're not raised correctly, you're out on the street, and you got to figure out a way. And then I talked about the dismantling of gangs. I talked about the dismantling of gangs. And I'll get into that a little bit later. And so all of those things kind of create the perfect climate for a high propensity for homicide, a high propensity for violent crime, a high propensity for exactly what you see in North Lawndale."

Interview participants referred to concentrated poverty as North Lawndale's economic positioning as a result of institutional racism, not as a way to camouflage the persistence of race. They then connected this extreme level of poverty to the need to find alternative avenues of success and money, which increase the likelihood of violence and homicide.

"What's the median household income in North Lawndale? What-- 20,000? If that? I think that's the number one thing—poverty-- you know, desperate times call for desperate measures. I mean, you got people who don't know where their next meal is coming from. And they may not… they may not want to do the things they have to do. But what other options do they have? You know?"

Participants' explanations of the link between poverty and violence center the idea when legitimate means to money and success aren't available, people turn to more "illegitimate" means that increase the likelihood of violence and homicide. However, the interview data also shows that this financial strain is only one "strain" in the explanation of increased levels of homicide, as many people feel additional strains that also increase the likelihood of violence: racism, loss of jobs, inadequate facilities, poor schooling, trauma, fear of police, distrust in government. To interview participants, these strains felt by the community are eventually matched in the form of crime and delinquency, drug addiction, and other minor and major everyday acts of violence.

One strain felt by community members is a lack of jobs and an economy that does not favor poor, Black people who are portrayed as "lazy" for their lack of employment.

"But I think when it comes to the violence and the things that take place in that area, then and now but especially now, the economy is just not in favor of those in that community. A lot of times, when they say, 'Yeah, we're going to bring jobs to North Lawndale' or anything other community, typically those are minimum wage jobs—grocery stores and things like that. And there aren't even enough of those for the people here who want those jobs. So when you have people that have that option… so should I work 40 hours a week at minimum wage at a grocery store and still be just as poor or I can stay on public assistance and I can get rent paid, I can get a voucher for my electricity and a Link card and I can still live… and they typically do that."

According to the interview participants, joblessness leads to violence in different ways-- spare time, alternate avenues for money, and the resulting feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. One member of a community organization said, "I've often said you cannot ask the person to put down the gun if you don't give them anything to pick up—like a hammer or trade or something of that nature." Overall, the multiple examples of State abandonment and disinvestment in North Lawndale are connected to historically high levels of homicide.

D. <u>Dissolution of Traditional Gangs</u>

In terms of the multiple forms of abandonment in North Lawndale, the dissolution of traditional gangs and gang organization as a form of abandonment was an extremely popular theme in the interviews. The data show that what's happening on the ground in communities as a result of this dissolution is complex; the community views the dissolution of traditional gangs as a form of abandonment, as they provided a form of structure and stability in the community that no longer exists. However, many identify racism, intentionality, and a threat to the larger power structure with this process, trading "dissolution" for "dismantling."

Five participants explicitly said that what's happening on the ground in North Lawndale is not about gangs at all—at least not how we are used to thinking of gangs in Chicago. Others say that it is about gangs but then go on to describe cliques rather than gangs in their explanations.

Participants describe violence that is personal or related to more neighborhood- and individual street-based "cliques" that have little or no formal leadership structure. As a result of this change, violence is described as more spontaneous that is initiated by individuals, rather than organized by gang leaders. They report that these cliques are entirely new formations that are more related to streets, someone who has been killed, or personal networks than the traditional gangs. Members of a clique might be associated with different traditional gangs but have a stronger tie to the clique than the traditional gang. People in the community associate the changes from traditional gangs to clique or the complete dissolution of traditional gangs in general with increased levels of violence in the community, a lack of structure, and government intentionality. The participants realize that the media and the general public blame gangs on the West Side for the high homicide rate but the interview participants actually associate the traditional gangs with stability and the breakdown of those gangs with racism at the city level, often using the word "dismantling" instead of "dissolution."

> "So I think… gangs were created, especially in Chicago and on the west side of Chicago, to protect folks in the community, right? It started off as, you know, they had a rule… a book of rules of what would happen and what you did and what we need to do and… they wanted to make sure that they were bettering their community. They would say "Vice Lords" so they were essentially saying that they were, you know, caretakers of their… what God had created and a caretaker of those folks. So they got social programs and they tried to feed the homeless and they, you know, tried to start a job program and they did things that social service agencies usually do but didn't. However, if you don't have the money with which to do it, then it doesn't always work out the way that you'd want it to. And so… and then again, you know, they started the voter drive. The voter drive, which is really what kind of turned the government against them to do a bonus registration drive. If you're getting folks within the community to vote and you start messing with the voters then it becomes an issue for those who are in power. And so that's… I think the dismantling of the gangs came then."

> "And there was an attempt for gangs in the 70s and 80s to kind of pull itself up by the bootstraps and the city actually started to invest and give them money to kind of do social programs. But when the gangs became too powerful, of course they dismantled the gangs."

> "And so, what I think happened is that the gangs became very powerful, in terms of drugs, and they used them to sell drugs and they were thinking that this was a way to get out. But

you know, when you have concentrated poverty and you give that one kind of person that control over that hierarchy over the gangs and drugs, then they become as powerful as the government and so then, the government then has to remove them. And so when they took the head from the gangs, gangs that were organized, and kind of focused just their attention on gang members, that kind of fractured and splintered. And now we're at a place where there is no head of the gangs, there is no hierarchy. There are no rules for gangs. And there's a mob on each… it's not gangs anymore, there's a mob on each street. If each block is fighting between each other then… and they're fighting for, you know, for territory. And it's not always drugs these days. It is, you know, social media and things of that nature and just fighting for territory and that's just kinda how it is. And I think also contributes to the high rates of violence."

The community doesn't view the shift in gang structure from organized gangs to cliques as a natural process—they view it through the lens of intentionality, racism, and the threat to the city power structure. They also view traditional gangs as an institution that provided stability in the neighborhood.

"…even on the street they said you have to go to school. But one of one of our laws is you have to be an asset to the community. And you live by the principles of love, peace, truth, justice and freedom. So… which is the essence of man so you live by certain laws, which is to be an asset to, not only to your community, but to greater society."

There is consistent agreement among the interview participants that the gang structure has changed and that change has increased the levels and changed the context of homicides in the neighborhood. While the traditional gangs are associated with rules, hierarchy, organization, and neighborhood stability, the cliques in the community now are associated with chaos. People showed respect for the Vice Lords in North Lawndale, even calling the area "sacred" because it was the birthplace of the gang. An older member of the Vice Lords from the neighborhood said that "there is a lack of respect for the rules" among the younger gang members now and it's causing an increased number of homicides. Outside of a lack of respect for the rules, community members mentioned the following effects of the dissolution of traditional gangs: younger shooters, increased drug use, distrust between old and young gang members, and random

violence. Interview participants associated these effects with a more recent rise in the homicide

rate.

> "It's a big shift. It's a big shift … and first of all, let me clarify something… I speak as an insider, someone that was a part of a subculture group, and most of the… it was some instances where it was gang violence based upon disrespect or something, but it didn't last long because in the 80s, and 90s, the drug economy was so huge that it had to be over something big in order for the beef to last, so for us to go to war… one of the things people didn't understand back then too… if you at war, you don't make a lot of money. Because a lot of people, the whole way you run your operation is different, because you constantly at war with an opposing organization. So typically, when you had some type of challenge… we still had historical allies and enemies but typically you try to resolve it if it could be… if it wasn't no loss of life. Another thing… most other people… most of the violence was assigned… it was directed… it was more directed. What I mean by that… In the 80s and 90s people that were getting killed were people involved in the underground or the subculture life… and it was rules established, like, very rarely with the hierarchy and the structures in place, very rarely would a 13-year-old be even with a gun… they take it from you. You had to go to school. There were rules that had to be followed."

The older interview respondents displayed nostalgia about gang life in the 80s and 90s as

compared to the cliques of today. One of the differencs older interview participants mentioned

was the age of the shooters today. There were several references in the interviews to much

younger shooters as compared to the 80s and 90s. The respondents attribute this to the shift away

from traditional gang rules but also rational choices made on the street based on juvenile

sentencing compared to adult sentencing.

> "And what's happening and the biggest reason the violence has spiked or the change in the violence is without the structure, the age limit no longer applies. Like remember, you had to be a certain age, you had to go to school… all that's out the door, because every street, every little clique has autonomy and no one can tell them anything."

Several participants echoed this idea that the age limit no longer applies but what is interesting is

that many said that the use of younger actors on the street is often a rational choice based on the

knowledge of more lenient juvenile sentencing laws. This either implies different goals of

leadership or a lack of leadership in general. Interview participants were split—some calling this a choice by leaders and other saying it is a result of the lack of leadership.

> "And then they try to come up with legislation for the juveniles because those are the ones being trained to carry this out. Because since there is no legislation for it… if you kill somebody and you're 15, you just gon' do juvenile life… you get out at 21."

> "Yes, it's thought out. Yeah, because now you got 14-, 15-year-olds… they're doing carjackings, they're the majority of the ones getting caught with the guns because you got… their big homies, their guys got them doing that because they found the flaw in the system."

So the shift from the traditional gangs of the 80s and 90s with rules and structure has resulted in younger shooters, either through a lack of leadership or the result of the rational decision of leadership. Because the shooters are younger, their decision making looks different. Respondents say that younger shooters are more emotional, inexperienced, and quicker to shoot. They also said that the younger shooters are more likely to engage in drug use. They report that the more traditional gangs had rules against drug use, especially the harder drugs that are more prevalent with the cliques now.

> "Another thing that's changed that increased violence is… the culture in the 90s was… it was a stigma if you used drugs. The only drugs that were acceptable were alcohol and marijuana… that was acceptable. You could still have reverence or be looked at as a leader. Now, the culture shift is, it's acceptable the use hallucinogenics and it's acceptable to use… some of them are molly's, ecstasy, a lot of people take Percocet… prescription drugs are big, too, from the opioid family. So a lot of people are numbed while they are doing the violence whereas when I was growing up, people were sober doing the violence and they were thinking their way through about how to get away whereas now they're just reacting off impulse and… ummm… from my understanding, like, ecstasy and things like that intensifies whatever you're feeling. So if you're upset with somebody, now it's times 50. And the drug will make you respond in a way that's irrational, that you can't really understand until you crash off the drug. You can't even believe you did that until you come down. So if you think now you got inexperienced people that's young and that's numb, high off drugs doing homicide as opposed to people that's sober and thinking strategically how to get the person out there and how to get away… it's two different, totally different processes going on."

Drugs on the street are becoming more dangerous as they are more often laced with new substances and as they are used by younger members of cliques. The interviews associate the increased use of these new, more dangerous drugs among younger cliques with the dissolution of traditional gangs and their rules for drug use. The combination of younger shooters and the use of more intense drugs increases the likelihood of homicide in North Lawndale. Participants say that this makes someone more likely to pull the trigger and turn an altercation deadly. It also decreases discernment, as the person is more likely to shoot into crowds with innocent people—families, kids, etc. Respondents agree that there is more random violence than in the 80s and 90s and say that it's because of drug use, younger shooters, and a lack of respect for the rules. "And it was rules to it. Like, if you with your girl, your wife and your kids. Like, that was a no-go. It was so many rules. It was so many rules to it back then. And now you just seeing people shoot at people with their kids. And it's just totally different man." This nostalgia about "the ways things were" back in the 80s and 90s was popular among the older interview participants. However, the younger participants did not speak about the traditional gang structure with the same level of respect.

There is obvious distrust between older members of the traditional gangs and younger members of cliques. Older members blame the younger cliques for the lack of structure and random violence in the community and the younger members of cliques say that they don't trust the older gang members because of mistakes they've made handling the streets in the past. One younger guy said, "It's just because as time went on, faults and errors were made that people saw. Like say you saw a top guy manipulating the system. So he set up a system to where it seems like it's benefiting everybody but then it doesn't benefit everybody. As time went on, people saw that." The interview data shows that there is a huge disconnect between these two

groups that is fueled by distrust. One respondent even reported that the older guys fear the younger guys now:

> "At the current moment, my take on it is like… as far as the gangs and violence, there isn't structure in the gangs like there once was when I was younger. When I was younger, there was more structure and the higher-ups had say-so and a lot of the influence. Nowadays the elders have less influence. They have some but when I was younger, it was more like they… for lack of better words… dictated the pace of the youth, you know? Now, the youth are renegades. They go against the grain. They don't care about the old. In a lot of situations, the older guys are scared of the younger guys because the younger guys are reckless. They are callous. But it's from the things that they've seen in their time frame. And not only that, as far as with older guys… even though they dictated the pace of their youth, they were seen in a different light. You know… they weren't upstanding people the way that they should have been or the way they try to make it seem. These young kids saw that. A few generations in between, you get to see that, like, the person that preached this and that to me, in certain situations, he wouldn't even follow some of the teachings. He would sacrifice me for him being better off. So I might as well get out there and sacrifice myself for me, instead of letting you sacrifice me."

A majority of interview respondents center the dissolution of traditional gangs into cliques in their explanation of the high homicide rate in North Lawndale. However, the story is complex. The dissolution of traditional gangs and their rules have caused younger shooters, increased drug use, distrust between generations, and random violence. Community members often associate the traditional gangs with structure and stability in the community and younger cliques with chaos, but the younger generation disagrees, saying that the traditional gangs and their members are not worth looking up to. The distrust displayed between the older gang members and the younger members of cliques was prevalent in all but two interviews with participants associated with gangs/cliques. The two that did not display distrust acknowledged the difference in street culture between the two generations in a way that lacked strong opinions about the changes. However, every single one of these interviews with gang/clique members acknowledged the shift from gangs to cliques in the explanation of and context behind the homicide rate. The dissolution (or "dismantling") of traditional gangs in North Lawndale is viewed as a form of abandonment, as a

majority of the community stakeholders say it was an intentional attack on the neighborhood by the city's larger power structure, resulting in cliques with a lack of rules and structure. This follows the theme of intentionality and the racial project of abandonment from the interviews. This dissolution has greatly impacted the homicide rate in North Lawndale as well as the context of homicide.

VI.   FINDINGS 2: RESULTS OF ABANDONMENT

As shown from the previous findings chapter, the community stakeholders interviewed in this study understand homicide not as the expression of the senseless "pathology" of the residents but as the by-product of the policies of abandonment. The four forms of abandonment increase the likelihood of homicide, so homicide should be understood from this data as a result of abandonment. However, the respondents also said that this equation of causality is not that simple. Abandonment increases the likelihood of homicide in North Lawndale in different ways and is felt in the community in media portrayals of the neighborhood that justify the abandonment, community organizations that fill in the gaps, varying mindsets that display distrust, alternate avenues for success, and various community anti-violence strategies. Abandonment leads to an increased likelihood of homicide in different ways. The different results and contexts of abandonment are worth addressing before developing antiviolence policies in North Lawndale.

The findings show that interview participants see the abandonment of the neighborhood as an intentional racial project, citing the media's stigmatization of the neighborhood and its violence. The community is actively resisting the media portrayals of North Lawndale's violence, saying that *the "hyper violent" label increases the likelihood of violence*. The abandonment has resulted in generational mindsets that reflect distrust and correlate to an increased likelihood of homicide. *Community members identify the police (and their response) as a form of violence within itself.* The interview data showed more extreme variation in feelings about community organizations in North Lawndale than any other theme in the data. However, there was consensus that community organizations are filling in the gaps left by the institutions that abandoned North Lawndale. The community has implemented various official and unofficial

antiviolence strategies in the neighborhood that include providing safe spaces, avoiding calling the police, providing jobs, stressing beautification and pride in neighborhood, and monitoring social media. Lastly, participants say abandonment of the neighborhood has caused people to find alternative avenues for success that increase the likelihood of homicide, particularly through the drug market, drill music, and a reputation for being a "bad ass" or violent. These alternative avenues have often made violence a commodity itself rather than a means to an end.

A.   Media Portrayals

The weaponization of the homicide rate in the media as a community characteristic justifies the neighborhood's multiple forms of abandonment. Interview respondents were aware of the neighborhood's notoriety as extremely violent and resist this portrayal. While many acknowledge the violence, they critique the media's one-dimensional portrayal of North Lawndale and instead provide dozens of the neighborhood's positive attributes. Much like the examples in the previous chapter, the residents recognize the intentionality behind the portrayal of North Lawndale as dangerous "no-go" area within the city of Chicago.

> "That's on purpose. Come on now. That shit is done on purpose. They control what you see on TV. What the outsiders see. I have had times when people have come to Chicago and North Lawndale and seen nothing. And they're like, 'What? I thought this was Chiraq for real!' That's what everyone says coming here from outside of Chicago. And outside the neighborhood, really, depending on who it is. I'll be like, 'Nah, bro. It's cool, bro. Shit be happening but it ain't like that."

> "The statistics and the stories make it look worse than it is. It ain't as bad as it's portrayed to be. You know? I'm not afraid when I go to the store or go get some gas. I don't need a gun. But violent things do happen, you know? So I think it's just like any other place in the world. I don't see it as that bad. But they definitely going to blow that story up."

One respondent connected the media portrayals of North Lawndale to increased violence in the neighborhood, saying, "If you're portrayed as an animal, told you're an animal, you're going to

act like an animal." I followed this statement by asking, "So the outside label of the neighborhood as dangerous actually feeds into it being dangerous?" and the respondent replied, enthusiastically, "Yeah! Without a doubt. That's how it works." Another respondent said, "It's like any negative part of it… it's promoted so much. Like if you watch the news… I had to stop watching the news for a minute because it was messing with my head." This is an important point because not only are the residents aware of their portrayal but also the results of that portrayal and they are resisting it. They are aware of the racial project that not only justifies the multiple forms of abandonment but increases the likelihood of homicide. One resident even points out that although the homicide rate of the last five years in Chicago is making national headlines, it's right where it was back in the 80s and 90s.

> "The truth is that we are probably much safer that we were in the 80s and 90s. But because of the advent of social media and just access to news on a 24 hour cycle, there's so much content on television and people are searching for things. For some reason, people are fascinated by the idea of these hyper-violent areas. So these things are brought to bear a lot more. Don't get me wrong, it's violent. One murder is more than one wants to have happen. And, unfortunately, we do get our share of murders, but it is not as violent as people are led to believe by media records. And we have to pay attention to why that is."

The media portrayal of North Lawndale as "hyper violent" is critical to the racial project of abandonment. It is also part of the devaluing process that the respondents mentioned throughout the interviews as a key to understanding the historically high homicide rate. Through a portrayal of the neighborhood as extremely violent, the residents themselves are viewed as violent, a historically dehumanizing trait that devalues the entire neighborhood, ultimately justifying the multiple forms of abandonment. However, the acknowledgement of the exaggerated media portrayal is resistance to the way North Lawndale is positioned within Chicago— the residents are resisting the racial project.

B. Community Organizations to Fill in the Gaps

The interview data show a wide range of feelings about community organizations in North Lawndale. These opinions stretch from those who think community organizations are a pillar of the community to those who argue community organizations are the reason for increased violence in the last five years. There was no other theme within the data that was so extreme in variation. Despite the difference in opinions, community members agree that these community organizations are filling in the gaps left by the institutions that abandoned North Lawndale. However, there is disagreement about the effectiveness of the city's investment in North Lawndale in reducing the neighborhood's homicide rate. It is important to note that many interview respondents were from community organizations, yet that did not always dictate a strictly pro-community organization response.

Four community members expressed extreme levels of distrust when speaking about community organizations, particularly the organizations that address neighborhood violence. The most extreme negative responses came from community members who were not associated with any community organizations or antiviolence programs. The distrust came from the organizations' alleged misuse of funds, reliance on gang members, small reach within the community, and use of outsiders to do community work. One community member's negative feelings about community organizations came from her inability to find a job with them. For those with the most extreme negative opinions, they explicitly associated these organizations with increased levels of violence in North Lawndale. One respondent said, "One of the reasons the violence is so high is because of these nonprofit organizations that's getting the funding and not doing the work for the community." Another said, "I promise you, they're hurting the community. They're hurting the city!" When I asked for clarification about the connection

between these organizations and increased levels of homicide, the respondent said, "By doing absolutely nothing. They cater to themselves rather than the kids. People expect action. And by them not taking that action, it makes the tension worse in the community." These more vocal community members are aware of the amount of money pouring into the neighborhood through community improvement initiatives like INVEST South/West and are disappointed by the outcome.

In terms of the city's preference to invest in community organizations run by ex-gang members to "interrupt violence" in the street, one community member said, "Y'all act like the only people that can rebuild my community are the ones that y'all saw tear it up. They're the only ones that they feel can do something—you got to be in a gang. You got to have been in jail." While they are excited about new revenue sources to North Lawndale, they express frustration about being left out and about the fact that the resources and their distribution were largely out of their control. The new revenue stream from the city is unfamiliar to longstanding North Lawndale residents, causing them to judge and distrust the recipients of the funds. This uncertainty has ignited growing gossip, suspicions, and accusations that rattle intimate social and political networks in the community. To those who are critical of community organizations, the creation of a responsible group for the oversight of funds is just as important as distributing the funds to North Lawndale, especially if the distrust of these organizations breeds tension and a higher homicide rate in the neighborhood.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, community organizations are also described in interviews as critically important pillars of the community, as they have filled in the gaps left by the institutions that have abandoned North Lawndale. A significant number of interview participants are involved with a community organization to some degree—officially or

unofficially. While there were community members who express extreme frustration with the (primarily antiviolence) community organizations in North Lawndale, many say that the organizations are doing what they say they do and the services they provide greatly improve life in the neighborhood. These findings are important, as many organizations were named in the interviews as critical to neighborhood organization, including North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, North Lawndale Employment Network, UCAN, Sweet Beginnings, the Restorative Justice Community Court, U-Turn Permitted, and Lawndale Christian Legal Center.

C. Community Anti-Violence Strategies

Community stakeholders are aware of the structural factors taking place in North Lawndale that are increasing the likelihood of homicide but also discuss really important work people are already doing in the community to address the violence. People aren't in this space stagnant. It's not just about people being disenchanted; community members are saying that they know what to do, can do it and have been doing it on a small scale. The larger question they raise in this data is—is there the political will to think about North Lawndale as a space to approach holistically as opposed to one centered around containment and abandonment? The community is aware of the conditions increasing the likelihood of homicide in North Lawndale and have implemented antiviolence strategies at every level, from individual to organizational strategies, to address the neighborhood's street violence.

Community members report avoiding the police as a violence-reduction strategy. *Community members identify the police and their response as forms of violence within themselves.* By avoiding calling the police in certain situations, community members report that tension in the neighborhood is reduced. Reduced community tension leads to reduced violence.

"But in certain situations we want to like try to like not have to get police involved where… if we can help, we will do the helping and if we can't, then we'll try to look for outside help but most of the time we like to stay in the community because they know us, they know your face… they don't have to worry-- they don't they don't feel scared. They don't, like, have to go cautious when… as if it was somebody else like the police. It's good… I think what helps is that familiar face. If they know the face, they'll be most likely to, like-- oh, okay, so I know you're not going to cause me any harm… you've done all this helpful stuff for us. We know you're not going to cause us this harm. So we'll gladly accept your help. And what I've seen is-- even if a cop is only looking to help, looking to do good, they are so skeptical that they won't even accept the help. Like, so calling the cops will just be another issue in itself because now we've created a panic… a headache that is not needed. So we try to keep the cops out as much as possible."

"The police caused this because we grew up with the crooked cops and stuff like that, you know what I'm saying? That's the mind frame that you have. I've watched the guys run and y'all catch them and tell them to get y'all a pistol and all that kind of stuff. But nobody believed those guys. Nobody believed that that was happening to those guys. I watched how y'all used to come over there and take them guys money and stuff like that. Like I watched that. I watched that. I've seen that. So that's where the relationship started being broken at because everything is a cycle. Everything is a cycle. The same thing I saw… my children watched. Because it'd be the same thing that they see. They children gonna watch it. So it's just gonna be that cycle every time because it could have started with my parents. What they saw. What they saw, I watched. So it's that cycle with the police that goes back to the violence."

These community members feel like people in the community are in a much better situation to interject in these scenarios than the police, who are viewed as outsiders that increase the tension in tense situations. Interview respondents show extreme distrust in the police and the use of police in addressing violence in North Lawndale and thus actively avoid calling the police whenever possible. However, the previous chapter showed that they are also hesitant to eliminate the presence of the police in North Lawndale.

Community members frequently mention the strategy of providing a space for people who are "in trouble" in the street to "lay low" and "buy some time." This strategy is the most popular with community organizations but also with community members who aren't associated with an organization.

"What some people do is, if they know some of the kids in the community, they would specifically go pick them up and take them places, like take them home. And if they know that they're into something serious, they will call someone and say, 'Hey, look, I need you to go get some food for this one kid. He's in some serious trouble. We want him to stay in the house. We don't want him to get involved with anything else. We want him to keep a low profile. Can you take care of this?' They will literally go and take care of that for them to make sure that they don't get involved in anything that they're not supposed to."

This strategy requires information/knowledge about the happenings of the street, a network of people who have access to resources, and a willingness to use those resources and run errands for the people who are in trouble in North Lawndale. In this example, the young person was able to stay in his home and buy some time. Other similar strategies rely on the idea that "buying time" is crucial, but provide a space outside of the home for that person to go to, sometimes to simply buy time and other times to vent and release anger/frustration that could turn into violence.

"And so that's why we try to create a space here at the office. That's technically not what our offices are for, but it helps. So when guys do have those types of issues, or they not feeling safe on the streets and stuff like that, just come over to the office. We got a TV here, we have a room where they can eat at. So guys can just come and hang out. We got WIFI. That's everybody's best friend."

"We really think it's important to give you space to vent, space if you want to talk to someone. I'm talking about, we're just going to buy some time for you. Like you can just stay here and hang out until whoever is here has to leave. We can get you some food and everything. Because what we don't want you to do is take that conversation you had with her, that disagreement, and run into the street and do something to somebody else who's not even deserving of it. And so that's the role we play with these guys."

This second strategy speaks to the popular theme of trauma in the interviews, where people are quick to react on impulse. This strategy also requires trust from the person experiencing the anger and the emotional maturity and experience to know that he/she needs time to "cool off." While several respondents say that removing people from the streets to cool off or "buy time" seems to work, they also acknowledge the individual cost to the person who decides to take the

time away from the street. They argue that antiviolence strategies need to address both the real costs and the opportunity costs of "laying low" to be effective.

> "So currency's universal. So knowing that the guys know that and that that affects their decision-making… that they can't stand out and sell drugs because the block is hot or they're in trouble with the opps… they can't because their security level is so high, if they come out, the opps is on them. But they might still go because they need to eat, feed their kids, girl, whatever. So you really need the stipends that we're giving to help make up for the loss that you're taking from not being able to go out. Otherwise they still gotta go out. They gotta eat. It's just reality."

This strategy assumes a rational choice that weighs costs and benefits. The people who rely on this strategy to prevent violence acknowledge people's need to involve themselves in dangerous, potentially violent, situations to make money. In all three examples of the strategy of removing people in trouble from the streets, it's important to note that food and resources were provided to reduce people's incentive to engage in street activities. People need food, rides, WIFI, physical spaces that provide protection, and stipends when taking the time away from the street to let things "cool down." They also need the emotional maturity and forethought to know that they need time to cool off when they're angry and trust in the people they turn to for help.

Along the lines of creating an incentive to leave the streets, job creation is critically important. Interview participants report that the average person in North Lawndale needs a well-paying, respectable job and those returning to North Lawndale from prison need jobs, skills, and job training. Respondents report official and unofficial ways that people in the community address the need for jobs and job training in the community. Several respondents mention the North Lawndale Employment Network as a critical community organization addressing this particular need in North Lawndale.

> "I've often said you cannot ask the person to put down the gun if you don't give them something to pick up—like a hammer or a trade or something of that nature. And so you have folks who are actively working on that. One particular that comes to mind is the North Lawndale Employment Network who takes individuals directly from prison and

they have several job training programs that work. So they have several programs in and around North Lawndale where they have a social enterprise called Sweet Beginnings, where they make honey and honey-infused products. They have this thing called U-Turn Permitted where if you recently returned home from incarceration and then they kind of help you along with your matriculation and to get you back into society and help you with jobs and so… when you do things like that, then you are helping, I think, reduce violence within any particular community, specifically in North Lawndale."

North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) was mentioned as a community organization that provides job training and helps community members secure jobs, particularly returning citizens. This community organization fills in the gaps left from capital abandonment in the neighborhood by responding to the notion that unemployment causes increased levels of violence.

Community members also mention more unofficial strategies to address the need for jobs in North Lawndale. One elderly woman says that she noticed her neighbor's son is increasingly engaging in different forms of delinquent behavior so she uses him for housework and grocery runs, finding ways to give him some extra money in hopes that it will reduce his need to be in the street. Community members with businesses and access to official and unofficial job opportunities mentioned that they try to hire from within North Lawndale. However, most people report relying on the bartering/trading of services in the community instead of official job creation. Within this data, though, is the understanding that jobs and job training are connected to violence reduction. While some people have the ability to provide these resources through official means, others do so unofficially.

Community members mention the importance of respecting the physical appearance of North Lawndale as a strategy of violence prevention. There is power in pride in the community, when people take ownership in their street, individual properties, and the neighborhood's overall physical appearance. A longtime resident of North Lawndale says,

> "I just try to get these guys to understand, like, this is really *your neighborhood*. This is your neighborhood. So rebuild the community up. Because the whole thing is… if we cleaned the block up, we take pride in that, you know. Hey man pick that up… that's garbage right there. So I try to have them build their own neighborhood up. So they can respect it more. So if you're going to do some land development or anything like that stuff, use the people from the neighborhood to do it. Because that gives them something to do."

There are two important points made in this quote: (1) maintaining the physical appearance of North Lawndale increases pride and (2) hiring from within the community also increases pride and reduces free time. Pride in the community reduces feelings of disposability that interview respondents say directly affect the homicide rate. Both of these points made by participants are important violence reduction strategies.

Finally, people in the community monitor the social media accounts of the youth in the neighborhood. This was an interestingly popular strategy with residents both associated and unassociated with community organizations. Again, this strategy requires street knowledge, access to the youth's social media, and respect between the younger and older people in North Lawndale.

> "So we do social media checks. And when we see guys on there doing stuff that they know they ain't supposed to be doing… "Bro, take that down. Yeah, take that down." Because what's going to happen is, you're going to… you're going to entice somebody and now it's going to be back and forth. So we get on that immediately. I mean, posting guns, smoking weed… no. Take it down. And it's starting to… you know, you're starting to see some positivity with it."

> "I'm on social media and I watch these kids. Kaitlin, I've known these kids since they were born. I know their parents and sometimes their parents' parents. If I see them doing something stupid, acting all tough, I tell them. Take that down. Why you not in school? Those not your guns…. You gonna get yourself in trouble. I'll come find them. Call their mom. I don't play that. That'll get you killed out here. And they all know me. They'll listen. Because they know I've seen it all… seen it all. They don't want to die. That's the key… and I remind them that'll get you killed out here."

> "And that's what it really is out here causing the violence… you got that Snapchat, and Instagram, and Facebook. That's why we monitor all participants' social media. Because you are… because of your contract. It says nothing negative is to be posted. And if it's posted, we have to get on top of that and take disciplinary action against you."

It is well-known by interview respondents that social media has significantly impacted the context of violence in North Lawndale. Social media was mentioned throughout the interviews in descriptions of the more micro causes of violence. Therefore, community organizations have written social media antiviolence strategies into their routines and community members with access to social media, respect with younger generations, and a strong network in the community have implemented their own social media antiviolence strategies.

These community-level antiviolence strategies are incredibly important for policy, as policymakers rarely talk about the antiviolence efforts already taking place in the community. North Lawndale proves to have the knowledge, problem-solving ability, and desire to address violence on a small scale. People are not in this place helpless and stagnant. As stated earlier, the larger question is—is there the political will to think about North Lawndale as a space to approach holistically as opposed to one centered around containment and abandonment? By looking at, acknowledging, and respecting what people are already doing in North Lawndale, policymakers can implement more effective antiviolence strategies that provide additional resources to what is already taking place. This builds on the respondents' point about taking ownership of the community as well as its antiviolence efforts. This idea of implementing the community's antiviolence efforts will be applied in greater detail in the policy recommendations in the following chapter.

D. __Mindsets__

Another way that the results of the multiple forms of abandonment appear in the community is a general mindset that reveals distrust. This mindset was broken down in the interviews to include feelings of hopelessness, the community improvement funds as reparations, and distrust

of government/politics. The connection between some of these mindsets and violence is more obvious than others. However, all should be viewed as the results of the multiple forms of abandonment in North Lawndale, as people have adjusted their mindsets due to decades of different forms of abandonment. What's important about these mindsets is that they are generational-- respondents say that they are passed down through generations in North Lawndale. The more obvious connection between these different types of mindsets is the distrust embedded within each.

Many community members express feelings of hopelessness resulting from the abandonment of North Lawndale. North Lawndale was described by one respondent as having an "atmosphere of hopelessness or struggle." And again, people connect feelings of hopelessness to the larger racial project and its intentionality: "It is designed for that level of hopelessness to exist as a homogeneous experience on the West Side." They also commented on the connection between these feelings of hopelessness and the homicide rate: "Hopelessness is at the center of violence in the community. Live for what? And if I'm in pain, you're going to be in pain too." Another respondent echoes this idea that hopelessness breeds violence in North Lawndale:

> "They're hopeless. Hopeless breeds violence because you don't really care… you know what, you might go to jail because of what you did but for some people that might be better than being on the street. They can eat, sleep somewhere, and it sucks but that's the mentality of somebody who's hopeless. But that's because of what has been taken from this community. When that hopeless pool starts to increase, you know, basically getting rid of the middle class. It's like now a lot of people don't see no future. At least not a good one."

The multiple forms of abandonment in North Lawndale increase the likelihood of violence but the story is more complex. Abandonment increases the likelihood of violence in different ways. These respondents argue that it is through the resulting feelings of hopelessness that people are more likely to engage in homicide.

There was an interesting mindset that popped up in several interviews as a result of abandonment in North Lawndale: the idea that the recent stream of income to North Lawndale through community improvement funds is reparations for all the harm done to the community. Under this thinking, the community should be able to do whatever they want with the money without city oversight. They also view it as a short-term investment by the city that will eventually run dry. This mindset is saying- you and I both know you have abandoned us, so you owe us this money (with no strings attached) to repair the harm caused by the abandonment.

> "So, if they're going to give you the resources, and they're going to give you some direction, take it because it's in the form of 40 acres and a mule… because you're definitely not going to get that. But if they're going to give you some resources now, and they're going to give you some direction to go and be successful with it, take it. I'll take it because it wasn't given before. I guess now they call themselves saying 'sorry.'"

> "I call it reparations but I know better than some other people taking the money and playing around with it. Why now? After y'all left us out here like this for so long? All of a sudden you want to help. You want us to mess up with that money because you know they'll be watching. Then they get to say 'we tried.' Y'all owe us the money though… no matter what ends up happening with it."

The interviews confirm that money is absolutely needed in North Lawndale but the city's motive is viewed with skepticism and distrust. The local government is not considered a partnering institution that wants to see North Lawndale do well and become revitalized long-term. While reparations, in general, are an acknowledgement of harm done, the respondents express a significant disconnect between the goals of the local government and the community. The community understands economic justice and healing to be integral to racial justice in the community after decades of abandonment, so there is a need for compensation towards conciliation. The question in the residents' minds is whether the city truly wants to see revitalization from the funds or a resource battle that fuels the racial project.

Throughout the interviews, including in the conversations describing these various mindsets, respondents show strong distrust of government and politics. The residents of North Lawndale have learned to remove trust from political figures. While this distrust is embedded within the other mindsets discussed, it is a mindset within itself and it is generational.

> "It's very different now because everybody has this "don't say nothing to me" attitude. "You can't tell me nothing" attitude. To me, I look at it because they have been forgotten for so long. That now you're trying to integrate them in situations… it's like nah, like, where y'all been all this time? Or where were you all at at this moment? And that's why my neighborhood has a lot of disregard for any type of political figure. My neighborhood has a disregard for… But there are certain age groups that have a disregard for the political scene because they feel like I watched you do this to my grandmother. I watched you do this, you know. So that's the attitude that a lot of them have when it comes to the politics and, you know, the input that they have within the community."

Like the conversation of generational trauma in the previous chapter, mindsets and the distrust embedded within them are passed down generation to generation. This distrust is taught as a defense mechanism—something that the older generations learned as a means for survival. A lot of antiviolence community organizations rely on trust between the community, the organization, and the city but that trust has been fractured. The interview data show that this distrustful mindset is generational and a result of decades of State abandonment and disinvestment and must be addressed when implementing antiviolence policy in the neighborhood.

E. Alternative Avenues for Success

The interview data show that there is a gap between the desire of many in the community to experience success and respect and the more legitimate, socially acceptable means to achieve them. Therefore, people find alternative avenues for success and respect—many likely to increase the likelihood of homicide. The interview data show that these alternative avenues include the drug market, drill music, and displays of masculinity/bravado. The need to find

alternative avenues for success results from the multiple forms of abandonment in North Lawndale that have removed many of the socially acceptable means for achieving success. Several respondents confirm that people often engage in risky or violent behavior in their desire to achieve a sense of accomplishment, often displaying extreme masculinity or bravado:

> "You couldn't always ascribe, remember, to be a doctor, lawyer, businessman, but you could become a courageous person or a person willing to go to any length… even to take other people's life to defend or protect the community. So when you think about the drug market, the drug market created this dichotomy, this dichotomous way of success. Now you could be successful if you was a person that was violent, willing to exhibit violence or if you was a killer, or if you was able to accumulate a lot of money. So it's always been in the African American community… those two people been looked up to-- the person that's willing to be courageous or violent, and the person that can get some level of success or money."

> "I think it's because there's not many other options for them. And so when there's not a lot of good options out there for people, they choose the easiest option. And I think violence is one of the easier options that they have readily available to them. And they've seen it so often that it becomes the norm."

> "A lot of the violence now is for… it's interesting too… I gotta kind of, like, give some kind of context because of the oppressive state of African Americans and really, America, for real. America has always glamorized people who are tough or bad asses or not afraid. And if you think about it, think about people like Clint Eastwood, the Rock… they always glamorize people who stand up to establishments or institutions. So if you think about that from a microcosm perspective, the same goals in an African American community because of institutional racism and structural racism, we began to glamorize people who are courageous, and will speak out against institutions, and were bad asses… and usually these people exhibit this behavior by really being able to be violent. So a person, to make a long story short, they began to glamorize people who were considered killers. So if you were a person that wasn't to be messed with, you are enamored in the African American community even though murder or killing somebody is associated with maladaptive behavior. And in society as a whole, it's frowned upon but communities like North Lawndale look at that person as a protector that's willing to defend… So now if you get a person who's willing, at any length, to protect the community, they was reverenced, so…. and also it made you somebody in society."

These three respondents explain the same phenomenon in North Lawndale: when you are blocked from success in the larger society, you can earn it in the community by being violent and feared. Violence and extreme masculinity are glamorized. Not only does it mean you are tough, but you are anti-institution and anti-society. In a neighborhood that is aware of structural racism

and its effects within the community, anyone who displays anti-institution behaviors is worth respecting.

Involvement in the drug economy was referred to as an alternative avenue for success following capital abandonment and State abandonment and disinvestment. Many people in North Lawndale lack the employment and educational background and skills to attract a living wage job so they "involve themselves in the underground," as one respondent reports. And the underground drug trade creates violence. "You've got people fighting over turf and all of that and ultimately, it's a recipe for violence. You know? People trying to survive, and they step on each other's toes and it's not like they're going to fight… they shoot. And I think that's probably the biggest reason why this area has been plagued by violent crime." However, a majority of the respondents disagree that this is a major cause of homicide in the neighborhood, saying that the drug market isn't as important within the neighborhood as people think: "The gangs and the drug market? Man, these people ain't worried about selling no drugs." Whether it's through drugs or not, the lack of an opportunity structure for upward mobility increases the likelihood of violence in North Lawndale.

Drill music is viewed as the more artistic display of the masculinity and anti-institution feelings and behaviors mentioned previously. Respondents mention drill music throughout the interviews as a way for young people to earn respect, display their bravado and make money. However, this online display increases the likelihood and changes the context of homicide in North Lawndale.

> "The killers are the ones with the power. So just think about it… as that became the only way out because the drug economy failed, where did a lot of that community go? Drill music. They start talking about Chief Keef… all them start talking about this lifestyle that glamorizes the only thing that that the community honored and then that blew up… now Chicago is famous for drill music. Drilling is when you go to another community and kill somebody. So now this only way to receive respect in the community has been coupled

or partnered with this music. So now you can either… so what ends up happening…
people that actually do it found out, like, I can rap about it or be creative. I can't be as
creative about or imaginative about it, but I can talk about things I've actually done. So a
lot of people, the way the music is situated, you're respected if you participate in some of
this drilling and you singing about it. So that's where we at now… so it went from the
drug economy to now, like, this music or drilling. And you got this… this violence that
comes along with it. So those right now in the community, for individuals who we're
talking about specifically, in this impoverished area, they see a way out is either through
drill music or what? Being a killer."

Through drill music, young people in North Lawndale are doing what generations of youth did
before them: forge new, often dangerous, pathways toward upward mobility, self-worth, and
social support. This interview data raises the idea that violence itself might be a commodity now;
violence might not serve the same purpose as it once did. In the past, violence was used as a way
to protect money and territory or put fear into people so they wouldn't "act out" in ways that
affected money. This interview data says that it's less about those reasons now and more about
violence for violence's sake. Violence is about identity in a neighborhood where violence is
more related to cliques than larger gangs. The introduction of social media and drill rap
transformed the *meanings* and *functions* of violence in North Lawndale.

The interview data shows that North Lawndale is a racial project, which centers
intentionality. The young men (and women) in North Lawndale have grown up in an
environment where they have been devalued and labeled a menace to the city. The interviews
show that they experienced this at school, in court, at the workplace, and at church and other
community organizations. But with social media and drill rap, these same young men can portray
a very violent, masculine image to unlock the means to receive a very different message—one of
respect and appreciation. Given the degrading experiences in the low-wage service economy and
the skimpy payoffs of the drug economy, this message is a reward that may be more attractive
than ever. This interview data suggests the power of the portrayal of violence itself without a

particular means outside of the violence. This combines with the fact that there are rarely

sanctions (via traditional gangs) for using violence in "unacceptable" ways anymore-- being

violent results in status and love.

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of Findings

1. Abandonment is the fundamental condition that explains the historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale. Respondents differentiated four forms of abandonment: physical abandonment, abandonment of care, state abandonment and disinvestment, and the dissolution (or dismantling) of traditional gangs.
   a. Physical Abandonment. Chicago is engaged in a de-Blackening project. Effects in North Lawndale: empty lots and storefronts, lack of Black businesses, concentrated poverty.
   b. Abandonment of Care. Effects: punitive policies over caretaking policies, generational distrust/trauma, and broken families.
   c. State Abandonment and Disinvestment. Effects: concentrated poverty, absence of social programs, lack of jobs, school closings, and poor neighborhood maintenance.
   d. Dissolution (or dismantling) of traditional gangs. Effects: cliques with little to no leadership structure, younger shooters, increased drug use, distrust between older gang members and younger members of cliques, and more random violence.
2. This study concludes that North Lawndale does not have a homicide problem as much as it has a white supremacy problem centered on devaluing Black life. The consistent (and intentional) devaluing of Black life creates an environment in which those deemed disposable and unworthy kill each other.
3. Young people in North Lawndale are doing what generations did before them: forge new, often dangerous, pathways to upward mobility and success. Alternative avenues for success and respect (many likely to increase the likelihood of homicide): drug market, drill music, and displays of masculinity/bravado.
4. Gangs have fractured into cliques which are not related to traditional gangs, causing changes in the context of homicides: younger shooters, increased drug use, distrust between older gang members and younger members of cliques, and more "random" violence.
   a. Homicide is less about a larger goal, i.e. making or protecting money, but about cliques, respect, and identity. Respondents indicate that violence is more of a commodity now than a means to an end. The introduction of social media and drill rap transformed the meanings and functions of violence in North Lawndale.
5. Mass incarceration is criminogenic. Respondents view police (and their responses) as a form of violence itself.
   a. However, respondents do not support defunding the police, which they view strictly as a decreased police presence. They want the police to be Black.
6. There are important generational effects. Neighborhood trauma, tension, and distrust are passed down through generations. Trauma is very real in North Lawndale: individual, community, racial, and generational.
7. Accountability. Respondents want continued investment in North Lawndale, often considering it reparations, but want those programs to be accountable to the community.
8. North Lawndale is a proud community with incredibly important assets working together to address violence. The community is aware of the conditions that increase the

likelihood of homicide in North Lawndale and have implemented antiviolence strategies at every level, from individual to organizational strategies, to address street violence and homicide. These strategies include avoiding the police, finding spaces for youth to "cool off," creating jobs, stressing beautification and pride in the neighborhood, and monitoring social media.

Below, the findings are summarized as answers to popular policy questions for a more efficient application to policy.

Do residents think gangs are the source of violence?
No. Violence is more related to cliques than larger gangs. This has caused a shift away from more instrumental causes of violence like protecting money or territory. Violence is now more about identity, camaraderie, male bravado, and self-worth. This data raises the idea that violence itself might be a commodity now. The introduction of social media and drill rap has transformed the meanings and functions of violence in North Lawndale.

Do residents think violence center on drug markets or is all about money?
The interview data says that violence is only indirectly related to money, as young men are using violence to derive meaning and purpose in the absence of socioeconomic mobility and meaningful employment opportunities. It is not directly related to protecting drugs or drug territories, as it once was.

What do residents say about defunding the police?
Not one single interview participant supported defunding police; they associated the movement strictly with a decreased police presence in the neighborhood. Many said that they just want the police to be Black, as that would solve many of the police-related problems in North Lawndale. However, most participants said that the police are more of a problem than a solution in the neighborhood, saying that their responses represent violence themselves. Police were often described as the arm of the larger power structure in Chicago.

What different views do residents have of violence interruption efforts?
There was extreme variance in the responses about violence interruption efforts. The distrust came from the organizations' alleged misuse of funds, reliance on gang members, small reach within the community, and use of outsiders to do community work. The most extreme participant said that violence interrupters are the cause of a lot of the homicides in North Lawndale. Other more flattering opinions said that they are some of the most important members of the community. However, the data shows that there is significant distrust between older gang members and younger members of cliques—the violence interruption efforts that rely on respect between the two groups should reevaluate the strategy.

What do residents think of the South/West initiative, or investing in the west side?
Every interview resident highlighted the importance of city investment in North Lawndale. However, the more vocal community members are aware of the amount of money pouring into the neighborhood through community improvement initiatives like INVEST South/West and are disappointed by the outcome. It is likely that this distrust stems from a publicized investment from the city in North Lawndale combined with a lifetime of sharing the same spaces, buildings

and resources within a resource-poor neighborhood. While they are excited about new revenue sources to North Lawndale, they express frustration about being left out and about the fact that the resources and their distribution were largely out of their control. The new revenue stream from the city is unfamiliar to longstanding North Lawndale residents, causing them to judge and distrust the recipients of the funds. Interview respondents whose salaries are supplemented by this neighborhood investment frame the money as reparations. The creation of a responsible group for the oversight of funds is just as important as distributing the funds to North Lawndale, especially if there is truth to the idea that distrust of these organizations breeds tension and a higher homicide rate in the neighborhood.

How much responsibility has the media, or the "racial project" narrative have for the extent of violence?
The weaponization of the homicide rate in the media as a community characteristic justifies the neighborhood's multiple forms of abandonment. Interview respondents were aware of the neighborhood's notoriety as extremely violent and resist this portrayal. While many acknowledge the violence, they critique the media's one-dimensional portrayal of North Lawndale and instead provide dozens of the neighborhood's positive attributes. One respondent connected the media portrayals of North Lawndale to increased violence in the neighborhood, saying, "If you're portrayed as an animal, told you're an animal, you're going to act like an animal." I followed this statement by asking, "So the outside label of the neighborhood as dangerous actually feeds into it being dangerous?" and the respondent replied, enthusiastically, "Yeah! Without a doubt. That's how it works."

How do residents define hopelessness as a source of violence?
Many community members express feelings of hopelessness resulting from the abandonment of North Lawndale. North Lawndale was described by one respondent as having an "atmosphere of hopelessness or struggle." And again, people connect feelings of hopelessness to the larger racial project and its intentionality: "It is designed for that level of hopelessness to exist as a homogeneous experience on the West Side." They also commented on the connection between these feelings of hopelessness and the homicide rate: "Hopelessness is at the center of violence in the community. Live for what? And if I'm in pain, you're going to be in pain too." The hopelessness cited in the interviews as one result of the abandonment of positive role models is actually the result of the portrayal of North Lawndale as disposable compared to other more valuable neighborhoods.

B. **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

The data from this research indicates that North Lawndale might not have a homicide

problem as much as it has a white supremacy problem centered on devaluing Black life in the

neighborhood. Racism in North Lawndale is ubiquitous, structural, systematic, and can be

amorphous. The respondents report that the primary message felt by the neighborhood is

disposability; the consistent devaluing of Black life in North Lawndale creates an environment in which those deemed disposable kill each other. The interview sample (n = 27) consists of (not all categories are mutually exclusive) long-time residents, politicians, business owners, community organizers, ex- and current gang members, violence prevention workers, a homicide detective, a youth sports coach, and educational and social service staff. This sample represents community stakeholders, many tied to community organizations, but not the overall population in North Lawndale. This is important to consider for the policy implications of this data. While the interview data showed variation in explanations of the historically high homicide rate, it is likely that representative sample of the North Lawndale community would show even more richness. The policy recommendations in this chapter are based on this interview data from the 27 community stakeholders.

Homicide is a result of policies of abandonment: physical abandonment, the abandonment of care, state abandonment and disinvestment, and the dissolution (or "dismantling") of traditional gangs. Addressing and reversing the negative impacts of this abandonment requires a shift in how we view poor, Black neighborhoods within Chicago. We must recognize the dynamics at play, hold purveyors of capital accountable, and build an alternative set of strategies to provide community safety while simultaneously tackling the underlying logic that creates the conditions for homicide in the first place. We can start by recognizing the processes of devaluation within the neighborhood and then placing those who have been devalued as the designers of ways to counter it.

Because many of the factors connected to neighborhood homicide in this data are structural, policy responses will require courageous leaders and policymakers willing to embark on a complete political reimagining of antiviolence efforts while also addressing more immediate

community needs. *Overall, this requires deeming the people of North Lawndale the solution rather than the problem.* These efforts may counter how we are trained in U.S. society to do urban policy, urban planning, and local politics. Violence is viewed by these North Lawndale stakeholders as anger that has built up and passed down through generations. In recognizing the relationality of state and individual violence in North Lawndale, antiviolence policies must hold perpetrators accountable while supporting victims, work locally with residents and organizations in North Lawndale, embrace (versus abandon) the community, respond to immediate needs, and hold community organizations accountable to the community.

My data suggests policies that embrace North Lawndale as an important asset to the city to counteract policies of abandonment. However, the idea of "value" to a city must be reimagined, as it is embedded with the same capitalist principles that have caused harm to North Lawndale. We must realize and encourage an off-the-books approach that is not attached to promoting careers, yet is continuously accountable to the community through standards of success developed by the community itself. This approach must be local, intentional, and center the opinions and efforts of the community, involving bureaucrats only peripherally or when desired by the community leaders. The data shows important work already taking place in North Lawndale and this strategy calls for strong support for community involvement in this process. The ultimate goal is to place neighborhood-level strategies like this at the center of our urban policy and capital investment priorities in Chicago. The data shows that North Lawndale requires continued investment, but that investment must be accountable to community members.

The data calls for critical support for INVEST South/West, alternatives to incarceration as an answer to high rates of violence, and strong support for community involvement and supervision of programs. These policy recommendations represent an intentional coupling of analysis with

strategies to reduce violence that do not isolate individual acts of violence from their larger

contexts. If there is disagreement about the structural, racist factors affecting North Lawndale's

homicide rate, the policy suggestions in this chapter will not be effective. Therefore, we begin

with a larger acknowledgment of the racial project, a willingness to engage in political

reimagining, and a team of community leaders in North Lawndale who will guide the work.

1. **Ideological Foundation: Acknowledgement & Commitment to Reimagining**

North Lawndale is a racial project (Omi and Winant, 2014) that equates historically high

neighborhood homicide rates with Black poverty. The racial project racializes the

neighborhood's high homicide rate and frames it as a community characteristic, using as a

justification for abandonment and isolation. In essence, North Lawndale's high homicide rate is

significantly connected to the racial project of abandonment, including the idea that Blackness is

violent and deserving of incarceration, poverty, avoidance, and abandonment. Therefore, the

starting point of a more off-the-books neighborhood approach to violence prevention and

political reimagining in North Lawndale must be creating the ideological foundation for changes

that addresses the racial project. The ideological foundation of these policy recommendations

include six important parts: (1) agreement that the neighborhood is the ideal unit of analysis for

measuring conditions and implementing antiviolence policy, (2) acknowledgement of the racial

project taking place in North Lawndale, (3) willingness to engage in political reimagining, (4)

desire to revitalize North Lawndale as a Black neighborhood, (5) willingness to resist white

supremacy in the forms of racial neoliberalism, uneven development, and a politic of

containment, and (6) agreement that efforts in North Lawndale must start with residents and

stakeholders as the knowledge-holders. While this policy recommendation of creating an

ideological foundation might come across as liberal academic rhetoric without practical policy implications, it is a critically important starting point, as it counteracts the devaluation that the interview data correlate with high levels of violence. The data says structural conditions are the primary cause of a historically high homicide rate in North Lawndale, so changes must also be structural. Addressing and reversing the negative impacts (including homicide) of the current conditions described in North Lawndale requires a shift in how we view neighborhoods within the city as well as a set of strategies that recognizes the dynamics at play, builds alternative strategies, holds purveyors of capital accountable, and tackles the underlying logic that creates the conditions in the first place.

This data suggest that the neighborhood should be placed at the center of the city's urban policy and capital investment priorities. City management should become more neighborhood based and more open to input from the organizations and residents they serve. There is urgency in making neighborhoods cultural, community, and economic centers as homicide rates are rising in many of the city's poor Black and Latinx neighborhoods. This data suggests strengthening neighborhood social institutions. The school closings, decaying infrastructure, crime and violence, and unemployment are all urban issues that require a neighborhood strategy. These strategies must work toward developing fully functioning neighborhoods where people have more autonomy in their choice to stay or go. The physical abandonment described in the data shows that it is not just about people moving out of the neighborhood but also about people's right to stay in a neighborhood when they choose to—and when they do, to stay under conditions of economic and social viability. Therefore, this data particularly rejects gentrification and "Black urban removal" as an answer to high rates of homicide. Instead, North Lawndale should be revitalized as a Black neighborhood. Mayor Lori Lightfoot has been arguing for reinvestment

in areas of concentrated poverty within Chicago as one of her preferred violence reduction strategies. *This strategy should remove concentrated poverty, not people, from North Lawndale.*

Acknowledging the racial project in North Lawndale requires agreement about the true structural issues affecting North Lawndale before moving on to affect positive change in neighborhood conditions and the homicide rate. We must acknowledge that racism is real and playing out in the day-to-day functioning in North Lawndale. Because there are inequalities reported in the data that affect quality of life and the local homicide rate, we must dedicate ourselves to identifying the origins so we can implement policies that counteract them. We must continuously make an effort not to repeat the things that this data is saying are harming residents. Without acknowledging the structural factors identified by the interview respondents, efforts will be strictly political at best and more realistically, another form of violence felt by North Lawndale's residents. We must view North Lawndale as worthy of our investment and care. Anyone who has their hands in designing policy affecting North Lawndale should not only acknowledge the racial project but also reflect on their commitment to any of the broader lies at the core of the racial project. The future of Black life in North Lawndale will be determined by people who are willing to resist white supremacy in the forms of racial neoliberalism, uneven development, and a politic of containment and abandonment. Race was present in every single explanation of the historically high homicide rate. If we don't acknowledge the ways in which white supremacy permeates lives in North Lawndale, we have made a tacit commitment to continue ignoring something that is harming people and increasingly the likelihood of homicide in the neighborhood.

The data show that effective policy will require radical reimagining and commitment to change the reality of the conditions reported by interview respondents. We have to stop acting

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like violence is something we can't solve. We must think outside of the frames that keep us confined to what has already been done. A theory of change proclaims that we can do and must do multiple things at once, so the question this data raises for the mayor and policymakers is *what are you willing to do*? Is there a political will to think about North Lawndale as a space to approach holistically as opposed to one of containment and abandonment? This requires politicians to oppose legislative changes that promote abandonment, criminalization, and mass incarceration. As a city, we must embrace this challenge. And if we do embrace it, it will push us to do things differently moving forward. We must be willing to support and build sustainable, long-term cultural and political shifts while also generating different "in the moment" responses to violence and harm. This work should come less from academic pieces like this and more from the community. We must agree that any antiviolence effort in North Lawndale should start with the residents and stakeholders as the knowledge-holders. We are at a critical moment in Chicago where people need to make a vow to actively refute the things that have caused harm to North Lawndale and to work in solidarity with people in the community to make sure that harm is reduced as much as possible.

a. <u>Resistance</u>

In Illinois, many elected officials agree with activists and academics that the current criminal justice system and approach to poverty have deep flaws and are open to reform. However, this openness to change is often tied to the larger push to dismantle the public sector's role in improving people's lives. Along with reducing the scale of the criminal justice system, they would like to slash public investments in neighborhoods. North Lawndale needs to see *both* a reduction of the criminal justice system and increased neighborhood investment through programs like INVEST South/West. A neoliberal policy approach that reduces all public

investment should be considered resistance to the ideological foundation of these policy recommendations. A reduction in carceral spending must be accompanied by an increase in social program investment in North Lawndale.

These forms of experimentation are not without conflict and are always about risk. Pushing against the racial project, dominant narratives, and powerful institutions incurs backlash. After acknowledging the structural factors increasing the likelihood of homicide in North Lawndale, anyone involved in this reimagining project must prepare for push-back and resistance and develop a plan for that resistance. How does your organization prepare for opposition? How does city hall prepare for opposition? Resistance is nothing to fear but it is important to know that it is coming and prepare for it. More importantly, how do we begin to engage in and talk about this political reimagining in ways that are unapologetic? Developing a plan for resistance is an important part of these policy recommendations.

2. <u>Create a Block-by-Block Leadership System</u>

The data calls for policy recommendations that explicitly remove top-down decision making and instead, center Black leadership from North Lawndale, recognizing that important antiviolence work is already taking place in the community. As members of an increasingly urban society, we often look to city officials to solve block-level problems, sometimes neglecting the fact that solutions exist in our backyard. If we respect the individual work taking place in North Lawndale, we understand that the same work done collectively is more powerful. Instead of feeling like high levels of violence in North Lawndale is insurmountable, we need to create a comprehensive, multi-organizational plan that starts at the block level. Because the larger systems behind the racial project seem so powerful, what must defeat them is a collective of

people that are willing to do things differently. The community's anchor institutions and the people who support them have the power to be a first line of defense when it comes to neighborhood resilience. If neighborhood violence results from a lack of power within the city, this strategy gives the community decision-making power and more self-determination.

Three interview respondents suggest a block-by-block leadership system in North Lawndale where the leaders are paid a living wage for their community work and given the title of "planner." We need to identify the people who are providing care and support to those who have been treated as disposable. Community organizations already working in North Lawndale should lead the process of identifying these people, as the relationship between the organizations and the block leaders will be important and hold decision-making power. The potential block leaders are the people who have been doing this important work effectively, often without credentials or pay. Resources and money would be allocated to these key individuals as well as the community-based organizations who have strong ties to the grass roots. Together, the organizations and the block leaders will decide how to allocate neighborhood-level resources. No matter how influential, well-funded, or well-designed, no single intervention has the power to shift the community contexts in which violence occurs. Historically, urban planners and public health officials have brought important expertise to this work, using local data to identify problems and coordinate more equitable long-term strategies. This work is important, but this new community paradigm would center North Lawndale's community leader system within this professional relationship. City resources would go to building and strengthening local collective networks to support these leaders, piloting new communication strategies where necessary. This differs from Lori Lightfoot's strategy that gives preferential treatment to politically tied anti-violence

organizations that are largely run by white CEOs. People and organizations with real ties to the community are better positioned to make the decisions that will ultimately reduce violence.

This community-centered strategy requires investment from the city to avoid competition for jobs between the organizations and the block leaders. These block leaders would supplement the already-existing organizations in the neighborhood. They would be encouraged to meet with their neighbors regularly and serve as the eyes-and-ears of their block, listening to and communicating more local neighborhood concerns. Because of their relationship with the community organizations, they would be able to connect people to important services. While many of the community organizations already serve as the voice of North Lawndale, the leaders would focus on the needs of the people on their individual blocks, even if some of these needs are just social. This process would provide jobs for people at the grassroots, highlighting the importance of community work that takes place consistently without a wage. It is worth emphasizing again that this block leadership system is not meant to bypass existing community agencies, but work alongside them.

The community organizations, along with these block leaders, will critically debate and discuss how to build the North Lawndale that they need. They will rethink how we allocate resources, what our budgets look like, how the neighborhood schools are designed, etc. By supporting leadership within communities, households and blocks have more available supports when seeking to resolve issues or uproot the more long-standing generational tensions described in the data. This strategy addresses the mentorship issue, as the younger generation will see Black leaders as the decision makers in the community and on their block. It creates jobs in North Lawndale where people can be proud of the work they are doing. These leaders should engage with individuals at the highest risk, implementing gangs and cliques into the decision-

making process. Through this planning, North Lawndale can become a multi-class, revitalized Black neighborhood with Black leadership, where residents are treated more like subjects than objects.

This plan is not calling for the development of a city organization within North Lawndale to monitor these leaders. The existing community organizations will take the lead in identifying known leaders and in deciding how these block leaders can help them with the work they are already doing. It is important to note that within this leadership framework, the city must avoid asking these leaders to develop a plan, only to implement part or none of it. The data shows that by doing that, we just exacerbate the frustrations of those whose lives depend on the outcomes of such planning.

a. <u>Re-evaluate standards of "success"</u>

A critical part of designing and implementing policy is developing standards of success for those policies. An effective urban strategy shifts viewing neighborhoods as what is good for the market to what is good for the people living in them. This policy recommendation urges the city to allow the community, its organizations, and the block leadership system to develop those standards. If the ideological foundation of these changes resists white supremacy in the form of racial neoliberalism, then certain standards for success may fall outside of more capitalist standards for success. For example, while the neighborhood would like to see increased household income and access to more skills, trades, and jobs (capitalist standards), they might also want to see reduced levels of neighborhood trauma or increased feelings of worthiness. We cannot measure progress until we reach consensus about our goal—but it is likely that the goals the city has for the neighborhood's progress look different from the ones North Lawndale has. We must move away from hard data on more traditional measures and look at broader

neighborhood effects. Since it is possible that some of the neighborhood's resources will be used nontraditionally, this approach to defining success from the neighborhood can help city officials better understand who they are serving and how these groups are being served.

3. Reimagine: Care, not Cops

To create lasting peace in neighborhoods like North Lawndale, we must shift popular thinking about what produces safety. North Lawndale is a space that should be approached holistically as opposed to one of containment. The data shows that North Lawndale has experienced the abandonment of care that has resulted in punitive neighborhood strategies that are criminogenic and increase the likelihood of homicide. Instead of continuing to respond to harm with punishment, we need to build infrastructures of support and care in North Lawndale—culturally and institutionally. The current system remains so focused on removing "problem" people that it has failed to build systems that can uproot the very problems that people face. We will never create safer neighborhoods by continuing to punish disadvantage. This data shows that punishment-focused investments are faulty, criminogenic, and structurally racist, trading one group's apparent safety for another. It is important to see these carceral policies as a misallocation of government resources and to know that much wiser allocations are possible. To uproot the problem of violence, we must also uproot this limited logic.

Rather than punishing, suffering and economic desperation must be met with opportunity, places to heal, and conflict-resolution resources. This idea of justice reinvestment isn't new—moving corrections dollars into violence prevention programs has been selectively tried around the country. This data calls for a focus on neighborhood determinants as identified by community leaders. Policy recommendations based on this data include shifting resources away from incarceration spending to human-capital and neighborhood investments like mental health,

violence prevention, public education, affordable housing, job creation, accessible public transportation, supports for viable commercial infrastructure, and healing. The Black people of North Lawndale have rightful and equal claims to these city services.

The data connects the breakdown of families in North Lawndale and generational anger/frustration to increased levels of violence. Empowerment care models that focus on the family rather than the individual would empower families that have been greatly affected by mass incarceration and those that experience generational trauma and tension. An empowerment model should also focus on the community's collective skills and capacity to prevent harm. In building this collective capacity, the block leaders described above should be trained in psychological first aid by existing North Lawndale agencies. This is a project of providing multiple sources of funding to existing North Lawndale agencies. This is not a call for new organizations appointed by city hall. Resources would go to those groups to train and support everyday leaders and organizations in North Lawndale to respond to conflict in more restorative ways. These organizations and leaders can help the neighborhood reimagine what it looks like for North Lawndale to both respond to and heal trauma. Schools and neighborhood facilities would have spaces where youth can process trauma safely rather than utilizing school police or suspension. Funding would make restorative justice training more readily available to everyone in the community through existing North Lawndale organizations. Ideally, these trainings would show that violence doesn't have to be met with violence and there are alternatives to policing to address violence in North Lawndale.

The interview respondents said that they desire a police presence in the neighborhood yet view the police as more of a problem than a solution to neighborhood issues. It is likely that the desire in the data for a police presence comes from fear of neighborhood violence, not from a

love of the police itself. Therefore, this policy recommendation suggests a solution where the police is only one element of a much broader public-safety strategy. There are people currently doing this important work in North Lawndale. The Trauma Response and Intervention Movement (TRIM) is working to build up residents' capacity to respond to and uproot community violence within an eight-block area as an alternative to relying on the police. The Lawndale Christian Legal Center has restorative justice programs for justice-involved youth and has worked with Judge Patricia Spratt to develop the Restorative Justice Community Court (RJCC) in North Lawndale. The RJCC utilizes restorative justice conferences and peace circles to resolve disputes for North Lawndale residents between the ages of 18 and 26. A policy recommendation based on this data must include the police but suggests a restorative justice approach as an alternative to incarceration that allows the victim to decide whether they want to see the perpetrator incarcerated or see them into a restorative justice program. Common Justice in New York City operates using this approach and reports that 90 percent of the victims choose to send the offender through their accountability-based program rather than incarceration. These are models that should be considered by the community leaders as alternatives to the policing and criminal justice system that currently operates in North Lawndale.

All these recommendations center the organizations and people in North Lawndale already doing this important work. This is a project of providing these agencies with multiple sources of funding to expand their reach. As stated previously, these recommendations do not call for the creation of agencies through city hall. North Lawndale knows what to do, how to do it, and has been doing it on a small scale. Through continued investment, the community can build on existing programs and agencies and expand the reach of the important work already taking place.

4. __Oversight__

The data shows that organization oversight is critical, as distrust can increase the likelihood of violence. The group responsible for the oversight is just as important as distributing the funds. If we zoom out a bit from North Lawndale and consider everyone in the city of Chicago and particularly those involved in violence in the city, we encounter a range of other people reaping large rewards for violence. These rewards arguably come off the backs of those violent young men and the "shooters" who are committing most of the violent acts. As one interview respondent told me, "I mean, just like this program… I have a job because it's violent in Chicago. You know what I mean? And there's a lot of money in violence prevention. They spent $25 million last year on violence prevention. So it's like selling a medicine. There's no money in the cure." This speaks to an exploitative reward structure embedded in the production of neighborhood violence that is part of a larger racial project. The data points to the inability of large public bureaucracies to serve the "hard to reach." It could very well be that compared to everyone else profiting from neighborhood violence, those few actual shooters benefit the least from their own violence. As people on the ground are engaging in violent acts, it's possible that violence prevention groups, city-funded groups, etc. are profiting from violence without the money trickling down and making it to those committing the violence. This speaks to the interview data that show a high level of distrust about the money flowing in from the city for violence prevention efforts. The arrival of social media and progressive city politicians have changed the parties doing the exploiting but there has consistently been a presence of parties exploiting the idea of North Lawndale being a violent community and residents of North Lawndale are aware of it. Therefore, oversight by the community is a critically important part of this policy recommendation.

Large public bureaucracies are rarely concerned with either the formal or informal results of programs. Once they sign off on the funding, the program's continued existence is often considered proof of effectiveness. These evaluations are often symbolic, not substantive. Policies implemented in North Lawndale must be held liable, as must the institutions charged with implementing them. As mentioned previously, the community leaders and organizations should identify the success standards for policies. This section suggests that these leaders should also have the power of evaluation and oversight. Programs should be regularly evaluated to determine if they are having a positive impact on those they claim to be service, as determined by the success metrics above. Are people truly benefiting outside of the agency or outside of bureaucratic benefits? This policy recommendation suggests program managers be judged on program results and success as defined by the community leaders.

5. **Economic Community Needs**

While the structural issues in North Lawndale are being worked on, neighborhood strategies need to deal with the realities that people are facing in communities where people have more immediate economic needs and have often been blocked from gaining access to meaningful employment. Alternative institutions such as worker cooperatives, small-business incubators, and community-based financial options can be the means to develop the talents and resources that the data shows already exist in North Lawndale. A neighborhood-based small-business incubator can help create self-employment strategies, build household wealth, and provide goods and services to the community. This will address the more immediate economic needs, build social cohesion, help circulate the Black dollar, and create neighborhood vitality—all of which were desired in the data.

The data suggests an empowerment model that finds ways for men to derive meaning, greater purpose, positive identification, belonging, and socioeconomic mobility, as these are all strongly correlated to an individual's likelihood to commit violence. Any strategy that does this would find more prosocial means for reinforcing community and acceptance among young men who are the highest risk of committing violence. The community leaders should help design strategies to do this, but one way to accomplish this would be through meaningful employment opportunities for young men between ages of 16 to 34. Employment strategies could include direct employment by relevant community institutions, participation in the neighborhood-based small-business incubator, and wage subsidies. The city should also consider a minimum basic income to remove extreme financial need as a violence reduction strategy in North Lawndale. Young people are especially in economic need in North Lawndale, as are those whose employment options have been severely limited by policies that use any kind of criminal record as a basis for not hiring. The city should embrace policies that focus on meaningful employment opportunities but also expanded rights and protections as valued members of the city. Community-based training and work force development jobs create pathways to employment. However, these efforts need continued funding. The data shows that this is a more immediate strategy for violence reduction in North Lawndale.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and/or
University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sciences System (UI Health)
Research Information and Consent and Authorization for Participation in Social,
Behavioral, or Educational Research
Homicide in North Lawndale**

Principal Investigator/Researcher Name and Title: Kaitlin Devaney, PhD Candidate
Advisor Name and Title: Teresa Cordova, PhD
Department and Institution: Urban Planning and Policy, UIC
Address and Contact Information: Great Cities Institute, 312-355-3803

About this research study
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Research studies answer important
questions that might help change or improve the way we do things in the future.

Taking part in this study is voluntary
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose to not take part in this
study or may choose to leave the study at any time. Deciding not to participate, or deciding to
leave the study later, will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled
and will not affect your relationship with the University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences
System (UI Health) and/or University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

This consent form will give you information about the research study to help you decide whether
you want to participate. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to
be in the study.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you have been identified as
someone with knowledge of and experiences in the North Lawndale neighborhood.
30 subjects will be enrolled in this research study.

Important Information
This information gives you an overview of the research. More information about these topics
may be found in the pages that follow.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?	Researcher is trying to:
	1. Complicate the narrative about North Lawndale violence by centering community members' and stakeholders'

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	understandings about what is going on in the space regarding homicide and violence. 2. Identify anti-violence efforts currently taking place in North Lawndale by community members and stakeholders. 3.Identify anti-violence, neighborhood level policy changes that are reflective of community need. 4. Add the voices of North Lawndale community members and stakeholders to policy-level discussions on neighborhood homicide rates and violence trends.
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO DURING THE STUDY?	This research will be conducted remotely via Zoom. You will be asked to log into zoom at the agreed upon time one time over the next five weeks. After the interview, you will be asked if you would be willing to attend a "member check" focus group to discuss the researcher's preliminary findings. This focus group will also be conducted remotely via Zoom. The interview will take about two hours. The study procedures are: 1. Participate in a semi-structured interview that will last about two hours. Interview will ask you about your opinions about the homicide rate in North Lawndale and your suggestions for policy change. 2. Allow the interview to be recorded. This is not mandatory; if you do not wish to be audio recorded then the researcher will not audio record your interview. 3. Give the researcher permission to use audio recordings from interview in her research and writing. 4. Give the researcher permission to contact you within six months with information about the focus group where she will show her preliminary findings. You do not have to agree to be contacted nor agree to attend the focus group. If you agree to participate in the focus group, you will go through this consent process a second time.
HOW MUCH TIME WILL I SPEND ON THE STUDY?	The interview will last between 60-90 minutes. If you provide your contact information to the researcher at the end of the questionnaire, you may then be asked for a follow-up interview lasting 30-60 minutes. The follow-up interviews will be conducted between 2-4 weeks after the initial interview. If you provide your contact information to the researcher and are willing to join a focus group, you may then be asked to join a

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	member-check focus group to analyze the interview findings. The focus group will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place 4-6 weeks after the initial interview. The researcher will contact you via email to verify the time and place of your specific focus group.
ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?	You may not directly benefit from participation in the research. We hope that your participation in the study may benefit other people in the future by helping us learn more about homicide in North Lawndale.
WHAT ARE THE MAIN RISKS OF THE STUDY?	The primary risks presented by this research study are breaches of privacy (others outside of the study may find out you are a subject) and/or confidentiality (others outside of the study may find out what you did, said, or information that was collected about you during the study). While researchers will ask others in the focus group to respect each other's privacy, and not repeat what is said to others outside of the group, this confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The researcher does not expect the study procedures to have any more risk of harm that you would experience in everyday life. If you experience any discomfort or concern, please let the researcher know as soon as possible. She will be able to provide you with resources to help you through your discomfort or concern. You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions you may be asked and/or asked to discuss. This research includes some items about homicide and neighborhood violence. You can skip and/or not respond to any questions that may make you uncomfortable.
DO I HAVE OTHER OPTIONS BESIDES TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?	This research study is not designed to provide treatment or therapy, and you have the option to decide not to take part at all or you may stop your participation at any time without any consequences.
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY?	For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact Kaitlin Devaney at (858) 337-5499 or email at kdevan4@uic.edu. You may also contact the faculty sponsor for this research, Teresa Cordova, PhD, at (312) 355-3803 or email at tcordova@uic.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a study subject; including questions, concerns, complaints, or if you feel you have not been treated according to the description in this form; or to offer input you may call the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

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	(OPRS) at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free) or e-mail OPRS at uicirb@uic.edu.

Please review the rest of this document for details about these topics and additional things you should know before making a decision about whether to participate in this research. Please also feel free to ask the researchers questions at any time.

<u>What will happen with my information used in this study?</u>
Your identifiable private information collected for this research study will <u>not</u> be used for future research studies or shared with other researchers for future research.

<u>What about privacy and confidentiality?</u>
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential; however, we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. In general, information about you, or provided by you, during the research study, will not be disclosed to others without your written permission. However, laws and state university rules might require us to tell certain people about you. For example, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at and/or copied for quality assurance and data analysis by:

- Representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.
- Other representatives of the State and University responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research.
- Government Regulatory Agencies, such as the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP).

A possible risk of the study is that your participation in the study or information about you might become known to individuals outside the study. Your personal information, interview/focus group data, audio-recordings will be coded and stored on a password protected computer to prevent access by unauthorized personnel.

To minimize these risks, the researchers will ask all members of the focus group to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality, and not identify anyone in the group or repeat what was said during the group discussion, but other members of the group may accidentally disclose this information.

Your individual data will be stripped of all direct and indirect identifiers after analysis of the data.

When the results of the study are published or discussed in conferences, no one will know that you were in the study. During the study, audio recordings will be collected if you consent to be recorded. Your identity will be protected or disguised by the use of a pseudonym in the interview transcription. After the interview is transcribed, all identity information will be changed. Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription is completed. To conduct future

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analysis, to do follow-up research if necessary, and to contact you about a future focus group to analyze the preliminary findings, the researcher will need to keep some identifying information after the interview is finished. This information will be placed on a master sheet; each person will be assigned a unique identifier/ID number. This master sheet will be stored in a locked file cabinet; only Kaitlin Devaney will have a key. This list will be kept separate from the hard drive. Your direct quotes may be used in research presentations and findings, though the researcher will only use the name or pseudonym for the study.

What are the costs for participating in this research?
There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw your consent and leave the study at any time without penalty.

During the interviews, participants may answer the questions in any way they choose, and may request to move on to the next question and/or decline to respond to any question at any point in the interview. Participants may also ask to have the recorder turned off. The investigator will ask when and if it is appropriate to resume taping.

If you become upset or distressed at any time during the course of the study, please let the researcher know and she will discuss your options. You may choose to utilize one of the resources she can provide you and/or you may choose not to participate in the interview.

The researcher also has the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests.

If you choose to no longer be in the study and you do not want any of your future information to be used, you must inform the researchers in writing at the mailing address or email address on the first page. The researchers may use your information that was collected prior to your written notice.

Remember:
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

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Regarding Kaitlin Devaney's request to **audio record the interview** (check only one):
[   ] I consent to audio recording the interview
[   ] I DO NOT consent to audio recording the interview

Regarding Kaitlin Devaney's request to be re-contacted for participation in a member-check focus group (check only one):
[   ] I consent to be contacted for a focus group
[   ] I DO NOT consent to be contacted for a focus group

Consent of Subject

I have read the above information. I have been given an opportunity to contact the researchers and ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. **PLEASE PRINT OUT A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT FOR YOUR RECORDS.**

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APPENDIX B

Recruitment Assistance Email Template

Dear [   ],

My name is Kaitlin Devaney; I am a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

I am conducting research on the high rates of homicide in North Lawndale. You have been identified as a North Lawndale stakeholder who has important knowledge about this topic. The study uses interviews with community stakeholders in order to center those who truly understand the causes of neighborhood violence on the west side of Chicago. I think the research will do several important things, including:

- Complicating the narrative about North Lawndale violence by centering community members' and stakeholders' understandings about what is going on in the space regarding homicide and violence.
- Identifying anti-violence efforts currently taking place in North Lawndale by community members and stakeholders.
- Identifying anti-violence, neighborhood level policy changes that are reflective of community need.
- Adding the voices of North Lawndale community members and stakeholders to policy-level discussions on neighborhood homicide rates and violence trends.

Interviews are expected to last approximately an hour. Participants will be asked their permission to have the interview audio-recorded. Every form of participation is voluntary. Please let me know if you would be interested in helping me with this research.

Thank you!

Kaitlin Devaney
Kdevan4@uic.edu
(858) 337-5499

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide
Kaitlin Devaney

This interview is part of my dissertation for UIC's CLJ department. I am gathering opinions from people in North Lawndale about why the homicide rate is so high and what should be done to address this violence. I am particularly interested in complicating the current narrative about homicide in North Lawndale and collecting opinions on new policies and programs aimed at revitalizing North Lawndale as an historic African American community rather than proposing gentrification or pushing out current residents. All interviews will be confidential unless participant wishes to be identified.

1. Name, occupation, years living in North Lawndale, or relationship to North Lawndale.

2. To start off, what does living in North Lawndale mean to you? (Probe: would you move if you had the opportunity? Why or why not? What are you proud of about your community?)

3. Why do you think homicide and violence are so high in North Lawndale? (Probe: changes since 1968, effect or riots and white flight; over policing or too little; role of machine politics, etc. Look for opinions supporting a racial project.)

4. What is going on in this space, in regards to homicide and violence, that is often misunderstood? (Probe: what do you want "outsiders" to know about homicide and violence in North Lawndale? What are some common misconceptions about homicide and violence in North Lawndale?)

5. How has violence changed over the time you've lived here? (Probe: What has the respondent personally witnessed rather than historical analysis. Has he/she ever personally seen a homicide? Can he/she describe it?)

6. How have people fought back against violence? (Probe: Anti-violence/resistance efforts and what obstacles they confronted. Why have they not been more successful? What do you see people in the neighborhood doing to protect themselves/their families from violence? What have you seen particularly successful in these efforts?)

7. How has (housing, schools, gangs, church, prison, drugs, particular institution of respondent) been affected by or affected the amount or nature of violence? (Probe for opinions on other institutions, i.e. if the respondent is a school principal, ask about incarceration, gangs, and drugs on schools)

   7b. Do police increase tensions or calm them?

8. How have government responses to the violence affected (institution)? What do you think was the underlying assumption about the violence that led to this government response? Was the assumption right?

9. What do you think is the best way to reduce violence in North Lawndale? (Probe: programs, change city policies; jobs, more or less police; business activity. Look for more than one specific suggestion)

      9b. What are your thoughts about defunding the police?

10. What would it take to make North Lawndale a vibrant, lively, and safe community? (Probe: Ask respondent to disregard political realities. How much investment would it take? Specific areas for massive city, state, federal, and private investment. Urge respondent to think big)

11. Who else should I talk to? Who would have a different view than you?

KAITLIN DEVANEY

EDUCATION

2022   Ph.D. with Distinction, Criminology, Law & Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
            Concentration: Violence Studies
            Dissertation Committee: Dr. John Hagedorn, Dr. Teresa Cordova, Dr. David Stovall, Dr. Beth Richie, Dr. Joseph Strickland

2016   M.A., Criminology, Law & Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago

2010   B.A. with Honors, Public Policy and Latin American Studies (Double Major), University of Chicago

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Neighborhood violence, critical theories of race and neighborhood development, comparative racialization.

Dissertation: *Death by Abandonment: Understanding North Lawndale's Historically High Homicide Rate*

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Instructor, 2021-Present
      University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Criminology, Law & Justice
- Violence in Society
- Gangs and the Media
- Crime and Society
- Crime and Society

Instructor, January-June 2018
      Roosevelt University, Department of Criminal Justice
- Juvenile Justice

Teaching Assistant, 2016-2021
      University of Illinois at Chicago
- Violence in Society
- Gangs and the Media
- Writing in the Discipline (Criminology, Law & Justice)
- Criminology 101

Graduate Research Assistant, 2017

        Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Violence, University of Illinois at Chicago

- Research and program evaluation for Safe From The Start (Youth Violence Prevention) and the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, June 2022-June 2023

        Northwestern University

- Program Evaluation, Northwestern Prison Education Program

Community Outreach Consultant, April-September 2022

        Chicago Humanities Festival

- Consult with Chicago Humanities Festival's Executive Team to create a community partnership model that is responsible and mutually beneficial.
- Engage South Side community organizations to co-produce a South Shore Day in the summer of 2022 (September 11, 2022).

Predoctoral Research Fellow, January-October 2021

        Chicago Humanities Festival, The Neighborhood Initiative

- Provided research and documentation support to aid in planning and tracking grant-funded activities.
- Contributed to the interpretation and evaluation of the Neighborhood Initiative in its pilot year.
- Supported sustained community engagement, identified local priorities, and established collaborative partnerships in a cluster of South Side neighborhoods.

Co-CEO, 2014-2021

        Savvy Student, LLC

- Educational Consulting and Tutoring

Researcher, June 2013-August 2014

        Jail Education Solutions

- Researched and organized information intended to help former offenders connect with careers and education upon returning to their communities.
- Worked with experts in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to develop content for a video series to be used in jails.

Instructor and Consultant, September 2012- December 2014

        Selective Prep

- Contracted by CEO to develop educational and marketing materials and business plan.
- Edited Study Guides and textbooks.
- Prepared 7th and 8th grade students for the Chicago Selective Enrollment Exam through weekly classes and tutoring.

Varsity Basketball Coach, October 2010-April 2012
    Chicago Public Schools, John Hope College Preparatory, Englewood

Teacher's Assistant & Afterschool Coordinator/Tutor, 2008-2010
    Neighborhood Schools Program, Woodlawn Charter School

Assistant Probation Officer, June-September 2008
    San Diego County Juvenile Probation Department, "Breaking Cycles" Unit
- Supervised minors on juvenile probation.
- Assisted deputies in their daily duties.
- Prepared and filed court documents, observed court procedures.

Research Intern, June-September 2007
    San Diego County Juvenile Probation Department, Research Unit
- Monitored the effectiveness of various probation programs and provided input on ways to improve services.
- Collected data and kept the Probation Department information system up-to-date.
- Visited detention facilities, attended meetings with directors.

INVITED WORKSHOPS, PRESENTATIONS, PANELS

April 2022	Invitee/Attendee, The City Club: *Impact 2022: Economic Trends & Opportunities of INVEST South West—North Lawndale*
March 2022	Speaker, *Gangs on Trial: A Conversation with John Hagedorn*
November 2021	Presenter, Poverty and Violence, Jane Addams College of Social Work
September 2021	Speaker, University of Illinois Humanities Summit
March-April 2021	Panelist, Grant Review Panel, 2021 CityArts Program, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)
October 2020	Presenter, Community Violence, Jane Addams College of Social Work
June 2020	Head Speaker/Panelist/Coordinator, *How to Be A Black Lives Matter Ally,* Funded by Census 2020
March 2020	Speaker, *Black Lives Matter and Identity*, University of Wisconsin-Parkside
February 2020	Invitee/Attendee, Mayor Lori Lightfoot's Poverty Summit
April 2019	Invitee/Attendee, Chicago Violence Conference, Great Cities Institute

PUBLICATIONS

Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Violence. (March 2015) *Safe From the Start, Year 13 Report.* Illinois Criminal Justice Authority. Available online at: http://www.icjia.org/assets/news/Safe_From_the_Start_Year13_Report_070615.pdf.

Chicago Policy Research Team. (May 2009) *CHICAGO PROMISE: A Policy Report on Reinventing the Harlem Children's Zone.* University of Chicago. Available online at: http://cprt.uchicago.edu/reports/CPRTExecSumChicagoPromise.pdf.

ACHIEVEMENTS, ACTIVITIES, ASSOCIATIONS

May 2022	Recipient, Teaching Award, Department of Criminology, Law & Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago
Jan.-Oct. 2021	Member, The Neighborhood Initiative. Co-produced three South Side summer community events: Community Gardens as Neighborhood Resources, Filmmaking on the South Side, Musical Legacies of the South Side
2020-Present	Graduate Student Council Representative, University of Illinois at Chicago
2010-Present	Member, Women's Athletic Association, University of Chicago
2006-2010	Member, University of Chicago Women's Basketball Team (Captain, 2008-2010)
2006-2010	Dean's List, University of Chicago
2009	Recipient, University of Chicago Metcalf Fellowship Award
2008-2009	Contributing Researcher, Chicago Policy Research Team, University of Chicago
2007-2010	Volunteer/Mentor, Blue Gargoyle After-School Program, Hyde Park, Chicago
2003-2004	Volunteer, San Diego City Attorney Campaign
2002-2006	Member, San Diego Policy Panel on Youth Access to Alcohol