WHITE SPATIAL PLANNING PRACTICES: DECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES AROUND RACE, SPACE, AND PRIVILEGE

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Academic Faculty

by

L. Katie OConnell

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in the
SCHOOL OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Georgia Institute of Technology
DECEMBER 2021

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WHITE SPATIAL PLANNING PRACTICES: DECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES AROUND RACE, SPACE, AND PRIVILEGE

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Date Approved: October 18, 2021
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A dissertation may only be attributed to a single person, but it is truly a community act. For me, without these supports, none of this would have been possible. First, my deepest gratitude to my amazing advisor and mentor, Dr. Nisha Botchwey, who supported me from my early days as a master’s student through to the final days of this dissertation. Her thoughtful and steadfast dedication to me as student, and the greater world, inspired me to be my best. I would like to express a deep appreciation to my committee – Drs. Elora Raymond, Kate Pride Brown, Todd Michney, and Katherine Hankins – whose challenging comments guided my path to a better paper and a better academic overall. Many thanks to the wonderful women of the Westside Communities Alliance, Drs. Jacqueline Jones Royster, Sheri Davis, and Mackenzie Madden who supported my love of data and introduced me to many of the ideas and thinkers that built the base of this dissertation. I am grateful for my writing group for reminding me to stop and watch the storms come in. Thank you to Meaghan McSorley who watched my framework evolve from an early sketch into a final design. Our half day coffee meetings may not have always looked productive, but they were always needed. To all my wonderful friends – the long dinners, zoom calls, and porch parties helped keep me connected to the world outside of school. You can finally stop asking, “are you done yet?” Thank you to my mom, who made sure I had quiet when I needed it the most. I would not be here without her support. To my Evie, who brings joy and light into everything she does. I’m ready to put on my “Mom Off Duty” button. Finally, to my wonderful husband Jai, whose encouragement knows no end. He listened to my endless ideas, talked me through more
than one bought of writer’s block, and, like the 1904 marathon support team, he carried me across the finish line when I didn’t think I could go any further. Thank you.
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SUMMARY

Racial inequality in the United States persists across multiple measures of health, wealth, and education despite changes in laws and policies to end de jure segregation. One reason is the way representations of space reproduces cycles of benefit to white people. This dissertation seeks to answer a central question: *What is the role of white privilege in the production of space?* To answer the overarching question in this dissertation, I ask four supporting questions 1) what are the changes in Black-white equality since the 1950s across multiple measures, including education, criminal justice, citizenship rights, health, housing, and poverty? 2) what is the relationship between abstract space and white privilege? 3) what have been the dominant discourses used in Atlanta's planning-related documents that ultimately justified the displacement of Black communities during urban renewal and the BeltLine redevelopment projects? 4) what counter-narratives did Black communities in Atlanta use to challenge white spatialities? A better understanding of whiteness and space guides planners to reframe urban problems not as the disadvantages found in communities of color but that of reproducing benefits for white people.
CHAPTER 1.  INTRODUCTION

According to Omi and Winant (2014), "race and racism in the United States have been shaped by a centuries-long conflict between white domination and resistance by People of Color" (3). Since the inception of the United States, whites have protected their dominant rule through legal discrimination supported by an expansive set of actions at the federal level down to the local (Lipsitz, 2018). For example, after the abolition of slavery, states enacted Black Codes to govern the conduct of African Americans. Then, Jim Crow laws during the late 19th century through the mid-20th century legalized spatial segregation. As a result, white people, endorsed by white supremacist institutions, felt comfortable directing intentional racist acts towards People of Color. But a shift occurred when the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s brought a "Great Transformation" that expanded democracy and "challenged some of the pillars of despotism" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 161), and the legal system no longer supported de jure racial discrimination.

However, the promises of equality are far from realized, and "race remains a fundamental category of (dis)empowerment in the United States" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 2). Across multiple indicators, white Americans accumulate disproportionate benefits compared to Black Americans. For example, due to several factors including access to jobs, intergenerational wealth, and a racially-discriminatory mortgage market, Black

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1 Following the style of the Associated Press, this dissertation capitalizes “Black” when using a racial identifier as this demonstrates the sense of shared community and history found among people who identify with the African diaspora. White will remain lowercase as few white people see themselves as part of a broader connected community based on their whiteness. At the same time, the white people that see themselves as a unified racial group are part of a broader white supremacists movement (Associated Press, 2020). It should be noted that APA format disagrees and says white should be capitalized since it is racial/ethnic group (American Psychological Association, 2019).
median household income is 60 percent that of white households (Kochhar and Fry 2014), while the net worth for white families is nearly 14 times that of Black families (Lipsitz 2018). In addition, white Americans have better access to health care, leading to Black Americans having twice as high diabetic death rates and lower survival rates for heart disease, stroke, and cancer (Lipsitz 2018). Finally, due to an education funding system that favors white suburban schools, 12th-grade Black students score 10 percent lower on reading assessments than white students (Smiley 2016).

Persistent inequality across multiple measures, including wealth, health, and education, demonstrates the embedded nature of racism in the United States. Feagin and Elias conceptualize this as "systematic racism," which they define as "the foundational, large-scale, and inescapable hierarchical system of U.S. racial oppression devised and maintained by whites and directed at people of color" (Feagin & Elias, 2013). Systematic racism demonstrates that racist actions are more than outwardly hostile acts. Understanding that "racial inequalities that cannot be attributed directly to a hostile, discriminatory act are not acknowledged" (Pulido, 2000, p. 13) is crucial because it allows whites the ability to ignore their participation and ongoing benefits from a racially stratified system. Bonilla-Silva (2011, p. 2) notes that "racial domination, like all forms of domination, works best when it becomes hegemonic, that is when it accomplishes its goal without much fanfare."

During the mid-20th century, the government outlawed more covert forms of oppression and by the 1960s "racism went underground" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 129),
and a new "colorblind" form of racism evolved (Taylor, 2016). Colorblind racial ideology posits that "civil rights legislation wiped the slate clean" (Taylor, 2016, p. 53), so racism appears to no longer be a factor in creating disparities. This ideology supports the belief that all Americans have equal opportunities and people remain in poverty due to cultural factors and an unwillingness to work hard (Fitzgerald, 2012). But in reality, a colorblind ideology creates "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) due to the "absence of racist language" (Taylor, 2016, p. 64), which allows white people to continue their domination.

One way for colorblindness to perpetuate domination is through the invisibility of whiteness. Delaney describes the invisibility of whiteness as the ways white people are "unmarked in the cultural economy of race" such that whiteness becomes "ordinary, unremarkable, neutral, fair, orderly, objective" (2002, p. 12). In contrast, non-white becomes defined "as exceptional, if not abnormal" (Delaney, 2002, p. 12). Leonardo (2002) describes invisibility as having two benefits for white people. On one side, whiteness becomes the normative way of being, and "whiteness becomes the ubiquitous marker of all that is right because it is associated with being white" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 42). But, at the same time, the invisibility of whiteness acts as a hidden yet omnipresent form of control – a "racial panopticon... cloaked in darkness while marking those with darker complexion for purposes of effective surveillance" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 42). As whiteness remains “opaque and unknowable” (Dwyer & Jones, 2000, p. 216), the differences of those with racialized identities become illuminated as an otherness and
marked as flawed “thus wholly responsible for their conditions” (Dwyer & Jones, 2000, p. 216).

To challenge the hegemonic power of whiteness, the discipline of planning must focus on the role of whiteness in shaping the urban form (Goetz et al., 2020). While whiteness as a framework redirects research attention towards white people and away from the challenges faced by communities of color, examining whiteness is crucial because it reframes the discipline of planning’s understanding of how white people rely on overt and covert white domination tactics to reproduce power and wealth. Within the planning field, overt tactics include the location of highways (Bullard et al., 2004) and bicycle lanes (Hoffmann, 2016), racial deed restrictions (Gotham, 2000), and exclusionary zoning (Whittemore, 2021). At the same time, more evasive actions include the pervasive use of colorblind language found within institutional documents (Fairclough, 2001a) as a justification for supporting white communities over others.

Challenging power structures, as a way towards inclusionary cities, requires planners to reanalyze the formal histories written about the field that purports to tell its “official story” (Sandercock, 2003). Sandercock describes the revisiting of histories as insurgent historiographies that recognize the "noir" history of planning (Sandercock, 1998a) and include the erased histories of resistance and the struggles of oppressed groups in shaping space. While insurgent historiographies re-examine the past, they influence how planners think about and create the future (Beauregard, 1998).
Besides rewriting planning histories through insurgent historiographies, planners can use community narratives and storytelling as a method to empower communities as they challenge the dominant structures that attempt to erase communities and suppress their memories. Planners interested in storytelling as a tool for improved planning practice recognize the power of stories to reconcile or heal communities divided by trauma (Forester, 1999). At the same time, preserving and sharing stories can be an emancipatory methodology that centralizes memory (Miraftab, 2016) and creates "other ways of knowing" (Sandercock, 1998b). Narratives challenge the epistemological view that stories of lived experience are not valid forms of knowledge (Collins, 2000). Besides individual impact, narratives can support communities through dialogues that, among other things, evoke an understanding of the past, creates a shared community vision, and influence future development.

Finally, to fully understand the tactics used to perpetuate racial inequality, planners must recognize the production of space, specifically the normalization and codification that defines who belongs and who remains on the periphery (Rimstead & Domenic, 2019). Space takes on a vital role because it “is not an empty void. It is always filled with politics, ideology, and other forces shaping our lives and challenging us to engage in struggles over geography” (Soja, 2010, p. 19). Within the United States, the process of historical and continuing racism creates a racialization of space which links race and space that “skews opportunities and life chances in the United States along racial lines” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 13).
Planners who see themselves as "agents of social justice" (Krase, 1997) recognize that racial inequality has compounding effects on individuals, society, and democracy, but they must also recognize their role in producing space that exacerbates inequalities.

1.1 Purpose of this Research

This dissertation seeks to answer a central question: *What is the role of white privilege in the production of space?* Because the production of space inherently creates inequality (Neely & Samura, 2011), to answer the overarching question in this dissertation, Chapter 2 first establishes that persistent inequality exists. To understand this, I ask, *what are the changes in Black-white equality since the 1950s across multiple measures, including education, criminal justice, citizenship rights, health, housing, and poverty?* To answer this question, I built a composite index that looks at twenty-nine variables across the six domains from 1954-2014 and find that African Americans and white Americans failed to reach a relative measure of equality.

After documenting persistent inequality with a composite index, Chapter 3 examines how white privilege becomes embedded in the spatial (re)construction of cities. To understand this, I ask, *what are the mechanisms used to produce white privilege within abstract space?* To answer this question, I build a framework based on Lefebvre's *Production of Space* that demonstrates a spatiality of white privilege occurs because the mechanisms to preserve white privilege play an essential role in the way the planners, as instrumental powers of the state, produce spaces that are ahistorical and homogenous.
Chapter 4 focuses on the mechanisms outlined in chapter 3, specifically how language and narratives support the spatiality of white privilege in Atlanta. To understand this, I ask, what have been the dominant discourses used in Atlanta's planning-related documents that ultimately justified the displacement of Black communities during urban renewal and the BeltLine redevelopment projects? At the same time, the chapter explores alternatives to the state's instrumental power and looks at how communities in Atlanta contest the reshaping of their lived space. With this, I ask what counter-narratives did Black communities in Atlanta use to challenge white spatialities?

Finally, the concluding chapter demonstrates the relationship among the chapters and includes a set of recommendations that challenge dominant representations of space and embraces alternative spatial concepts as a way towards an emancipatory future (Hawthorne, 2019).
2.1 Introduction

In his 1963 “I have a Dream” speech, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. issued a call for racial equality and economic justice, infusing the American Dream with new meaning and fresh purpose. Yet sixty years later, calls for racial justice continue. One of the challenges faced by individuals and organizations working to build a more just world, is the divergent perceptions of the current state of equality between white and Black Americans in the United States. One side believes equal protection under the law is a sufficient measure of equality, while others recognize a just world will not occur until equal outcomes between groups are achieved. To support policymakers and activists, we need an understandable measure that quickly demonstrates the longitudinal changes between quality-of-life indicators for Black and white Americans.

The Measuring the Dream (MTD) Index fills this void with an analysis of six domains with strong, measurable, national-level data sets—education, criminal justice, citizenship rights, health, housing, and poverty. Each domain includes five indicators from various sources - the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Census, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The Index begins in the year 1954 and continues until 2014.
The discussion starts by comparing ways to measure social equality, which is essential because how we measure equality can shape the way we understand equality. The following section describes why planners and other practitioners should understand inequality measures within a historical context. The “Data for Equality” section first outlines our process in selecting variables and then looks at the chosen variables within each domain. Next, the “Measuring the Dream Index” section explains the method used to construct the Index summarizes the final results. Next, the “Space and Equality” section describes why spatial scale matters while also exploring the spatial inequalities wrapped into each indicator. This section is followed by limitations in composite indicators and the problems inherent in only using quantitative data to describe communities. Finally, the chapter concludes with implications for future research.

The goal of the MTD Index is to provide a comprehensive point of reference as a tool for research on race in America and to stimulate important policy and planning-related interventions. This chapter acts as a starting place to understand changes in Black-white equality since the 1950s by establishing the methodological construction of the Measuring the Dream Index. The chapter does not intend to do a detailed analysis of results as that requires connecting the Index with qualitative analysis, which is outside the scope of this paper.

2.2 What Is Equality?

The preamble of the Declaration of Independence states, “all men are created
equal.” However, when the all-white, all-male Second Continental Congress adopted those words in 1776, they did not recognize many members of society, only property-owning white males. Over time, the definition of who had full rights under U.S. law expanded though Black Americans by the mid-20th century still did not have equal protection. Yet, despite centuries of discrimination, the idea of equality still resonated as a central value of the United States. For example, in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, Dr. King called attention to the country’s guiding principle of equality when he called the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence “promissory notes… (that) guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Like so many scholars, he saw equality as the central tenet of the United States, and the fight for civil rights was to “make real the promises of democracy” (King, 1963).

Following court cases, like Shelley v. Kraemer (1948) and Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), where African Americans achieved an end to restrictive housing covenants and access to desegregated schools, Dr. King turned his attention towards the struggle for “genuine equality.” However challenging, winning legal battles was easy compared to redesigning a society with equal access to quality jobs, housing, and education. In Dr. King’s opinion, equal access to voting booths did nothing if people could not afford to live (King, 2010). He recognized that despite great strides in civil rights, more changes were needed, specifically in how society valued Black people compared to whites.
After the turmoil of the 1960s, polls in the 1970 show most Black and white Americans saw racial equality as a top priority for policymakers. But by the 21st century, racial equality appears more like a fading fantasy than an achievable future. In 2013, the Pew Research Center asked “how much progress toward Martin Luther King’s dream of racial equality do you think the U.S. has made over the last 50 years” and found that less than 50 percent of Americans believe a significant amount of progress has been made, with twenty-seven percent of Blacks seeing almost little to no progress (Pew Research Center, 2013).

At the same time, Black and white people have diverging opinions regarding race and racism in the United States. For example, a 2016 Pew poll found that 70 percent of African Americans, compared to 36 percent of white Americans, believed racial discrimination made it harder for African Americans to get ahead (Pew Research Center, 2016). Forty-three percent of Black Americans, compared to eleven percent of white Americans, believe the country will not make the necessary changes to give Black people equal rights to whites (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Eibach and Ehrlinger (2006) find that white and Black Americans view the goal of equality differently. Whites tend to consider how far society has come from the racial divisions of the past, since the days of Jim Crow and segregated lunch counters (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). For African Americans, the focus is on the current unequal outcomes between white and Black Americans. Essentially, the two viewpoints of equality indicate
that for white Americans, “compared with where we were, there is progress,” but for Black Americans, “compared with where we should be, that progress is insufficient” (Wolfe, 1998, p. 223). The differing views on equality demonstrate two of the three standard measures of equality most often used by policymakers and think tanks—absolute and relative.

An absolute measure of equality calculates the improvements made by Black Americans by comparing an indicator’s past value to its present value (Coleman, 2016). For example, 10% of Black people aged 25 or older completed high school in 1940 compared to 85% in 2012 (Coleman, 2016), a 750% increase. Across many measures, Black people have seen significant improvements in outcomes since the 1950s compared to white people. While this measure has importance, it demonstrates improvements but does not readily identify disparities between groups.

A relative measure of equality is an optimal way to highlight racial disparities because a relative measure takes a ratio of the indicators between the Black and white population to illustrate the gap between the two groups. For example, the median income (in 2014 dollars) for Black Americans in 1950 was $18,359 and $35,398 in 2014. As an absolute increase, that is 93%, which seems impressive especially compared to white Americans, who saw only a 68% increase. However, as a relative measure, Black Americans in 1950 earned just more than half as much as white Americans, and by 2014
that only increased to 62%. Thus, by taking a relative measurement compared to absolute, it is apparent income inequality continues between Black and white Americans (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 – Absolute vs. Relative Measures of Equality**

A final option explored was the method of creating benchmarks, which the United Nations uses for its Millennium Development Goals. Goal setting sets a bar for both groups and calculates how far each group has to reach that goal. While goal setting is helpful for the U.N., it is difficult to determine the appropriate longitudinal benchmark goals for Black and white Americans to achieve at a national scale. For example, levels of homeownership change over time such that a benchmark set for 1950 is drastically different than one for
the 2010s. At the same time, homeownership opportunities are very different in New York City compared to suburban Atlanta. Finally, as Eibach and Ehrilinger (2006) note, setting goals can be different among individuals. The Index risks setting a subjective standard that does not translate across time and geographies by choosing a benchmark.

2.3 Equality in the Context of History²

Historical context is necessary for the public to understand the root cause of inequality as data alone can entrench people’s racial stereotypes about the causes of disparities rather than change their opinions (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2014). For example, when people are “presented evidence of extreme racial disparities in the criminal justice system, cause(s) the public to become more, not less, supportive of punitive criminal justice policies that produce those disparities” (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018, p. 184). Hetey and Eberhardt (2018) theorize this may be because the data acts as evidence of stereotypes rather than an indication of injustice. Therefore, Hetey and Eberhardt (2018) recommend placing data within a historical context to demonstrate the processes that created and

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² While using historical data can be beneficial, it poses many problems. Longitudinal data are rarely located in a single, downloadable spreadsheet, and it takes time to locate data points for each year. In addition, many early 20th century documents are handwritten, which can be time-consuming to input each data point manually. Another challenge of historical data is the lack of disaggregation by race as well as evolving definitions. For example, most publicly available data before 1964 differentiates between two categories of white and nonwhite, but the Voting Rights Act of 1965 expanded the need for accurate racial tabulations, so most data set post-1964 are available with Black as a separate category (National Research Council, 1995). Time-series analysis of Census data by race gets further complicated with changes to the 2000 Census that allowed respondents to choose more than one race. Projects interested in panel data by race must be aware of these challenges and plan accordingly.
maintained inequality.

The unequal outcomes between indicators are part of a historical legacy that affects the African American community decades after courts made racially motivated policies illegal. For example, the GI Bill helped build intergenerational wealth for veterans returning from World War II (Robles et al., 2006). It gave returning soldiers access to free money for home purchases and college education, both of which have substantial wealth-building potential. However, the GI Bill was not available to all soldiers. To pass the Bill, John Rankin of Mississippi, known for his inflammatory, racist language, pushed to make the handouts from the GI Bill determined by states rather than federally mandated. Ultimately, southern states denied most Black veterans access to G.I. benefits. For example, a 1947 survey found that “of 1700 veterans employed in the veteran’s Administration in one southern state, only seven are Negroes” even though Black Americans comprised a third of all southern veterans at the time (Herbold, 1994).

Unequal treatment was not only a southern problem. After passing the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, cities across the country constructed interstates that bisected Black and Latino communities. For example, St. Paul, Minnesota’s highway construction displaced one-seventh of the Black residents while Flint, Michigan’s highway destroyed Sugar Hill, a community established by enslaved people escaping the South (Archer, 2020). By the 1960s, protests took place across the country to save communities from the devastation inflicted by highways. Still, the successful voices were white, middle-class, or
affluent that used their resources and connections to protect their homes. For example, after Robert Moses decimated Black and Latino communities in New York City, he introduced a plan to build a highway through lower Manhattan, cutting across Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park. Protest erupted, and the city eventually canceled the project (Avila, 2014), demonstrating the power white people could wield to protect their communities.

As noted in the above examples, present-day inequalities have roots in the past. To better understand how they continue to impact contemporary society, equity measures must look at changes in data over time. The following section outlines the specific indicators used in the Measuring the Dream Index, including selecting each data point.

2.4 **Data for Equality**

The Measuring the Dream Index relied primarily on public source data. I started by collecting over 400 data points spanning a range of years from the early 1900s through the present. To reduce the data to a manageable number, I used the Thriving Cities Indicator Explorer database (explore.thrivingcities.com) as a guide (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.). The Thriving Cities team built a database based on a panel of field experts who classified each indicator by academic strength. The five strength categories were very strong³.

³ Thriving Cities defines “very strong” when “the quality research around the indicator is very strong and lacking any dissenting voices in the body of research. This indicator is highly correlated with other aspects of social life. This classification is reserved for well-established indicators that have a large body of literature that points in a consistent direction” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.).
strong⁴, promising⁵, slight⁶, and inclusive⁷. Most of the Measuring the Dream Index indicators fell in the very strong and strong categories. I reduced the number to thirty-three and organized them into six domains—criminal justice, education, health, housing, poverty, and rights. To further verify the data, the Index was presented at the Measuring the Dream Scholar’s Conference and to a Technical Advisory Board, which consisted of community leaders, economic development and spatial analysis subject matter experts, and researchers from Thriving Cities and the Atlanta Metropolitan Planning Council.

The complete set of indicators is in Table 1, including definitions, years available, and data source, followed by a section describing our rationale for choosing each indicator. To standardize the data, I took a ratio of the Black vs. white population. Section 2.5, “Measuring the Dream Index,” gives a more detailed explanation of our calculations.

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⁴ Thriving Cities defines “strong” when “the quality research around the indicator is strong, and mostly positive. The correlations between the indicator and other sectors of social life are strong. The research is good quality, but there may be some debate among scholars about strength or direction of the correlations. A strong indicator could also have a field of research that is somewhere between “promising” and well-established indicators that are ‘very strong’” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.).

⁵ Thriving Cities defines “promising” when “the majority of voices think there is strong evidence of correlations between this indicator and other aspects of social life. There may still be some dissent about the strength or existence of the correlations, or the research may be limited in some way. Promising indicators could also be emerging indicators where in small or observational studies, they show strong results but have not been used long enough to amass a large body of research” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.).

⁶ Thriving Cities defines “slight” when “there is little or no correlation between the indicator and other aspects of social life, as seen in current literature. Either a substantial body of research failed to uncover a relationship or more work needs to be done to uncover stronger correlations” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.).

⁷ Thriving Cities defines “inconclusive” when “the research on the indicator that does exist is inconclusive, contradictory or the quality of the research needs to be improved. How this indicator correlates with other aspects of social life still remains to be seen” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.).
Table 1. Measuring the Dream Index indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Years Available</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criminal Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>Arrests per 100,000 population</td>
<td>1954-2015</td>
<td>Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration</td>
<td>Incarceration per 100,000 population</td>
<td>1950 - 2014</td>
<td>Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Punishment</td>
<td>Executions per 1,000,000 population</td>
<td>1978-2016</td>
<td>Death Penalty Information Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent crime rate</td>
<td>Victims of violent crime per 1,000 population age 12 or older</td>
<td>1993-2016</td>
<td>Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>Probations per 1,000,000 population</td>
<td>1993-2016</td>
<td>Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>Percentage of public school students in grades 6 through 12 who had ever been suspended</td>
<td>1993-2013</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed 4 years or more of high school</td>
<td>Percent of population that completed four years or more of high school</td>
<td>1950 - 2016</td>
<td>Census, Current Population Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult illiteracy</td>
<td>Percent of population classified as illiterate</td>
<td>1952 - 1979</td>
<td>Census, Current Population Survey</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percent of population age 3-4 enrolled in school</td>
<td>1965 - 2014</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>4th grade reading</th>
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<th>1974 - 2014</th>
<th>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics</th>
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<td>College Graduate or more</td>
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<td>1960 - 2016</td>
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#### Health

<table>
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<th>1950 – 2014</th>
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<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Median Home price</td>
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<td>Cost burdened households</td>
<td>Percent of families pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing</td>
<td>1987 - 2014</td>
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<td>Travel time to work</td>
<td>Percent of population that travels 90 minutes or more for work</td>
<td>2008-2016</td>
<td>Ipums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food insecurity</td>
<td>Percent of population that reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet</td>
<td>1995 - 2014</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family wealth</td>
<td>Median family wealth in dollars</td>
<td>1983-2016</td>
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<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voted presidential</td>
<td>Percent of population that participated in presidential election</td>
<td>1964-2016</td>
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Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Percent of population that holds active voter registration</th>
<th>1966-2016</th>
<th>U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congressional representation</td>
<td>Percent of elected federal government representatives per total population</td>
<td>1950-2018</td>
<td>Statistics of Presidential and Congressional Election</td>
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<td>Voted nonpresidential</td>
<td>Percent of population that participated in non-presidential election</td>
<td>1966-2014</td>
<td>U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.1 Criminal Justice

When indicator projects look at criminal justice, they most often look at crime in the community. While this does indicate quality of life, at the same time, the disparities caused by the over-policing of communities are vast. Overall incarceration has increased 340,000 in the 1970s to over 2.3 million (National Research Council, 2014), but the contrast is more significant for communities of color. For example, 1 in 3 African American males in a lifetime can expect to be imprisoned compared with 1 in 17 white males (Bonczar, 2003). In communities of color, police presence is higher, which often translates into higher arrest rates, especially for low-level crimes like minor drug possession, even though studies find whites use drugs at a similar rate to Black Americans (Earp et al., 2021). For example, a study by Hetey, Monin, Maitreyi, and Eberhardt (2016) found that 60% of police stops in Oakland were African American, even though they comprise only 28% of the population. Once stopped, Black people are more likely to be
handcuffed, searched, and arrested (Hetey et al., 2016). The impacts of incarceration on individuals include interpersonal distrust, alienation, social withdrawal, diminished self-worth (Haney, 2002), and voter disenfranchisement. Over 7% of adult African Americans cannot vote due to former convictions compared to 1.8% of non-African Americans. Four states (Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia) have more than one in five African Americans unable to vote (Uggen et al., 2016). At the same time, the impact of incarceration does not touch only the incarcerated. Estimates show that approximately 11% of children are at risk of having a parent incarcerated. Put another way, 50–75% of incarcerated individuals report having a minor child. The impact on children of an incarcerated parent includes depression, antisocial behavior, and changes in parent-child relationships (Martin, 2017).

The Measuring the Dream Index included incarceration and arrest rates. As already noted, incarceration impacts individuals, but arrests can have long-term impacts even if they do not end in incarceration. For example, the cost of bail can be too high for individuals, and they stay in jail for extended periods, which can lead to the loss of jobs, eviction, and loss of child custody (Haney, 2002; Martin, 2017; Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Probation is another indicator included in the Index. While probation allows individuals to reenter the world and reunite with their families, it can be a thin line between freedom and incarceration. Lack of employment and stable housing can send people back to prison, yet many places do not accept formerly incarcerated as tenets or employees. The
U.S. banned capital punishment nationally in 1972 but reinstated it in 1976. The Index included this indicator as it can show sentencing disparities between Black and white defendants. The Index also included 6th through 12th-grade school suspension as research shows disciplinary practices can affect students’ social, emotional, and academic achievement (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.). At the same time, research shows that suspensions are an early step in the school-to-prison pipeline. Finally, the Index included the violent crime rate, as increased violent crime can act as a proxy to understanding overall community health.

2.4.2 Education

The ruling in 1954 of Brown v. Board of Education required school desegregation. While some school systems followed the law, others, like Prince Edward County in Virginia, chose to close their public schools rather than desegregate. The Prince Edward County schools remained closed from 1958 to 1964. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act mandated the Equality of Educational Opportunity study, better known as the Coleman Report, to understand Black-white inequality in the U.S. education system. The massive study looked at 600,000 students across 3,000 schools, and it changed the educational policy narrative that defined “good schools” by its inputs (expenditures, school size, etc.) to one focused on outputs (knowledge acquisition, long-term employment, years of education, etc.). The Coleman Report became most associated with the conclusion that student problems were first the family’s fault, followed by the schools. This conclusion left
many uneasy with the report, so many forgot its most significant findings. For example, “the average Black 12th grader in the South had an achievement level that was comparable to the average 7th grader in the urban Northeast” (Hanushek, 2016, p. 25). Since the publication of the Coleman Report, significant improvements in educational outcomes have happened over the past half-century for African American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). However, the gap remains. Hanushek (2016) found that at the current rate of improvement, it would take two-and-a-half centuries before the Black-white math gap closes and over one and a half centuries until the reading gap closes.

For the MTD Index, several indicators changed as societal norms changed. For example, the Census Bureau stopped collecting adult illiteracy at the national scale after 1979, so the indicator was removed and replaced by 4th-grade reading, assessed using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Studies find that 4th-grade reading is a reliable indicator for improved long-term learning outcomes as it is a child’s transition period from “learning to read to reading to learn” (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.). Completed four or more years of high school was replaced by college graduate or more as research indicates (Carnevale et al., 2010) the job market starting in the 1980s required a higher education than a high school diploma. Other indicators included in the Index were 8th-grade math NAEP scores, as eighth-graders with math proficiency are more likely to graduate from high school (Thriving Cities Group, n.d.). The Index included preschool enrollment because early childhood education has long-term math and reading skill
benefits (Tucker-Drob, 2012). The Index included median income for workers aged 25–34 with bachelor’s degrees because as Black workers between ages 25 and 34 have a median income of $41,700, well below $55,990 earned by whites with a bachelor’s degree (Current Population Survey, National Center for Education Statistics 2016). The disparity continues, as African American workers with a master’s earn $54,760, which is less than whites with a bachelor’s (Snyder et al., 2018). Finally, the Index included Advance Placement (A.P.) test pass rate as that indicates preparedness for college.

2.4.3 Health

The health disparity between Black and white has multiple roots. Lack of access to healthy foods and poor community design contribute to uneven health outcomes among populations (Marmot, 2005). Both social determinants of health are exacerbated by structural racism because it codifies unequal distribution of goods into society’s customs, practices, and laws (Jones et al., 1991), thus hindering communities of color from achieving health equity. For example, studies show that Black women have higher pregnancy-related mortality and morbidity rates, independent of socioeconomic status (Tangel et al., 2019).

The MTD Index used both life expectancy and infant mortality as the two most common indicators used by researchers and policy makers to understand health disparities (cite). In addition, the Index included the age-adjusted death rate from cardiovascular diseases. The Centers for Disease Control—National Vital Statistics System reports that prevalence for Black men is lower than white men while it is higher for Black women than
white women. Though the overall prevalence of cardiovascular disease is lower for Black Americans, the death rate is higher. The Index also included the percent of respondents to the National Health Interview Survey that had one or more chronic conditions (hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, hepatitis, weak or failing kidneys, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or current asthma). Chronic conditions can increase a person’s risk of dying prematurely, being hospitalized, and having significant health care costs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.). Finally, I included insurance as studies find that health improves, especially for population subgroups, with the addition of health insurance (Levy & Meltzer, 2008).

2.4.4 Housing

The Fair Housing Act, outlawing discriminatory housing practices, barely became law in 1968 when it passed the Senate by one vote. Senator Brooke of Massachusetts, the first African-American elected to the Senate by popular vote, cautioned the “Fair housing (Act) does not promise an end to the ghetto. It promises only to demonstrate that the ghetto is not an immutable institution in America” (Brooke, 2007, p. 176). Since his speech, studies show that unequal treatment within the housing market continues (Taylor, 2019). For example, the Great Recession (2007–2009) impacted African American communities at a higher rate than white, leading to a slower post-Recession recovery (M. E. Thomas et al., 2018). Besides discriminatory financial practices, the practice of redlining neighborhoods had generational impacts on African American homeownership.
In developing the Index, I looked at measures of homeownership, median home price, one-year residential stability, and cost-burdened households. Of these variables, I chose homeownership because it demonstrates both housing discrimination (Quillian et al., 2020) and wealth inequality (Killewald & Bryan, 2016). Median home prices also showed wealth building. Studies also indicate that banks value predominantly Black neighborhoods less than white neighborhoods. For lower-income African American communities, displacement is a common challenge hence the reason I chose one-year residential stability and cost-burdened households. These indicators demonstrate the challenges of gentrification. Travel time to work is an essential measure as it can indicate a spatial mismatch of employment, which can cause higher childcare costs, lower job stability, and lower quality of life (National Equity Atlas).

2.4.5 Poverty

In 1962, Michael Harrington published the groundbreaking book The Other America: Poverty in the United States. This book became a best seller and brought to light the struggles of the poor to a broad American audience who had increasingly become isolated from poverty. Some say this book pushed both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to fight against poverty and inspired students to join the fight for civil rights. Since the publication of the book, the war on poverty shifted to a war on the poor. Starting with President Nixon and expanding under President Reagan, the rhetoric changed to demonize the poor (Chappell, 2012, p. 201). With cuts in federal funding aimed at reducing poverty,
the message became clear that people are victims of their “culture of poverty” rather than the circumstance in which they were born (Tayler, 2016). This same message continued into the twenty-first century when Speaker of the House Paul Ryan stated, “We have got this tailspin of culture, in our inner cities in particular, of men not working and just generations of men not even thinking about working or learning the value and the culture of work, and so there is a real culture problem here that has to be dealt with” (Lowery, 2014).

The MTD Index used three standard poverty measures — unemployment, median income, and child poverty. In addition, I included food insecurity as it measures financial stability. The USDA defines food insecurity as, at some point during the year, some household members were uncertain or unable to acquire enough food because they had insufficient money. The impacts of food insecurity are long. For children, it is related to cognitive problems, increased aggression and anxiety, increased hospitalizations, and a higher probability of asthma. For adults, food insecurity outcomes can include mental and physical health problems, diabetes and other chronic diseases, and depression (Gundersen, 2013). Median family wealth is an essential measure. It measures assets and can demonstrate a family’s financial security, ability to produce more personal wealth, and improve future outcomes for their children. In 2016, white family wealth was seven times greater than Black family wealth (The Urban Institute, n.d.).
2.4.6 Rights

Quality of life indicator projects do not always incorporate citizenship rights, and when they do, they tend to focus on voting. For example, in 1948, the United Nations included the right to vote as a dimension of its Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, n.d., p. 6), and today, 74% of U.S. adults say it is “very important to vote in elections in order to be a good citizen” (Pew Research Center, 2018, p. 93). However, since the *Shelby County v. Holder* case in 2013, which ruled two provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights unconstitutional, we have seen voting rights challenged across the U.S. One of the provisions no longer upheld was Sect. 4.5, which required jurisdictions that had previously enacted racially discriminatory voting practices to submit formal voting changes to the Department of Justice. *Shelby v. Holder* threw this out, and between 2013 and the 2016 presidential election, 868 polling places were closed in those jurisdictions formerly covered by Sect. 4.5 (Simpson, n.d.). Other practices that make it hard to vote include stricter voter I.D. rules, reduced voting hours, and purging of voter rolls. Besides legal restrictions at the voting booth, several states disenfranchise voters due to felony convictions. Across the United States, more than 5 million people cannot vote due to past criminal convictions, which disenfranchises African Americans at a 2.7 higher rate than non-African American voters (The Sentencing Project, 2020).

The Index included congressional representation, registered voters, presidential election voters, and non-presidential voters. Congressional representation is the only
Rights indicator that spans the entire Index, and it is calculated as a percent of elected federal government representatives per total population. Following the 1965 Voting Rights Act, organizations collected voting data, so I was able to add registered to vote in 1969. The indicator demonstrated the percent of the voting-age population holding an active voter registration.

2.5 Measuring the Dream Index

In creating a longitudinal measure of equality for the Measuring the Dream Index, I wanted something that demonstrated the continued gap between Black and white Americans, included multiple measures to ensure a holistic understanding of issues, and wanted an easily understood number. The MTD Index followed a similar methodological approach as the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), which created an index to measure change over time across eight domains—healthy populations, democratic engagement, community vitality, environment, leisure and culture, time use, education, and living standards.

The CIW calculated their score in three steps: (1) for each indicator, the percent change from 1994 to each year was calculated. For negative indicators, the inverse was used. (2) The average mean was taken of the indicators for each domain. (3) The average mean of the domains was calculated to arrive at the index score for each year. The MTD Index followed this method with one notable exception—the CIW was interested in an absolute measure of equality, so they used a percent change from year 1 (1994) while the
Measuring the Dream Project wanted a relative measure of equality, so I calculated an annual ratio of the Black to the white population.

![National Measuring the Dream Index and Domain Scores](image)

**Figure 2 – National Measuring the Dream index and domain scores**

Figure 2 demonstrates the changes in index scores from 1954 to 2014. Values range between zero and one, with those closer to zero indicating large inequality and the value of one indicating equal outcomes between Black and white Americans. Between 1954 and 2014, the overall MTD Index score increased from 0.47 to 0.64, with the most significant
gains in the domain of Rights (0.05–0.84). The housing and education domains saw moderate increases, with housing increasing from 0.57 to 0.75 and education from 0.68 to 0.76. It is not surprising that the scores in these domains increased as the federal government enacted policies and laws to improve African Americans’ access in these three areas. The health domain only saw a minor increase from 0.73 to 0.77 while criminal justice and poverty decreased. Criminal justice dropped from 0.28 to 0.27 and poverty from 0.52 to 0.44. The decreased domains are not surprising, as there was, and continues to be, significant growth in U.S. incarceration and higher income inequality (Table 2).

Table 2 – National Measuring the Dream index and domain scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Criminal Justice</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>MTD Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Space and Equality

It is essential to think about spatial inequality because a person’s geographic location can significantly affect their quality of life (Bell and Rubin 2007). Within counties,
there are vastly different outcomes between indicators. For example, Fulton County, Georgia (the primary county associated with Atlanta) has a median income of $61,336 (Neighborhood Nexus, 2019a). However, the disparities are vast. For example, the northern suburb of Johns Creek has a mean income of $113,609 (Neighborhood Nexus, 2019b), while the neighborhood Vine City, just west of downtown Atlanta, is $25,413 (Neighborhood Nexus, 2017). Similarly, across Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), there are vastly different numbers. For example, based on American Community Survey 2016 data, Bridgeport, CT saw the highest income inequality with 95th percentile household income at $485,657 and the 20th percentile at $34,25, a ratio of 14:2 (Berube, 2018).

One of the reasons this spatial inequality exists is because injustice comes from “unevenly distributed advantage and disadvantage” and works across geographic scales from the “intimacies of the household to the uneven development of the global economy” (Soja, 2010, p. 20). Bound within each indicator is a racialized spatial component (Lipsitz, 2007) that produces this disparity. For example, looking at the Fulton County example from above, the neighborhood of Vine City is 90 percent Black (Neighborhood Nexus, 2017) compared to Johns Creek at 12 percent. Due to this racial makeup, it is possible to follow several threads to explain the income disparities between these two communities. First, looking historically, we can say that because of desegregation in the 1950s, whites fled to the suburbs of Atlanta. Jobs followed, and today, residents in Johns Creek have
access to higher-paying jobs compared to those in Vine City. At the same time, banking practices ensured residents in Vine City did not have access to mortgage programs which depressed the housing values which in turn reduced funds for local public schools. Meanwhile, the suburbs of Johns Creek have higher property values, which funnels more resources to the schools, thus higher educational outcomes, leading to better job opportunities.

2.7 Limitations

Composite indicators, which often compare country performance, are increasingly valuable for policy analysis and public communication. Such composite indicators provide simple comparisons of countries that policymakers and researchers can use to illustrate complex and sometimes elusive issues in wide-ranging fields, e.g., environment, economy, society, or technological development. Moreover, it often seems more accessible for the general public to interpret composite indicators than to identify common trends across many separate indicators. They have also proven helpful in benchmarking country performance (Saltelli, 2007).

However, composite indicators can send misleading policy messages if poorly developed. First, a single index oversimplifies complex issues. While oversimplification is an accurate statement, a single composite index yielding a single numerical value is an excellent communications tool, especially for the public. A second limitation is that index values have no clear meaning. Like the first limitation, creating a single number can be
more accessible to the public and simplify complex, multi-dimensional phenomena. Finally, a selection of domains, variables, weighting, and aggregation can be chosen to ensure results support a politically motivated message. A Technical Advisory Board reviewed and discussed the selected data to ensure the Measuring the Dream Index did not have biased results.

Another significant challenge for the MTD Index is the reliance on quantifiable, positivist data that “reduces Black lives to essential measurable ‘facts’” (Brand & Miller, 2020, p. 468) which can reduce Black life to racism, violence, and death (Woods, 2002). In addition, the empirical data can label Black communities within a deficit framework that erases their struggle and resistance against a racist system (McKittrick & Woods, 2007). While the MTD Index relies strictly on data, this chapter aims to establish a methodology of building a longitudinal composite index that acts as a critical first step in “understanding racialized outcomes” (Brand & Miller, 2020). The MTD Index creates a starting place for future research, including policy analysis and other qualitative studies, which allows us to “unpack the larger racial processes at work” (Brand & Miller, 2020, p. 468) within urban environments.

2.8 Implications

The MTD Index is a set of indicators providing the scaling and longitudinal framework necessary to assess America’s prosperity and equality. The Index identifies six domains where the struggle for equal justice has occurred, including criminal justice,
education, health, housing, poverty, and rights. This data collection and analysis can increase awareness and direct assessments for residents, community organizers, and decision-makers.

To expand this research, I recommend an interdisciplinary approach, weaving law, history, political science, and other disciplines into a narrative and analysis of the arc of change and resistance that characterized the era since Dr. King began his ministry to transform America into a beloved community. These six ‘Dream’ indicators serve as a historical lens for how African American leaders and their allies used the Courts, legislative action, elections, and consumer boycotts, community organizing, and public demonstrations to advance the cause of equality.

The current iteration of the MTD Index only looks at national data, so it does not analyze local spatial inequality. While I plan to extend the MTD Index into smaller spatial units, this project opens an opportunity for other organizations to think about local inequality in a historical context. Many of the indicators I have discussed are available at the sub-national level, although at varying spatial scales and varying levels of access. For example, criminal justice indicators are readily available at the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) level. Depending on the jurisdiction, smaller-scale data will require data requests from local jails, courthouses, and police departments. On the other hand, all of the data dealing with voting rights is available by congressional districts.
While the MTD Index focuses on disparities between Black and white populations, researchers and policymakers can use the principles and questions outlined in this chapter to build an Index for other groups. Therefore, I recommend that indicator projects consider disaggregating data and delve deeper into the Quality of Life between racial, ethnic, and other marginalized groups.

Dr. King said, “The arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” The Measuring the Dream Index helps us trace this arc and anticipate where and how communities, decision-makers, and institutions can engage to maintain the integrity of the arc’s progress. Our goal is to inform, enable and inspire a diverse audience, including public, private and non-profit leaders; students; scholars; and community activists —so that we can finally achieve the equality that Dr. King called for in 1963.
CHAPTER 3. THE SPATIALITY OF WHITE PRIVILEGE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to bring a white privilege framework into the planning discipline. Planning research often focuses on disadvantages within Black communities rather than the unearned benefits that occur within white communities. Other fields have expanded their research to expose the benefits afforded to white populations, but planning is only starting to participate in this conversation (Goetz et al., 2020). For example, Goetz, Williams, and Damiano (2020) set out a whiteness framework for urban planning, which calls for the planning field to center the role of whiteness in shaping urban communities. This chapter is in response to their call. My central argument is that white privilege, when viewed as an individual-level social benefit for whiteness, does not provide an adequate theoretical foundation for understanding the spatial nature of white advantage. I suggest that without a spatial understanding, planners will overlook the concept of white privilege as being outside of their area of study.

Research language often describes urban Black communities as persistent areas of segregated, concentrated poverty neighborhoods (Lichter et al., 2012) while ignoring the accumulation of wealth taking place in white communities. Researchers across disciplines consistently study and make policy recommendations for low-income communities (Goetz et al., 2019; Jargowsky, 1997; Sharkey, 2013). Yet equally important are areas of Racially
Concentrated Areas of Affluence (RCAAs) which segregate affluent, white residents, along with their power and resources, into isolated communities (Goetz 2019). By spatially enclosing their advantages (Anderson, 2010), whites create pockets of privilege that reproduce themselves over generations (Lipsitz, 2018).

For this chapter, I use Lefebvre because his work has an essential role in understanding the production of space within urban environments. As a Marxist, he is interested in space as a means of production, but he also sees space as “a means of control, and hence of domination, of power” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26). Space is both “result and cause, product and producer” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 142). Those writing on racial capitalism effectively address the historical-materialist process of dispossession and exploitation (Dantzler, 2021; Gilmore, 2002; Pulido, 2016). But I want to focus on how “political projects” (Jones Popke 115) are produced with symbols, codifications, and discourses, what Lefebvre calls the representations of space, that intertwine space and power (Rimstead & Domenic, 2019). Through Lefebvre’s theory, we can better understand the “social relations and political negotiations that produce urban space” (Jones Popke 116)

Other researchers used Lefebvre’s Production of Space to demonstrate the relationship between abstract space and the racialization of urban spaces as a means of destruction of Black space. For example, Dougherty (2020) does a historical analysis looking at the discourse used by white and Black communities to produce space around school segregation. She demonstrates how:
“educational and residential spaces themselves are imbued with and productive of social meaning and that controlling the meaning and experience of space is essential to how power works. This is due to the fact that hegemony—political and ideological—is reliant on controlling representations and their materializations (e.g., the built environment itself)” (Dougherty, 2020, p. 1118).

In another example, McCann (1999) draws a clear line between abstract space and race in his study of racial protest in Lexington, Kentucky, following the murder of a Black teenager at the hands of a white police officer. He demonstrates how homogenous abstract spaces deny racial differences while being ahistorical in their erasure of racial struggles. Thus, while it is essential to explore the mechanisms used to destroy Black spaces, to challenge the invisibility of whiteness, it is also important to explicitly call out the tools that produce space that benefits white people.

Through this chapter, I demonstrate a framework for considering the spatiality of white privilege. I begin with an overview of the range of ways that white privilege has been conceptualized and defined, primarily by non-planners, over the last several decades. I rely on non-planners, as the planning field has not adequately addressed white privilege. This section includes a look at the mechanisms of white privilege. Next, I outline Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*, specifically focusing on how dominant forces use space as a means of controlling people and their lived experiences. In the following section, I propose a framework for linking white privilege and the production of space. I provide
three key characteristics of the production of abstract space (homogenous, ahistorical, instrumental) that connect with the mechanisms that support white privilege (invisibility, othering, pathologizing). In this section, I give tangible examples of the spatiality of white privilege. I conclude by suggesting additional questions to consider and directions for further inquiry.

This research is vital because of Lefebvre’s criticism of planners as bureaucratic instruments of the state. As a discipline, we need to step back from our rational, quantifiable, datacentric worldview that reduces “three-dimensional realities to two dimensions” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 285) and look at space as Lefebvre envisioned – a differential space that includes layers of contestation “where differences are aired, negotiated, struggled over, performed, remembered, survived, and exposed in the hope that knowing conflict is a viable way of living conflict more progressively” (Rimstead & Domenic, 2019, p. 5). The only way to create an equitable future is to have a "transformation of sociospatial relations, a production of a new, liberatory space" (Gottdiener, 1993, p. 133). Planners are ideal for supporting communities working towards redistributive practices and restorative justice because many planning professionals understand the importance of place and space in the health and well-being of communities. But ignoring whiteness continues to perpetuate an unbalanced system and keeps planners from supporting meaningful reforms. Once the discipline of planning centralizes an understanding of the spatiality of white privilege, planners can strive to create racially
liberatory spaces and work to dismantle a system that maintains material and social advantages to whiteness.

3.2 White Privilege

W.E.B Du Bois first introduced the concept of white privilege, which he described as “public and psychological wage” that allows whites, specifically poor whites, to receive monetary and non-monetary compensation based solely on their whiteness (Du Bois, 1998). For Du Bois, white elites created benefits to perpetuate a racial divide within the working class to maintain capitalist social control. He saw privilege as a way to drive a wedge between groups that ensured workers would not find common ground, thus more easily exploited as they were uninterested in joining forces to overthrow an unequal system.

Nearly fifty years after Du Bois, Peggy McIntosh reintroduces white privilege to an academic audience (1989). She outlines the daily benefits she receives due to her whiteness. McIntosh's examples range from finding bandages that match her skin tone to not being singled out by police, all of which form an "invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions" (1989, p. 1). Her work has been especially influential within education.

While McIntosh calls attention to the benefits afforded to white people, other scholars assert that her “theme of privilege obscures the subject of domination (Leonardo, 2004, p. 143). McIntosh’s list hides the “agents of domination” and gives the impression that the benefits of white privilege are “happening almost without knowledge of whites.”
(Leonardo, 2004, p. 143). Mills argues a white privilege framework focuses on the individual rather than the system that is “run by whites for white benefit” (2017, p. 117). Instead, we need “to shift focus from the individual and attitudinal to the realm of structures and power... as this highlights how white populations benefits illicitly from their social location” (Mills, 2017, p. 117).

Lipsitz takes white privilege up to a societal level. Lipsitz (2018) recognizes the "unfair gains and unjust rewards for all whites," dubbing them the "possessive investment in whiteness." His writings underscore the temporal nature of benefits, whose positive effects accumulate even as outwardly discriminatory practices are no longer in place. Lipsitz’s work illuminates the multiple processes, policies, and systems that drain resources from Black communities and disproportionately benefit white communities.

Lipsitz notes that white benefits become place-bound over time due to the centrality of space on the enduring racial processes. He describes this relationship as “the racialization of space and the spatialization of race” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 12), which demonstrates that “race is produced by space, [and] that it takes places for racism to take place” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 5). Several researchers look at the ways in which white benefits become place-bound. For example, Goetz, Damiano, and Williams (2019) address the spatial nature of a system that rewards whiteness in their analysis of Racially Concentrated Areas of Affluence (RCAAs). They look to understand the characteristics of the
analytically ignored RCAA’s compared to the overly studied Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RECAPs).

Pulido (2000) examines the spatiality of white benefits. She demonstrates how generations of overt and covert racist practices have historically led to the siting of hazardous waste facilities in communities of color rather than in white neighborhoods. She sees white privilege as a valuable lens to discuss "suburbanization and environmental racism because it shifts our understanding of racism beyond discrete siting acts, while also emphasizing the spatiality of racism" (Pulido, 2000). At the same time, Pulido recognizes the historical nature of white privilege, concluding that "since landscapes are artifacts of past and present racisms, they embody generations of sociospatial relations" (Pulido, 2000).

Drawing on Pulido’s work, Hankins, Cochran, and Derickson (2012) demonstrate how a racialized production of space shaped the social and cultural development in a neighborhood of Atlanta: Buckhead. They use a discursive analysis to trace the perception of Buckhead in the 1990s as a space of Blackness in “need of reigning in,” which led to a redevelopment of the area that now protects white privilege. Hankins et al. identify three main mechanisms that allow whites to perpetuate their privilege within space – the invisibility of whiteness, othering, and pathologizing.

The *invisibility of whiteness* as a racial marker establishes the actions and behaviors of white people as "normal" and "ordinary" (Delaney, 2002; Lipsitz, 2018; I. H. Lopez,
1997), which in turn sets whiteness as "unmarked in the cultural economy of race" (Delaney, 2002). Iris Marion Young (2011) calls this "cultural imperialism" in that the dominant group's culture becomes defined as the norm, which gives them exclusive access to "means of interpretation and communication in society" (Young, 2011). Being designated as the "norm" gives the dominant group the power to construct and organize space to protect its image and deny the damage done to secondary citizens.

*Othering* is a tool that dominant groups use to delineate between themselves and groups they define as having inferior characteristics. The mechanism of othering legitimizes the superiority of those in power while creating a subordinate identity (Jensen, 2011). The mechanism of othering deems "not white" people, places, or situations as abnormal (Delaney, 2002), thus situating them into a marginalized existence. This process creates an environment that devalues people (Robinson, 2000) while supporting a system of exploitation for power and profit (McIntyre & Nast, 2011). Once the system views Black people as "disposable" (Pulido, 2016), it becomes easier for them to be expelled or exterminated (Young, 2011).

*Pathologizing* occurs by deeming whiteness as "normal," so that those that fall outside are considered "other," and the system portrays their behavior as pathologized and marked as deviant (Housel, 2009; Roediger, 1999). As a result, Western society often views "non-whites" as disorderly, uncivilized, dangerous, and highly sexualized (K. Anderson, 2000; Nast, 2000; Sibley, 1995; Takahashi, 1997). Under such a mentality, white people
feel the need to protect themselves and their homes and neighborhoods from the encroachment of Others (Sibley, 2001).

The invisibility of whiteness, othering, and pathologizing are social mechanisms that allow white people to perpetuate their privilege. They are not separate processes. Instead, they merge into an enduring support system for white people. Within a spatial context, the mechanisms support the maintenance and reproduction of power and wealth. The following section outlines Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* to demonstrate the ways dominant forces manipulate space as both a means of production within capitalistic markets and a means of control.

### 3.3 Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*

In the *Production of Space*, Lefebvre develops Marx’s theory of space. At the end of *Capital*, Marx expanded his original binary opposition between wages and capital to include Earth which he calls Madame la Terre (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 325). This expansion to include space was important because it looked beyond the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois society to include the landowning class (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 324). Space consists of the land as well as below and above ground resources. While space is tangible, “once it integrated into capitalism, it only gains in strength” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 325) until it takes an active role in the expansion of capitalistic markets. For Lefevre, “space becomes reinterpreted not as a dead, inert thing or object but as organic and alive: space has a pulse, and it palpitates, flows, and collides with other spaces” (Merrifield 2006, 105).
The spatial triad is central to Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space as it traces “the history of space as it proceeds from nature to abstraction” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 110). There are three overlapping parts – representations of space, spaces of representation, and spatial practices. The representations of space are the conceptualized spaces that planners, engineers, developers, geographers, and other bureaucrats produce. Here, space is given meaning through “ideology, power, knowledge in its representation” (Merrifield, 2006, p. 109). Technocrats flatten space into “bureaucratic and political authoritarianism” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 49). Spaces of representation are lived spaces, the everyday. Within spaces of representation are the “symbolic use” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39) of space by its inhabitants, including “images and memories” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 50). It is within these representational spaces the individuals construct “counter-discourses” that “open up the possibility to think differently about space” (McCann, 1999, p. 172). Because this space is elusive and contains cracks of contradictions (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52), those with dominant power want to “appropriate and dominate it” (Merrifield, 2006, p. 110). Thus, spaces of representation become crushed by conceived space. Finally, spatial practices bridge conceived and lived spaces, allowing for “spatial competence” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Here, people’s perception of the world around them structures their lived reality (Merrifield, 2006). Spatial practices ensure social cohesion.

Within spaces of representation is abstract space which is produced with a “Cartesian logic and created “as a product of violence and war, it is political” (Lefebvre,
1991, p. 285). It is here the “material representations of wealth and power that enable and reproduce spatial practices” (Cutts & Minn, 2018, p. 18) and it “functions...as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships: glass and stone, concrete and steel, angles and curves, full and empty” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 49). Abstract space is the “intersection of knowledge and power” (Gottdiener, 1993, p. 131) as it “transports and maintains specific social relations, dissolves others and stands opposed to yet others. It functions positively vis-à-vis its own implications: technology, applied sciences, and knowledge bound to power” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 50). Representations, ideologies, and epistemologies perpetuate a dialogue between space and user, prompting compliance (Merrifield, 2006).

Lefebvre notes, “Abstract space is buttressed by non-critical (positive) knowledge, backed up by a frightening capacity for violence, and maintained by a bureaucracy which has laid hold of the gains of capitalism in the ascendant and turned them to its own profit” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52). Thus, within his production of space, dominant forces create abstract space that is ahistorical and homogenous and controlled by the instrumental power of the state (including planners and other technocrats). *Ahistorical spaces* are those that are "devoid of any indications of the social struggles around its production" (McCann, 1999), where "previous histories have been erased" (Gregory, 1994, p. 366). Thus, while space may appear devoid, in reality, abstract space buries lived histories as a means of control. *Homogeneous spaces* come out of the two-dimensional Euclidean representation of spaces (Elden, 2007). In a goal to achieve homogenous space, planners and bureaucrats attempt
a “reduction of the ‘real’… to a ‘plan’ existing in a void” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 287) which is done as a way to “reduce reality in the interests of power” (Wilson 370). The *instrumental power of the state* occurs when elites use their influence to map, plan, and model landscapes to fit their capitalistic needs. They do this as both a way to remain in power and continue the constant flow of capital (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39; Zieleniec, 2018).

Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* demonstrates how planners, and other instruments of the state, produce ahistorical and homogenous spaces to maintain control of the capitalistic means of production and to remain in power. The following section establishes how the spatiality of white privilege develops as a relationship between the social mechanisms of whiteness (invisibility of whiteness, othering, and pathologizing) and the spatial representations of control (ahistorical, homogenous and instrumental power of the state).

### 3.4 The Spatiality of White Privilege

The *spatiality of white privilege* (SWP) creates an interdependent relationship between abstract space and the mechanisms used by whites, as the dominant class, to maintain and reproduce their power and wealth. The spatiality of white privilege often (but not always) develops within urban, middle-class communities. Urban because abstract space constitutes the “centers of wealth and power” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 49). Middle class because abstract space is “the space where the middle classes have taken up residence and
expanded – neutral, or seemingly so, on account of their social and political position midway between the bourgeoisie and the working class” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 309). As middle-class white people seek spaces that are an “image of a social world in which they have their own specially, labeled, guaranteed place” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 309), they perpetuate the spatiality of white privilege.

![Figure 3 – Spatiality of White Privilege Framework](image)

In this framework (Figure 3), the spatiality of white privilege occurs through the mechanisms of invisibility of whiteness, othering, and pathologizing of "non-whites." As those with power erase the racialized histories within spaces, they rearticulate and reimagine the space for a white audience. The development and maintenance of homogenous spaces enforce the marginalization of others while also protecting white
identity. Finally, as the state presents its rationale for reshaping landscapes, the state usually does so by pathologizing communities of color.

3.4.1 Invisibility of Whiteness – Ahistorical

In the production of space, ahistorical spaces erase social struggles from both the physical and memorialized landscape. Within the urban context, ahistorical places deny the contested racial histories that took place within that space (McCann, 1999). Space takes on a race-neutral quality when planners construct landscapes that hide a racialized past (Inwood & Martin, 2008). It creates a “collective amnesia” in that the official memory is reduced to a “feel-good history for whites” (Mills 65) that protects “white identity, white memory” (Mills 65).

For example, the American Planning Association (APA) lists Ansley Park in Atlanta, Georgia as a "Great Places in America: Neighborhoods." The APA describes the neighborhood as the "the brainchild of attorney and real estate developer Edwin P. Ansley" and goes on to highlight Ansley Park’s history of equitable practices by stating in 1968, "bucking prevailing attitudes… Ansley Park residents craft statement welcoming all to reside there, regardless of race or color" and then in 1974 "despite initial reservations, Ansley Park welcomes public housing" which makes the neighborhood a “model for successful integration of lower-income housing into affluent area” (American Planning Association, n.d.). While both are important moments in Ansley Park history, the article ignores the reality that Edwin Ansley created Ansley Park as the first racially restrictive
covenant in Atlanta. A 1908 advertisement states Ansley Park "has not and never will have a home belonging to a person of color or occupied by one other than as a servant on the premises." “Deed restrictions keep them out perpetually,” so “it has nothing but homes – handsome homes – of Atlanta’s best and foremost citizens” and “It NEVER will have anything else. IT NEVER CAN HAVE” (Ariail, 2013, p. 37). While restricted covenants based on race are no longer allowed, by only describing a sanitized history, the article creates a narrative of the area as progressive, which enables residents to ignore the racialized history of their community.

Besides historically white neighborhoods, this interaction between ahistorical and invisible whiteness often occurs in gentrifying neighborhoods. Displacement of communities of color first erases their existence along with their collective past and then rebrands the area to make it palatable for new, often white, residents. Developers rename neighborhoods to give them a sense of newness and expunge all residual associations with the past. Harlem becomes SoHa, South Philly becomes So-So, and Bankhead becomes West Midtown Atlanta. As people leave, their place memories go with them (Hayden, 1995). Development erases their inscribed meanings from the built environment. Over time, the new residents rearticulate the space in their image (Mirabal, 2009).

While communities are displaced, there is a co-opting of their spaces and histories to sell the "hipness" of gentrifying communities. Summers (2019) calls this "Black aesthetic emplacement," which uses Blackness as a mode to demonstrate authentic
experience and coolness to sell neighborhoods yet does not extend this value to Black residents. In Washington D.C., a white-owned brewery, Chocolate City Beer best exemplifies "Black aesthetic emplacement"9 (Summers, 2019). In Brooklyn, developers and real estate agents use hip-hop and graffiti to promote the area to young white gentrifiers. The use of the “Black aesthetic emplacement” demonstrates the ahistorical nature of abstract space as it erases social struggles inherent in Black street art, which was often a protest against state-sanctioned violence and public neglect only to be repacked and sold to new white residents (Boston, 2019). Similarly, in San Francisco's Mission District, formerly a Latino community, taco trucks are now being opened by white restauranteurs to sell food to white gentrifiers looking for an authentic "ethnic" experience. All of these examples give whites the ability to claim they live in a diverse area even as Black and Brown residents have been priced out and policed out long before.

3.4.2 Othering - Homogenous

Planners and other technocrats plan homogenous spaces to the point that they abolish spatial and cultural distinctions (Lefebvre, 1991). These spaces deny racial differences to protect the dominant racial group (McCann, 1999) and reshape communities of color to ensure whiteness becomes normative. Anyone who falls outside of the "norm" of whiteness is deemed other. For example, landscape architect, Walter Hood, notes that "congregating on corners implies illicit activities and trouble" in inner-city communities,

9 “Chocolate City” refers to a moniker for Washington D.C. as a predominantly Black city.
while in other areas of the city, it is encouraged and seen as a sign of vitality and community spirit” (Koh, 2020, p. 97).

Within gentrifying communities, newcomers slowly criminalize and censure "distasteful" behaviors that longtime residents enjoyed (Pattillo, 2007). There are countless examples of new white residents calling the police on longtime residents of color participating in longstanding community traditions. For instance, in 2007, a nearly 40-year tradition of African drumming in Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem, NY, drew complaints from residents in a new $1 million apartment complex. The weekend drumming tradition began in 1969 to keep children safe when squatters and drug dealers besieged the area, but the sounds did not sit well with new residents expecting solitude in their luxury co-op (Williams, 2008).

Similar actions have taken place in "Chicano Park:" in Austin’s East Cesar Chavez neighborhood, a working-class Latino neighborhood separated from downtown Austin by Interstate 35 (built in the mid-1960s) with a 2009 average home price of around $100,000. Since the early 1990s, a car club where Black and Latino men bring their customized cars to a middle school parking lot along with music, children, and food. As the area gentrifies, the car club meetups act as a place to reconnect with displaced friends and family. However, the longtime revelers are not appreciated by residents in the newly built luxury apartment complex that despite the community website that states renters will enjoy living
in a "community that is rich in history and tradition," new residents call the police and work to cite noise ordinances in hopes the gatherings will be shut down (Holley, 2012).

Othering can take place at a citywide level, as in the example of Detroit, Michigan, whose failure and "rebirth" are prime examples of how the spatiality of white privilege first destroys Black communities through othering and then recreates a city for new white residents (Doucet, 2020). During the early part of the 20th century, Detroit symbolized American ingenuity with the Ford assembly line and a growing middle-class of blue-collar workers. Nevertheless, as the city declined due to several factors, including the loss of manufacturing jobs, the city became a "metonym for urban failure" (Doucet, 2020, p. 634). Detroit, as one of the nation's largest Black-majority cities, the narrative became a "racialized city that is responsible for its own decline" (Apel, 2015, p. 79). Over time, “Detroit became othered: a city presented as something distinct from the rest of the world, rather than as an extreme example of the challenges facing all cities.” (Doucet, 2020, p. 634). The dominant images shared of Detroit were those of “a ruined city, devoid of people or economic life” (Doucet, 2020, p. 634) – an unoccupied wasteland that could not survive on its own.

However, as white gentrifiers begin to move into the city, the image of Detroit becomes a "comeback city" with "new life, energy, people and development" (Doucet, 2020, p. 235). Richard Florida describes the city's rebirth due to "interesting people or engaged people – artists, innovators, musicians, designers, city-builders, place-makers."
He goes on to say, "Detroit has begun to attract the right kind of people – the people who want to help rebuild this great city.” (Florida, 2012 as cited by Doucet, 2020: 635). As a majority of these “right kind of people” are white, this builds the narrative of white people as the saviors and gives them license to rebrand the city in their image.

3.4.3 Pathologizing - Instrumental

Early planners in the 20th century used pathologizing language to represent urban "non-white" space (Wirth, 1938) while building a narrative that Black spaces and experiences as expendable (Crutcher, 2006, p. 35). City and federal agencies used this discourse in countless communities of color to justify "clearance and erasure" (Brand, 2018).

For example, city governments described communities as "dangerous" and "morally depraved" to rationalize the systematic destruction and relocation of residents through urban renewal (McDonough, 1993). The Federal government used similar language for highway construction that bisected communities of color across the United States (R. Lopez, 2012). In the 1990s, the racially coded language around the culture of poverty merged with HOPE VI Program designed to demolish "obsolete" public housing with little regard to the social networks established by community residents. The language surrounding HOPE VI implicated poor communities in their poverty, suggesting that they were lost and desperate without the assistance of outsiders.
The language of pathologizing of Black communities continues into the 21st century. After Hurricane Katrina, in New Orleans, politicians and the business elite saw the relocation of poor, Black residents as an opportunity to redevelop the city (Marable, 2006). Just two weeks after the Category 5 storm ravaged the area, head of the regional transit authority James Reiss⁠¹⁰, stated, "Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically" (Cooper, 2005). Then, four months after the storm, the “Bring New Orleans Back” land use committee presents a map of neighborhoods that would not be able to rebuild unless the residents could demonstrate “the existence of sufficient “critical mass” in their neighborhoods—by showing, for example, that half of the population planned to return and rebuild.” If not, the homes would be bought or seized through eminent domain so the government could transition the land into green space (Randall, 2006). The "media's racialized denigration" of Lower Ninth Ward New Orleans as "unsalvageable" supported efforts to turn the area into wetlands rather than rebuild for displaced residents (Brand, 2018).

3.5 Implications for Research

This chapter examines how white privilege becomes embedded in the spatial (re)construction of cities. To understand this, I ask, what is the relationship between

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¹⁰ Who helicoptered in an Israeli security company to guard his upscale home after the storm
abstract space and white privilege? I find that white privilege takes on a spatial quality when merged with the violent construction of abstract space. While not a linear process, it often starts with instruments of the state (i.e., planners, engineers, and other bureaucrats) pathologizing communities of color. As that narrative persists, a homogenization of space occurs which enforces the marginalization of others while also protecting white identity. Finally, the spatiality of white privilege expunges racialized histories from the landscape so that white communities can rearticulate and reimagine the area for themselves.

The Production of Space attacks bureaucratic planners and their production of flattened space through maps, data, and images. Cutts and Minn (2018) note the planning field in the 1970s was grappling with the outcomes of rational planning, so Lefebvre’s theory should be “less of a timeless professional indictment than a methodological call for us to critically seek the contradictions and syntheses unique to our own time and space.” While rational planning no longer is in vogue, I think the rise of data analytics and Smart City technologies continues the trend to produce representations of space that bury the lived experiences of people, especially within historically marginalized communities of color.

By understanding the mechanisms of abstract space, we as planners can work on challenging it. For Lefebvre, “To change life is to change space; to change space is to change life. Neither can be avoided. This is Lefebvre’s radiant dream, the virtual object of his concrete utopia. It’s a dream that undergirds The Production of Space.” (Merrifield
Lefebvre notes that “abstract space carries seeds of a new kind of space, a differential space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 52) – one that supports “use over exchange, difference over homogeneity, the qualitative over the quantitative, the lived over the conceived” (Wilson, 2013, p. 373). Differential space does not require “the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences without oppression” (Young, 1990: 47 as cited in Soja, 2010:78). It is within differential space that we “celebrate bodily and experiential particularity, as well as the nonnegotiable right to difference” (Merri 113). Understanding Lefebvre helps us understand the path to a better space.
CHAPTER 4. DOMINANT AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF ATLANTA’S REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

4.1 Introduction

In the early 20th century, planners classified urban areas with ethnic and lower-class populations as dangerous and deviant, places of alienation and degeneration (Wirth, 1938). Often the language took on a public health narrative or discourse that equated blight to metastatic cancer infecting surrounding neighborhoods (Pritchett, 2003). At the time, government agencies saw the best remedy was to wipe out the disease through slum clearance and urban renewal. In the 1990s, many cities across the United States saw the start of significant shifts in demographics as middle-class white families began moving back into cities (Katz & Bradley, 2013; Randolph, 2017; Sassen, 2001; Smith, 1996). To attract these residents, city governments promoted a narrative that the new large development projects reshaping their municipalities would bring healthy living for all (Glaeser, 2012). In reality, the plans consistently displaced Black residents. Thus, from the early 20th century through today, we see government agencies promote their plans using a specific yet evolving dominant narrative, which justified reshaping the city as both necessary and in the best interest of all residents, including the displaced.

For this study, I compare the dominant narratives in Atlanta at two significant
development moments—urban renewal\textsuperscript{11} and the BeltLine, a 33-mile greenway project that encircles the city. These plans radically shaped and reshaped Atlanta, and each consistently displaced countless Black residents. It is important to note that this chapter does not outline the events of Atlanta’s urban renewal and the BeltLine. Those are already well-documented (Holliman, 2009; Kruse, 2007; Stone, 1989). Instead, this chapter is concerned with the influence of language on the production of space within social and political contexts (Seale, 2017) and to understand how language acts as a tool of domination (Fairclough, 2001b), specifically around race (Bonilla-Silva, 2011).

I use a spatiality of white privilege framework to understand how Atlanta city officials utilized the specific language of pathologizing and othering to produce space that systematically displaced Black residents. The urban renewal narrative focuses on the language of contagious disease to pathologize the area and warn about the spreading blight that may infect the surrounding areas and lead Atlanta into financial ruin. This narrative establishes Blackness as a pathology that planners must dispel from spaces to ensure "livable" communities (Rutland, 2018). The language used by the city to promote the BeltLine evolved away from pathologizing towards a marginalized other that placed Black communities outside the future vision of Atlanta.

\textsuperscript{11} For this study, I focus on the Federal Urban Renewal Program that took place from the early 1950s through the 1970s
While it is vital for researchers to recognize the power embodied in dominant narratives, we perpetuate a system that continually boosts the voice of privilege and silences others by amplifying only one side. Counter-narratives can demonstrate the persistence of racism in U.S. society (Parker & Lynn, 2002) and challenge dominant ideologies by unmasking the power and privilege behind race-neutral and color-blind perspectives (Bell, 1987). With that understanding, I include counter-narratives of residents and businesses in neighborhoods impacted by redevelopment as they pushed against expansion plans and watched their communities get restructured by outside forces. Using a counter-narrative to resist the dominant cultural narrative (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) allows residents to describe the duality of their community as one that was shaped by racism yet served as a place of refuge, dignity, and social vibrancy (Brand, 2018). Exploring counter-narratives also helps us recognize contested space and the ways communities produce their own spaces of representation (Lefebvre, 1991; Rimstead & Domenic, 2019).

In this chapter, I find the community's counter-narratives demonstrate a duality of space (Brand, 2018) – a place viewed by the city as pathological and expendable, yet for residents a space that embodies community, solidarity, and democratic imaginations (Hawthorne, 2019). Across both redevelopment movements of urban renewal and the BeltLine, community residents recognized the city's role in creating blight while at the same time noting the city's data did not match their lived reality. Through both
redevelopment projects, community organizations emphasized their desire to have control in creating their vision for the future.

This discursive approach to historical analysis compares two contradicting narratives around the production of space during development projects in Atlanta. Using city and community reports throughout this historical analysis and newspaper articles that support the dominant narratives as news media often acts as a tool of politicians to promote economic and development projects (Dreier, 2005). This chapter aims to recognize "the power behind discourse rather than just the power in discourse" and “sets as an objective [to] raise people’s consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by other’s as a step towards social emancipation” (Fairclough 2015, 3).

One of the challenges of this research is identifying racism when reports take a colorblind approach of using race-neutral language. While it is true that none of the documents produced by the city identify neighborhoods by race, the subsequent impact on those neighborhoods makes it clear which racial group Atlanta recognized as problematic. Moreover, calling out the documents is a step towards challenging the ahistorical memory creation in city building, specifically the dominant narratives of planning as race-neutral rather than "supportive of white power structure's policies of segregation and discrimination" (Sandercock, 2003: 42).

The first section begins with a brief overview of Atlanta’s early urban renewal efforts in the city. Following this section is a detailed description of the narrative used in
the 1959 report, *Shall We Rebuild Again? Atlanta Faces the Problem of Central Area Blight* which detailed the need for urban renewal in Atlanta. This document relied on the language of pathology as well as opportunity and rejuvenation. Next is the counter-narrative of Vine City, which drafted a *Vine City Comprehensive Development Project Proposal* in 1973 that outlined the community’s needs and their desire to have more say in the urban renewal projects impacting their neighborhood.

The second section outlines Ryan Gravel’s master’s thesis from 1999, which created the idea for BeltLine and its potential to redefine Atlanta. This section includes a description of the 2004 *Beltline Emerald Necklace: Atlanta’s New Public Realm* report, which presented a comprehensive plan and described the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Atlanta to transform itself into one of the most livable cities in the nation. Next, I analyze the counter-narrative of Washington Park, a west Atlanta neighborhood located between the BeltLine and Vine City. The Conservancy at Historic Washington Park drafted the 2015 *Washington Park Neighborhood Visioning Plan*, which outlined the need to protect the community’s historical significance.

### 4.2 Urban Renewal

In 1933, the Roosevelt administration created the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), which made funds available for slum clearance. In Atlanta, Charles Palmer, President of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, owned office buildings near the city’s central business district. At the time, he was not involved in
housing, but the real estate aspect piqued his interest (Palmer, 1955). As a businessman, Palmer saw the funds as an economic benefit to himself and the central business district. He described risk and reward regarding personal gains when he stated, “The whole matter was new and untried, and there undoubtedly would be many complications. But the man who assembled the property for clearance and rebuilding could expect to earn reasonable commissions” (Palmer, 1955, p. 9). As he “examined municipal maps and records, looking for a suitable slum,” (Palmer, 1955, pp. 8–9) Palmer started to recognize the proximity of slums to the city and saw, “that wiping out the slum area would enhance the value of our central business properties” (Palmer, 1955, p. 9).

Palmer started with an economic focus, but his wife suggested looking beyond the financials and thinking about the people. She asked, “Have you ever seen a slum?” and reminded him that people call the slums home (Palmer, 1955, p. 9). This conversation pushed Palmer to stop in the slums adjacent to the Georgia Institute of Technology. Around him, he saw “ragged children” that should have been in school, “pools of stagnant water near an open privy,” and “a chamber pot hung beside a water dipper” (Palmer, 1955, p. 10).

Using medical language to describe the problem, Palmer asked himself, “why such an untended abscess should fester between the lovely campus of our proudest school and the office buildings in the heart of our city” (Palmer, 1955, p. 7). Seeing the people firsthand, he saw slum removal as a way for them to have access to “decent, safe, and
sanitary homes” (Palmer, 1955, p. 13). For Palmer, his personal narrative shifted from purely economic to one that recognized the slums as unhealthy for both the residents and the city of Atlanta. Palmer set his sights on redeveloping a 10-block area known as the "Tech Flats." In October 1933, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution outlined the new development and addressed health and economic implications. It described the Techwood development as a "project which will rebuild the unsightly district ... into one of the most beautiful and modern up-to-date residential section of the city ... with special attention being given to light, air and ventilation." The newspaper anticipated employment of more than 1,000 men, and the final project would increase the value of Georgia Tech (Garrett, 1968, p. 82).

Less than a year later, President Roosevelt’s public works administrator, Secretary Ickes, came to Atlanta in 1934 to dynamite two neighborhoods classified as slums—Tech Flats and Beaver Slide, in West Atlanta. In a nationwide broadcast, Ickes stated this moment was “a milestone in the social history of America” (Garrett, 1968, pp. 920–921). His words indicate that at the time, it was clear the use of federal funds for slum clearance was a grand idea that would reshape cities across the United States.

Two years after Palmer stopped in the Tech Flats, the Techwood development was complete. President Roosevelt came to Atlanta to dedicate the new Techwood Homes. He stated the “antiquated, squalid dwellings for years a detriment to this community .... are gone and in their place we see the bright, cheerful buildings.” The residents now “will live
here in reasonable comfort and healthful, worthwhile surroundings” (Garrett, 1968, p. 88). His message of rebirth for slum residents and the city was broadcast to millions, ushering in a new era of slum clearance across the United States.

Over the next decade, Atlanta continued to clear slums to make way for public housing. During this time, the media supported the city’s endeavors by printing articles that highlighted the problems with blight. For example, an Atlanta Journal-Constitution article from February 24, 1952, entitled, "Shantytown Shackles; Areas in Heart of City Studied for Redevelopment" made the case to the public for why Atlanta must redevelop with an emphasis on the health of the city. The article began by stating, "Modern cities represent man at his worst. By and large they are ugly and unhealthy. In this environment which he has made himself, man can deteriorate…. Cities can breed sickness and death for the body and spirit" (Spalding, 1952). The article described the blighted areas as "wormy" and "cannibalistic substandard areas living on the healthy tissues of new development." It went on to say, “as the prosperous and productive moved out" of the city, they left behind a “ring of decay” around downtown Atlanta. The described decay was said to sit near "the heart and nerve center of the district ... If left alone, it will gradually eat into the city's vitals and spread like ringworm into clean areas. The heart will be stilled, and Atlanta will be through.” To demonstrate the proximity of blight to the heart of Atlanta, the article included a photo of blighted buildings near the Capital with the circled capital building in the background with a pile of tires in the foreground (Figure 4). The article concluded that only
“a cleansing of the rotting sections can save Atlanta, renew it, and guarantee its prosperous future” (Spalding, 1952).

Besides health implications, the news media emphasized the economic benefit of slum clearance. In “Shantytown Shackles,” the article noted slum areas accounted for 20 percent of the city yet only 5 percent of the city’s revenue, and it described “civic blight” as “the drag of unproductive areas against the sections that are healthy and prosperous”
(Spalding, 1952). On April 16, 1958, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* repeated this sentiment when it presented blighted areas as a burden on the tax structure by straining police and fire departments. Not only could urban renewal eliminate the financial strain but also add economic value through jobs programs. The article continued to describe urban renewal as “the greatest opportunity Atlanta has ever had to rejuvenate itself physically and economically” and “any city that does not set in motion by 1960 a comprehensive program to halt blight will be flirting with municipal ruin by 1965” (Britton, 1958).

4.2.1 Shall We Rebuild Again?

In 1959, the Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board (AFCJPB) completed a Neighborhood Analysis Study entitled "Shall we Rebuild Again? Atlanta Faces the Problem of Central Area Blight" as required under the Workable Program provision. It focused on a 13 square mile area around the "heart" of Atlanta's downtown business district (Figure 5). The Planning Board saw as “some of the most valuable land in the city" (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 12) and worried about the “veritable ring of blight which threatens to encircle the critical downtown area” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 13). It is important to note, the AFCJPB saw deteriorating houses as only one cause of blight. Other reasons included “poor platting, mixed land uses, poor zoning, congested streets, narrow lots, inadequate community facilities, poor drainage, excessive noise or odors, and/or social organization which might
encourage low morals or crimes” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 16). The language of the study was bleak and often invoked the imagery of war. The title, “Shall we Rebuild Again,” referenced the Civil War, stating in the Forward “Before in its history, [Atlantans] have rebuilt the City in the wake of war and fire ... Thus, once more, history confronts Atlantans with the same question: “SHALL WE REBUILD AGAIN?” [emphasis from the original document] (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward). Other language included in the Forward to build the urgent case for urban renewal was “This large area is undergoing rapid ... sometimes violent ... changes in character” and “great damage being inflicted upon large portions of the area.” Throughout the study, the authors described urban renewal as a defensive force against Atlanta’s challenges. In the Forward, urban renewal was described as a “powerful weapon as a means of attacking” Atlanta’s problems (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward). Later in the study, the Planning Board stated it was “one of the most powerful... weapons available to cities today to combat and conquer slums and blight” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 4).
Figure 5 – Analysis Study Units for Urban Renewal plans in Atlanta

Besides war, the Planning Board evoked slums as both a literal and figurative contagion. The report emphasized that Atlantans faced the “deadliest of modern urban disease—SLUMS AND BLIGHT!” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 1). The Planning Board described the metastasizing nature of blight, asserting that "entire neighborhoods are being changed into slums.” Slums were also places that “breed... disease” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward) as they were places that epidemics started and spread (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 15). For Atlanta to improve its future, the city needed to “eliminate slums and their
The Planning Board described the study as a presentation of "fact" (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward), a word they repeated in the first two lines of the report. The usage of the word "fact" established the Planning Board as the authority and guided the reader to believe all subsequent analyses. However, the Planning Board conceded the "answers to the problem are not now known," but the solutions "seem to lie in the field of Urban Renewal" (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward). Their usage of the ambiguous word "seem" emphasized their uncertainty, and one could argue that this formulation disavowed future ownership if the plans should fail to produce desired results. The Planning Board went on to place the final decision-making on Atlanta residents when they wrote, "a big policy question is left which cannot be answered by their report, but only by the citizens themselves ... SHALL WE REBUILD AGAIN?" (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward).

The Planning Board did not place blame for the development of slums on residents nor the Atlanta government. Instead, they centered responsibility on “Atlanta’s great growth and change” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 2) and the “products of Atlanta’s dynamic nature” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 5). While the Planning Board did not blame residents for deterioration, the Board used social indicators to define areas of blight which in turn defined clearance areas. They saw blighted areas as those with “abnormally high incidence of delinquency, health
problems, and welfare cases” and areas with “the almost complete collapse or absence of the ordinary and expected patterns of behavior” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 6). In the study, they did not define “ordinary” behavior, but they noted that attitudes caused blight, and while difficult to measure, “they are the measure of what is ‘good’ what is ‘standard’ and what is ‘substandard’” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 7).

After the “Shall We Rebuild Again” report, Atlanta completed massive urban renewal projects across the city. In Mechanicsville and Peoplestown, on the southeastern side of Atlanta, the city leveled 600 acres and demolished 3,261 dwellings. Most families relocated to nearby Summerhill. Some of the land in question became interstates, while the rest became a baseball stadium and associated parking lots. Meanwhile, on the eastern edge of the central business district, the city cleared the community of Buttermilk Bottom. The Atlanta Housing Authority offered to house displaced residents in the Bowen Homes public housing on the west side of the city (Holliman, 2009, p. 374). Between 1950 and the late 1960s, the city displaced approximately 4,077 families, of which 89 percent were Black families (Digital Scholarship Lab, n.d.).

4.2.2 Vine City Comprehensive Development Project Proposal

One of the last communities under urban renewal was the community of Vine City – located in west Atlanta, just a half-mile from the central business district, yet separated by "railroad yards and deteriorated industrial and heavy commercial uses" (National
Domestic Workers Union, 1976). Nevertheless, Black residents considered Vine City a “much-desired address” of Atlanta (Turner, 1986). Along the neighborhood’s southern border ran Hunter Street\(^\text{12}\), an important commercial district for African Americans that housed Bronner Brothers Beauty Supply\(^\text{13}\) and several important civil rights sites, including Paschall’s Restaurant\(^\text{14}\), Hunter Street Baptist Church\(^\text{15}\), and Aleck’s BBQ\(^\text{16}\). Near Vine City was the Atlanta University Center which made the area a prime location for professors’ homes. Through the 1960s, the community was home to many prominent Black Atlantans, including Dorothy Bolden\(^\text{17}\), Alonzo Herndon\(^\text{18}\), Q. V. Williamson\(^\text{19}\), Grace Hamilton\(^\text{20}\), Maynard Jackson\(^\text{21}\), Martin Luther King Jr., and important entertainment facilities like the Magnolia Ballroom and Sunset Park (Urban Collage, 2004). It was also home to the longstanding social service facility the Neighborhood Union\(^\text{22}\).

\(^{12}\) Now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive  
\(^{13}\) Purveyor of African American beauty products as well as the Bronner Brothers International Beauty Show  
\(^{14}\) Important meeting place during the Civil Rights Movement  
\(^{15}\) Served as a headquarters for civil rights workers and organizers as well as a site for nonviolent conflict resolution training  
\(^{16}\) A favorite dining spot for Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, Andrew Young, and others during the Civil Rights Movement  
\(^{17}\) Founder of the National Domestic Worker’s Union of America  
\(^{18}\) A former slave who by the early 1900s owned a barbershop that catered to Atlanta’s lawyers, judges, politicians, and businessmen. He founded the Atlanta Life Insurance Company among many businesses and became Atlanta’s first African American millionaire.  
\(^{19}\) Atlanta’s first Black city councilman  
\(^{20}\) First Black woman state legislator  
\(^{21}\) First Black mayor of Atlanta  
\(^{22}\) An African American clubwomen’s association provided many services to residents of west Atlanta, including housing, food, classes, and medical attention. The women pushed the city to allocate park space for African American residents.
In 1973, Vine City was named an urban renewal area. In response to slow actions by the city, in 1976, Dorothy Bolden wrote a letter to Atlanta Councilman Arrington describing the challenges faced by the community. She stated that the city did initial work urban renewal work for “cleaning and rehabilitation,” but then, “all of a sudden,” the money ran out. The community felt that designated federal funding was no longer available and the “benefits from these programs never received.” Residents believed “they were left out” (Bolden, 1976).

A report published for the Vine City Project Area Committee (PAC) described the conditions of Vine City at the time. The report's goal was to give the Vine City PAC "general information they need to make decisions about the future development of Vine City” (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 1). The report relied on Census data as well as the data collected by a consultant.

The report notes that 60 percent of the community lived on an income of less than US$300 ($1416 in 2021 dollars) a month, and 82 percent of the population at less than US$500 ($2361 in 2021 dollars) a month (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 7). Fifty-six percent of the land was residential. Of the total 885 structures in the community, 32 percent were "structurally deficient," while 62 percent were "structurally deficient warranting clearance” (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 4). In describing the physical characteristics, the Guideline Report noted the “deteriorated residential area” (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 3) but spent most of the section stressing the
city's role in neighborhood blight. The National Domestic Workers of America (NDWA) described the streets as “poor physical condition” and “poorly maintained” (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 3). In the section focused on community recreation facilities, the authors noted Vine City contained no parks and described recreation facilities as "very poor" and used "inadequate" three times. The report also noted, "inadequate to describe bus services" (National Domestic Workers Union, 1976, p. 5).

In response to the depletion of Vine City's dedicated urban renewal funds, the NDWA and the Vine City Community Corporation (VCCC) created the Vine City Comprehensive Development Project Proposal (hereafter known as "Project Proposal"). The report outlined the concerns of the community and created a plan for a two-year study.

The Project Proposal saw Vine City’s problems having been created not from the slums as outlined in “Shall we Rebuild Again” but rather from the city's “neglect, false promises, meaningless surveys,” which the VCCC states in the opening paragraph of the report. The authors reiterated these sentiments in the following paragraph as they described the city's “inaction, false promises, ineffectual leadership” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 7). Dorothy Bolden, director of the NDWA, wrote in a letter to Councilman Marvin Arrington where she stated “if a poor person[‘s] house was run-down before Urban Renewal came, the first thing the Housing Inspector would say now is that these homes are in no condition to be rehabilitated. This is how poor people lose their ownership” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 7).
The false promises and neglect led to residents' "apathetic attitude" (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 1). The sense of community malaise repeated throughout the report with residents' "suspicion and sometimes hostile response to new ideas" due to City actions (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 1). Residents felt they had “been prostituted too often with no appreciative results” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 4). It “caused a deep sense of hopelessness and powerlessness among the people to effect change and make decisions in matters affecting their own destiny” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 1).

The themes of “ownership and decision-making powers” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 1) were central to the Project Proposal. The NDWA recognized that community ownership required residents to have knowledge of the process and suggested a “two-way communication channel needs to be established so as to feed pertinent information to the people in a manner for all residents to comprehend and understand” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 4). This statement “for all residents” stressed the need for information to be available and understandable to everyone. The NDWA and VCCC recommended a residential training program in “management, problem-solving,
decision making, and program implementation” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 2), which would help “eliminate the gap in technical assistance to residents” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 10).

The NDWA and VCCC saw the “absence of current systematic knowledge and information of VC residents” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 7) as a problem. To challenge misinformation, the Project Proposal included a step to “compare factual data on VC with perceptive understanding of the area” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 7). To achieve this aim, the Project Proposal recommended the “population should be studied in the broadest possible way” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 8) with resident interviews (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 7) and to “identify informational level residents have on matters pertaining to their neighborhood” (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 8).

4.3 BeltLine

Over the next fifty years, Atlanta went through major demographic shifts. Between 1970 and 1990, the city's population decreased by 19 percent from 487,000 to 394,000, with the white population decreasing nearly in half from 62 percent of the total population
to 33 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). By 1992, the Atlanta Housing Authority served 13 percent of Atlanta's population, and 40 percent of Atlanta Public School students lived in public housing (Glover, 2009, p. 145). Atlanta's public housing drastically changed with the 1996 Olympic Games combined with HOPE VI funds which “authorized a major new allocation of capital funds for the removal and replacement of the most blighted public housing” (Cisneros, 2009, p. 4). Between 1994 and 2004, the Atlanta Housing Authority demolished 17,000 public housing units and replaced them with ten mixed-income projects (Oakley et al., 2008). At the same time, Atlanta started to see an increase in population.

4.3.1 Belt Line Thesis

In 1999, Ryan Gravel, a student in Architecture and City Planning at the Georgia Institute of Technology, submitted his master’s thesis, “Belt Line—Atlanta: Design of Infrastructure as a Reflection of Public Policy” (Gravel, 1999). The central argument for the thesis was that "an expansion of mass transit infrastructure will lead to both the revival of the inner city and the protection of our natural ecology and agricultural resources” (Gravel, 1999, p. 1). To achieve this aim, Gravel proposed an “adaptive re-use of Atlanta’s historic freight rail lines” (Gravel, 1999, p. 20) which he named the Belt Line.

Gravel positioned the project within the framework of New Urbanism as well as a “more open vision of cities in the twenty-first century” (Gravel, 1999, p. 21). He described New Urbanists' vision of "a new kind of city" that challenges the suburban-style "low density, disconnected development” (Gravel, 1999, p. 21) but could not deal with the
economic and cultural complexities found in modern cities. Gravel set out to “discover new ways to create cities where people want to live, within the economic, cultural and spatial conditions of the contemporary city” (Gravel, 1999, p. 24) while also prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists over automobiles (Gravel, 1999, p. 67). To achieve this aim, Gravel saw the Belt Line design as creating a “broader network of rail transit” (Gravel, 1999, p. 25) with the potential to deal with increasing traffic pressures while protecting established neighborhoods.

Beyond creating new transit infrastructure for Atlanta, Gravel saw the Belt Line as a way for Atlanta to reshape its physical form within and beyond municipal boundaries. The Belt Line was a chance to “change the way we experience and understand the city” (Gravel, 1999, p. 108). He believed it was an opportunity for the City of Atlanta to take back its role in the metro area’s development. At the same time, it also “redefine itself with a new understanding of city form and redefine urban life in the twenty-first century South” (Gravel, 1999, p. 32).

Gravel noted that redevelopment should not take a “clean-slate” approach, like that of urban renewal. For him, older buildings, schools, and parks expressed a community’s characteristics and needed to be preserved through incremental redevelopment. Gravel calculated a total of 4,000 acres\(^2\) as sites for potential redevelopment and included industrial-zoned areas, "obsolete, disconnected" apartment complexes, and “automobile-

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\(^2\) Which he notes is equal in size to downtown and midtown Atlanta
style commercial strips” (Gravel, 1999, p. 47). However, in the thesis, he did not give details about the residents of these obsolete apartments, nor note that a number of these were low-income properties that supported residents that relied on Section 8 vouchers.

After Gravel completed his master’s program, he started work at an architecture firm. It was not until 2001 that Gravel, along with Mark Arnold and Sarah Edgens\textsuperscript{24} wrote a proposal outlining the BeltLine project and sent it to various government officials, including the mayor and governor and transportation and planning agencies. The proposal caught the attention of Atlanta City Council member and chair of the Council’s Transportation Committee, Cathy Woolard. She saw potential in the idea, so she and Gravel started presenting the proposal at neighborhood meetings throughout the city (Pendergrast, 2017). They promoted the BeltLine as “a three-part quality of life proposal—transit, greenspace and economic development” (Gravel, 2005, p. 4).

In 2002, \textit{The Atlanta Journal-Constitution} article introduced the idea of the BeltLine to a broader Atlanta audience by outlining the vision for a future Atlanta as a “true transit city” (Saporta, 2002). The article quoted Woolard, who gave residents a binary choice between a positive future with the BeltLine or an undesirable one filled with "kudzu and vagrants, or a very big train” (Saporta, 2002). The article also quoted Edgens, who highlighted both the public health aspect of the plan and the plan's transformative power. She stated, “These also could be greenways for walking, cycling and transit. They could

\textsuperscript{24} Coworkers at the same architecture firm
be an incredible asset for Atlanta that we haven’t seen before” (Saporta, 2002).

4.3.2 The Beltline Emerald Necklace: Atlanta’s New Public Realm

In 2004, The Trust for Public Land commissioned Alex Garvin and Associates to create a comprehensive plan for the BeltLine (Figure 6). The final report entitled The Beltline Emerald Necklace: Atlanta’s New Public Realm analyzed the “greenspace and development opportunities of the Beltline” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 114). Garvin dedicated the report to Frederick Law Olmsted, who inspired the proposal, specifically his masterwork, Boston’s 6-mile-long emerald necklace.

The Emerald Necklace report is a prime example of Lefebvre’s issue with the technocrats flattening of lived space. In an opening letter at the start of the Emerald Necklace, Alex Garvin described the team's process to prepare the report. He states the team “scoured maps, aerial photographs, and property records. Geographic Information Systems maps and databases were used to determine ownership, land values, and other documented features... and to conduct spatial analysis based on proximity between key features... Several members of the team flew in a helicopter in order to understand and appreciate fully the corridor’s relationship with both the surrounding communities and downtown” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. Letter from Garvin to James Langford). Nowhere in the report does the team talk to community members. Instead, they determine their recommendations based on two-dimensional data and a bird's eye view of the city to understand relationships.
Figure 6 – View of the proposed location for the Beltline

Garvin highlighted the BeltLine as a “unique opportunity” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 114) and a “once-in-a-lifetime gift” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 11). If Atlanta chose not to pursue, it would “squander its chance to create a marvelous public realm” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 11). Garvin recognized the BeltLine plan as “grand and ambitious but also intelligent and forward-looking” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 14). According to Garvin, the BeltLine was a transformative opportunity that would take “what was once an industrial ‘sewer of smoke’ into Atlanta’s emerald necklace” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 6). Throughout the report, the authors used “rebirth” to describe Atlanta's brighter, healthier future.
Besides transforming the city, the “BeltLine’s strength lies in its ability to connect communities across a corridor” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 49). The report repeated the idea of connectivity when it stated, "the BeltLine's greatest value will be its creation of a single, unified public realm for the City of Atlanta” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 12) and its “fundamental promise to unite the City of Atlanta” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 49). He saw the BeltLine as an opportunity to create “a shared common space, greatly strengthening community relationships” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 24). Garvin felt strongly about the uninterrupted BeltLine as they said, “anything less than a single, continuous transit loop is unacceptable” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 51).

Figure 7 – The future of a healthy Atlanta

Gravel’s original BeltLine thesis did not address health directly, but the Emerald Necklace was more explicit. Throughout the report, Garvin used images of active people
in lush, tree-lined spaces (Figure 7). The report stated people would have access to biking and jogging trails, but there would be new opportunities like “sailing in the new Bellwood Lake Park” or “horseback riding from Intrenchment Creek” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 4). The BeltLine gave Atlanta a chance to become the “nation’s most livable cities” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 123) and “positively impact residents’ quality of life for generations to come” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. Executive Summary).

According to Garvin, there were few adverse outcomes from the BeltLine redevelopment. He believed the BeltLine would “displace almost no occupied housing or centers of employment” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 1). The report highlighted one residential area, the Simpson Road corridor, as an “extraordinary” opportunity to redevelop to make the area “more attractive” to developers, to create a “new community” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 114). To highlight the poor conditions of the area, the report included two images of boarded-up, overgrown apartment buildings. It is important to note, the Simpson Road corridor bisects the Bankhead and Washington Park communities, and in the 2000 census, the area was 97% Black. For occupied property that might interfere with the BeltLine, the authors saw those as “not the highest and best use of property” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 11). Similarly, for residents in “substandard” housing stock, the project wanted to "create a desirable community once again," which required relocation. The BeltLine report stated it would first build new housing in a “vacant warehouse” district, and relocated residents, most of whom rely on
Section 8 vouchers, would receive “highly improved housing within a half-mile” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 114).

After the publication of the Beltline Emerald Necklace report, several Atlanta Journal-Constitution articles promoted the political desires to push the BeltLine project forward. A 2005 article described a meeting that included “200 big-money developers, consultants, lawyers and supporters,” and one Council member described the project as “a political dream” while an economic development consultant stated, “We haven’t seen this type of excitement since the [1996] Olympics.” An Inman Park25 resident and affordable housing developer declared the BeltLine “is the best idea I’ve heard in my lifetime in Atlanta.”121 Another 2005 AJC article highlighted the language of the Beltline as being a huge change for the city. A council member stated, “I believe the Beltline ranks up there with the huge opportunities and events that have come through Atlanta in the last 40 or 50 years, quite frankly, it equals or exceeds the Olympics” (Hairston, 2005). However, the message also highlighted the health impact of the BeltLine—“safe pathways for more students to walk or bike to school or transit that could replace lines of exhaust-spewing cars picking up and dropping off students on school days” (Hairston, 2005).

In a 2008 article in the Arts and Books section of the AJC, the author noted that “Atlanta is too often the land of missed opportunity” and stated that even the Olympics had created street and park improvements but left no buildings behind. She asked, could the

25 An intown Atlanta neighborhood that sits adjacent to the BeltLine
BeltLine, “the city’s biggest opportunity of the twenty-first century,” be a missed opportunity? The article mirrored the language of the Garvin report by describing the plan as a “resurrection” of the railroad to “make for a more livable city” and the ability to connect neighborhoods. She goes on to state, “the Beltline could become the city’s civic symbol, linking the past and present even as it shapes the future” (Fox, 2008).

As the BeltLine project began to move forward, national news media picked up the story. A *New York Times* article started with a question, “Could this traffic-clogged Southern city, long derided as the epitome of suburban sprawl, really be discovering its walkable, bike-friendly, density-embracing, streetcar-riding, human-scale soul” The article continued to state that advocates believe that the completion of the BeltLine will “connect 45 neighborhoods—rich and poor, Black and white—thus easing old division of class and race.” The article ended by quoting a west Atlanta barber who was excited about the development of the BeltLine through his community as it may bring more whites which may be a good thing. He stated, “It may blur that racial line a little bit. Maybe we’ll learn to live amongst each other.” The article supported its story of racial integration and health by showing photos of a diverse set of people being active—walking, jogging, biking, and skateboarding. The images show faces enjoying themselves against fresh/refreshing backdrops of artistic murals, sweeping building skylines, and playgrounds. One picture stands out that shows the “undeveloped south side.” It shows a blurred face of a scruffy-bearded African American man crossing over a bridge with mud, warehouses, and electric
lines in the background (Fausset, 2016).

After the initial 2005 TPL report, the next decade saw an incredible amount of development around the repurposed BeltLine trail. Gravel noted in a 2005 Addendum to his thesis that the project initially "focused on transit as an infrastructure tool ... to encourage economic development,” but the project evolved to include parks and trails (Gravel, 2005). The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership was formed in 2005, followed a year later by creating the Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. The first significant developments by 2010 were three parks in four locations within the city (Atlanta BeltLine Inc., 2010). By 2015, a decade after its inception as an entity, the areas around the BeltLine saw US$3.1 billion in private economic development, 1.3 million annual visitors to the first section of the park, and further development of paved trails along the entire park (Atlanta BeltLine Inc., 2015).

However, not all Atlanta residents shared the same BeltLine vision. For example, residents in west Atlanta disagreed that the BeltLine would necessarily lead to a better, more connected community. As reported in the Atlanta Daily World26 at a 2012 Town Hall outlining a proposed penny sale tax increase, residents pushed back against the proposed plan. For example, one resident noted her street did not have buses or trains, so “I don’t see where the transportation plan changes anything” (Scott, 2012). Others, including a state senator, were concerned that “Black small businesses were cut out of the deal” (Scott,
2012), while a local activist felt the plan did not guarantee jobs for the Black community.

4.3.3 Washington Park Neighborhood Visioning Plan

One of the west Atlanta community’s concerns about the new development plans was Washington Park which sat between Vine City to the east and the BeltLine to the west. The neighborhood had a significant role in the development of Black Atlanta. In the early 1900s, Heman E. Perry, an African American businessman, developed the Washington Park neighborhood as the first planned suburbs for the Black community (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 10). In 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Neighborhood Union pushed the city to build a park for African American residents, including a natatorium and tennis courts. That same year, Black voters formed a voting bloc to force the city to build its first high school for Black students, Booker T. Washington High School.

The Conservancy at Historic Washington Park (CHWP) completed the Washington Park Neighborhood Visioning Plan in 2015 with the purpose to “develop a community-driven vision for the neighborhood that will serve as a guide for the improvement, redevelopment, and revitalization of the area” (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 4). The report did not rely only on public-use data like the Census but included survey data to develop a broader picture of the community. Central to the CHWP plan was a process that facilitated “meaningful input” between residents and allowed “participants (to) collaboratively develop a vision for the Washington Park Neighborhood” (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 4).
The CHWP felt strongly about “collaboration” as the word appeared multiple times throughout the report.

Figure 8 – Cover of the Washington Park Neighborhood Visioning Plan

From the start of the report, it was clear that the Washington Park Plan process participants held great pride for its community. In the first paragraph, the authors promoted the community as a “historically significant Black neighborhood,” a place that once had the “most influential community leaders and movers and shakers in the Black neighborhood” as well as the "finest and most influential Black-owned businesses and institutions in the city." The report continued to state the Washington Park Neighborhood’s “many great assets ... helped maintain its relative stability," including the “dedication and zeal of many families." However, when noting the challenges, CHWP wrote that the neighborhood began "over the decades… to lose some of the appeal and luster” (Perez
The representation of the decline of Washington Park came primarily from outside sources, including vacant or dilapidated commercial buildings, unmaintained vacant lots that "have become an eyesore on the community,” deteriorating infrastructure like “sidewalks, streetlights, streets, and stormwater drains” (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 10). Like Vine City fifty years earlier, the CHWP sees the city as culpable for physical challenges in the neighborhood.

The CHWP saw the neighborhood at a “cusp of change” with both the BeltLine and the redevelopment of the neighboring professional football stadium and saw revitalization might bring both opportunities and potential challenges (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 4). Seventy percent of “participants believe that in ten years, the neighborhood will feel very different,” while 88 percent “believe that change in the neighborhood is good” (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 29). The survey responses demonstrated a community excited about their neighborhood’s future.

As a community proud of its past, the CHWP most worried that redevelopment changes could “lead to the displacement of many families that were central to the neighborhood’s rich history” while bringing in an “influx of new residents that are not aware of the historical significance of the neighborhood.” Both of these actions “could lead to the loss of much of history that made this neighborhood one of the most historically significant Black neighborhoods in the City of Atlanta” (Perez Planning + Design LLC,
4.4 Conclusion

While the term “urban renewal” did not become official until the 1954 Housing Act, urban renewal projects’ efforts began decades earlier with the first slum clearance in Atlanta, in what was declared “a milestone in the social history of America” (Garrett, 1968, pp. 117–118). A half-century later, Atlanta once again leads the nation in “a staggeringly ambitious engine of urban revitalization” (Fausset, 2016) with the BeltLine project. These projects aimed to physically reshape the city and sold this idea as an economic and health improvement. These narratives led both projects to state that displacement of residents was not a problem but rather a positive outcome as it would allow people to leave substandard housing for someplace safe, decent, and sanitary.

Urban renewal and the BeltLine utilized a similar narrative in building public approval. Both saw the redevelopment projects as once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the city to rejuvenate and redefine itself. While both projects acknowledged the city’s role as organizer and financier, they both recognized the citizens of Atlanta as final decision-makers, and the project's future rested in their hands. Both projects used public health to promote their plans to the public, with urban renewal describing the development sites as contagious diseases that can infect and kill the surrounding neighborhoods. On the opposite side of the health spectrum, the BeltLine plans promoted a future Atlanta with improved access to parks and recreational facilities, thus creating a healthier, better quality of life.
When we look specifically at the discourse used in the reports, both redevelopment projects use a language that supports a spatiality of white privilege. First, the authors of the urban renewal documents, acting as instruments of the state, pathologize the predominantly Black communities such that they become expendable. As a result, the Atlanta government, with the help of federal funds, wiped out Black communities across the city. For the BeltLine, the plans looked from a two-dimensional perspective to create a homogenous future for Atlanta. The reports labeled communities that did not fit into the design plan as something other than ideal for the grand scheme. Although not identified as Black communities, the racialized language identifies “Section 8” recipients and those living in “obsolete, disconnected” apartments. By identifying these communities as not part of the “connected communities,” they are othered and placed outside Atlanta’s future. Thus, the planners continue to shape the city in a particular image of whiteness.

As the city’s redevelopment narrative did not vastly change from urban renewal to BeltLine, neither did the community’s counter-narrative. Both Vine City and Washington Park recognized the city’s role in creating blight and wanted to have control in creating their vision for the future. It is important to note that neither community was entirely against the redevelopment project but instead wanted to control the process and guarantees. Both communities indicated that the city’s data did not match their lived reality and felt it was essential to create their own data source through surveys completed by residents within the community. Looking at the language used by the two reports, the most significant
difference was the tone. The Vine City report noted that residents felt hopeless and powerless. In contrast, the Washington Park report took a more upbeat albeit apprehensive tone as they worried about displacement and the loss of their history.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation seeks to answer a central question: *What is the role of white privilege in the production of space?* To answer the overarching question in this dissertation, I recognized the need to establish that persistent inequality exists. To understand this, I ask, *what are the changes in Black-white equality since the 1950s across multiple measures, including education, criminal justice, citizenship rights, health, housing, and poverty?* To answer this question, I first built a composite index that looks at 29 variables across the six domains from 1954-2014 and found that a relative measure of equality between African Americans and white Americans has improved but still has not reached a 1:1 ratio which means equality has not been achieved.

The longitudinal analysis of the MTD Index is crucial because it demonstrates that persistent inequality exists across multiple measures. But we know, one of the reasons that inequality continues is the intertwined relationship between spatial forms and social processes (Harvey, 2009). The U.S.’s historic sociospatial relationship creates spatial injustice, creating uneven development across geographic scales (Soja, 2010, p. 20). These corresponding socio-spatial mechanisms are crucial to understanding persistent inequality due to "sedimentations of racist histories in contemporary landscapes" (Hawthorne, 2019).

Chapter 3 examines how white privilege becomes embedded in the spatial (re)construction of cities. To understand this, I ask, *what is the relationship between abstract space and white privilege?* To answer this question, I build a framework based
on Lefebvre's *Production of Space* that demonstrates the spatiality of white privilege occurs because the mechanisms to preserve white privilege play an essential role in the way the instrumental power of the state produces spaces that are ahistorical and homogenous.

Discussions around white privilege often frame it as an individual-level social benefit of whiteness, yet spatial patterns of inequality demonstrate the advantage afforded to larger units, entire white communities. For planning scholars and practitioners to challenge persistent disparities, they need to understand the role of white privilege in the spatial (re)construction of cities. Within the spatiality of white privilege framework, planners construct spaces that erase the past and rearticulate and reimagine space for a white audience. The development and maintenance of homogeneous spaces enforce the marginalization of others while also protecting white identity. Finally, as the state makes arguments to reshape landscapes, it usually does so by pathologizing communities of color.

Chapter 4 focuses on the mechanisms outlined in chapter 3, specifically how planners, as an instrument of the state, use language and narratives to support the spatiality of white privilege. To understand this, I ask, *what have been the dominant discourses used in Atlanta's planning-related documents that ultimately justified the displacement of Black communities during urban renewal and the BeltLine redevelopment projects?* I find that urban renewal documents utilized a pathologizing language about the communities including slums as places that “breed... disease” (Atlanta-Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. Forward) and create an environment of “low morals or crimes” (Atlanta-
Fulton County Joint Planning Board, 1959, p. 16). For the BeltLine, both the original thesis and the Emerald Necklace report moved away from pathologizing language towards a narrative that othered communities to demonstrate the need for their clearance. For example, the city’s narrative identified areas that were “not the highest and best use of property” (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 11) and to “create a desirable community once again,” which required relocation for those in “substandard” housing (Alex Garvin & Associates, 2004, p. 114). Nowhere in the document did the authors identify white or Black communities, yet the use of this colorblind language reinforces the invisibility of whiteness while also reinforcing the position that Black neighborhoods are expendable (Brand, 2018).

At the same time, the chapter looks to explore alternatives to the instrumental power of the state and look at community counter-narratives to understand differential space. With this, I ask what counter-narratives did Black communities in Atlanta use to challenge white spatialities? I find that Vine City (during urban renewal) and Washington Park (during the BeltLine development) have a desire to be part of the planning process that impacts their neighborhoods. The Vine City Community Corporations wants a “two-way communication channel” between residents and the city (National Domestic Workers Union and Vine City Community Corporation, 1976, p. 4) while Washington Park specifically develops a “community-driven vision for the neighborhood” (Perez Planning + Design LLC, 2015, p. 4). Both suggest surveys and interviews as a way to understand their lived space in contrast to the bureaucratic flattening that takes place within the
documents created by Atlanta. Finally, they both establish a narrative that the city plays a role in creating blight within their communities.

The research laid out in this dissertation is necessary because it confronts the planning field’s long history of using space to control “others” to protect whiteness. By calling out whiteness within research and planning decisions (Goetz et al., 2020), the planning field can challenge the invisibility of whiteness while also supporting anti-racist activists’ calls to re-examine the role of the built environment in maintaining a system of erasure and dispossession. Finally, "rather than developing best practices that leave oppressive structures intact," planning practitioners can "draw strength from imagining futures built on existing strategies of collective resistance" (Bonds, 2018, p. 1291) as found within Black communities across the United States. Lipsitz describes “Black negotiations with the constraints and confinements of racialized space” as being able to “envision and enact more decent, dignified, humane, and egalitarian social relations for everyone” (Lipsitz 2011 pg 6). By reconciling planning’s historical role in racializing cityscapes and also training future planning practitioners “who will make development decisions that either exacerbate and expand or challenge and counter the persistent links” (Brand & Miller, 2020, p. 469), the planning field has an opportunity to disrupt the use of space in the construction of whiteness and to create a more liberatory future.
5.1 Recommendations for Planners

This dissertation explores hegemonic representations of space. While these three chapters can act alone, planners need to challenge their role as instruments of the state (Lefebvre, 1991). To challenge the mechanisms of the spatiality of white privilege, planners must look to a radical future that supports liberatory spaces, which are those that go through a "conscious recodification that envisions a more just social world" (Brand, 2015, p. 252). Because this dissertation focuses on the production of space as a mode of power, I aim my recommendations to confront the symbols and discourses used to support the relationship between power and space rather than challenging the capitalistic modes of production. Besides, others have already done an excellent job exploring frameworks away from capitalistic markets (Purcell, 2003; Taylor, 2018).

There are three overarching ways planners can dismantle the representations of space that allow for the spatiality of white privilege to exist – create historical spaces, envision spaces of heterogeneity, and recognize new perspectives on space (Figure 9). To create historical spaces, planners must make whiteness visible by contextualizing the past, supporting "representativeness" in historic preservation, embracing therapeutic planning practices, and advocating for reparative planning. To reduce the othering of non-white spaces as outside the norm, planners must envision spaces of heterogeneity that recognize the duality of space and Black placemaking. Finally, to challenge the pathologizing
language used by the state, planners need to acknowledge new perspectives on space by expanding beyond positivist metrics and supporting community narratives.

**Figure 9 – Recommendations for Planners**
5.2 Create Historical Spaces

5.2.1 Contextualize the Past

An important step to challenge ahistorical spaces is to contextualize the past. Ladd notes that "Monuments are nothing if not selective aids to memory: they encourage us to remember some things but to forget others" (2018, p. 11). For example, activists around the country have worked to bring down Confederate monuments as they symbolize white supremacy. However, other monuments and memorials still stand that omit crucial historical context. In the example of Ansley Park, the American Planning Association should include language about the community's origins as the first racially restrictive covenant in Atlanta. Including this fact does not take away from Ansley Park as a "Great Place in America." It just ensures the narrative includes an expanded history about the creation of the community. One of the ways to support a contextualization of a difficult past, is to create sites of “fragmented commemoration” (Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2002) as it allows for diverse discourses aimed at different audiences. It does not shy away from controversial pasts, but rather allows for audiences carry their own meaning and personal history into the space.

The Los Angeles Mayor’s Office Civic Memory Working Group is a good model for cities to contextualize their history. The organization first convened in 2019 and included “40 historians, indigenous elders and scholars, architects, artists, curators, designers, and other civic and cultural leaders”. By asking, “what if the city of the future
could be simultaneously be lauded for its regard for the past\textsuperscript{27} (Los Angeles Mayor’s Office, n.d.-a) the committee recognizes that excavating the truth about L.A.’s past does not damage the future. Recommendations include commemorating the 1992 civil unrest and the 1871 Anti-Chinese Massacre, recontextualizing "fraught memorials" rather than simply removing them, and adopting more inclusive memorials, including a garden dedicated to L.A.'s essential workers (Los Angeles Mayor’s Office, n.d.-b).

5.2.2 Support “Representativeness” in Historic Preservation

Historic preservation works to protect and memorialize the history of a place. Often landmark buildings based on European-centric designs are preserved due to standards outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act (Ryberg Webster, 2017) that promote “traditionalist” architectural standards over others. At the same time, lack of diversity within historical commissions reduces the interest in non-white spaces while also "denying the genius inherent" in non-white "musicians, authors, artists" (Woods, 1998, p. 259).

Over the last several decades, advocates pushed to expand preservation, highlighting spaces and contributions by African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx. Still, it should be cautioned that without "community-based decision making, a community's heritage can be turned against it and used to reproduce and expand the existing structures of exploitation" (Woods, 1998, p. 261). For example,

\textsuperscript{27} Los Angeles is often called the “City of the future”
Atlanta's central development agency's redevelopment plans for the Auburn Avenue corridor\(^{28}\) looked to "commodify race in an effort to promote the redevelopment of urban areas," which runs counter to the redevelopment visions outlined by community residents (Inwood, 2013, p. 574).

To counter this lack of diversity and to avoid appropriation of cultural heritage, Roberts calls for "representativeness," which she defines as "more diverse leadership reflecting an entire community's cultural and socioeconomic makeup." The goal is to support distributive justice by commissioning projects based on “underrepresented groups' priorities (not just designation)” (Roberts, 2020, p. 4). For example, the San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation recognizes that “cultural heritage anchors social memory and cohesion, informs community identity, and instills a sense of place” (Office of Historic Preservation, n.d.-a). Because of this need, the Office includes a cultural historian who “engages the community in identifying places of cultural significance” and works to “foster the next generation of heritage stewards, as well as including the voices of people who feel disenfranchised” (Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, 2018). Projects include cultural mapping to preserve the “intangible” heritage of “traditions, arts, spirituality, and events” (Office of Historic Preservation, n.d.-b).

\(^{28}\) Once the center of Black life in Atlanta before the government bisected the community with an interstate in the mid-1960s
5.2.3 Embrace Therapeutic Planning Practices

Sandercock (2003, p. 164) calls for "therapeutic planning" working on first healing as a step towards a "capacity for collective growth." Efran defines therapeutic planning as "emotionally engaged planning, which intends to support a process of healing and reconstruction of meaning. It is a dialogical, rational, embodied and collaborative process that brings community members together and creates the conditions for them to work through collective traumas" (Erfan, 2017, p. 38). Erfan follows the "Deep Democracy" approach developed in post-apartheid South Africa, to work with a First Nation reserve located on Vancouver Island as they created a Comprehensive Community Plan which "recognized the value of community planning in community rebuilding in the wake of colonization" (Erfan, 2017, p. 35).

Like therapeutic healing, a Truth and Reconciliation process works to "address the ongoing psycho-socio-cultural implications of past planning acts." (Poe, 2021, p. 14). For an authentic relationship between governmental agencies and the dispossessed community, there must be "truth, inclusion, power-sharing, and the return of land and significant spaces" (Schiffer, 2018). Within planning, one example of a reconciliation plan is the 2018 Northeast False Creek Plan in Vancouver, British Columbia. In this project, reconciliation is considered a "foundational component" and works to address both the local First Nations and the Chinese and Black community displaced during highway construction 30 years prior. Vancouver's assistant director of planning notes, "The displacement that occurred
resulted from some pretty racist policies at the city, and as we began the process of public engagement [for the new plan], we realized the deep healing that needed to take place. So that is what the plan is built on” (American Planning Association, 2019). To work towards reconciliation, the plan acknowledges an expanded history that acknowledges the dispossession of lands and then works to outline policies to improve relationships and work with community groups towards "Recognition, Honoring, Access and Inclusion, Security of Tenure, and Investment" (City of Vancouver, 2015).

In 2016, The Kellogg Foundation worked to create a Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Implementation Guidebook, which focuses "less on reconciliation and much more on healing and transformation" because the U.S. needs more than "reuniting." Instead, the country requires a transformation to "embrace a new narrative for the country, a belief in equal humanity for all Americans" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2020). As part of the process, the Foundation gave grants to fourteen communities across the United States to implement the TRHT strategy. One city includes Richmond, Virginia, which is working to "dismantling key pieces of the city's social and economic framework that have long reinforced racial oppression and perpetuated societal and economic separation within its communities.” Part of the work involves honest examination and discussions to reshape purposefully discriminatory practices” around the public school system, transit, and housing" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, n.d.).
5.2.4 Advocate for Reparative Planning

Reparative planning not only identifies past wrongs but works to repair injustices as felt by descendants (Williams, 2020). Williams notes that planners need to move towards reparative justice, which he describes as "the rejection and dismantling of white supremacy such that life chances become independent of one's ascribed social location." To get there, he recommends, "not only requires fundamental changes in the distribution of public goods and services and a confrontation with white ignorance but a fundamental rethinking of the role of African American communities in setting planning goals and enacting planning policies" (Williams, 2020, p. 8).

Reparative planning actions are rare in practice, but some communities are starting to examine reparations as a path to challenge entrenched injustices. For example, in the early 1900s, a 7,000 square foot piece of water-front property at Manhattan Beach, California, was once only 1 of 2 beaches in L.A. County that allowed African Americans. Willa and Charles Bruce, an African American family, bought adjacent land and built a lodge which attracted other Black families to build neighboring cottages. White residents objected to their new neighbors and responded by creating plans for a public park that included the Bruce’s property. The city seized the land through eminent domain, and by 1927 all the Black families were forced to sell. The land remained vacant for more than 30 years before the city finally built a park.
Over the next half-century, a local resident ensured the Bruce’s story was not forgotten. In 2006, a mayor pushed to rename the beach for the Bruce's, which met resistance. The mayor won, and the beach was named "Bruce's Beach Park" but also included a marker that follows the ahistorical mechanism of the spatiality of white privilege in that it stated, "In 1912, Mr. George Peck, one of our community's co-founders, made it possible for the beach area below this site to be developed as Bruce's Beach, the only beach resort in Los Angeles County for all people." By including the language "for all people," the marker makes the community appear progressive and makes invisible the role of white people in dispossessing land from the Black families.

In 2021, the land is worth $75 million. Community organizers have pushed for the government to pay reparations back to the family business, but the city rejected that plan saying it would be an "illegal gift of public funds." However, because the county owns the land, the city does not have the final say. So instead, the county board and the state created plans to return the land to the Bruce's descendants, who "plan to lease it back to the county at market value" (Moore, 2021)

5.3 Envision Spaces of Heterogeneity

5.3.1 Recognize the Duality of Space

Planners working on challenging SWP need to recognize the duality of space. W.E.B Du Bois first presented double-consciousness in The Souls of Black Folk in which
he described as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 2018, p. 7). Brand expands Du Bois' theory to a "spatial consciousness" as it "illuminates experiences across the veil, elevating ongoing geography and social racisms that anticipate (therefore critique) the ways that racial processes are taken up through development paradigms" (Brand, 2018, p. 5). The duality of space allows for a reframing of Black communities as existing "outside the system of racial oppression, casting them as resilient and beautiful rather than blighted and abandoned" (Brand, 2018, p. 18). Thus, double consciousness is a "radical potential" that does not lead to "apathy but rather to a more radical formulation of double-consciousness as "second sight," that particular gift of Black Americans that always exists in potential form" (Ciccariello-Maher, 2009, pp. 372–373).

Brand writes about the neighborhoods of Treme and the Lower Ninth Ward as being viewed by planners as "unsalvageable" yet central to the socio-cultural practices of the community that views their community through "diagnostic, interpretive, and liberatory narratives" (Brand, 2018). As a way to challenge the "city-led (re)(de)construction," "residents drew on their history of resistance to articulate the importance of their emplaced geographies for their cultural, social, and economic survival" (Brand, 2018, p. 15). Other studies demonstrate that the dual vision of Blackness and space. In Black Corona, Gregory describes Corona as "a Black community because its residents fought back as Black
community." A place that is both "subjected to practices of racial discrimination and subordination... but also a place where they lived and raised their children" (Gregory, 2011, p. 11). Space allows communities to demonstrate their "homeplace" (hooks, 1990) that is both "shaped by racism yet a place of refuge, dignity, and social vibrancy" (Brand, 2018).

5.3.2 Support Black placemaking

Placemaking “inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community” (Project for Public Spaces, 2007). Examples include parklets, open streets events, and street art. Placemaking practices intend to support community-based participation in creating quality public spaces, but it is essential not to continue to “replicate inequalities and exclusionary practices” (Koh, 2020, p. 100). At the same time, it is necessary to specifically recognize Black placemaking, which is the “ability of residents to shift otherwise oppressive geographies of a city to provide sites of play, pleasure, celebration, and politics” (Hunter et al., 2016, p. 4).

One of the ways for planners to first address placemaking is to understand place memory. Hayden describes place memory as the way an area was interpreted and understood by a community over time, and it reflects the community's cultural attributes (Hayden, 1995). She recommends public history, historic preservation, and public art so that internal and external members of the community can better understand a place. She believes place memory can help empower community residents.
An early example of Black Placemaking is Claiborne Avenue Design Team (CADT) in New Orleans, written in 1976. From the late 1800s through the mid-20th century, Claiborne Avenue was central to Black residents in New Orleans as a site of businesses and daily life. But, like many prominent Black communities in the 20th century, the government bisected the community with an interstate. The highway divided Treme (Avila, 2014), the oldest community of free Blacks in the United States, and viewed by residents as a “social space like no other” (Brand, 2021, p. 2). In 1976, the CADT completed a report that described the “trend of deterioration” associated with the destruction caused by the highway but spent a majority of the report outlining a “detailed vision for the future” that includes a “complex and complete narrative of resistance, survival and desire” (Brand, 2021, p. 3). Brand describes this as “Black mecca futurism” as it is a “celebration of past Black geographic settlement amidst the brutalities of Jim Crow segregation” while being “set against and counter to positivist reductions of blight and disinvestment” (Brand, 2021).

A modern example is Destination Crenshaw which is a "1.3 miles of art and culture celebrating Black L.A." (Destination Crenshaw, n.d.), which is a response to the expansion of L.A. county's transit system as both a symbol of historical neglect as well as a driver of gentrification (Easter, 2019). The architecture design team "met quarterly with Black people who lived, worked and grew up in the Crenshaw District… they took time to know the story of Black Los Angeles... They listened to stories of family migrations from
Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. They heard about putting down roots and of having those roots ripped up by so-called urban renewal projects or by new highways like the Santa Monica freeway, which was designed to tear through Sugar Hill, South LA's wealthiest Black neighborhood. They listened to stories of art and jazz and Soul Train dancers. Residents spoke of the hopeful planting of southern Magnolias by their grandparents and their present-day grief after hundreds of Canary Pines along Crenshaw Boulevard were torn down to make way — first for the space shuttle Endeavour, and then for the Crenshaw/LAX train" (Destination Crenshaw, 2021). From these stories, the architecture team created a design for the area that will become "the most dynamic expression of Black American culture in the United States" (Destination Crenshaw, n.d.) with art, economic investment, parks, and community spaces and includes shade structures, based on the African Gian Star, as they are “a plant native to the African continent that was used by our ancestors as bedding on slave ships… The grass, like the people who carried it with the, took root everywhere our ancestors landed. And it flourished, even in strange soils” (Destination Crenshaw, 2021).

5.4 Recognize New Perspectives on Space

5.4.1 Expand Beyond Positivist Metrics

One of the ways to challenge the pathologizing that takes place at the state is to expand beyond planning's "positivist approaches to knowledge building and the scope of data used to understand communities and generate future planning visions" (Brand and
Focusing only on the problems within Black communities perpetuates pathologizing of Black people. Focusing on the "'where' of Blackness in positivist terms can reduce Black lives to essential measurable 'facts' rather than presenting communities that have struggled, resisted, and significantly contributed to the production of space" (McKittrick & Woods, 2007, p. 6). For example, Reese (2018) calls out the food justice movement that describes Black communities as "food deserts," which uses the language of "nothingness" that "not only erases Black food geographies but reinforces the belief that these communities have little or no investment in creating their own place-making strategies toward food self-sufficiency" (Reese, 2018, p. 412). Instead, shift the "lens of analysis from the body to space and place" to create a new unit of analysis (Hawthorne, 2019, p. 5).

A good example is how Brand approaches her analysis of post-Katrina New Orleans that avoids the "re-isolation of the dispossessed and instead focuses on the site as a place of "co-operative human efforts" (McKittrick, 2011, p. 961). She does this by not relying only on the "lens of high rates of poverty, unemployment, poor education, blight, abandonment, and any other myriad of descriptive statistics that amplify how structural racism and advanced capitalism have reproduced and emplaced racial inequality," but instead focuses on the communities as "sites of resistance to development paradigms that render Blacks' claims to space vulnerable, as sites of beauty and emplaced community and
as sites that validate a history or racial processes and resistance to these processes" (Brand, 2018, p. 16).

By looking beyond, the traditional "planning metrics (that) are very good a prescribing the death of Black communities rather than the possibilities for Black life" (Brand & Miller, 2020, p. 468; Woods, 2002), it is possible to start to recognize new ways of knowing spaces. For example, in Clyde Wood's analysis of the Mississippi Delta, he creates a blues epistemology that "reconstructs the oral and written records of resistance movements" that centers on their "indigenous knowledge and sustainable development" (Woods, 1998, pp. 258–259). This new way of knowing "highlights the radical possibilities of Black geographies, specifically the oppositional place-making imaginaries and practices employed by subaltern actors" (Neely & Samura, 2011, p. 1943). New ways of knowing "refuses to equate Blackness with racism, oppression, and dehumanization" and "opens up possibilities for alternative, anticolonial, and liberatory forms of geographic knowledge and world-making" (Hawthorne, 2019, p. 9).

5.4.2 Support Community Narratives

By centering community knowledge and "alternative spatial logics," planners can "challenge the very foundations of planning practice and theory" and create "hopeful and generative space" (Brand & Miller, 2020, p. 469). Local narratives came from a reaction to modernist planning, which valued "order, coherence, regulation, and homogeneity" (Sandercock, 2003a: 2) over anything else. The goal of insurgent historiographies and
local community counter-narratives is not to rewrite planning stories but rather reshape how we define who is a planner and highlight community planning "as a counterpoint to modernist narrative" (Sandercock, 2003, p. 56).

Central to recognizing local narratives in planning practice is the understanding that cities contain a diversity of people and stories. As noted above, through much of planning's early days, planners did not recognize multiple voices that made up the fabric of cities (Beauregard, 1991). To achieve an "authenticity of other voices," planners need to see communities as full of "contradictory narratives" (Burke et al., 2017, p. 589). For example, Burke finds a neighborhood with varying opinions about their park – “derelict… a vision of inclusive space… half-built place… a publicity stunt” (Burke et al., 2017, p. 590). By seeing these opposing visions, it looks past the physical dimension of places to recognize "the poetics of occupying particular places" as well as places of "memory, desire" (Sandercock, 1999, p. 543).

Multiple voices create multiple ways of knowing and challenge the view of stories as "soft, inferior, lacking in rigor, or, worst insult of all, as a 'woman/native/other' way of knowing" (Sandercock, 2010). This "epistemology of multiplicity" challenges the technocratic planner that only views quantitative data as truth. In reality, "planners are both authors who write texts (plans, analyses, articles) and also characters whose forecasts, surveys, models, maps, and so on, act as tropes (figures of speech and argument) in their own and others' persuasive stories" (Sandercock, 2003, p. 20). By expanding definitions
of knowledge, it creates a "more inclusive attitude as to what counts as data and to cross-disciplinary insights as well as citizen collaboration" (Rappaport, 1995, p. 795), including stories, prose, and poems. For example, early African American rap was used as a way to address the challenges felt by "disenfranchised, disadvantaged ghetto youth" and to view through this lens allow us to expand our understanding about "power and protest in the contemporary U.S." (J. M. Thomas, 2008).

Local community narratives recognize that by "telling new stories about our past, our intention is to reshape our future" (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003, p. 47). Van Hulst (2012) describes this imagination as "future-directedness" (pg. 300) as stories work as a tool, "in the service of change, as shapers of a new imagination of alternatives" (Sandercock, 2003, p. 9). A view of the future is fundamental within communities of color whose past of resistance creates an empowering vision of the future (Woods, 1998). Bell hooks (1994) note that "subversive historiography connects oppositional practices for the past and forms of resistance in the present, thus creating space of possibility where the future can be imagined differently."
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