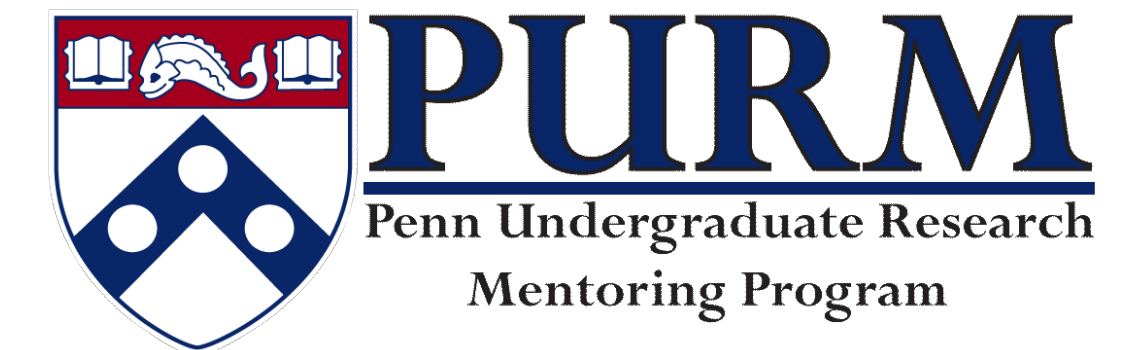


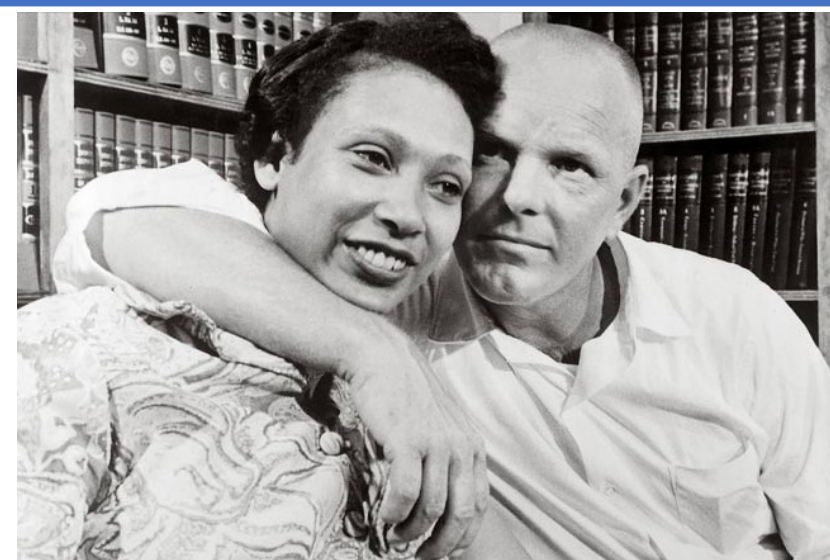
The Social Experience and Science of Interracial Marriage in Chicago, 1937- 1967

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Faculty Mentor: Dorothy Roberts, Professor of Law and Sociology



Introduction



Richard and Mildred Loving embrace. This photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA-NC

- The 1967 *Loving v Virginia* Supreme Court case legalized interracial marriage nationwide. It had been legal in Chicago prior to this but stigmatized. Whites in Chicago often didn't want to give much thought to the 'Negro Problem'
- Robert Roberts, a white UChicago master's student wrote his thesis on hundreds of interviews that he conducted with Chicago interracial couples in the mid-20th century
- **This study examines the scholarship and Chicagoan societal views on interracial marriage and race** from 1937 (the beginning of Roberts's study) to 1967 (the passage of *Loving*)

Findings

Caste

- Led by W. Lloyd Warner, primary race scholarship at the time marked America's racial organization as a caste-based system
 - The little scholarship there was on miscegenation at the time tended to connect it to caste in terms of its relative rarity
- Allison Davis (Chicago's first Black tenured professor and friend of Roberts) **connected interracial love to caste transcendence** in his book *Deep South* (26-27)
- Other scholars predicted that only white men are most easily able to initiate interracial relationships because the male upper-caste member has a society and sex morality most conducive to them doing so (Merton 491)
- Visual realism as activist scholarship for Caroline Bond Day at Radcliffe

Courts

- Harry Olson's **Morals Court** (under Chicago Municipal) regulated sexuality under the guise of preventing prostitution
 - Discreet way to prosecute interracial marriage though it was legal in Chicago at time
 - Demonstrative of obsession with public perception of being politically correct despite racism
- **Morals Court** was deeply connected to the Eugenics Movement, which sought to prevent interracial marriage
- The high-profile case of Jack Johnson is an example of this
 - The Black boxer was arrested for transporting his white wife across state lines and launched a fresh anti-miscegenation movement

Culture

- Robert Abbott, founder and editor of the Black newspaper the *Chicago Defender*, often published articles about interracial marriage, pictured left
- Black-and-tan cafés, most located in Chicago's majority-Black South Side, were places where interracial couples could meet and feel comfortable being seen together
- Well-known Chicago authors Nella Larsen and Richard Wright featured Chicago interracial marriages and relations in their books

Conclusion + Future Directions

- Many of these scholars, particularly Roberts, viewed **interracial marriage as a path to American racial equality**
- During this time period, we found that **the topic of miscegenation was very salient**, but at the same time there existed a reluctance by the general Chicago public to talk about it or experience it personally
- This seems to accurately reflect the general white Northern sentiment during the 20th century around race: they denied explicit racism, but were loath to go about finding ways to solve the 'race problem'
- Our project served to add information to Professor Roberts's forthcoming book on the role of interracial marriage in Chicago's changing race politics

References

- Allison Davis, Burleigh Gardner, and Mary Gardner, *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941; reprint, 2022).
- Robert K. Merton, "Intermarriage and the Social Structure" in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000), 491, previously published as "Intermarriage and the Social Structure: Fact and Theory," in *Psychiatry* (1941)

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Judge Wells M. Cook of the Morals court, displayed rank racial prejudice Thursday, Oct. 31 last, when he sentenced Norval A. Wilburn, 3531 Indiana avenue, waiter at the Congress hotel, to six months in the house of correction, on a charge of fornication with Mable Faulk (white) a young woman to whom Wilburn had been married Aug. 30, last by Dr. Parrish, 3650 Wabash avenue.

6 BLACK AND TAN CAFES DIVESTED OF LICENSES

AGAINST INTERMARRIAGE

ROCKFORD, Ill., March 28.—Some years ago, a white hack driver here named Jones, drove an attractive young lady, Miss Jackson, as a fare in his cab, but learned later to his surprise that she was Colored. Being unaccustomed to hauling our people, he did not want her or any Race people passengers again, so he turned her and his cab over to a Colored driver.

Now, Miss Jackson hadn't changed her color, so she was as white riding with the Colored driver as she was when riding with the white man. It all seemed so childish to me, based as it was on the stigma of race and not on actual color.

However, I do think that intermarriage—one race absorbing another—will solve the Race problem. Genuine leadership, united action, education, the accumulation of wealth and the wisdom to keep it will be the determining factors in its solution.

Judge Cook Denies Prejudice in Court Decision
Southern White Man Tells How He Solved His Intermarriage Problem

An interesting sidelight on the back on their Louisiana plantation, and although white people in his part The Chicago Defender is play-

A sampling of Chicago newspaper articles about miscegenation, mostly from the *Defender*