Poverty in Chicago
A Sociological Perspective
OF 100
CHICAGO PUBLIC
SCHOOL FRESHMEN,
SIX WILL GET A COLLEGE DEGREE

By Jodi S. Cohen and Darnell Little
Tribune staff reporters

Of every 100 freshmen entering a Chicago public high school, only about six will earn a bachelor’s degree by the time they’re 25.

The study, which tracked Chicago high school students who graduated in 1998 and 1999, also found that making it to college doesn’t ensure success: Of the city public school students who went to a four-year college, only about 35 percent earned a bachelor’s degree within six years, compared with 64 percent nationally.

Researchers say they’re not exactly sure why Chicago schools don’t produce enough college graduates. The report points out that the city’s public schools are underfunded and too few resources at the college level contribute to the problem.

“Just focusing on getting kids to college isn’t going to be enough,” said study co-author Elaine Allensworth, a researcher at the consortium, a group that works closely with Chicago Public Schools. “This report raises a lot of issues that the colleges need to struggle with.”

Schools chief Arne Duncan said the grim statistics outlined in the report and the variation in the college rates among city high schools is no surprise—it’s what is driving massive private investment in high school reform.

“When students here are unprepared for college or the world of work, they are condemned to social failure,” he said. “We’re doing everything we can to dramatically change the high school experience for our teenagers.”

Among other findings:

■ Students who graduated from high school with a grade-

Please see Graduates, Page 6

ABOUT THE STUDY
Six in 100 Chicago public high school freshmen will receive a bachelor’s degree by the age of 25, according to a study that tracked 1998 and 1999 high school graduates.

MORE INSIDE
■ Two similar schools with not-so-similar levels of success preparing kids for college. Page 6
Estimated progress towards a four-year college degree among a cohort of 13-year-olds in the Chicago Public Schools

- Of 100 entering freshman, how many....
  - Graduate high school by age 19
    - Total: 54 (18.6%), African-American: 57 (21.3%), Latino: 38 (11.4%), White/other ethnic: 65 (17.5%), 51 (10.7%), 71 (32.6%), 58 (23.7%)
  - Enter a 4 year college within one year after high school
    - Total: 8.4 (8.3%), 8.3%, 3.2%, 8.75%, 3.8%, 21%, 13.7%
  - Graduate from a four year college within 6 years
    - Total: 100, African-American: 100, Latino: 100, White/other ethnic: 100

Aspired to Complete a Four-Year or Graduate Degree

- 100

Planned to Attend a Four-Year College in the Fall

- 72

Applied to a Four-Year College

- 59

Did Not Apply

- 13

Not Accepted

- 8

Accepted Into a Four-Year College

- 51

Not Enrolled

- 10

Enrolled in a Four-Year College

- 41

Note: These figures are based on the Potholes Sample (see Appendix B for details).
So how did we get here?
Chicago 1850
Population: 29,963

Incorporated in 1837 with a few thousand residents; becomes major grain port

Maps by Dennis McClendon
Chicago 1860
Population: 109,260
Black: about 1,000

*Nature’s Metropolis* leads U.S. and world in wheat/corn, pork/beef
•12 rail lines to carry grain/reapers
Chicago 1870
Population: 298,977
Black: about 4,000

Manufacturing and agricultural center
• keys Civil War victory
Chicago 1880
Population: 503,185

1871 Chicago Fire destroys 1/3 of city’s valuation
• astonishing recovery
Chicago 1890
Pop: 1,099,850
Black: 14,000

By 1890 stockyards “processed” 9,000,000 animals per year
• employed 25,000
• supplied 82% U.S. meat
“During the postwar years, the formal pattern of segregation that had characterized race relations in antebellum Chicago broke down. Despite these advances... [blacks] continued to face discrimination in housing, employment and... public accommodation. But they were not confined to a ghetto. Most... lived in mixed neighborhoods. [Black] businessmen and professional men cater to a white market and... there were still few separate civic institutions.”

- Allan Spear, Black Chicago, pp. 6-7
Chicago 1900
Pop: 1,698,575
Black: 30,000
5th largest in world
• 1893 World’s Fair
Chicago 1910
Pop: 2,185,283
Black: 44,000

- 1909 Plan of Chicago
- Germans, Irish, Italians, Polish, Austrians, Russians, Swedes to city
- African Americans conspicuous, used as scabs
As writer Studs Terkel explained, "Chicago to many black people, especially following World War I ... [in the] early 20s, it was the place to go ... [P]eople in the fields would hear the whistle of that Illinois Central, going from New Orleans to Chicago. Chicago! That's where it is. Chicago, where the work is, the stockyards, the steel mills, the farm equipment, the heavy industry. Sandburg's poem may have been corny but true. Chicago [was the] "hog butcher for the world." There [were] jobs at the stockyards, "stacker of wheat," "center of nation's railroads," a thousand passenger trains each day passing through Chicago. Pullman car porters, of course, and chefs, and working the tracks, and of course, the steel mills. Chicago was the place where you could get a job possibly, but life would be different."
Chicago 1920
Pop: 2,701,705
Black: 109,000

European immigration lessens during war, restricted in 1920s
• black migration high
Source: Spear, *Black Chicago*
“1924 to 1929 have been regarded as the golden years of the Black Metropolis. The Depression had not yet begun, and 75,000 wage earners supported a prosperous and well-educated professional and business class. By 1929 Chicago outranked New York as the site of the most black-owned businesses in the country.”

Chicago 1930
Pop: 3,376,438
Black: 234,000

Roaring 20s, frantic growth outward
• blacks concentrated in Black Belt
Chicago 1940
Pop: 3,396,808
Black: 278,000
Depression slows growth
Making the Second Ghetto, 1940-1960

• mechanized cotton picker debuts in 1940s
• massive migration from South (278,000-813,000)
• overcrowding, housing increasingly scarce
• rapid “racial succession” (2 years in some cases)
• white flight to suburbs

Sources: Lemann, The Promised Land; Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto
Chicago 1950
Pop: 3,620,962
Black: 492,000

- labor demand peaks, strong pull north
Chicago 1960
Pop: 3,550,404
Black: 813,000

• 1950s controversy over public housing siting
• After riots, protests, City Council votes to build in Black Belt
### Table 4.3 Neighborhood preferences of white respondents to Detroit Area Survey, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood composition</th>
<th>Percentage who would feel uncomfortable in neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage who would try to move out of neighborhood</th>
<th>Percentage unwilling to move into neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8% black</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% black</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36% black</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57% black</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.2 Neighborhood preferences of black respondents to Detroit Area Survey, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood composition</th>
<th>Preference ranking</th>
<th>Percentage willing to enter such a neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First choice</td>
<td>Second choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All black</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70% black</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% black</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% black</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All white</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*

Robert Taylor Homes completed in 1962

- 27,000 people
- 28 identical buildings
- 16 stories
- 4,300 units
- two miles long
- largest in world
Chicago 1970
Pop: 3,369,359

- expressways, more housing finished
- social unrest
Chicago 1980
Pop: 3,005,072

- Growth to Oak Brook, Schaumburg
- manufacturing down
- poverty concentrates as population decline
Chicago 1990
Pop: 2,783,726

1980s difficult for cities
• manufacturing hit hard
• crack, AIDS epidemics
• out-migration continues
economic restructuring, deindustrialization

joblessness, irregular work, esp. men in central cities

social isolation

segregation

migration waves, white flight & violence, housing actors and policies

decentralization of employment

black middle class out-migration

concentrated, extreme poverty

depopulation, vacant lots, abandonment

decline in social organization

“ghetto-related behaviors, attitudes”: informal work, crime, dysfunctional schools

William J. Wilson, “The New Urban Poverty”
Chicago School Reform I

- 1988 School Reform Law
- decentralization, democratic localism
- 1991 Daley elected
- 1995 Daley’s mayoral takeover
- 1995-2001 Paul Vallas, first CEO of CPS
Chicago 2000
Pop: 2,896,016
Redevelopment of urban core in 1990s
• public housing in disrepair
• segregation stark
• public housing demolished, refurbished
• replaced w/mixed-income developments
• attempt class rather than race integration
• some received Section 8 vouchers
• poverty deconcentrates with mixed results
# Children Living in Poverty, Ages 0-17, 2005

- <1,000
- 1,000 to 3,000
- 3,000 to 7,000
- 7,000 to 10,000
- >10,000
and 68% of low-income families (up to 200% of FPL) have at least one worker

Source: National Center of Children in Poverty
Washington Park, 2005
• # Children in Poverty: 3,657
• % Children in Poverty: 86%

Woodlawn, 2005
• # Children in Poverty: 4,899
• % Children in Poverty: 61%
Chicago School Reform II

- **2001-2009** Arne Duncan as CEO of CPS
- **2004** Renaissance 2010 to close 60, build 100
- **2005** Fresh Start schools (CBE/CTU agreement)
- **2006** first **turnaround** school: Sherman
- **2009-present** Ron Huberman becomes CEO

**Sources:**
- [http://www.cps.edu/](http://www.cps.edu/)
Promise and Possibility

- Social science advances
  - fluid nature of intelligence
  - payoff for early cognitive investment
  - payoff for non-cognitive skills investment

Sources: Nisbett, *Intelligence and How to Get It*; Heckman, “The Productivity Argument”
Promise and Possibility

• Urban Education Institute
• Woodlawn: 98% accepted to college
• professional development
• Urban Teacher’s Education Program
Promise and Possibility

- Harlem Children’s Zone
  - mission: place-based anti-poverty
  - theory of change: contamination
  - methods: early, continuous, comprehensive
Selected Bibliography

• Spear, *Black Chicago*
• Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*
• Lemann, *The Promised Land*
• Grossman, *Land of Hope*
• Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*
• Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*
• Wilson, *When Work Disappears*
• Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*
• CCSR, *From High School to College to the Future*
• Tough, *Whatever It Takes*
• Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change*
• Heckman, “The Productivity Argument”
• Nisbett, *Intelligence and How to Get It*
% Children Living in Poverty, Ages 0-17, 2005
## Chicago’s Changing Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population 2008</th>
<th>CPS 1999</th>
<th>CPS 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American</strong></td>
<td>935,000 (34.6%)</td>
<td>227,000 (52.5%)</td>
<td>185,000 (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
<td>133,000 (4.9%)</td>
<td>14,000 (3.2%)</td>
<td>15,000 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>760,000 (27.8%)</td>
<td>148,000 (34.2%)</td>
<td>172,000 (41.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White, alone</strong></td>
<td>860,000 (31.5%)</td>
<td>43,000 (10.0%)</td>
<td>38,000 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,700,000 (100%)</td>
<td>432,000 (100%)</td>
<td>409,000 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; Chicago Public Schools.