

What about the effect of racial desegregation? One 1965-72 study found that it helped black students in the North but had no effect in the South. There are no studies of long-term effects.

The results from high schools are more complete. Two studies show that students entering the ninth grade with comparable test scores are just as likely to graduate and attend college whether they attend high school in a poor or an affluent neighborhood.

But racial segregation does have a clear impact: Dropout rates are highest at predominantly black high schools, no matter what the individual student's race or socioeconomic background. Studies of northern blacks who attended all-black high schools during the 1960s and early '70s showed that they had higher aspirations than their black counterparts in integrated schools but were ultimately less successful in college. (Yet, in the South, blacks attending integrated high schools in 1972 enjoyed less collegiate success than blacks in segregated schools.)

Teenage crime is more complicated. A study of Nashville during the 1950s found that poor youths attending middle-class schools were less likely to commit serious crimes; a study of Chicago teenagers during the early 1970s found that such youths were *more* likely to commit crimes.

Two studies show fairly conclusively that black teenage girls growing up in predominantly black neighborhoods are more likely to become pregnant.

Overall, the authors write, two things are clear. First, as researchers learn more about the causes of particular problems,

Culture, Chicago-Style

In 1926, admen at the J. Walter Thompson Company proclaimed that an "economic millennium" and the universal availability of standardized merchandise, motion pictures, and radio were erasing class distinctions in America. During the 60 years

Almost Heaven

Visiting California during the 1950s, diplomat George F. Kennan was amazed by its sun 'n surf culture. From his memoirs in *The Atlantic* (April 1989):

California reminds me of the popular American Protestant concept of heaven: There is always a reasonable flow of new arrivals; one meets many—not all—of one's friends; people spend a good deal of their time congratulating one another about the fact that they are there; discontent would be unthinkable; and the newcomer is slightly disconcerted to realize that now, the devil having been banished and virtue being triumphant, nothing terribly interesting can ever happen again . . .

These people practice what for centuries the philosophers have preached: They ask no questions; they live, seemingly, for the day; they waste no energy or substance on the effort to understand life; they enjoy the physical experience of living; they enjoy the lighter forms of contact with an . . . indulgent and undemanding natural environment; their consciences are not troubled by the rumblings of what transpires beyond their horizon. If they are wise, surely the rest of us are fools.

socioeconomic factors seem to diminish in importance relative to racial segregation. Second, the effects of socioeconomic factors and race are rarely straightforward. A poor black youth attending a well-to-do integrated school may be spurred to greater achievements, or he may feel resentment towards his more privileged classmates and turn to crime.

"Encountering Mass Culture at the Grassroots: The Experience of Chicago Workers in the 1920s" by Lizabeth Cohen, in *American Quarterly* (March 1989), Univ. of Md., 2100 Taliaferro Hall, College Park, Md. 20742.

since, critics, Left and Right, have turned the ad agency's boast into an indictment. American "mass culture," they argue, spawned an apolitical materialism across the land, creating a bland, homogenized society.

Nice theory, says Cohen, a historian at Carnegie Mellon University, but that is not what happened, at least not in Chicago.

During the 1920s, the city's working-class Italians, Poles, Slavs, and Irish made the new mass culture conform to their own way of life. True, they loved the new movies coming out of Hollywood. But they watched them in neighborhood theaters—with nicknames like "The Garlic Opera



No sale: During the 1920s, Chicago's Marshall Field department store sold its stylish wares only to the affluent, not to the working class.

House"—where Buster Keaton's hilarious adventures were punctuated by local amateur acts and impromptu film criticism. "The old Italians used to go to these movies," recalled one patron, "and when the good guys were chasing the bad guys... they'd say [in Italian]—Getem—catch them—out loud in the theater." Local radio broadcasts (e.g., "The Irish Hour") were usually tuned in at neighborhood social clubs and were likewise subjected to community comment.

Chicago's workers bypassed the impersonal A&P supermarkets and Walgreen drugstores. "Go to A&P they ain't going to give you credit like I give you credit here," warned one grocer in Little Sicily. The workers were still buying sugar from barrels when the housewives of Evanston were stocking their pantries with Del Monte canned goods and other national brands.

Only blacks, Cohen notes, wholeheartedly accepted the new American mass culture—and promptly made it serve their own interests. Lacking local black-owned shops, they flocked to chain stores. Black consumer boycotts—"Don't spend where you can't work"—forced the chains to hire black workers. And the new mass media enabled "Fats" Waller and other black jazzmen to reach a national audience.

As the decade ended, "mass culture" made greater inroads. But Cohen is not convinced that Chicago's workers were swept into the Great American Mixmaster. It may be, she says, that "mass culture did more to create an integrated working-class culture than a classless American one."

Child Abuse

"The Child Abuse 'Crisis': Forgotten Facts and Hidden Agendas" by Bryce Christensen in *The Family in America* (February 1989), P.O. Box 416, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054.

Last year's trial in New York of attorney Joel Steinberg for fatally beating his adopted daughter Lisa raised new alarms about a nationwide plague of child abuse. "Child abuse has been allowed to remain the hidden tragedy of too many middle-class families," warned a writer in *Ladies'*

Home Journal, echoing an increasingly common view.

Nonsense, says Christensen, editor of *The Family in America*. Child abuse is not nearly as widespread in America as it is said to be. "Of the 2.1 million children who were reported to state authorities in