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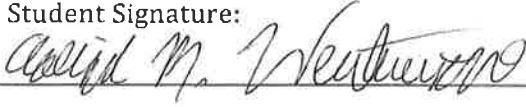
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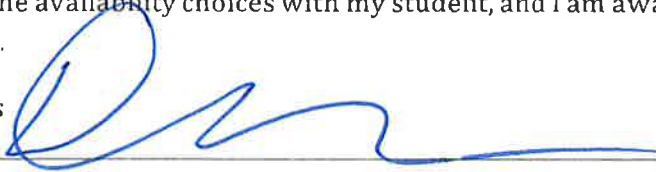


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Chicago's Inner-City Life and Culture

Senior Project

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The Esther G. Maynor Honors College  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

By

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Spring 2019

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Teagan Decker, Ph.D.  
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4-3-19  
Date

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### Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my mentor Dr. Walton for his insights in the History of Hip Hop class and inspiration to focus on Chicago's Hip Hop scene. Also, I would like to thank him for his insights and suggestions for my research project itself.

Next, I would like to thank Dr. Decker for encouraging me to talk to Dr. Walton about taking on this project. Without either of them, I would have not been able to learn about Chicago's historical background and its connection to the Hip Hop Scene.

I would also like to thank my department mentors Professor Phillippi and Dr. Rouse for teaching the basics of cartography and GIS. I have found interest in map designing through the courses they taught and the hawk assistantship they offered. This allowed me to always find an opportunity to incorporate GIS into anything, including this research project.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and loved ones for the support they always offer me.

Abstract

When I took Dr. Walton's "History of Hip Hop" course, he mentioned the term 'drill rap.' Because of the limited time we had in the semester, we did not discuss a lot about drill rap, so I decided to do further research and found interest in it. 'Drill rap' is characterized with "trap-influenced beats...paired with violent lyrics that focus on gang life, drugs, guns and killing. Drill itself means to fight or scrap and can also refer to a firearm."<sup>1</sup> Keon Diego's definition helped me understand that 'drill rap' is associated with violence in Chicago.

I then developed a research question: how did this subgenre develop in such a particular location? To answer the question, I gathered some historical data for Chicago regarding crime, income, and education (since they all intersect) during the 80s/90s. I also gathered some contemporary data regarding crime, income, and education so I could compare the six datasets. In addition, I focused on different neighborhoods in Chicago for each of the three datasets so my maps would not be cluttered. For instance, if I just focused on North Lawndale, it would be very difficult to effectively convey the historical and present statistics on crime, income, and education on my maps. Instead, I focused on different neighborhoods for two reasons: it is not a cluttered mess and it effectively shows that 'drill rap' applies to more than one Chicago neighborhood. Also, I produced a map illustrating the diaspora of Hip Hop music in the United States. This map shows the spatial pattern of the origins of Hip Hop as a whole as well as the origins of drill rap in Chicago.

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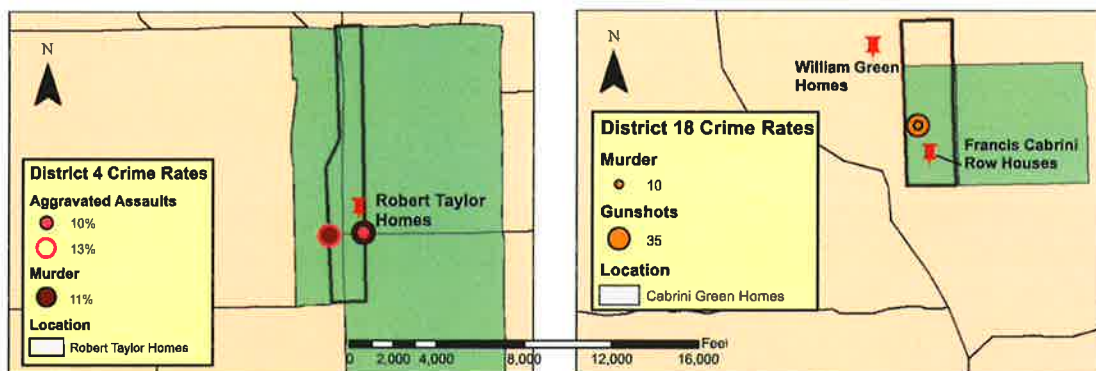
### Chicago's Inner-City Life and Culture

Located in Cook County, Illinois, Chicago is one of the most well-known cities in the United States. For one thing, it sits on the western shore of Lake Michigan. The city also has unique food and lovely views amongst other things. People enjoy the musical heritage that Chicago has, which is what I will be talking about in this paper. More specifically, I will be looking at the development of Chicago's current Hip Hop scene. Two main factors of this development would be the city's historical record on crime, income, and education and how Hip Hop as a whole spread to Chicago.

Starting in the mid-1960's, crime in Chicago sky-rocketed and it continued to rise through the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Crime was not new in Chicago, but the underlying reason to this rapid shift points back to slavery, really. Here is the domino effect: slavery eventually led to the Reconstruction Period, which led to hurting the black community rather than helping them with the creation of Jim Crow laws, which then led to the Great Migration during the 1910s to 1970. This was when blacks were seeking better opportunities in northern cities. Specifically during the 1960s, Chicago experienced a booming black population. With this demographic shift, whites were alarmed and eventually, poor black communities were ghettoized. This led to strict racial boundaries which did not allow for adequate housing, education, and city services. The result: increased crime, lack of support for families, and lack of quality education.<sup>3</sup> In this case, the black community got the short end of the stick once again, leading to Chicago's steadily increasing crime rate heading into the 1990s. Also, these communities suffered more when it came to income and education inequalities that diminished the prosperity of the black community.

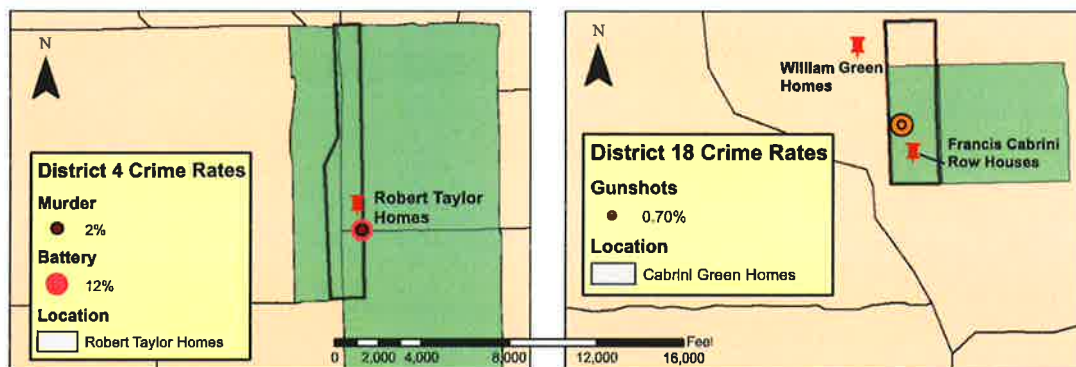
Crime is often times associated with low-income communities of the underclass. For example, in 1983, Wentworth Avenue in South Side Chicago was responsible for 11% of the city's total amount of murders and 13% of the city's total amount of aggravated assaults. This was partly due to the Robert Taylor Homes. In 1980, this housing project was responsible for 11% of the city's total amount of murders, 9% of the city's total amount of rapes, and 10% of the city's total amount of aggravated assaults. Economically, the Robert Taylor Homes' unemployment rate was at approximately 47% in 1980 and in 1983, the median family income was \$5,470 while 93% of families were headed by a single parent. The Cabrini-Green Homes was another housing project that made a mark on Chicago's crime. Within the first three months of 1981, ten residents were murdered and thirty-five were wounded by gunshots; over fifty firearms were confiscated. The records from the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) showed that in 1983, 90% of families with children were headed by women, 83% of households were on welfare, and 81% of families with children received Aid for Dependant Children (AFDC) in the Cabrini-Green Homes.<sup>4</sup> The income status of these two housing projects during that time highlights the significant correlation between income and crime. By 2010, both the Robert Taylor Homes and Cabrini-Green Homes were demolished.<sup>5</sup> Below is a map which shows the former locations of both housing projects and their respective crimes rates.

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The crime rate in District 4 shows the percentage of the city's total crime for murder and aggravated assaults, which happened on Wentworth and at Robert Taylor Homes. District 18 map shows the number of people and gunshots heard in the first nine weeks of 1981, not percentage. Furthermore, Cabrini-Green consisted of two housing developments as shown above.

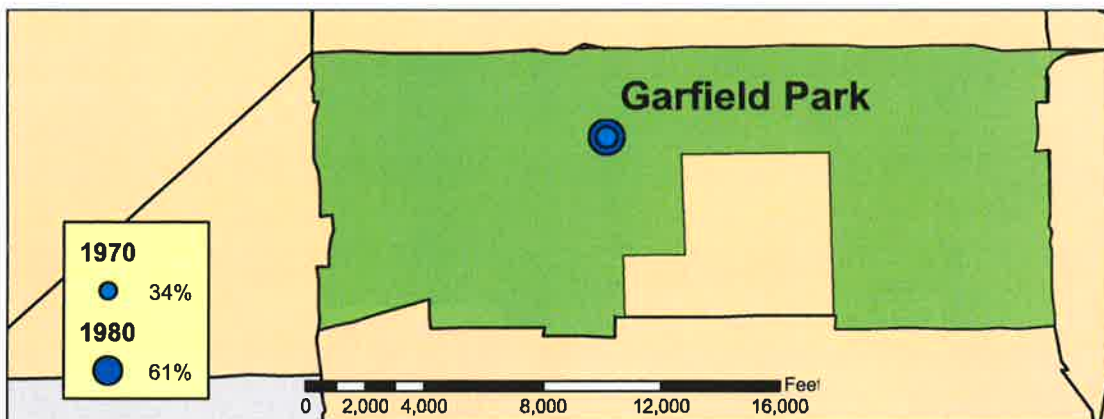
In comparison, the map below shows the crime rates in 2018 in those same areas. The present data provides comparison to the historical data.



The crime rates shown for District 4 represents the entirety of District 4 rather than just Wentworth Avenue and Robert Taylor Homes' approximate location. Also, according to Chicago Police Department's stats, there were no murders reported in 2018 in District 18. Shooting incidences were less than 1%. This means that these stats went down for the most part.

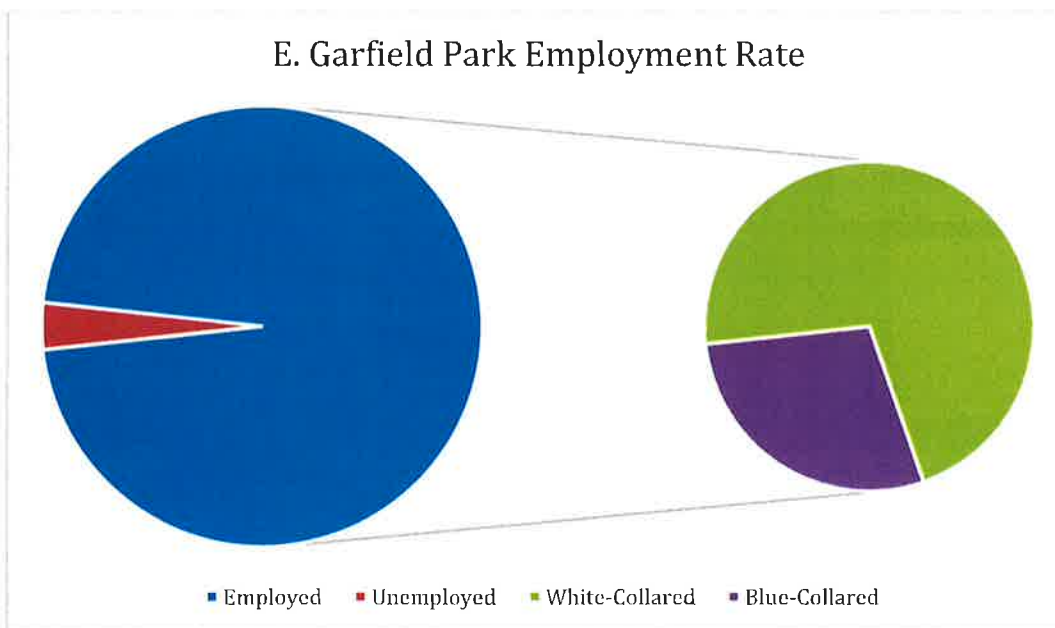
Income is another important factor to look at when it comes to Chicago's statistics and the development of the city's current Hip Hop scene. In 1983, over three million families in Chicago reported incomes below \$5000. A little over half of these families were headed by women. Also included in this statistic were twenty-five thousand families with children living in CHA projects with only 8% married-coupled families and 80% family households receiving AFDC. Female-headed households increased in the United States since the 1970's: 63% increase for white women compared to a 108% increase for black women and a 164% increase for Hispanic women. In Chicago alone, during the 1970's, female-headed households increased in different neighborhoods. For example, Garfield Park experienced an increase from 34% to 61% of households headed by women.<sup>6</sup> The map below shows that increase.

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The map represents the 27% increase of female-headed households in just a decade. With 3 million families having an income of below \$5000 in 1983 and over half of them headed by women, this shows the correlation between the difficulty women had to support their households and how common this struggle was during the time.

Garfield Park is located in West Side Chicago and is split by East and West, as shown in the map above. East Garfield Park has a total population of 72,385 people. Of those people, 68,151 are employed in either a blue-collared or white collared job as shown below.



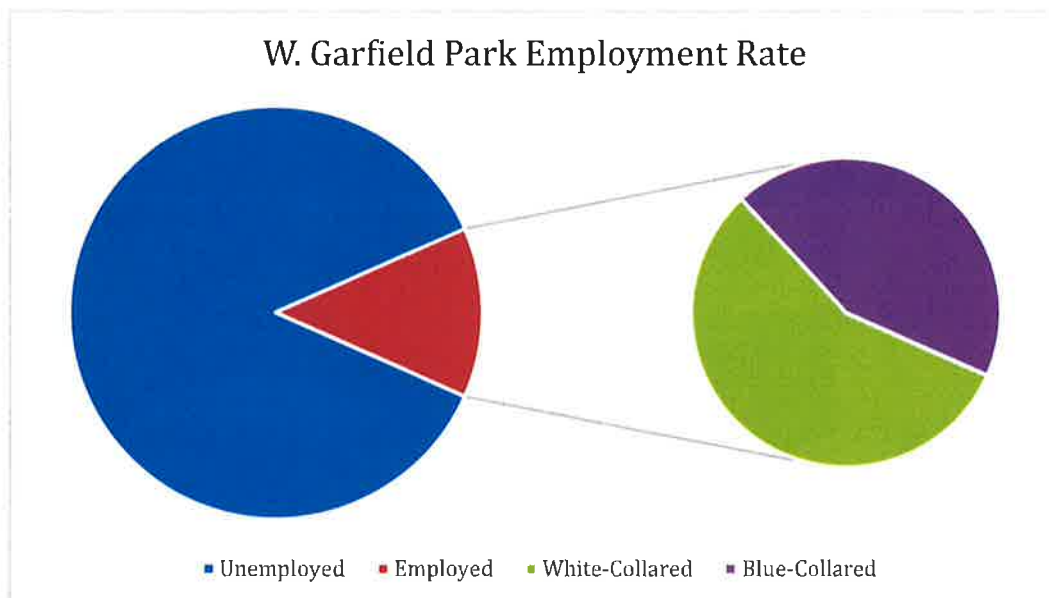
Source of Info: <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/IL/Chicago/East-Garfield-Park-Demographics.html>

Currently, the average income in East Garfield Park is \$43,433 while the median income is \$28,802. This supports the different types of households seen in this area



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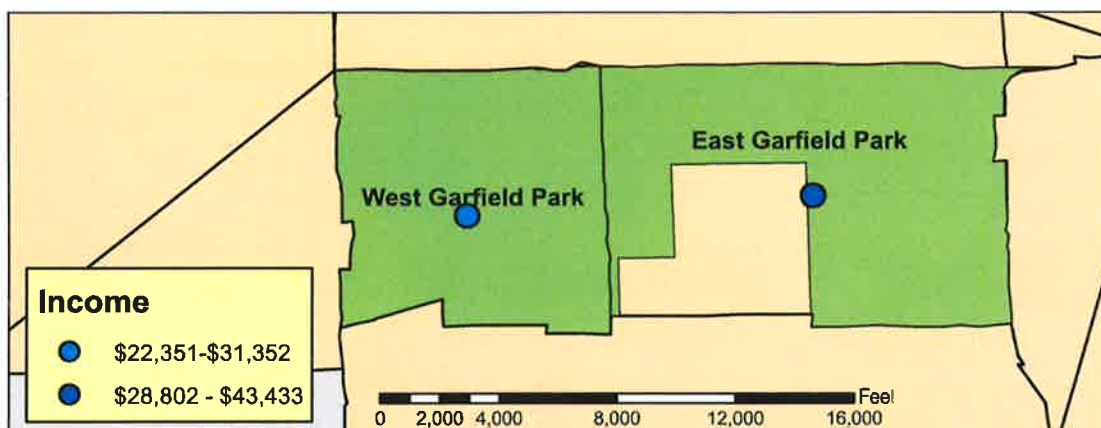
such as households with children and family households, whether or not they are headed by one person or two. West Garfield Park, on the other hand, as a total population of 38,368 people. Of that, only 8,551 people are employed as shown below.



Source of Info: <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/IL/Chicago/West-Garfield-Park-Demographics.html>

Currently, the average income for West Garfield Park is \$31,352 while the median income is \$22,351. Even though West Garfield Park has less people and the unemployment rate is higher than East Garfield Park, these numbers are still better than what there were in the 1970s. Households in that area are better supported than they were before.<sup>7</sup> Overall, Garfield Park seems to be doing better when comparing historical and present income data. In the 1970s and 1980s, households reported low incomes due to the fact that they were headed by single parents. Today, whether or not households include married-couples, there is a significant increase of income since the 1980s. The map below represents this in East and West Garfield Park.

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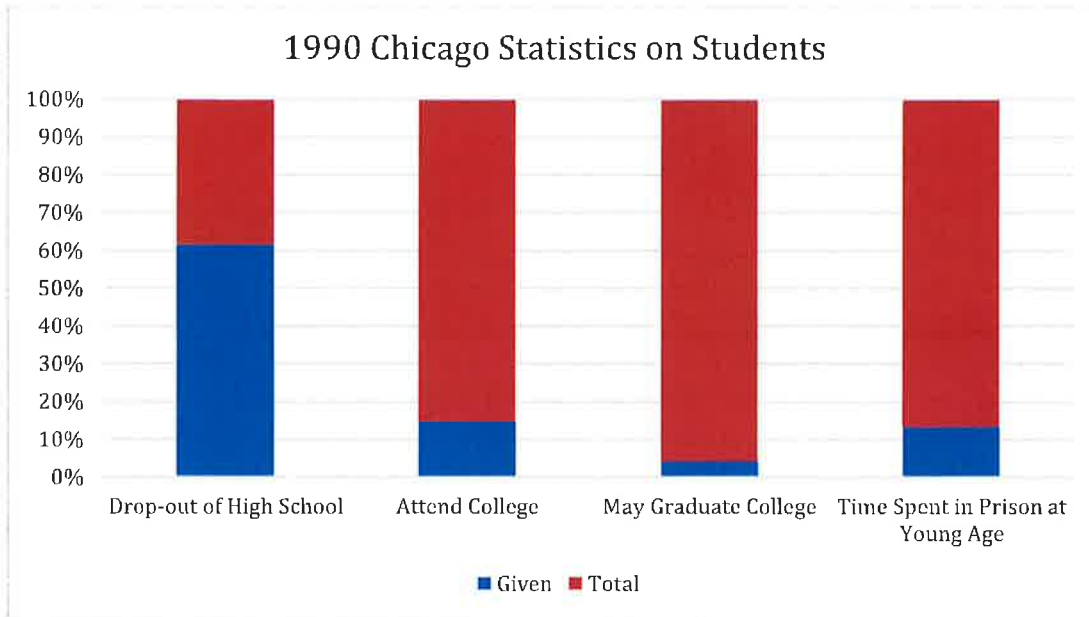


The first number in the legend represents the median income while the second number represents the average income. Depending on the size of the household, these numbers may or may not be ideal; however, it is an improvement from earning less than \$5000 a year.

Lastly, education. In the late 1980s, Jonathan Kozol visited schools across the nation and found devastating results. In his 1991 sociological study *Savage Inequalities*, he documented his experiences and shed light on the disadvantages that black communities faced during that time. When he was in Chicago, he visited North Lawndale, which is located in West Side Chicago. To give some context, North Lawndale used to be a middle-class white neighborhood. By 1970, however, the last of the white families left, leaving North Lawndale with a 75% loss of businesses and a 25% decrease in jobs. Over the next decade, 80% of the remaining jobs were lost. As jobs decreased, gang activity increased. North Lawndale was considered “an industrial slum without the industry.”<sup>8</sup> North Lawndale went downhill within a few decades, leaving its inhabitants, especially the school children, to suffer.

Kozol visited Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School. The students at this school got the short end of the stick. First off, not as much funding went into the black schools as did the white schools. The students who attended Bethune Elementary were among the poorest in the city. It was not uncommon for students to have some type of learning disability (possibly due to neurological impairments a lot of children were born with in these neighborhoods). The school itself (amongst others) was not staffed with many friendly and warm teachers. School children were awarded a diploma after 8<sup>th</sup> grade even if they could not read.<sup>9</sup> The drop-out rates were alarming in Chicago during this time:

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Source: Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*. He retrieved most of his data from the *Chicago Tribune*.

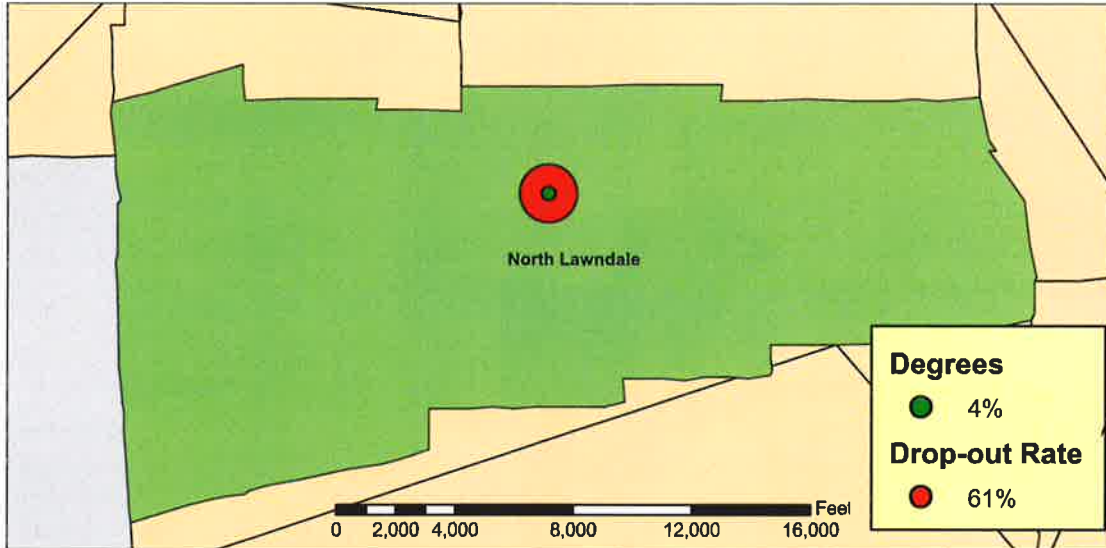
Furthermore, Manley High School, where most children attended if they went to high school, had a drop-out rate of 38%.<sup>10</sup> While specific to North Lawndale, similar statistics were seen across low-income neighborhoods, directly correlating to how much was spent on each pupil. The wealthier schools, such as Niles Township and New Trier, received more spending on each pupil compared to the less fortunate schools/districts, such as Wilmette School District. The table below shows the school funding in the Chicago Area for the 1988-1989 School Year:

School or District	Spending Per Pupil
Niles Township High School	\$9,371
New Trier High School	\$8,823
Glencoe	\$7,363
Winnetka	\$7,059
Wilmette	\$6,009
Chicago (average of all grade levels)	\$5,265

Source: Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*; he retrieved information from the Chicago Panel on School Policy and Finance.

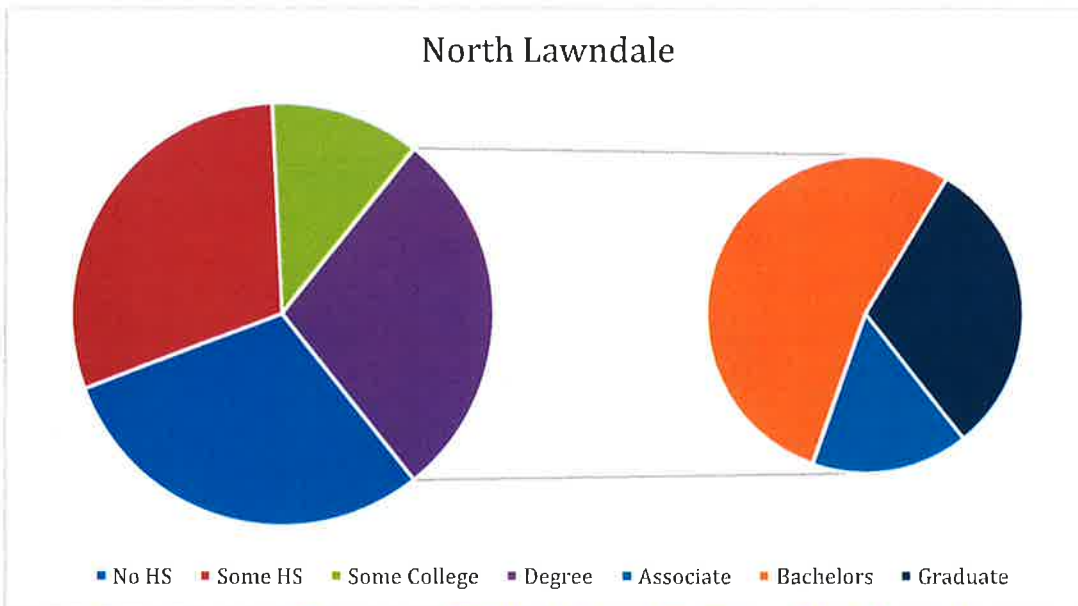
The table above explains why low-income neighborhoods did not have good schools; it is based off of who was prioritized more and of course, it was the wealthy white kids. The map below illustrates the level of education in North Lawndale in 1990:

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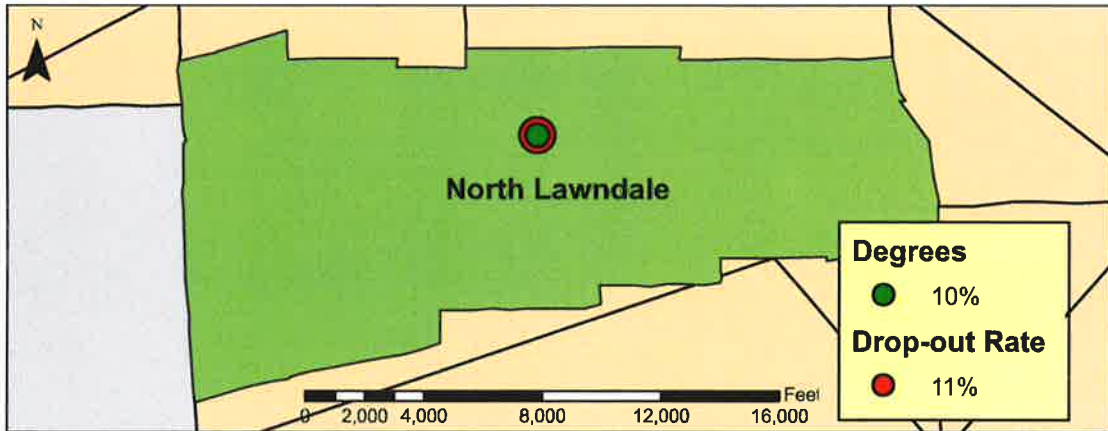
The map represents the 1990 education statistics in Chicago; based on the statistics given by the *Chicago Tribune*, in a classroom of 23 students, 61% of them were expected to drop out of high school and 4% of them were expected to receive a college degree.

Fast forwarding to today, the level of education has increased in North Lawndale. The following chart illustrates the education level in this neighborhood, followed by a map which compares to the one above:



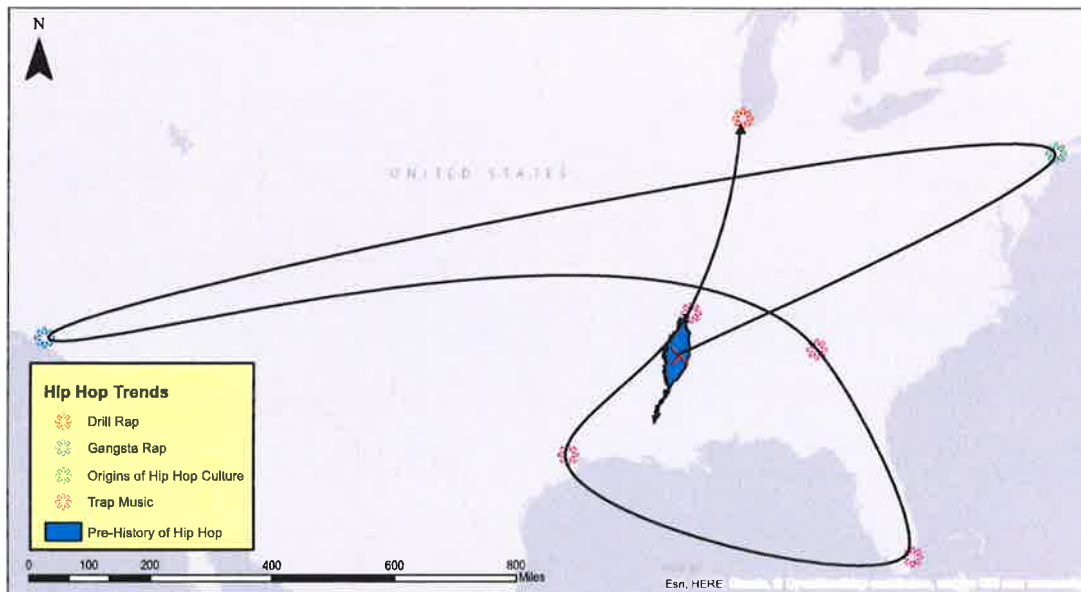
Source: <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/IL/Chicago/North-Lawndale-Demographics.html>

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The map above represents today's statistics on the drop-out rate and who has a college degree. While the drop-out rate is still higher than the rate on college degrees received, the numbers have significantly changed over the last 30 years.

Chicago's historical and present statistics on crime, income, and education is significant to look at. The historical statistics provide background as to why drill rap originated specifically in Chicago while the present statistics shows how Chicago changed over time. While this information is directly related to *where* drill rap was born and *why*, the diffusion of Hip Hop music in the United States is related to *how* it originated. The map below shows Hip Hop's diaspora in the 20th century, explaining how the Hip Hop scene evolved in various places including Chicago.



Before the Hip Hop Era was recognized, it started in the Mississippi Delta; however, South Bronx became known as the place where it started. Compton was the next popular spot with gangsta rap as its trademark. Then other trends of Hip Hop came about: trap music in the South and drill rap in Chicago.

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Before I explain where the Hip Hop scene made its marks, I first need to explain what the Hip Hop scene is. When Hip Hop was first recognized, it started out as a culture containing four elements: rap music, deejaying, breakdancing, and graffiti.<sup>11</sup> Originally, Hip Hop was local to South Bronx, serving as an outlet when the marginalized community were facing hardships. Things changed when the music became commercialized a decade later.<sup>12</sup> With that being said, I would define Hip Hop as a self-expressing culture which devolved from the four elemental forms the marginalized used as coping mechanisms to one art form which is mainly used for audience entertainment.

As shown on the diasporic map, jazz music is represented in the Mississippi Delta. The reason being is because jazz and blues are direct links to Hip Hop. This means that Hip Hop was already present earlier in the century; more specifically, during the New Negro Era. Though it was not called Hip Hop at that time, it served the same purpose it did in decades to come: self-expression, advocacy, and entertainment. Prominent figures during the New Negro Era portrayed different art forms and had different political platforms which are similar to the elements of Hip Hop. For example, performance (especially dance) would birth the element of breakdancing; vocal and literary style would birth the element of rap; and graphic art would eventually be linked to graffiti. Swing music, blues and political/social commentary would also directly link to Hip Hop, given that these forms would speak on issues of violence and civil rights.<sup>13</sup>

When fires broke out in South Bronx in 1970, it led to destruction, crime, and economic struggle. With this being a marginalized community, Hip Hop was the go-to for people who were facing these hardships.<sup>14</sup> As mentioned, the Hip Hop culture served as an outlet, allowing people to express themselves through deejaying, breakdancing, rap music, and/or graffiti. People argue that this decade was when Hip Hop was in its truest form since a lot of records were unrecorded.<sup>15</sup> During the 1970's, Hip Hop was about the culture and about helping the community, and improving the morale. The first recorded rap single led to a shift in Hip Hop.

By the 1990's, Los Angeles became a hot spot in the diffusion of Hip Hop due to a shift in tone and narrative style. Since the spatial focus was specific to Los Angeles, their rap music referenced a lot of gang activity. A lot of the lyrics included stories of rivalry, drugs, and sexual relations. Because of the close-minded critics not understanding that these lyrics served as advocacy, this new trend was coined with the nickname 'gangsta rap.'<sup>16</sup> This brief background knowledge of gangsta rap is significant because "drill rap is a subgenre of gangsta rap that originated in Chicago around 2010."<sup>17</sup> That is why we see Los Angeles on the diaspora map relating to Chicago. It illustrates the connections gangsta rap has with drill rap.

Hip Hop scenes started to develop around the United States. While South Bronx's Hip Hop scene was a cultural movement, Los Angeles's Hip Hop scene was geared more toward spreading awareness on gang activity. Outside of these traditional spatialized concepts of Hip Hop (i.e.- east coast rap and west coast rap) is

another style of rap in which drill rap has roots. During the 1990's, trap music developed from the South; specific cities include Atlanta, Miami, Memphis, and Houston.<sup>18</sup> Though unrecognized in scholarly critiques, Houston's Hip Hop scene made recognized contributions in Hip Hop. The Getto Boys, formed in the 1980s, broke down barriers which allowed Houston to be noticed on the Hip Hop map. Their 1991 album *We Can't Be Stopped* applied to the group itself and to Houston, as the Hip Hop scene in Houston was making a noticeable mark. As time progressed, the scene evolved when DJ Screw, leader of the Screwed Up Click (SUC), came up with the chopped and screwed style. He used technology during the 1990s "to create cassette mixes of strangely slow, murky versions of existing songs punctuated with repeated words and phrases."<sup>19</sup> The audience enjoyed these tracks, especially while they were high. After a while, certain trends that SUC was referencing in their music (such as drugs) became associated with the group and a whole and DJ Screw himself. These lyrics would describe the concerns of their audience, which was primarily drug dealers, rappers, and other friends.<sup>20</sup> Just as the Hip Hop scenes in South Bronx and Los Angeles tell a story specific to their location, the Hip Hop scene in the South also tells a story that is specific to their story as well.

In southern cities such as Houston, trap music shed light to street life during the time of its development. While the music is characterized by trap beats, the term "trap" is a metaphor for a drug house. While the content is about drugs, it also tells the story of "the struggles of life in the streets."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the term is appropriate because the music represents the difficulty of escaping the lifestyle which people are trapped in. However, the music depicts another reality where people are able to escape their trap. In summary, trap music depicts the harsh street life as well as depicting the reality of achieving the American Dream.<sup>22</sup> Understanding trap music is also important to drill rap because "its hardhitting beats and musical stylings take from trap music."<sup>23</sup> As we see the arrows coming from the South pointing toward Chicago, we see the connections that trap music has with drill rap. This includes artists from Houston to travel to more well-known places, such as Chicago, for better success.<sup>24</sup> This is one way how trap music influenced drill rap- the physical movement of artists from one region to another. Another way trap music influenced drill rap was drug usage. Lean is a well-known drug that has been associated with Hip-Hop for awhile and rappers from both movements (such as Pimp C and Santana) died from complications which were connected with lean.<sup>25</sup> Even though drill rap is a product from pre-existing styles of Hip Hop, it does have its own uniqueness.

Drill rap focuses specifically on violence in the urban street life of Chicago. Its lyrics make direct references to the gang landscape where it is prevalent in neighborhoods such as South and West Sides, where unequal socio-economic conditions existed before and still exists today. This movement "exists as cultural resistance at the intersection of inequality, social formation, expression, and technology."<sup>26</sup> Just like any other genre of Hip Hop, drill rap serves as a movement to its specific location. While South Bronx's Hip Hop focused on helping its audience and Los Angeles Hip Hop focused on the advocacy of gang violence, Chicago's Hip Hop focuses

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on a cultural resistance revolving around inequality. Furthermore, it is unique because of its own history, just as how the other Hip Hop scenes are unique for their own purposes. The upbringing of drill rap dates back further than the Great Migration, with racism being the norm in the twentieth century. Part of the black population migrated to Chicago in hopes of better opportunities but were met with hardships instead. The white population did not associate with them unless it was in a negative way (e.g. racial boundaries). I argue that this is part of the prehistory of drill rap as well as the domino effect it had: increased crime, lack of income to support families, and no educational opportunities. This led to increased gang activity in Chicago and eventually, drill rap. However, even though drill rap is associated with violence, documented crime in certain areas decreased over time since the 1970s and 1980s. During that time, certain areas such as the Robert Taylor Homes and the Cabrini-Green Homes were known for their high rates of crime and gang-related activity. Both of those housing projects are demolished today but looking at the crime rates of those same areas, we see a dramatic decrease. This could possibly be due to the destruction of the Robert Taylor Homes and the Cabrini-Green Homes.

While Chicago is a place that people enjoy to visit, the Hip Hop scene reflects its inner-city culture which is the reality of Chicago versus what people expect. With that being said, drill rap is not just a style of rap, but it is something that should be analyzed to understand what it is, the reason it exists, and why particularly it is from Chicago.



Notes

1. "Chicago's drill rap: misunderstood or theme music to murder?" Kaleo, accessed 26 January, 2019, [http://www.manoanow.org/kaleo/features/chicago-s-drill-rap-misunderstood-or-theme-music-to-murder/article\\_0bc2da92-94bb-11e6-8b2f-43c1e2d4393b.html](http://www.manoanow.org/kaleo/features/chicago-s-drill-rap-misunderstood-or-theme-music-to-murder/article_0bc2da92-94bb-11e6-8b2f-43c1e2d4393b.html).
2. William J. Wilson, "Social Change and Social Dislocations in the Inner City" in *The truly disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 22.
3. "Pizza and Murder: Why is Chicago so Dangerous?" Timeline.com, accessed 26 January, 2019, <https://timeline.com/chicago-murder-violence-48a71c395640>.
4. William J. Wilson, "Social Change and Social Dislocations in the Inner City" in *The truly disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 25-26.
5. Google, "Cabrini-Green Homes" and "Robert Taylor Homes"
6. William J. Wilson, "Social Change and Social Dislocations in the Inner City" in *The truly disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 29.
7. "Chicago," Point2Homes, accessed 17 January, 2019, <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/IL/Chicago.html>.
8. Jonathan Kozol, "Other People's Children: North Lawndale and the South Side of Chicago" in *Savage Inequalities*, (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1991), 51.
9. Ibid, p. 57
10. Ibid, p. 55
11. "Hip-hop: MUSIC AND CULTURAL MOVEMENT," Britannica, accessed August 30, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/hip-hop>.
12. Justin Williams, "Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity," *Lied und poplar Kultur/Song and Popular Culture* 56, (2011): 142.
13. Sabina G. Arora and Shalini Saxena, "The Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance," (New York, NY: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2016).
14. *Hip Hop Evolution*, "The Foundation," Rodrigo Bascunan, Darby Wheeler, Banger Films, 48 minutes, 2016.
15. Justin Williams, "Historicizing the Breakbeat: Hip-Hop's Origins and Authenticity," *Lied und poplar Kultur/Song and Popular Culture* 56, (2011): 137.
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