Poverty areas and the 'underclass:' untangling the web

An analysis of the effect of changes in metropolitan area definition and poverty area boundaries reveals that the poor became less concentrated in poverty areas, not more so, over the period 1972–89

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Has the total population living in poverty areas increased or decreased over the last two decades? And, have the poor, in the Nation as a whole as well as in our cities, become more clustered in areas of high poverty concentration, contributing to the formation and growth of what some analysts term an "underclass?" This article attempts to answer these questions, taking advantage of data on the distribution of the poverty area population that have been available for nearly two decades.

Since 1972, social and economic characteristics of the U.S. population living in poverty areas have been derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and published annually by the Census Bureau in its *Current Population Reports P-60* series and by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in *Employment and Earnings*.[1] Although the definition of a "poverty area" has not changed over time, there are major stumbling blocks to analysis of trends in these data, because of changes in the definition of metropolitan areas since the early 1970's, and the updating of the list of poverty areas in 1985 to reflect the results of the 1980 census. Changes in the metropolitan area definition not only affected the number of cities included in the "central city" category, but also had a dramatic impact on the proportion of the Nation's poverty area population estimated to be living in nonmetropolitan areas. The following discussion describes these analytical problems and attempts to isolate those trends that do seem clear despite data inconsistencies between 1972 and 1989.

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Understanding 'underclass'

While definitions of the underclass vary widely, it is usually considered to be a relatively small component of the poverty population.[2] What has come to be implied by the term is a group of persons who: (1) live in isolation or near-isolation from the rest of society; (2) have low labor force attachment, evidenced by nonparticipation or welfare dependence and potentially leading to long-term dependence and intergenerational transmission of poverty; and (3) have a high incidence of social deviance that has increased as the result of outmigration of the middle class—who had served as positive role models—from areas in which the underclass have concentrated. Recent studies have suggested that the size of the underclass has increased. However, the data presented in this article generally do not support that finding.

For research purposes, defining the underclass becomes more problematic. Operationally, most research on the underclass has included the total population living in poverty areas or the poverty population in such areas—who, it should be noted, are not all members of the underclass. The analysis in this article also uses the poor living in poverty areas as a proxy for the underclass, but differs from other research efforts in certain important respects. For example, few previous studies intended to determine the size of the underclass and whether conditions are worsening in poverty areas used the CPS poverty area data directly, and the effects of the metropolitan area changes were given different weight than in this article.[3]

The discussion that follows is organized into two main sections. The first consists of a history of the development of the poverty areas concept by the Census Bureau, including references to the magnitude and effects of the changing metropolitan area definitions. The second section describes trends in the number of poverty area residents.

Both trends in the numbers of the poor and trends in the total population living in poverty areas are relevant to the underclass concept used in many studies, and so data are discussed separately for both population groups. Because trends in the total U.S. poverty population, the total population living in cities (regardless of poverty status), and the concentration of the Nation's poor in cities are often intertwined in discussions of the underclass, these issues are also developed briefly within the section of the article devoted to poverty area trends. And because it appears that the concept of an underclass is not unique to metro-

Concepts and definitions

Metropolitan areas: Metropolitan Statistical Areas, or MSA's, are defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. In earlier years, they were termed Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's). An area generally qualifies for recognition as an MSA if it includes a city with a population of at least 50,000 or a Census Bureau-defined urbanized area of at least 50,000 with a total metropolitan population of at least 100,000. In addition to the county containing the main city or urbanized area, an MSA may include other counties having strong commuting ties to the central county. There are major differences between the definition of a metropolitan area used in the Current Population Survey in the income reference years between 1972–83 and that used from 1985 to the present time. See text for discussion.

Central cities: In the text and tables of this article, all references to cities are to the central cities of SMSA's or MSA's. The largest city in each metropolitan area is always designated a central city, and others may be identified if they meet certain requirements. In some large metropolitan areas, certain cities may not be designated central even though they are quite large. In the San Francisco area, for example, Berkeley, CA, with a population of about 100,000, is a central city, while Hayward, with an almost identical population size, is not. There were 308 central cities designated according to the metropolitan concept used in the Current Population Survey in the income reference years 1972–1983; 510 such cities have been used since 1985.

Suburban areas: As defined for this article, a suburban area is the balance of metropolitan area territory outside of a central city.

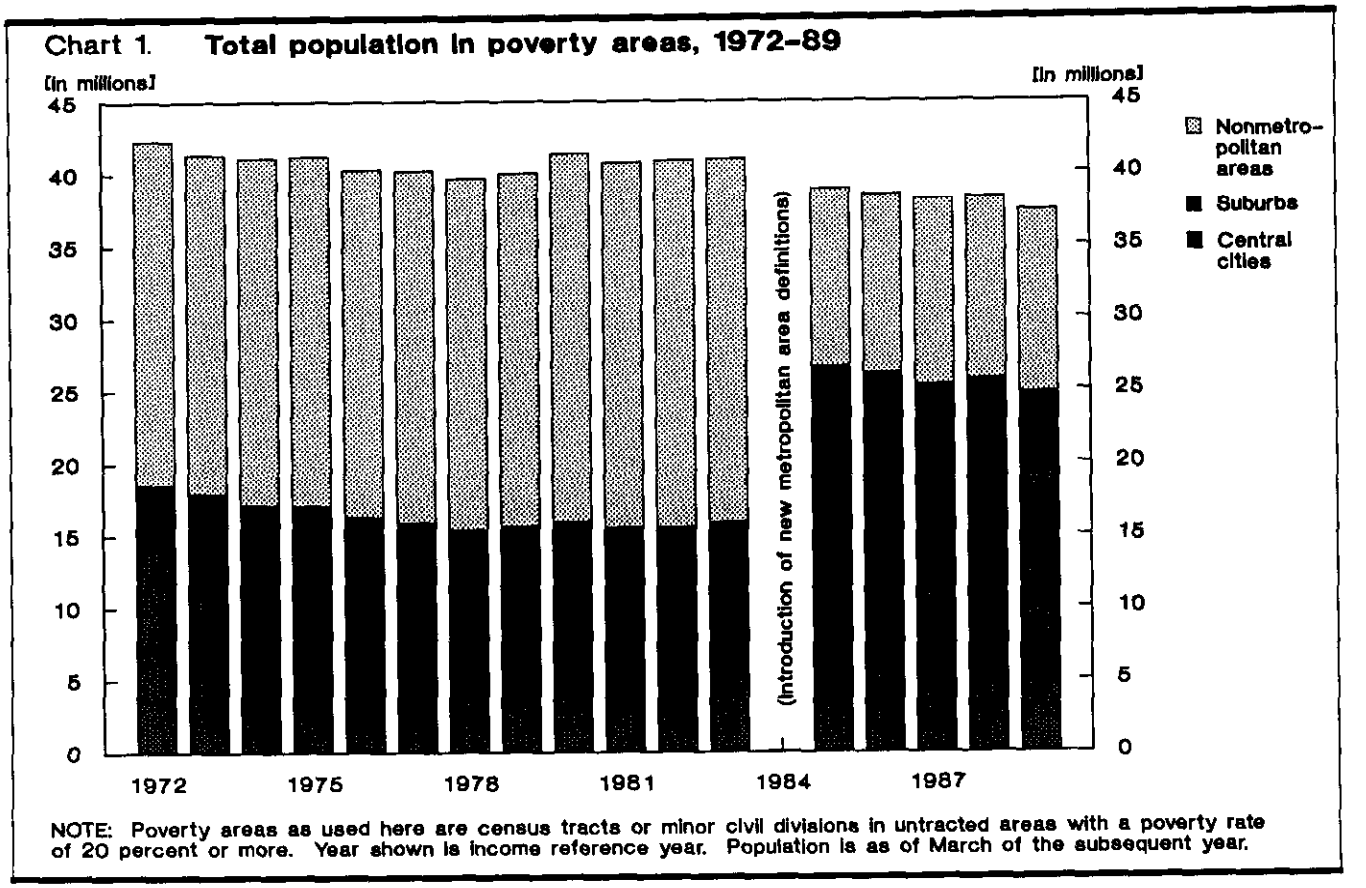
Nonmetropolitan areas: The territory outside of metropolitan areas is referred to here as nonmetropolitan or rural. Approximately 84 percent of the U.S. land area is classified as nonmetropolitan.

Census tracts: Census tracts are small areas into which metropolitan areas are divided in order to provide statistics for small areas. In 1980, such tracts generally had populations of between 2,500 and 8,000, but there was considerable variation. Their boundaries were established by local committees in cooperation with the Census Bureau, and the tracts were designed to be homogeneous with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions. Only in rare instances were census tracts designated outside of metropolitan areas in 1970 and 1980.

Minor Civil Divisions (MCD's): MCD's are subdivisions of counties established under State law, variously designated as townships, towns, precincts, districts, Indian reservations, and so forth. Census county divisions were established by the Census Bureau in States where there are no legally established MCD's.

Poverty: As used in this article, the term refers to a condition in which a person or persons live below the Federal Government's official poverty level, a sliding scale of income thresholds that vary by family size and number of children and are adjusted annually for inflation. See text for further details.

Poverty areas: This term is used here to refer to the combination of census tracts (generally only delineated in metropolitan areas) and MCD's in nonmetropolitan areas with a poverty rate of 20 percent or more for persons in the 1970 census (used in the Current Population Survey in the income years 1972–83) or the 1980 census (used in the CPS for 1985 and subsequent income years).



politan America, trends in nonmetropolitan poverty areas—half of the Nation's poor who lived in poverty areas lived in rural areas during the 1970's—and the effects of changing metropolitan definition on the size of both the nonmetropolitan and metropolitan poverty area populations are examined. Brief descriptions of some of the concepts used in the article are given in the box on p. 20; the major trends are summarized in exhibit 1.

Evolution of the poverty area concept

Poverty areas were first designated by the Census Bureau in the mid-1960's, based on 1960 census data for the 101 largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's)—those with a 1960 population of 250,000 or more. The work was conducted at the request of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity—the lead agency in the Nation's war on poverty.[4] These poverty areas consisted of whole census tracts, which were selected on the basis of their rank among all tracts in these relatively large metropolitan areas on the basis of five equally weighted characteristics.[5] (The Social Security Administration poverty index developed by Mollie Orshansky—later to be designated the Government's official poverty measure—had been revised but was not yet widely used at that time.) Those census tracts falling into the lowest quintile were initially designated poverty tracts, although some dropped out and others were added when certain rules concerning contiguity were applied.

The Office of Economic Opportunity published census tract maps of these poverty areas for use by local antipoverty agencies.[6] The five-factor selection method for determining poverty areas was also applied to the March Current Population Survey for SMSA's with a population of 250,000 or more (combined—not for individual metropolitan areas) for 1966, 1967, and 1968.[7] The list of designated 1960 poverty areas was updated around 1970, based on information from a variety of local sources, and was used as the basis for sampling in the Census Employment Survey (CES), a follow-on survey to the 1970 census conducted by the Census Bureau for the U.S. Department of Labor.[8] The updated 1960 poverty areas were used because the timing of the study precluded the use of data from the 1970 census.

Starting with the 1970 census, the poverty (or "low-income") area definition was changed to include only census tracts (or Minor Civil Divisions

Table 1. **Total population and poverty population in the United States and in central cities, 1972–89**

[Numbers in thousands]

Year	U.S. total population	U.S. poverty population	U.S. poverty rate (percent)	Central cities, total population	Central city poverty population	Central city poverty rate (percent)	Central city population as percent of U.S. total for—	
							Total population	Poverty population
1972	206,004	24,460	11.9	62,311	9,179	14.7	30.2	37.5
1973	207,621	22,973	11.1	61,526	8,594	14.0	29.6	37.4
1974	209,362	23,370	11.2	61,155	8,373	13.7	29.2	35.8
1975	210,864	25,877	12.3	60,695	9,090	15.0	28.8	35.1
1976	212,303	24,975	11.8	59,922	9,482	15.8	28.2	38.0
1977	213,867	24,720	11.6	59,626	9,203	15.4	27.9	37.2
1978	215,656	24,497	11.4	60,453	9,285	15.4	28.0	37.9
1979	222,903	25,345	11.7	60,351	9,500	15.7	27.1	37.5
1980	225,027	29,272	13.0	62,003	10,644	17.2	27.6	36.4
1981	227,157	31,822	14.0	62,305	11,231	18.0	27.4	35.3
1982	229,412	34,398	15.0	63,650	12,696	19.9	27.7	36.9
1983	231,700	35,303	15.2	64,907	12,872	19.8	28.0	36.5
1984	233,816	33,700	14.4	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
1985	236,594	33,064	14.0	74,473	14,177	19.0	31.5	42.9
1986	238,554	32,370	13.6	73,758	13,295	18.0	30.9	41.1
1987	240,978	32,546	13.5	74,760	13,893	18.6	31.0	42.7
1988	243,530	31,745	13.0	75,027	13,615	18.1	30.8	42.9
1989	245,992	31,534	12.8	75,123	13,594	18.1	30.5	43.1

[1] Not available.

NOTE: Year shown is the March CPS income reference year. Population data are restricted to the poverty universe and relate to March of the subsequent year.

outside tracted areas) in which 20 percent or more of all persons had incomes below the official Government poverty level in 1969.[9] The 20-percent rate was chosen because, when it was applied to 1960 data for metropolitan areas in test States of Texas and Ohio, it yielded a set of areas that closely approximated the poverty areas delineated in 1960 using the 5-factor index described above.[10] A list of alternative poverty areas, consisting of aggregations of census tracts with poverty rates of 30 percent or more and 40 percent or more also was published.

A large fraction of persons who live in poverty areas live in rural areas.

From 1973 to 1984, households participating in the March Current Population Survey were assigned an identifier indicating whether the household was in a poverty area, based on the area's 1970 poverty rate—that is, whether the household was in a 1970 census tract or 1970 Minor Civil Division (outside tracted areas) with a poverty rate of 20 percent or more. (Minor civil divisions are primary divisions of counties established under State law, and variously designated as townships, towns, precincts, wards, and so forth.) Poverty area data were published in the Census Bureau's annual *P–60* report series on poverty during that period.

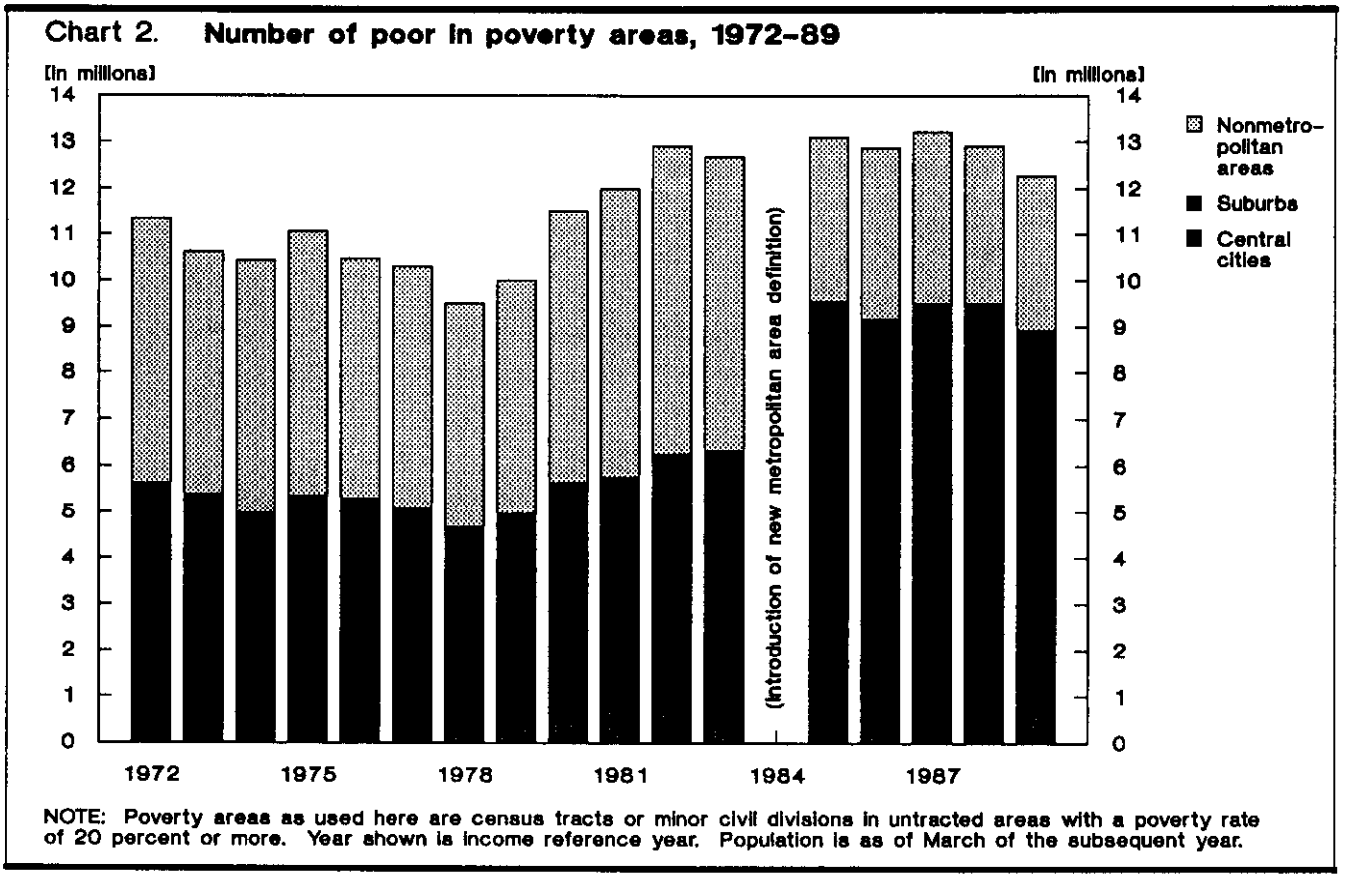
As part of the 1980 census, the poverty area status of census tracts and Minor Civil Divisions (MCD's) was updated.[11] But these revised poverty area tract (and MCD) designations were not incorporated fully into the Current Population Survey until March 1986. No metropolitan/nonmetropolitan data or data for poverty areas were published from the March 1985 CPS because a sample redesign based on results of the 1980 census was being phased in, and the 1985 sample consisted of parts of two sample frames. Subsequent data from the CPS (that is, poverty data for 1985 forward) published in the *P–60* series reflect the 1980 census designation of poverty areas and the revised Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) definition of 1984 rather than the 1970 metropolitan area (SMSA) definition.[12]

Changing metropolitan area definition. The number of cities included as "central cities" changed dramatically for purposes of the CPS between 1984 and 1986. This is an important factor when comparing poverty area data over time. As an illustration, using the 1984 MSA definition of metropolitan areas for both 1970 and 1986, the metropolitan population would be proportionately the same size, representing 76.5 percent of the U.S. total in both years. But because of definitional changes, the metropolitan population "grew" from 67.1 percent of the U.S. total in 1970 (using the 1970 definition) to 76.5 percent in 1986 (1984 definition). Conversely, the number of persons living outside metropolitan areas can be said to have either decreased or increased between 1970 and 1986, depending on whether a constant or current metropolitan definition is used.[13]

The 1970 census metropolitan area definition, used in the March CPS from 1973 to 1984, consisted of 243 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA's), which covered 10.9 percent of the U.S. land area. There were 308 central cities designated in these areas. In contrast, the 1984 Metropolitan Statistical Area definition used in the March 1986 CPS and later years included 277 metropolitan areas (Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Metropolitan Statistical Areas), which represented 16 percent of the U.S. land area (about 1-1/2 times the 1970 land area) and included 510 central cities—202 more than under the 1970 SMSA definition. Most existing metropolitan areas were expanded and many central cities annexed population, further complicating comparisons over time. Thus, it is likely that apparent changes between 1983 and 1985 CPS data relating to the geographic distribution of the population—including that in poverty

Exhibit 1. Trends in population, poverty, and poverty areas by metropolitan or nonmetropolitan residence, 1972–89

Type of residence	1972–83 trend	1985–89 trend
United States:		
Total population	12-percent increase.	4-percent increase.
Poverty population	Fairly stable, 1972–78; large increase, 1978–83.	Both poverty rate and number of poor decreased, but not to 1978 levels.
Central cities:		
Total population	4.2-percent increase (308 cities).	0.9-percent increase (510 cities) (not statistically significant).
Poverty population	1972–78 — no change in number; 1978–83 increase paralleled increase in total poor. Similar percentages of U.S. poor lived in cities in 1983 and 1972.	Proportion of the poor living in cities was the same in 1985 and 1989, but the ratio jumped from 37 percent in 1985 due to new metropolitan area definitions.
Poverty areas—nationwide:		
Total population	Overall decline in both number and percent of U.S. total population between 1972 and 1983.	Number declined between 1983 and 1985. Even after introduction of new poverty areas, the number declined again between 1985 and 1989.
Poverty population	Proportion of poor who lived in poverty areas decreased from 46 percent to 36 percent.	Proportion hovered around 40 percent, well below the 1972 figure.
Poverty areas—cities:		
Total population	Overall decline from 14 million to 11.5 million.	Decreased 1.4 million between 1985 and 1989. (Large increase between 1983 and 1985, but one cannot determine how much is due to changing metropolitan area definitions vs. introduction of new poverty areas.)
Poverty population	Decreased as a percentage of all city poor, from 51 percent to 39 percent.	Jumped to 55 percent after introduction of new metropolitan and poverty areas. No significant change between 1985 and 1989.
Poverty rate	Increased between 1972 and 1983, as did the national rate, but a greater percentage-point increase was noted for poverty areas.	Poverty rate steady, actually lower than 1983 by 6 percentage points after the introduction of new metropolitan and poverty areas.



NOTE: Poverty areas as used here are census tracts or minor civil divisions in untracted areas with a poverty rate of 20 percent or more. Year shown is income reference year. Population is as of March of the subsequent year.

areas—in reality reflect both this major change in classification and updating of the poverty area tracts to reflect the results of the 1980 census.[14] This will become more clear in the analysis that follows.

Periods of analysis

Because of these definitional differences, trends in the poverty area data are presented separately for the two periods during which the same metropolitan area and poverty area definitions were used: 1972–83 and 1985–89. The 1972–83 period encompasses the March 1973 through March 1984 CPS surveys. The 1985–89 period includes the March 1986 through March 1990 surveys. The discussion in this section refers to the income year rather than the year in which the data were collected, because persons in the March CPS are asked to give their income for the previous calendar year. Thus, for example, respondents in March 1973 were asked for their income—from which poverty status is determined—for calendar year 1972.

What was the population trend for the Nation as a whole and for central cities in the aggregate between 1972–83 and between 1985–89? While the Nation's total population grew by about 12.4 percent between 1972 and 1983, its central cities as a whole were growing very slowly (a 4.2-percent aggregate increase), and many did not grow at all. During the 1970's, 13 of the 23 largest cities (those with more than 500,000 inhabitants) actually lost population.[15] Note from table 1 that the Nation's central city population jumped from 64.9 million in 1983 (using the 1970 metropolitan area definition) to 74.5 million in 1985, with the introduction into the CPS of the 1980 metropolitan area definition—which, as noted earlier, increased the number of central cities from 308 to 510. Using this newer definition, the Nation's central cities did not grow significantly between 1985 and 1989. Thus, approximately 12 percent of the aggregate central city population in the 1985 to 1989 period can be attributed to cities designated "central" after the 1980 census.

It should also be noted that the 1970's saw a nonmetropolitan growth rate surpassing that for metropolitan areas (as then designated), a trend in contrast to that noted for several decades prior to 1970.[16] But this reversal did not continue into the

1980's.[17] Nonmetropolitan growth was only 2.5 percent between 1985 and 1989, while metropolitan growth overall (including central cities and suburban areas) was 4.4 percent, using the newer metropolitan area definitions. This reversal was not caused simply by the new MSA boundaries swallowing up the fastest growing nonmetropolitan counties, although many of those that were contiguous to metropolitan areas were redefined as metropolitan. One study has shown that this reversal would have occurred whether the earlier metropolitan definitions or the later ones were used.[18]

National level trends

Poverty data based on the official Federal Government definition were first tabulated for 1959. Under this definition, the poverty rate fell dramatically in the 1960's, decreasing from 22.4 percent to 12.1 percent by 1969. Over the same period, the number of poor declined from 39.9 million to 24.1 million. Between 1970 and 1977, the size of the poverty population fluctuated between 23.0 million and 26.1 million, and the poverty rate ranged only from 11.1 percent to 12.6 percent. Then, from 1978 to 1983, the number of persons in poverty increased by 44 percent, from 24.5 million to 35.3 million, and the poverty rate rose from 11.4 percent to 15.2 percent, the highest poverty rate the Nation had experienced since the mid-1960's. Since 1983, however, both the number of poor and the poverty rate have declined, although in 1989 both remained well above their 1978 levels.

Are the proportions of the poor and of the total population living in cities increasing or decreasing? Although there was some vacillation over the 1972–83 subperiod, as the figures in the last column of table 1 indicate, a similar proportion of the poor lived in cities in 1983 as in 1972 (using the 1970 metropolitan definition). The apparent decrease was not statistically significant. About 37.5 percent of the poor lived in central cities in 1972, a figure that varied little during this period and was 36.5 percent in 1983. The total population has historically been somewhat less concentrated in cities than are the poor, and the proportion of the total population living in cities decreased from 30.2 percent in 1972 to 28.0 percent in 1983.

The trend in the *number* of poor living in cities basically parallels that of the total U.S. poverty population. In 1972, the number of central city residents with incomes below the poverty level was 9.2 million, and remained essentially the same until 1978. Thereafter, however, the number began to rise rapidly, reaching 12.9 million in 1983. The 1978–83 increase, 39 percent, paralleled the 44-percent increase in the poverty population as a whole.

Table 2. **Total population and poverty population in U.S. poverty areas and central city poverty areas, 1972–89**

[Numbers in thousands]

Year	Poverty areas, U.S. total			Central city poverty areas			Poverty areas poor as a percent of all poor in—	
	Total population	Poverty population	Poverty rate (percent)	Total population	Poverty population	Poverty rate (percent)	United States	Central cities
1972	42,404	11,343	26.7	14,089	4,667	33.1	46.4	50.8
1973	41,409	10,649	25.7	13,450	4,363	32.4	46.4	50.8
1974	41,201	10,462	26.1	12,866	4,114	32.2	44.8	49.1
1975	41,325	11,085	26.8	12,744	4,446	34.9	42.8	48.9
1976	40,336	10,526	26.1	11,736	4,306	36.7	42.1	45.4
1977	40,319	10,340	25.6	11,340	4,132	36.4	41.8	44.9
1978	39,754	9,512	23.9	10,950	3,798	34.7	38.8	40.9
1979	40,093	10,037	25.0	10,804	3,857	35.4	39.6	40.6
1980	41,430	11,574	27.9	11,231	4,284	38.1	39.5	40.2
1981	40,800	12,015	29.4	11,033	4,485	40.7	37.8	39.9
1982	41,017	12,953	31.6	11,122	5,074	45.6	37.7	40.0
1983	41,028	12,725	31.0	11,513	5,044	43.8	36.0	39.2
1984	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
1985	38,966	13,137	33.7	20,885	7,837	37.5	39.7	55.3
1986	38,527	12,894	33.5	20,410	7,397	36.2	39.8	55.6
1987	38,243	13,231	34.6	20,169	7,786	38.6	40.7	56.0
1988	38,376	12,961	33.8	20,300	7,718	38.0	40.8	56.7
1989	37,458	12,323	32.9	19,466	7,267	37.3	39.1	53.5

[1] Not available.

NOTE: Year shown is the March CPS income reference year. Population data are restricted to the poverty universe and relate to March of the subsequent year.

But, again, there was no increase in the proportion of the poor who lived in cities.

Data for 1985 and subsequent years reflect the impact of the new MSA definition. The proportion of the poor living in cities jumped to 42.9 percent in 1985, dipped (inexplicably) to 41.1 percent in 1986 before increasing again in 1987, and stood at 43.1 percent in 1989.[19] The proportion of the total population living in cities rose to 31.5 percent in 1985 under the new MSA concept (from 28 percent in 1983), and was 30.5 percent in 1989. The difference between the poor and total populations in terms of percent living in cities thus widened from an 8.5-percent margin in 1983, using the old metropolitan definition, to a 12.6-percentage-point difference in 1989, using the newer MSA definition. This would seem to indicate that new MSA areas added since 1970 had higher concentrations of their poverty populations in cities than did the older metropolitan areas. In addition, some cities that had previously been included in the suburban category and had relatively high poverty rates in 1980 were newly recognized as central cities of existing MSA's in the 1983 revision. Examples include East St. Louis, IL, and Camden, NJ.

Historically, the general population has been less concentrated in cities than have been the poor.

Focusing on poverty areas

Did the total population—regardless of poverty status—living in poverty areas increase nationally or in central cities between 1972 and 1989? Nationally, the total population living in poverty areas declined from 42.4 million in 1972 to 39.8 million in 1978 before increasing again to 41.0 million by 1983, recouping about one-half of the 1972–78 population loss. (See table 2.) This pattern could imply that the total population in poverty areas is influenced by economic conditions—1978 being close to a business cycle peak, and 1983 near a trough. The proportion of the U.S. population living in poverty areas decreased from 20.6 percent to 17.7 percent between 1972 and 1983. This trend continued even after the designation of new poverty areas based on the 1980 census.

By 1985, the total population living in poverty areas was down to 39 million, 16.5 percent of the U.S. population, and by 1989, the figure had decreased to 37.5 million—15.2 percent of the Nation's total, and 4.9 million fewer than the 1972 estimate. These data suggest that a shrinking pool of persons are exposed to whatever negative neighborhood effects accrue in such poverty areas, although this loss of total population is not inconsistent with William Julius Wilson's underclass thesis, which predicts the flight of the middle class from areas they perceive to be increasingly characterized by intractable poverty.[20]

Switching now to developments for the cities themselves, we see that the total population in central city poverty areas was 14.1 million in 1972, declined steadily to 10.8 million through 1979 before starting to increase again, and reached 11.5 million by 1983—still far below the 1972 figure. However, with the advent of the new poverty area and metropolitan definitions in 1985, the total population in central city poverty areas jumped dramatically, nearly doubling to 20.9 million. It is not possible to tell how much of this increase is due to changing poverty area designations and how much is due to changing metropolitan area definitions. On the one hand, the continuing decline in poverty area population nationally between 1983 and 1985 implies that most of this increase in total poverty area population in cities is due to changing metropolitan area definitions, because the new poverty area designations were in use in 1985. On the other hand, one might contend, as has Robert D. Reischauer, that poverty areas had become increasingly underbounded because they were locked into a 1970 poverty area definition, and that this apparent jump in poverty area population would be expected.[21] However, one could also argue just the opposite—that the poverty area total population was artificially inflated by keeping 1970 boundaries, because areas that had "gentrified" between 1970 and 1980 (such as the new Southwest district in Washington, DC) would still be included. The individual effects of these changes are not discernable from CPS data.

Nevertheless, between 1985 and 1989, the total population in city poverty areas declined slowly, from 20.9 million to 19.5 million, while the total population of cities as a whole showed no significant change. (The apparent 1985–89 increase in total city population in table 1 is not statistically significant).

Are the poor becoming increasingly concentrated in poverty areas on a national basis? Turning now to the numbers of poor (rather than the total population) in poverty areas, in 1972, about 46 percent of the poor were classified as living in poverty areas nationally—that is, in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. This figure decreased steadily through 1983 to reach 36 percent. (See table 2.) With the introduction of the 1980 poverty area designations in 1985, this estimate increased by 3.7 percentage points to 40 percent and did not show a statistically significant change thereafter (39.1 percent in 1989), but it remained about 7 percentage points below the 1972 benchmark at the end of

the study period. Thus, the U.S. poverty population as a whole has become less concentrated in areas of high poverty concentration over the past 15 years, and, at the national level, the new poverty area designations had a rather small effect.

Are the central city poor becoming increasingly concentrated in poverty areas? Has the poverty rate increased in central city poverty areas? How about the suburban and nonmetropolitan poor? The 1972–83 trend for poor central city residents was similar to that described above for poverty areas in the Nation as a whole. Overall, 51 percent of poor city residents lived in poverty areas in 1972, decreasing to 39 percent by 1983. (See table 2.) In 1985, with the new poverty area designations, the figure jumped to 55 percent and stood at 53.5 percent in 1989, not significantly different from the 1985 estimate. However, when the entire 1972–89 period is examined, it appears that poor city residents did not become more concentrated in poverty areas. The apparent increase between 1972 and 1989 (2.5 percentage points) in the concentration of central city poverty population in poverty areas was not statistically significant.[22]

Another gauge of changing conditions in poverty areas is the poverty rate itself. (See table 2.)

Table 3. **Percent distribution of the population living in poverty areas by metropolitan or nonmetropolitan residence, 1972–89**

Year	Poverty areas in—				
	United States, total	Metropolitan areas			Nonmetropolitan counties
		Total	Central cities	Suburban areas	
Total population					
1972	100.0	43.7	33.2	10.5	56.3
1973	100.0	43.3	32.5	10.8	56.7
1974	100.0	41.7	31.2	10.5	58.3
1975	100.0	41.3	30.8	10.5	58.7
1976	100.0	40.2	29.1	11.1	59.8
1977	100.0	39.3	28.1	11.2	60.6
1978	100.0	38.7	27.5	11.2	61.3
1979	100.0	38.8	26.9	11.9	61.1
1980	100.0	38.5	27.1	11.4	61.5
1981	100.0	38.0	27.0	11.0	62.0
1982	100.0	37.9	27.1	10.8	62.1
1983	100.0	38.7	28.1	10.6	61.3
1984	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
1985	100.0	68.2	53.6	14.6	31.8
1986	100.0	67.8	53.0	14.8	32.3
1987	100.0	66.3	52.7	13.6	33.7
1988	100.0	67.1	52.9	14.2	33.0
1989	100.0	66.2	52.0	14.3	33.8
Poverty population					
1972	100.0	49.4	41.1	8.3	50.6
1973	100.0	50.6	41.0	9.7	49.4
1974	100.0	47.5	39.3	8.2	52.5
1975	100.0	48.2	40.1	8.1	51.8
1976	100.0	50.4	40.9	9.5	49.6
1977	100.0	49.4	40.0	9.4	50.6
1978	100.0	49.2	39.9	9.2	50.8
1979	100.0	49.6	38.4	11.2	50.4
1980	100.0	48.9	37.0	11.8	51.1
1981	100.0	47.9	37.3	10.6	52.1
1982	100.0	48.4	39.2	9.2	51.6
1983	100.0	49.8	39.6	10.1	50.2
1984	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
1985	100.0	72.8	59.7	13.1	27.2
1986	100.0	71.0	57.4	13.6	29.0
1987	100.0	71.8	58.8	12.9	28.2
1988	100.0	73.4	59.5	13.8	26.6
1989	100.0	72.6	59.0	13.7	27.4

[1] Not available.

NOTE: Year shown is the March CPS income reference year.

The poverty rate within central city poverty areas rose between 1972 and 1983, as did that for the Nation as a whole and for all central cities combined, but the increase in city poverty areas represented a greater percentage-point increase. The poverty rate for all cities as a group rose from 14.7 percent to 15.7 percent during the 1972–79 period, while the corresponding apparent increase in the poverty rate in city poverty areas was not statistically significant (33.1 percent in 1972 versus 35.4 percent in 1979).

Between 1985 and 1989, the total population in city poverty areas declined slowly.

But between 1979 and 1983, the city poverty area poverty rate increased by 8.4 percentage points, to 43.8 percent, a change significantly different from the increase for cities as a group. (Central cities overall experienced a 4.1-percentage point increase in poverty rate, from 15.7 percent to 19.8 percent.) With the new metropolitan area definitions and poverty area designations in place in 1985, the poverty rate dropped to 37.5 percent within city poverty areas from 43.8 percent in 1983. (This would seem to be evidence that poverty areas had not been underbounded before the definitional changes, or at least that the most depressed areas were already included in the 1970 definition). Because the nationwide poverty rate was going down during the 1983–85 period, it is impossible to tell how much of this reduction was "real" and how much was due to the new metropolitan area definitions.

The poverty rate in central city poverty areas remained fairly steady between 1985 and 1989 (37.3 in 1989), during a period when the national rate declined by about 1 percentage point (from 14.0 percent to 12.8 percent).

It should be noted that, even though the poverty rate was increasing in city poverty areas between 1972 and 1983, the number of poor persons (and the total population, as indicated earlier) actually decreased between 1972 and 1979 (from 4.7 million to 3.8 million persons) before increasing again to 5.0 million in 1983, a figure not significantly different from that posted in 1972. This implies that both the poor and nonpoor were exiting poverty areas during this period, the latter at a somewhat faster rate than the former.

Nonmetropolitan poverty

It should be noted that little if any recognition is given in current underclass research to the fact that a large fraction of persons (regardless of poverty status) who live in poverty areas live in rural areas. Most analysts simply confine their discussions to large cities or to tracted areas which, in the 1970 and 1980 censuses, excluded virtually all nonmetropolitan areas.[23] Yet more than half of poverty area residents lived in nonmetropolitan areas in 1972. (See table 3.) Even under the new metropolitan area definitions, one-third of poverty area residents lived outside metropolitan areas in 1989.

The poor—regardless of poverty area residence—were more likely in 1972 than the nonpoor to live in nonmetropolitan areas (41 percent for the poor versus 30 percent for the nonpoor) and they have remained so (27 percent versus 22 percent in 1989). Some studies have shown nonmetropolitan poverty to be more persistent than metropolitan poverty.[24] The underclass theory notion of "contagion effects" should, it seems, apply whether one lives in a densely settled inner city such as Chicago, a sparsely settled area such as Appalachia, or on an Indian reservation in New Mexico.

The nonmetropolitan poor were more concentrated in poverty areas in 1972 than either their central city or suburban counterparts. In 1972, 58 percent of the nonmetropolitan poor lived in areas of concentrated poverty, but this proportion decreased to 47 percent by 1983. However, instead of increasing between 1983 and 1985—with the introduction of the newer MSA and poverty area definitions—as did the city and suburban proportions, the proportion of the nonmetropolitan poor living in poverty areas decreased to about 37 percent, further evidence of a large reclassification of what had been nonmetropolitan poverty area territory into metropolitan areas.[25] In 1989, 39 percent of the nonmetropolitan poor lived in poverty areas, a figure not significantly different from the 1985 estimate.

In suburban areas, the proportion of the poor living in poverty areas was 18 percent in 1972, and decreased to 14.5 percent by 1983 after some vacillation in the intervening years.[26] In 1985, after the poverty area and metropolitan area redefinitions, the proportion of the suburban poor living in poverty areas jumped to 19 percent and remained virtually unchanged (18.1 percent) as of 1989. Thus, although the territory and definition of poverty areas have changed considerably, the proportion of the suburban poor living in poverty areas in 1989 was very similar to that noted when such measurement began 18 years earlier.

Summary and conclusions

The Nation's total population has deconcentrated among many population centers during the past two decades, rather than becoming increasingly centralized in a few areas. The U.S. poverty population has not become more concentrated in central cities either (except because of definitional changes in 1984), and the poor have not become increasingly confined to poverty areas. Between 1972 and 1983, the nonpoor were be-

coming proportionately less concentrated in those cities designated "central" under the 1970 SMSA definition, and the proportion of the poor living in these cities remained unchanged. With the introduction of the newer MSA definitions in 1985, which added over 200 new central cities to the more than 300 included in the 1970 SMSA definitions, the proportions of both the total population and of the poor who were classified as living in central cities jumped—that for the poor more than that for the total population—indicating that the newer MSA's designated after 1970 had higher proportions of their poverty populations in central cities than did the older metropolitan areas. About 43 percent of the poor in 1989 lived in one of the 510 central cities then defined by the newer MSA definition, compared with 31 percent of the total population. The figure for the poor was the same in 1985 as in 1989, while that for the nonpoor had declined slightly.

Both the total number of persons living in poverty areas and their proportion of the U.S. population decreased on a national basis (that is, including both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas) between 1972 and 1989, even with the introduction into the CPS in March 1986 of the new poverty area designations derived from 1980 census information. The number declined from 42.4 million to 37.5 million, or from 20.6 percent to 15.2 percent of the U.S. population. This indicates that a shrinking pool of persons are exposed to whatever negative neighborhood effects accrue in poverty areas as herein defined.

The total population in central city poverty areas declined as well, from 14.1 million in 1972 to 11.5 million by 1983, but nearly doubled in 1985 with the introduction of the new metropolitan area definitions and newer poverty area boundaries. The continuing decline in poverty area population nationally between 1983 and 1985 implies that much of this increase in total city poverty area population was due to changing metropolitan area concepts. Between 1985 and 1989, the total population in city poverty areas once again showed evidence of shrinking, from 20.9 million to 19.5 million.

When the focus of the discussion is narrowed from the total population to the Nation's poor, it is apparent that the poverty population nationally has become less concentrated in areas of high poverty concentration, not more so. In 1972, 46 percent of the poor lived in poverty areas, a figure that decreased steadily through the 1972–83 period, finally reaching 36 percent. The figure rose somewhat with the introduction of the newer MSA and poverty area boundaries, but in 1989 was only 39 percent—7 percentage points below the 1972 figure.

For the poor living in central cities, the trend between 1972 and 1983 was similar to that depicted above, with the proportion living in poverty areas declining from 51 percent in 1972 to 39 percent in 1983. However, with the introduction of the newer MSA definitions and 1980 poverty area boundaries, the fraction jumped to 55 percent, indicating both a large transfer of nonmetropolitan poverty areas in smaller cities to metropolitan area status—as well as the change in the poverty area boundaries within cities already designated "central"—and likely indicating that the fraction of the city poor living in poverty areas has not decreased as much as the 1970 poverty area designations used between 1972 and 1983 would lead one to believe. But by 1989, 53.5 percent of poor city residents lived in poverty areas, a figure not significantly different from the estimate in 1972.

The poverty rate in central city poverty areas did increase between 1979 and 1983 (when the national rate rose as well) from 33.1 percent in 1972 to 43.8 percent in 1983, a larger percentage-point increase than for the Nation as a whole or for cities in general. This was likely the result of the nonpoor population exiting poverty areas in greater proportion than the poor—because the numbers of both living in poverty areas were shrinking during this period. The rate, however, actually dropped to 37.5 percent with the new metropolitan and poverty area designations introduced in 1985 and has not changed significantly since, implying that the 1970 poverty areas were not highly underbounded—that is, they already included those areas with very high poverty rates.

Do the results presented here contradict recent underclass research? Not necessarily. Several researchers who have concluded that the underclass is growing, including Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, Robert D. Reischauer, and Sarah McClanahan, restricted their analysis largely to data (in two published Census Bureau reports) for the 50 largest cities in 1970, looking at changes between 1970 and 1980 in the poverty area population in census tracts with a poverty rate of 40 percent or more.[27] (The Census Bureau published data for tracts with poverty rates of 20 percent or more, 30 percent or more, and 40 percent or more). Because this is only a subset of the poverty area definition used here, it is quite conceivable that the direction of change is different for the 50 largest cities (with a more restrictive poverty area definition) than for the Nation as a whole, as indicated by the CPS data.

The poverty population has become less concentrated in high poverty areas over the past 15 years.

Work by Isabel Sawhill, Erol Ricketts, and Ron Mincy, using an underclass definition of their design (but similar to the definition used by the Census Bureau in the 1960's), also showed a

large proportional increase in the underclass—who numbered about 2.5 million persons in 1980 using their definition—using census tracts throughout the country.[28] I do not question their definition per se, although some analysts have.[29] But because they restricted their analysis to tracted areas only, they excluded the nonmetropolitan population, the importance of which has already been mentioned. Excluding the nonmetropolitan population gives a misleading regional distribution of the poor, and probably of the underclass as well (in addition to underestimating the size of the latter group).

On the other hand, their conclusion that there was an increase in the size of the underclass between 1970 and 1980 may be questioned because they did not look at the same areas over time—that is, cities and suburban areas were tracted in 1980 that were not included in census tracted territory in 1970. In 1970, there were 243 metropolitan areas designated. Between 1970 and 1980, 75 new metropolitan areas were delineated, including such areas as Iowa City, IA, and Williamsport, PA. Half of these new metropolitan areas were wholly untracted in 1970. Some, like Benton Harbor, MI, and Athens, GA, had relatively high poverty rates in 1980. In addition, more than 100 counties (tracted in 1980 but not tracted in 1970) were added to existing SMSA's in 1980. There were undoubtedly existing poverty areas in those cities (which may even have declined in population), but the Ricketts and Mincy analyses could very well have attributed their addition to tracted areas as an increase in the underclass.[30]

It should also be noted that not all of the Nation's 50 largest cities saw increases in their poverty area population using the 40-percent poverty area criterion, and furthermore, that the poverty area population is not homogeneous across all cities.[31] Between 1970 and 1980, for example, the population in census tracts with a poverty rate of 40 percent or more decreased in 16 of the 50 largest cities (such as Boston, Dallas, El Paso, Memphis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Seattle), and did not change in 3 others (for example, St. Louis). In 15 of these large cities—including Boston, Dallas, Denver, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Seattle—the number of poor in poverty areas (40-percent poverty rate tracts) also decreased, and the corresponding estimate did not change significantly in 3 others (including St. Louis again). The poverty area outlook during the 1980's for individual cities will have to await the outcome of the 1990 census.

Finally, although one could interpret as good news the fact that the proportion of the poor who live in areas of high poverty concentration has decreased between 1972 and 1989, it should be remembered that both the number of poor and the Nation's poverty rate in 1989 remain above the levels attained in the 1970's. The poor, like the total population, have dispersed. But they have not disappeared. □

Footnotes

[1] In addition, data are available for 1979 and 1969 from the 1980 and 1970 censuses, respectively (or subsamples of the full samples) using the same definition applied in the CPS. These decennial census poverty area data have been used by other Federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for determining enterprise zones and by the U.S. Public Health Service in developing target areas for various services and in some funding formulas. Also, data are available for families living in poverty areas of large cities in 1959 from the 1960 census and for 1966 from the CPS using a related (but different) definition.

[2] The term "underclass" has been used with so many different meanings that William Julius Wilson, a sociologist at the University of Chicago who popularized the concept during the past decade, indicated the term should be abandoned in a recent speech to the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association. See Jason DeParle, "What to Call the Poorest Poor?" *The New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1990, p. 2E.

[3] See, for example, Robert D. Reischauer, *The Geographic Concentration of Poverty* (Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1987). Several analysts have relied on published 1970 and 1980 census figures relating to census tracts with a poverty rate of 20 to 40 percent or more for the 50 largest cities. (See Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, "Earnings Inequality, the Spatial Concentration of Poverty and the Underclass," *American Economic Review*, May 1987; and Sara McClanahan and Irwin Garfinkel, "Single Mothers, the Underclass, and Social Policy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, AAPSS 501 (Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications, January 1989), pp. 92–104. A few researchers have used poverty area figures to compare with or validate their own definitions, again using 1970 and 1980 census figures. For example, see Erol Ricketts and Ron Mincy, *Growth of the Underclass: 1970–1980* (Washington, The Urban Institute, 1988). Various other underclass definitions, some using other data sources, are described in a recent publication of the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Institute for Research on Poverty. (See "Defining and Measuring the Underclass," *Focus*, Spring 1989).

[4] See "Poverty Areas in the 100 Largest Metropolitan Areas," *1960 Census of Population*, Supplementary Report PC (S1)–54 (Bureau of the Census, Nov. 13, 1967).

[5] The factors were: (a) percent of families with money income under $3,000 in 1959; (b) percent of children under 18 years not living with both parents; (c) percent of persons 25 years and over with fewer than 8 years of school completed; (d) percent of unskilled males in the employed civilian labor force; and, (e) percent of housing units dilapidated or lacking of some or all plumbing facilities. Factors (b)

through (e) were selected based on their relatively high correlation with factor (a) above, among the various other factors analyzed. See "Characteristics of Families Residing in Poverty Areas: March 1966," *Current Population Reports*, Series P–23, No. 19 (Bureau of the Census, 1966).

[6] See U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, *Maps of Major Concentrations of Poverty*, 3 volumes (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

[7] See *Current Population Reports*, Series P–23, No. 19; Series P–60, No. 61; and Series P–60, No. 67. The data tabulated were limited to a count of families by sex and race of householder and presence of children.

[8] See "Employment Profiles of Selected Low-Income Areas," *1970 Census of Population*, Series PHC(3) (Bureau of the Census, 1972).

[9] The Government's poverty definition is described in detail in appendix A of "Poverty in the United States: 1987," *Current Population Reports*, Series P–60, No. 163 (Bureau of the Census, 1989). For a short time during the Nixon administration, the terms "poor" and "low-income" were used interchangeably in Census Bureau reports to describe persons below the official poverty definition. See, for example, "Characteristics of the Low-Income Population: 1970," *Current Populations Reports*, Series P–60, No. 81 (Bureau of the Census, 1971). The poverty definition was changed slightly—primarily eliminating separate thresholds for the farm/nonfarm populations and different thresholds for male and female householder families—starting with the March 1982 CPS. These changes increased the total number of poor somewhat, as well as slightly increasing the proportion of the poor living outside metropolitan areas. See "Characteristics of the Population Below the Poverty Level: 1981," *Current Population Reports*, Series P–60, No. 138 (Bureau of the Census, 1983).

[10] See "Low-Income Areas in Large Cities," *1970 Census of Population*, Final Report PC(2)-9B (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973).

[11] A 1980 decennial census report for the 100 largest cities updated the poverty area tracts to those delineated in 1980 (rather than 1970) and kept the same incremental poverty rates as the 1970 reports (20, 30, and 40 percent or more). Those tracts so designated could vary from the 1970 tracts not only because of change in poverty rate but because of newly changed boundaries in 1980. Included in each 1980 census tract report is a comparability table for 1970–80 census tracts. See "Poverty Areas in Large Cities," *1980 Census of Population*, Final Report PC80–2–8D (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985).

[12] The MSA definition used in the March CPS starting in 1986 corresponds to metropolitan areas as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget as of June 1984. Households would, however, be classified as in a poverty area (or not) based on the 1980 census classification of the census tract or minor civil division in which the household or group quarters was located. These metropolitan areas (and their definitions) are given in U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards, *Metropolitan Statistical Areas (including CMSA's, PMSA's, and NECMA's)* FIPS Pub. 8–5 (Springfield, VA, National Technical Information Service, Oct. 31, 1984).

[13] See *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1988*, table C, appendix 11, p. 874.

[14] There is some controversy over the increasing inclusiveness of the metropolitan definition. See, on the one hand, Calvin Beale, "Poughkeepsie's Complaint of Defining Metropolitan Areas," *American Demographics*, January 1984, pp. 29–48; and the rejoinder by Richard L. Forstall and Maria Elena Gonzalez, "Twenty Questions: What You Should Know About the New Metropolitan Areas," *American Demographics*, April 1984, pp. 22–28.

[15] See "Patterns of Metropolitan Area and County Population Growth: 1980–1984," *Current Population Reports*, Series P–25, No. 976 (Bureau of the Census, 1985).

[16] Calvin L. Beale, "The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America," ERS 605 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 1975); and "Social and Economic Characteristics of the Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Population 1977 and 1970," *Current Population Reports*, Series P–23, No. 75 (Bureau of the Census, 1978).

[17] Some analysts feel that nonmetropolitan population growth in the 1970's was enhanced by the convergence of economic conditions in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, and that economic problems in the 1980's were responsible for the slowing of this growth. See, for example, Kenneth M. Johnson, "Recent Population Redistribution Trends in Nonmetropolitan America," *Rural Sociology*, 1989, pp. 301–26. Other research has shown that for metropolitan-to-nonmetropolitan county movers, "leisure lifestyle" amenities of the county were more important than job-related characteristics. See Linda L. Swanson, "What Attracts New Residents to Nonmetro Areas," Rural Development Research Report Number 56 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 1986).

[18] See Larry Long and Diane DeAre, "U.S. Population Redistribution: A Perspective on the Nonmetropolitan Turnaround," *Population and Development Review*, September 1988, pp. 434–50.

[19] The number of poor living in central cities declined from 14.2 million to 13.3 million between 1985 and 1986, then increased again to 13.9 million in 1987. This precipitous decline was likely a statistical quirk, because the trend for the poor as a whole was more of a straight-line decrease during this period.

[20] Wilson writes of "concentration effects," which "refers to the constraints and opportunities associated with living in a neighborhood in which the population is overwhelmingly socially disadvantaged—constraints and opportunities that include the kinds of ecological niches that the residents of these communities occupy in terms of access to jobs, availability to marriageable partners, and exposure to conventional role models." These effects result, according to Wilson, from the movement of middle-class families out of these neighborhoods—families whose leaving "made it more difficult to sustain the basic institutions in the inner city (including churches, stores, schools, recreational facilities, etc.)..." See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 144.

[21] See Reischauer, *The Geographic Concentration of Poverty*.

[22] Certainly the definitional changes for metropolitan areas were a factor in the "leap" from the 39-percent estimate for 1983 to the 55-percent figure for 1985. As indicated earlier, about half of poor persons living in poverty areas from 1972 through 1983 lived in nonmetropolitan counties. (See table 3.) But in 1985, this figure was reduced to 27 percent with the introduction of the new metropolitan area definitions, indicating a large conversion of nonmetropolitan poverty areas to metropolitan poverty areas. Many of the poor were likely living in towns that were defined as central cities because, as indicated earlier, the number of central cities increased from 308 to 510 under the new metropolitan area definitions.

But how could territory be reclassified as "central city" in 1984 from nonmetropolitan in 1970? Frederick, MD, serves as an example. Frederick is a city of about 34,000 inhabi-

tants, approximately 30 miles north of Washington, DC. In the 1970 census classification used in the CPS until 1983, Frederick city (and county) were classified as nonmetropolitan. In the MSA designation introduced in 1983, Frederick county is now classified as metropolitan and Frederick city is a central city of the Washington, DC, MSA.

Nevertheless, this is only a partial explanation for the post-1985 increase in poor city residents living in poverty areas; with the more current poverty area boundaries also being a plausible reason for the change, there is no way of ferreting out the primary cause. But it should be reiterated that, at the national level, the proportion of the Nation's poor living in poverty areas rose only 3.7 percentage points between 1983 and 1985 with the introduction of the new poverty area boundaries.

[23] See for example, Erol Ricketts and Isabel Sawhill "Defining and Measuring the Underclass," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Winter 1988, pp. 316–25. This analysis was restricted to territory in which census tracts were delineated in 1980, 93 percent of which were in metropolitan areas.

[24] See Peggy J. Ross and Elizabeth S. Morrissey, "Rural People in Poverty: Persistent Versus Temporary Poverty," *Proceedings of the Second Annual Meetings of the National Rural Studies Committee, 1989.*

[25] It could also imply weighting problems with the 1980 census sampling frame, which was incorporated fully into the CPS in March 1986. Metropolitan area status is not controlled to independent totals in the Current Population Survey. The new CPS nonmetropolitan estimates have been lower than independent estimates. Conversely, the CPS metropolitan area population estimates have ranged from 0.4 to 1.0 percentage points higher than the independent estimate.

[26] For convenience's sake, the territory inside metropolitan areas but outside central cities is referred to here as "suburban." It should be remembered, however, that some MSA's include considerable territory and some population beyond what would ordinarily be considered "suburban" because MSA's are, by definition, generally composed of whole counties. For example, most of the Mojave Desert and part of Death Valley National Monument are in the Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside CMSA.

[27] See text footnote 3.

[28] See text footnotes 3, 23.

[29] See Mark Alan Hughes, "Concentrated Deviance and the Underclass Hypothesis," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Spring 1989, pp. 274–81.

[30] Actually they have not demonstrated an increase in the underclass, but rather an increase in persons living in underclass areas, a distinction that Mincy and Ricketts, as well as other analysts, have recognized.

[31] See for example, Paul L. Knox, "Disappearing Targets? Poverty Areas in Central Cities," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Autumn 1988, pp. 501–08. Knox contends, using cluster analysis, that poverty area populations in the 100 largest cities can be separated into eight groupings of city types, each with its own dominant characteristics.

A note on communications

The *Monthly Labor Review* welcomes communications that supplement, challenge, or expand on research published in its pages. To be considered for publication, communications should be factual and analytical, not polemical in tone. Communications should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, *Monthly Labor Review*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20212