

**The Labor Market Experience of Young
African American Men from Low-Income Families in Wisconsin**

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Perspectives

**The Employment Status of Young Adult Black Males
Residing in Poverty Households:
Recent Milwaukee County Experience**

by Harold M. Rose

Introduction

A larger percentage of urban black youth is currently being reared in households in which household income fails to exceed the poverty level than at any time in recent history. The specter of an increasing percentage of black youth growing up in poor households, at a time when most American youths are enjoying the privileges of middle class status, casts a shadow of doubt on the validity of equality of opportunity. Explanations for the poor progress of black youth in the work force run the gamut. Some analysts view it as simply a negative externality that is part and parcel of growing welfare dependency (Murray, 1984). Others are more inclined to attribute it to the process of global economic restructuring, and the subsequent decline in manufacturing employment in selected American urban areas (Wilson, 1987; Kasarda, 1988). This essay will focus attention on aspects of that problem in a single metropolitan area: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Milwaukee previously constituted one of the nation's premier durable goods manufacturing centers, a place where persons with limited formal education could achieve stable working class status, provided their willingness to work. A variety of populations of European origin did just that, as successive waves of immigration beginning in the late 19th century brought them to southern Wisconsin. Blacks, however, were not attracted to Milwaukee in substantial numbers prior to World War II. Yet those blacks who did arrive early were able to establish a foothold in Milwaukee's manufacturing sector (Trotter, 1985). Unfortunately, the largest share of Milwaukee's current black population arrived during the period in which manufacturing employment was gradually losing its dominance. The result has been an increase of young black males, in particular, who are the product of households whose chief breadwinner has experienced economic dislocation and/or households that have become mired in economic dependency. The growth in economic dependency has attracted the attention of a growing contingent of both social science researchers and social critics during the last decade (Murray, 1984; Auletta, 1982; Wilson, 1987; Lemann, 1991; Jencks, 1992).

This essay will draw upon much of that literature in an effort to document and make sense of the seriousness of the problem confronting a cohort of black male labor force entrants in the local economy. The target cohort grew up in households that were dependent upon one or more forms of government assistance, i.e., the AFDC program, food stamps, or medical assistance during the interval characterized by the most far-reaching evidence of industrial decline, i.e., the early 1980s. Are these youths negatively affected by the experience of growing up in single

-parent households, or are they simply the victims of economic restructuring? The present investigation represents a preliminary effort to place in an appropriate context the plight of a growing number of young adult black male workers as they attempt to navigate the tides of a rapidly changing labor force.

Black Population Growth in the City During a Period of Incipient Economic Decline

During the 1950s Milwaukee's black population almost tripled. In that decade it experienced the fastest growth for blacks than did any other major American city (Grier and Grier, 1966). Growth was occurring at a time in which southern agriculture, especially cotton farming, was beginning to mechanize (Fligstein, 1981), a factor that would lead to a third major movement of southern blacks to northern and western cities. This latest movement was recently detailed by Lemann (1991), specifically for the city of Chicago.

Lemann, like a number of contemporary social critics, undertook his timely assessment in an effort to explain the origins of the so-called urban underclass. Although he does not devote any attention to Milwaukee, it is clear that there exists some similarity between the push factors that led black migrants to choose Milwaukee and Chicago as destinations. Milwaukee was no doubt perceived as the "Promised Land" for a segment of the uprooted share croppers and tenant farmers from Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Louisiana. But some blacks who moved to Milwaukee, like those described by Lemann, would wind up dependent on a variety of government support programs.

It wasn't apparent at the time of these early post-war movements that major industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest were poised to enter a period in which their economies would experience major restructuring. Few, especially the newly arriving migrants, would foresee that the workshops of America would soon be unable to provide secure jobs for the newest arrivals and their children, as they had for earlier European immigrants. But they nevertheless continued to arrive. Thus between 1960 and 1990 the city's black population grew by more than 128,000.

By the 1970s it was becoming evident that smokestack cities were on a downward spiral, as manufacturing employment had reached its peak in the heavily unionized American manufacturing belt. The shift of manufacturing jobs to metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in other U.S. regions and overseas provided solid indicators that the abundant opportunities once available for unskilled workers in the Northeast and Midwest would diminish. The newest arrivals could no longer expect to capture jobs that had been available to those arriving as recently as one generation earlier. As these changes accelerated, the economic outlook for a growing segment of the city's black population grew bleaker.

The Social and Economic Changes Taking Place in the Larger Society

While the nation's urban economic future was more difficult to project during the period of rapid black urban population growth, it was becoming increasingly evident that the decades of the 1950s and 1960s would offer blacks the opportunity to overcome the handicaps of second class citizenship. The success associated with the Civil Rights movement in eliciting a positive response from the Supreme Court, the President, and the Congress communicated to the American public in general, and the black population in particular, that a new era was upon us. An array of forward-looking policies were enacted in order to eliminate barriers to social and economic progress. The previously existing barriers had been responsible for the inability of a disproportionate share of black American to earn wages that were sufficiently adequate to lift them above the poverty threshold. Nevertheless, other policy analysts are convinced that social actions which liberalized welfare policy during the Kennedy administration (Glazer, 1988) best explain the current plight of the population of interest in this essay (Murray, 1984; Kaus, 1992) rather than the previously cited explanations.

Few would disagree that the decades of the 1960s and 1970s were ones in which far-reaching economic and social policies were initiated. Both structural changes and cultural adaptations to these changes permeated all segments of American society, albeit disparately. One outcome of this restructuring has been the slowing of economic progress of a segment of the black population which, as a result, is said to have had a far-reaching effect on family structure. These changes are reflected in female-headed households with children present becoming the modal structural form nationally among blacks (Hacker, 1992). In Milwaukee this household type constituted more than 66.7 percent of all black households in 1990. In this essay the primary focus will be on males who have grown up in such households,¹ and how well they have fared in an economy in transition from industrial to post-industrial dominance.

Black males who came of age during the first generation following the end of the post World War II baby boom have experienced both the rewards associated with the adoption of the earlier described progressive social policies, and the penalties associated with economic restructuring. The negative consequences associated with economic restructuring have been far-reaching. The effects most often highlighted are those associated with rising crime rates, the increased prevalence of out-of-wedlock births, and growing welfare dependence (Wilson, 1987; Jencks, 1992; Sullivan, 1989; Hughes, 1989). Based on the rise of these consequences, a number of writers suggest that they represent the growth of an underclass culture that must be brought under control (Sleeper, 1990; Kaus, 1992; Jencks, 1992). Because young black males are frequently implicated in these behaviors, they are viewed with suspicion and disdain, qualities that do not enhance their chances of acquiring access to jobs that offer either security or the opportunity for advancement.

The position of these recent entrants into the labor market, both nationally and locally, threatens to destabilize local black communities. For these populations the promises of the 1960s are becoming extremely elusive. At issue is how to advance a social agenda under severe economic constraints.

A Young Black Male Adult Cohort in Milwaukee: Is it a Product of Dependency?

Data assembled by the Employment and Training Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee will be used to describe how successfully a segment of young adult males in metropolitan Milwaukee has adapted to structural and cultural changes taking place in the larger society. The Institute data, while confined to households receiving or applying for public assistance, does not totally eliminate the possibility of expanding our concerns to all young adult black males in the city. Our central focus will be on those who grew up in households that some would describe as underclass, and their status as an outcome of having grown up in such households. The position assumed here is that this is a much too simplistic view. But until such time that we are in a better position to integrate the knowledge derived from household studies with those derived from macro-structural investigations, underclass explanations are likely to prevail. Yet there is a serious need to go beyond easy explanations and to derive more robust interpretations of the outcomes previously detailed. Unfortunately, the data available does not facilitate that kind of an assessment.

The data assembled by the Institute, however, is longitudinal, and does enable us to describe the work history of the cohort of interest. That cohort was born during the period 1966-1974, the period previously described as one of sweeping economic, social, and cultural change. Not only does the data provide us with a temporal view, it also allows us to judge where in the ecological structure of the local black community these changes have been most pervasive. Are there concentrated poverty effects in Milwaukee similar to those Wilson (1987) described for Chicago? Or are welfare households more uniformly distributed throughout the black community? These are questions we will attempt to answer.

Growing up in Milwaukee's Inner City

More than one-half of the current residents of Milwaukee's black community grew up there, and among young adults the proportion is even higher. The world view of young adult males has largely been fashioned by the local environment, but their world view has also been conditioned by an awareness of their parents' experiences, both in Milwaukee and elsewhere. Many of the parents of this young adult cohort resided outside of Milwaukee prior to 1960. But by 1960, owing to a rapid influx of newcomers, Milwaukee's black population numbered more than 60,000. A continuation of growth sparked by high in-migration rates and high fertility rates resulted in moving this population beyond the 100,000 level in 1970.

The target population is those black males born between 1966-1974 who resided in households in 1987, 1988, and 1989 where a household member received or applied for welfare grants, e.g. AFDC, food stamps, or Medicaid. This group represents those who had fared poorest among residents of the city's black community. Unfortunately, the continuing rapid growth of that population threatens to turn the promised land into a bad dream.

In 1970, approximately one-quarter of all the city's black households fell below the official poverty level; almost half of these households were supported by public assistance. During the decade that followed, the share of households below the poverty level increased by an additional five percent, an increase that placed an extra 4,400 households in the below-poverty category.

Changes in Black Male Labor Force Participation Rates

It was becoming increasingly apparent that a component of the black population had failed to make positive adjustments to the economic and social changes occurring around them. Although blacks were able to capture 27,000 additional jobs during the 1970s, only 62.2 percent of all blacks sixteen and older were in the labor force. The reduced participation in the labor force by Milwaukee blacks mirrored changes that were taking place in terms of black labor force participation rates nationally. Yet fully 70 percent of all blacks were in the labor force as recently as 1984 (Bradbury and Browne, 1986).

During the period between 1959 and 1984 black males withdrew from the labor force at a much higher rate than white males. In Milwaukee the pace appears to be higher still. Changes in black male labor force participation rates have contributed to the increase in the size of the poverty population.

Black Males in Households Receiving Public Assistance

By 1989, 41,745 black males (ages 15-67) resided in Milwaukee County households where a household member received and/or applied for welfare assistance at some time in 1987, 1988, or 1989. A substantial share of these households--approximately one-fifth--were young adult males (15-24), most of whom became eligible to officially enter the labor force during the early 1980s. By the end of the decade approximately 70 percent had had experience in the labor force. However by the first quarter of 1991, 78.1 percent of the more mature segment (ages 20-24) of this population had held jobs in the local economy. Nevertheless, during this first quarter fewer than two-fifths of those aged 20-24 were actually employed.

The population described above constituted 45.8 percent of the black male population in Milwaukee at the time of the 1990 census. These were generally not individuals who functioned as household heads. The growing inability of males to become central figures in nuclear families has led to a rapid increase in female-headed households (see Table 1).

Table 1.

The Changing Prevalence of Black Female Headed Households
Nationally 1950 - 1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percent Female Heads</u>
1950 -	16.8%
1960 -	21.6%
1970 -	37.6%
1980 -	56.4%
1987 -	63.7%

Source: Hacker, Andrew, Two Nations, Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1992, p. 80.

It is the latter factor which a number of social science analysts employ to explain the growth of poverty in the nations' larger black communities (Wilson, 1987; Murray, 1984; Jencks, 1992; Peterson, 1992; Ellwood and Bane, 1988). Daniel Moynihan, who first detected this trend in 1965, feels that he is now vindicated by history for attempting to signal what he perceived as a breakdown in the black family (Moynihan, 1992). Wilson (1987) on the other hand suggests that the growing number of female-headed households is simply an outgrowth of a declining male marriage pool, which he attributes to the difficulties black males encounter in the job market.

The opposite position is assumed by Murray (1984), who contends that liberal welfare policy discourages marriage and has fostered a tendency for black women to have children out of wedlock. A continuing stream of research keeps this debate alive by supporting one position or the other. However, Jencks (1992) contends that both views tend to oversimplify the reality of the situation. Peterson (1992), too, raises questions regarding the validity of the two polar positions.

The Extended Presence of Young Black Males in Parental Households

The process which leads to the above described outcome is obviously a complex one. But what becomes clear is that young black males are remaining in their parental households for much longer periods and/or refraining from establishing independent households of their own. This emerging pattern has been described elsewhere as the cluttered nest (Heer, Hodge and Felson, 1985). These authors argue that this pattern represents a reversal of the declining household size largely prevailing since 1950. By 1976, Ellwood and Wise (1983) found that one-third of 24-year-old black males nationally still resided in their parental homes. Thus young adult black males in Milwaukee are simply caught up in a set of forces that appear to be national in scope.

Although there is evidence that young black males are remaining in their parental households for longer periods of time, it is also evident that this age cohort has diminished over the same interval. There were fewer 15-24 year-old black males in Milwaukee households in

1990 than there were 5-14 year-olds ten years earlier. The inverse was true for young black females. The sharpest decline for males occurred among those who were 20-24 years old in 1990. Thus it appears that the older group in this cohort was sensitive to the decline in opportunity in the entry level job market (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Changes in the Size of Milwaukee's Young Black Adult Population: 1980 - 1990

<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>Absolute Change</u>	<u>Percent of Change</u>
15-19	Male	8,115	9,159	1,044	12.8%
	Female	8,648	9,410	762	8.8%
20-24	Male	6,693	6,849	156	2.3%
	Female	<u>8,611</u>	<u>8,958</u>	<u>347</u>	<u>6.6%</u>
TOTAL	15-24	32,067	34,376	2,309	7.2%

Source: Based on 1990 census count, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

This explanation no doubt accounts for the slightly more than two percent increase in the size of this older group during the decade. But that increase was substantially lower than the almost 30 percent increase in the general black population over the same interval.

The more substantial and surprising increase occurred among black females who were 25-34 years old in 1990. That age group grew by 11.5 percent, while their male counterpart decreased by 7.2 percent. The implications of this observed growth pattern is not readily explainable, but it does demonstrate that entry by young adult males into the labor force declined during the decade, while the same age female population was growing. Thus it is apparent that there were a set of forces at work which influenced male and female growth in opposite ways. It appears, however, that the observed trend, if continued, could lead to an increase in labor force entrant offspring in the 1990s larger than that observed during the previous decade. Without adequate employment outlets for these additional labor force entrants the size of the poverty population could be expected to expand even more.

The Employment Experiences of the Young Adult Male Cohort

Male children born between 1966-1974 who at some time resided in households that were dependent upon public assistance began their formal work force experience during the 1980s--a period in which job losses were exaggerated during the first three years. White and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Urban Research Center have documented the level of job growth in the metropolitan labor market during the recovery period following

1983. Three findings of their reports are that most of that growth has taken place in the suburbs, manufacturing jobs continue to decline, and employment growth is concentrated in the service sector, a sector noted for low wages. Thus the cohort of interest was entering the labor market during a period in which the likelihood of earning more than poverty level wages was becoming increasingly remote, especially for those failing to complete high school (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Metropolitan Job Growth by Selected Sector of Growth: 1978 - 1987

<u>Jobs</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Rate of Change</u>
Manufacturing	167,354	135,020	- 32,334	- 19.3%
Services	192,454	204,477	+12,023	+ 6.6%
Retail Trade	112,953	109,101	- 3,897	- 3.4%
Wholesale Trade	41,519	38,374	- 3,145	- 7.6%
Transportation, Utilities	40,098	38,430	- 1,668	- 4.2%

The earnings experience of the target population includes 8,479 young black males. This total represents more than one-half of the black male youth born to women currently residing in Milwaukee County, whose children in 1990 were approximately 15-24 years of age. Thus, this constitutes a population that has resided for varying periods in poverty households while growing up in Milwaukee. Such youth are frequently described as having a weak attachment to the labor market. If this characterization is meant to demonstrate that only a few have held jobs in the formal economy, then it is not a very accurate depiction of the study population. If, on the other hand, it refers to the number of jobs held and/or the number of quarters worked, then one would need to re-evaluate the validity of that description (see Table 4).

Table 4.

The Work Experience of Young Black Adult Males
(Born between 1966 - 1970
1988 - 1990

	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>
Employed	3,838	3,889	3,782
Not Employed	1,009	958	1,068
Percent with Earnings	79.2%	80.2%	78.0%
Percent with Earnings during all 4 quarters of each year	25.8%	31.8%	34.8%

Source: Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1991.

Based on the observation of UW-M Employment and Training Institute researchers, it becomes readily apparent that most individuals in the cohort spent some time employed in the work force during the 13 quarters covering the period from January, 1988 through March, 1990. Of the 20-24 age group almost four-fifths had been employed during this interval. Slightly more than half of the younger males in this cohort had had earnings as well. It should be noted, however, that this was a time in which job growth had begun to take off and the local economy had emerged from the recession it had experienced during the early 1980s. While manufacturing jobs had declined, the number of new service jobs had expanded by more than 27 percent during the period 1979-89 (Binkley and White, 1991). It was also in the service sector of the local economy that our cohort experienced its greatest success in securing employment.

More striking, however, are the low level of wages received, even by the older segment of this population, the part-time nature of employment, and the high job turnover rates. The observed work pattern is more or less typical of that characterizing large American urban places going through the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial state. It likewise typifies what Sassen (1991) has described as the casualization of work, wherein a growing share of the work force works less than full-time, with no benefits, and at low wages. This process has reached its peak in the low wage service sector of the economy.

The Earnings History of the Cohort

Even in a rebounding economy young black males were experiencing only limited success in altering their poverty status. Few were able to rise above the income threshold that would allow them the luxury of surpassing individual level poverty and fewer still earned enough to allow them to support a family outside the restrictions of poverty (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Share of Cohort with Earnings Above Poverty Level - 1990
(20-24 Year-Old Males by Industry Group)

	<u>No. of Jobs</u>	<u>Income Adequate to Support:</u>	
		<u>One Person</u>	<u>Three Persons</u>
Retail	2,398	10.0%	3.3%
Service	1,974	10.6%	3.7%
Manufacturing	876	27.8%	17.0%
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	257	21.0%	9.0%
Wholesale Trade	298	17.8%	9.1%
Day Labor	2,225	0.0%	0.0%
Other	<u>393</u>	18.7%	10.3%
All Jobs	8,421	10.5%	4.6%

Source: Employment and Training Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1991.

The observed outcome is said to be directly related to the emerging dominance of the service sector of the local economy. Only in those instances where members of the cohort were able to acquire jobs in the manufacturing sector were they able to earn wages that were adequate to enable them to raise a family outside of poverty's grip.

Cohort Attachment to Labor Force

The issue of attachment to the labor force, as described by these data, is not a simple one. The data shows that most men had earnings at some time during a given year. But these men were in and out of jobs from one quarter to another. Among older workers fifty to sixty percent were observed to have had earnings in any given quarter. Yet our data demonstrate that between 1988-90 almost 30 percent of those aged 20-24 left the labor force. It is quite possible some of these men joined migrant streams destined for elsewhere; others might have run afoul of the law; still others might simply have become discouraged and/or cast their lot with the irregular economy. For younger men evidence of withdrawal was less apparent. Nevertheless, some interesting comparisons arise when we disaggregate the data.

To illustrate the above point we will now direct our attention to the younger segment of the cohort. When we disaggregate those who were 14-19 in 1988 from those who were 20-24 and then trace the work experience of the two groups through the years 1988-90 some of the contrasts previously noted become more apparent. The younger group was for the most part still in school at the beginning of the period, although within a crucial two-year span a sizeable share no doubt withdrew prior to graduation (see Table 6). Since it is the younger group that is most likely to adopt maladaptive behaviors, it is to them that we will direct our initial attention. The younger segment of the cohort demonstrated an early attachment to the labor force by age 15; at least one third were in the labor force by that age. By age 18, the vast majority of these youths demonstrated an affinity for work. The question becomes: do they continue to display this attachment as they begin to mature?

What is more apparent, however, is that the less mature segment of the cohort, even by age 19, is characterized by very low earnings capacity. Only eleven percent of the 19 year olds had earnings that would allow them to support themselves. Although the size of the younger group fluctuated during the observational interval as a function of an aging effect, their share of all young adult male workers also varied from year to year. From 1988 to 1990 they constituted 36.6 percent, 21.2 percent and 31.8 percent in each year respectively. Nevertheless in 1989, when the largest share of this population was 18 years old, the smallest share of the total worked.

From ages 18 to 19 there was an almost flat net addition of workers. That is, the transition from school to work changed only nominally, at least on the part of those remaining in school. Those who were 19 years old in 1989 demonstrated an absolute decline in numbers working by the time they were 20 years of age. It appears that a partial explanation for this phenomenon might be the withdrawal from the labor force at the onset of some critical age. Given that a sizeable percentage of this population eventually withdrew from school, i.e., 38.9

percent, and with most withdrawals occurring between the ages of 16 to 18, it is at that point that we expect the number of persons with earnings to begin to decline.

One researcher has explained withdrawal from the labor force as one reaches advanced adolescence as partially related to the emergence of a black youth culture (Ferguson, 1992). This same researcher also suggests that a decline in labor force participation often occurs after an initial encounter with the criminal justice system. We have no concrete evidence that either of the above explanations apply to the local labor market. What we have been observing may simply represent a withdrawal from the local labor market on graduating from high school and subsequently going away to school or enlisting in the armed forces. But admittedly this represents a critical issue and one that requires serious investigation.

The lot of the older workers was somewhat more stable, and at the same time they showed some modest improvements in easing out of poverty. Will the younger segment follow in the footsteps of their older peers or will they experience the pattern demonstrated by those who were 19 years old in 1989? Obviously, that question cannot be answered. But hopefully what we observed in 1989 was simply a temporary setback.

It is apparent that members of the cohort who were born in 1969 and later did not show a strong commitment to school, based on the extent to which they were observed to have withdrawn prior to graduation. It is uncertain whether early withdrawal from school was associated with their ability to attach themselves to the labor force at an early age, or to some other combination of intervening factors. In 1988 the vast majority of youngsters through age 17 who had earnings secured them through employment while they were still in school. But beyond that age the transition to employment not associated with student status began to take on greater importance.

Table 6.

The Withdrawal of a Segment of the Cohort (16-18 year-olds)
Prior to Graduation from Milwaukee Public Schools

<u>Age</u>	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Number who Withdrew</u>	<u>Percent Eventually Withdrawing</u>	<u>Percent with Earnings</u>
16 yr.-olds	1089	394	36.2%	50.3%
17 yr.-olds	1112	448	40.2%	60.8%
18 yr.-olds	1132	384	33.9%	71.8%
	<u>3333</u>	<u>826</u>	<u>24.8%</u>	

Source: Employment and Training Institute, UW-M, 1991.

As a case in point, the 18-year-old members of the cohort in 1988 were more reliant upon income earned as non-students (50.4 percent) than as students (30.8 percent). At the same time, 27.2 percent of the group had no earnings at all. It is unclear what the ratio was between dropouts and graduates among those without earnings.

The exaggerated tendency for these youths to withdraw from school prior to graduation coincides with Hess's (1986) description of the withdrawal of students residing in low income areas of Chicago. Did they withdraw because they were simply bored with school, because they were able to take advantage of good paying jobs, or because they were in difficulty with the law? Any of the previous motivations plus others could have led to early withdrawal.

Schooling, Labor Force Participation, and Earnings

Both intensity of attachment to the labor force and subsequent earnings are associated with whether individuals remained in school until graduation or dropped out prior to graduation. While dropouts and graduates generally appear to have entered the same sectors of the labor market, graduates were successful in achieving substantially more income but still slightly below that required to support an individual above poverty level (see Table 7).

Table 7.

A Comparison of Quarterly Earnings of High School
Graduates and Dropouts - First Quarter 1991 (Men, Ages 20-24)
by Industry of Employment

	<u>Graduates</u> <u>Avg. Wages</u>	<u># of Jobs</u> <u>Held</u>	<u>Dropouts</u> <u>Avg. Wages</u>	<u># of Jobs</u> <u>Held</u>
Retail	\$1,565	126	\$1,120	182
Services: hotel, auto, business	1,377	76	1,024	88
Services: health, legal, ed., soc.	1,751	47	1,381	46
Manufacturing: non-durable	2,016	38	1,702	28
Manufacturing: durable	2,744	29	2,514	21
Transportation, Commun., Utilities	1,449	35	1,143	22
Wholesale Trade	1,819	20	2,135	25
Day Labor	585	49	316	97

Source: Employment and Training Institute, UW-M, 1991.

The most obvious differences between the two groups were the graduates' ability to secure a greater number of jobs in the declining manufacturing sector and their lesser dependence on day labor. The observed discrepancy helps to explain the higher quarterly wage rates garnered by graduates. Dropouts earned only 56 percent as much as graduates, but neither averaged enough income to support a family of three during this period. The Employment and Training Institute reports graduates earned only 58 percent of the income needed to support a family of three, while dropouts earned only 33 percent of the income required to support a family of the same size. This group of young men, in terms of their employment and earning experiences, constitute what Wilson (1987) has previously identified as a weak marriage pool. Nevertheless, members of this population can be expected to father children out-of-wedlock, as Lerman (1986) has demonstrated using a national data set.

Employment and School Enrollment

More than two-thirds of the males under investigation were enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools at some time between 1985-1991. The one-third who were never enrolled were no doubt persons who had already terminated their schooling prior to arriving in Milwaukee. Thus, one might presume that the largest share of persons never attending Milwaukee Public Schools were those born between 1966-1970. Furthermore, there was a strong likelihood that those students enrolled in the city's public schools would secure employment while still in school.

As early as age 15, one-third of the males were wage earners while still in school, and that percentage escalated with age. At age 17 more than three-quarters of these youths had held jobs for pay. The majority of these in-school jobs were concentrated in the retail sector, primarily in food service. Those students who were employed while in school were observed to have earned more on leaving school than did their peers who did not hold jobs while in school. But those advantages were seldom sufficiently great to allow the individual to escape their poverty status.

In some ways it is misleading to perceive these extensive early contacts with the work force as having provided substantial future career advantages such as access to the ladders of upward mobility or guarantees of significant improvements in wages. This simply was not the case. These job experiences were primarily temporary and seldom provided more than sub-par wages and almost never for a full year. That is, they did not often lead to jobs which paid a living wage. Yet a small segment of the older workers (20-22 year-olds) have been described as persistent (approximately 38 percent).

Persistent Workers

These were the individuals who were generally employed full-time for most quarters during the 13 quarters under observation. The hallmark of those designated persistent workers was that most were employed by a small number of firms during the observation period. Persistent workers were the only workers among the cohort who had the potential for supporting

families at a living wage. Persistent workers number 1012 or only 38.1 percent of the total group aged 20-22. For the vast majority of the workers, both high school graduates and dropouts, job turnover rates were high, the number of jobs held were numerous but of short duration, and the sector in which they were employed was among the lowest paying in the local economy. Seldom were these young men able to penetrate the growth sectors of the economy where wages were higher and the potential to support a family above the poverty level was greater.

Why has this Cohort Failed in its Effort to Secure Above-Poverty Level Wages?

The lack of success that this group experienced in its effort to escape poverty through its participation in the labor market raises a number of difficult questions. Among the questions not easily answered are the following: 1) were there simply too few jobs to accommodate the number of new entrants to the labor force; 2) were these individuals ill-prepared in terms of schooling to satisfactorily perform jobs which were coming on line; 3) is there a spatial mismatch between jobs and the location of workers; 4) does racial discrimination continue to serve as a barrier to job access; 5) has a black youth culture emerged which leads to a rejection of jobs which offer minimal financial rewards? Admittedly we are unable to provide definitive answers to these questions, but that in no way diminishes the need to attempt to shed some light on them. Because of the complexities associated with the interaction between race and economics, there would likely be little agreement on the answers even if objective data were readily available to allow us to address them comprehensively rather than superficially.

Based on findings or partial findings in other locations, one can at least begin to venture a set of preliminary observations about the local labor market experience of young black males within the context of the above-framed questions. To do less than that would simply allow us to continue to operate with our heads in the sand. Likewise, we need to know if those researchers who are describing this population as an endangered species (Taylor-Gibbs, 1988) or a lost generation (Austin, 1992) are correct or simply engaging in hype.

Until we begin to look more closely at the local situation, available evidence suggests that we are likely to pass it off as a simple flaw in the system that can be corrected through welfare reform or stiffer criminal penalties and/or the substitution of good values for bad values without seriously trying to come to grips with the problem in all of its complexities, if indeed it is a problem.

One thing which the data amassed by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute makes clear is that young black adults who resided in Milwaukee households that received and/or applied for welfare fared poorly in their experiences in the local labor market during the 1980s. Unfortunately, at this time we do not have access to data that illustrates the achievement of the same aged cohort who resided in households in which heads were not dependent upon public assistance. These two cohorts contained memberships that were quite similar numerically. But if Wilson and other researchers view the cohort described by these data as members of the underclass, then its counterpart should have

fared substantially better. If that is the case the problem appears to be less strongly associated with race and more strongly associated with class.

Job Growth in the Local Economy

Metropolitan Milwaukee, like many similar places, recorded weak labor force growth during the past decade. White and his colleagues reported an 8.7 percent overall increase in employment in the local labor market between 1979-1989. Numerically this represented a total increase of 56,700 jobs. The vast majority of these new jobs were found in the service and retail trade sectors. While new job opportunities were emerging, jobs in the traditional manufacturing sector were being phased out (-42,200). While job growth was occurring in the metropolitan area, the city of Milwaukee lost more than 10,000 jobs during this interval; a situation that did not bode well for the target population. Nevertheless, more than 17,000 new service jobs were created within the city of Milwaukee. The question is, was the volume of new jobs created and their sectoral location adequate to absorb the previously described new black entrants to the labor market? Not only that, but could they absorb them at a level that would enable them to earn a living wage and support a family? If the labor market were unable to locate such persons in more productive jobs, Wilson's weak male marriage pool takes on greater validity.

To the extent that the observed changes in the local labor market bore a resemblance to those noted by Kasarda (1990) in New York, St. Louis, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, or those observed by Clark (1989) in Denver or by Orfield and Ashkinaze (1991) in Atlanta, we can expect the population that we previously described to encounter difficulty in securing a niche for themselves in the formal economy. Kasarda demonstrated that the job prospects were dismal for young males who had failed to graduate from high school, in a sample of cities in transition from industrial to post-industrial in character--almost three-fifths possessed a higher likelihood of being out of work. Since most of the new jobs that were added to the market in these cities were targeted for the upper end of the educational continuum, even high school graduates were encountering difficulty in the marketplace--more than one-quarter were not working in 1986.

Clark observed a similar phenomenon taking place in Denver and suggested that "It is, at least in part, the responsibility of the public schools to inform students of their prospects while providing educations that are relevant to current labor market realities" (Clark, 1989, p. 248). But to simply follow Clark's advice is not likely to be enough. In Atlanta, where the economy was booming during much of the previous decade, young black men hardly fared better in the job market (Orfield and Ashkinaze, 1991) than did the black males in our cohort. For example, according to Orfield and Ashkinaze, the job training program which basically prepared workers from low income households for dead-end jobs tended to favor females because they were easier to place. So, even when educational programs are designed specifically to address the problem, they often do not succeed. This no doubt is simply an indication that the problem requires a solution much more complex than the simple provision of reasonable job-to-worker ratios.

Labor Force Participation and Educational Attainment

It is not easy to assess the suitability of the work force, based on educational preparation, to perform the jobs often being sought. One would assume that most individuals graduating from high school or dropping out no earlier than grade ten would be adequately trained to work in the food service field and/or other retail or service areas where most sought work. It is true that most public school students during this period (1980s) did not perform well scholastically, but it was recently pointed out that scholastic performance is seldom employed as a criterion for employment in entry-level jobs in the United States (Rosenbaum and Kariya, 1991).

Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991), on interviewing a group of Chicago employers, found that the traits most desired in applicants seeking low-skilled jobs were dependability, desire to work, and ability to work well as a team. The vast majority reported that having graduated from high school was not a prerequisite for being hired. Even so, these employers exhibited negative responses generally when it came to hiring those they perceived as inner city black youth. This is simply additional evidence in support of the complexity of the employment problem and the seriousness of effort required to overcome it.

Is Spatial Mismatch an Issue?

Another barrier that is frequently identified when describing the employment problems of young adult blacks is that the vast majority of entry-level jobs continue to be located in the suburbs. Binkley and White (1991), in describing employment growth in metropolitan Milwaukee during the past decade, confirm that most jobs have located outside the city of Milwaukee. At the same time, high-level service jobs in the downtown growth center have increased. But they are generally beyond the reach of our target population, inasmuch as they usually require greater skills than those possessed by this group. Thus, while job growth in metropolitan Milwaukee is currently showing some signs of recovery, the location of many of these jobs outside city limits effectively place them out of reach of young black males. The spatial mismatch theory which has been supported by a number of researchers (Kasarda, 1988 and Hughes, 1989) to describe the current pattern of siting high-level educational requirement jobs in the nation's downtowns and low-level educational requirement jobs in the suburbs, does indeed appear to be applicable locally. The intent in describing this theory is to attempt to establish an additional context within which to view the employment dilemma of the target population.

To the extent that young adult black males are unaware of the availability of these jobs or that they lack transportation access to newly evolving employment centers, the growth of new jobs is likely to have only a limited impact on their status. It should be further noted that, even if the above constraints could be minimized, employers continue to show a reluctance to introduce inner city youth to environments in which the potential for social or cross-race conflict is perceived to exist (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991). If the above perception is widespread, then the possibility of placing members of the target population in selected workplaces becomes even more unlikely.

Black Youth Styles and Employment Prospects

The evidence presented by Kirschenman and Neckerman (1991) reveal that racial attitudes of employers vis-à-vis black youth are more negative than previously suspected. It is true that these negative attitudes are often associated with styles that white employers themselves reject or believe their customers reject. Thus the question arises, are employers discriminating on the basis of race or a set of behaviors, styles and/or attitudes associated with a single segment of the black population? That question is not easily answered. It is true that black youth have developed dress and language styles as well as other symbolic styles that have enabled them to express their own unique identities (Majors and Billson, 1991). Some of these youth are well aware of the negative way these styles are viewed by prospective employers, but feel they are being unfairly singled out for punitive treatment because they are black (Duke, 1992).

There is little doubt that emerging black youth styles have created an impasse between segments of the white and black population. There are those who view the rise of the underclass and the values this group displays as one of the more serious problems confronting America (Kaus, 1992). Kaus suggests that the apparent deterioration of the public sphere is directly related to the fear generated by minority youth who are exemplars of underclass values and lifestyles. Such a position is likely to find far less support by minority scholars, whose interpretation of the problem is apt to be far different from that espoused by Kaus (Pinkney, 1985 and Willie, 1989). Yet an increasing number of scholars are raising issues regarding black youth culture and the threat it is perceived to pose for whites generally. Much of the growing antipathy for black youth styles and/or culture is often embedded in the findings of researchers pursuing underclass themes. Unfortunately, these arguments have degenerated into the chicken-or-egg phenomenon, with conservative scholars promoting the position that underclass culture supports bad values, e.g. weak attachment to the labor force, out-of-wedlock births, failure to complete high school, etc., whereas liberal scholars relate underclass styles to limited opportunity, the disappearance of jobs paying a living wage, and continued evidence of discrimination. The intensity of these arguments and their appeal to different segments of the American population does not bode well for altering the lot of the target population any time soon. Because of this Wilson (1991), an early leader in research on the underclass, seems now to regret his role in the promotion of the use of the term underclass.

The Role of the Residential Environment on the Group's World View

One element which is often missing from the discourse on the status of poor young adult black males in American society is the relevance of their residential environments. We believe this represents a very important, but often overlooked contextual factor that may contribute more to explaining the styles and attitudes of these new prospective labor force entrants than has been heretofore acknowledged. But even if that is not the case, researchers have an obligation to examine this factor in an effort to set the record straight. The findings of Wilson (1987) offer some evidence that the most prevalent indicators of underclass behaviors are found in zones of concentrated poverty. These are neighborhoods in which 40 percent or more of all households

have income below the poverty threshold. There was a marked growth of these impoverished neighborhoods during the 1970s, paralleling in time the take-off in urban economic restructuring. The maximum growth of neighborhoods of concentrated poverty occurred in a selected set of cities in the Northeast and Midwest (Hughes, 1989).

The growth of these neighborhoods in Milwaukee has been described by Jargowsky and Bane (1991). Based on their assessment, the number of concentrated-poverty neighborhoods in the metropolitan area increased by 80 percent during the 1970s. This outcome suggests that Milwaukee was buffeted by a similar set of forces that were observed in such larger metropolitan areas as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

Concentrated Poverty and the Quality of Neighborhood Life

The quality of neighborhood life is known to be adversely affected under conditions of concentrated poverty. Higher rates of teen pregnancy, higher numbers of school dropouts, higher level of child abuse, higher rates of violent crime, and higher rates of drug abuse have all been associated with residence in a concentrated-poverty neighborhood. Based on bias as well as other considerations, Wilson (1991) has chosen to identify neighborhoods that reach the 40 percent threshold of poverty as ghetto neighborhoods. Jargowsky and Bane (1991) concur with that assessment, indicating that their tour of concentrated-poverty neighborhoods in a number of large American cities satisfied them of the appropriateness of the label, since these neighborhoods look like ghettos. We are unconvinced that the latter observation, on its face, is a valid one, without considering such things as neighborhood age, housing type, and other objective characteristics.

Our objection to the use of "ghetto" as a label to identify simply a segment of a community that houses people who have less than full access to the general housing market, without financial constraints, is that it promotes misunderstanding when that term is employed in its more traditional context. It is true that this label enables supporters of the existence of an underclass population to sharpen their spatial focus, but often at the expense of omitting other neighborhoods from the analysis. The issue here is how has this process played itself out in Milwaukee.

The poverty population in Milwaukee grew by more than one-third between 1982 and 1988, or at least that part of the population receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children did (Wiseman, 1991). Since it is in those households that the largest segment of the cohort resides, its spatial growth pattern should provide us with some understanding of the extent to which our cohort constitutes a concentrated poverty population or a more dispersed population. At the beginning of the period this population was largely concentrated in that segment of the black community that had comprised the core of the black community in 1960. This zone constituted what has been previously described as a zone of high stress (Rose, 1990), inasmuch as it was the place of residence for a disproportionate share of the black community's households falling below the poverty level, a disproportionate share of female heads of households, and persons less often attached to the work force.

Has the cohort under investigation become anchored in this zone as a result of limited mobility, or has it become more widely dispersed, thereby minimizing the potential for concentration? It should be noted, however, that Massey and his colleagues (1991) suggest that a concentration of poverty among blacks is strongly associated with the intensity of residential segregation prevailing in a given community. It would reasonably follow that in Milwaukee, which was previously described as a hyper-segregated metropolitan area (Massey, 1989), and with the overall level of black poverty holding constant, there would have been an increase in the number of concentrated poverty neighborhoods during the previous decade.

The Recent Growth of Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods

Using the data sources available at this time it is difficult to explicitly conclude in what ways the residential settlement propensities of the study cohort have changed. Nevertheless, an attempt will be made to deduce from the available data the likelihood of concentrated poverty neighborhoods expanding beyond the locations previously described by Jargowsky and Bane (1991). To do that will require that we generalize from data collected at a variety of spatial scales: zip code areas, community areas, housing status areas, and census tracts. Only one of these scales, the census tract, qualifies as what is generally considered to be an appropriate neighborhood level surrogate. Nevertheless, while not true neighborhood scale measures, community areas have been employed by Wilson (1987) and others to illustrate changes taking place within the context of zones of expansion of the concentration of poverty. In this instance the objective is to use to best advantage the variety of spatial data available as a means of advancing our understanding of the problem.

Where is Ghetto Poverty Intensifying?

To date only Wiseman (1991) has attempted to document the growth and spread of households receiving Aid to Dependent Children in Milwaukee County during the past decade. Fortunately for us, Wiseman has disaggregated the data on the basis of race, and thereby eases our task of attempting to identify sub-areas in the black community where poverty is intensifying. One shortcoming of the Wiseman description is its reliance upon Department of City Development's housing status zones as units of analysis. Because housing status zones employ designations that do not conjure up place-based images, e.g., northside transition zone, people are less likely to get a feeling for the geography of neighborhood and/or subcommunity change that is under way. This is not an insurmountable problem, however. It is possible to adapt Wiseman's data in a way that will allow us to use community area designations in describing the changes he observed employing alternative spatial units.² Of course some precision will be lost in an effort to describe these changes within a more stable geographic framework.

Most black households receiving Aid to Families with Dependent children are concentrated in the community areas identified as Halyard Park, Garfield, and Midtown (see Figure 1). These represent zones of early black concentration in which most housing is part of an aging multifamily stock. Halyard Park,³ the oldest of these community areas, has

experienced lowered housing density as a result of the removal of some of the worst housing in the standing stock. Although some redevelopment has taken place in this community area, it has continued to lose population during the past 20 years. These three community areas conform largely to City Development's zone of basic housing maintenance.

Insert Figure 1.

It was within this zone that the majority of neighborhoods previously described as concentrated poverty neighborhoods were located. Thus any expansion of concentrated poverty neighborhoods is likely to represent an extension of such neighborhoods around this basic core of neighborhoods that have been in the process of decline for some time. By 1988, more than two-fifths of the AFDC's caseloads were housed within the above community areas, although the black population was absolutely declining in both Halyard Park and Garfield (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2.

Although Milwaukee's black population grew by more than 30 percent during the previous decade, its AFDC caseload increased by more than 40 percent. Both the total population and the AFDC population spread well beyond the previously described core community areas during the 1980s (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3.

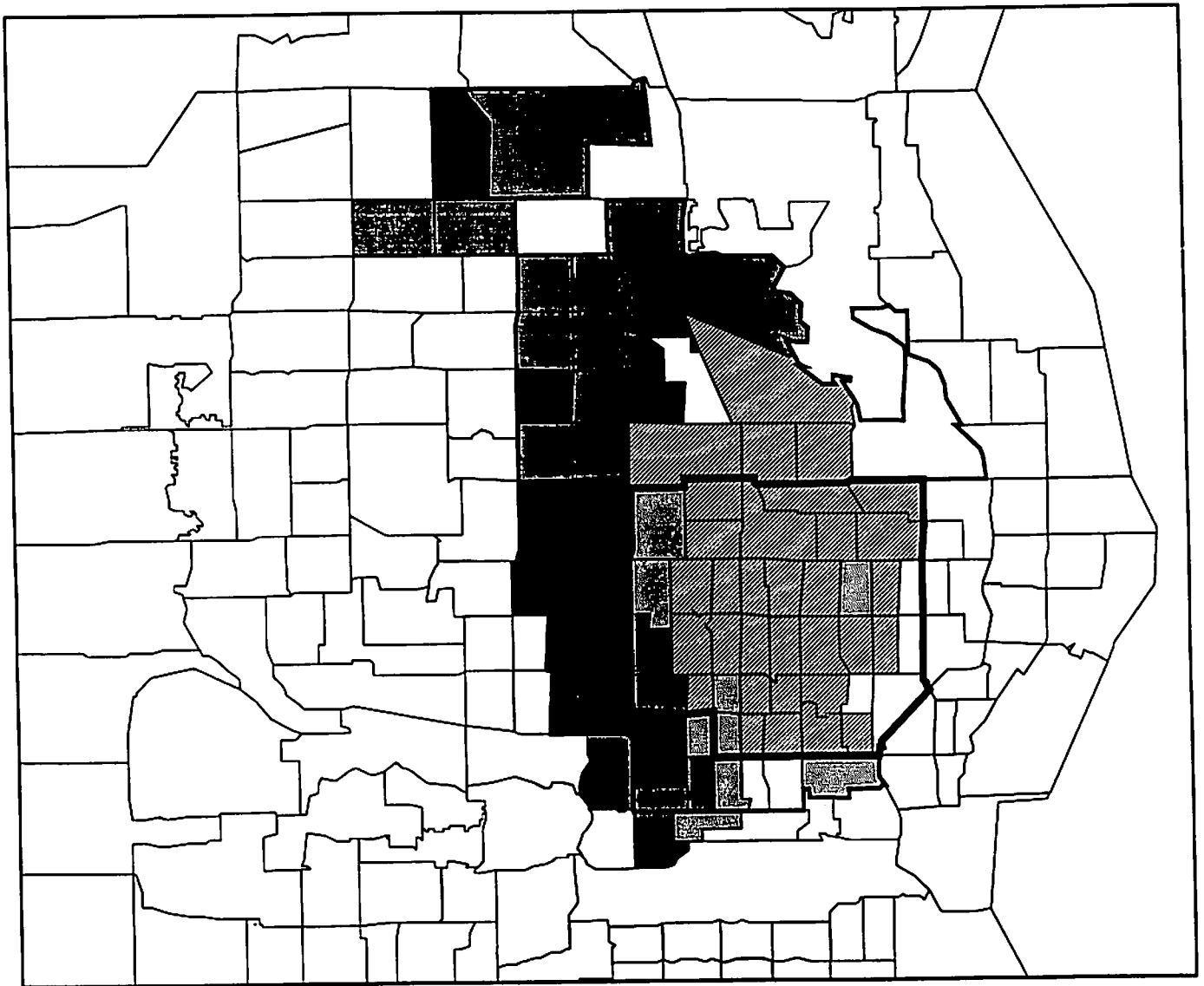
Community areas which were targets of entry during the 1970s--Lincoln Creek, Sherman Park, and North Milwaukee--had become zones of black dominance or incipient dominance as the 1980s came to a close. These community areas were described by City Development largely as reinvestment areas, although those neighborhoods closest to the basic maintenance neighborhoods were more often designated as northside transition areas. The transition neighborhoods appeared to be in the process of undergoing a status change from working-class dominance to lower-income dominance.

The Dispersion of Low Income Households

As black AFDC caseloads increased during the 1980s, caseheads entered peripheral community areas in a pattern similar to that of non-caseheads. The largest absolute increase among caseheads took place in northside reinvestment areas, which included neighborhoods in Lincoln Creek, Sherman Park, North Milwaukee, and Silver Spring. Wiseman (1991) partially attributes this process to the use of housing vouchers that were available to caseheads. Yet it appears that the process was simply fueled by the increased availability of rental housing as the white population was quick to abandon such units in the face of ongoing changes in the racial composition of neighborhoods.⁴ Thus poor households were becoming more dispersed within a context of black community expansion.

Changes in Size of Black Population

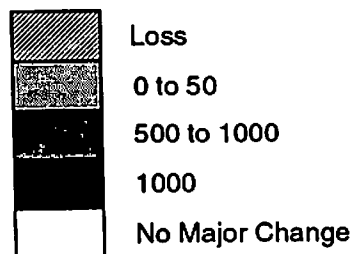
1980-1990



Absolute Level of Growth

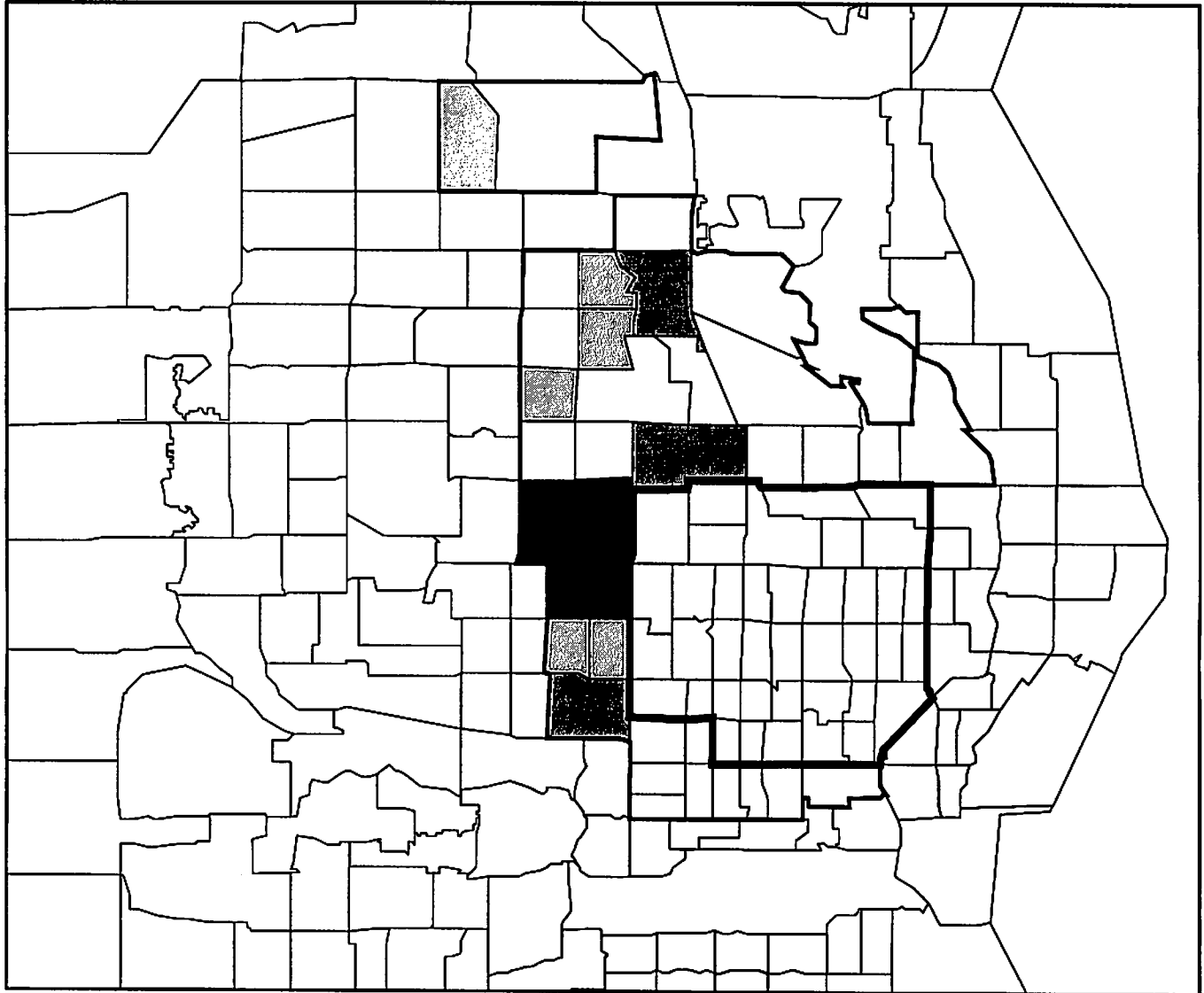
 1990 Black Community Boundary


 Zone of Concentrated Poverty



Major Black Entry Neighborhoods



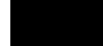
1980-1990



 1990 Black Community Boundary

 Zone of Concentrated Poverty

Housing Status Type

 Reinvestment Areas
 Transition Areas
 Non-Program Areas

How have the changes described above affected the quality of life and/or the opportunity structure of the young adult black male population? That represents our central concern. Based on a series of maps produced by Frank Stetzer, UW-M Computer Center, it appears that a disproportionate share of the target population continues to be concentrated in basic maintenance areas, i.e., Halyard Park, Garfield, and Midtown. Although there is evidence that details the spread of caseheads into outer community areas, this movement appears to be dominated by younger heads. Stetzer's maps show that youth 15-17 years of age predominate in basic maintenance areas, and show a dropoff in their prevalence in neighborhoods more remote from core neighborhoods. Therefore our cohort (ages 15-24) have more members in neighborhoods that are more likely to be designated concentrated poverty neighborhoods.

The movement of non-poor households out of transition areas into reinvestment areas facilitates an increase in the intensity of poverty among the non-mover households. Older caseheads, with whom members of our cohort reside, are obviously less mobile; this condition appears to be leading to a concentration of potential new entrants to the labor market in environments that others are finding less attractive. But at the same time, caseheads with younger children are settling in the more attractive reinvestment areas where poverty is less intense and the neighborhood income mix extends over a greater range.

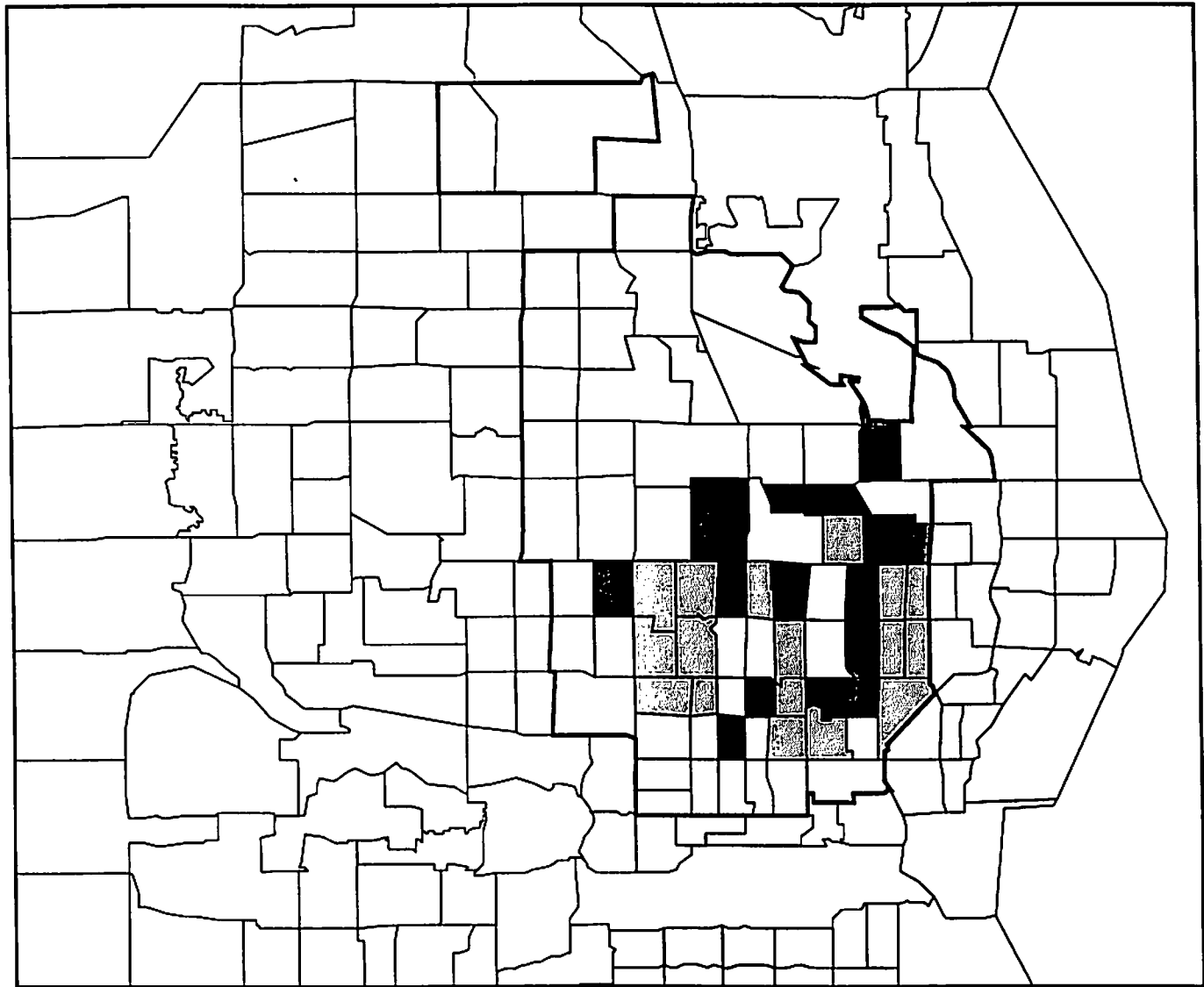
Zones of Black Neighborhood Expansion: Have the Poor Been Left Behind?

Despite the downturn in the strength of the local economy during the early 1980s the city's black population continued to grow at a lively pace. By 1990, the number of neighborhoods in which blacks were numerically dominant had increased by 53.3 percent. The expanding population was involved in a process of racial residential turnover in a series of neighborhoods contiguous to the northern and western edge of the 1980 black community. The mover population ran the gamut in terms of socio-economic status, including the non-poor and poor alike, although there is evidence to demonstrate that movement to selected neighborhoods to the west tended more often to attract middle income black households than did movement to the north. Nevertheless, poor female-headed households participated in the rental housing market in recently opened neighborhoods on both the western and northern edge of the core community (see Figure 4).

Insert Figure 4.

The impact of this movement was to leave behind a cluster of neighborhoods that were becoming poorer. Older working class households that had previously purchased housing on the black community's leading edge, i.e., the pre-1970 black community, were now more or less anchored in place. Likewise, older single-parent households, that currently or previously were dependent upon public support, occupied rental units within declining segments of the black community. In these neighborhoods population decline was almost universal during the 1980s.

Concentrated Poverty Neighborhoods in The Black Community



□ 1990 Black Community Boundary

▨ Actual 1980

■ Projected 1990

Within major frostbelt cities this pattern of neighborhood change has been associated with the growth of concentrated poverty neighborhoods (Greene, 1991). It appears that the old heads described by Anderson (1991) have not abandoned these areas as suggested by Wilson (1987), but are just simply no longer able to serve as effective role models for a maturing cohort of young adults.

Is There a Set of Behaviors Associated with Residence in Core Zones and Beyond?

The apparent marginality of the target cohort in the local labor market and its growing concentration in declining neighborhoods sets the stage for the evaluation of a variety of behavioral repertoires. The evolving repertoires place a growing number of persons at risk of dropping out of school, early childbearing, persistent joblessness, the threat of injury, both lethal and non-lethal, etc. The prevalence of the above risks has been shown to be directly associated with the intensity of neighborhood poverty. For instance, Kornblum and Williams (1985) have detailed black youth lifestyles and behaviors across a number of American urban places. Among the activities they found to be more commonplace in the more intensely poor neighborhoods are the rise of the underground economy, especially that associated with drug distribution, and its accompanying violence, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, and petty theft, as well as a variety of assaultive behaviors.

The inability of a growing number of young adult black males to secure an acceptable niche for themselves in a rapidly changing economy places great pressures upon them. This also influences how they are likely to conduct themselves within their neighborhoods of residence. Gabarino and others (1992) describe the plight of children in some of the very worst neighborhoods in American cities as paralleling those observed in a number of war zones around the world.

In Milwaukee, approximately one-half of the current cohort of young adult black males are at an increasing risk of becoming part of a population that has been written off--the population that has been described by the media and a growing battery of academics as members of an underclass. Whether or not the underclass label is the most appropriate one to describe populations possessing these attributes will not be argued here. But what is becoming more apparent is that our target cohort is increasingly becoming entrapped in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Within those neighborhoods there is increasing evidence of the rise in the incidence of events and/or conduct that could transform these neighborhoods into environments in which respect for civility disappears and disorder and chaos reign supreme.

Conclusions

Young adult black males who came of age during the previous decade, and who at some time resided in households dependent upon some form of public support, fared poorly in the local labor market. Only eight percent of those who had reached their 20th birthday by the first quarter of 1988 had earnings that were sufficient to support a family of three, but only 15

percent had wages adequate to raise them above the poverty level. Thus, more than 80 percent of the more mature members of this cohort failed to make a successful adaptation to observed structural changes in the local economy, i.e., a declining manufacturing employment base and a growing service employment sector. The observed outcomes do much to illustrate the growing potential for negative behavior generally and heightened prospects for predatory behaviors in concentrated poverty neighborhoods, where the least successful among this cohort are concentrated.

The parents of this cohort, who grew up in this community, or arrived from elsewhere during the turbulent 1960s, must by now be questioning the hand they drew. Given the promise associated with that decade, the screens of opportunity turned out to be much finer than was anticipated, especially for males growing up in poor households. We have not attempted a direct and precise explanation for the outcomes observed. Instead, a number of factors that are potential contributors to these outcomes were examined, in a very general way, as guides to better understanding the problem. Obviously, there should be some testing of the association between the theses identified and job market success. Success in this instance should be defined as the ability to earn a living wage, one that at a minimum would enable a person to become self-supporting and to eventually support a family.

Many social science researchers tend merely to focus on job availability and the individual's ethical responsibility to work (see, for instance, Meade, 1989; Kaus, 1992). Few would deny the merits of these arguments, but it is indeed short-sighted to think that this group, or any group of Americans who have bought into the ethic of prosperity, will be satisfied to simply hold a job. We must become much more effective than we have been in the past in making children wish to learn, and in promoting the kind of school environments that will substantially lower the dropout rates in all schools. To accomplish this will require far greater cooperation between middle-class teachers and lower-status parents than is usually the case in schools where the urban poor predominate (see Comer, 1980).

We are now confronted by one of the more serious social problems of this generation--the growing income inequality among segments of the population, based largely on race. To the extent that both race and class are implicated in this outcome, the resolution of the problem is made even more difficult.

Locally, however, the potential for cooperation and experimentation is greater than in urban places where the population is larger, and influential power bases are more rigid in their interpretation of what might constitute appropriate solutions. We need not document the litany of known outcomes associated with the failure of the target cohort to experience success in the local market, for that would be redundant. Based on our observations, which demonstrate only nominal success at best, it appears that the popular rap group "Boyz II Men" might consider producing a rap recording titled "Boyz 4 Ever," if major strides are not made to successfully incorporate a far larger share of the existing and future work force into more productive niches in the local economy.

Notes

1. Technically, the subject population did not all reside in female headed households. But the largest share of subjects were the sons of persons receiving AFDC at some time during the interval. Others were themselves, at times, caseheads who qualified for AFDC. More than one-fifth of the male residents of these households never qualified for public aid themselves.
2. By superimposing the Redevelopment Authority's housing zones on a map showing community area designations, it is possible to ascertain the general quality of housing within individual community areas.
3. It appears that, because of the wide ranging changes that have occurred in the diversity of housing development in the Halyard Park community area, a number of subareas or neighborhoods are now recognized by residents. A very much smaller area within the Halyard Park community is currently labeled Halyard Park (see map of Milwaukee Neighborhoods, 1990, Department of City Development Neighborhood Information Center).
4. Racial residential turnover occurred swiftly in selected neighborhoods. In several neighborhoods in which blacks were present in only small numbers at the beginning of the period they represented majorities or near majorities by 1990.

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