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BRAZIL 1989
A Socioeconomic Study of Indigence and Urban Poverty

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Translated by Mara Connor

Project
"Social Policies for the Urban Poor in Southern Latin America:
Welfare Reform in a Democratic Context"

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A Socioeconomic Study of Indigence and Urban Poverty

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Translated by Mara Conner

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Introduction

In this paper I attempt to draw a picture of urban poverty in contemporary Brazil, with the aid of data taken from sample household studies,¹ using the poverty line approach.² In the case of Brazil, the picture of urban poverty should include not only the demographic and socioeconomic proportions and characteristics of the poor for the country as a whole but also the variations in these characteristics across the different regions of the country. Geographical variations in the cost of living in Brazil make it necessary to assign different monetary values to the lines of indigence and poverty³ for the different regions.

One aspect of poverty that stood out early in my analysis was its rapid dimensional change in conjunction with changes in the general economic cycle. From a perspective commonly shared by sociologists, I tend to think of poverty as a relatively stable phenomenon, which moves slowly with the improvement or worsening of economic conditions. Therefore, one focus of this paper is the search for a common structural component within the total population of the poor in order to try to differentiate between 'chronic' and 'more recent' (possibly short-term) poverty. To achieve this, I have used a direct indicator of unsatisfied basic needs, which complements the indirect indicator of the satisfaction of those needs. The indirect indicator compares per capita household income with the poverty and indigence lines.⁴ The direct indicator is based on a combination of

¹ Most of the data used here come from the *Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde e Nutrição* (PNSN), conducted in 1989. This study was sponsored by the Instituto Nacional de Alimentação e Nutrição (INAN) and conducted with the technical collaboration of the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) and the Instituto de Pesquisas em Economia Aplicada (IPEA). The information furnished by PNSN is basically comparable to that provided by the *Pesquisas Nacionais de Amostra de Domicílios* (PNAD) and by IBGE.

² This approach comes from a long line of investigation, beginning with the first studies done in York, England, by Rowntree (1901, 1941) at the beginning of the century. In the last few decades, this methodology has gained clear guidelines from the analyses done by Oscar Altimir (1979). For a long time in Brazil, analyses of poverty remained methodologically crude, focusing on the proportions and characteristics of families with total incomes below a certain level of minimum wage. Comparisons across time and interregional comparisons provided by this method were extremely unreliable. In the last few years, the poverty line approach has begun to gain followers (see, among other recent studies, Lopes and Gottschalk 1990; Rocha 1988, 1991; and Romão 1991).

³ In this study I have used indigence lines (per capita values that cover only money spent on food) and poverty lines (per capita values that cover all basic necessities, both food and nonfood items), adapted from data calculated by Sonia Rocha (1991) as well as data organized by Vera Lucia Fava (1984) for ENDEF (the *Estudo Nacional de Despesa Familiar*, carried out by IBGE in 1974–75). Household groups are separated along these lines and identified in the tables as I (indigents), NIP (nonindigent poor), and NP (nonpoor). In the Methodological Appendix at the end of this paper I have detailed the methods used to combine the poverty and indigence lines for each region, as well as other indicators that were used, to distinguish and define basic needs discussed in the text.

⁴ There is an extensive list of studies on indicators of unsatisfied basic needs. See, for example, publications by CEPAL (1988, 1989) and the investigation of poverty in Argentina by Feres (n.d.).

certain household characteristics indicating unsanitary conditions, such as high density of inhabitants per bedroom, and other indicators of unfavorable social conditions, such as school absenteeism among children from seven to eleven years old.⁵ This indicator makes it possible to classify households into two groups: those whose basic needs are unsatisfied (UBN) and those whose basic needs are satisfied (SBN). The combination of these two dimensions allows us to analyze the question of poverty more closely and examine the issue of structural or chronic poverty.

The results are organized as follows: The first part of the study begins with a brief history of the country's regional differences, starting with its past as a slave economy exporting primary products and moving on to a discussion of the changing regional inequalities throughout the industrial development period. This section looks back on the evolution of poverty rates in the country as a whole and in its different regions during the last few decades.

This is followed by a closer examination of urban poverty during 1980s, using data from the studies by Sonia Rocha (1988, 1991) and Mauricio Romão (1991), both of which employed a similar methodology. This section gives an analysis of poverty across the country, showing the proportion of households that fall under the indigence and poverty lines and giving their demographic and socioeconomic profiles. The aim is to characterize who the poor are, at various levels, and to identify the various codeterminants of the conditions of poverty—the sex-age structure of household members, the qualifications of the work force (principally their level of education), the number of jobs obtained and, last but not least, the quality of these jobs.

At the end of Part I, I return to the intersection of poverty lines and the different household types, those that have their basic needs satisfied and those that have not (SBN/UBN). I endeavor to determine the point at which a profile of chronic poverty emerges, with distinct demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

The second half of the paper focuses on the regional differences of poverty. I do not intend merely to repeat the analysis done for the country as a whole for each of the country's regions.⁶ The ultimate aim of this work is to identify the specific forms in which poverty and misery manifest themselves. Some indications have been found to suggest that, more than simply coexisting, two Brazils are interacting to reproduce each other.

⁵ See the Methodological Appendix for more details.

⁶ The national study of health and nutrition carried out in 1989 by INAN/IPEA/IBGE, although essentially the same as the PNAD study, was based on a smaller sample (17,920 households and 63,213 people from all over Brazil). Primarily for this reason, I found it convenient in many places to group together the Northern, Central-Western, and Northeastern urban regions into a single unit, the Greater Central-Northern Region, large in land area but relatively small in population, and contrast it with the unit combining the urban populations of the South and the Southeast, the Greater Southern Region (see also footnote 23).

Part I

Evolution of Poverty Rates in Brazil, from the Nineteenth to the Late Twentieth Century

In the beginning of Brazilian industrialization at the end of the nineteenth century, large-scale differences in levels of economic growth were already apparent among the diverse regions of Brazil, leading to large differences in levels of poverty. Primary product export cycles (sugar, gold) succeeded each other in the slave economies of the different regions of the country. Sugar grew along the coastal regions of the Northeast, while gold was mined in the vast empty lands of the center of the country. The production of these primary exports declined; they were substituted by other production cycles in other regions of the country, leaving behind a large population of poor, mostly blacks and *mestiços*, slaves and freed.

The coffee production cycle flourished in São Paulo during the nineteenth century. Linked to the world economy and the tremendous socioeconomic transformations brought about by the industrial revolutions in Europe and later in the United States, the coffee economy was blessed with a different destiny from that of other primary products. The very impetus of its development accelerated the decline of slave labor and provoked enormous waves of immigration and the creation of internal urban markets for domestic industrial products.

Southern Brazil had its own distinct social and economic history. Immigration to the Southern states started in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unlike immigrants to São Paulo who provided the manual labor for the coffee plantations, immigrants to the South were farmers who occupied significant tracts of land as small landholders in a country typically divided into large farms and plantations. In this region, economic development centered around providing basic food supplies to the São Paulo region. Economic decline in the South only manifested itself much later in the 1940s and '50s when the region lost both its own consumer markets and its markets in the Southeast. Poverty among the Southern population is a more recent phenomenon, and compared with the poverty of the Northeast, much less severe.

In the 1920s and '30s, small landholders also developed in São Paulo and Paraná, alongside the large plantation system. In Paraná, coffee was grown on a smaller scale, in areas of planned colonization and as a consequence of the westward movement of São Paulo's coffee cultivation. The 1930s witnessed the decline of coffee in São Paulo, and the growth of farms supplying basic food stuffs to support the regional market, substituting, in large part, commodities grown in the South.

At the beginning, import substituting industrialization developed where there were urban markets. This form of industrialization concentrated rapidly in the Center-South, in Rio de Janeiro and even more in São Paulo, to the detriment of the urban industrial economies of the Northeast

and the South. These interregional disparities in economic growth increased at least until the 1960s, when deliberate government policies aimed at fostering regional development were implemented. However, industries located in the Northeast as a result of the incentives established by these policies were capital intensive and driven by Southern and external markets. Although industrial growth in these regions occurred, it had almost no effect on the standard of living of the majority of the poor.⁷

The prevalence of poverty and wretched urban living conditions in all parts of the country closely reflected the regional economic situation; rural to urban area migrations increased in the poor regions due to the decline of their regional economies. The richer states in the Center-South experienced a similar movement of population to the cities, but this movement was a result of agricultural modernization. In the poorer regions, demographic urbanization occurred at a pace that greatly surpassed the development of modern urban economic activities. In the Center-South, migration responded to economic development, specifically to the increase in urban job opportunities. Increased interregional migrations of the poor to this region surpassed the number of rural to urban migrations within the Central-Southern region itself.

The history of the North and the Center-West is more complex. During the 1910s, the Northern states experienced the abrupt decline of the rubber economy, similar to the decline of earlier economic export cycles, which caused a large-scale increase in regional poverty. The northern half of the Central-Western region along with the eastern part of the Northern region witnessed the constant influx of peasants and rural farm workers while this 'frontier' land remained relatively open for many years. The construction of Brasília at the end of the 1950s and the opening of the Belém-Brasília highway accelerated the movement of modern agricultural practices to the southern part of the Center-West and the establishment of an urban network in this part of the country. Peasant migration from the Northeast to the West intensified, and as the agricultural 'frontier' closed, so did the rural to urban migration within the Central-Western region. This latter movement was acutely manifested in the growth of the urban poor in the satellite cities on the outskirts of Brasília.

To this diversity of social and economic regional histories were added variations in the growth rate of the national economy, high during the fifties, sixties, and seventies, low during the 1980s. The period of growth was interrupted by the recession from 1961 to 1964, and the stagnation of the last decades was accentuated by the deep recession from 1981–1984.

This is the historical and economic backdrop we need to keep in mind in order to contextualize the proportional differences of misery and poverty, as well as the different ways in which poverty manifests itself, as revealed by the household survey done by PNSN in 1989.

⁷ See Lopes (1968), Castro (1971) and, for more recent decades, Camargo and Giambiagi (1991).

The percentage of poor in Brazil decreased during the '60s and even more so in the '70s. A study by Romão (1991), using census data, data from PNAD, and poverty lines defined in roughly the same terms as used in the present study, furnishes us with the following percentages of poor people for the entire country in each of the census years: in 1960, 47.4%; in 1970, 39.3%; and in 1980, 24.4%. With the recession at the beginning of the 1980s, the national percentage of poor people grew rapidly: in 1983, the number of poor returned to the 1960 level, 41.9%. The economic recovery initiated in 1985, which peaked with the boom of the 'Cruzado Plan,' caused a rapid drop in the number of poor; in 1986 the national percentage of people living below the poverty line was 28.4%. In the following years, increasing inflation and a deteriorating economy acted in conjunction with the recessionary effects of successive economic stabilization plans to return the national percentage of people living below the poverty line to the 1970 level.⁸

The study conducted by Sonia Rocha (Rocha 1991) for the nine Brazilian metropolitan regions, based on PNAD's Household Surveys, provides adequate information on this trend in the 1980s, as illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Poor People in Metropolitan Regions, Selected Years

Metropolitan Regions	P e r c e n t a g e s			
	1981	1983	1986	1989
Belém	50.9	57.6	45.9	39.6
Fortaleza	54.0	56.2	30.1	40.7
Recife	55.6	56.6	39.9	47.2
Salvador	43.1	43.8	37.5	39.0
Belo Horizonte	31.3	44.1	26.4	27.2
Rio de Janeiro	27.2	34.7	23.2	32.5
São Paulo	22.0	34.4	16.9	20.9
Curitiba	17.4	29.6	10.5	13.5
Porto Alegre	17.9	29.7	16.3	21.0
Total	29.1	38.2	22.8	27.9

Source: Sonia Rocha (1991); data from PNAD

Changes in the percentage of poor people living in the metropolitan areas, as well as in Brazil as a whole, follow the economic fluctuations of each decade. Two additional points need to be stressed. First, levels of extremely high poverty in the urban centers of the North and the Northeast stand out in contrast to the average levels of poverty found in the Southeast and the

⁸ Romão (1991) furnishes data for the entire country, including urban and rural populations. His data from the 1980s were calculated on the basis of the PNAD study.

even lower percentages found in Southern urban centers. Second, in the face of the 1981–1983 recession, the percentage of Northeastern poor, already very high, rose only slightly; with the economic recovery, in turn, the numbers fell significantly. We are left with the impression that the link between the poor sectors of Northeastern cities and the marketplace is distinct from the linkages experienced by poor sectors in other parts of the country. I will return to this question later in the paper.

Who Are the Urban Poor? A Profile of Poor Households in 1989

I turn now to an analysis of poor urban household data from 1989, in percentages, characteristics, and profiles, for the country taken as a whole. (Some of the tables used in this section break down the figures by region. However, I will leave the detailed examination of the regional differences in urban poverty for the second part of the paper.)

At this point, it is necessary to distinguish between poverty and indigence by providing an estimate of income levels below which a household should be considered poor (poverty line), and an estimate of income levels below which it is difficult for a household to buy the food necessary for its survival (indigence line). Table 2 provide such estimates. The first two columns provide my estimates for the four Brazilian urban regions. The last column provides Rocha's (1991) estimates for Brasilia and the nine metropolitan regions. All these estimates are expressed in 1989 US dollars. (See also footnote 3 and the Methodological Appendix, pages 40–43.)

My estimates, based on information collected by the 1989 PNSN, permit me to classify the Brazilian urban population of each region into three groups: indigents, nonindigent poor, and nonpoor. By adding the contingent of each group in each region we obtain each group's total for urban Brazil as a whole. Table 3 summarizes some general data on the situation of poverty among Brazil's urban populations.

Who are the urban poor? What are their most distinct characteristics? Where are they found? There are 8.6 million poor households in urban Brazil, one-third of the total number of all households; 2.8 million live at the indigence level and 5.8 million are poor but not indigent. These households are made up of 40.6 million people, almost 40% of the total urban population, a figure that would seem to indicate that poor households average a greater number of persons per household than the prevailing average in urban Brazil overall. In addition, 51% of all children from 0–3 years old live in these households. Considering the enormous economic and social disadvantages suffered by poor households, it is not difficult to see the significance of this concentration of children for explaining the phenomenon of transmitting poverty from generation to generation, however favorable and rapid the effects of sociopolitical and innovative economic strategies may be.

TABLE 2

**Urban and Metropolitan Brazil:
Regional Variations in the Income Value of the Poverty and Indigence Lines^a**
(monthly per capita income in 1989 US\$)

Regions ^b	Indigence Lines	Poverty Lines	Metropolitan Areas ^c	Poverty Lines
Urban North/ Center-West	22.94	54.37	Belém Brasília	60.69 65.11
Urban Northeast	16.36	35.41	Fortaleza Recife Salvador	36.38 44.26 52.70
Urban Southeast	20.41	48.37	Belo Horizonte Rio de Janeiro São Paulo	46.16 53.31 63.64
Urban South	19.32	38.92	Curitiba Porto Alegre	40.15 52.01

^a See footnote 3 for a definition of indigence and poverty lines as used in this paper.

^b Values for urban regions are adapted from Rocha's data (1991, 36) and from the study done by ENDEF/FAVA.

^c Values for metropolitan areas are based on Rocha's data (1991, 36). The value for Brasília was taken from ENDEF/FAVA data (1984, 102). See the Methodological Appendix.

TABLE 3

Urban Brazil: Distribution, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, of Households; People; Households with Children 0-3 years Old; Black and Pardo Heads of Households; Households in the Greater Central-Northern Region (GCNR)

	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Nonpoor	Total
	Indigent (I)	Nonindigent Poor (NIP)	Total Poor (I + NIP)	(NP)	
I n T h o u s a n d s					
Households	2,833.0	5,783.3	8,616.3	17,070.2	25,686.5
People	14,553.5	26,021.0	40,574.5	63,908.4	104,482.9
Children (0-3 years old)	2,035.1	2,517.4	4,552.5	4,326.8	8,879.2
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads of households	1,922.9	3,278.6	5,201.5	5,203.0	10,404.5
Households in the GCNR	1,525.5	2,364.7	3,890.2	3,883.5	7,773.7
I n P e r c e n t a g e s					
Households	11.03	22.52	33.54	66.46	100.00
People	13.93	24.90	38.83	61.17	100.00
Children (0-3 years old)	22.92	28.35	51.27	48.73	100.00
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads of households	18.48	31.51	49.99	50.01	100.00
Households in the GCNR	19.62	30.42	50.04	49.96	100.00

Source: PNSN 1989

The data from Table 3 that refer to the black and *mestiço* populations point to the survival of disadvantageous institutions and structures and, despite the tremendous economic growth of the last century, the continuation of the inequalities with which this population was originally incorporated into Brazilian society. Black or *pardo*⁹ headed households, which constitute 41% of all urban households, make up 68% of indigent households and 57% of nonindigent poor households.

As expected, the urban indigent households and urban nonindigent poor households are disproportionately located in the least economically developed regions of the country: in the North, the Center-West, and the Northeast (GCNR). While these regions contain almost 30% of the total number of urban households in the country, they are also home to 54% of the total number of indigent households and 41% of the nonindigent poor households. I will analyze urban poverty along regional lines in the second part of this paper. It is not out of place, however, to present the data in Table 4 on the probability of being poor in urban Brazil in 1989 by region and metropolitan area.¹⁰

TABLE 4

Percentage of Poor People, Metropolitan Areas^a and Urban Regions,^b 1989

	Belém	39.6
Total	Urban North/Center-West Region	49.37
	Fortaleza	40.7
	Recife	47.2
	Salvador	39.0
Total	Urban Northeast Region	59.11
	Belo Horizonte	27.2
	Rio de Janeiro	32.5
	São Paulo	20.9
Total	Urban Southeast Region	31.48
	Curitiba	13.5
	Porto Alegre	21.0
Total	Urban South Region	25.17
Total	Metropolitan Areas	27.9
Total	Urban Regions	38.83

^a Rocha (1991, 37); PNAD data 1989

^b PNSN data 1989

⁹ The term *pardo* probably indicates all of the possible intermarriages among whites, blacks, and the various indigenous groups.

¹⁰ Note that this table of urban regional data is a result of our analyses of PNSN 1989 data, while the data for the metropolitan areas are from Sonia Rocha (1991).

Note the two clearly distinct levels of poverty: the poverty of the Southern and Southeastern urban populations, where the probabilities of being poor are 25% and 31%, respectively; and the poverty of the rest of the country where the probabilities of being poor reach 59% in the Northeast and 49% in the North/Center-West.

The data for the metropolitan areas show a similar geographical variation, ranging from 13.5% for Curitiba to 47% for Recife. Additionally, the percentages of poor people in the metropolitan areas tend to be lower than the percentages in their respective regions, indicating higher levels of poverty for the nonmetropolitan urban areas.

TABLE 5

Urban Brazil: Percentage of Poor Households and the Probability of Being Poor According to Family Structure, 1989

Family Structures ¹¹	Households				Probability of Being Poor
	Poor	%	Totals	%	
S	20,228	0.23	467,708	1.82	4.32
C0	135,293	1.57	954,283	3.72	14.18
C1	2,073,661	24.07	5,449,403	21.22	38.05*
C2	2,688,949	31.21	8,472,642	32.98	31.74
E1	685,243	7.95	2,080,910	8.10	32.93
E2	537,916	6.24	1,479,228	5.76	36.36*
Other	379,435	4.40	1,942,069	7.56	19.54
Multi	868,556	10.08	2,165,660	8.43	40.11*
W1	356,965	4.14	599,860	2.34	59.51*
W2	870,085	10.10	2,074,774	8.08	41.94*
Total	8,616,311	100.00	25,686,537	100.00	33.54

* Probabilities are above the national average.
Source: PNSN 1989

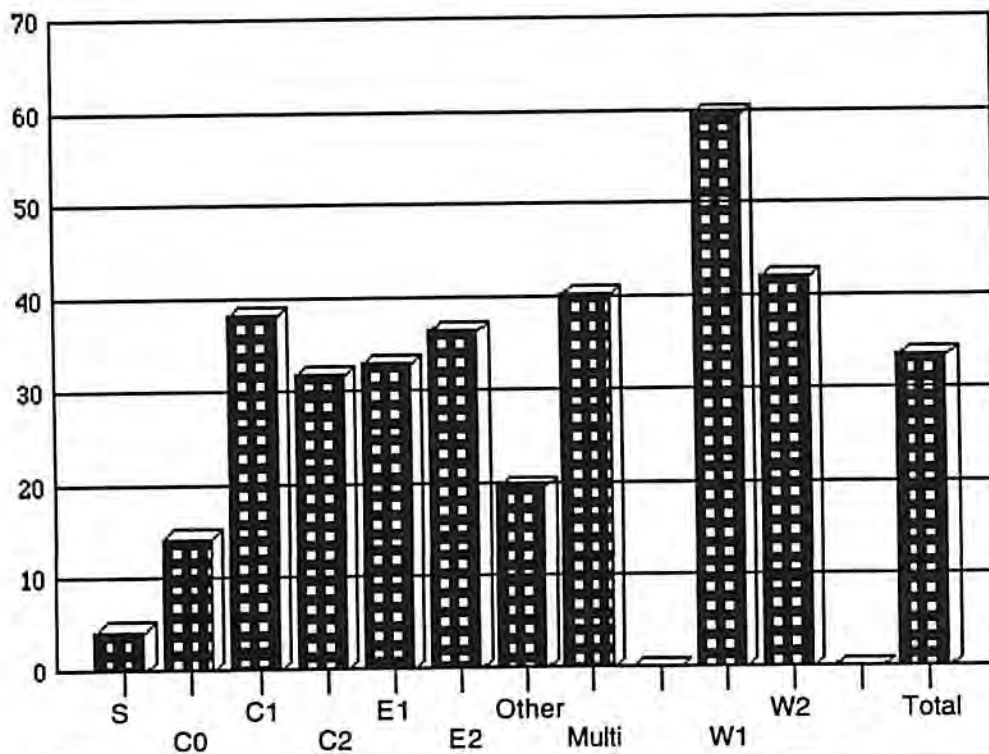
- ¹¹ S—Young single men and women with no dependents
 C0—Young couples with no dependents
 C1—Young couples with children or other dependents
 C2—Couples, 35-59 years (average), with children or other dependents
 E1—Elderly men, women, or couples, 60+ years, with children or other dependents
 E2—Elderly men, women, or couples, 60+ years, with no dependents
 Other—Other family structures
 Multi—More than one family per household
 W1—Young single female heads of households, 34 years or less, with children or other dependents
 W2—Single female heads of households, 35-59 years, with children or other dependents

Note that all of these types of family structures, except for 'multi,' are single family households. I used a similar classification in an earlier study in which I analyzed, together with Andréia Gottschalk, the poverty of the metropolitan region of São Paulo. In that study our unit of analysis was the family, dividing up the multifamily households. In this study, the unit of analysis is the household, and the multifamily households are included as a specific type of family structure, a type that, in itself, may be interesting to analyze.

The data in Table 5 and Figure 1 will help us to further identify the poor population: these data refer to the diverse family household structures at different levels of poverty. These structures have been classified in such a way as to locate each household within its life cycle (its composition, growth and change, and aging process). Poor households, including indigents, represent a wide spectrum of family structures: young families, middle-aged and older families, nuclear and nontraditional families. Some household types are found more often at the poverty level than in the population at large. In other words, households with some specific structures have a higher probability of being classified as poor than others. These household types are made up of young couples with children; elderly men, women, and couples with no dependents; multifamily households; and, above all, households run by single young or middle-aged women with children. These cases are marked with an asterisk in the last column of Table 5. While the types of family structure mentioned above make up 46% of all households in the urban population, this percentage reaches almost 55% among the urban poor population.

FIGURE 1

Probability of Being Poor According to Family Structure, Urban Brazil, 1989



Vertical axis = Probability of being poor
 Horizontal axis = Family structures (See footnote 11)

Multifamily households deserve additional commentary. Examining them, we perceive that in a large number of cases the heads of the secondary families are related in some way to the head of the primary household. They are children or parents and, separating the components by generation, each represents a common structure among poor families. One example would be a daughter and her children living in the house of her father, who is the head of the household. In this way, multifamily households represent traditional patterns as well as deliberate living strategies that help poor families cope with difficult economic situations. As we confirm in a later section, the percentage of multifamily households classified as poor (very different from one region to another) is related to how great the probability is of other family structures being classified as poor.

Other aspects of these data also merit further discussion. Examine Figure 1, which shows the percentage probability that a household will be classified as poor based on the various family structures found in the households in our sample. Observe the percentages of poor families in the C0, C1, and C2 columns (couples without children, followed by couples with young children,¹² and couples with older children). Note that the probability of being poor first increases abruptly and later decreases. This relationship is also verified by studies done of individual regions.¹³ The key factor seems to be that children represent both financial responsibilities and impediments to their mothers working outside the home. When these children grow up and get jobs of their own, they bring additional income to the family as well as 'liberating' their mother to work outside the home. A large proportion of the Brazilian population is disadvantaged by low levels of education and skills and access to only the lowest paying jobs. Their situation is such that just getting married and having children is enough to throw many families below the poverty line or even the indigence line. With the growth of their children, their situation improves. These considerations weigh even more heavily in the case of women who are single mothers. The probability that single mothers will fall below the lines of indigence and poverty is always much higher than the probability of couples of the same age groups; the probability decreases as women get older (their children get older and enter into the job market).¹⁴

¹² If the highest mean age of a couple in group C1 is 34 years, their oldest children will be at most around 12 years old.

¹³ See also the same results in a study of the metropolitan region of São Paulo (Lopes and Gottschalk 1990).

¹⁴ Analysis of 1980 census data for the state of São Paulo permits us to see the effect of the presence of another person in households headed by single women with children. Comparing family groups that differ only with respect to the presence of another person (usually an older woman) shows that what happens with the percentage of poverty depends on the age of the head of the household. The hypothesis is that when the female head of household is young, the presence of another person to take care of her children frees her to work, diminishing her chances of falling below the poverty line. When the female head of the household is older, the presence of another person is more of a burden and the probability of being classified as poor is greater.

Another constant in the data, whether it be for the country as a whole or for each region separately, is that the percentage of poor among the elderly with no dependents is higher than the percentage of poor among the elderly who still have children at home (E2 compared with E1). This discrepancy is testimony to the fact that retirement and pension funds are not universally distributed and generally pay very little; the number of elderly who receive pensions varies from region to region. For the elderly with no children at home to support them, the likelihood of being below or above the poverty line depends on the opportunity to continue to work.

To increase our understanding of what it means to be poor in urban Brazil, we will examine data ranging from sanitary living conditions to the degree of cultural isolation of households (Table 6). The first four items on the table refer to the presence of rustic living conditions in the cities: earthen floors and walls and roofs made out of materials found in the area or *taipa*.^{*} Houses like these would typically be found in *mocambos*, *várzeas*, and traditional shantytowns. It should be noted that although rustic living conditions make up a small proportion of the total urban population's living conditions, rustic houses still represent a significant percentage among poor households, primarily among those living at the indigence level.¹⁵ Even more serious is the situation indicated by items five through nine which give a measure of the unsanitary conditions of the urban poor. Among indigent households, around half do not have indoor plumbing or toilets and/or are in neighborhoods where the garbage is not collected; more than two-thirds live on streets with no sidewalks, no sewer systems or only rudimentary pits. The percentage of nonindigent poor living in these conditions is comparatively lower but still high, ranging from 25% to 50%. We should not forget that while these conditions may not all be found together, only one of them is necessary to constitute an extremely unsanitary situation.¹⁶

The remaining data in the lower panel of the table (ten through thirteen) allow us to visualize the limitations of the cultural world of Brazil's urban poor. More than two-thirds of those living at the indigence level do not have any books in their homes (not counting school books or the Bible) and half of these households do not have television. (Almost none have telephones, but this is the case for the great majority of Brazilians.) Add to this the fact that almost half the heads of these households are illiterate. The world of these people is restricted, confined to direct contact with other people in their neighborhoods or in their workplaces. For the nonindigent poor population, these percentages are slightly better, varying from one-fourth to

* *Taipa* is a mixture of sand, sticks, and mud or lime used to make walls and roofs of rustic houses. *Mocambos* are wooded areas where runaway slaves originally sought refuge. *Várzeas* are low grassy fields usually bordering streams or bodies of water that frequently flood.—TRANS.

¹⁵ The last census of shantytowns showed that half of the shantytown houses in large metropolitan areas like São Paulo today are made out of concrete cinder blocks, a material that has been made affordable by industrialization.

¹⁶ This is the fundamental idea behind the satisfaction of basic needs indicator used in this study. See subsequent discussion.

one-half (except for telephones, which are almost totally absent). These percentages, except those for the telephones, are drastically lower among the nonpoor population, indicating a much better situation.

TABLE 6

Urban Brazil: Diverse Indicators of the Physical Characteristics of Households and Their Possessions, According to 1989 Poverty Levels

Selected Characteristics	Poverty Levels				Probability of Being Indigent	Probability of Being Poor (I + NIP)
	I	NIP	NP	Total		
1. Rustic living conditions	7.56	3.37	0.48	1.91	43.59**	83.42
2. Walls made of <i>taipa</i> , wood scraps, or other materials	12.18	6.21	0.97	3.39	39.61**	80.95
3. Roof made of earth or other materials	4.01	1.05	0.32	0.89	49.67**	76.26
4. Floor made of packed earth or wood scraps	16.65	6.09	0.99	3.87	47.42**	82.95
5. No indoor plumbing	45.88	24.46	5.56	14.27	35.43**	74.11
6. Rudimentary pit, other sewage system, or no sewage system	68.69	49.41	20.16	32.11	23.58**	58.30
7. Nonceramic toilet or no toilet	48.72	23.72	5.30	14.24	37.70**	75.28
8. Trash is not collected	50.72	37.77	12.81	22.62	24.72**	62.39
9. Unpaved streets	66.43	54.02	28.33	38.32	19.12*	50.86
10. No television	49.37	27.92	8.78	17.57	30.97**	66.81
11. No telephone	97.52	95.60	66.31	76.36	14.08	42.32
12. No books	66.69	50.25	25.11	35.37	20.78*	52.84
13. Percentage of illiterate heads of households	44.89	27.11	8.08	16.42	30.15**	67.32

Note: The single asterisk indicates that the percentage of indigents in that category is 1.5 to 2 times the average of the total population. The double asterisk indicates that this relation is more than double the average.

Source: PNSN 1989

(I = indigent; NIP = nonindigent poor; NP = nonpoor)

Tables 7, 8, and 9 allow us to analyze characteristics of the people in these households, primarily those of the heads of the households, that characterize their situations of poverty. The following factors are analyzed: the unfavorable sex-age structure of the household; the extremely low qualifications of household members (based on the very low educational levels of the heads of households); the insufficient number of jobs to maintain the size of the household; and indicators of the quality of the jobs obtained (unstable, without guarantees, and very badly paid).

TABLE 7

**Urban Brazil: Various Indicators of Household Sex-Age Compositions,
According to 1989 Poverty Levels**

Indicators	Poverty Levels				Probability of Being Indigent	Probability of Being Poor (I + NIP)
	I	NIP	NP	Total		
Age distribution						
(1) 0-9	35.87	25.94	18.30	22.69	22.21*	50.90
(2) 10-17	20.86	20.65	14.93	17.20	17.04	47.16
(3) 18-59	37.95	45.66	58.42	52.34	10.19	32.07
(4) 60+	5.33	7.75	8.35	7.77	9.63	34.63
Average number of people per household						
(1) 0-9	1.841	1.165	0.675	0.914	—	—
(2) 10-17	1.071	0.927	0.551	0.693	—	—
(3) 18-59	1.948	2.050	2.155	2.109	—	—
(4) 60+	0.273	0.348	0.308	0.313	—	—
(5) Total	5.137	4.499	3.744	4.068	—	—
Percentage of female heads of households	30.25	23.99	18.95	21.33	15.64	40.96
Nonproductive age people per productive age people ^a	1.64	1.19	0.71	0.91	—	—

^a [(1) + (2) + (4)] / (3).

Note: The single asterisk indicates that the percentage of indigents in that category is 1.5 to 2 times the average of the total population.

Source: PNSN 1989

(I = indigent; NIP = nonindigent poor; NP = nonpoor)

The main idea behind the information provided on the structure of ages can be summarized by the indicator at the bottom of Table 7: the number of people at a normally unproductive age (0-17 years and 60+ years) per person of productive age (18-59 years). This indicator, a basic determinant of the dependency index commonly used by economists, is 1.64 for indigent households and 1.19 for poor households, compared with 0.71 for nonpoor households. The difference in the percentages of female heads of households, by levels of poverty, is another aspect of the disadvantages in the sex-age structure of the households. A large percentage of indigent and nonindigent poor heads of households, more than two-thirds of the former and more than half of the latter, are either illiterate or have had extremely limited schooling (at most they have finished three grades of school) (Table 8). Also, the fact that two out of every three indigent heads of households and 57% of nonindigent poor heads of households are black or *pardos* demonstrates how heavily past disadvantages, combined with discrimination in the present, have weighed in the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Table 3).

TABLE 8

**Urban Brazil: Characteristics of Heads of Households,
According to 1989 Poverty Levels**

Characteristics of Heads of Households	Poverty Levels				Probability of of Being Indigent	Probability of Being Poor (I + NIP)
	I	NIP	NP	Total		
% Illiterate	44.89	27.11	8.08	16.42	30.15*	67.32
Grades completed						
0-3	68.40	51.95	25.71	36.42	20.97*	53.28
4-8	29.25	41.91	44.14	41.98	7.78	30.40
8+	2.35	6.14	30.15	21.60	1.22	7.65
% females	30.25	23.99	18.95	21.33	15.64	40.96
% employed	66.13	77.34	81.81	79.07	9.22	31.25
Type of employment						
wage earners	54.06	64.00	62.55	62.08	8.03	30.74
agricultural workers ^a	10.70	5.08	1.00	2.79	35.37**	75.45
self-employed	33.70	27.99	28.29	28.72	10.82	32.30
employers	1.24	2.59	7.93	6.14	1.87	11.18
unpaid	0.30	0.34	0.24	0.27	10.32	38.24
% heads 40+ who receive retirement or pension benefits	34.41	39.50	43.15	41.40		
% employed in poor occupations ^b	43.39	44.51	22.95	30.06	15.92*	49.26
% employed without a signed workcard	53.22	31.97	20.69	26.26	18.26**	46.79
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	85.22	73.24	45.03	54.22	14.55*	40.75
% Who looked for work						
in the last 4 weeks	16.69	8.63	4.80	6.97	26.39**	54.26
in the last 4 months ^c	9.26	14.10	6.70	8.65	11.81	48.52
have not looked	74.05	77.27	88.50	84.38	9.68	30.30

^a Urban-dwelling agricultural laborers, tenant farmers, and share-croppers

^b See Methodological Appendix.

^c Not including the last four weeks

* and ** See the note under Table 6.

Source: PNSN 1989

Table 8 presents data on the employment of poor heads of households and its 'quality.' The main element to be pointed out concerning occupational position is the high proportion of 'agricultural occupations' (agricultural laborers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers) among poor urban heads of households: more than 10% among indigent heads of households and more

than 5% among other poor heads of households. As we shall see in the second part, these percentages, high for urban populations, are due primarily to the regions of higher economic development. In these regions, agricultural modernization in the last decades has meant the expulsion of traditional forms of labor originally established on the properties and their replacement by *bóias frias*, agricultural proletarians and drifters who live on the outskirts of cities in primary agricultural areas. Tied to unstable or seasonal work, *bóias-frias*, together with other agricultural laborers, have come to represent one in every ten indigent heads of households found in Brazil's cities. Equally significant are the high percentages of heads of households employed in 'poor' occupations (those that pay the lowest wages): above two-fifths for the two levels of poverty as against one-fifth for the nonpoor.

Other indicators from the same table also point to the extreme instability, lack of guarantees and job security for poor heads of households. One in every two indigent heads of households who are employed do not have signed workcards;* for the nonindigent poor, one in every three. It is also estimated that five out of every six indigent heads of households are self-employed and do not pay into any kind of social security system; for the nonindigent poor this percentage is almost three out of every four. The figures on how many people have recently looked for work are a sign of the instability of their jobs. One in four indigent heads of households and more than one in five nonindigent poor heads of households reported that they had looked for work in the last twelve months, as opposed to one in six among the nonpoor.¹⁷

As we consider the data for the combined group of household members (Table 9), other aspects of work and income within the poor sectors of the population become clear. The unfavorable demographic structure of poor households, especially indigent households, combined with the lack of employment and the low qualifications of their members, frequently results in enormous burdens for those members of the household who do work. Among indigent households, more than three-fourths either do not have employed members or have a ratio of three or more unemployed people to every employed person. In the nonindigent poor households this situation of high dependency describes more than one out of every two households, while it is only found in close to one in every three nonpoor households.

* To work legally in Brazil and benefit from the rights guaranteed by the labor code (retirement, sick leave, social security, maternity leave, etc.), a person needs to have his or her workcard, *carteira de trabalho*, legally signed by an employer.—TRANS.

¹⁷ Here we are only considering the act of looking for work, without being concerned with whether the respondent was employed or not or whether he or she found a job or not. Later on, we will analyze statistics on unemployment among all members of the household (Tables 19 and 20). With respect to indigent heads of household, only two out of three were working, and three out of four nonindigent poor heads of households were working; the rest were unemployed or economically inactive.

TABLE 9

Urban Brazil: Work and Income of Household Members, According to 1989 Poverty Levels

Distribution of Households	Poverty Levels				Probability of Being Indigent	Probability of Being Poor (I + NIP)
	I	NIP	NP	Total		
Based on the number of people per employed person:						
0 employed	16.71	10.34	6.58	8.55	21.56*	48.81
up to 3 people	21.84	43.64	66.42	56.37	4.27	21.70
3 or more people	61.45	46.01	27.00	35.08	19.32*	48.85
Based on the type of income of household members:						
Only job income	56.67	49.77	40.38	44.27	13.99	39.25
Only 'other' ^a income	20.72	10.69	6.93	9.28	24.41**	50.28
Job and 'other' income	22.61	39.54	52.69	46.45	5.32	24.45
Based on the employment condition of household members:						
economically inactive only	11.97	9.09	6.14	7.45		
one or more unemployed	27.21	20.46	9.52	13.93		
employed or economically inactive	51.49	58.89	55.27	55.67		
employed only	9.33	11.56	29.07	22.95		
Household averages						
employed	1.285	1.624	1.804	1.706		
unemployed	0.365	0.234	0.104	0.162		
economically inactive	1.642	1.465	1.101	1.243		
Total	3.292	3.322	3.010	3.111		
Average number of people per employed person	3.998	2.771	2.075	2.384		
Average number of people per economically active person	3.114	2.422	1.962	2.177		

^a Retirement, pension, compensation payments, rent, etc.

Note: The single asterisk indicates that the percentage of indigents in that category is 1.5 to 2 times the average of the total population. The double asterisk indicates that this relation is more than double the average.

Source: PNSN 1989

Here I must issue a word of caution. The high percentage of households among the poor population with no employed members or with some members unemployed indicates that we need to distinguish situations of chronic poverty within these populations from other situations such as recent poverty. The latter is a result of periods of unemployment due to economic recession and/or the loss of purchasing power due to the high costs of inflation for salaried workers and those earning from retirement and pension plans. These conditions have been brought about by the prolonged economic stagnation, as well as the deterioration of state finances, that the country has been experiencing since the beginning of the 1980s. This is confirmed by the high averages of unemployed among the members of poor households,¹⁸ in

¹⁸ The data on the average of unemployed people per household is revealing: the value for the

addition to the high percentages within this group of households that have only 'other' income, not earned from employment (Table 9). Notice also the distribution of households according to the employment status of their members. For example, 27% of indigent poor and 20% of nonindigent poor households have at least one unemployed member.

The 'Basic Needs' Approach: The Components of Poverty

In this last section I attempt to discuss, on the basis of other data, the question of the separation of the different subgroups of the poor. Whether the existence of structural or perennial poverty is distinct from more recent forms of poverty (due perhaps to transitory factors) can only be correctly assessed by adequate longitudinal studies. In Part II, I propose to hypothesize the distribution of these component groups across the various regions of the country, on the basis of cross-section data.

The method used to approach this question involved crossing the household poverty levels (indigents, nonindigent poor, and nonpoor) with their positions according to having or not having basic needs satisfied (UBN when they are not met, and SBN when they are met). This indicator, unsatisfied basic needs, was developed as a combination of six variables: four refer to the sanitary conditions of the living space; one refers to the relationship between the house and its members (the number of people per bedroom); and the last is more of a social condition, whether school-age children (7 to 11 years) are in or out of school. A score considered bad on just one of the variables is sufficient to indicate unsatisfied basic needs (UBN); only if the household scores well on all six variables is it considered to have satisfied basic needs (SBN).¹⁹

At this point we divide the households into six categories and compare selected characteristics of heads of households. Notice, in Table 10, that for each characteristic selected, cross-classifying by the UBN/SBN indicator produces a consistent pattern across all three income levels. Thus divided, the SBN subgroups, at each level of poverty and nonpoverty, have lower percentages of illiterate, black and *pardo* heads of households but higher percentages of female heads of households and higher percentages of heads of households who have passed more than three grades of school.²⁰ In summary, at each poverty level, in those households whose basic needs are satisfied the heads are less handicapped and better prepared for work. For

indigent poor households is almost three-and-a-half times greater (more than two times greater for nonindigent poor households) than the average for nonpoor households.

¹⁹ See the Methodological Appendix for more information on the unsatisfied basic needs indicator.

²⁰ The data most difficult to interpret is the greater percentage of female heads of households in the SBN subgroup. Note, however, that when comparing the two levels of poverty the differences between female-headed households with satisfied basic needs and those with unsatisfied basic needs are very small. The percentage difference for nonpoor female-headed households is substantially larger.

TABLE 10

**Urban Brazil: Selected Characteristics of Households and Their Heads,
According to the Intersection of Poverty Levels and the Unsatisfied Basic
Needs Indicator,^a 1989**

Selected Characteristics	Indicator of Basic Needs	Levels of Poverty			Total
		I	NIP	NP	
Number of households (thousands)	UBN	1,503.00	1,707.70	1,624.90	4,835.60
	SBN	1,324.20	4,069.00	15,394.70	20,787.90
% of households in each group	UBN	5.87	6.67	6.34	18.87
	SBN	5.17	15.88	60.08	81.13
% of households with 0 employed persons	UBN	14.42	8.07	3.01	8.34
	SBN	19.10	11.16	6.93	8.53
Characteristics of Heads of Households					
% illiterate	UBN	54.40	35.16	16.56	34.89
	SBN	34.04	23.72	7.19	12.14
% female	UBN	29.92	23.51	13.75	22.22
	SBN	30.71	24.07	19.45	21.07
% black or <i>pardo</i>	UBN	79.33	67.97	51.25	65.88
	SBN	54.92	51.94	28.28	34.61
% employed without a signed workcard	UBN	61.99	37.02	26.33	39.74
	SBN	40.63	29.57	20.07	22.92
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	UBN	88.22	90.74	82.10	86.70
	SBN	81.65	65.65	41.12	47.24
% agricultural workers ^b	UBN	12.92	7.04	3.40	7.32
	SBN	7.71	4.17	0.72	1.71
% have looked for work in the last 12 months ^c	UBN	28.59	30.10	17.03	25.24
	SBN	22.87	19.59	10.92	13.38
% have completed 4 or more grades of school	UBN	21.40	41.79	64.52	43.03
	SBN	43.13	50.63	75.29	68.34

^a See text for more details on the UBN indicator.

^b Urban-dwelling agricultural laborers, tenant farmers, share-croppers

^c Including those who looked for work in the last four weeks

Source: PNSN 1989

instance, blacks and pardos—who are discriminated against in the job market—are underrepresented in the SBN subgroups by comparison with the UBN ones. The jobs performed by SBN heads of households are less unstable and have more social guarantees. This is indicated by the low percentages of agricultural workers, of workers with unsigned workcards, of self-employed workers who do not contribute to any kind of social security fund, and of heads of

households who have looked for work in the last year among the SBN subgroups. Finally, among those households whose basic needs are satisfied, compared to the households whose basic needs are not being satisfied, there are significantly higher percentages of households without any employed members.

All of this points to the fact that at each level of poverty the basic needs indicator separates those households whose situation of indigence or poverty is more extreme (chronic or structural) from those households that are going through difficult but more recent or even transient economic troubles.

The intersection of the poverty (poor/nonpoor) indicator with that for the satisfaction of basic needs (satisfied/unsatisfied) results in four situations, presented here with the total values and percentages for urban Brazil:²¹

Structurally poor—families who are below the poverty line and whose basic needs are unsatisfied: 3.21 million households or 12.53% of the total;

Recent poor—families who are below the poverty line but whose basic needs are satisfied: 5.39 million households or 21.05% of the total;

Poor due to UBN—families who are above the poverty line but whose basic needs are unsatisfied: 1.62 million households or 6.34% of the total;

Nonpoor (strictly defined)—families who are above the poverty line and whose basic needs are satisfied: 15.39 million households or 60.08% of the total.

Part II

I begin the second part of this paper by presenting data concerning the different situations of poverty in the various regions of Brazil. The principal objective is to look for qualitative differences in the poverty of the poorest regions of the country vis-à-vis the most advanced regions, especially as regards the way in which poor populations are linked to the job market. Throughout most of this analysis, I will use the same divisions of indigence and nonindigent poverty. However, we should examine the regional differences in the percentages of structural poverty, recent poverty, and poverty due to UBN.

²¹ The terms used in the text are based, in part, on Carlos Filgueira's study in this series (1994). These terms should be used with caution until we have a more complete knowledge of the nature of the various components of poverty, which would require long-term studies. Note also that in this part of the analysis I am ignoring the distinction between indigence and nonindigent poverty; the size of the sample in the PNSN study with which I am working does not permit me to make such a distinction with confidence. Some additional observations are necessary concerning the calculation of the total values and percentages of the components of poverty. Clearly, these values depend on the same specifications as the variables that go into the basic needs indicator. Among the variables studied by the PNSN, I restricted myself to those needs that seemed indisputably basic. Clearly, I was almost restricting myself to the bare minimum. As a result, the total values and percentages for the 'structural poverty' component (as well as those for the 'poor due to UBN' component) turned out to be lower than they would have been had a more comprehensive concept of basic necessities been used.

Examination of the data in Table 11 shows that the social situation is dramatically worse in the North, Center-West, and Northeast than in the Southeast and the South of the country. This justifies dividing the data for the regional analysis into these two groupings.

TABLE 11

**Percentage of Households According to Situations of Poverty,^a
Urban Regions, 1989**

Urban Regions	Households According to Situations of Poverty				Total
	Structural	Recent	Due to UBN	Nonpoor (strictly defined)	
North & Center-West					
Thousands	547.10	639.50	203.90	1,313.80	2,704.30
%	20.23	23.65	7.54	48.58	100.00
Northeast					
Thousands	1,230.50	1,463.20	317.80	2,019.90	5,031.20
%	24.45	29.08	6.32	40.15	100.00
Southeast					
Thousands	1,167.60	2,678.10	921.20	9,169.70	13,936.50
%	8.38	19.22	6.61	65.80	100.00
South					
Thousands	265.80	612.30	181.90	2,891.40	3,951.40
%	6.73	15.50	4.60	73.17	100.00
Brazil					
Thousands	3,210.70	5,393.10	1,624.90	15,394.70	25,623.40
%	12.53	21.05	6.34	60.08	100.00

^a See the text.

Source: PNSN 1989

Levels of Poverty in the Two Regions

Observe not only that the percentage levels of poor (indigent and nonindigent) from the two parts of the country differ markedly (as we saw in Table 4), but also that the very separation of the poor into two components—structural poverty and more recent poverty—results in very different percentages across the two regions. The relationship of structural poverty to more recent poverty is 0.86% and 0.84% in the North/Center-West and the Northeast, respectively, and 0.44% and 0.43% in the Southeast and the South. Also, the percentages in the 'poverty due to UBN' column are quite distinct from the percentages in the nonpoor column in these two parts of the country. The corresponding numbers are 0.16% for the two poorest regions and

0.10 and 0.06% for the Southeast and the South.²² It seems plausible to assume that the structural component of poverty is less variable than the total set of poor families, though this hypothesis should be tested by comparing observations over time.

We return now to the analysis based on the indigence and nonindigent poverty lines, beginning—as we did for the analysis of urban Brazil as a whole—with some general data, which are presented separately for the two parts of urban Brazil in Tables 12 and 13.²³

TABLE 12

Percentage Distribution of Households, People, Children, and Black and *Pardo* Heads of Households, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Central-Northern Urban Region

	P o v e r t y L e v e l s				%	Total (thousands)
	I	NIP	Total Poor (I + NIP)	NP		
North/Center-West						
Households	13.43	30.17	43.60	56.40	100.00	2,725.4
People	16.24	33.13	49.37	50.63	100.00	12,222.8
Children 0–3 years old	22.98	34.31	57.28	42.72	100.00	1,206.3
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	16.11	35.03	51.14	48.86	100.00	1,651.9
Northeast						
Households	22.97	30.55	53.52	46.48	100.00	5,048.3
People	29.43	29.68	59.11	40.89	100.00	23,307.1
Children 0–3 years old	40.81	27.55	68.36	31.64	100.00	2,203.2
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	25.83	32.02	57.86	42.14	100.00	3,853.6
GCNR: North/Center-West/Northeast						
Households	19.62	30.42	50.04	49.96	100.00	7,773.7
People	24.89	30.87	55.76	44.24	100.00	35,529.9
Children 0–3 years old	34.50	29.94	64.44	35.56	100.00	3,409.5
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	22.92	32.92	55.84	44.16	100.00	5,505.6

Source: PNSN 1989

²² The responsibility of regional government agencies to provide urban infrastructure (water, sewage, room for students in public schools) greatly affects the variables that enter into the unsatisfied basic needs indicator that was used. The capacity of government agencies varies from region to region, adding to the different relations between chronic poverty and recent poverty in each region. All of this said, the important point remains that there does exist a difference in the characterization of poverty in these different regions.

²³ I am arguing that the data justify dividing Brazil's urban population into two main geographical groupings and making an overall distinction between them in terms of economic development and prevalence and nature of poverty: The area with significantly more poverty and lower economic development I will call the Greater Central-Northern Region or GCNR; this comprises the North, Center-West, and Northeast of the country (including the vast central hinterlands). The more economically advanced area, where poverty is both less prevalent and less severe, I will call the Greater Southern Region or GSR; this comprises the Southeast and the South.

TABLE 13

Percentage Distribution of Households, People, Children, and Black and *Pardo* Heads of Households, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Southern Urban Region

	P o v e r t y L e v e l s				%	Total (thousands)
	I	NIP	Total Poor (I + NIP)	NP		
Southeast						
Households	7.49	20.07	27.57	72.43	100.00	13,949.6
People	8.41	23.07	31.48	68.52	100.00	53,988.6
Children 0-3 years old	16.87	28.82	45.70	54.30	100.00	4,259.8
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	13.42	30.76	44.19	55.81	100.00	4,380.0
South						
Households	6.61	15.60	22.22	77.78	100.00	3,963.2
People	7.81	17.36	25.17	74.83	100.00	14,964.4
Children 0-3 years old	11.56	22.21	33.78	66.22	100.00	1,209.9
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	14.13	22.83	36.96	63.04	100.00	519.0
GSR: (Southeast/South)						
Households	7.30	19.09	26.38	73.62	100.00	17,912.8
People	8.28	21.83	30.11	69.89	100.00	68,953.0
Children 0-3 years old	15.70	27.36	43.06	56.94	100.00	5,469.7
Black and <i>pardo</i> heads	13.50	29.92	43.42	56.58	100.00	4,898.9

Source: PNSN 1989

These data do not require a lot of commentary. They serve to delineate the analysis that follows. The most important statistics reveal that almost two out of every three urban children in the Greater Central-Northern region (the North, Center-West, and Northeast) are poor and that close to one in every five households is indigent. In the Southeastern and Southern regions, slightly less than two out of every five urban children are poor and only one household in every fourteen is indigent. Almost three-fifths (58%) of all indigent Brazilian children live in the largest underdeveloped region of the country, which has less than one-third of all the country's urban households but 54% of the total indigent households.

Household Sizes

Another important fact that stems from this unequal distribution of households and people at the various levels of poverty has to do with the size of households. Households in the Greater Central-Northern Region, as might be expected, tend to be significantly larger than those

in the Greater Southern Region: average 4.6 compared to 4.0 persons per household. This difference is related as much to the higher birth rate in that region as to the larger percentage of households containing more than one family. However, upon analyzing the size of the households according to the different levels of poverty, we found that the greatest difference in the number of persons per household is between the poor households of the two greater regions, especially between the indigent households for which there is an average difference of almost one-and-a-half persons (the GCNR averages 5.8 persons per indigent household as opposed to GSR average 4.4). The difference for the nonpoor households is small (4.0 and 3.7 persons per household, respectively). The regional difference in sizes of poor and indigent households is more significant than the uniformity of household size found in the upper income strata. Not only are the percentages of poor and indigent people higher in Brazil's less developed region, but what it means to be poor or indigent in this region is different from the other.

Household Structure

I now move to the analysis of the family household structure in the two greater regions of Brazil (Table 14). The data from Table 14 reveal the composition of poor urban households based on their family structures. In the two greater regions the majority of households (52% in the GCNR and 58% in the GSR) are composed of young and middle-aged families, their children, and sometimes another person.

When we compare the percentages of each type of urban poor family structure in more detail, a difference emerges between the two regions. To characterize this, we call attention to two apparently unrelated facts. The first is the larger percentage of multifamily households and elderly families whose adult children still live at home (multi and E1 types) among the poor urban populations of the GCNR. There, these households together account for 22% of the total number of poor urban households, compared to 15% in the GSR. The other fact is the greater percentage among the urban poor of the GSR of couples with children (C1 and C2) together with families headed by young single females with young children (W1).

Note, first, that the two most commonly found types of family structures (after C1 and C2) among the urban poor in the GCNR are, in reality, variants of the same situation—one that joins together people from two generations in the same household, sons and daughters, with their parents (one of them or both). When these second generation adults do not have their own children, the family is categorized as an E1 household; when the adult sons and/or daughters do have their own children, the household type becomes multifamily.²⁴ This, therefore, is related to

²⁴ One study of multifamily households showed that the most commonly found situation was where the head of the secondary family was the son or daughter or parent of the head of the primary household.

the lower percentages among the poor from the GCNR of couples with children and of young single women with children living as separate units; here they would very often be found as part of a multifamily household.²⁵ Lastly, it is important to note that this family structure, whether it be a holdover of traditional living patterns and/or a deliberate survival strategy, seeks to share difficult living conditions and to protect its members against unemployment and the special difficulties that come from the advanced age of certain family members.

TABLE 14

**Family Structure of Households in the Greater Urban Regions of Brazil
(GCNR and GSR), 1989**

Family Structures ^a	Households				Probability of Being Poor
	Poor	%	Total	%	
GCNR: North, Center-West, and Northeast					
S	14,554	0.37	167,977	2.16	8.66
C0	65,362	1.68	287,081	3.69	22.77
C1	889,109	22.86	1,698,828	21.85	52.34*
C2	1,141,055	29.33	2,283,473	29.37	49.97*
E1	395,570	10.17	742,423	9.55	53.28*
E2	263,756	6.78	443,762	5.71	59.44*
Other	138,706	3.57	475,143	6.11	29.19
Multi	448,935	11.54	786,705	10.12	57.07*
W1	141,868	3.65	235,385	3.03	60.27*
W2	391,283	10.06	652,928	8.40	59.93*
Total	3,890,198	100.00	7,773,705	100.00	50.04
GSR: Southeast and South					
S	5,674	0.12	299,731	1.67	1.89
C0	69,931	1.48	667,202	3.72	10.48
C1	1,184,552	25.06	3,750,575	20.94	31.58*
C2	1,547,894	32.75	6,189,169	34.55	25.01
E1	289,673	6.13	1,338,487	7.47	21.64*
E2	274,160	5.80	1,035,466	5.78	26.48*
Other	240,729	5.09	1,466,926	8.19	16.41
Multi	419,621	8.88	1,378,955	7.70	30.43*
W1	215,097	4.55	364,475	2.03	59.02*
W2	478,802	10.13	1,421,846	7.94	33.67*
Total	4,726,133	100.00	17,912,832	100.00	26.38

^a See footnote 11.

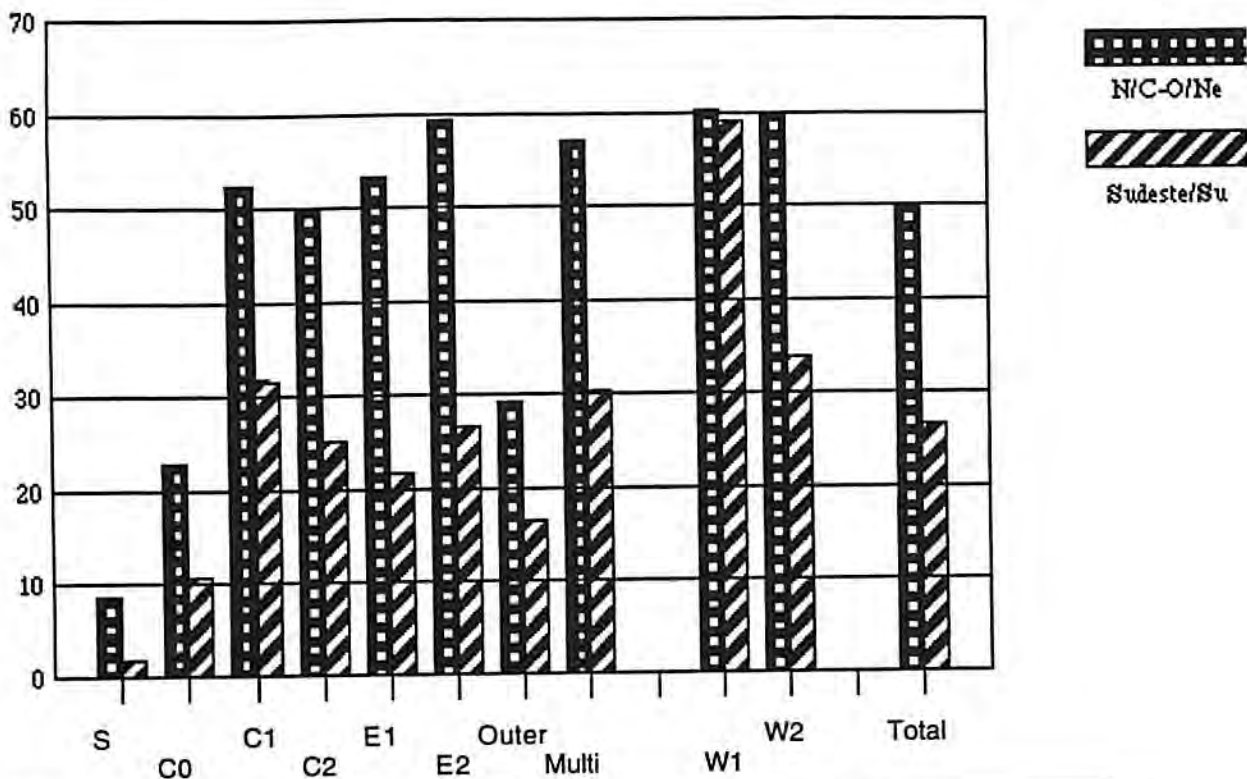
Note: The single asterisk indicates that the percentage of indigents in that category is 1.5 to 2 times the average of the total population.

Source: PNSN 1989

²⁵ Observation: the larger average size of the poor urban household in the GCNR, shown above, should be related to the greater prevalence in this region of these types of family units.

Figure 2

**Probability of Being Poor, Based on Family Structures,
Greater Urban Regions, 1989**



Vertical axis = Probability of Being Poor

Horizontal axis = Family Structures (See footnote 11)

N/C-O/Ne = North/Center-West/Northeast (GCNR)

Sudeste/Su = Southeast/South (GSR)

Examining the probabilities of being poor in Figure 2, we notice that there are more pronounced differences among family types in the GSR than in the GCNR (notice, for example, the curve formed by the sequence of the probabilities of C1, C2, E1, and E2, or by the W1, W2 pair). This difference is partially a result of the higher percentage of multifamily households among the urban poor of the GCNR. If these compound families were considered separately, the probability of being poor would be even greater for the C1 and W1 groups (young couples with small children and young women with small children).

Table 15 furnishes data for the different levels of poverty within both greater regions on certain physical and sanitary characteristics of urban living conditions, as well as the presence of books and televisions in each household. We need to point out the major differences in living conditions among the indigent and nonindigent populations between the two regions. The

percentages of these wretched conditions in the GCNR are almost always more than double the percentages for the GSR. Looking at the sanitary conditions, items three and four, among the nonindigent poor populations, we see that the percentages in the GCNR are frequently much more than double those for the GSR.

TABLE 15

Physical Living Conditions, Sanitary Conditions, and Possessions, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Urban Regions (GCNR and GSR)

Selected Characteristics	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
GCNR: North/Center-West/Northeast				
1. Walls of <i>taipa</i> , wood scraps, or other materials	6.01	8.96	1.76	6.76
2. Floor of packed earth or wood scraps	23.06	10.28	2.41	8.88
3. No indoor plumbing	58.37	40.05	13.89	31.84
4. Nonceramic toilet or no toilet	64.36	42.89	13.15	32.30
5. No television	58.67	40.30	15.16	31.39
6. No books	73.69	59.93	30.42	47.94
GSR: Southeast/South				
1. Walls of <i>taipa</i> , wood scraps, or other materials	7.71	4.32	0.74	1.93
2. Floor of packed earth or wood scraps	9.17	3.21	0.58	1.71
3. No indoor plumbing	31.31	10.95	3.13	6.68
4. Nonceramic toilet or no toilet	30.47	10.50	3.01	6.44
5. No television	38.53	19.38	6.92	11.60
6. No books	58.55	43.57	23.56	29.94

Source: PNSN 1989

As I did in the analysis of urban Brazil as a whole, I move now to examine certain demographic and economic conditions of urban poverty. I will limit my observations to showing the main regional differences and, when possible, their broader significance. I start with Table 16 and data on the demographic structure of households.

The data that stand out most in this table in terms of regional differences confirm our analysis of the data in Tables 12 and 13. That is, the enormous disadvantage inherent in the age structure of the indigent population of the GCNR, compared with the indigent population GSR.

TABLE 16

**Various Indicators of Household Sex-Age Composition, According to 1989
Poverty Levels, Greater Urban Regions (GCNR and GSR)**

Indicators of Sex-Age Composition	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
GCNR: North/Center-West/Northeast				
Average number of people/household				
(1) 0-9	2.100	1.168	0.779	1.157
(2) 10-17	1.324	0.927	0.605	0.844
(3) 18-59	2.059	2.082	2.228	2.151
(4) 60+	0.312	0.440	0.324	0.357
Total	5.797	4.638	4.048	4.571
% female heads of households	25.600	26.460	20.26 0	23.200
% nonproductive age people per productive age person ^a	1.814	1.217	0.767	1.096
GSR: Southeast/South				
Average number of people/household				
(1) 0-9	1.539	1.163	0.645	0.809
(2) 10-17	0.775	0.927	0.535	0.627
(3) 18-59	1.818	2.027	2.134	2.091
(4) 60+	0.228	0.284	0.303	0.294
Total	4.367	4.404	3.654	3.849
% Female heads of households	35.680	22.270	18.570	20.520
% nonproductive age people per productive age person ^a	1.399	1.171	0.695	0.828

^a [(1) + (2) + (4)] / (3)

Source: PNSN 1989

Observe also the much larger average size of indigent households and the much smaller percentage of female heads of households in the GCNR. These factors are undoubtedly related to the greater prevalence in this region of compound family units, defined by the family structure data in Table 14.

In our previous analysis of Table 14, we suggested that these forms of household family structures, were 'defenses' against economic insecurity—the lack of unemployment and social security.²⁶ I wonder whether these strategies of sharing the burdens are really successful in

²⁶ We should explain the reference to the lack of social security. I refer to the present situation in which the lack of jobs in companies forces individuals to take jobs without legal guarantees, without a work card and with no contributions to social welfare, or become self-employed, with a lower salary and little chance of legally making voluntary contributions to social welfare.

improving living conditions or whether they are self-defeating. I also wonder how this could be expressed by the indicators I have been using here. Perhaps consumption indicators, which are already very low, would decline further. Unemployment indicators might drop but indicators of inactivity might go up.

Regional Characteristics of Heads of Households

Some of these variables can be discerned in Tables 17 and 18, where I focus on the regional differences of the characteristics of heads of households and their work. Tables 19 and 20 focus on the combined work and income of all the household members, according to poverty levels. In these four tables, I include data on the urban populations of all the regions separately, rather than aggregated into the two greater regions, so as to bring out some internal regional differences that in specific cases may be important. As examples of this, I call the reader's attention to the extremely high degree of illiteracy among the Northeastern heads of indigent households (59%), not even close to the rate of any other region; the high percentage of agricultural workers (17%) among Southeastern heads of indigent households (at a higher level than any other region); and the percentage of retirees and old-age pensioners among indigent households—among people forty years of age and older, the percentage is especially high in the South (47%) and low in the Northeast (30%).

The nonindigent poor households for the same regions generally reflect the same percentage differences as the indigent households, but to a lesser degree: higher illiteracy among Northeastern heads of households (45%); a higher rate of agricultural workers among Southeastern heads (6%) than those of the Northeast and North/Center-West, though in this case an equally high rate is shared by Southern heads of households (7%); an especially high rate of retired people or pensioners, forty and older, in the South (50%), followed by a high rate in the Northeast as well (49%).

TABLE 17

Characteristics of Heads of Households, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Central-Northern Urban Region (GCNR)

Selected Characteristics of Heads of Households	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
	North and Center-West			
% illiterate	36.20	23.54	7.30	16.80
% employed	68.51	81.48	88.89	83.92
Type of employment				
wage earners	56.95	59.79	57.58	58.16
agricultural workers	7.72	4.35	2.40	3.55
self-employed	34.28	34.45	30.74	32.21
employer or unpaid	1.05	1.41	9.29	6.08
% employees without signed workcards	52.46	37.90	32.45	36.39
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	85.99	82.12	55.06	65.61
% looked for work in the last 12 months ^a	27.02	19.18	12.50	16.46
	Northeast			
% illiterate	58.65	44.64	17.32	35.16
% employed	70.40	70.26	79.96	74.80
Type of employment				
wage earners	54.91	52.72	51.79	52.74
agricultural workers	6.99	2.40	1.38	2.89
self-employed	37.25	42.89	39.35	39.91
employer or unpaid	0.85	1.99	7.48	4.46
% employed without a signed workcard	55.59	46.86	29.74	40.69
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	87.13	85.87	59.03	72.05
% looked for work in the last 12 months ^a	25.09	16.69	8.81	14.95

^a Including those who looked for work in the last four weeks
Source: PNSN 1989

TABLE 18

Characteristics of Heads of Households, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Southern Urban Region (GSR)

Selected Characteristics of Heads of Households	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
Southeast				
% illiterate	34.09	19.94	6.65	11.37
% employed	65.50	81.61	81.01	79.97
Type of employment				
wage earners	49.80	69.58	67.01	66.48
agricultural workers	17.38	6.13	0.57	2.74
self-employed	29.98	20.12	24.86	24.21
employer or unpaid	2.83	4.17	7.55	6.57
% employees without a signed workcard	49.54	25.15	18.45	21.77
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	82.04	59.60	41.54	46.02
% looked for work in the last 12 months ^a	26.53	26.45	12.05	16.03
South				
% illiterate	39.17	20.58	6.10	10.55
% employed	46.47	70.12	82.30	78.03
Type of employment				
wage earners	66.33	69.27	58.77	60.54
agricultural worker	4.05	7.37	1.32	2.28
self-employed	29.62	22.21	29.82	28.75
employer or unpaid	0.00	1.14	10.08	8.43
% employees without a signed workcard	60.45	33.78	16.74	21.60
% who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	86.65	66.20	40.31	44.05
% looked for work in the last 12 months ^a	25.96	25.77	11.24	14.48

^a Including those who looked for work in the last four weeks.

Source: PNSN 1989

TABLE 19

Work and Income of Household Members, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Central-Northern Urban Region (GCNR)

Work and Income of Household Members	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
North and Center-West				
% households with 0 employed persons	16.90	7.17	2.53	5.86
Number of people per employed person	4.02	2.66	2.12	2.48
Household distribution based on type of income				
only job income	47.69	47.55	47.42	47.50
only 'other' income ^a	18.62	7.52	2.93	6.41
job and 'other' income	33.68	44.94	49.64	46.10
% people unemployed 10+ years	9.86	5.55	3.28	4.93
% heads of households 40+ receiving retirement or pension funds	40.13	33.27	28.04	31.57
Northeast				
% households with 0 employed persons	19.10	15.97	7.04	12.54
Number of people per employed person	4.22	2.87	2.28	2.84
Household distribution based on type of income				
only job income	61.58	52.36	48.26	52.55
only 'other' income ^a	20.49	16.15	7.52	13.13
job and 'other' income	17.93	31.49	44.22	34.32
% people unemployed 10+ years	9.72	5.15	4.04	5.80
% heads of households 40+ receiving retirement or pension funds	30.04	49.36	43.57	42.35

^a Retirement, pension, compensations payments, rent, etc.

Source: PNSN 1989

TABLE 20

Work and Income of Household Members, According to 1989 Poverty Levels, Greater Southern Urban Region (GSR)

Work and Income of Household Members	P o v e r t y L e v e l s			Total
	I	NIP	NP	
Southeast				
% households with 0 employed persons	10.22	6.49	6.99	7.13
Number of people per employed person	3.55	2.72	2.04	2.25
Household distribution based on type of income				
only job income	58.97	52.62	39.55	43.60
only 'other' income ^a	18.66	6.87	7.35	8.09
job and 'other' income	22.38	40.51	53.10	48.31
% people unemployed 10+ years	13.14	8.41	3.34	5.10
% heads of households 40+ receiving retirement or pension funds	34.11	32.05	45.10	42.04
South				
% households with 0 employed persons	31.70	17.96	6.93	10.29
Number of people per employed person	4.83	2.99	2.01	2.24
Household distribution based on type of income				
only job income	38.52	33.45	33.61	33.91
Only 'other' income ^a	32.71	18.36	7.09	10.54
Job and 'other' income	28.77	48.18	59.30	55.54
% people unemployed 10+ years	12.93	7.63	3.12	4.50
% heads of households 40+ receiving retirement or pension funds	46.67	50.04	42.57	44.03
^a Retirement, pension, compensation payments, rent, etc. Source: PNSN 1989				

Work and Income

Analysis of the work and income of heads of households and other household members reveals more regional heterogeneity than can be seen from overall percentages of indigents and nonindigent poor, poverty in its chronic and recent components, or demographic and family structures. The Northeast and Southeast contain, respectively, the largest numbers of households and people within the GCNR and GSR. Taking the Northeast and Southeast as representative of the two greater regions for the moment, we notice that they contrast sharply in the number of indigent poor and nonindigent poor households and in the number of 'structurally' poor versus 'recently' poor (See Tables 11, 12, and 13).

The differences are reflected in the physical and sanitary characteristics of each household, as well as in their demographic and family structures of each household. Additionally, we observe how the indigent and poor populations are distinctly linked to the job market in each of these regions. Particularly in the Northeast, the poor—and specially the indigent poor—are clearly marginalized in a job market that is itself poor and segmented.

Examining the data on urban indigent and nonindigent poor heads of households (Tables 17 and 18), the higher percentage of self-employed workers in the Northeast stands out in contrast to the numbers for the Southeast, at both levels of poverty. The Southeast, on the other hand, shows higher percentages of wage earners, including agricultural workers. The kind of self-employment the Northeastern worker engages in should be considered in relation to the very high regional percentages of illiterate heads of households and their lack of contribution to social services (in contrast to lower percentages for the Southeast). What kind of self-employment do these these workers engage in? This can be inferred from the high percentages of heads of households who are illiterate, do not have a signed work card, and are not covered by social security. These proportions are systematically higher in the Northeast than in the Southeast.

Data on the combined income and work of household members bring together information that permits us to contrast further the urban poverty of the Northeast with that of the Southeast. Thus, on one hand, at both levels of poverty, the percentage of households where no one is employed is greater in the Northeast. On the other hand, the overall percentage of unemployed people is lower in the Northeast than in the Southeast. Taking these two pieces of information together, it seems clear that the rates of inactivity must be higher in the Northeast. In the latter region, there is a higher percentage of households whose income is classified as 'other' (retirement and pension funds, rents, etc.) rather than income from work. In the Southeast there is a higher percentage of households that bring in both job income and income from other origins. If household members are able to supplement their job incomes with even the smallest amount of

other income from retirement and pension funds or rent, it may make all the difference among not being poor, being nonindigent poor, or living in misery.

Given the data on heads of households as well as on other household members, we conclude that the main difference between the two regions is that the labor market in the Northeast, when compared to that of the Southeast, offers fewer jobs, suffers from a shortage of the better jobs, is more unstable, more informal, and offers less social security coverage. The lack of job opportunities in the Northeast leads to all sorts of alternative or informal income generation such as moonlighting and self-employment, as well as (mainly in nonindigent poor households) economic inactivity supported by small retirement and pension benefits.

The North/Center-West presents a picture of urban poverty similar to that of the Northeast, though somewhat ameliorated (Tables 11 and 12). The situation in the South is more complex. This region has relatively low percentages of indigents and nonindigent poor and of chronic versus more recent poverty; these figures are comparable to those of the Southeast and even slightly lower (Tables 11 and 13). However, the poverty *traits*—shortage of jobs, insufficient labor legislation coverage, and limited access to social welfare benefits—of the urban poor in the South are similar to those of the urban poor in the Northeast. The retired poor in the South, on the other hand, seem to fare considerably better than their counterparts in the Northeast, as indicated by the higher percentage of households that receive both wages and 'other' income.²⁷

Summary

Development of Poverty Rates

1) The percentage of poor in Brazil as a whole (both urban and rural populations) decreased from 1960 to 1980, from a little more than 40% to a little less than 25%. During the 1980s, the poverty rate fluctuated with economic conditions, almost reaching the two extremes of the previous decades. The recession at the beginning of the 1980s raised the rate to the 1960

²⁷ These data are for indigent households in the urban regions of the South and Northeast:

	South	Northeast
Number of people per employed person:	4.83	4.22
Percentage of households with zero employed people:	31.70	19.10
Percentage of employed heads of households without workcards:	60.45	55.59
Percentage of self-employed heads of household who don't contribute to social welfare (estimated):	79.80	83.29
The percentage of households having income resulting both from work and from other sources places the urban indigent population of the South in a better situation than that of the same population in the Northeast:	28.77	17.93

level, but the boom of 1986 returned it to the 1980 level. In 1988, amid economic deterioration, the poverty level again rose to slightly more than 40%.

2) The changes in the percentage of poor people living in metropolitan areas likewise accompanied the economic fluctuations of the last decade. However, there were significant variations by region. The extremely high poverty rates in the Northern and Northeastern metropolitan areas (much higher than 50%) contrast with rates in the Southeast (generally 20–30%) and even more with rates in the South (frequently lower than 20%).

Urban Brazil: A Profile of Poor Households in 1989

3) One-third of all urban households have incomes below the poverty line (8.6 million households); and one in every three of these has an income below the indigence line.²⁸ Within these poor households live almost 41 million people, almost 40% of the total urban population and more than half of all children zero to three years of age (51%). Levels of indigence and poverty in the poorest regions of the country (North, Center-West, and Northeast) are higher, 54% and 41%, than in urban Brazil as a whole, 30%. Also, black and *pardo* populations are over-represented among poor households; two-thirds of the indigent households in these regions are headed by blacks or *pardos*.

4) Poverty is associated with certain family structures and with specific phases of the life cycle of the family. In other words, households with certain family structures have a higher probability of being poor or indigent than the urban average. These households are young couples with children; elderly men, women, and couples with no dependents; multifamily groups; and, above all, young single women with small children.

5) Rustic living conditions are still found among a significant minority of the poor urban population, especially among indigent households. More serious are the indicators of extremely unsanitary conditions found in more than 50% of urban indigent households and in one-fourth to one-half of the nonindigent poor households.

6) Other indicators (illiteracy, absence of television, telephone, or books) show that for the vast majority of the urban indigent population and for a large proportion, although not the majority, of nonindigent poor, the world is narrow and confining, limited to face-to-face contacts within the neighborhood. This is aggravated by precarious working conditions, unemployment, or economic inactivity.

7) Associated with urban indigence and poverty are specific demographic, economic, and social characteristics. We begin with the household age structure, which is very unfavorable. Indigent households have, on average, three times more children younger than ten years old,

²⁸ See the Methodological Appendix for more information on poverty and indigence lines.

and nonindigent poor households have nearly twice the number of children that nonpoor households have. In both situations of poverty there are significantly fewer people of working age, as well as higher percentages of female-headed households.

8) Qualifications for work, indicated by educational levels and by the characteristics of the job held by the head of the household, reflect a highly unfavorable situation for poor workers, whether they are indigent or not. We underscore the data on indigent households where all of the differences are much more pronounced: two-thirds of these heads of households are illiterate or have completed only up to three grades of school. Consistent with this is the fact that more than 40% of indigent and nonindigent poor heads of households are employed in jobs that pay very little: 'poor' occupations.²⁹ Among indigent heads of households only 66% are employed, compared with 77% nonindigent poor heads of households and 82% nonpoor heads of households, and there is a much greater percentage of indigent heads of households who are economically inactive. Among those who are employed, urban employment accounts for 54%, self-employed workers make up 34%, and agricultural workers (in general, *bóias-frias*, who live in urban areas) represent 11%.

9) Employment among poor heads of households, both indigent and nonindigent, is much more unstable than employment for the nonpoor. This is indicated by the high percentage among these heads of households who looked for work in the past year: one in every four indigent heads of households and more than one in every five nonindigent poor heads of households. For nonpoor heads of households, only slightly more than one in ten looked for work. Additionally, employment for these two poor groups is very insecure: very few are protected by the guarantees of labor legislation or social welfare; more than half of the indigent heads of households who are employed do not have workcards; and more than 85% of those who are self-employed do not contribute to social welfare.

10) The uncertain situation of employment and income becomes ever clearer when we focus on all the members of poor urban households (indigent and nonindigent) and not solely on the heads of households. Indigent households, due to the number of nonproductive members and the high rates of inactivity and unemployment, have on average almost double the number of people per employed person that nonpoor households have. For nonindigent poor households, this ratio is one-third higher than nonpoor households. The type of occupation and the manner in which other incomes combine with regular employment income distinguish poor households from nonpoor households, at each level. In more than half of indigent households and more than two-fifths of nonindigent households, occupants are usually employed in jobs that pay very little. Finally, in nonpoor households, a total household income that combines both job incomes and

²⁹ For more information on 'poor' occupations, see the Methodological Appendix. See also Figueiredo et al. (1990).

'other' incomes is more prevalent than in poor and indigent poor households: 53% of nonpoor households compared with 40% of nonindigent poor households and only 23% of indigent households.

The Basic Needs Approach: Components of Poverty

11) Two groups were compared, one with unsatisfied basic needs (UBN) and the other with satisfied basic needs (SBN).³⁰ We observed that SBN heads of households showed lower levels of certain characteristics associated with poverty than UBN heads of households at the same income level. That is, there was less illiteracy and low levels of schooling; there were lower percentages of blacks, *pardos*, and agricultural workers; and there were fewer employees without signed workcards, fewer self-employed workers who don't contribute to social welfare, and less people looking for work. On the other hand, among these same heads of households with satisfied basic needs (SBN), there were higher percentages of households in which no one was employed. These two factors seem to signal that the UBN/SBN indicator separates the components of a more transient poverty from those of chronic poverty, at both the indigent and nondigent levels. From this separation, came the idea of utilizing the intersection of poor/nonpoor, according to who is below or above the poverty line, in conjunction with the UBN/SBN indicator, and thus the development of four categories that describe four situations of poverty/nonpoverty: structural poverty, more recent poverty, poverty due to UBN, and nonpoor (in the strict sense). The total percentages of urban Brazil in these four categories are, respectively, 13%, 21%, 6%, and 60% of all households.

12) Percentage variations in the distribution of poor households can occur throughout the various situations of poverty as a result of two types of processes.³¹ These variations may be the results of changes in per capita household income (rising or falling mobility) or changes in the availability of public equipment (to provide indoor plumbing, sewage services, and schools). For example, the rise (or fall) in per capita household income, all other things being equal, changes the percentage among the structurally poor and the nonpoor. However, even without changes in per capita household income, if public agencies would opt to increase municipal infrastructure (sewage and water services), the number of school classrooms, and the availability of housing more rapidly than the growth of the urban population, these actions would serve to decrease the percentage of 'poor with UBN' relative to the nonpoor. It is possible that some decrease in this ratio may have occurred due to the process of democratization that Brazil experienced in the

³⁰ For more on the UBN/SBN indicator, see the Methodological Appendix.

³¹ Or, clearly, from the combination of the two processes.

1980s, among other factors.³² In order to fully understand the impact of these processes and their combinations on the changing magnitude and structure of poverty, it will be necessary to conduct research, for instance, panel studies, over long periods of time.

The Regional Differences of Urban Poverty

13) In addition to the sheer magnitude of poverty, the percentage distributions of its various components demonstrate an overall difference between the social situation experienced in the GCNR (North/Center-West and Northeast) and that in the GSR (Southeast and South). The relation of structural poverty to recent poverty is 0.86 and 0.84 in the North/Center-West and the Northeast, and 0.44 and 0.43 in the Southeast and the South. Also, the ratio of 'poverty due to UBN' to nonpoor is different: 0.16 for the two poorest regions and 0.10 and 0.06 for the Southeast and the South.

14) When the social conditions of poverty are analyzed in their diverse aspects, from the least developed to the most developed parts of the country, quantitative differences become apparent. The percentages of indigents and poor are much higher in the Center-West, the North, and the Northeast (GCNR) and their living conditions are much worse. Whichever aspect of poverty is focused on, the differences between the two parts of Brazil are so extreme that it becomes apparent to all analysts that two different planes of poverty exist. As a telling instance: in the Greater Central-Northern region, two-thirds of all children between the ages of zero and three are poor, while in the Greater Southern region this figure is 43%.

To underscore this point, I cite data for indigent populations in both regions of Brazil: indicators of sanitary conditions (lack of indoor plumbing or a toilet) and social isolation (lack of books and television). In the GCNR the percentage of indigent households living under the conditions described by these indicators varies from 58% to 74%, while in GSR the corresponding percentages range from 30% to 59%. The analysis of the family structures of poor households in both greater regions revealed the same kind of percentage gap between the GCNR and the GSR: the former has a much higher percentage of multifamily units where people from two or more generations live together. Through this type of living situation, these families share the hardships of social conditions, protecting each other from the difficulties of unemployment and the advance of old age. Combining this family arrangement with other pronounced sociodemographic differences, specifically among indigent households, from the

³² This point was suggested by Vilmar Faria in a discussion of the first version of this work. It seems to me less probable that such a provision, at least in the short term, has provoked a decrease in the number of structurally poor relative to the number of more recent poor. If it were verified that this decrease occurred to a significant degree, the very term 'recent poverty' would be called into question.

rest of the country, we get a clearer picture of the distinct character of indigence and poverty in the poorest region of Brazil. In this region we find larger household sizes, together with a much lower percentage of households headed by women, and a much more unfavorable age structure.

15) We looked at the conditions and types of activities performed by urban heads of households, as well as the employment and income of other household members older than ten years of age. This revealed greater heterogeneity of poverty among the various urban regions of the country, making it more difficult to keep the contrast only at the level of the two greater regions. However, the contrast remains striking if we compare the Northeast with the Southeast. In this comparison, keeping only the general trends in mind, I concluded that the main difference between the two regions is the greater lack of job opportunities in the formal sector in the Northeast, not adequately compensated by alternative sources of income in the informal sector. Pension funds and retirement income, in part resulting from job experience in the past, are also far worse in the Northeast.

Methodological Appendix

Indigence and Poverty Lines

My point of departure for the determination of the indigence and poverty lines for the urban regions of Brazil were the lines defined by Sonia Rocha (1991, 36) for metropolitan regions. The basic data that Rocha used were from the *National Study of Family Expenses* (ENDEF), from 1974 to 1975. A few citations from Sonia Rocha's work specify her procedures. She informs us: "Recognizing the different consumption structures of each metropolitan area, the study chose the 'consumer market basket' as the basic indicator for each metropolitan region's low income populations." This was done, using "the nutritional levels of consumption of the bottom 20% of the ENDEF family expenditure distribution and Engel's coefficient of the bottom 40%."³³ "Prices were linked to different consumer items [using the IBGE's consumer price index], for each year and each metropolitan region, with the object of explicitly accounting for the different changes in the cost of living at each local level, within the poverty line values."

I calculated the values of the indigence and poverty lines for the urban populations of each region, on the basis of the values provided by Sonia Rocha for the metropolitan areas of each region. In addition to these values, I began with (a) the cost of a 'market basket of basic food items' and the cost of a 'consumer market basket,'* both consistent with the ENDEF study of

³³ More detailed information on her methodology can be found in Rocha (1988).

* *Cesta de alimentos*, a market basket of basic food items, and *cesta total*, a consumer market basket including nonfood items, are economic indicators based on the prices of basic products like rice, beans, flour, oil, etc., used periodically by the government to set minimum wage levels.

1974-75, for the metropolitan areas of each region and for the nonmetropolitan urban areas in these regions (Fava 1984, 102); and (b) population estimates for the metropolitan areas and the nonmetropolitan urban areas in 1989. In order to calculate the indigence and poverty lines for the urban region as a whole, I used averages weighted by the population estimates of 1989, and simple crossmultiplication.

I must underscore one of my calculation assumptions. Sonia Rocha used consumption structures based on the ENDEF study of 1974-75 for each metropolitan area and the price index for each metropolitan area in order to update the prices of the contents of the basket for each year during the 1980s, including the year that interests me, 1989. Thus, on the basis of the poverty lines that she calculated for each metropolitan region, I calculated poverty lines for the urban populations as a whole under the assumption that the differences in cost of living between the metropolitan areas and the nonmetropolitan urban areas of each region calculated in the past hold true for today. This, however, may not have remained the case during the last two decades. Supposing that these cost of living differences have decreased, which seems to be more probable, my calculations would underestimate the poverty line for the combined urban populations and, consequently, underestimate the poverty rates.³⁴

I offer one last observation. We did not calculate indigence and poverty lines for urban Brazil as a whole. The lines for various urban regions served to separate indigents, nonindigent poor, and nonpoor within each region. The sum of these various population components from each of the regions gave us the combined figures for indigents, nonindigent poor, and nonpoor for Brazil as a whole.

Household Members

As defined in both the PNAD and the PNSN studies, 'household members' includes members of the family (a unit where earnings are pooled together and consumption is common), as well as other people living in the household as boarders, domestic servants, and relatives of domestic servants. Inclusion or exclusion of these nonfamily members only slightly alters the results of the majority of the indicators used in this study. I excluded these categories of people only in certain cases where the data would otherwise have been seriously affected: where indicators were based on income (types of family income), on age structure, on employment status (in the case of households with 0 people employed), and on types of family structures.

The indigence line = per capita household income required to satisfy food needs only, i.e., to purchase the *cesta de alimentos*; the poverty line = per capita household income required to satisfy both food and nonfood needs, i.e., to purchase the *cesta total*.—TRANS.

³⁴ Because price indexes for nonmetropolitan areas do not exist in Brazil, there is no way to correct this distortion.

The 'Unsatisfied Basic Needs' Indicator

The unsatisfied basic needs indicator utilized six variables, one of which was sufficient to indicate a wretched living situation and classify a household as UBN (the rest are SBN).

The variables that indicate the existence of unsatisfied basic needs are the following:

- 1) density of people per bedroom, greater than 3.5;
- 2) 'rustic' type of living quarters;
- 3) 'other forms' of water supply (not from the general water system, from a well or a spring) and no indoor plumbing;
- 4) no sanitary sewage system;
- 5) no toilet bowl;
- 6) children from seven to eleven years old who do not attend school.

The components of the indicator were specifically chosen in order to reflect situations of extreme poverty, even within Brazil's present socioeconomic conditions, no matter which region of the country was being studied.

'Poor' Occupations

In a study of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, Figueiredo et al. (1990) analyzed the remuneration of various occupations and developed a typology of occupations: 'pauperized occupations,' 'occupations with variable income,' occupations concentrated in the higher income brackets (but that may also register lower incomes), and occupations of 'ensured high income.' We specify the procedures used in order to identify the group of 34 categories of 'pauperized occupations' that I used in the present study (see Table 9) under the label 'poor' occupations.

The authors initially aggregated the 366 existing occupations found in the primary data base (data from PNAD 1987, for Rio de Janeiro) into 108 categories, grouping "like occupations as long as they appeared with reduced frequency (less than ten cases)." Among those 108 categories, they included 'poor' occupations, in which the majority of those employed (more than 75%) received sublevel salaries or salaries equal to three minimum wages.³⁵ Thirty-four 'poor' occupations emerged from this procedure. I made a preliminary examination of the degree to which household workers at various levels of poverty/nonpoverty are concentrated in 'poor' occupations, using the list of occupations that came out of the study by Figueiredo et al. The following is a list of occupations defined as 'poor':

³⁵ "Four occupations that do not correspond exactly within this limit were introduced, taking into account the high degree of family poverty of these professions: carpenters, bricklayers, television and radio repair technicians, and garbage collectors" (29).

receptionists; small independent farmers and cattle ranchers; farm laborers, cattle hands, and fishermen; tailors/seamstresses; other types of clothing makers/cobblers; carpenters; polishers/upholsterers; electronic parts assemblers; television repair technicians; bricklayers and assistant bricklayers; painters/plasterers; bakers; other food workers; tire mechanics; lapidaries; packers; salespeople; cashiers; merchandise stockers/merchandise demonstrators; farmers' market vendors; street vendors; news sellers; domestic servants; waiters/waitresses/cooks; bartenders; hairdressers/manicurists; washers/ironers; doormen/elevator operators; guards; servants; messengers; private security guards; trash collectors; manual laborers.

A Note about Rural Poverty

Defining and characterizing rural poverty in Brazil, based on the poverty lines method and the data it has produced, is problematic at best. If my extrapolation of urban Brazilian poverty lines from the data estimated by Sonia Rocha for metropolitan areas was only a rough approximation, there is no doubt that similar calculations for the rural areas are even less reliable. What makes these results problematic is the assumption that food prices and the total cost of living in rural areas have risen (since the 1974-75 ENDEF study) at the same rate as the prices in the metropolitan areas (the figures used by Sonia Rocha to update the values of metropolitan poverty lines).

Additionally, since the difference between the cost of living in the metropolitan areas and the rural areas has almost certainly diminished since the last ENDEF study (1974-75), especially in the more modernized agricultural regions, the poverty lines that I am using here³⁶ may be too low and may underestimate the true extent of rural poverty. Raising the value of the poverty line to include more people might also mean that more different types of people would be brought into the category of poverty, thus increasing the heterogeneity of characteristics among the rural poor population. With these limitations in mind, I will present some data on rural poverty, its dimensions and characteristics.

The data indicate that close to 3.2 million rural households (45%) in the Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern regions subsist below the poverty line (PNSN 1989). These households represent 17.3 million people, more than half of the rural population in these three regions.³⁷

³⁶ I found the following values for the indigence (I) and poverty (P) lines (in dollars/month): Rural Northeast: I—\$12.88; P—\$18.95; Rural Southeast: I—\$13.11, P—\$20.73; and Rural South: I—\$14.72, P—\$23.74. We left out the rural population of the Center-West, for which there were no figures in the ENDEF study (see Fava 1984) in order to make the necessary extrapolations. Thus, when I speak of rural regions in Brazil, I am referring only to the first three regions.

³⁷ The corresponding data for the indigent poor are: 1.9 million households (27% of all households) and 11 million people (one out of every three rural inhabitants).

In order to characterize the differences between rural and urban poverty, I present two tables of data. One table maps out the distribution of poor households based on their family structures. The other presents data on living conditions; household possessions; and characteristics of the heads and other members of households, emphasizing their employment and income situations.

The key insight we gain from examining these tables is that, compared with the urban poor, the rural poor are on the whole all living in similar situations of poverty. In other words, while we discern various distinct situations of poverty among the urban poor, rural poverty is more homogeneous. Table 21 verifies that the vast majority of poor rural households (80%) are characterized by certain family structures: couples and children (and sometimes other relatives), where the head of the household is male (young, middle-aged, or elderly). These are the structures indicated on the table by the symbols C1, C2, and E1.³⁸ Among poor urban households, these types represent only 63%.³⁹

TABLE 21

Percentage of Poor Rural Households and the Probability of Being Poor, According to Family Structure, 1989

Family Structure ^b	Rural Households ^a				Probability of being Poor
	Poor	%	Total ^c	%	
S	1,120	0.04	69,443	0.98	1.61
C0	22,762	0.72	165,935	2.35	13.72
C1	910,945	28.70	1,759,627	24.88	51.77
C2	1,319,957	41.59	2,573,113	36.38	51.30
E1	308,413	9.72	771,516	10.91	39.97
E2	113,432	3.57	451,023	6.38	25.15
Other	88,328	2.78	492,404	6.96	17.94
Multi	220,015	6.93	459,738	6.50	47.86
W1	47,089	1.48	60,678	0.86	77.60
W2	141,834	4.47	269,655	3.81	52.60
Total	3,173,895	100.00	7,073,132	100.00	44.87

^a From the Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern regions

^b See footnote 11.

^c Not including households that did not complete their income declarations

Source: PNSN 1989

These indices are a result of the high probability that rural C1 and C2 family structures will be poor, and not due to their high frequency in the total population. Within urban areas, however,

³⁸ The E1 category, as defined, can be headed by a woman. However only 12% of poor rural households are headed by women (compared with 26% of poor urban households). Note that this category also accounts for widowed heads of households.

³⁹ See Table 5 for more information on the distribution of urban households based on family structure.

the types of family structures with the highest probability of being poor are the multifamily structure and families headed by women (W1 and W2), types that are infrequently found in rural areas. Table 22 also confirms the greater homogeneity of rural poverty.

TABLE 22

Comparison of Selected Characteristics of Rural and Urban Poor, 1989

Selected Characteristics	Poor Households	
	Rural ^a	Urban
Households		
No sewage system	70.73	10.64
No toilet	79.78	18.27
Trash left on empty land or elsewhere	69.75	26.41
Dirt roads	97.87	58.10
Rustic houses	20.98	4.75
Walls of <i>taipa</i> or other material	26.02	5.69
No books	79.82	55.64
No television	84.87	34.96
Heads of Households:		
black or <i>pardo</i>	68.17	60.37
illiterate	60.56	32.95
less than four grades of school completed	86.87	57.38
females	11.88	26.05
employed in a 'poor' occupation ^b	71.38	44.14
who don't contribute to social security (self-employed, employers, or nonpaid)	93.48	77.11
employed without a signed workcard	73.92	37.87
has looked for work in the last year	13.32	23.79
Household members who receive only job income	66.48	52.03
Household members, based on activity		
all employed	13.37	10.83
employed and economically inactive	71.55	56.46
one or more members unemployed	6.78	22.68
all economically inactive	8.30	10.04

^a From the Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern regions

^b See the Methodological Appendix.

Source: PNSN 1989

Substandard living conditions, especially sanitary conditions, are prevalent in the large majority of poor rural households. Indicators such as the lack of a sewage system and/or toilet, the disposal of trash on vacant lands (or other places), reach levels of 70–80%. Most of the rural poor, 98%, live in areas with unpaved streets. For urban poor households, the values of these indicators range from 11% (sewage system) to 58% (unpaved roads), indicating a much greater heterogeneity of situations among the urban poor.

The same conclusion can be deduced from the indicators of cultural isolation. In the rural areas, 61% of all heads of poor households are illiterate, and combined with those who have finished less than four years of school, the total equals 87%. Almost 80% of rural poor do not have books in their homes and 85% do not have televisions. The corresponding percentages for the urban poor are 33% illiterate, 57% including illiterate and those who have finished less than four years of school, 56% without books, and 35% without televisions.

Finally, in the case of the rural poor, the figures for occupations and incomes indicate a general situation of complete dependency on bad or poor occupations that require few qualifications and offer no guarantees (signed workcards or social security). In comparison, the figures for the urban poor point to more highly differentiated situations. For example, in only 7% of poor rural households is at least one member unemployed; only 13% of heads of households declared having looked for work in the last twelve months. The corresponding percentages for the urban poor are 23% and 24%, respectively.

The poverty in the rural areas is less a question of lack of employment than of the miserable salaries earned, the lack of job security and, clearly, the greater expense of larger families. Over 66% of poor rural households are supported only by salary incomes (compared to 52% of urban poor households), and 71% of the heads are employed in 'poor' occupations (compared to 44% of poor urban heads). Almost three-fourths of the employed rural poor do not have signed workcards and almost all (93%) of those who are self-employed do not contribute to social security. Both of these figures demonstrate the 'informality' of the employment sector. In the urban regions, the corresponding percentages are 38% and 77%.

In conclusion, I return to my initial reservations about the reliability of the poverty line method and its approximation of data. Although the percentages of poverty among the rural population are already very high, there may be still more people living in rural areas whose per capita income is insufficient to meet the actual current costs of food and nonfood necessities but whom we have not identified as 'poor' due to underestimation of the poverty lines. Moreover, if we were to investigate the characteristics and living conditions of those sectors of the rural population living close to but just above the poverty lines as presently set, it is possible that we might find more diversity among them, perhaps more similarity to the heterogeneous pattern we found among the urban poor.

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