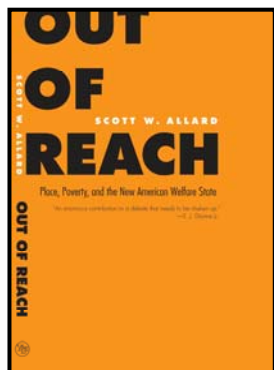


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# Places in Need: The Geography of Poverty and the American Safety Net

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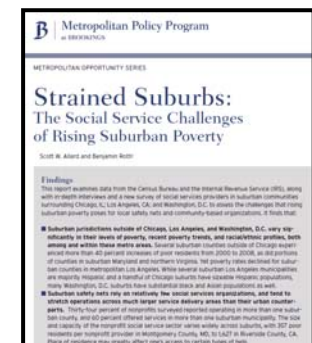
**Scott W. Allard**

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# **Conventional Spatial Discourse around Poverty and Opportunity**

**Urban = poor    Suburban = opportunity**

**Informs scholarship**

**Guides journalism**

**Shapes popular understandings**

**Targets policy discussions and tools**

# My Research Questions

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- **How has the spatial distribution and concentration of poverty shifted across urban and suburban places since 1990?**
- **How has the safety net responded to the changing geography of poverty in the past decade?**
- **How should communities organize local safety net activity?**

# Data Sources

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- **Demographic and Employment Data**
  - Census 1990/2000; 2006-10 American Community Survey
  - Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), 2002-10
    - » Metropolitan area, place, county, and tract
- **County-level safety net database, 2000-10**
  - Administrative data: EITC, TANF, SNAP, SSI
  - Nonprofit expenditure and revenue data from 990 forms
- **Primary data collection - detailed suburban cases**
  - Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington DC
  - In-depth interviews with suburban leaders
  - Pilot survey – Suburban Social Service Providers
- **Michigan Recession and Recovery Survey (MRRS)**

# **What is a Suburb?**

**No formal definition**

**Definitions contain key assumptions**

**Different definitions for different questions**

**More than just geography**

# **What is a Suburb?**

**All US Metro Counties**

**Tracts in Largest 100 metro areas**

**Municipality = urban or suburban?**

**Inner-tier suburbs and rural exurbs**

# **What Has Happened Since 1990?**

# **More than Just More Poor People**

**Poverty Rates are about twice as  
high in cities, but have increased  
twice as fast in suburbs since 1990**



# **More than Just More Poor People**

**More people in extreme poverty in  
suburbs than in cities**

**(Less than 50% of federal poverty line, or under  
\$8,784 for family of three in 2010)**

# More than Just More Poor People

Concentrated poverty more prominent in cities, but number of high-poverty tracts almost doubled in suburbs since 1990  
(high-poverty = +20% poor)

# What Explains the Trends?

# What Explains the Trends?

## Changes in the Labor Market

# What Explains the Trends?

## Demographic Changes in Population

# What Explains the Trends?

## Immigration and Migration

# What Explains the Trends?

## Collapse of Housing Market

# Why Does It Matter?



**Rising Poverty**  
**+**  
**Rising Extreme Poverty**  
**+**  
**Rising Concentrated Poverty**  
**=**  
**Challenge for Suburban  
Safety Nets**

# How the Safety Net Helps

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(≈\$15-20 billion)

**Welfare**

(≈ \$80 billion)

**Food Stamps**

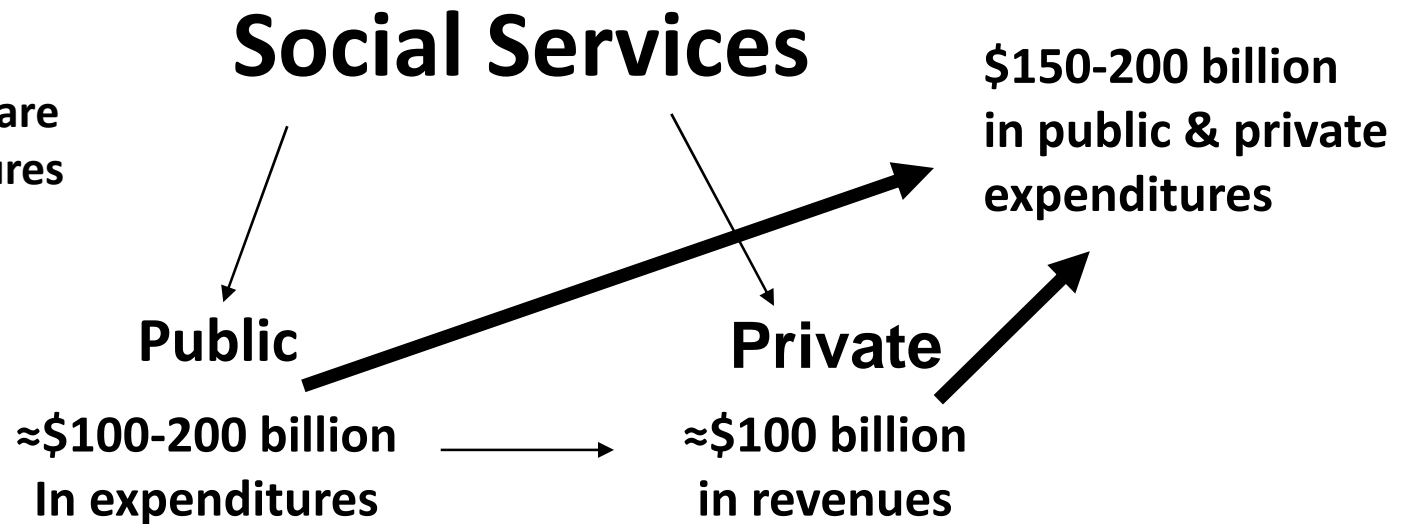
(≈ \$60 billion)

**EITC**

(≈ \$70 billion\*)

**Medicaid**

Figures reported are  
annual expenditures  
in current dollars



**\*Able-bodied Working Age Adults**

# **Safety Net is Inherently Local**

**Role of Nonprofit Organizations**

**Local Variation in Capacity**

**Local Leadership and Political Will**

Some evidence that ***Public Programs*** Have Expanded Similarly in Suburbs and Cities

***Suburban Nonprofit Sector***  
Lags Far Behind  
**Urban Nonprofit Sector**

# Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets

# Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets

**Limited Capacity  
\$, Orgs, & Leadership**

# Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets

## Competitive Pressures

# Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets

## Perception Gap



# Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets

## Distance and Transportation

# **Challenges Confronting Local Safety Nets**

## **Anti-Immigrant Sentiment**

# Can the Safety Net Adapt?

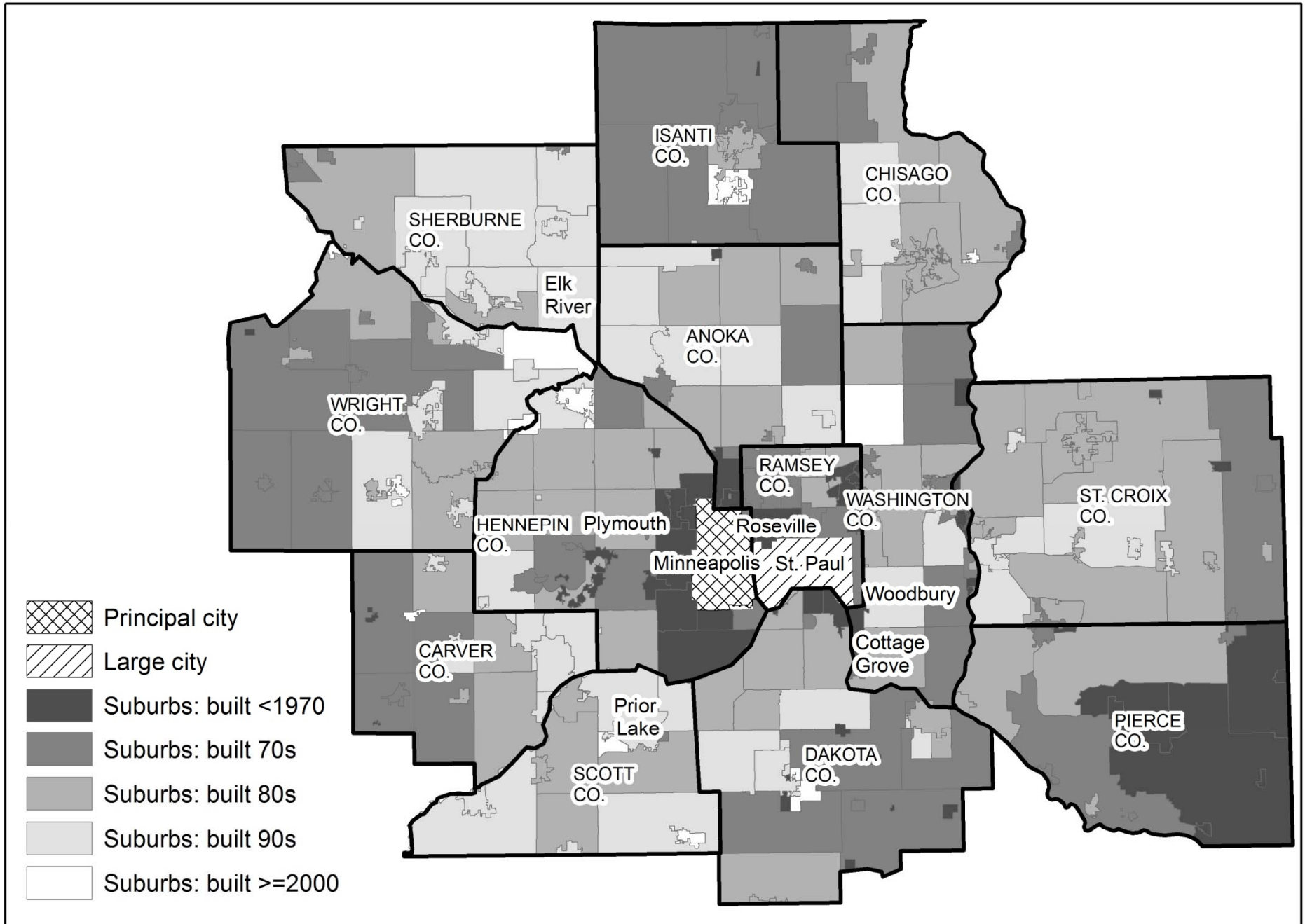
# Thank You

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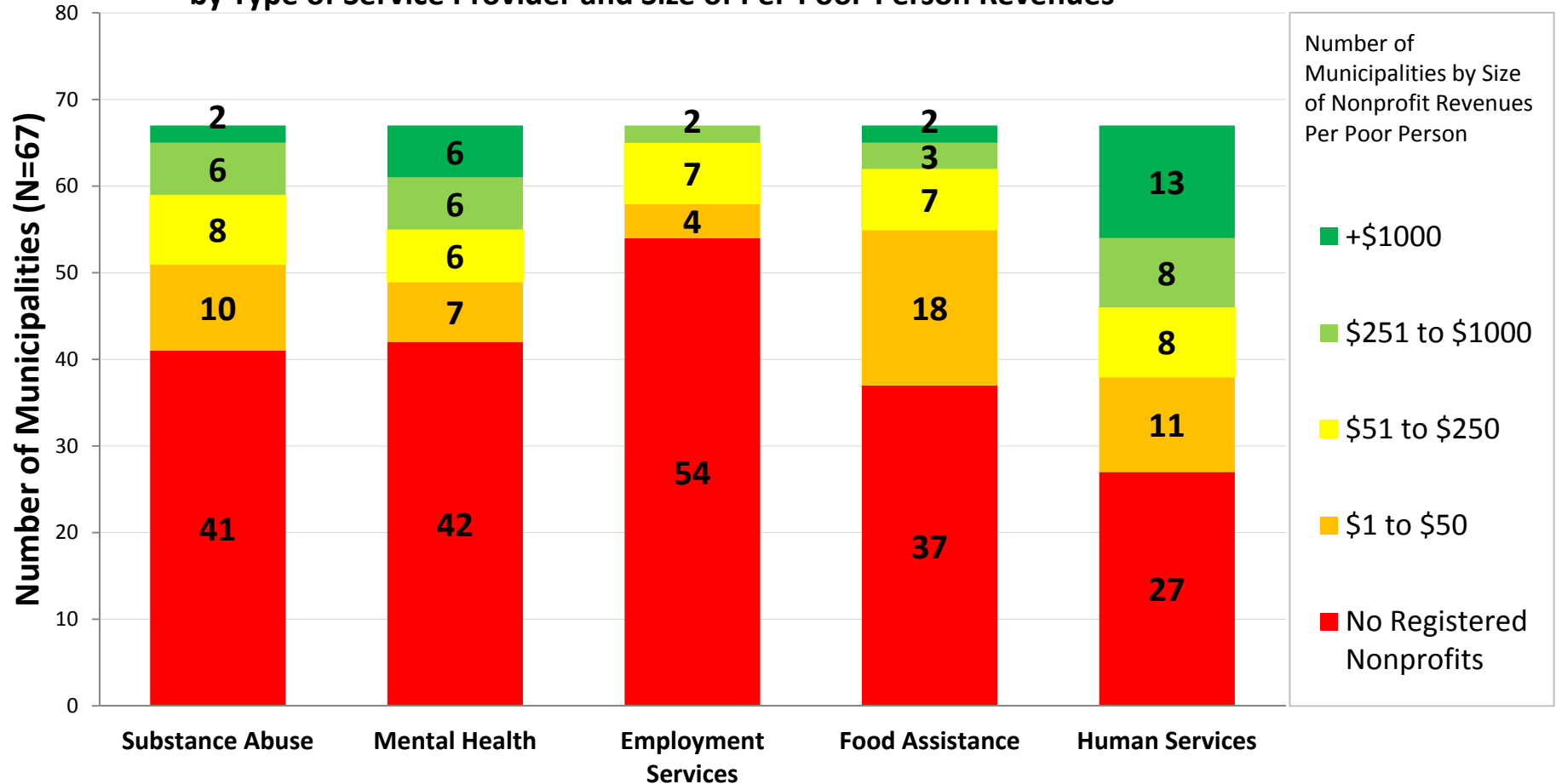
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# Defining Suburbs in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area



# No to Low Nonprofit Capacity in Suburbs

Number of Registered Nonprofits in Selected Suburban Municipalities of Chicago, L.A., and D.C., by Type of Service Provider and Size of Per-Poor-Person Revenues



Note: Figures reported are rounded to the nearest dollar. Values of zero indicate no reported revenues. Service categories reflect the following National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) codes for registered nonprofits: Substance Abuse (F20, F21, F22); Mental Health Treatment (F30, F32); Employment Services (J20, J21, J22); Food Assistance (K30, K31, K35, K36); and, Human Services (P20, P22, P24, P26, P27, P28, P297).

Source: Allard and Roth (2010)