

The effect of supplementary family earners on an income size distribution is still largely unexplored. The Census estimates clearly indicate that inequality of income size distributions decreases as the number of supplementary family earners increases.³⁶ Some unpublished tabulations of the Bureau of the Census for 1946 seem, however, to indicate that this greater equality was due to differences in the earnings distribution of family heads (having no, one, or two or more supplementary earners) themselves, rather than to differences in the income distribution of supplementary earners. Still, significant inverse correlation may be assumed between the number of supplementary part period family earners and the income of the family head. This probably does not hold true for full period supplementary earners (typically, grown children or distant relatives living with the family). More data for more years and involving larger samples with cross-classification of incomes of principal and supplementary earners must be obtained before definitive conclusions can be drawn concerning the separate effects of part and full period supplementary wage earners on the size distribution of family income.

Obviously, here again we are likely to meet the same problem as with individuals who continue as independent units instead of joining families headed by their younger relatives. To the extent that some supplementary workers are part time or intermittent workers desiring full time employment, an improvement in the labor market situation is likely to cause a decrease in the number of multi-earner families and an accompanying increase of one earner families, including one person families, many of whom will be part period units.

One is thus led to believe more and more that global analysis in terms of size distributions for the entire population is at best the first step toward comprehending changes in income structure. Over-all distributions are the composite result of separate and frequently contradictory developments toward which we should increasingly direct inquiry.

³⁶ See, e.g., *ibid.*, Table 7. In Bulletin 7 of the same series, the Bureau of the Census commented: "There was a progressive increase in the proportion of families with more than one earner up to the highest income level, at which point this proportion decreased markedly. These figures provide an important clue in explaining the diminution of inequality in the distribution of income in the United States since the depression. It is very likely that because of the greater employment opportunities which exist today, many families which were formerly at low income levels were able to rise to higher income levels as a result of the employment of other family members in addition to the head."

