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The Greatest of Evils: Urban Poverty and the American Underclass. Joel A. Devine and James D. Wright.

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This definitive book should dispel many stereotypes about Sweden. Anyone who has an interest in Swedish society, and in the social democratic tradition generally, will benefit from reading this highly informative publication. Designed specifically to trace the evolution of social democracy in the country and to assess its achievements, the book is an invaluable resource covering topics as diverse as education, local government, housing, international affairs, agriculture, family policy and social security. The book examines the Swedish system critically, and the authors do not hesitate to expose its weaknesses and failures. Despite current difficulties, and disaffection with state intervention from some sections of the population, Swedish social democracy has fostered significant social gains. Whatever one's personal biases, it is hard to disagree with the book's conclusion that social democracy in Sweden has produced an extraordinarily high quality of life for the nation's citizens.

Joel A. Devine and James D. Wright. *The Greatest of Evils: Urban Poverty and the American Underclass*. Hawthorn, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993. \$34.95 hardcover; \$17.95 papercover.

This significant book provides a comprehensive account of poverty in the urban areas of the United States today. It focuses particularly on the 'underclass' phenomenon but does not become entangled in theoretical and ideological debates about whether an underclass exists, or whether sociologists should use the term.

Examining various operational definitions, the book uses the 'poverty threshold' approach to account for the incidence of poverty. Although the threshold approach is also applied to examine rural poverty, the book focuses primarily on the urban underclass. Particular attention is paid to family issues, employment, welfare, substance abuse, crime and violence. The final chapter attempts to sketch out a policy agenda for the future which urges the federal government to create programs that will enhance job creation, social welfare, education and health care. The authors argue that is only through national policies and programs that urban poverty can be eradicated and that new opportunities for the deprived and oppressed of American cities can be created.