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THE FAMILY, POVERTY, AND WELFARE
PROGRAMS: HOUSEHOLD PATTERNS
AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES

A VOLUME OF STUDIES

PREPARED FOR THE USE OF THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISCAL POLICY

OF THE

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES



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LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

NOVEMBER 29, 1973.

To the members of the Joint Economic Committee:

Transmitted herewith is a volume of studies entitled "The Family, Poverty, and Welfare Programs: Household Patterns and Government Policies." This is Paper No. 12 (Part II) in the series *Studies in Public Welfare*, prepared for the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy as part of its comprehensive review of the Nation's welfare-related programs.

The views expressed in these studies are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, the Joint Economic Committee, or the committee staff.

WRIGHT PATMAN,
Chairman, Joint Economic Committee.

NOVEMBER 27, 1973.

HON. WRIGHT PATMAN,
*Chairman, Joint Economic Committee,
U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Transmitted herewith is a volume of studies entitled "The Family, Poverty, and Welfare Programs: Household Patterns and Government Policies," Paper No. 12 (Part II) in the subcommittee's review of public welfare programs.

The studies in this volume examine patterns of household composition and income sharing among low-income families as well as current and proposed government policies directly related to family structure. Among the vitally important questions considered in this volume are:

How serious are the problems of establishing paternity and of collecting support payments from absent fathers of welfare recipients?

Would greater efforts to establish paternity and collect support payments pay off in terms of higher incomes for recipients and/or taxpayer savings?

How do public welfare benefits vary for different types of family and household units? What financial incentives exist for families to break up and to form separate households?

What problems result from the fact that, depending on the program or set of programs, the recipient unit may be the individual, the family, the household, or some combination of the three?

What is the process by which unstable household living arrangements occur among low-income families?

The authors address these and other controversial questions and in so doing make a contribution to rational public debate on topics highly relevant to government policy. The papers represent the views of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, individual members thereof, or the subcommittee staff.

This volume was edited by Robert I. Lerman. Alair A. Townsend provided general direction and compiled many of the papers.

MARTHA W. GRIFFITHS,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy.

FOREWORD

Family organization among low-income groups and its relationship to Government programs are broad subjects. This two-part series includes discussions of many important topics, but it is not comprehensive in scope. The papers in this volume (part II) deal with patterns of household composition and income sharing among low-income families as well as current and proposed Government policies directly related to family structure. In part I, published by the subcommittee on November 4, 1973, five authors examined various factors influencing levels of illegitimacy, marital instability, female headship of families, and participation in welfare programs. As an aid to the reader in coping with such a wide range of issues, the opening paper in part I, "The Family, Poverty, and Welfare Programs: An Introductory Essay on Problems of Analysis and Policy," by Robert I. Lerman, provides an overview of the subjects and findings discussed in parts I and II. Thus, only a few words are necessary to introduce the papers in this volume.

Government policies relevant to family structure make up one set of topics. Irene Cox describes and analyzes how public income transfer benefits and eligibility conditions vary for different family types and household units. Lee Rainwater, and Carol Stack and Herbert Semmel recommend changes aimed at improving these Government policies. Harry Krause and Stack and Semmel discuss the Government role in determining paternity and in obtaining child support payments from absent fathers of children on welfare. Krause argues for increased vigor by Government in these two areas while Stack and Semmel contend that such stricter enforcement would be self-defeating.

The other major topics concern how low-income persons combine to form households and to share income. Marc Fried and Ellen Fitzgerald, Andrew Billingsley, Rainwater, and Stack and Semmel report findings on these patterns based on participant-observer studies of low-income families. They describe actual patterns of illegitimacy, marital instability, and household formation and dissolution. Billingsley also discusses some evidence from case studies dealing with the effects of family breakdown on the behavior and development of children.

CONTENTS

PART I

	Page
LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL.....	iii
THE FAMILY, POVERTY, AND WELFARE PROGRAMS: AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON PROBLEMS OF ANALYSIS AND POLICY.....	1
<i>Robert I. Lerman</i>	
THE IMPACT OF WELFARE PAYMENT LEVELS ON FAMILY STABILITY.....	37
<i>Marjorie Honig</i>	
INCOME SUPPLEMENTS AND THE AMERICAN FAMILY.....	54
<i>Phillips Cutright and John Scanzoni</i>	
ILLEGITIMACY AND INCOME SUPPLEMENTS.....	90
<i>Phillips Cutright</i>	
PARTICIPATION IN THE AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN PROGRAM (AFDC).....	139
<i>Barbara Boland</i>	

PART II

LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL.....	iii
FOREWORD.....	v
TREATMENT OF FAMILIES UNDER INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS.....	181
<i>Irene Cox</i>	
POVERTY, LIVING STANDARDS, AND FAMILY WELL-BEING.....	207
<i>Lee Rainwater</i>	
CHILD WELFARE, PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE STATE.....	255
<i>Harry D. Krause</i>	
THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY IN THE POOR BLACK COMMUNITY.....	275
<i>Carol B. Stack and Herbert Semmel</i>	
BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURE: MYTHS AND REALITIES.....	306
<i>Andrew Billingsley</i>	
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE WORKING CLASS.....	320
<i>Marc Fried and Ellen Fitzgerald</i>	
RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISCAL POLICY.....	350

TREATMENT OF FAMILIES UNDER INCOME TRANSFER PROGRAMS

By IRENE COX*

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that a basic purpose of publicly supported social welfare programs is to support, strengthen, enhance, and preserve family life. Public education, housing, health programs, income maintenance, and a variety of other human service programs are essentially concerned with direct, community, or environmental supports for family life and the fulfillment of family responsibilities. Public income transfer programs which distribute more than \$100 billion annually have a major role in underpinning the economic well-being of families.

These are broad statements of general purpose which require much more specification if we wish to examine the role or effectiveness of social welfare programs in general or of income transfer programs in particular in relation to the support of family life. Examination of the effect of income transfer programs on the economic well-being of families is difficult, since complete factual data on the impact of various benefit sources on families is lacking.¹ But the question of the effect of this variety of income support programs on family life, family stability, and family functioning is even more difficult to answer. Fortunately, this paper has no such ambition. We propose only to begin to formulate more specific questions and issues by looking at the design of the major income transfer programs as they relate to treatment of families. Some initial questions are: How do income transfer programs deal with families? How do they reflect general concepts of "family" and family responsibilities?

First, the concept of "family" must be considered. We tend to think of the typical family as a "nuclear" or "primary" family consisting of parents and their minor children, or spouses without children in the home, but we also accept other groups of related individuals living together as families. The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines a family as two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption who reside together. Sociologists have identified many types of family structures which are encompassed in the general usage of the word,

*Staff sociologist, Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy.

¹ Subcommittee papers Nos. 1 and 6 report explorations of this question which is a major focus of the subcommittee's overall study. See *Studies in Public Welfare*, Paper No. 1, "Public Income Transfer Programs: The Incidence of Multiple Benefits and the Issues Raised by Their Receipt," Apr. 10, 1972, prepared by James R. Storey for the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy; and Paper No. 6, "How Public Welfare Benefits Are Distributed in Low-Income Areas," prepared by James R. Storey, Alair A. Townsend, and Irene Cox for the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, Mar. 26, 1973.

though terms such as "extended family" are usually used to describe households including relatives other than those in the parent-minor child primary unit.

The concept of family usually implies living together but also connotes kinship ties with implications for personal relationships and varying degrees of legal and moral interdependency and responsibility regardless of living arrangements. A common thread is relationship, but "family" is also used to describe variously related or unrelated persons who live together as an economic and social unit.

Future anthropologists will have a difficult time determining what "family" means in our heterogeneous society. And they will get very little help if they depend on eligibility definitions of income transfer programs as a source of enlightenment. With the possible exception of housing programs, none of the major income transfer programs define a "family" as an eligible unit. Instead, they define eligible individuals. The primary beneficiary is defined by his status relative to a particular program's eligibility criteria: covered wage earner, veteran, unemployed worker, dependent child. Other individuals who may be included or entitled to benefits are defined by their relationship to the primary beneficiary.

Relationship, defined by blood, marriage, or adoption, is a basic element in defining families and is a primary consideration in most income transfer programs. However, relationship is used to define support obligations and dependency status, not to define a family as a unit. In fact, living together as a family unit is not generally a basic requirement, especially where the primary family is concerned. For instance, in the social security program, evidence of relationship usually establishes dependency and entitlement of primary relatives (wife and children) of the wage-earner, regardless of past or current living arrangements. Living together in a family setting is used as evidence of dependency for some secondary relatives and as a basis for including adult caretakers of beneficiary children such as the mother in old-age, survivors, and disability insurance (OASDI) and parents or other relatives in aid to families with dependent children (AFDC).

The only program with "Family" in its title (AFDC) generally excludes primary families which meet the ordinary conditions of stable families. That is, families consisting of both parents and their children are excluded unless the father is incapacitated or, in 23 States, is unemployed. Families with able-bodied working fathers are excluded from federally assisted AFDC in all States regardless of the level of income or need of the family. However, the program recognizes extended families by including children living with relatives other than the parent.

The administration's family assistance plan, which did not gain Senate approval, defined a "family" as the eligible unit and went even further in recognizing extended families by including all relatives living in the home with children. The food stamp and food distribution programs define the eligible unit as a "household" which may include unrelated as well as related persons.

Although currently operating programs generally define individual eligibility rather than family eligibility, all types of beneficiary family arrangements are possible and are implicitly or explicitly recognized by the various programs, including "families" consisting of unrelated

persons sharing household facilities. However, there is no common definition of family or of entitlement based on relationship. Each program has its own rationale for defining eligible persons or units based on the purpose of the program and on a variety of traditional, legal, cultural, or moral concepts. Changing concepts of program purposes and objectives have been reflected in changes over time in eligibility definitions and coverage. The variety of programs with varying rationales and definitions results in some inconsistencies and differing potential incentives² or disincentives for family formation or dissolution, or for establishing or changing legal relationships.

SOCIAL INSURANCE PROGRAMS

Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI)

The social security system's major purpose is to protect wage earners against loss of earnings due to retirement because of age or disability. Coverage has been extended to specified dependents of workers reflecting the premise that persons dependent on the wage earner should also be protected against loss of income when the wage earner suffers a risk to income covered by the program. The definition of dependency is crucial. Emphasis is on relationship, which reflects basic concepts of legal responsibility for primary relatives and also recognizes responsibility assumed by the wage earner for certain relatives beyond the primary family unit.

Evidence of relationship is sufficient to establish dependency of wives and children of wage earners whether they lived together as a family unit and whether or not the wage earner actually supported them. Illegitimate children also are entitled to benefits on the father's wage record if paternity was acknowledged in writing or established by judicial decree. Wives age 62 and widows age 60 or disabled widows at age 50 are recognized as dependents, and other wives and widows with entitled minor children in their care may receive benefits. However, aged and disabled husbands and widowers must establish that they have, in fact, received more than half of their support from their wives in order to receive benefits as dependents. Husbands are not eligible as caretakers of minor children under any circumstances. Although this difference in treatment of spouses may be a reflection of the cultural expectation that a man has primary responsibility for support of the family, the Social Security Act also reflects changing attitudes toward the role of women. Prior to 1950, dependent husbands and widowers were not entitled to benefits under any circumstances, and children of women workers received benefits only if there was proof of prior substantial support by the mother.

For relationships beyond the primary relationship of spouses and legitimate or legally recognized illegitimate children, dependency and entitlement to benefits is established either through an assumption of dependency—if the relative lived with the wage earner—or through evidence of actual support, or both. Stepchildren are assumed to be dependent if they lived with the wage earner, or, if not living with the

² "Incentive" is used here to refer to a potential economic advantage which might accrue under certain conditions and which could be a factor in influencing choices made in respect to family structures and living arrangements. The extent to which such incentives actually influence choices is not known.

stepparent, may gain entitlement if there is evidence of actual support. Similar rules apply to illegitimate children when paternity is not legally established or acknowledged in writing but other acceptable evidence of paternity exists. Under the 1972 amendments, a grandchild or stepgrandchild whose parents are dead or disabled may gain entitlement if the child lived with and was supported by the primary beneficiary for at least a year. Surviving parents and stepparents of a wage earner are entitled to benefits if there is evidence that they received more than half of their support from the wage earner.

There is one exception to the general premise that dependency on the worker, either assumed, as in the case of primary relatives, or established by evidence of support for other specified relatives, is a condition of entitlement to benefits. The 1972 amendments to the Social Security Act removed the requirement of dependency on the worker or a court order for support of a divorced wife age 62 or older or a divorced widow age 60 or older, if married 20 years before the divorce, and a surviving divorced wife with eligible children in her care. This is a change from the concept of benefit entitlement to protect dependents against interruption of income due to the retirement or death of the wage earner. Instead, the purpose is to provide compensation to a divorced wife who did not build up her own entitlement while married and lost the entitlement she would have had as the wife of the worker.

This is another illustration of changes in the program which reflect changes in family patterns. Early provision (1939) for coverage of a wife on the husbands' earnings in part recognized the wife's role as homemaker in sharing in the family's economic effort. But it also conveyed the cultural expectation of marital stability and continued dependence of the wife on the husband. Coverage was extended to divorced wives with eligible children in their care in 1950 and to aged, dependent, divorced wives and widows in 1965, providing the marriage had lasted 20 years before the divorce. The 1972 amendments reinforce recognition of divorce in family patterns, and legislation has been introduced to reduce the number of years of marriage required for entitlement under this provision. In a sense, this progression of changes represents not only acceptance of the fact of divorce but a public willingness to compensate a woman for spending several years with the wrong man. The latest change, however, is primarily a response to one of the problems of equity resulting from coverage of nonworking wives on the husband's wage records a provision which is also being questioned by working wives who receive no more or little more in benefits than nonworking wives, even though they may have paid social security taxes for several years. This questioning reflects the changing role of women and an expectation of equitable treatment as taxpayers instead of emphasis on protection as dependents.

In general, it appears that the rules defining entitlement to OASDI benefits reflect concern for legal relationships which define primary families and for legal responsibility for primary relatives and assumed responsibility for other close relatives where there is a strong moral presumption of responsibility. For entitlement purposes, whether or not the individuals lived together as a family unit is not of importance except to establish dependency of some secondary relatives. The assumption that a man is responsible for his wife and children does not require that they have been living together or that he has, in fact, been

supporting them. A man can have two wives receiving full benefits (the family maximum does not apply to a divorced wife) even though he did not support either of them. His legal and acknowledged illegitimate children are entitled to benefits even though he did not live with or support them.

The emphasis on legal relationships rather than living arrangements extends to conditions under which benefits may be reduced or terminated. The marriage of a child beneficiary under age 18 or over 18 and in school always terminates the benefit. And, except for widows age 60 or over, the marriage of other survivor beneficiaries to a non-beneficiary terminates the benefit. A widow age 60 or over continues to receive full benefits if she marries a beneficiary who is a disabled child over 18 years of age,³ or a dependent widower or dependent parent. Her benefits are reduced to one-half if she marries a nonbeneficiary or a beneficiary receiving retirement or disability benefits. For other surviving dependents who marry beneficiaries, the benefits may be continued, reduced, or terminated depending on the beneficiary status of the spouse. The rules appear to be related to changes in dependency status. They attempt to relate entitlement to comparable situations applicable to other married couples and to reduce somewhat the disincentives to remarriage. The rules are complex, and survivor beneficiaries contemplating marriage are well advised to seek information on the effects of entering into a marriage contract. However, the legal relationship is paramount and there is no change in benefits if a couple lives together without a legal marriage.

In general, OASDI rules for original entitlement of dependents reinforce legal marriage but are concerned more with consequent legal obligations than with the family as a living unit. Desertion, divorce, and nonsupport are not discouraged but the insurance-type coverage of dependents, with no additional premium or tax paid for such coverage, is an incentive for establishing appropriate legal relationships including paternal acknowledgment of illegitimate children. There is some incentive to having children, but this is limited by the effect of the family maximum which provides full benefits for only two children.

There are some disincentives to remarriage for survivor beneficiaries, but these are ameliorated by extension of full or partial benefits to widows over 60 and to other beneficiaries under certain conditions. Widowed mothers under age 60 with eligible children in their care lose entitlement if they remarry. However, the children retain entitlement and the operation of the family maximum often results in continuation of the same total amount of benefits when the mother remarries. In addition, the children may also be covered for potential benefits on the stepfather's wage record.

Unemployment Compensation

The purpose of this program is to replace a portion of wages for a temporary period when a covered worker is unemployed. Only 11 States include an allowance for dependents. The amounts are rela-

³ A disabled child can be any age. The term "child" denotes that the beneficiary draws benefits based on the parent's earnings record.

tively small (more than \$6 a week in only two States, with maximum allowances ranging from \$3 to \$46 in most of these States). Dependents are variously defined as children under 16 (two States) or under 18 (nine States), older children who are not able to work (seven States), wife or husband (seven States), parent and brother or sister (two States). Stepchildren are included in 10 States. Parents, brothers and sisters, and, in one State, the wife or husband must be unemployable.

Military and Civil Service Retirement

A major emphasis of these programs is wage replacement for retired workers and servicemen. These retirement benefits are usually more generous than social security benefits since they are based on military pay at retirement, or on the highest 3-year average salary under civil service. In contrast, social security benefits are based on covered wages averaged over several years.

No allowance for dependents of retired persons is made in military or civil service retirement benefits. The surviving spouse of a retired civil service beneficiary, and the surviving spouse and dependent children of a retired serviceman, may receive benefits if the retiree so elects and accepts a reduced benefit at the time of retirement. Surviving dependent children of a deceased retired civil service beneficiary are eligible to receive benefits. Children, including stepchildren and illegitimate children are eligible if under age 18, under 22 if a student (under 23 if the child of a serviceman), or over 18 if disabled before age 18. Civil service regulations specify that stepchildren and illegitimate children must have been living with the worker. The widow or widower and children of a worker covered under civil service who dies while he is employed are eligible to receive benefits. Under military retirement, the surviving spouse loses benefits upon remarriage at any age. The surviving spouse of a civil service worker loses benefits if remarried before age 60.

*Veterans Compensation and Veterans Pensions*⁴

Veterans' dependents who may receive benefits are children (under 18, or under 23 if attending school, or over 18 and disabled) including stepchildren who are members of the veteran's household and illegitimate children whose paternity has been acknowledged or established by judicial decree or other evidence; wife, widow, or dependent and disabled widower; and dependent parents, including natural parents or a person standing in the relation of parent to the veteran before his entry in service. A wife or widow must be living with the veteran or must have lived with the veteran until his death, or separated from the veteran through no fault of her own; and must not be living openly with another man and holding herself out openly as the wife of such other man. There is a provision that her benefits may be reinstated on evidence of termination of the relationship or conduct creat-

⁴The veterans pension program is an income-tested public assistance program and should be classified as a public assistance-type program. It is included here, however, because of the similarity of its dependency features to those of the veterans compensation program.

ing an "inference or presumption of remarriage or open and notorious adulterous cohabitation or similar conduct."⁵

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Adult Assistance Categories—Aid to the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (AABD)

These programs of assistance to aged (age 65 or over), blind, or disabled persons (over age 18), authorized by the Social Security Act, currently are administered by the States or localities with Federal sharing in program costs. They are to be replaced in 1974 by a federally administered program of supplemental security income for the aged, blind, and disabled.

The AABD programs do not treat the family as a unit but are concerned with individual eligibility. Dependents are not covered simply because of their relationship to a beneficiary, but must instead meet all the conditions for eligibility themselves in order to receive benefits. For instance, the wife of a man receiving old age assistance does not receive benefits unless she is fully eligible as an aged, blind, or disabled individual. A wife and minor children may receive AFDC benefits if they are eligible under that program. There is an indirect relationship, however, since the spouse's or parent's ability to provide support affects the eligibility and amount of benefits to dependents.

There is a provision in the current AABD programs which permits the needs of an "essential person" to be included in the payment of the primary beneficiary. The essential person may be a spouse who is not individually eligible, such as a wife under 65, or another needy person living in the household. However, an essential person is not included because he or she is dependent on the beneficiary but because the beneficiary is dependent on the essential person for personal care or household tasks which he cannot manage for himself.

Although individual eligibility and individual needs are the primary consideration, living in a family setting may reduce the amount of benefits payable to a beneficiary. This happens when the benefit includes only the beneficiary share of common household expenses or other adjustments are made because of the number of persons in the household. Thus a man with an ineligible wife may actually receive a lower benefit because of her presence in the home even though she has no income.

Supplemental Security Income for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (SSI)

This program, to be initiated January 1974, also provides for individual eligibility. A benefit amount is specified for a couple which is 150 percent of the benefit level for an individual. The SSI program enacted in 1972 (Public Law 92-603) made no provision for including an ineligible spouse, or other "essential" persons, but specified that the benefit for a couple is to be paid only when both spouses are eligible

⁵ "Wife" or "widow" is defined in VA regulations as meaning "husband" or "widower" if the veteran is a woman but the regulations use the feminine pronoun and depict situations applicable to a male veteran and wife or widow.

as individuals. An amendment passed in July 1973, however, provided that, in cases in which an essential person is included in the State's assistance payment in December 1973, the SSI benefit will be increased to include the needs of the essential person. This provision will not apply to new applicants for SSI.

The legislation provides for recognition of legal marriage as applicable under appropriate State law and, in addition, provides that a man and woman holding themselves out as husband and wife in the community in which they live will be so considered even if not legally married. In a sense, this is recognition of a family unit not based on legal marriage, but the basic purpose for the provision is to limit the amount payable to that applicable to a couple rather than that which could be paid to two unrelated individuals.

Similarly, the legislation reflects acceptance of the fact that couples may separate by providing for recognition of husband and wife as individuals if they do not live together. However, as a disincentive to separation in order to obtain higher benefits, a couple may not be treated as individuals until they have lived apart at least 6 months.

An individual or couple who live with other persons in a family setting may have their benefits substantially reduced. The statute provides that when beneficiaries live in another person's household and receive support and maintenance in kind from such person, the benefit amount will be reduced by one-third in lieu of estimating a dollar value for this type of in-kind income. The basic benefit payable to beneficiaries with no other income is \$130 per month for an individual and \$195 for a couple. These amounts would be reduced to \$86.67 and \$130 if the beneficiaries live in another person's household, even though they pay their full share of household expenses.

As in the present adult assistance program, the needs of dependent minor children are not included but the spouse and minor children may receive assistance under the AFDC program. The SSI legislation specifically provides that an SSI recipient is not to be considered as a member of the AFDC family and his income and resources are not to be considered as available to the AFDC family unit.

Although SSI is termed an "adult" assistance program, there is no minimum age for blind and disabled persons. Therefore, assistance may be provided for blind or disabled minor children. The income of parents with whom the child under age 21 is living is considered in determining the child's eligibility. The child is treated as an individual recipient and his income is not considered to be available to the family applying for or receiving AFDC.

Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC)

The emphasis of the AFDC program is on the child who is deprived of parental support due to the death, disability, or absence of a parent from the home, or due to the unemployment of the father in the 23 States which have elected to provide assistance in these situations. By definition, therefore, more than half of the States exclude from AFDC intact families with an able-bodied father in the home, whether or not he is employed; and, in all States, intact families with a full-time employed father in the home are excluded from the program regardless of the family's income or needs.

The program was called "aid to dependent children" when it was initiated in 1935. Although it required that a child be living with a parent or other relative in order to receive assistance, the parent or caretaker relative was not included as a recipient for Federal matching purposes until 1950. Only one parent could be included even though the family received assistance because of the presence of a disabled father in the home. The optional provision for assisting children with an unemployed parent was added in 1961, and in 1962 provision was made for both parents to be included as recipients for Federal matching purposes. At that time, the name of the program was changed to "aid to families with dependent children." This change was more rhetorical than real since the program still excludes most families with both parents in the home.

The AFDC program provides assistance to a child who is living with relatives other than the parent. The needs of a relative who is caring for the child also may be included in the assistance payment if the relative is eligible under conditions generally applicable to parents. For instance, a widowed grandmother not old enough to receive old age assistance may be included in the assistance payment if her income and resources are insufficient to meet her own needs. Therefore, although primary intact families are substantially excluded, the program recognizes extended family arrangements to several degrees of relationship. The Social Security Act includes children living with "grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, stepsister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, or niece." Regulations of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) interpret this to include relatives by adoption of the child or the child's parent; blood relatives including those of half-blood and persons from preceding generations as denoted by prefixes of grand, great, and great-great; and spouses of the specified relatives even after marriage is terminated by death or divorce.

Although it is necessary to establish the relationship of children to parents or other caretaker relatives with whom they are living, there is no requirement that the parents of a child be legally married to each other. Children and their parents living together as a family may receive assistance if the father is disabled or unemployed even if the parents are not legally married. A similar family is not eligible if the able-bodied, employed, natural but unmarried father lives in the home with the children and their mother.

The presence of other persons in a household does not have a direct bearing on basic eligibility of the children, but living arrangements may affect the amount of benefits paid. As in the adult categories, the assistance unit (one or more children and caretaker relative, if included) may receive less if household expenses are shared with nonrecipients or if the nonrecipients are contributing toward the recipients' support. However, the Supreme Court has ruled that it may not be assumed that the income of a person living in the home is available to the children if that person has no legal obligation for support. Only voluntary contributions may be considered, regardless of the income of the relative or other person living in the home. Therefore, the children may continue to be eligible for assistance if the mother lives with or marries a man who is not the father of the children.

This program, which has the basic purpose of preserving a family home for children deprived of parental support, has developed an odd set of incentives and disincentives in respect to family life. There are incentives to have children or for a childless person to take a related child into the home; incentives for divorce, separation, and desertion; and incentives to live with or marry a man who is not the father of the children rather than the father.

H.R. 1—Family Assistance Plan

The program of assistance to families with children proposed in H.R. 1 (as passed by the House of Representatives in 1971 (92d Congress)) defined the eligible unit as a family consisting of two or more individuals (at least one of whom is a child) related by blood, marriage, or adoption who are living together. This definition includes primary parent-child families with both parents in the home and would also include extended families. Any other relatives, or relatives other than parents who are caring for children, could be included for benefit purposes with their income and resources considered in determining eligibility and amount of benefits. The underlying assumption was that relatives living together constitute an economic unit and that their incomes are shared, whether or not there is a legal obligation for support.

Several exceptions to the basic definition were made, however. Recipients of assistance under the adult category program were included for purposes of defining a family but their income and resources were not to be considered in determining the amount of benefits payable to other family members. Other persons whose income and resources were not available to family members could be excluded, except for parents and stepparents.

Criteria for determining when an individual's income was not to be considered available were to be established by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. We assume that the criteria would have applied to exceptional circumstances only and would not have provided for inclusion or exclusion at the individual's option. Such an option would permit the inclusion of nonresponsible relatives if they had little or no income but would allow their exclusion when they had income or acquired income through earnings or other sources which would reduce the family benefit. This would defeat the purpose of a household definition and would be inconsistent with the concept of a household as an economic unit.

Although the program was designed to encourage family stability by assisting families with both parents in the home and recognizing extended families, various incentives and disincentives with potential effect on family structures were present:

- Incentive to have a child;
- Incentive for low-income fathers to remain in the home;
- Incentive for separation when income exceeded the break-even point if the income advantages of family splitting are perceived as having greater value than living together as a family;
- Disincentives for a mother to marry a man with income who is not the father of her children;
- Incentives for childless relatives with little or no income to join the family; and

- Disincentives for relatives with income to join or remain in family households. For instance, there would be a disincentive for employed older children, single adults, or other relatives with income to remain in the home if they are expected to make all income available to the family group. This would also discourage arrangements where a family with young children lives with older relatives in order to economize.

Although the basic family definition was designed to treat all related household members as a family, the required and allowable exceptions meant that some households would not be treated as families. If a parent or stepparent received assistance under the adult category he was not to be considered a member of the family for benefit purposes and his income would not reduce the benefit to other family members. However, if the parent's income was from other sources, he was considered a member of the family and his income would reduce the family benefit.

Other relatives in the home would not be considered as members of the family for benefit purposes if they received adult category assistance. If income was from other sources, a relative could be included as a family member for benefit purposes, or would be excluded as a member of the family for any purpose if the determination was made that his income was not available to other family members. Since a family, by definition, consisted of two or more members, no family would exist, and no benefits would be payable, if a child lived with a relative not receiving public assistance, such as a grandparent, whose income was not available to the child.

IN-KIND BENEFITS

Health Benefits

Medicare, like social security cash benefits, is concerned with individual eligibility. Coverage is limited to persons age 65 or over and, effective July 1, 1973, to disability insurance beneficiaries after they have received cash benefits for 2 years. Disabled beneficiaries include individuals receiving benefits as disabled widows and widowers between the ages of 50 and 65 and disabled children over 18 years of age. However, the primary conditions for medicare coverage are age or disability insurance status, not relationship or dependency status, as such.

Medicaid eligibility is largely linked to the categorical assistance programs. Individuals who are recipients of cash assistance under the adult categories and those who are included in AFDC assistance units are eligible for medicaid (except in one State which has no medicaid program). In addition, individuals or members of families who are not receiving cash payments but who would be eligible on the basis of income and other conditions relative to the appropriate category, are eligible to receive medicaid benefits. In States which extend coverage to the medically needy, individuals are eligible who meet the basic conditions for categorical eligibility but have incomes, after deducting medical costs, above the State's assistance payment standard up to the level specified by the State which, for Federal matching purposes, may be no more than one-third higher than the assistance standard.

Therefore, individual eligibility and not family or dependency status is required for aged, blind, or disabled persons. The only exception is that a spouse under age 65 who is included in the AABD payment as an essential person may receive medicaid benefits. This exception does not apply to the medically needy. Therefore, a man age 65 who has income slightly above the assistance standard may be eligible for medicaid under the medically needy program but his wife under age 65 is not eligible even though they depend on the same family income.

Similarly, since the categorical rules apply, families with children generally are treated the same under medicaid as they would be under AFDC. In order for a family to qualify, the children must be deprived of parental support because of the death, disability, or absence of a parent, or the unemployment of the father. However, States may elect to cover children under 21 who are eligible on the basis of income even though the conditions in respect to deprivation of parental support are not met. Eighteen States have adopted this provision which permits recognition of the needs of families with both parents in the home. However, only the children in such families and not the parents may receive medical benefits.

Food Stamps and Food Distribution

The unit considered for eligibility for these food subsidy programs is the household rather than the individual or related family members. A household is defined as a "group of persons, excluding roomers and boarders * * * who are not residents of an institution or boarding house, who are living as one economic unit sharing common cooking facilities and for whom food is customarily purchased in common."

The 1971 amendments to the Food Stamp Act added a provision which excluded households consisting of persons under 60 years of age unless all household members were related to each other. In June 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Moreno v. USDA, District of Columbia*) ruled this provision to be unconstitutional. The apparent intent of Congress was to deny food assistance to "hippie" communes as an attempt to combat the unconventional living arrangements popularly associated with them. As applied, however, other types of households were excluded, such as family groups with an unrelated friend living in the home. The Supreme Court upheld the district court's conclusion that the "unrelated person" provision created an irrational classification in violation of the equal protection components of the due process clause of the fifth amendment.

The basic definition recognizes living arrangements of related and/or nonrelated persons who live together in a family-type setting. It assumes that persons who live together share their income and resources at least in the purchase and preparation of food and that it is therefore appropriate to consider total household income in determining eligibility for a food subsidy. The household definition is also being challenged in the courts. A U.S. district court has granted a temporary restraining order (*Knowles v. Butz, N.D. California*) against the operation of regulations which determine eligibility on a household basis and which require that all individuals residing in the same living quarters be eligible for stamps in order for any stamps to be received.

Provisions which relate eligibility to the receipt of cash assistance benefits permit varying treatment of households depending on their makeup and sources of income. A household in which all members are recipients of assistance benefits is automatically eligible for food stamps or food commodities. This can result in assistance households receiving the minimum food stamp bonus or the full amount of distributed commodities even though total household income exceeds the eligibility level for other households of the same size. For households including assistance recipients and one or more nonrecipients of assistance, or households including nonrecipients only, eligibility is determined by comparing total household income to an eligibility level adjusted for household size.

An additional complication, and a move away from household consideration, will result from exclusion of some SSI recipients from the food subsidy programs. A 1973 amendment (Public Law 93-86) provides that a person who is receiving SSI benefits will not be considered a member of a household for food subsidy purposes if the SSI benefit and a State supplement, if any, is more than the assistance payment and food stamp bonus he would have received under current programs. If applied literally this could result in a household including an SSI recipient being eligible for benefits when his income is excluded while a comparable household with no SSI recipient is ineligible when total household income is considered.

[For further discussion of effects when food stamps are combined with other programs, see p. 201.]

The household definition provides an incentive for persons with low incomes to live together, a disincentive for persons with higher incomes to stay in the home, and a disincentive for assistance recipients to include nonrecipients in the household. Living together in order to economize sometimes can result in a loss of benefits.

Although the household definition appears to imply acceptance of living arrangements of extended families and households including nonrelated persons, congressional reluctance to assist "communes" indicates a limited acceptance of this type of arrangement. In addition, the household definition serves to limit eligibility by assuming that combined household income and resources are mutually available and shared regardless of relationship and support obligations among household members.

SOME PROBLEMS IN COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS

Effects of Differing Treatment of Family Members

1. OASDI AND SSI OR ADULT ASSISTANCE CATEGORIES

The assistance categories for the aged, blind, and disabled originally were designed to assist persons with risks to earnings comparable to those covered by the social security programs but who did not have sufficient coverage for social security entitlement in the early years of operation of that program. They were considered to be "residual" programs which would decline as social security coverage was extended. Although the numbers of old age assistance recipients decreased as social security coverage expanded, there was still a need for supple-

mentation of low incomes of some social security beneficiaries and other aged, blind, or disabled adults with little or no income.

The recently enacted SSI program recognizes the supplemental objective of the adult assistance program both in its title and in its administration by the same agency which administers social security benefits. The definition of blindness and disability under SSI is consistent with social security definitions, but differences in eligibility due to old age can result in different treatment of individuals and couples under SSI and OASDI. At the time they were enacted in 1935, both OAA and OAI covered individuals age 65 or over. Since then, retirement due to old age has been accepted under OAI for workers at age 62. Benefits are payable to wives at age 62, and to widows and dependent widowers at age 60. However, for OAA and SSI entitlement, old age continues to be defined as age 65.

Since the age definition is not congruent, assistance to supplement social security benefits is available only when the beneficiary reaches the assistance definition of old age even though he qualifies for social security benefits on the basis of age and his income is below the SSI benefit level. Under the social security programs, a worker may retire between the ages of 62 and 65 and receive an actuarially reduced benefit. If a man age 62 with a wife the same age accepts the reduced benefits because he is unable to find work, the couple is not eligible to receive a supplement until they reach age 65 even though their combined income is below the SSI benefit level.

In addition to age difference, treatment of married couples is affected by differing views of the dependency status of wives and differences in treatment of the earnings of husbands and wives. Consider a man aged 65 with a wife aged 62. He is eligible for the full social security benefit and his wife, as his dependent, is eligible for a benefit equal to one-half of the man's primary benefit. If his benefit is below \$150, he may be eligible for a supplemental payment from SSI. The SSI program would not consider the wife as a dependent of the husband or as eligible for an assistance supplement. Instead, her income is counted in determining the eligibility and amount payable to the husband. [The statute provides that the income and resources of an ineligible spouse living with the eligible individual are to be included in the income and resources of the eligible individual, whether or not available to him, except to the extent determined by the Secretary to be inequitable under the circumstances.]

Treatment of a wife as the husband's dependent in OAI and as responsible for her husband's support in SSI has other ramifications. Consider a couple, both age 65 or over, and eligible for both OAI and SSI. The husband receives \$100 per month in OAI benefits and the wife receives \$50. The couple is eligible for SSI benefits of \$65 per month. [The benefit level for a couple is \$195 with \$20 of other income disregarded.] Under the OAI retirement test, the social security benefits are reduced by one-half of all earnings in excess of \$2,100 a year and \$175 per month.⁶ If the husband works, his excess earnings reduce

⁶ Beginning in January 1974, these amounts will be \$2,400 per year and \$200 per month.

the wife's benefit as well as his own. Therefore, if the husband has regular earnings of \$475 per month, the OAI benefits are reduced to zero:

$$\left(\frac{\$475 - 175}{2} = \$150\right)^7$$

If the wife works, her share of the benefits (\$50) is reduced to zero when she has regular earnings of \$275 per month.

$$\left(\frac{\$275 - 175}{2} = \$50\right)$$

The husband continues to receive \$100 in OAI benefits if her earnings exceed \$275. Thus, earnings of the wife can receive more favorable treatment than earnings of the husband.

Under the SSI program, \$20 of income from any source is disregarded. In addition, the first \$65 of monthly earnings and one-half of the remainder above \$65 is disregarded; or the first \$85 plus one-half of the remainder if there is no other income to be disregarded. The break-even level when income is from earnings is \$475.

$$\left(\frac{\$475 - 85}{2} = \$195\right)$$

Therefore, if the husband earns \$475 per month, the couple is not eligible for OAI or SSI benefits. However, when the wife earns as much as \$295 per month, the couple is not eligible for supplemental SSI payments. This happens because the husband continues to receive an OAI payment of \$100 per month, \$20 of which is disregarded in computing the SSI payment. The wife's countable income from earnings is \$115,

$$\left(\frac{\$295 - 65}{2}\right) = \$115$$

and their combined countable income is \$195. Therefore, their total gross income when they are no longer eligible for an SSI payment (and medicaid) is \$475 when the husband works but only \$395 when the wife works.

2. OASDI AND AFDC

The position of wives and widows with minor children in their care is viewed differently under these programs. Under OASDI, the mother is included as caretaker of the children. She is not required to work and, in fact, the earnings disregard is viewed as a disincentive to employment since her share of the benefit is reduced if her earnings exceed \$2,100 a year and \$175 per month. However, she continues to receive benefits for the children.

⁷ Illustrations used here assume regular monthly earnings over a year's time which would reduce social security benefits to zero for the entire year. At lower earnings levels, differences in accounting periods (period of time over which income is counted in determining benefits) and method of reducing benefits would result in much more complicated effects. Under social security, which has an annual accounting period, the full monthly benefit is withheld until the estimated total annual reduction is accounted for. But SSI uses a quarterly rather than an annual accounting period. This could result in situations in which an individual or a couple receives SSI benefits during the time that social security benefits are withheld, but are not eligible for SSI when social security benefits are reinstated even though monthly earnings are the same throughout the year.

Under AFDC, the mother is included as the caretaker but she is expected to work, if child care is available, to support or assist in the support of herself and her children. In this program the less liberal earnings disregard (\$30 a month plus one-third of the remainder plus work expenses) is seen as an incentive for employment. Therefore, if a family is deserted by the father or the parents are divorced, the mother is expected to work if the family receives assistance under AFDC. with the earnings disregard seen as an incentive for employment. If the father dies and the children are entitled to social security benefits, the mother is included and the earnings test is seen as a disincentive to employment.

In another respect, however, AFDC may treat a mother more liberally than does social security. If the only eligible child is a student between the ages of 18 and 22 (21 for AFDC), the mother caring for the child is not included under social security but is included under AFDC. Such mothers and students whose income is low would gain more favorable treatment under AFDC than under OASDI.

Both programs have essentially the same provisions if the mother remarries. When a mother receiving social security benefits remarries, her share of benefits is discontinued but the children continue to be eligible. Similarly, the children in an AFDC family continue to be eligible if the mother marries a man who is not the father of the children. Although the basic premise that the stepfather is not responsible for the children is essentially the same, there has been considerable reluctance to accept this in respect to the income-tested AFDC program. However, there is a difference in that, for entitlement purposes in the social security program, an assumption is made that the stepfather is supporting the children if they live with him. This could result in a rather anomalous situation. When an AFDC mother remarries, the children continue to receive AFDC because the stepfather is not held responsible for their support. However, if the stepfather dies, the children are entitled to social security benefits on his wage record because it is assumed that the children were dependent on the stepfather.

The operation of the family maximum in the social security program lessens the effect of the earnings test or remarriage of the mother if there are two or more eligible children. If the family consists of a mother and three or more children, there is no reduction in benefits since three children receive the maximum family benefit (see table 1). Two children receive the maximum family benefit if total family benefits are \$254 a month or less. (A family could receive \$254 if the father's average wage for benefit calculations was \$239 a month.) When family benefits are higher than \$254, there is some reduction if the mother has excess earnings since benefits for two children are less than the family maximum. For instance, if the family maximum is \$317, the mother loses \$27 in benefits if she marries or has regular earnings of \$230 per month. At a family maximum of \$495, the mother loses \$90 if she marries or has earnings of \$355. When there is only one child entitled to benefits, the family benefit will always be reduced if the mother marries or has excess earnings. Except for benefits near the minimum, the mother's share is one-half of the benefits payable to a mother and one child. If a mother and one child receive \$200 in social security benefits, the mother will lose her share (\$100) if she marries or has earnings of \$375 per month. If the total benefit is \$320, it will be reduced by \$160 if the mother marries or earns \$495 per month.

TABLE 1.—*Examples of monthly social security primary benefits, family maximum and benefits by family size*

Benefit and family type	Benefits at average monthly wages ¹ of—							
	\$76 or less	\$125	\$239	\$300	\$400	\$500	\$600	\$700
Primary benefit ²	84. 50	125. 10	169. 40	193. 10	233. 30	269. 70	309. 80	342. 50
Survivor benefit:								
Family maximum: Mother and 2 chil-								
dren, or 3 children.....	126. 80	187. 70	254. 10	316. 80	425. 70	494. 80	548. 20	599. 40
Mother and 1 child, or 2 children.....	126. 80	187. 70	254. 10	289. 70	350. 00	404. 55	464. 70	513. 80
1 child.....	84. 50	93. 90	127. 10	144. 80	175. 00	202. 30	232. 40	256. 90

¹ Average covered wages as calculated for benefit purposes.

² Benefit which would be paid to a retired worker at age 65, or a disabled worker.

Effects of Different Treatment of Earnings

1. AFDC AND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

The differences in treatment of earnings in the AFDC and social security programs can result in different treatment of similar families when some are eligible for benefits from both programs.

When a family consisting of a mother and three or more children receive both social security and AFDC benefits, and the mother is employed, only the AFDC earnings disregard applies since her earnings do not reduce the social security payments.⁸ This would usually be true of a family with two children since the relatively small AFDC supplement for which these families would be eligible would be reduced to zero before the earnings test would apply to the mother's social security benefits. One result of this is that a family receiving social security benefits becomes ineligible for AFDC with lower earnings than a comparable family with no social security income. Consider a family of four persons receiving \$230 from social security in a State with a payment standard of \$300. The family would be eligible for an AFDC supplement of \$70 (see table 2). If the mother works and has work-related expenses of \$60 a month, the family is ineligible for AFDC with earnings of \$225. The family with no social security would continue to receive an AFDC payment of \$230 to supplement the mother's earnings of \$225. At this point their gross cash income is the same (\$455), but the AFDC recipients continue to be eligible for a food stamp bonus of \$24 and the full amount of medicaid costs. The AFDC family would continue to be eligible for AFDC, food stamps, and medicaid until the mother's earnings reach \$570 per month.

TABLE 2.—*Illustration of combined monthly receipt of social security and/or AFDC and earnings—4-person family*

Income source	Mother and 3 children with social security and AFDC benefits		Mother and 3 children with AFDC benefits only	
	I	II	III	IV
Social security.....	\$230	\$230	0	0
AFDC.....	70	0	\$230	0
Earnings.....	0	225	¹ 225	\$570
Total income.....	300	455	455	570

¹ With work expenses of \$60, countable income is \$70.

Receipt of any other unearned income, such as veterans' benefits or support payments, would have similar results. The breakeven point is lower when a family has unearned income since the AFDC payment is reduced by 100 percent of such income but is reduced by 67 percent of earnings over \$30 per month minus work expenses.

At low levels of social security benefits for a mother and one child, both earnings disregards would apply over a range of earnings. If

⁸ Her earnings do not reduce the social security payments because the children remain eligible for the maximum family benefit in any case.

the minimum amount of family social security benefits (\$127) is received in a State with a payment standard of \$200, the family would receive an AFDC payment of \$73 (see table 3). With earnings up to \$175 a month, social security benefits remain the same but AFDC is reduced by two-thirds of earnings above \$30 less work expenses. If work expenses are \$60, the AFDC payment will be \$36 when the mother earns \$175. For earnings above \$175, the mother's social security benefit will be reduced by 50 percent of the excess but this reduction will be offset by an increase in AFDC. The AFDC earnings disregard of one-third of additional earnings continues to apply and the family is ineligible for AFDC when earnings reach \$292 per month. The mother continues to receive the minimum of \$85 social security benefit for the child. A comparable family with no social security benefits or other income would be eligible for AFDC, food stamps, and medical care until the mother earns \$420 per month.

TABLE 3.—*Illustration of combined monthly receipt of social security, AFDC, and earnings—2-person family*

	Mother and 1 child with minimum social security benefits and AFDC			
	I	II	III	IV
Social security-----	\$127	\$127	\$85	\$85
AFDC-----	73	36	22	0
Earnings-----	0	175	259	292
Total income-----	200	338	366	377

2. AFDC, SSI, AND OASDI

Some of the problems resulting from categorical treatment of family members are evident when a family includes persons eligible for benefits under all of these programs. A parent (for illustrative purposes, the father) who is aged, blind, or disabled is treated as an individual when he is eligible for SSI. The wife who is not eligible for SSI and minor children are considered as a separate assistance unit under AFDC. However, if the father's income makes him ineligible for SSI benefits, he is included in the AFDC assistance unit. This difference in treatment of family units according to the source of income of the parent, coupled with differences in benefit levels between the two programs, can result in quite different treatment of similar families—and of the same family if the source of income changes. The higher individual benefit under SSI provides additional assistance to families if the father is eligible under that category, but this favorable treatment does not extend to similar families with aged, blind, or disabled fathers receiving only social security, veterans benefits, or other income.

Illustration: A family consisting of a disabled father, mother, and two children lives in a State with an AFDC payment standard of \$250 for three persons and \$300 for four persons. In the first instance (see table 4), the father receives SSI benefits only; in the

second instance, he receives social security benefits of \$130; and in the third instance his social security benefits are increased to \$150. The wife and children receive social security benefits equal to one-half of the primary benefit at this level of payment.

TABLE 4.—*Illustration of combined monthly receipt of social security, SSI, and AFDC*

	I	II	III	IV
Father:				
Social security	0	\$130	\$150	\$224
SSI	\$130	20	0	0
Mother and children:				
Social security	0	65	75	176
AFDC	250	185	175	0
Total family income	380	400	300	400

¹ AFDC payment includes the father and is adjusted to consider his income.

The income of the third family is \$100 less than the total income of the second family in which the father has the same income but part of it is received under the SSI program. As shown in column IV, the father would have to have a social security benefit of \$224 in order for the family income to reach \$400. (At this level of benefits, the family maximum is more than 150 percent of the primary benefit.)

In 14 States with AFDC payment standards at or below \$225 for a family of four persons, the family would be ineligible for AFDC when the father's social security benefit is \$150 per month. The family's cash income would be reduced in amounts varying from \$40 to \$123 when the father is no longer eligible for SSI benefits.

The problem is further compounded if the father has earnings. (See table 5.) The earnings disregard is more liberal under SSI than under AFDC. Benefit losses = $\left(\frac{\text{Earnings} - \$65}{2}\right)$, or $\left(\frac{\text{Earnings} - \$85}{2}\right)$ if he has no other income. But, if his earnings are high enough to make him ineligible for SSI, he is included in the AFDC family and the AFDC disregard applies. $\left(\frac{\text{Earnings} - \$30}{3}\right)$. Work expenses are also disregarded in AFDC but unless the work expenses compensate for the higher disregard under SSI, the father will have more countable income when he is included in the AFDC family. By earning those few added dollars that make the father ineligible for SSI, the father would cause significant losses in total family income.

TABLE 5.—*Combined monthly receipt of social security, SSI, AFDC, and earnings*

	I	II	III
Father:			
Earnings.....	0	¹ \$155	² \$165
Social security.....	\$100	100	100
SSI.....	50	5	0
Mother and 2 children:			
Social security.....	50	50	50
AFDC.....	200	200	³ 90
Total family income.....	400	510	405

¹ Countable income is \$45 from earnings and \$80 from social security.

² With work expenses of \$30, the father's countable income is \$60 from earnings and \$100 from social security.

³ Father is included in AFDC family.

In this example, an increase of \$10 in the father's earnings decreases the family income by \$105 per month.

3. FOOD SUBSIDY AND CASH BENEFIT PROGRAMS

Combining food programs with cash benefit programs further illustrates the complexities and inconsistencies which can result from the variations in treatment of individuals, families, and households. In the food subsidy programs, the household is the basic unit and a household consisting only of recipients of public assistance is automatically eligible. The amount of the food stamp bonus (total allotment for household size minus the required purchase price) decreases as family income increases. The full amount of food commodities is received by eligible households. However, under certain conditions recipients of SSI will not be eligible to receive food subsidies and are not to be considered members of households for purposes of determining household eligibility for these programs. This will change the household concept in some situations. Differences in treatment of households depending on the source of income of household members will be accentuated.

a. Food stamps and AFDC

A household consisting only of AFDC recipients may participate in the food stamp program even though its income exceeds the eligibility level for nonrecipient households. This is likely to happen when a parent has earnings and continues to receive an AFDC supplement. Therefore, an AFDC family can receive at least the minimum food stamp bonus (or the full amount of food commodities) even though its income exceeds that of an ineligible nonassistance household. For instance, an AFDC family of three persons with \$400 total income from AFDC and earnings may receive a small food stamp bonus (\$18)

while a nonrecipient family of three persons with a net income of more than \$313 is not eligible. (Some exclusions from gross income are allowed in the food stamp programs but these are not as generous as those allowed in AFDC.) However, the AFDC family would not be eligible for food stamps if a nonrecipient joins the household, even though the additional person has no income. The net income maximum for a four person household is \$387 per month.

b. Food stamps, SSI, and OASDI

The intent of the provision which makes some SSI recipients ineligible for food subsidies is to "cash out" these programs, or to provide SSI beneficiaries with the cash equivalent of the food stamp bonus. In a few States with low payment levels in the current adult assistance categories, the Federal SSI benefit level will compensate for the loss of food stamps. States with high assistance payments may supplement the SSI benefit and may add an amount equal to the food stamp bonus. (For illustrative purposes, the Federal SSI benefit level is used.)

Since the exclusion from food subsidies is related to receipt of SSI, an individual with equivalent income from another source could participate in the food stamp program.

	Amount of benefit	Food stamp bonus
Individual receiving:		
SSI.....	\$130.....	0
Social security and SSI.....	\$150.....	0
Social security.....	\$150 to \$169.99.....	\$11
	\$170 to \$183.....	10

If there are other persons in the household, exclusion of the SSI recipient has other effects. For instance, consider a 65-year-old man receiving SSI benefits with a wife under 65 years of age. The wife may receive food stamps until she reaches age 65 and is included in the SSI benefits. At this point the household loses food stamp eligibility even though there may be little or no difference in total cash income.

TABLE 6.—*Combined monthly receipt of social security, SSI, and food stamps*

	Husband age 65; wife age 62				Wife, age 65
	I	II	III	IV	V
Husband:					
Social security.....	0	\$100	\$130	\$150	\$130
SSI.....	\$130	50	20	0	20
Wife:					
Social security.....	0	50	65	75	65
SSI.....	0	0	0	0	0
Food stamp bonus.....	38	30	28	21	0
Total cash income.....	130	200	215	225	215
Total cash and in-kind.....	168	230	243	246	215

¹ SSI benefit for husband and wife.

The couple has the same combined cash income in columns III and V but in the latter instance they are not eligible for food stamp participation because both receive SSI.

Although some SSI recipients are excluded from the food stamp program, a reverse kind of situation can occur when an SSI recipient, such as a grandparent, who is not eligible for food stamps, lives with a family which is eligible to participate in the food stamp program. Under these circumstances, the household can receive food stamps when the grandparent is eligible for SSI but may not receive them if his income is from some other source.

	I	II	III
Grandparent:			
Social security	0	\$130	\$150
SSI	\$130	20	0
Family of 3 persons:			
AFDC (or other income)	250	250	250
Food stamp bonus	24	24	0
Total cash income	380	400	400
Total cash and in-kind	404	424	400

In situations described in I and II, the grandparent is not a member of the household for food stamp purposes but in III all members are considered and their income exceeds the eligibility level for a four-person household (\$387).

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined some of the ways in which families are treated under the major programs designed to provide income maintenance to individuals and families. We have found that programs differ in definitions of eligible individuals, family units, and households and that many types of family structures are recognized in some fashion. This finding should not be surprising in a society which includes many forms of family structures and living arrangements. However, the differences in program definitions of eligible individuals and families have consequences or potential effects on choices of living arrangements and also can result in inequitable treatment of comparable family units. An internal rationale is usually discernible when programs are viewed separately, but potential effects when more than one program reaches the same family defy logic. It is small wonder that many program manuals of policies and instructions appear to be translations of Alice in Wonderland into bureaucratic language.

As we have seen, programs differ in definitions of ages of eligible persons, treatment of income, work requirements, earnings disregards, recognition of support obligations, benefit levels by category, and circumstances under which individuals are or are not included as family or household members. This list is not exhaustive. There are many other factors which can affect families and add to administrative complexities, such as differences in accounting periods, assets tests, and treatment of earnings and other income of various family members not discussed here.

A common element across most programs is the consideration of relationship and support obligations, but there are considerable differences in the way this is treated. In general, the major social insurance programs are concerned with legal relationships and obligations for support of dependents as a basis for determining the entitlement of dependents for benefits. These programs are not concerned primarily with living arrangements of beneficiaries. The need-based programs, on the other hand, emphasize the determination of financial need of recipients, and are concerned with responsibility of relatives for current support and with living arrangements and family structures as they affect current need. Although the major social security program includes some conditions which may affect decisions as to family formation or dissolution, it is relatively neutral as to family structure and the trend in legislation is to make it even more neutral. By contrast, the public assistance programs include provisions which appear more likely to affect choices as to family structure and living arrangements. They illustrate some of the conflicting and inconsistent effects of attempting to provide preferential treatment to selected types of families:

- Preference for one type of family excludes others in similar circumstances. The AFDC program is the prime example. By selecting families with children deprived of parental support because of specified risks, families headed by the mother or by an incapacitated father or an unemployed father in some States are given preference and two-parent families are generally excluded. This appeared rational in the early years of the program since children in the defined families were considered most likely to be in need. This type of preferential treatment is increasingly difficult to justify since there are many families headed by working or employable men with incomes as low as the incomes of recipient families. The introduction of work incentives in the form of earnings disregards has accentuated the inequitable treatment of families based on structural differences.
- Exclusion of a particular type of family or living arrangement can result in excluding households other than those in the intended target group. An example is the food stamp program provision (since declared unconstitutional) for excluding households consisting of persons under 60 years of age unless they are all related to each other. The intent was to avoid assisting "hippie" communes but the provision also excluded noncommune households such as middle-aged persons who shared living arrangements to economize, or families who had an unrelated friend living with them.
- Preferential categorical treatment of individuals can result in inconsistent treatment of families of which they are members. For instance, when aged, blind, or disabled parents of minor children receive SSI payments, the family benefits from the higher SSI benefit level. If the parent's income is entirely from another source, such as social security or veterans pension, he is not given preferential treatment as an individual but is included in the AFDC family and family income drops to the AFDC benefit level.
- A household definition appears to accept all types of living arrangements but has the effect of assuming that the income of non-

responsible persons is available to other members of the household, even though support by the nonresponsible person could not be enforced otherwise.

An examination of the differences in treatment of families by benefit programs raises questions of the propriety, as well as the feasibility, of public policy directed toward influencing beneficiary behavior. As reflected in challenges to various legislative and administrative provisions in recent years, questions are being raised about the appropriateness or even the constitutionality of attempting to influence or control behavior through the granting or withholding of benefits; or by applying restrictions to selected groups identified by their relationship to a particular benefit program or need for a particular type of assistance. Court challenges of policies and judicial opinions also reflect the fact that freedom of choice and freedom of association are important values in our society. Family security is equally important and benefit programs, regardless of how they are designed, are likely to contain factors which may influence choices; and may compete with or complement basic social, economic, and cultural institutions which influence family life.

There is also a question of the efficacy of using public programs to influence family structures. As illustrated above, attempts to give preference to or exclude particular family types often have inconsistent and inequitable results. It is probably impossible to design programs that are completely neutral and complete neutrality is not necessarily the only objective. It should be possible, though, to design programs with the view of supporting conditions for family life, with a minimum of distortion of choices for economic reasons.

The problem at present is not simply one of trying to arrive at a consistent definition of a "family," since there is no unique family pattern with general applicability. Consideration of individuals and their dependents as the core family unit, as in the social security program, appears to be the most workable and consistent treatment of family units and family responsibility. This has basic legal and social sanctions both in determining family need and in designating legal responsibility for support. However, the basic problem now is that we have a profusion of income maintenance and income subsidy programs rather than a coherent income support system. Programs have been developed to meet particular needs or to serve particular groups and designed as if they served a unique body of constituents. As more of the population is covered by social security, veterans programs, other retirement programs, or cash and in-kind need-based programs, the problems of overlapping and inconsistencies become much more apparent.

Taken together, most of the population is covered by a retirement program or might find a program to meet a particular need. A major problem at present for administrators and beneficiaries alike is to determine the categories or programs which fit the applicant and his set of circumstances and then to determine how they relate or do not relate to each other when they reach the same individual or family.

Ad hoc adjustments of individual programs will provide no solution to the basic problem. Instead, it is necessary to begin to look at the present patchwork as a system—to reconsider overall objectives and the appropriate functions of an income maintenance system rather

than continue to maintain a diversity of programs with original rationales which are no longer appropriate, and with proliferating complexities as more of the population is covered.

In the short run, a start can be made on developing a network of programs rather than a patchwork. A desirable method would be the initiation of a legislative mechanism for examining and minimizing the effects of overlapping programs and inconsistencies in treatment of individuals and families. Much can be done in present legislation and, as legislation is amended, in coordinating programs to attain more consistent and equitable treatment of beneficiaries—from using consistent definitions of age of eligible students, to the treatment of individuals and dependents as family units rather than continuing the categorical emphasis which can defeat program purposes and detract from, rather than enhance, family unity.

POVERTY, LIVING STANDARDS, AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

By LEE RAINWATER

INTRODUCTION

Reflection on the past decade of the war on poverty reveals many paradoxes.¹ The most central is that while "poverty" has been reduced by almost half, we have no sense of a reduction in the prevalence of human problems associated with poverty. The proportion of all persons living below the poverty line decreased year by year from 1959 to 1969—from 22.4 to 12.2 percent of all persons.² In 1970 this decline halted; poverty increased slightly to 12.6 percent, but this seems to have been a product of the recession. Reductions in the poverty population seem to go hand in hand with increases in per capita personal income. No more elaborate explanation of the decline in poverty over the past decade is necessary than to say that the people at the bottom of the heap got their share of increasing affluence, and that this shift in their income moved almost half of them above the poverty line. If economic growth continues at its long-term rate, it is not overly risky to predict the virtual elimination of poverty by around 1980.

But we know this is ridiculous. Any speaker is likely to meet with audience disbelief if he argues that in 1972 the poverty problem is almost half of what it was in 1959. His listeners will be quick to point to the undiminished intensity of a broad range of human and social problems.

If one leaves aside the statistical indicators of problems and looks instead at the quality of life of families at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale one is impressed by the extent to which it seems hardly to have changed over longer periods of time than a decade. The people who would have been considered poor on an "eyeball to eyeball" basis in 1959 still seem poor today. The people who felt themselves poor, deprived, oppressed, and wasted by society in 1959

¹ The research on which this paper is based in part has been supported by a Public Health Service grant, MH-18635, and earlier by MH-15567. In the development of the ideas presented here I have profited greatly from discussions over the years with several of my colleagues, particularly Richard P. Coleman, Phillips Cutright, Herbert J. Gans, and Martin Rein.

The lessons of the 1960's war on poverty have been analyzed in Joseph E. Kershaw, *Government Against Poverty*, Brookings Institution, 1970; Robert A. Levine, *The Poor Ye Need Not Have With You: Lessons From the War on Poverty*, M.I.T. Press, 1970; Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform*, Aldine-Atherton (revised edition in press); Daniel P. Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding*, The Free Press, 1969; James Sundquist, *On Fighting Poverty*, Basic Books, 1969; and Gilbert Y. Steiner, *The State of Welfare*, Brookings Institution, 1971.

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 81, *Characteristics of the Low Income Population, 1970*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1971. Table A, p. 2.

still seem to feel poor, deprived, oppressed, and wasted today. Indeed, a reader who systematically compares studies carried out in low income slum or ghetto communities in the 1930's with recent ones is struck by the tremendous similarity across that timespan in the style of life and in the kinds of human difficulties and problems confronting people. No one who was acquainted with the lower-lower class described in the 1930s' studies by such researchers as Warner, Davis and Gardner, or Whyte would feel at all surprised by the style of life in Boston's white slums of today.³ And no one acquainted with Negro lower class life as dealt with by authors such as Cayton and Drake or Allison Davis would find basic change in the conditions of life of today's ghettos (although he might be surprised by the nature of ideological and political expression).⁴

Yet the material base for life would have changed dramatically. Today's low income person has available to him perhaps two-and-a-half times as much in the way of goods and services.

To find what has not changed in the economic situation of the poor, we do not have far to look. Although the incomes of people at the bottom of the income hierarchy (as in the middle and at the top) have changed dramatically, the pattern of inequality in income distribution has varied only marginally since before World War II. There is some reason to believe that there has been a slight shift toward a more equal distribution during the depression and through World War II.⁵ Since 1947, however, there seem to have been hardly any changes in the income distribution. The proportion of the population with incomes less than half the median family income was 18.9 percent in 1947—it was 18.9 percent in 1970. (It had reached a high of 20.9 percent in 1954 and a low of 18.3 percent in 1968).⁶ The post-

³ See for earlier descriptions of lower class family and community life W. Lloyd Warner, et al., *Yankee City*, one volume abridged edition, Yale University Press, 1963; Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner and Mary R. Gardner, *Deep South*, University of Chicago Press, 1941; Allison Davis, "The Motivation of the Underprivileged Worker," in *Industry and Society*, W. F. White, editor, McGraw-Hill, 1946; Allison Davis, *Social Class Influences Upon Learning*, Harvard University Press, 1948; William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1943. For studies after World War II, see Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers*, Free Press, 1962; Gerald E. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, University of Chicago Press, 1968; Lee Rainwater, Richard P. Coleman, and Gerald Handel, *Working Man's Wife*, Oceana Publications, 1959; Lee Rainwater, *And the Poor Get Children*, Quadrangle Books, 1960.

⁴ For studies of lower class black communities, see Davis, Gardner, and Gardner, op. cit.; Davis, op. cit.; Horace Cayton and Sinclair Drake, *Black Metropolis*, Harper & Row, 1962; John Rohrer and Monro Edmundson, *The Eighth Generation Grows Up*, New York, Harper & Row, 1960; Hyman Lewis, *Blackways of Kent*, University of North Carolina, 1955; Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, Harper & Row, 1965; Elliott Liebow, *Tally's Corner*, Little, Brown, 1967; Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside*, Columbia University Press, 1969; Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls*, Aldine-Atherton, 1970; and David Shultz, *Coming Up Black*, Prentice-Hall, 1969.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Income Distribution in the United States* by Herman P. Miller (a 1960 monograph), U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1966, pp. 12-28, and U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 80, *Income in 1970 of Families and Persons in the United States*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1971, table 14, p. 28.

⁶ Victor R. Fuchs, "Comments on Measuring the Low Income Population," in Lee Soltow, editor, *Six Papers on the Size Distribution of Income*, National Bureau of Economic Research, 1969, p. 200, and Current Population Survey, *Incomes in 1970*, op. cit.

World War II economy was capable of practically eradicating poverty in a generation—if poverty is defined as having to live on less than half of the median family income at the generation's beginning. But the post-World War II economy does not seem to contain anything approaching automatic mechanisms to significantly change the share of the income that people on the bottom receive.

The balance of this paper will consider the theoretical and empirical base for the assertion that *only a relative definition of poverty has any relevance for the human concerns that lie behind Americans' interest in poverty as a public policy issue.*

POVERTY AND THE FAMILY

Various studies of poor communities from the 1930's to the present deal in some detail with the family life of the poor as well as with interactions between family patterns and local community participation. From those studies it is possible to condense the principal outlines of family relations among the poor.

A descriptive account of those family patterns leaves open the question of their dynamics or causes. Some have argued that family behavior is determined more by social status (indexed by educational level or occupational prestige) than by income. The emphasis in the literature on social class and on class-related subcultures has tended to reinforce this belief. Yet the one systematic attempt to assess the relative impact of status versus income variables on family events suggests strongly and consistently that income is the most powerful socioeconomic variable in its impact on family behavior, and that whatever impact social status variables have on family behavior is by virtue of their effect on income and not direct.⁷ The income effect is even more powerful if one takes into account not just current income but also the effect of "permanent income" or, from the individual's perspective, expected future income.

It has sometimes been argued that the family behavior of low income populations differs from that of those in the middle of the income distribution because the poor have different values and preferences concerning marriage and family behavior. Until recently community studies of lower class areas did not systematically address this issue, and in their manner of presenting findings sometimes seemed to support such a view.

More recently, however, since the issue of the relationship of class, subcultures and values and preferences has been confronted directly, there seems good reason to believe that there is no distinctive set of values regarding family life in the lower class. Instead lower class people seem to have firmly conventional notions of what marriage and family life should be like. Even though behavior very often diverges from those conceptions, the divergence is regarded as an unfortunate consequence of difficulties in life. The alternative value system of the lower class seems to exist more in the minds of middle class romantics (and pessimists) than in the wishes of lower class people themselves.

⁷ See the three articles by Phillips Cutright dealing with "Income and Family Events," in the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, November 1970 ("Getting Married"), February 1971 ("Income, Family Size and Consumption"), and May 1971 ("Marital Stability").

In that sense the values and conceptions of the good life held by lower class people are essentially those of the stable working class world view. Where incomes are higher working class families are able to act in terms of these conventional ideals. In the lives of lower class people events continually conspire to frustrate such aspirations.⁸

It is likely that being on welfare for more than a short time tends to confirm their lower future income prospects. Having to stay on welfare brings home forcefully the fact that one does not have much chance of significantly improving one's condition in life. When, on the other hand, a family has had previous experience of not being poor and temporarily ends up on welfare (for example, on the aid to families with dependent children-unemployed fathers program after exhausting unemployment benefits) the situation of poverty can be defined as temporary and behavior will not be as much affected.

The principal family concomitants of living in the poverty milieu can be characterized in fairly straightforward ways.

(1) The lower class milieu affects family formation quite dramatically. At a lower- and working-class levels couples expect to marry earlier than at middle class ones, although the difference is not as great as it was two generations ago. Even in terms of their own age norms for marriage, it is likely that more people end up married earlier than they feel is best at the lower class level than is true at higher status levels. Often the marriages are forced by premarital pregnancies. Such pregnancies are common at all class levels (and are experienced by about a quarter of all brides) but it seems likely that marriages are more often truly forced by the pregnancy in the lower and working class than the middle class—in the middle class getting pregnant is often the prospective wife's way of bringing the engagement to a close.⁹ In addition to marriages which begin with a pregnancy already in progress, a much larger proportion of poor families are formed by the birth of an illegitimate child. That is most dramatically apparent in the case of nonwhites both because the illegitimacy rate is so much higher, and because white mothers of illegitimate children are more likely to give them up for adoption.¹⁰

The overall result of these mating patterns is that at the lower class level families start earlier, and at a time when the couple, or the mother alone, is not well-established in adult status. Growing up in a lower class world and expecting to have no better prospects are dynamic factors in producing early marriages and early pregnancies. Many lower class individuals see no more attractive alternatives and therefore do not resist strongly the pressures of their peer group for early sexual participation and toward early marriages to establish one's adult independence and autonomy. High status confers both a wider range of activities signalling grown-up status and more to be lost by becoming involved prematurely in family formation.

⁸ See Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls*, op. cit. pp. 43-76.

⁹ For discussions of the data on this issue and some of the contradictions in those data see Lolajean C. Coombs, Ronald Freedman, Judith Friedman, and William F. Pratt, "Premarital Pregnancy, Status Before and After Marriage," *American Journal of Sociology*, March 1970, p. 800-820, and Phillips Cutright, "The Teen-age Sexual Revolution and the Myth of an Abstinent Past," *Family Planning Perspectives*, January 1972, pp. 24-31.

¹⁰ Phillips Cutright, *Illegitimacy in the United States: 1920-68*, Final Report to the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, October 1970, U.S. Government Printing Office, forthcoming.

(2) Within marriage, lower class families have more children more rapidly than higher status families. It is by now well established that the larger family sizes at the lower status levels are not a result of a desire for them but are a product of insufficiently institutionalized family planning practices.¹¹ If family planning programs provided the resources to allow lower class families to have only the wanted number of children they would not be larger than higher status families.

Because the poverty line is tied to family size, there is a direct relationship between lower class fertility patterns and the prevalence of poverty. If lower class families had only the number of children that they wanted, poverty would be cut nearly in half.¹² (However, as we will argue below, it may be that the direct connection between family size and poverty lines does not properly reflect the social-psychological basis of feeling poor.)

Marital relations within the lower class have been consistently described as characterized by a high degree of separateness and a fairly rigid division of labor between the husband and wife.¹³ This pattern hardly can be a direct consequence of low income but it can be understood as part of the adaptive apparatus lower class people have developed to cope with the uncertainty and marginality of their lives. The more unstable a family's economic situation, the more its members are thrown on their own and the less likely they are to feel that they can rely on each other for emotional support. Not having enough money to properly operate a family means that the husband is constantly vulnerable to accusations of being inadequate or an incompetent provider, and the wife is constantly vulnerable to accusations of not being sufficiently energetic in making do. The greater failure is his, of course, and the awareness of it often leads lower class men to feel uncomfortable in their homes, and to spend as much time as possible with their peers—other men who understand how tough life is.

These factors produce a common pattern of endemic tension and dissatisfaction within lower class marriages. They also tend to confer greater de facto authority on the wife than is found where the man achieves more success as breadwinner. The matrifocal character of lower-class families, much commented upon in the discussion of the Negro family, in fact is found in many societies where there is an economically marginal lower class group.

Early in marriage, lower class couples often have a good deal of difficulty "settling down." It is not at all uncommon for there to be several temporary separations.¹⁴ Where the marriage continues, the husband and wife often both experience a period of learning to take their marital responsibilities more seriously, and growing pride in their ability to do so. For women, this happens naturally as part of carrying out their wifely and motherly duties; for men there is more often a sense of effort and consequently a more sharply defined sense of pride at having turned their backs on the more interesting and rewarding world of their peers.

¹¹ Norman B. Ryder and Charles Westoff, *Reproduction in the United States: 1965*, Princeton University Press, 1971.

¹² Phillips Cutright, "Family Income, Family Size and Consumption," op. cit. p. 172.

¹³ Rainwater, Coleman and Handel, op. cit., Gans, op. cit., Mirra Komarovsky, *Blue Collar Marriage*, Random House, 1964.

¹⁴ Rainwater, *And the Poor Get Children*, op. cit., and Lee Rainwater, *Family Design*, Aldine Publishing Co., 1965.

But, because family life is cramped and limited by skimpy resources available for living it, a sense of depression and lowered energy often grows on the part of lower class husbands and wives. Maintaining the marriage and family is important as a sign both of personal efficacy and respectability, but the interpersonal rewards in the family are not very great. Wives complain over and over again that all their husbands do is sit in front of the television and drink beer or go to sleep on the couch. Husbands complain that their wives complain all the time.

All these problems are exacerbated to the degree that lower class families live in highly homogeneous communities. Consistently, when socioeconomic status is controlled differences persist between Negroes and whites in various kinds of family problems. One of the most likely causes is a contextual effect. That is because of patterns of residential segregation making Negroes much more likely to live in neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor and economically marginal people. In the past this also has been true of the white lower class. It has not been difficult for commentators to find parallels in earlier descriptions of white slums to descriptions of the "tangle of pathologies" in the black ghetto. However, concentrated neighborhoods of very poor white people have almost disappeared from American cities. One can still find a few such neighborhoods in Boston, but in most American cities lower class families live dispersed in stable working class neighborhoods. The result is that white lower class families live in neighborhoods which have more of an infrastructure of community control than the black lower class neighborhoods. For blacks, of course, community control is undermined additionally by the sense of hostility and distance between local residents and representatives of formal social control agencies such as the police, social workers, and schools.¹⁵

Where the community is concentrated lower class, one is much more likely to get the growth of street institutions which provide alternatives to the family for interesting and validating things to do. This is again most dramatically self-apparent in lower class black communities where the attractions of the street represent a constant alternative without very robust competition from domestic life in most societies. Lower class wives have feared the destruction of their families by the greater attractiveness of the world out there—other women, drink, and gambling are the classic threats. Historically, where the man's position as provider has been weak enough, he too has feared the attractions of the street for his wife: often he knows that it is more the wife's desire for "respectability" that keeps her from where the action is than the value she places on what he does for his family.

(3) It is with respect to children, however, that the character of the community interacts most vigorously with family dynamics. Their experience of the world teaches lower class people to take a dim view of human nature. When this world view is applied to children it tends to take the form of great anxiety lest the children, like so many others, turn out to be "bad ones." Strictness, obedience, and staying out of trouble come to be emphasized in lower (and working) class child-rearing. To be successful, however, this strategy requires that the

¹⁵ We are not referring here to formally conferred community control as in community action programs or model cities programs, but rather to the informal block level control exercised as a matter of course by residents of the neighborhood. Formal community control probably has very little to do with this kind of institutionalized but not official social control.

parents have effective control over their children's activities. Such control is possible in communities in which like-minded adults will support the strategy.¹⁶ Where this kind of adult community solidarity is not present, the parents' only alternative is to isolate the child. This strategy is often pursued but of necessity begins to break down once the child goes to school. Only a very energetic parent, often one who can press older children into service, can maintain this kind of surveillance for long. To do so with legitimacy requires that the child perceive his parents to be operating in his best interest, however unreasonably strict they seem, and that he believe there is some hope for a payoff from living up to these strict standards.

The economic marginality, instability, and conflict of many lower class family situations tend to undercut the legitimacy of parents in maintaining this stance. When this strategy of protecting the children from the morally and socially threatening world their parents perceive around them breaks down, parents often salvage what self-respect they can by disavowing responsibility for the child's behavior. They say that it is impossible to control him. Given their poverty and the little protection they can offer their children from the insults and deprivations of the world, they are often right. In the process, children learn in their relations with their parents and from the negative identities their parents often offer them in anger, that they very likely are persons of whom not too much good can be expected. Their experiences at school can drive home this lesson day in and day out.

It seems likely that a principal "cause" of the minor crime, endemic in concentrated lower class areas and a source of constant irritation and insecurity to the people living in them, is the failure of lower class child-rearing strategies as it interacts with the growing pessimism of preadolescents and adolescents on their possibilities for a rewarding future.

(4) Many different factors conspire to produce a higher rate of family instability in low income families.¹⁷ Middle class preoccupations with their own concerns often lead them to believe that marital instability is primarily a "middle class suburban" problem. In fact, of course, the probabilities of divorce are much higher at lower income levels. Both early and late in marriage lower income couples are about twice as likely to experience divorce as middle and higher income couples.¹⁸ Lower class couples are even more likely to separate and not get a divorce at all, or to wait a long time before getting a divorce. Similarly, lower class individuals, once divorced, are less likely

¹⁶ See the discussion of contrast in gang behavior between white and black areas by James Short and Fred Strodbeck, *Group Process and Gang Delinquency*, University of Chicago Press, 1965. The same issues are dealt with in Gerald Suttles, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Cutright, "Family Stability," *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Paul Glick and Arthur J. Norton, "Frequency, Duration and Probability of Marriage and Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, May 1971, pp. 291-317. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 223, "Social and Economic Variations of Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage: 1967," Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971. For an example of processes of marital disruption at the turn of the century, see Lilian Brandt, *Five Hundred and Seventy-Four Deserters and Their Families*, Arno Press, New York, 1972. See also, Phillips Cutright and John Scanzoni, "Income Supplements and the American Family," prepared for the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy, Joint Economic Committee, Paper No. 12 (Part I), 1973.

to remarry within any given period of time than are higher income people.

Taken together these differences mean that there are far more female-headed nuclear families at the lower status level than at higher statuses—although it is difficult to deal with this statistically since it is the ex-husband's income by which one would wish to stratify families rather than by the woman's own income (which generally is lower if she is the head of the family than when she was with her husband).

The discussion of female-headed families and of the welfare problem generally is plagued by an overly narrow focus on the female head and her family, when in fact it is the absent husband whose situation should be the subject of analysis and policy. Thus, it is said over and over again that employment strategies are not important for dealing with the welfare problem because few welfare household heads would be able to work full time at adequate wages. But this misses the central issue. If the men who participated in forming the families that end up on welfare were not economically marginal there would not be so many female-headed families. If economic marginality produces high rates of (*a*) illegitimacy, (*b*) divorce, and (*c*) a low rate of remarriage, then it is the principal cause of the welfare problem. Policy which treats that issue as water over the dam is narrow and shortsighted, to say the least. Since the principal future cost of welfare is not that of maintaining families already part of the eligible population, but rather that of providing support for the increasing number of families that become newly eligible every year by virtue of illegitimacy, desertion, and divorce, the key to having any impact at all on welfare is to affect the rate of formation of low income family units without a male breadwinner.

It has also been argued on the basis of impressionistic evidence that the characteristics of the AFDC program have an independent effect on the family behavior of those low income families who make use of it. This is an extremely difficult variable to get hold of, and today one would have to say that there is little to support any of the hypotheses offered concerning the effect of the particular program characteristics of AFDC on the family life of its recipients.

There are some tentative hypotheses that find support in lower class community studies. First, however, there is the common notion that because (aside from AFDC-U and families with incapacitated fathers) complete families cannot receive AFDC, husbands and wives, when they have no other source of income, agree to break up so the family can become eligible. This has never been offered on other than impressionistic authority and it seems unlikely.

Far more common and less happy is the lower class pattern in which the husband's status within the home is continually undermined by his inability to provide, in which the wife becomes increasingly hostile and denigrating of him, and in which he increasingly acts out away from home as a way of trying to salvage some self-respect. In the end, the family breaks up, not amicably and rationally to get on AFDC but because the good will between the husband and wife has been used up. (One possible test of the contrary hypothesis would be the frequency with which families get back together as the husband finds steady employment. My guess would be that this is an uncommon occurrence.)

It may be that over the past decade with the institutionalization of AFDC in the lower class world, wives feel somewhat more secure in their aggression toward their husbands because they know they have the alternative of welfare. (To assess the possible importance of this factor one would need to know the amount of time that lapses between separation and going on AFDC). In any case, it is hard to say that strengthening the wife's hand is a negative factor. She is, after all, incredibly vulnerable, far more so in the lower class than in the middle class situation.

Some of the same considerations may apply to the set of implicit decisions made by unmarried women which end in an illegitimate birth. It may be that the knowledge that AFDC is a possibility becomes part of the implicit world of the young girl, and in that sense the availability of welfare reinforces the pattern of behavior that produces a female-headed nuclear family by an illegitimate birth. However, this logic really would apply only to the first illegitimate birth. There is simply nothing in the life pattern of lower class mothers to indicate that the availability of an additional AFDC amount for later illegitimate births in any way facilitates having these children—the incremental allowances are simply too small to have that effect.

There is one possible effect of the design of the AFDC program for which evidence from studies of lower class communities is stronger, though still inferential. This has to do with the possible effect of AFDC on remarriage rates. Mothers on AFDC live a very lonely life. Even if they were extremely dissatisfied with their husbands they often miss them, feel lonely and isolated. The solution to this problem is to take a boyfriend. The role the boyfriend plays vis-a-vis the family may be quite varied from family to family and from ethnic group to ethnic group. However, when there is a steady boyfriend, he and the woman often come to consider the question of whether they should get married—just as middle-class divorced women and their boyfriends do. The woman on AFDC has to make a hardheaded and difficult choice in deciding whether to remarry. She has to give up a steady source of family income for one that is not certain. In some cases, though she loves her boyfriend she is less than sanguine about his potential stability as husband and provider. Even when she has no such doubts, she has to consider the ubiquitous possibility of unemployment through no fault of his own. He may, and often does, earn somewhat more than the family receives on AFDC, so their standard of living might be slightly improved by marriage. But the security of their prospects might not. In this situation, many women opt to maintain security at the price of a regularized marriage. This decision, in turn, contributes to higher order illegitimacy rates since, given ineffective contraception, the woman may end up having children by her boyfriend.¹⁹ This effect can be seen to be purely a product of the design of the AFDC program. Any income support program which did not make a hard and fast distinction between families headed by women and those headed by male providers would not have this depressing effect on remarriage rates.

¹⁹ See David Shultz, op. cit. 137ff and Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls*, op. cit., pp. 180ff.

These, then, are some of the apparent effects of the low-income situation on family life. The effects are not simply straightforward, but highly ramified through the lower class communities and lower class subcultures created to survive the problems of economic marginality. By now most of these facts are reasonably well known. What is not fully understood is the process which by "living below the poverty line" produces these effects. There seem to be many misconceptions concerning the psychosocial base for the effects of income. The balance of this paper, then, will consider the process whereby such simple, cold, brute facts as the number of dollars in a pay or a welfare check have their effects on such subtle human issues as personal well-being, nurturance, family relations, self-esteem, and the like.

POVERTY AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

Poverty is defined as a human problem because people feel that there is some connection between the material resources of an individual or family and their well-being. An understanding of the interconnections between inadequate resources and well-being, therefore, requires that we start by considering the dynamics of well-being.

Much social and psychological knowledge about people's sense of satisfaction and meaningfulness in their lives can be summarized by saying that well-being is a function of engaging in validated activities. By activities we refer simply to all the things that a person does. We chose such a general expression in order to encompass both straightforward role performances (for example, carrying out the duties and enjoying perquisites of father, mother, worker, parent) as well as the less structured and more "voluntary" activities that are carried on as "leisure time pursuits," or "informal socializing" or "just hanging around." People are always doing something—they judge their lives as satisfying or unsatisfying depending on how rewarding they find their activities.

Validated refers to the fact that human beings do not behave in random or arbitrary fashion, but rather are guided by a complex set of social definitions of what should and should not, can and cannot be done, of what is meaningful or meaningless, instrumental or pointless, et cetera. In order for individuals to have a sense of well-being they must feel that most of what they do is done for good and proper reasons, and is regarded as both appropriate and effective by the significant people around them. Similarly, in order for the individual to experience a sense of well-being, his activities must be validated internally as personally rewarding and as appropriate to his developed conception of himself. The individual also experiences internal validation for his activities when they lead to the satisfaction of his "creature needs." The satisfaction of creature needs for food, shelter, and protection from the elements, has played a large role in the discussion of poverty, but in modern society it is much more the social form of meeting them that individuals use to judge their well-being—because in any "biological" sense they are well met.

Thus, we can say that if an individual is able to engage in activities which are valid in earning him a place among his fellows, and valid in the inner sense of having met his social, psychological and biological needs, then he will have a sense of well-being. If, on the other

hand, he is not able to carry out a set of activities which elicit this response, then his sense of well-being will be diminished.²⁰

In order to understand an individual's level of well-being we need to understand (a) whether he has available to him a set of activities that if successfully carried out prove socially and psychologically validating, and (b) whether he has the resources required for carrying out those activities. The first issue is not problematic in most societies. Since individuals are socialized in the validating ways of their society, they are not generally at a loss to know what would be a good thing to do. Of course there are pathologies of socialization which result in some people not being able to discover potentially validating activities—we call these people neurotic, psychopathic, bored characters, and so forth. Similarly individuals who are culturally marginal may find it difficult to discover a set of activities which will be simultaneously rewarded by others and experienced as personally rewarding. Finally, sometimes individuals pursue activities that are personally deeply gratifying, and perhaps also are validated by a small group of individuals around them, but discover that the larger society will not validate and indeed stigmatizes those activities. The individual in such a situation has to give up his special interests, to seek to persuade "society" to modify its stance and also validate these activities or to learn to live with an in-between situation in which validation is found within an in-group, or at a purely personal level. The tension between the larger society's indifference or disapproval and the individual's own wishes inevitably reduces the sense of well-being. This kind of disjunction between activities and social validation can be defined as a problem of liberty. Individuals who share a preference for the "deviant" validating activities may engage in "moral enterprise" to seek to persuade society to allow the proscribed activity as fully validating—particularly clear-cut examples are the cases of recreational drugs and homosexuality.

But, for the great majority of situations in which there is a problem about well-being, the source of the problem lies in the availability of resources to carry out validating activity. These inadequate resources may be personal, having the character of impediments to "labor." Thus, individuals who are physically handicapped often have difficulty maintaining a sense of well-being because they cannot successfully carry out socially and personally validating activities (and of course, these difficulties are exacerbated by society's rigidity about acceptable substitute activities.)²¹ But again, for most people, impediments to personal well-being have to do with resources external to the person rather than with inadequacy in personal characteristics.

The basic interference with the well-being of people in poverty comes from the unavailability of resources in the form of goods and services that would allow them to carry out the validating activities

²⁰ Lee Rainwater, "Work and Identity in the Lower Class," in Sam B. Warner, *Planning for a Nation of Cities*, MIT Press, 1966; Melford Spiro, "Social Systems, Personality and Functional Analysis," in Burt Kaplan, editor, *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally*, Row Peterson, 1961; and Ward Goodenough, *Cooperation and Change*, Russell Sage Foundation, 1963.

²¹ Cf. Erving Goffman, *Stigma*, Prentice Hall, 1963; and Fred Davis, "Deviance Disavowal: The Management of Strained Interaction," *Social Problems*, Fall 1961, pp. 120-132.

required for well-being. Defined in this way, we can view poverty as a symbol of larger issues in the social psychology of materialism. Poverty can arise only in a materialistic society—defined as one in which members achieve and act out membership in it and its institutions through the use of objects and paid for services. A materialistic society is one in which goods and services are essential to the achieving and acting out of membership and in which they are not in such sufficient supply to be had simply for the asking, the reaching out.

All societies have material underpinnings. In so-called primitive societies, however, these are simple, and the social organization functions effectively to see that each individual has available to him through his family, kinship, age grade and other groups, the material basis for carrying out appropriate roles and activities. Distinctive to industrialized society is the proliferation of material objects and services for sale through which individuals may live out their identities, perform roles, forge their sense of personal meaningfulness. In order to better understand poverty we must learn to chart the connections between the individual's sense of place and purpose in social space and life, and his access to and command over the resources represented by goods and services provided through private and public markets.

WELL-BEING AND CONSUMPTION

These social psychological views mesh nicely with a theory of consumption and saving developed by James Duesenberry. The economist starts by being concerned with consumption and this leads him to broader social and cultural questions. Thus, Duesenberry observes:

If we ask why consumers desire the things they buy, we raise a problem which has to be dealt with on several different levels. We know, of course, that certain goods are purchased to maintain physical existence and physical comfort. We also know that certain activities are an essential part of our culture, or at least of parts of it * * * the kinds of activities in which people engage are culturally determined and constitute only a subset of the possible actions in which people might participate. Nearly all purchases of goods are made, ostensibly at least, either to provide physical comfort or to implement the activities which make up the life of our culture. * * * People do not for the most part desire specific goods but desire goods which will serve certain purposes. * * * There is likely to be, at any one given time, a high degree of agreement about the best means of satisfying any particular need. This agreement will be particularly strong in the fields of food, housing, household operation, clothing, and transportation, which absorb the largest part of most family budgets * * * On the whole it appears safe to build a theory of consumption around the four propositions: (1) physical needs and the activities required by the culture require the consumption of certain kinds of goods; (2) each of the needs, whether physically or socially generated, can be satisfied by any of a number of qualitatively different types of goods; (3) these different types of goods, or, in the broader sense, ways of doing things, are regarded as superior or inferior to one another; (4) there is a generally agreed upon scale of ranks for the goods which can be used for the specific purpose.

Given these and other considerations, Duesenberry concludes: "It seems quite possible that after some minimum income is reached, the frequency and strength of impulses to increase expenditures for one individual depend entirely on the ratio of his expenditures to the expenditures of those with whom he associates."

Duesenberry then shows that this line of reasoning leads to the conclusion that an individual's satisfaction is not independent but rather interdependent. A given individual's utility index (U_i) is a function of his consumption (C_i) divided by the weighted average of the

consumption of other persons ($\sum a_{ij}C_j$) about whose consumption the individual has or believes he has some knowledge:

$$U_i = f\left(\frac{C_i}{\sum a_{ij}C_j}\right)$$

Or, the expression

$$\frac{1}{\sum a_{ij}C_j}$$

can be viewed as "a scale factor analogous to the price level." A man's satisfaction from his consumption is adjusted in relation to changes in the consumption of others just as it is adjusted to changes in the price level.²²

The weighted average of all known-about persons' consumption is rather awkward for empirical applications. Fortunately, we have good reason to believe that people integrate their disparate experiences with the particular consumptions of others into formulations concerning different "levels of living." Riesman and Rosebrough refer to conceptions of the consumption appropriate to given levels of living as "the standard package" for these different levels.²³ Parsons and Smeltser apply the standard package concept to three aspects of family functioning which represent demands for consumption:

In the first place the institutionalization of the family system * * * implies a certain minimum of possessions in order for the family to meet the cultural definitions (as opposed to the mere legal definitions) of a family. This list of goods of course varies in accordance with value changes. But it certainly includes a minimum level of nutrition necessary for "cultural survival" which implies far more than mere biological survival; shelter of a certain quality; some minimum symbolic differential of intrafamilial sex and generation roles * * * (The standard package) is relatively invariant in the face of moderate income changes. Its acquisition is the culturally defined goal of the family as a consuming unit.

They also observe that a certain amount of spending is required by families in order to manage tensions within the small family group, and to serve as reward and symbolic exchange among family members,

²² James S. Duesenberry, *Income Saving and the Theory of Consumer Behavior*, Harvard University Press, 1967. Richard A. Easterlin observes that despite the great salience of Duesenberry's formulation for understanding personal welfare in relation to economic processes, there has been almost no useful further development of his theory. Easterlin presents a very suggestive analysis of the relationship between economic growth and personal happiness which provides strong support for Duesenberry's formulation: Richard A. Easterlin, "Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot?", *Nations and Households in Economic Growth: Essays in Honor of Moses Abramovitz*, Paul A. David and Melvin W. Reder, editors, Stanford University Press, forthcoming. For a recent discussion of interdependent utilities and Paretian standards of income redistribution, see Harold M. Hochman, "Individual Preferences and Distributional Adjustments," *American Economic Review*, May 1972, pp. 353-362. See also the discussion of the strong relationship between psychological well-being (happiness) and income in Norman Bradburn, *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*, Aldine-Atherton, 1969, pp. 90 ff.

²³ David Riesman and Harold Rosebrough, "Careers and Consumer Behavior," in N. Bell and E. F. Vogel, editors, *A Modern Introduction to the Family*, the Free Press, 1960. See also, "The Analysis of Generational Shifts in Consumption," in Reuben Hill et al., *Family Development in Three Generations*, Schenkman Publishing Co., 1970.

and particularly between parents and children, as a way of concretizing value and sentimental transactions among the family members.

Finally, they observe that "class and prestige symbolism are a major area of role involvement for the consumption unit." Thus consumption locates the family in the stratification system.²⁴ The fit between a family's preferred conception of its status and the status it is able to actually live out by virtue of its consumption ability can be problematic and a source of tension.

Families can be thought of as selecting target "standard packages" which they regard as appropriate for the kinds of persons they conceive themselves to be. Thus, the utility for a given individual will depend on the extent to which he assesses his consumption level as adequate given the target standard package which he has selected. The contents and expensiveness of this package will vary depending upon the status or hoped for status of the individuals and families involved. As background for any particular consumption standards there exists a very broad-based consensus on the standard package of "mainstream America."²⁵ This is a conception of the going standard of living, an approximation of which the great majority of Americans can and do enjoy. Higher status levels of living add to and refine this standard package, but basic to them is the conception of the mainstream package from which they depart in a more desirable direction. Living levels below the mainstream package are thought of as constrained compromises, as recipes for "making do," for "doing the best we can."

Given the existence of a mainstream standard package, and a continuum of ever more expensive packages above the mainstream level, one can represent a great deal of what has been written about the stance individuals take toward their position in the hierarchy of living levels by saying that each person's utility will be a function both of his consumption adjusted by the weight he applies to mainstream consumption, and of his consumption adjusted to above mainstream consumption levels. Individuals will differ in the weights they apply to these two consumption levels. For those below the mainstream and for those at the mainstream with low mobility aspirations, little weight will be attached to the above-mainstream consumption packages; for those oriented to higher status levels, higher weights will be attached to those packages. One would assume, however, that for all persons the weight attached to the mainstream budget is greater than that attached to the higher budgets—which is simply to say that the most important judgment people make about their standard of living is whether or not it is at least at the mainstream level for their society.

It is possible to relate these formulations concerning consumption and utility to the social psychological model of personal well-being outlined earlier. We said that well-being was a function of validated activities.

²⁴ Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society*, Free Press, 1956, pp. 22ff. See also the general framework for the analysis of social resources in James S. Coleman, *Resources for Social Change*, John Wiley and Sons, 1971.

²⁵ Gerald Handel and Lee Rainwater, "Persistence and Change in Working Class Life Styles," in *Blue Collar World*, A.B. Shostak and W. Gomberg, editors, Prentice-Hall, 1964, and Lee Rainwater, "Making the Good Life: Working Class Families and Lifestyles," in Sar Levitan, editor, *Blue Collar Workers: A Symposium on Middle America*, McGraw Hill, 1971.

WELL-BEING= f (VALIDATED ACTIVITIES)

In turn, validated activities are a function of the availability of valid models and the availability of the resources to carry out successfully the activities specified in those models.

WELL-BEING= g (MODELS, NOT RESOURCES)

Without doing much violence to reality, we can assume that for most persons in the U.S. valid models are a constant. That is, all the evidence suggests that at the value level there is an extremely broad consensus in the society as to a wide range of models for activities that are supposed to be personally rewarding and socially acceptable. These models include various areas of role performance in family and occupational life and a wide range of leisure-time, voluntary, and informal social activities.²⁶ Given constant availability of valid models, well-being as a function of validated activities is affected primarily by the level of resources an individual has for achieving in terms of these models.

WELL-BEING= w (RESOURCE LEVEL)

In turn, the resource level adequate for achievement of validated models of activity is a function of the individual's ability to consume, adjusted to the standard package consumption implicit in the validated models.

RESOURCE LEVEL= h (CONSUMPTION/STANDARD PACKAGE)

With appropriate substitutions then we get

WELL-BEING= k (CONSUMPTION/STANDARD PACKAGE)

There are, of course, other factors that affect well-being but the brunt of the argument developed so far suggests that a primary source of

²⁶ That there is consensus concerning conceptions of life goals is argued about American society by Robert Merton, in his classic essay on "Social Structure and Anomie," *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Free Press, 1957. The accuracy of this view with respect to lower class behavior has been analyzed by Hyman Rodman in "Lower Class Value Structure," *Social Forces*, December 1963; Hyman Lewis, "Culture, Class and the Behavior of Lower Class Families," *Culture, Class and Poverty*, Washington: Crosstel, 1967; Louis Kriesberg, "The Relationship Between Socioeconomic Rank and Behavior," *Social Problems*, Spring 1963, pp. 334-353; and Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls*, op. cit., 261ff. S. M. Miller and Pamela Roby (*The Future of Inequality*, Basic Books, 1970) have analyzed conceptually and in some empirical detail the question of the distribution of a wide range of resources in American society. An initial effort at a cross-national survey of distribution of a variety of resources is contained in S. M. Miller and Martin Rein, "The Possibilities and Limits of Social Policy," prepared for Working Meeting of the Research Committee on Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy of the International Sociological Association, Bucharest, December 1971. See also Peter Townsend, "Measures and Explanations of Poverty in High Income and Low Income: The Problem of Operationalizing the Concepts of Development, Class and Poverty," in Peter Townsend, editor, *The Concept of Poverty*, American Elsevier Publishing Co., 1970.

variation in the personal well-being of individuals is variation in their resource levels. Resources here would be broadly defined to include not only external assets and supplies (consumption) but also internal factors such as health, intelligence, etc. However, since most of the "internal" factors which are important in adult functioning are themselves products of a complex interaction between the developing individual and his environment, consumption plays a large role in the development of those resources also.

Personal well-being, then, as most immediately a product of social and psychologically validating activities, can be regarded as most dramatically affected by the individual's command over the socioeconomically determined resources necessary for engaging in those validating activities.

Because the cultural models of validating activities change over time to accommodate changes in the mainstream package, the individual's possibilities for achieving a sense of personal well-being by engaging in validating activities is indexed by his consumption position vis-a-vis the standard package at any given time. (For clarity, this states the matter in an overly precise way. Obviously, the psychosocial meaning of the consumption level represented by the standard package does not shift by precise amounts each year. However, over longer periods of time, probably even as short as 5 years, individuals perceive noticeable shifts in the "size" of the standard package.)

POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND MEMBERSHIP

The Council of Economic Advisers at the beginning of the war on poverty defined the prevalence of poverty as involving "the number of families who do not have the resources to provide minimum satisfaction of their own particular needs." But the Council went on to observe that "By the standards of contemporary American society most of the population of the world is poor; and most Americans were poor a century ago. But for our society today a consensus on an approximate standard can be found."²⁷ In fact, however, it is not possible to find an approximate standard that is based on the presumably absolute logic of "low cost" or "economy plan" budgets. If we are to define the poor, as the Council does until it tries to develop a measuring instrument, as "those who are not now maintaining a decent standard of living—those whose basic needs exceed their means to satisfy them," then one must recognize that the standard involved is inevitably one of relative equality/inequality.

The issue of inequality and the goal of equality have tended to be neglected in modern political discussions and in social science scholarship and research responsive to major political issues. The approaches to equality which so preoccupied political philosophers in the nineteenth century until recently seemed to have reached a dead end.²⁸ For

²⁷ *Economic Report of the President*, January 1964.

²⁸ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, 1972, for the most thorough modern treatment of equality. See also R. H. Tawney, *Equality*, G. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1952; George Bernard Shaw, *The Road to Equality*, Beacon Press, 1971; the selections in William T. Blackstone, editor, *The Concept of Equality*, Burgess Publishing Co., 1969; Talcott Parsons, "Equality and Inequality in Modern Society, or Social Stratification Revisited," in Edward O. Laumann, *Social Stratification: Research and Theory for the 1970's*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1970. For a discussion of equalitarian impulses in contemporary America, see Herbert J. Gans, "The New Equalitarianism," *Saturday Review*, May 6, 1972.

all the emphasis on equalitarian values in our traditions, the issue of inequality per se has tended to be fragmented and refocused into a number of other concerns, one of which has been defining poverty according to some absolute standard of subsistence. To base a social science analysis on the effects of inequality has a kind of old-fashioned ring to it. Equality as an ideal has come to seem an arbitrary or abstract, unreal since it is so obvious that people have different tastes, want different things, experience life in different ways, and so on. The sameness which is conjured up by the idea of equality seems both impossible and unattractive. The impasse in equalitarian thinking was a result of concentration on making models of the process by which society might be equalized, which tended to make the idea seem either unachievable or irrelevant to issues of social justice.

One model of equality dominated a great deal of early socialist thinking. It might be called the "top down" model. The emphasis was more on taking resources away from the rich and powerful than on distributing those resources to people who were less rich and less powerful. Such a model tends to reach a pragmatic dead end with respect to antipoverty objectives when it is discovered that distributing all of the personal income of the very rich would have a fairly small impact on the economic status of everyone else. So the writers on equality generally have had to admit that confiscatory approaches would not accomplish much for the material well-being of those at the bottom (even though it might have great consequences for power and status equality). This approach has also seemed to reach a pragmatic political dead end with the discovery that of course the rich and powerful will fight tooth and nail against any proposal to take away all that they have.

Another model, increasingly emphasized as the confiscatory approaches were discarded, is one emphasizing not so much the production of equal results as the equality of opportunity to achieve rewards in a society which it is accepted will continue to be highly stratified into "haves" and "have-nots." This concept dominated a great deal of discussion of racial inequality and led to the symbolic importance of Negro "firsts," that is, Negroes who are the first to win some important position or reward. The logic here tends to emphasize the extent to which the disadvantaged minority is excluded both from participating in the unequal reward system of the society and from making outstanding contributions to it—as in the rhetorical point that used to be popular before the latest civil rights revolution: "Think how many Negro Nobel Prize winners have been lost because we denied Negroes equality of opportunity."

This pattern for equality has been considerably frustrated by the discovery that inequalities are so tenaciously interconnected that it becomes almost impossible to produce equality of opportunity except in a situation in which there is already equality of result (as Nathan Glazer has nicely observed in his comments on Negro family studies since Frazier's landmark study).²⁹ Equality of opportunity thus has come to be seen as a kind of will-of-the-wisp. But, the long effort to provide a social science base for policies aimed at the goal of equal

²⁹ Nathan Glazer, "Introduction" in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, University of Chicago Press, 1965.

opportunity has had a great impact in teaching us what the real implications of those ideals for social arrangements are for a society that might even approximate the achievement of equalitarian ideals.

Much earlier discussion of equality assumed that who men are and what they want are given (by human nature, genetics, etc.) and that equality and equalitarian social forms must be treated without considering the question of how the person is formed in society and by its institutions. The increasingly strong evidence that who men are and what they want even to such apparently innate characteristics as intelligence, are *social* products, recasts the whole issue of equality, of equal opportunity, and, most importantly for our discussion, of what represents a "subsistence" level of resources. Much discussion of equality foundered on the question of what to do about the presence in society of individuals whose productivity would not merit an equal reward, and what to do about incentive if people are rewarded in excess of their contribution to society. Once one admits the perspective that *men's productivity is itself a product of society* and not just of their own innate ability and motives, the incentive issue appears as the problem of how to structure a society so that it does not produce persons of low productivity; that is, how society can be structured so that problems of unmerited reward are trivial rather than significant.

This leads one in the direction of a model of equalization which might be called a "bottom up" model as opposed to a "top down" or equality of opportunity model. In the "bottom up" model of equalization the central question is: "What material resources are necessary to be a fully participating and fully contributing member of the society?" It is a question of what level of resources are necessary in order for individuals to enter the mainstream of society and be self-sustaining within it. Interestingly, many definitions of poverty take this into account but then back away from the equalitarian implications. In 1958 John Kenneth Galbraith defined poverty very much along these lines when he said that "people are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency; and they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent. They are degraded for, in a literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as respectable."³⁰

Harold Laski faced this issue in an even more direct way, and his choice of words for discussing equality makes it easy to begin to see some of the connections between traditional behavioral science concerns with socialization, personality development, motivation, and the like, and the apparently abstract issue of equality. Laski characterized equality and its social implications along the following lines:

Equality means that no man shall be so placed in society that he can overreach his neighbor to the extent which constitutes a denial of the latter's *citizenship*.

Equality * * * means such an ordering of social forces as will balance the share in the toil of living with a share in its gain also. It means that my share in that gain must be adequate for the purposes of *citizenship*.

In institutional terms (equality means that) the urgent claims of all must be met before we can meet the particular claims of some. The differences in the social and economic position of men can only be admitted after a *minimum basis of civilization* is attained by the community as a whole. That minimum basis must admit of my realizing the implications of *personality*.

³⁰ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, Houghton Mifflin, 1958.

Equality * * * involves * * * rendering to each man *his own* by giving him what enables him *to be a man*. It is only by making identity (that is, equality up to the point of sufficiency) the basis of our institutions, and differences the answer to the necessities of social function that we can make our society call into the play the individuality of men.³¹

In these quotations is embedded a theory of socialization and of the just society that is congruent with the dominant thrust of behavioral science development over the past several decades. The image of the good society contained here is that of a society in which each man *is* who he knows he *should be*. Well-being arises from activities that yield *membership*. That is, each man is a fully formed member of his society. Much of cultural and psychological anthropology has been devoted to describing and analyzing in detail how primitive, traditional societies operate to prepare for their members the "minimum basis of civilization" that realizes for them the "implications of personality." Much of sociology has involved cataloging the various ways in which exploitative societies deny full membership to their members—commonly by tribal and ethnic subjugation or of exploitative capitalist economic arrangements.

The central social science issue becomes that of how a society positions its members by its stratification of the experiences and resources available to them. Erving Goffman's concept of virtual social identity is relevant here. He suggests that both generally and with reference to particular social situations, persons in a society develop expectations as to what attributes, characteristics and possessions an "ordinary" person is likely to have, and that these expectations are converted into demands on others, which are usually smoothly met because the other person is indeed the ordinary person whom we expected. The "in effect" characterization of others appropriate in a given society or a given situation constitutes a *virtual social identity* appropriate for that society or situation.³²

The person who is able to fit into that identity is then characterized by himself and by others as a "whole and usual person." When he possesses attributes that make him different in a less desirable direction from persons in the category in which he is supposed to fit, Goffman shows he is subject to processes of stigmatization that deeply affect his life career and his personality. People who feel comfortable in their role as *members* of a society are those who perceive themselves as possessing those attributes and resources which construct a virtual social identity for persons in their society. Following from Laski's observations is the judgment that the good society is one which programs the experiences of its members as they grow to adulthood and make commitments as mature adults so that they experience themselves as, and are treated by others as, "whole and usual" persons—so that there is concordance between a virtual social identity appropriate for their society, and the actual social identity that they inhabit.

The discussion in the previous section emphasizes the importance not only of identity at any one time but of identity through time. One's own sense of identity involves a conception of a likely life course (or of alternative life courses with subjective probabilities attached to each

³¹ (Italic mine.) Harold Laski, *The Grammar of Politics*, Yale University Press, 1925, quoted in Blackstone, *op. cit.*

³² Erving Goffman's *Stigma*, *op. cit.*

possible development). And just as the actual social identities of individuals are matched against virtual social identities which represent society's conception of who its members are, the actual life careers of individuals are paralleled by the *virtual life careers* which they carry around in their heads to summarize their understandings of how members of their society progress through life. Much of the discussion of socialization, particularly as it varies by social class, can be seen as turning on the question of the prospective life career the child sees for himself and the extent to which there is a disjunction between it and a virtual life career he has learned is appropriate for full members of the society. A virtual life career, when it seems a possibility for the individual, becomes a powerful stimulus for anticipatory socialization in ways that facilitate adaptation and productivity in the society. A marked disjunction between society's virtual life careers and individuals' conceptions of their own likely life careers tends to set up identity processes which reduce the degree of their commitment to activities which are likely to earn a reward in the larger society.

The much discussed measures of subjective perception of control over one's fate may be a roundabout way of treating the extent to which there is or is not a disjunction between the life career the individual projects for himself and ones he knows are appropriate and desirable for members of his society. It may be that because social scientists are career-oriented and mobile they have tended to develop concepts with an activist bias like "control over one's fate" rather than concepts which go more directly to the issue of how individuals calculate the probability of good things happening to them if they behave naturally, if they are themselves; that is, of the extent to which they perceive themselves as so positioned that things will go right for them if they behave in what seems like a reasonable and congenial fashion. Part of the fascination of books such as *Black Like Me* is that they provide dramatic illustrations of what happens when the "person" doesn't change but the contingency of "good things happening" when he continues to be himself changes dramatically.³³ (Much the same kind of consideration probably also applies to the concept of "inability to defer gratification" which has been used in a great deal of discussion of lower class behavior. Here again the central factor involved seems to be that of the subjective probability assigned to different kinds of futures.)

A focus on life career as opposed to identity and life situation at any given time also tends to shift our concern with economic resources from income at any one time to the income stream through the individual's life. Thus there is an important parallel between the subjective sense of life career and economic concepts of assets, human capital, and permanent income which indicate the ability of the individual to sustain a given level of consumption through time. (This kind of longitudinal emphasis is approximated statistically by measures of lifetime income.)

In the best possible data world one would discuss poverty and income inequality not in terms of cross-sectional comparisons of current income but in terms of lifetime income, or more exactly, lifetime command over resources. As it is now, a good deal of discussion of

³³ J. W. Griffith, *Black Like Me*, Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

poverty confounds the problem of allocation of income to a given individual at different portions of his lifecycle (for example, the problem of the old poor) with the question of the total amount of resources that are likely to be available to him throughout his lifetime.

From the point of view of the individual's sense of membership in the society it is probably the latter that is the most important. That is, the amount of money he has available right at the moment is less important to him than the stream of resources that he has reason to believe will be available to him into the future.

If one defines the good society as one in which individuals have those experiences in life necessary for them to regard themselves as members of their society, that is as persons who are who they know they should be, then the goal of equality can be assessed against this more general standard for judging the good or just society. The first response of the cross-culturally sophisticated social scientist is likely to be that in fact equality is not necessary for the development of a sense of valid membership in their society among its members. Thus the anthropologists is likely to point to societies in which stratification and elaborate systems of role variation based on positions in kinship, age grade or other hierarchies are central, and yet where there is little evidence that their members do not regard themselves as having a valid place within them.

In fact, the anthropologist would also note that the vast majority of cultures are highly egalitarian in resource distribution for all the elaborateness and specificity of their role systems, and that even where there are enormous differences in sacred or political status, material differences tend to be fairly small. We would note that the crucial characteristic of highly stratified societies in which individuals nevertheless have a sense of place, of valid membership, is that there is clear definition and overall articulation of each individual position or class of position in the system so that the existence of varied and invidiously ranked positions is not anomalous. Thus one could say that one way of abolishing poverty is to make the poor content with their lot by convincing them that their status has meaning and purpose within the overall design of the society, to say that there are validating activities for which one does not need mainstream resources. However, the moment one considers such caste-like arrangements as a solution to the problem of the destructive consequences of inequality one is immediately struck by how totally dysfunctional such arrangements would be for industrial society. In industrial society people are socially positioned principally by their relationship to the economy. No other role system challenges the importance of that central positioning institution. Industrial societies seem to require a considerable degree of openness in their operation; they require mobility of labor; they challenge competition from other sources by their own dynamic, and so forth. Therefore industrial societies are required to be relatively open societies. They cannot function effectively if traditionalistic or rigidly stratified. The individual's command over material resources becomes the central measure of the extent to which he is a fully participating member of the society at any one time and prospectively.

And it is apparent from a wide range of sociological studies that people know this about their society. People tend to define themselves

and others very much in terms of their judgments about individuals' command over the resources produced, whatever the going definition of a satisfactory standard of living may be. The study of lower class behavior and subculture must focus on how groups experience themselves in history as distinct from the going definition of a member's lifetime trajectory (that is, the going definition of virtual social identity and virtual life careers). We discover that when a group finds itself so removed from command over resources that it cannot participate in society in these terms it adapts to its position by developing a lower class culture. The daily experiences of the group as well as its accumulated wisdom tells its members that they are not part of the society, that they are not able to function in an ordinary way, and that therefore they must develop extraordinary techniques for adapting, for making a life from day to day, and from year to year.

LOWER CLASS CULTURE AND LOWER CLASS INCOMES

One of the clearest of the "social goals" giving widespread support for transfer programs is the desire to increase "stability" and "health" of low income families. An example is welfare reform aimed at eliminating the presumed family-destroying characteristics of the current AFDC program. In fact, however, there is little in the way of solidly grounded empirical research on either the extent or mechanisms by which low income, and ill-designed welfare programs affect family stability and health. Instead we have a wealth of qualitative studies in the ethnographic and community-study traditions which seem to document the processes operative in lower class families and suggest some of the causes for the higher rate of "broken families" at lower socio-economic levels. Once one moves past census tabulations, however, quantitative measures of the various kinds of family pathologies associated with low income, or empirically grounded quantitative models of these processes, are simply not available.

At the more theoretical level, accounts of the dynamics of lower class behavior traditionally have been polarized around two kinds of explanations: the so-called "situational" explanations of lower class behavior offered primarily by sociologists who follow Robert Merton, and cultural explanations offered by persons representing a broader range of disciplines from social and personality psychology to anthropology.³⁴

One reading of the ethnographic data from ghetto studies carried out during the 1960's would take the situational versus cultural view as a false and misleading dichotomy. A synthesis of the two views has been offered by Hyman Rodman in his paper on "The Lower Class Value Stretch." In a series of papers I have tried to synthesize these two perspectives by systematically comparing participant observation data from an all black public housing project in St. Louis with the reports of other ethnographers of the white and black lower class. Much the same kind of synthesis is represented by Ulf Hannerz's *Soulside: Inquiries Into Ghetto Culture and Community*.³⁵

³⁴ Seymour Spillerman and David Elesh, "Alternative Conceptions of Poverty and Their Implications for Income Maintenance," *Social Problems*, Winter 1971, pp. 358-373.

³⁵ Rodman, op. cit., Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls*, op. cit., Hannerz, op. cit.

In brief, a synthesis of the situational and cultural perspectives maintains that a "lower class culture" exists but that it represents a configuration of values, beliefs, knowledge, and techniques for coping with the world, some of which are shared with the larger society and some of which are distinctive to the lower class. This culture is viewed as adaptive to the situation of socio-economic marginality which defines the lower class position in the social hierarchy. From this perspective of "adaptive culture," the "culture of poverty" analysis of lower class situation is criticized because it fails to take into account systematically the ways lower class culture is adaptive to the day-to-day and year-to-year reality in which lower class children and adults find themselves. The situational perspective is criticized because it fails to take into account the fact that socio-economic position has an effect on how individuals develop, on the social and personal identities they form as they grow up, and on the particular techniques they develop for mastering their environment. The situational perspective fails to take into account the "opportunity cost" lower class people incur as they perfect their ability to survive in their particular worlds.

The adaptive culture perspective emphasizes values concerning the desirable life as the principal element lower class culture shares with the larger culture. There seems to be a broad consensus among lower class, and stable working and lower middle class Americans concerning "the good life" an individual will live if he has the opportunity. Lower class people share with those above them a belief in most of the conventional virtues. With respect to the family, they share a belief in the desirability of stable, monogamous marriage and they feel their children should be born legitimately and reared in two-parent families. At this level there is no distinctive "culture" of the lower class.

However, the more economically marginal a group is to the American mainstream of stable working class and lower white collar workers and their families, the more "lower class" the adaptations it develops to its situation. The social pathologies associated with low income can be understood as products of these special adaptations. Illegitimacy is a product of a special adaptation in the lower class courtship institution which puts both boys and girls under strong pressure to engage in sexual relations without regard to the possibility of marriage. Pressures of economic marginality and participation in street life as a way of salvaging self-esteem produce patterns of marital relations conducive to a high rate of marital disruption. The same pressures discourage remarriage.

ANTIPOVERTY POLICY AND RESOURCE LEVELS

This model of the dynamics of lower class life suggests that lower class behavior will change only as the situation of economic marginality requiring special adaptations changes. Therefore this model predicts that any structural change which significantly reduces the economic marginality of lower class families will also significantly increase the similarity of lower class behavior to that of the stable working class. The crucial issue, unresolved by the qualitative research on which the theory is based, involves the amount of change that would be "significant enough" to lead to changing adaptations. The logic of the model requires that we look at change in resources in terms of the "dis-

tance" they allow the individual to move toward the mainstream. This, in turn, requires that we know something about what "mainstream" resources are, and that we have a metric for expressing a given absolute amount of resources in terms of their approximation of the mainstream amount.

This becomes a particular issue with respect to the input represented by government welfare programs. The question of whether an effect on family behavior reasonably can be expected from transfer payments depends crucially on the shape of the function that relates resources to family behavior. These functions would describe the effect on particular *populations* of the inputs of given amounts of resources. For example, our interest would be in determining the degree to which the probability of a marriage staying intact would be increased by a given increase in income for a given group of couples.

To the extent that poverty policy is concerned with the question of whether the "culture of poverty" is stronger than the intervention, the essential issue is whether a family's behavior will most strongly resemble that of other families in its "earnings class" or other families in its "income class." The "earnings class" (at least averaged over a reasonable time period) would index the extent to which the family was associated with "the culture of poverty" while its "income class" would add transfer payments (unearned and "unmerited" income) on top of earnings.

The central hypothesis of welfare programs is that the additional income the transfer payment produces for families will change their personal well-being. According to the model outlined above, whether or not this turns out to be true will depend on the social effect of the increased income and the meaning the income increment has in terms of new possibilities which can be lived out through having and spending the additional money.

Changes in family behavior are seen as an effect of the added utility the money brings. But since absolute dollars of income have meaning in the relationship of the individual's new total income to some going standard of mainstream income, it is unlikely that one would find the main effects of transfers nationally simply by relating absolute income as the independent variable to various dependent variables. One step taken toward recognizing that given amounts of money represent different value to different families has been using a welfare ratio à la Morgan, Orshansky or (as proposed in a modified form) Watts. Here income is converted into a measure seeking to relate income to needs.³⁶

However, there is no warrant for assuming that the experts' definitions of what a family needs at some level of subsistence have much relation to the social psychological reality in which family members operate. For example, the living standard budgets on which welfare ratios are based tend to change over time principally to offset price increases. However, we do have very solid indications that people's conceptions of income sufficiency vary more directly in relation to the general economic level of the society.

³⁶ James N. Morgan, et al., *Income and Wealth in the United States*, McGraw Hill, 1962; Mollie Orshansky, "Counting the Poor," *Social Security Bulletin*, Government Printing Office, 1965; and Harold Watts, "An Economic Definition of Poverty," in D. P. Moynihan, editor, *On Understanding Poverty*, Basic Books, 1969.

MAPPING LIVING LEVELS

In the 19th and 20th centuries as concern with the problems of those at the bottom of society became increasingly specialized, those whose job it was to supervise charitable activities began to formalize living standards using family budgets. Oscar Ornati carried out a historical survey for the period 1905-60 of living standard budgets at three levels—"minimum subsistence", "minimum adequacy," and "minimum comfort."³⁷ An examination of his findings suggests that in terms of the social levels they represented, the three budgets served as dividing lines between three classes of people, all of whom were seen to live below the average income level for the society. These classes were:

1. A "*charity*" class. These budgets Ornati called minimum subsistence. Except in the early part of the 1905-60 period they have been used almost exclusively for charity purposes—to establish standards of "minimum decency" or "minimum for physical efficiency." In the few cases where the budgets have been used for wage determination it has been with a characterization (for example, "lowest bare existence") indicating that the budget is not supposed to provide more than the minimum daily resources for staying alive and functioning. Charity has become more public and more bureaucratized; now the principal versions of the minimum subsistence budget are the State AFDC budget standards.

2. A "*poor-but-honest-worker*" class. The budgets that Ornati called "minimum adequate" seem to have been established principally to fix a kind of floor for membership in the established working class. These budgets were almost all related to wage determination; when they were used by charitable institutions it was for the purpose of establishing the point at which clients could be expected to begin to pay for social agency services. Characterizations of the budgets suggest that the focus was on a kind of minimum "social" subsistence rather than a presumed minimum physical subsistence—budgets were characterized as representing "a fair living wage," "the working margin," "minimum wholesome living," "minimum but reasonable."

3. *The average-American-worker class.* These budgets were for purposes of wage determination and comparison. Many of the budgets were prepared for establishing the wages of civil service workers, a further indication of the "averageness" of the class the budget level was to denote. Interestingly enough, however, the budgets tended to be characterized by their developers much more in terms of some presumed necessity than otherwise. Thus many of the budgets are said to represent the consumption necessary for "health and decency" or "minimum health and comfort." Occasionally, however, the budget makers were a little more forthright. Thus the 1923 budget for the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway wage determination was characterized as representing only an income that was "proper and suitable." And in 1926 and 1927 when the National Industrial Conference Board established a standard for industrial workers in twelve industrial cities it was characterized simply as "a fair American standard." Again as the matter has become bureaucratized (in this case at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) the point of the budget has become somewhat more obvious. Thus the minimum comfort budget Ornati used for the later years of his survey is the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Interim city worker's family budget" which is characterized as "modest but adequate" by "prevailing standards." The prevailing standards characterization introduces much more directly the relative emphasis for this budget.

The higher two budgets were fairly explicitly relative in their logic—the makers sought to construct budgets that would enable families to live at a particular consumption level relative to the average for the society as a whole. To a certain extent these budgets were a

³⁷ Oscar Ornati, *Poverty Amid Affluence*, the Twentieth Century Fund, 1966. See also the discussion of changing consumption and styles of life from the 19th into the 20th century by Dorothy S. Brady in Davis, Easterlin, Parker, et al., *American Economic Growth: An Economist's History of the United States*, Harper and Row, 1972.

substitute for accurate family income statistics. In the absence of such statistics the budgets makers could make budgets for "minimum comfort" or "minimum adequacy" to try to represent concretely some consensus concerning a living level near the median for the society, and another living level ("minimum adequacy") below the median but not so far below as to represent great deprivation.

The logic of the charity class budget, however, is somewhat different. The budget makers tended to describe them as "subsistence budgets" with the note that they represented the minimum goods and services needed for the family simply to continue to exist. Such budgets were often considered as for emergencies rather than for a consistent level of living.

However, all three budget levels in fact tended to increase in fairly constant ratio to the overall level of affluence of the society.

Over the 1905-1960 period all three budgets increased in constant dollar value, with the minimum comfort budget increasing the most (120 percent) and the minimum adequate budget close behind (111 percent). The minimum subsistence budget did not increase quite so dramatically—only 93 percent—and after 1930, it increased much more slowly than the others, suggesting that the further professionalization of welfare has tended to dampen the growth of charity class budgets in line with the "absolute" logic of subsistence.

In the period since around 1935 there seems to have been a very stable relationship between minimum subsistence budgets and per capita disposable personal income. The budgets are phrased for four-person families so that a convenient index of the level of the minimum subsistence budget is its ratio to four times the per capita disposable personal income. (We'll call this latter the *family disposable income*.) If one ignores the World War II years, from 1935 to 1963 the minimum charity class budgets range from 42 percent of family disposable on the high side to 34 percent on the low side. There is no discernible linear trend during this period—the ratio tends to go up and down around the total period average of 36.5 percent. It is only after 1963, when the new social security poverty index was fixed except for price changes, that this relationship begins to change. By 1971 the SSA poverty index amounted to only 29 percent of family disposable income.

If our analysis of well-being and utility is accurate, however, more important than standard of living budgets made by experts are the standard of living conceptions held by the people themselves. A very useful historical series on public conceptions of living standards is provided by a Gallup public opinion poll question which has been asked in exactly the same form since 1946: "What is the smallest amount of money a family of four needs to get along in this community?" Table 1 presents the mean responses of national samples for 21 surveys during the 1946-69 period, and relates those responses to median family income, per family consumption (per capita \times 4) and the average weekly spendable income for workers with four depend-

ents in private nonagricultural industries.³⁸ It is apparent that there is a constant relationship to family disposable income. The relationship to workers' earnings also seems quite stable. There is a small downward trend in the proportion of median family income the "get along" amount represents—perhaps reflecting the slight increase in the proportion of family income attributable to wives' earnings.

TABLE 1.—*What is the smallest amount of money a family of 4 needs (weekly) to get along in this community?*

Date of survey	Current dollars	Constant dollars (1963)	Percent of median family income	Percent per family consumption	Percent average weekly spendable earnings ¹
January 1946.....	42. 80	80. 30	-----	55	-----
August-December 1947 ²	45. 20	74. 00	78	53	101
June 1948.....	51. 93	78. 80	85	56	107
May 1949.....	49. 73	76. 40	83	54	100
February 1950.....	47. 98	73. 00	75	50	92
April-December 1951.....	55. 00	77. 20	86	57	101
October 1952.....	62. 00	85. 50	83	58	107
March 1953.....	59. 80	82. 00	73	54	99
April 1954.....	63. 85	87. 90	79	57	105
November 1957.....	74. 77	97. 10	78	59	110
May 1958.....	82. 17	103. 70	69	54	114
August 1960.....	81. 54	101. 10	75	59	112
January 1961.....	83. 23	101. 20	76	59	111
January 1962.....	83. 13	100. 80	73	57	108
April 1963.....	83. 24	99. 40	71	55	106
November 1964.....	85. 35	100. 70	68	53	103
December 1967.....	109. 16	119. 20	71	57	120
February-October 1969.....	119. 72	119. 72	66	55	107

¹ In private nonagricultural industries for a worker with 3 dependents.

² Indicates average of 2 surveys.

From 1959 to 1970 per family consumption and the Gallup "get along" figure both increased by about two-thirds. In contrast, the Consumer Price Index and the low income, "poverty" budget which is tied to it increased by only 27 percent. Across this 10-year span a comparison of families which relied on the poverty line to place them relative to the mainstream would be of a relatively less deprived group in 1959 with a relatively more deprived group in 1970. If the compari-

³⁸ Data on the get-along question and several other Gallup and Roper questions discussed here are available in the files of the Roper Public Opinion Research Center. We wish to thank Prof. Phillip K. Hastings and his staff for their assistance in detailed tabulation of the Gallup get-along question for surveys from 1937-69. Claude Fischer and Sally Nash carried out further calculations to prepare data on this and the Boston Social Standards Survey for this presentation.

son were based on some target such as the "get along" figure, the two groups would be quite comparable in their relationship to the mainstream. For our purposes we can consider the "get along" figure as indicating an income allowing a family to live a lifestyle characteristic of the lower margins of the stable working class—not really in the mainstream but within striking distance of it.

COMMUNITY SIZE AND GETTING ALONG

An important source of variation in the social meaning of given amounts of income has to do with the local community context. The mainstream lifestyle an individual is most intimately acquainted with may vary depending on the region of the country and the size of the community in which he lives. Again the Gallup "get along" results can serve as a useful index of these variations. Detailed analysis of two surveys in 1969 indicates that regional variations are not significant after community size is controlled for, while community size is an important variable in all regions.

Table 2 presents data for surveys from 1946 to 1969 on variations in average amount needed by community size. From that table, one can see that until the early 1960's the amount needed in the largest cities was, on the average, about 45 percent higher than the amount needed in farm and rural areas. By the mid and late 1960's that difference seems to have narrowed somewhat, with about 35 percent more needed in the larger cities.

TABLE 2.—Gallup "get along" weekly averages by community size

	Farm and rural	Up to 49,999 ¹	50,000 to 499,999 ²	500,000 to 999,999 ³	1,000,000 and above ⁴
January 1946	35. 27	42. 13	45. 34	52. 61	-----
August-December 1947	36. 66	45. 88	48. 83	53. 74	-----
June 1948	43. 29	50. 84	54. 83	61. 31	-----
May 1949	38. 65	49. 24	52. 81	59. 32	-----
February 1950	40. 42	52. 51	52. 58	52. 01	-----
April-December 1951	44. 01	57. 84	62. 58	64. 38	-----
October 1952	51. 12	62. 59	66. 06	74. 98	-----
March 1953	48. 48	62. 55	66. 67	59. 79	-----
April 1954	54. 44	62. 88	65. 34	63. 70	-----
November 1957	62. 07	69. 45	83. 39	90. 10	75. 18
May 1958	55. 00	69. 39	74. 45	84. 10	70. 42
August 1959	66. 97	76. 42	81. 73	97. 21	95. 50
August 1960	63. 77	79. 50	87. 25	96. 82	82. 32
January 1961	68. 72	80. 30	88. 50	91. 99	100. 75
January 1962	71. 43	72. 99	87. 02	92. 24	101. 28
April 1963	69. 26	78. 56	87. 77	89. 19	99. 83
November 1964	74. 08	81. 60	86. 26	93. 56	99. 42
December 1967	92. 81	101. 67	115. 50	115. 83	127. 73
February-October 1969	103. 32	109. 65	121. 80	139. 73	142. 66

¹ Up to 100,000 in 1946-51; 2,500 to 49,999 in 1951-54.

² 100,000 to 499,999 in 1946-51.

³ 500,000 and over in 1946-54.

⁴ Not available until 1957.

The relationship between population of an area and the amount needed can be described quite closely by the following equation:

$$S = kP^{.05}$$

where S is a "sufficient income" for a given standard of living (in this case, to "get along"), P is the population of the area in which the respondent lives, and k is a constant. This relationship suggests that for a family to be as well off in terms of lifestyle as a rural farm family it would need about 8 percent more income in a city of 25,000, 21 percent more in a city of 250,000, 28 percent more in a city of 750,000, and 35 percent more in a city of 2 million. For purposes of illustration, at least, this little exercise suggests something of the magnitude of the income adjustments that would have to be made before families in different areas of the country could be equated in terms of consumption as that bears on personal well-being.

The Gallup get-along question produces results which match very closely with the amounts in Ornati's minimum adequacy budgets, represented today by the Bureau of Labor Standards "lower standard" budget for an urban family. Over the 1946-69 period the Gallup get-along amount for the country as a whole averaged 107 percent of the minimum adequacy budget (the range was from a high of 125 percent to a low of 99 percent). It would seem that "getting along" means having a standard of living that puts you just inside the mainstream, a level that places you in the lower part of the working class.³⁹

POVERTY, COMFORT, RICHES, AND FAMILY SIZE

Gallup has also asked a question about how much income a family of four needs for "health or comfort" or "health and decency" or sometimes simply to live decently. All of these versions seem to get essentially the same kind of response.⁴⁰

The results for the 5 years in which questions were asked are given in table 3.

³⁹ The only other important source of systematic variation in the get-along amounts involves the social status of the respondents. For most of the period in which the Gallup question was asked the surveys provide no data on family income. After 1961 income breakdowns are possible. In each survey the higher income respondents average higher amounts in their response to the question. In 1969, for example, those with family incomes over \$10,000 specified an amount 43 percent greater than those with family incomes under \$3,000. Before 1962 we find similar variations according to the education levels of the respondents although the range is not as great. There is of course a correlation between community size and family income. The effect of community size can be thought of as including three effects; a cost of living effect, a relative income effect and a residual effect covering other unknown factors. The higher the cost of living the greater the amount people feel it takes to get along. Similarly, the higher the average income in the community, after controlling for cost of living, the larger the amount people will think it takes to get along on. In our analysis of the February and October, 1969, surveys these effects accounted for an average of slightly over 10 percent of the variance in the amounts individuals specified in answer to the question. In these two analyses the status of the respondent, measured by family income and education, accounted for an additional 5 percent average of the variance in individual responses. We see, therefore, that a person's position in the hierarchy does affect his perception of the amount it takes to get along, but we also see that the effect is quite small.

⁴⁰ Gallup very often used a "split ballot" technique in the early years to test question phrasings.

TABLE 3.—*Weekly amount necessary for health and comfort (or decency)*

Year	Mean amount	Constant dollars (1971)
February 1937	\$36. 03	\$101. 92
February 1939	31. 40	91. 41
June 1942	39. 24	97. 48
November 1944	48. 88	112. 17
August 1963	111. 42	146. 61

These amounts do not relate quite so steadily to Ornati's minimum comfort budgets as the get-along amounts related to his minimum adequacy. However, for the few observations we have, the means of the Gallup samples average 92 percent of Ornati's minimum comfort budgets (which in the 1960's becomes the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "moderate standard").

In a survey carried out in the Boston metropolitan area, Richard P. Coleman and I have expanded the levels of living about which survey informants are asked to respond.⁴¹ In the Boston Social Standards Survey, carried out in the spring of 1971, respondents were asked to specify how much income was necessary for a family considered living at various qualitatively defined levels—"poverty," "enough to get along," "comfortable," "prosperous and substantial," and "rich." Sub-samples were asked about each of these living levels for families with different numbers of children varying from none through five. The geometric means of the annual amounts for the total sample for each of the combinations of living level and family size are given in table 4. (There were slightly fewer than a hundred respondents for each of the particular items which means that these averages have fairly large standard deviations. Our analysis of response to the items by social status of the respondent suggest that there are minimal systematic variations by status level. It is only for the category "rich" that there is any systematic significant variation among the social classes. Upper middle class respondents do see a higher lower limit for the rich level than do lower middle and working class respondents. Thus for a family in the middle range of children (2.5 children), the average upper middle class respondents place the lower limit of the rich level at slightly over \$30,000 a year whereas the working and lower middle class respondents place that limit at around \$21,500 a year.) We can be interested both in the variation from one level to another, controlling for family size, and in variations from one living level to another, controlling for family size. The former analysis can be carried out for each of the living levels separately, although the small number of observations per living level suggests that the results would be fairly unstable. Alternatively, we can look at the relationship across all the living levels by calculating a multiple regression equation with the amount specified as the dependent variable and the living level

⁴¹ The Boston social standards survey involved a sample of 300 respondents representing the Boston metropolitan area. The survey was carried out by the survey research program of the Joint Center for Urban Studies and we wish to thank the staff for their able response to the challenge of a highly complex questionnaire.

(ranked from one through five) and family size (two adults plus the given number of children) as independent variables. When this is done for the total of 31 items we find an R^2 of .984 for the following form of the multiple regression :

TABLE 4.—*Annual incomes appropriate for living levels and family sizes (geometric means)*

Living levels	Number of children					
	None	1	2	3	4	5
Poverty (highest income to be considered living in poverty)-----	\$4, 036	\$4, 477	\$4, 508	(¹)	\$5, 458	\$5, 848
Get along (lowest income to still have just enough to get along)---	5, 794	6, 683	7, 586	\$8, 298	8, 356	9, 419
Comfortable (lowest income to have a comfortable level of living)---	9, 141	-----	11, 402	10, 864	11, 912	12, 882
Prosperity (lowest income to have a prosperous, substantial level of living)-----	-----	11, 967	14, 158	15, 560	15, 996	15, 922
Rich (lowest income to be considered rich)-----	17, 498	21, 380	24, 717	21, 878	26, 122	-----

¹ No question asked for this combination of level and family size.

$$\text{Log amount} = 3.359 + 0.303 \text{ Log size} + 0.16 \text{ level}$$

The relationship with family size that best characterizes all of the living levels then is:

$$\text{amount} = k \text{ size}^{0.3}$$

where k is an empirical constant. In other words, the amount of money considered necessary to maintain a given living level with increased family size increases at the rate of slightly less than the cube root of family size.

Looking at the other variable, the living level specified, we can use the regression equation to indicate the approximate ratios of the living levels to each other. Starting with the comfortable level as a mid-point and setting that arbitrarily at 100, the income amounts tied to these different levels seem to be in the following ratios:

Living levels:	Ratio to a comfortable level (percent)
Poor -----	48
Get-along -----	69
Comfortable -----	100
Prosperous-substantial -----	145
Rich -----	209

Apparently you are poor if you have about half the money necessary to be comfortable. You have enough to get along if you have 70 percent of what is necessary to be comfortable. You become prosperous when you have about half again as much as is necessary to be comfortable. And you are rich when you have twice as much as is necessary to be comfortable.

The implications of this analysis for variations in "equal welfare" incomes with family size are quite interesting in policy terms. Many Federal and State programs vary income limits or benefits by family size. These variations are usually set in terms of assumptions concerning resources necessary for families of different sizes living at a given level, but their rationale presumably also includes some expectation that the public generally would share an understanding that families with different benefits should nevertheless somehow have "equal welfare." If we compare our equal welfare ratios based on a formula that varies the equal welfare income amount by approximately the cube root of family size with the ratios in two sets of Government standards, we see some interesting differences (table 5). We note that a family of seven persons is seen as requiring about 50 percent more income than a family of two persons to be at an equal living level. The ratios built into the SSA poverty index and the earlier versions of the family assistance proposal (FAP) involve $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as much income for a family of 7 as for a family of 2. If the logic of our respondents mirrors even roughly the national consensus on the relation of family size to economic well-being, then these Government standards considerably overestimate the "poorness" of large families and underestimate the "poorness" of small families relative to each other. The exponent for family size implied by the two sets of Government standards is almost exactly double that suggested by the responses in our survey.

TABLE 5.—*Comparison of incomes necessary for equal welfare of different family sizes with poverty line and FAP family size variations in payment by family size*

Family size	Equal welfare ratios (dollars= kN^3)	Low income threshold ratios (nonfarm)	Payment ratios in FAP
2.....	\$1. 00	\$1. 00	\$1. 00
3.....	1. 13	1. 19	1. 30
4.....	1. 23	1. 52	1. 60
5.....	1. 32	1. 79	1. 90
6.....	1. 39	2. 01	2. 20
7.....	1. 46	2. 48	2. 50

It is possible to combine the relationship between community size and equal welfare amounts with that for family size developed above and present the following formula as indicating the income amounts that produce equal economic well-being for different community and family sizes:

$$\text{Equal welfare income} = kP^{0.05}N^{0.3}$$

If our living levels were measured in terms of the ratio scale we also could introduce a living level variable (basically a utility variable) into the equation. However, we have only five ordinal categories. Instead let us simply look at the extremes for each of the five living levels—the incomes that our formula says would produce equal levels of living for a two person rural family and a seven person urban family (table 6).

TABLE 6.—*Annual incomes required for various living levels*

Living level	2-person rural family	7-person metropolitan family
Poverty	\$3, 012	\$5, 914
Get along	4, 354	8, 547
Comfortable	6, 293	12, 355
Prosperous-substantial	9, 097	17, 859
Rich	13, 149	25, 814

The equal welfare living level for the large family in the metropolis is almost twice that of the smallest family in a rural area.⁴²

LIVING LEVELS, SOCIAL STATUS, AND FAIR INCOMES

We now have examined a number of variations in the social meanings of income based on people's conceptions of living levels, and of income requirements as these vary by family size and community size. We can fill in the pattern of social meanings somewhat more by noting briefly some of the findings of the Boston social standards survey in response to questions that ask about income levels identified with different social classes, and incomes that respondents regard as fair and just for different kinds of people.

In the Boston social standards survey one question asked respondents to specify the income of persons at various places in the social class hierarchy. Respondents were given the names of five social classes along with the percentage of the population that "social scientists say" fit in those classes:

- The upper class (2 percent).
- The upper middle class (10 percent).
- The lower middle class (33 percent).
- The upper working class (40 percent).
- The lower working class (15 percent).

Respondents were then asked to indicate an income that they would regard as representative of a typical family at the boundary line between each of the classes—for example, a family on the borderline between the upper class and the upper middle class—and also of a family at "the very bottom" of the lower working class and the "tip top" of the upper class (the top or bottom 1 out of 1,000 families).

Respondents were asked two kinds of questions designed to get at the issue of fair incomes. The first was related to the concept of minimum

⁴² It should be apparent that in addition to the other assumptions we make in offering this formula, we are also assuming that there are no marked differences between the views people in a given situation hold of the equal welfare income for that situation and those held by others. Thus we have derived the relationship with community size on the basis of comparing the incomes people in different community sizes say are necessary to get along in their own community. And we have combined that result with the incomes for different family sizes given by the total number of respondents in the Boston survey, and not just those respondents who had that number of children. This seems safe for illustrative purposes since our detailed analysis of the data suggests that there are no marked differences in amount specified by respondent's own family size.

wage, and asked what minimum salary or wage a man who works hard all year should be entitled to "no matter what his job is"—the different questions specified different ages covering 22-, 32-, 42-, 52-, and 62-year-old workers and a retirement income for a man who had worked at this level all his life.

We presented respondents with a description of "an imaginary simplified community" asking them to judge what would be a fair income for each of five categories:

The 150 workers at the lower skilled level.

The 400 at the average workingman level.

The 250 at the average white collar level.

The 150 at the middle management and professional level.

The 50 at the top management level.

Finally, we asked respondents, after describing to them in fairly abstract terms the negative income tax mechanism of a family assistance plan, to indicate what they felt should be the minimum guaranteed income level of such a plan and what should be the maximum level at which respondents received no more payments.⁴³

Table 7 presents the results for all of these different items—for the living levels of four-person families (derived from the regression formula), for the class boundaries, and for the fair income items. (All the amounts are based on geometric means of the responses given by the total sample.)

⁴³ Lee Rainwater, "Public Responses to Low Income Policies: FAP and Welfare," Joint Center Working Paper No. 8, Joint Center for Urban Studies, 1972.

TABLE 7.—*Annual incomes associated with various living and status levels in Boston*

Living levels	Class boundaries	Fair incomes
Poverty (\$5,000)-----	\$3,100: Very bottom of the lower class (0.1 percentile).	
Above poverty but not getting along (\$7,200).		\$5,000: Retirement income for minimum wage worker. \$5,500: Guaranteed minimum annual income for FAP. Minimum annual wage for: \$5,700: A 22-year-old man. \$6,000: A 62-year old man. \$6,400: Fair salary for 150 lower skilled workers. Minimum annual wage for: \$6,700: A 32-year-old man. \$6,800: A 52-year-old man. \$7,200: A 42-year-old man.
Getting along (\$10,400)--	\$7,400: Lower class/working class boundary line (15 percentile). \$8,800: Working class/lower middle class boundary (55 percentile).	\$7,500: Fair salary for 400 average workingmen, \$7,500: FAP maximum income. \$8,800: Fair salary for 250 average white collar workers.
Comfortable (\$15,000)-----		\$14,500: Fair salary for 150 middle management and professional workers.
Prosperous, substantial (\$21,800)	\$15,000: Lower middle/upper middle class boundary (88 percentile).	
Rich-----	\$25,000: Upper middle/upper class boundary (98 percentile). \$95,000: Tip top of the upper class (99.9 percentile).	\$25,000: Fair salary for top management people.

This table gives a reasonably coherent view of the range of, and relationships among, living levels recognized by our respondents. They would seem to regard incomes below \$3,000 a year as beyond any ordinary experience, even that of the lowest social group. They recognize a low-living level that is near but slightly above real poverty. They see this as the level at which the Government should guarantee income, and as representing reasonable incomes for a retired minimum skill worker and for a minimum skill worker just beginning his work career at age 22. Then there is a cluster of fair minimum salaries close to but slightly below the get-along level. These are the minimum wages for 32- through 52-year-old men.

The get-along line seems to approximate the boundary line between the working and lower classes, as we might expect. Respondents seem to feel that a proper family assistance plan would assist workers until their earnings brought them within the working class—so they specify a maximum of \$7,500 as the point at which benefits would cease. The results are somewhat ambiguous for the working class-middle class boundary—as perhaps is to be expected given the great overlap in incomes between higher level blue collar and lower level white collar workers.

The comfort line is clearly seen as above that of the earnings of the great majority of workers—perhaps suggesting something of the importance of moonlighting and wives' working to make the difference between getting along and having a comfortable life style. The perception that extra hard work is necessary to bridge that gap is a common factor in the resentment working and lower middle class people feel toward the idea of giving away money to people who "don't deserve" it.⁴⁴ Appropriately enough our respondents see a fair salary for middle management and professional workers as about on the border line between comfortable and prosperous levels and between the lower-middle and upper-middle class. Finally, the world of

⁴⁴ The median income for husbands in 1970 was \$8,451. We estimate a national sample would have placed comfort for four at about \$9,500. The median husband-wife family income was \$10,516.

the rich is that of the \$25,000 a year and up workers—the very top of the upper-middle class and the upper class above it. And the rarified area of the super rich seems to start at about \$100,000 a year for our respondents.

POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE LIVING LEVELS

Overall, one is impressed by the great gap between the living levels in the \$6,500 to \$9,000 range that are regarded as characteristic and also as generally fair for the mainstream of blue and white collar workers, and the levels below \$4,000 with which we are typically concerned when we discuss the poor.

We have suggested earlier that across-time comparisons, using the Gallup get-along and comfort questions, are particularly useful to understand the point that well-being is a function of consumption relative to mainstream consumption. Table 8 pulls together in one place the questions from several Gallop and Roper polls extending back to 1937, the Ornati living standards data from 1929 onward, and our own Boston Social Standards Survey data for 1970. The table presents the results categorized by general living level from poverty through super rich adjusted (*a*) on a relative basis, and (*b*) in terms of constant 1971 dollars. The relative adjustment is accomplished by calculating for each budget or opinion poll average its ratio to the family disposable income (per capita disposable personal income times four) for that year. Thus if the budget or poll mean was \$5,000 in a year in which family disposable income was \$10,000 the ratio is 0.50. We have then projected that ratio forward to 1971 and entered in the second column the comparable amount in terms of 1971 family disposable income (\$14,324). This column then shows a constant amount in terms of the relationship between a given item and disposable personal income. The remaining columns show the comparable amount in terms of constant 1971 dollars.

TABLE 8.—*Patterns of stability in relative annual living levels: 1929-71*

	Adjusted to 1971 FDPI	Results expressed in constant (1971) dollars							Boston 1970-71
		1929	1937-40	1942-44	1946-51	1952-54	1957-64	1967-69	
Super rich:									
Incomes above should be confiscated (30 percent) (P)---	\$266, 727		\$116, 660						
No one should earn more than (50 percent) (B)-----	151, 029								\$151, 029
Rich:									
Only 40 percent believe a young man has a good chance of rising to earn \$5,000 (P)-----	32, 372		14, 105						
Mean for a perfectly satisfactory income for self (P)---	23, 062		10, 689						
Bostonians say the minimum income to be rich is (B)---	21, 775								21, 775
Mean amount defined as upper income (P)-----	20, 770		9, 095						
Prosperity:									
Bostonian minimum income to be prosperous, substantial (B)-----	15, 065								15, 065
Median for a perfectly satisfactory income for self (P)---	14, 610		6, 686						
Standard comfort:									
Family of 4 needs for health, comfort, decency, necessities, and a few luxuries. (P)-----	12, 000		5, 026						
	11, 400			\$5, 450			\$7, 623		
	10, 456								10, 400

Minimum for comfortable life. (B)-----	10,400							
Minimum comfort budgets-----	8,880	\$4,028						
	8,883		5,476					
	10,026			\$6,392		7,668		
	10,200						\$11,009	
	11,746							11,009
Getting along:								
Minimum adequacy budgets--	8,164	3,693						
	8,307		3,815					
	7,878			5,046				
	8,307					5,944		
	7,691						7,175	
	7,691							7,175
Young couple needs to get married. (P)-----	8,100			5,200				
Enough for a family of 4 to get along. (P)-----	7,900			3,983	\$4,425	5,226	6,214	
	8,000							8,000
Mean defined as lower income. (P)-----	7,305		3,336					
Proper minimum for a full time worker (men). (B)-----	7,300							7,300
Poverty lines:								
Proper minimum retirement income. (B)-----	5,500							5,500
Minimum subsistence budgets.	6,016	2,688				3,729		
	5,075		2,414	3,652				
SSA poverty line (1963)-----	5,300					4,135	4,135	4,135
Maximum to be in poverty. (B)-----	14,990							14,990
Historic poverty line projected to 1971 (36.5 percent family DPI)-----	5,228							5,228

¹ P= Gallup or Roper polls. B=Boston Social Standards surveys.

A reader who for any given living level compares the amount under the relative adjustment with the amounts involving the constant dollar adjustment will note the impressive extent of stability once an adjustment is made for disposable personal income. Thus in the late 1930's respondents in public opinion polls defined at over \$20,000 in "relative dollars" the "upper income" group. Bostonians in 1971 say that a little over \$21,000 defines a four-person family as rich—yet in constant dollars the 1930's respondents were calling only \$9,000 upper income.

Several polls touched the area of standard comfort—asking about incomes necessary for health and comfort or decency or "the necessities and a few luxuries." In relative terms results dating from 1937 fit very nicely with the amount our Boston respondents specified as minimum for a comfortable level of living—but in absolute terms the constant dollar amounts seem to have about doubled. Responses for "getting along" show a similar consistency. The mean amount for a family to get along is put at about \$8,000 following adjustment for 1971 disposable personal income but it has doubled in constant dollar values since 1946. Finally, poverty line budgets seem quite stable in relative terms at slightly over \$5,000 a year (except that 1929 was high)—but in constant dollar amounts they have almost doubled. Similar stability is shown by minimum comfort and minimum adequacy budgets in terms of the relative adjustment, but we have the pattern of at least doubling in terms of constant purchasing power.

All of these results then point to the necessity of paying systematic attention to relative incomes if we are to properly understand the meaning of "poverty" for families and individuals. The implications of this relativity of poverty to mainstream income can be made clearer by projecting past relation of poverty lines and per capita personal income into the future. In 1985, according to Herman Miller's projections, mean family income will be around \$18,700 in 1971 dollars, and median family income will be around \$17,100.⁴⁵ The historical relation of the "poverty" or "minimum adequacy" line to personal income would suggest that in 1985 we will be considering around \$3,300 as the poverty line for a family of four. Yet today only slightly more than half of all male workers in the prime earning years of 25 to 54 earn that much. They do not call themselves poor—they are in the mainstream. If we do not have poverty in 1985 it will not be because fewer than 2 percent of the population have incomes of less than \$5,000 a year. Abolishing poverty can only be the result of sharply altering the income distribution so that very few families with children have incomes less than \$9,000 or \$10,000 a year in 1985.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If the above analysis is correct—that it is incomes that are low in relation to others rather than in any absolute or subsistence sense which produce the social and psychological consequences that we call poverty—then several general policy implications follow. Only policies that achieve a different distribution of income from the present one

⁴⁵ Herman P. Miller, *Rich Man, Poor Man*, Thomas Crowell, 1971, pp. 234–246, and Lee Rainwater, "Post-1984 America," *Society*, February 1972.

can hope to deal with problems of poverty. To be effective policies must generate a distribution of income such that as they grow up, pass through maturity, and into old age, no individuals have living levels that are far removed from the mainstream living level appropriate to that stage in life.⁴⁶

Life cycle variables very much complicate being concrete about the income distribution that meet the criterion of policy efficacy. Life cycle factors complicate matters in two ways. First, the standards by which people assess their relationship to the mainstream obviously differ depending on age and family circumstances. It is easiest to think about these matters for adults who are married and have children, or from the perspective of their children. Individuals spend half or more of their lives in one or another of these stages so it is perhaps understandable that we tend fairly automatically to focus on the family in defining the mainstream.

Here the criterion is straightforward enough. An equitable society would be one in which each individual, as he grew up, as he assumed responsibility for rearing a family, had available the resources necessary to approximate mainstream consumption. That consumption is understood to be somewhat age-graded—families normally accumulate resources as they go along.

It is not easy to specify the relationships of relative equity for the period of youth—the time between being old enough to leave home and being married and settled down with a couple of kids. It is obvious that there is a feeling that one needs less in the way of resources during that time but how much less is difficult to specify, especially since individuals take up family responsibilities at different ages. The same considerations apply to the time after the children have grown up and left home when husband and wife are settling into “the golden years” and retirement.

The other confusion life cycle factors introduce to discussions of income distribution policy results from the fact that many income maintenance or security policies really aim at redistributing income within the life cycle of individuals without notably changing their lifetime income distribution rank. This is preeminently true of social security. Family allowance programs also have a large component of this kind of redistribution since once they get going, individuals repay later in life the support that they received as children, just as they now pay earlier in life for the support they receive in retirement. Income distribution over the life cycle is an important issue but in much discussion of social welfare and income security it has served to obscure and complicate the more crucial and also more sensitive one of income redistribution among persons at similar stages in the life cycle.

The prevalence of this kind of confusion—with heavy emphasis placed on children (often justified as investment in the human capital)

⁴⁶ For too long the Nation has sought to deal with problems of the maldistribution of income by a service strategy which seeks either to provide opportunity or else change the culture of poor people. In the last half dozen years policy analysts and policy makers increasingly have recognized that the service strategy simply does not work and that the only effective way to change income distribution is to work directly on it by using an income strategy. Lee Rainwater, “Poverty and Deprivation in the Crisis of the American City,” U.S. Senate Committee on Government Operations, Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization, Washington, D.C., Dec. 9, 1966.

and on provision of security for old age—indicates the need for a countervailing emphasis on the necessity of redistributing income among individuals during their years of mature productivity.

There has been increasing consensus that the basic element in any strategy to do away with poverty must be a guaranteed annual income program. The considerations presented early in this paper all support such a conclusion. They also suggest something of the standards by which a minimum income might be judged. We noted that Bostonians seem to feel that a guaranteed minimum income of around \$5,500 would be sensible in terms of providing what they feel represents a kind of social minimum for a decent life. If that amount is discounted to a national figure (based on the assumption that the same relationship found between community size and the Gallup get-along amount would apply) we arrive at a 1971 target guaranteed annual income of around \$4,600 a year for a family of four. (But as we have noted, our respondents would not see that amount varying as much by family size as government standards typically vary.)

Such an amount is far above the level of the FAP guaranteed income proposal considered seriously by the 92d Congress. It is also clear that to move toward this higher level of guarantee requires a shift from a negative income tax concept to a credit income tax format which simultaneously introduces a guaranteed income and integrates it into a simplified and reformed income tax system. The country, now willing to support the idea of a guaranteed income as represented by the FAP proposal, may well move in that direction first, but it seems unlikely that incremental additions to FAP could ever reach a level that meets a public definition of an "adequate guaranteed income."

The tax credit form of guaranteed income is appealing because it contains little in the way of disincentives to increasing income through work.⁴⁷ It faces the issue of income redistribution squarely by rewriting the tax schedule. It introduces progressivity of income tax so that low income individuals do not have to pay high tax rates on their earnings as they do under a negative income tax plan.

The relationship between a guaranteed income program and the employment of low-income people is a crucial one. High as the suggested minimum guaranteed income level may seem—say 50 percent of a "comfortable" level—simply creating an income maintenance program that brings all families to it will not produce the equalization of personal well-being that is the implicit goal of public concern with poverty. The relationship between transfers and the tax rate is such that it seems unlikely that guaranteed income can ever go high enough to provide the kind of money that would allow all people to "get along." Planning should probably assume that it will not be pos-

⁴⁷ See James Tobin, "Raising the Incomes of the Poor," (in Kermit Gordon, editor, *Agenda for the Nation*, Brookings Institution, 1968) for an excellent discussion of income transfer strategies and of the tax credit as a strategy that retains maximum work incentives. See also Earl R. Rolph, "A Credit Income Tax," in Theodore R. Marmor, *Poverty Policy*, Aldine-Atherton, 1971.

sible to take more than 25 or 30 percent of personal income for redistribution.⁴⁸

The guaranteed income strategy has to be coupled with a guaranteed employment strategy if a fuller, more secure, self-maintaining and therefore more lasting and more equitable distribution of income is to be achieved. For three decades, whenever the American people have been consulted by public opinion poll concerning their preferred strategies for combating economic disadvantage they have emphasized the importance of providing people with jobs. Indeed, insistence on the importance of this strategy grows as one moves from high-status to low-status groups.⁴⁹

However, the Federal Government has not come to grips with this task. We have had job training programs, other education programs designed to increase "human capital" and now, finally, a more rational and vigorous concern with the issue of income guarantees via transfers. But the best income guarantee is not the one of transfer but the guarantee of the capacity to work, be productive, and return to society what one takes for personal and family maintenance. A nation which cannot provide every American with a job at a decent wage is telling too many of its members that they are superfluous.

An employment strategy for greater equity to abolish poverty must have two goals. First, it must distribute unemployment more equally. That is to say, if demand for labor does not absorb all persons looking for work, mechanisms must be developed to produce a more equal distribution of unemployment. One such mechanism would be a job subsidy to employers varying with the duration of unemployment of the men they hired; the longer the person hired had been unemployed the greater the subsidy to the employer.⁵⁰

More important for equalizing the income distribution are changes in the structure of labor demand which would also change the structure of wages and salaries in a more equalitarian direction. The various possible strategies for achieving this goal have been ably analyzed by Lester Thurow and Robert Lucas.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cf. James Tobin, "On Limiting the Domain of Inequality," *Journal of Law and Economics*, October 1970, p. 265, "Serious redistribution by tax and transfers will involve high tax rates as the following simple calculation illustrates * * *. If the guarantee level * * * is a quarter or a third of mean income, and especially if the government is purchasing for substantive use a significant fraction of national output, the necessary tax rates would be so high that incentive and allocational effects cannot be ignored."

⁴⁹ See Lee Rainwater, "Public Responses to Low-Income Policies: FAP and Welfare," op. cit.; Michael E. Schiltz, *Public Attitudes Towards Social Security, 1935-1965*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security Administration Report No. 33, 1970; and Amital Etzioni and Carol O. Atkinson, *Sociological Implications of Alternative Income Transfer Systems*, N.Y.: Bureau of Social Science Research, Columbia University, September 1969.

⁵⁰ See John F. Kain, "Coping with Ghetto Unemployment," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, March 1969, 11:80-83.

⁵¹ See Lester C. Thurow and Robert Lucas, "The American Distribution of Income: A Structural Problem," prepared for the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress of the United States, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., Mar. 17, 1962. Also, Lester C. Thurow, *The Impact of Taxes on the American Economy*, Praeger Publishers, 1971, and John Kenneth Galbraith, Edwin Kuh and Lester C. Thurow, "The Galbraith Plan to Promote the Minorities," *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 22, 1971.

If we achieve the goal of altering the wage and salary structure toward equality, we will have succeeded at the greatest domestic challenge the Nation has ever faced.⁵² This achievement cannot be the work of a crash effort or a few single programs, but if the poor are not always to be with us then it must be attempted.

APPENDIX A

Family Size, Children's Ages, and the Credit Income Tax Plan

Recent political events have focused attention both on the attractive features and on some of the potential disadvantages of a credit income tax form of guaranteed income.⁵³ Here I want to deal with one of the issues raised by close examination of the credit income tax mechanism, the redistribution of income from smaller to larger families that occurs because of the per capita form of the guarantee.

A per capita phrasing is appealing to many both on philosophical and pragmatic grounds. It seems fitting that income guarantees should go to individuals rather than to particular social units. Pragmatically, it seems desirable to have an income plan which does not set up incentives by conferring a different advantage to some forms of family grouping as opposed to others.⁵⁴

On the other hand, a guarantee phrased on a per capita basis increases the family guarantee in strict proportion as family size increases. Such a relationship with family size accords neither with the logic of family budget studies nor with that expressed by ordinary citizens when judging equal welfare incomes for families of different size.⁵⁵

The simplest resolution of this problem is to have different guarantee amounts for children and adults. The guarantee for each successive child would decline as in various negative income tax and family allowance schemes.

Doing this, however, results in awkwardness when children cross the threshold into adulthood. At what age does a person become entitled to an adult guarantee? What are the likely effects of this dichotomy on family splitting and family formation in the late teenage and early adult period?

I will sketch out below one possible solution which preserves the credit income taxes format of benefits being attached to individuals rather than to particular household units.

⁵² J. H. Goldthorpe has dealt in useful detail with the broad issue of social consensus, legitimacy and income redistribution in his "Social Inequality and Social Integration in Great Britain," *Advancement of Science*, December 1969.

⁵³ Russell Lidman, "Costs and Distributional Implications of McGovern's Minimum Income Grant Proposal," discussion paper 131-72, Institute for Research on Poverty, Madison: University of Wisconsin, June 1972. A simpler, probably more feasible age-tested credit income tax plan has been worked out by Harold Watts, "Income Redistribution: How It Is and How It Can Be," testimony for the Democratic Platform Committee hearings, St. Louis, June 17, 1972. I have benefited from comments on the initial draft of this appendix by Robert Haveman and Russell Lidman.

⁵⁴ See Tobin, "Raising the Incomes of the Poor," *op. cit.*, and Rolph, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ For a discussion of variations in family need budgets related to family size and age see Margaret Wynn, *Family Policy*, London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1970, especially p. 53 to 86. For public conceptions, see above.

We start out with a guarantee amount for adults (how that amount might be arrived at will be discussed later). The modification to be discussed here involves the stipulation that each newborn child becomes entitled to a percentage of the adult guarantee rather than to the full amount.

That proportion of the guarantee is then increased each year in such a way as to reach the full amount at age 25. Thus in this plan, adults 25 years of age and older receive the full amount of the credit income tax guarantee and those younger receive some smaller proportionate amount.

The logic for entitlement to the full amount at age 25 is simply that we have moved toward a society in which training for adulthood is assumed to proceed to about the middle twenties—either training through higher education or on the job. Most people seem to feel that people in their early twenties are not entitled to quite the same level of living as older adults are.⁵⁶

Depending on how much or how little redistribution toward larger families is desired, one would choose a particular proportion of the adult allotment for the newborn. Table 1 gives three distributions, one illustrative of minimal redistribution to larger families, one of a higher level of redistribution to larger families, and one in the middle.

TABLE 1.—*Sample appreciation rates on tax credit with increasing age*

Age at last birthday	[In percent]		
	Appreciates 10 percent per annum from 10 percent at birth	Appreciates 6.7 percent from 20 percent at birth	Appreciates 4.5 percent from 33.3 percent at birth
Birth	10.0	20.0	33.0
1	11.0	21.0	35.0
2	12.0	23.0	36.0
3	13.0	24.0	38.0
4	15.0	26.0	40.0
5	16.0	28.0	42.0
6	18.0	30.0	43.0
7	19.0	31.0	45.0
8	21.0	34.0	47.0
9	24.0	36.0	50.0
10	26.0	38.0	52.0
11	29.0	41.0	54.0
12	31.0	44.0	57.0
13	35.0	46.0	59.0
14	38.0	50.0	62.0
15	42.0	53.0	65.0
16	46.0	56.0	67.0
17	51.0	60.0	70.0
18	56.0	64.0	74.0
19	61.0	69.0	77.0
20	67.0	73.0	80.0
21	74.0	78.0	84.0
22	81.0	83.0	88.0
23	90.0	89.0	92.0
24	98.0	95.0	96.0
25 and over	100.0	100.0	100.0

⁵⁶ See results presented above on public conceptions of a fair minimum wage in relation to age of worker, p. 60.

Summary by age group (mean proportion for group)

Age at last birthday	Appreciates 10 percent per annum from 10 percent at birth	Appreciates 6.7 percent from 20 percent at birth	Appreciates 4.5 percent from 33.3 percent at birth
Birth to 4	12. 2	22. 8	26. 4
5 to 9	19. 6	31. 8	45. 4
10 to 14	31. 8	43. 8	56. 8
15 to 19	51. 2	60. 4	70. 6
20 to 24	82. 0	83. 6	88. 0
0 to 19	30. 2	41. 8	55. 0
0 to 24	41. 0	50. 5	61. 9

The minimal redistribution schedule involves 10 percent of the adult guarantee at birth, appreciated at about 10 percent a year so that it reaches 100 percent by age 25. The more heavily redistributive plan involves an entitlement of one-third of the adult amount at birth and this amount appreciates at 4.5 percent a year. The middle illustration involves a 20-percent entitlement at birth, appreciating at 6.7 percent a year. Under the 10-percent schedule, a child averages 30 percent of the adult guarantee during his first 19 years. With the highest guarantee, he averages 62 percent of the adult guarantee; and at the 20-percent starting level, he averages 50 percent of the adult guarantee.

The gradual appreciation in the amount of the guarantee has several things to commend it. First, children require more in the way of resources the older they get—though no effort has been made to adjust these figures to budgetary estimates of the ratio of “need” of children of different ages. Second, the larger a family is, the more dispersion there is in the ages of the children; this mechanism has the effect of producing lower increments of income for each additional child (except in the case of quintuplets). Third, because the increments with age are gradual but increasing, the family knows that from year to year it will be relatively better off by virtue of the guarantee and therefore there is to some extent a sense of compensation for the “work” of raising a family.

The principal inadequacy of this plan in terms of amounts of money is perhaps that it produces relatively less money for families with very young children than would be the case if age did not affect the guarantee. This does not bother me since I am quite unconvinced by arguments about the importance of the early years of childhood—at least insofar as small differences in income are concerned. The income squeeze at the low income level is probably much more important for children in preadolescence and adolescence when having the things money can buy become much more crucial to the child himself.⁵⁷

If one wanted to minimize the redistribution toward larger families even more, it would be possible to use different schedules depending on the age order of the child. Thus the oldest child's guarantee could be calculated under the schedule that starts at one-third of the adult

⁵⁷ See Wynn, *op. cit.*, for the relation of need to age of child.

guarantee, the second and third oldest children's guarantees could be calculated under the schedule that starts at 20 percent, and the fourth and fifth children's guarantees calculated under the schedule that starts at 10 percent. (One could even set up a plan in which higher order children were not entitled to a share of the guarantee, or alternatively, a schedule could be calculated that starts at 1 percent at birth and appreciates at a higher rate than 10 percent.)

To illustrate the operation of this system, let us take the BLS's Federal family of four persons which includes a 38-year-old husband, a wife of unspecified age, and a 13- and 8-year-old child. Table 2 shows that family's entitlement under the three schedules and then illustrates variations in that entitlement at different points in that family's career. The family's entitlement is calculated by adding the entitlements of the different members. The husband has a 100-percent entitlement, the wife also. The 13-year-old under the first schedule has an entitlement of 35 percent, and the 8-year-old has an entitlement of 21 percent. Perhaps it is simpler to call these points and to say that the family as a whole has an entitlement of 256 points under the first schedule, 280 under the second, and 306 under the third. One can see here the different redistributive effects for family size. In the first case the family of four would receive 28 percent more than the couple alone; in the second case, 40 percent more; and in the third case, 53 percent more. The ratios to a couple's income would of course vary by the ages of the children. A couple who had twins would receive 10, 20, and 33 percent more respectively from the three schedules. By the time the twins graduated from high school, the couple would be receiving 56 percent, 64 percent, and 74 percent more respectively. Under a straightforward credit income tax plan they would have received 100 percent more from the birth of the twins.

As Rolph and Tobin note, under a credit income tax plan which includes a flat tax rate on all income, there is a precise relationship between the Nation's personal income, the size of the population, the taxes used for transfers, other Government expenditures, and the income guarantee.

$$\text{Tax rate} \times \text{income} - (\text{per capita grant} \times \text{population}) - \text{other expenditures} = 0$$

We have disturbed that neat relationship by departing from a straight per capita base. In order to make use of the relationship between personal income, tax rate, and income guarantee, we have to weigh each person in the population by the proportionate entitlement he has given his age. This is simple enough. One weights the population 0 to 4 years of age by the mean proportionate entitlement for that category, and so on for successive age cohorts. When this is done, the 207 million Americans in 1971 produce a weighted total of slightly over 149 million under the 10-percent schedule, over 158 million for the 20-percent schedule, and 169 million for the one-third schedule (table 2). These figures can then be substituted in the Rolph-Tobin formulas to make the same kinds of calculations. The weighted per capita personal income which appears in the next line in the table varies from \$5,747 under the 10-percent schedule to \$5,075 under the one-third schedule.

TABLE 2.—*Illustrations for Nation and for the Federal family of 4 (husband age 38, wife of unspecified age, son age 13, daughter age 8)*

Federal family's entitlement	Appreciates 10 percent per annum from 10 percent at birth	Appreciates 6.7 percent from 20 percent at birth	Appreciates 4.5 percent from 33.3 percent at birth
Family-----	256	280	184
Federal family's entitlement:			
At marriage (husband 24, wife 22)-----	179	178	184
1st child, age 3-----	213	224	238
2d child:			
Age 1-----	228	250	276
Age 6-----	247	271	297
Age 11-----	275	297	321
Age 16-----	320	334	351
3d child, age 3 (1st child is 13)-----	269	304	344
1971 weighted population (millions)-----	149. 12	158. 57	169. 99
1971 weighted per capita P.I.-----	\$5, 747	\$5, 405	\$5, 075
Credit at 25 percent-----	\$1, 437	\$1, 351	\$1, 269
Credit at 30 percent-----	\$1, 724	\$1, 621	\$1, 523
At 25 percent tax rate Federal family gets-----	\$3, 679	\$3, 783	\$3, 883
At 30 percent tax rate Federal family gets-----	\$4, 413	\$4, 539	\$4, 660

One can then calculate the adult tax credit either by pegging it at a particular percentage of weighted per capita personal income, or one can pick a target guarantee and work backwards to calculate the tax rate necessary to sustain that. Table 2 shows how much the adult credit would be if 25 percent of personal income were reserved to finance redistribution (the neighborhood Rolph and Tobin use for illustration) and at a higher level of 30 percent. At 25 percent the adult guarantee under the 10 percent-at-birth schedule would be \$1,437 and under the one-third schedule would be \$1,296. For comparison, a straight credit income tax plan at this level would produce a guarantee of \$1,034. The Federal family of four when the husband is 38 years old would receive \$3,679 under the 10 percent plan, \$3,783 under the 20 percent plan, and \$3,883 under the one-third plan. A straight credit income tax would give them \$4,136. If they had two more younger children, their guarantee would be \$4,023 under the lower schedule, \$4,390 under the middle schedule, \$4,089 under the higher schedule, and \$6,000 under a straight credit income tax plan.

An alternative plan is to take a target income guarantee—either for the Federal family of four or for the adult credit—and work backward to the tax rate. Suppose one wants to take as a target an income for the Federal family just above the poverty line—\$4,200 in 1971. Taking our middle schedule for an example, we have an adult credit of \$1,500 (\$4,200 divided by 2.8). The weighted per capita personal income for this schedule is \$5,404 which divided into the \$1,500 adult credit yields a tax rate for transfers of 27.8 percent.

CHILD WELFARE, PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE STATE

By HARRY D. KRAUSE*

INTRODUCTION

Welfare is our domestic Vietnam. Increased expenditures have brought diminishing returns. New approaches have been discussed for years, but truly innovative proposals remain stalled. The left wants double, the right wants half, and the result is deplorable. In the meantime, spiraling costs have all but bankrupted State governments¹ and the aid to families with dependent children (AFDC) program has been most directly responsible.² Within the AFDC program, paternal child abandonment and illegitimacy are the crucial problem. Detailed statistics are available elsewhere.³ Suffice it to say here that desertion and illegitimacy accounted for some 44 percent of AFDC families studied in 1969 and that approximately three-quarters of the AFDC load is made up of homes from which, for one reason or another, the father is

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¹ "Empty Pockets on a Trillion Dollars a Year," *Time*, Mar. 13, 1972, 66.

² "If the situation in welfare was alarming and in a state of crisis at the beginning of 1970, the AFDC program is now completely out of control. January 1971 expenditures for aid to families with dependent children were \$482,423,000—a 40.5 percent increase over the previous January. The number of AFDC recipients rose from 7,501,000 in January 1970 to 9,773,000 in January 1971—*2¼ million more people in 1 year!*" Committee on Ways and Means, Social Security Amendments of 1971 (H.R. 1), H. Rep. 92-231, 92d Cong. 1st sess. at 159. Welfare costs generally rose from about 4 billion in 1961 to 8 billion in 1968 to 16 billion in 1971. Persons "on relief" increased from about 7 million in 1961 to 9 million to 1968 to 14 million in 1971. *U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 25, 1971, p. 63. Much of the growth in welfare rolls has not been due to increased numbers of eligible recipients, but to "governmental programs designed to moderate widespread political unrest among the black poor. One consequence of these programs was that the poor were suddenly stimulated to apply for relief in unprecedented numbers (except in the South); another consequence was that welfare officials were suddenly stimulated to approve applications in unprecedented numbers." F. Piven & R. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* 337-338 (1971).

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* at 293-97 (72d ed. 1971); Senate Committee on Finance, Social Security Amendments of 1971, *Hearings on H.R. 1*, 92d Cong. 1st sess., Administration witnesses, pp. 88-92 (1971); Bureau of Family Services, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Illegitimacy and Dependency* XV, XXIV (1963); Bureau of Public Assistance, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Illegitimacy and its Impact on the Aid to Dependent Children Program* 37 (1960); M. Burgess and D. Price, *An American Dependency Challenge* (1963); G. Blackwell and R. Gould, *Future Citizens All* (1952); Wiltse and Roberts, "Illegitimacy and the AFDC Program," in R. Roberts, *The Unwed Mother* 218 (1966).

absent.⁴ No relief is in sight: The 10 years from 1961 to 1970 saw enough new illegitimate children to populate a city the size of Los Angeles; the last 5 years, a city the size of Detroit. In 1968, 339,000 illegitimate children were added, 318,100 in 1967, 302,400 in 1966, 291,200 in 1965, 275,700 in 1964, for a total of 1,526,400 in just these 5 years. Worse, not only has there been an absolute increase in the number of illegitimate births, but the rate is accelerating rapidly. Approximately 10 percent of all births now are illegitimate. In many urban areas illegitimacy stands at 40 percent and in some it exceeds 50 percent.⁵

In the statistics of divorce, separation, and desertion, the increases also have been substantial.⁶ The ensuing welfare dependency of this army of social orphans transcends lack of money—child neglect, as defined by statutes designed to protect children against their environment, is commonplace.⁷

Rather than follow the tradition of viewing welfare as a problem of dependent adults, this paper focuses on child welfare and deals with parental nonsupport and neglect. This focus is seen as the most important—what is done or not done in child welfare now will determine the quality of life a generation hence. Perhaps needless to add, child welfare is not seen as a concept that is limited to financial welfare dependency, but is seen as a problem that extends well above the poverty line.

FUGITIVE FATHERS

In the effort to reduce the welfare rolls, attempts at seeking financial support from the mothers of AFDC children (through work requirements) have been in the forefront of the discussion, even though this route often is closed by the mother's need to stay at home to care for her children.⁸ The father, on the other hand, has not been called to account. The disregard of the father's role is at least partially rooted in the common law view of the illegitimate child as *filius nullius* (no one's child) or, prophetically, *filius populi*—the child of the people. While the relationship of the mother to her illegitimate child has long been respected by law, most States have continued to discriminate heavily in the substantive relationship between father and illegitimate child. Discrimination extends to rights of support, inheritance, custody, name, and claims under father-related welfare statutes, such as workmen's compensation, wrongful death, and various Federal acts.⁹

⁴ Senate Committee on Finance, *supra* note 3, at 91.

⁵ Sources are cited in H. Krause, *Illegitimacy: Law and Social Policy* 8, 257-59 (1971).

⁶ Senate Committee on Finance, *supra*, note 3, at 92.

⁷ *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, report at 129-30 (1968).

⁸ The newest amendatory legislation on this subject is Public Law 92-223, 85 Stat. 802 [H.R. 10604], 92d Cong. 1st sess.; see also Conference Report No. 92-474 and cf. H.R. 1, 92d Cong. 1st sess. §§ 430-444 and H. Rept. 92-231, 92d Cong., 1st sess. at 166. Results under earlier legislation have not been encouraging. See Comment, "Public Welfare 'WIN' Program: Arm Twisting Incentives," 117 *Pa. L. Rev.* 1062 (1969); Comment, "The Failure of the Work Incentive (WIN) Program," 119 *P. L. Rev.* 485 (1971); Wolf and Erickson, "Work Incentive Aspects of the Family Assistance Plan," 9 *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 179 (1972); Comment, "Compulsory Work for Welfare Recipients Under the Social Security Amendments of 1967," 4 *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems* 197 (1968).

⁹ Generally, see Krause, *supra* note 5 at 9-42; Semmel, "Social Security Benefits for Illegitimate Children" 19 *Buffalo L. Rev.* 289 (1970).

For example, in several States the illegitimate child has no right to claim support from his father and, in most States, his right to paternal support is considerably narrower than that of the legitimate child. Absent a will, the illegitimate child inherits nothing upon the death of his father in most States, whereas the legitimate child takes a fair share. Similarly, many State statutes leave the illegitimate child out of consideration when paying workmen's compensation claims or in wrongful death actions related to the father. With respect to his mother, on the other hand, the illegitimate child generally has the same rights as a legitimate child.

In short, our social consciousness, as reflected in and formed by our law, sees the illegitimate child as the child of his mother, and all but denies the existence of his father. The following judicial opinion, rendered not in 1661 in New England, but 300 years later in Ohio, illustrates the continuing depth of prejudice:

It might perhaps be mentioned that the Decalog, which is the basis of our moral code, specifically states that the sins of the father may be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, so that the argument against making the children suffer for the mother's wrong can be attacked on ethical grounds.¹⁰

If this tradition helps explain the disregard for the father's role vis-a-vis his out-of-wedlock child, it seems to be coming to a categorical end. A recent line of U.S. Supreme Court cases enforces the illegitimate child's right to substantive equality with legitimate children under the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment.¹¹ The essence of these cases is that—

* * * imposing disabilities on the illegitimate child is contrary to the basic concept of our system that legal burdens should bear some relationship to individual responsibility or wrongdoing. Obviously, no child is responsible for his birth and penalizing the illegitimate child is an ineffectual—as well as an unjust—way of deterring the parent. Courts are powerless to prevent the social opprobrium suffered by these hapless children, but the equal protection clause does enable us to strike down discriminatory laws relating to status of birth where—as in this case—the classification is justified by no legitimate State interest, compelling or otherwise.¹²

Simultaneously, the illegitimate child's legal lot is being improved by progressive legislation in many States. And it is only the recognition of a broad-spectrum, substantive legal relationship between father and illegitimate child which can make it clear that the enforcement of support is not the father's punishment, but the child's birthright. Until this consciousness develops, punitive associations will continue. Feelings run high on this issue. Some people simply do not want the law to involve the father. They argue that:

* * * it is not the status of illegitimacy which most harms poor children but the resulting denial of government benefits. Illegitimacy carries little stigma in many poor communities and continuing social relationships often exist between

¹⁰ Judge Young in *In Re Dake*, 180 N.E.2d 646, 649 (Juvenile Court, Huron Co., Ohio 1961).

¹¹ *Levy v. Louisiana*, 391 U.S. 68, 88 S.Ct. 1509 (1968); *Glover v. American Guarantee & Liability Ins. Co.*, 391 U.S. 73, 88 S.Ct. 1515 (1968); *Stanley v. Illinois* 92 S.Ct. 1208 (1972); *Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co.*, 92 S.Ct. 1400 (1972); *G. v. P.*, 466 S.W.2d 41 (Texas 1971) review granted, 40 U.S. Law Week, 3609 (June 27, 1972); but cf. *Labine v. Vincent*, 401 U.S. 532 (1971), Krause, "Equal Protection for the Illegitimate," 65 *Mich. L. Rev.* 477 (1967).

¹² *Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co.*, 92 S.Ct. 1400, 1407 (1972). (Footnote omitted.)

illegitimate fathers and children, even if these do not conform to middle class patterns.¹³

Others argue child support obligations as a moral imperative. And Senator Long has developed a dramatic hypothetical case which compares an illegitimate family with a total income of \$11,700 (made up of welfare payments amounting to \$5,700 and the father's \$6,000 earnings) with a conventional family which must live within the father's \$6,000.¹⁴ In such an environment, the truly responsible father will feel obliged not to marry his children's mother, so as not to destroy his family's welfare eligibility.¹⁵

It is not necessary to decide who is "right". Whatever philosophical position one may hold on child abandonment and illegitimacy, the practicalities are that the social system has a choice on this issue only so long as the rate remains small. After the rate reaches a certain level, public funds are inadequate to deal with the problem. Our States are now tumbling from financial crisis to fiscal chaos largely because of a fatherless child population that still constitutes only a small fraction of the total child population. For a while longer, we shall be able to afford the option of having society take care of the most immediate financial problems of these children. It seems clear, however, that our welfare system would break down if child abandonment and illegitimacy long continued to increase at recent rates. At that point, individual support obligations would have to be enforced, or the whole system would have to be changed to provide State support for all children. Any other model probably would have more and more parents refusing to marry for unwillingness or even inability to take care of their own children after paying the taxes that would be needed to support someone else's. This is not hyperbole.

Sweden now stands at this crossroad. Along with a significant drop in the marriage rate, Sweden is approaching an illegitimacy rate of 20 percent of all births. However, a mandatory paternity action is instituted in nearly all cases of illegitimate births in which the father does not voluntarily acknowledge the child, and fathers are determined for approximately 95 percent of all children who are born out of wedlock. It has been found, moreover, that court action is required only in some 20 percent of all cases, because the background threat of the mandatory paternity action encourages voluntary acknowledgments on the part of the majority of fathers. Once paternity is established, support obligations are enforced rigidly as an essential supplement to comprehensive social services.¹⁶ Since Sweden's tax rates are already far higher than those in the United States, no other course seems open.¹⁷ It is ironic that America, with her tradition of individualism, should continue to view illegitimacy as a public welfare problem, whereas socialist Sweden has chosen to stay with individual, parental responsibility for child support.

Of course, the immediate relationship between bursting welfare rolls and absentee fathers has not been lost on Congress. For some time, the

¹³ Gray, Book Review, 46 *N.Y.U.L. Rev.* 1228, 1233 (1971).

¹⁴ Senate Finance Committee, *supra* note 3, at 182-83.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 48-50.

¹⁶ This information was obtained by the author on a research visit to Sweden in January 1972, in discussion with judges, scientists and officials of the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Social Welfare.

¹⁷ "How the Swedes Do It," *Time*, Mar. 13, 1972, 70-71.

Social Security Act has required State welfare authorities to establish the paternity of children receiving AFDC.¹⁸ Unfortunately, however, this requirement was issued in a vacuum. Most States lack a decent, humane, and efficient process to ascertain paternity. The problem existing in Chicago was described in a recent report to the Illinois legislature: "(C) coercion, corruption, perjury and indifference to the rights of the individual defendant pervade in the day-to-day practice in this area of judicial proceedings * * * Testimony before the Commission revealed that generally defendants appear before judges who have a daily caseload of about 140 cases * * * the evidence in most cases consists of an accusation by the woman and a denial by the defendant. Under such circumstances, the judges feel constrained to enter a finding of paternity. Not even the slightest corroborating evidence is required."¹⁹

Elsewhere in the Nation, the situation is similar.²⁰ These scandalous conditions are one reason why the congressional mandate to enforce support obligations has not been successful. And reasonable men and women will agree that, if this situation were to be maintained, continued inaction on support enforcement would be the lesser evil. But there is an alternative. Paternity proceedings could become efficient, fair, and relatively inexpensive, if scientific evidence were its mainstay. Legislation to that effect already has been drafted and is now being considered by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. Most importantly, the "Uniform Legitimacy Act"^{20a} will provide a wholly new system of elaborate pretrial hearings in which, with heavy reliance on scientific evidence, most cases will be resolved without need for formal proceedings in court. It should be added that, substantively, the act will provide that all children have equal rights vis-a-vis their parents, regardless of the latter's marital status.²¹

All that can be said here on the issue of utilizing medical evidence to ascertain paternity is that blood typing tests and related systems now can provide a conclusive answer to most false paternity charges. Exclusion rates of up to 90 percent of nonfathers have become practical.²² Moreover, contrary to popular oversimplification, tests that do not result in exclusion of the alleged father show more than that any man with blood of the alleged father's type could be the father of the child in question. Whereas exclusions can be established with scientific,

¹⁸ 42 U.S.C. §§ 602(a) (17) (21), (22). See Comment, "AFDC Eligibility and the Mandatory Paternity Suit," 10 *J. Family Law* 174 (1970). No significant change is proposed in H.R. 1, 92d Cong., 1st sess. See § 402(a) (11), (14), (15) as proposed to be amended.

¹⁹ State of Illinois, Family Study Commission, *Report and Recommendations to the 76th General Assembly*, at 55 (1969).

²⁰ A few years ago, a study made of paternity cases in Wayne County, Mich., revealed the impressive, but altogether excessive, conviction rate of 95 percent in paternity cases. Glazer, "Blood Grouping Tests in Proof of Non-Paternity," 33 *Mich. St. B.J.* No. 1, pp. 12, 17 (1954); cf. Sussman, "Blood Grouping Tests—A Review of 1,000 Cases of Disputed Paternity," 40 *Am. J. Clinical Pathology* 38 (1963).

^{20a} Since this article was written, the act was approved by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws and was renamed "Uniform Parentage Act."

²¹ An earlier, complete draft is contained in Krause, *supra* note 5 at 240-56.

²² See Krause, *supra* note 5 at 123-148.

absolute certainty, inclusions can be established by degrees of probability. At the extreme end of the spectrum, paternity can be all but positively determined if very rare genes are found in both the putative father and the child. In less extreme cases that do not produce an exclusion, the probability of paternity may be computed. To put it very simply, if the blood constellation of father, mother and child is such that only a small percentage of a random sample of men would not be excluded as possible fathers, then it is of considerable significance that this particular man (if he has been linked with this mother by other evidence) is not excluded. That "significance," of course, falls short of the absolute certainty involved in an exclusion but, in a given case, may equal the weight of other types of circumstantial evidence. Many foreign countries now apply the new techniques.²³

²³In Scandinavia, for example, centralized blood typing facilities in Oslo, Copenhagen, and Stockholm serve the whole of their respective countries and, over several decades, have developed great expertise. [Information concerning Scandinavian practice was obtained through interviews with Professor Lundvall and Dr. Lie (University Institute of Forensic Medicine) and Judge Aubert (Paternity Court), Oslo; Drs. Henningsen and Gürtler, (University Institute of Forensic Medicine), Judge Mols (Paternity Court), Mr. Grønning-Nielsen (Justice Ministry), and Mrs. Thaulow (Mother's Aid Center), Copenhagen; and Professor Vamosi (State Laboratory of Forensic Chemistry), Mr. Lind (Ministry of Justice), and Mrs. Traung (Social Welfare Department), Stockholm. Their most gracious and helpful cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. See generally, Henningsen, "Some Aspects of Blood Grouping in Cases of Disputed Paternity in Denmark," 2 *Methods of Forensic Science* 209 (1963); K. Henningsen, on the application of blood tests to legal cases of disputed paternity, 12 *Revue de Transfusion* 139 (1969) 137 (1969); P. Andresen, *The Human Blood Groups* 73 (1952); Henningsen, "Die Bewertung Blutgruppenserologischer Abstammungsgutachten vor Gericht in Daenemark, mit Erfahrungsbericht ueber die Abgabe positiver histostatistischer Indizien zur Vaterschaft," paper delivered at meeting of Gesellschaft fuer Forensische Blutgruppenkunde, Travemuende 1969.]

The Scandinavian laboratories are distinguished not only in terms of their use of complex and advanced blood typing systems, but also in terms of highly developed safety procedures which assure accuracy of the results they report. This latter point may be the most crucial element of blood typing. We can agree quickly that it would be better not to admit blood tests into evidence at all than to admit unreliable evidence under the halo of scientific truth—as often is done in the United States where a recheck of even relatively simple tests revealed about one-third of them to have been in error! [Wiener, Foreword, L. Sussman, *Blood Grouping Tests—Medicolegal Uses*, ix (1968); See also Wiener, "Problems and Pitfalls in Blood Grouping Tests for Non-Parentage," 15 *Journal of Forensic Medicine* 106, 126 (1968).] Specifically, the safety procedures employed in Scandinavia include specialization of and close supervision over highly skilled laboratory personnel, "blind" double testing of all samples with careful independent rechecking by a third person of any discrepancies that are reported, careful maintenance and daily testing of testing agents, and tight control over the identification of samples and over other clerical aspects of the testing and reporting process. The Scandinavian laboratories distinguish themselves further in the efficiency with which they cooperate with the courts. Standardized routines govern the taking of blood samples, the transmission of samples to the laboratories and the reporting of findings to the courts. Most of this is accomplished by the use of well designed standard forms which keep the information compact and present it in a manner that is understandable to the court.

The courts rely heavily on the medical evidence, and the reputation for accuracy of the laboratories is such that the parties and their lawyers usually rest their case with the medical evidence. Scandinavia also leads the way in terms of the variety of grouping systems used. Constant research seeks to develop new systems for practical use and years of testing precede the actual use of a new system. In contrast to the limited number of systems accepted for practical use in American courts, the Copenhagen Laboratory (and the practice in Stockholm and Oslo is similar) employs two sets of systems in "layers":

Our own courts, on the other hand, have all but ignored recent scientific progress in this area. They have not done so out of malice or ignorance. They have been forced to do so because no reliable procedures have been provided to make the new medical knowledge usable in the courts. On this point, an interdisciplinary committee sponsored jointly by the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association was recently convened to develop appropriate guidelines and procedures. The committee's purpose is to evaluate modern scientific advances in this area in terms of their practical applicability in the court-

"(1) A routine blood group determination involving the A₁A₂B—, MN—, Rh (CDEe)—, F_i—, K—, H_p—, and G_i— systems resulting in exclusion of paternity for about 70 percent of nonfathers;

"(2) An extended blood group determination involving the S—, C^w—, Fy(a)—, and Gm(axb)-types and the AP—, PGM—, AK—, ADA—, and PGD— erythrocytes enzyme type systems which increases paternity exclusions to about 90 percent of nonfathers." [Memorandum prepared by Dr. Hans Gürtler, Copenhagen, for the author, dated Jan. 10, 1972.]

An exclusion figure approximating 90 percent of men falsely named as fathers is an impressive figure. However, the Scandinavians go further. Cases which do not produce an exclusion are pursued on the basis of a "blood group paternity index" by means of which the "probability" of the named man's paternity can be estimated. [See Gürtler, "Principles of Blood Group Statistical Evaluation of Paternity Cases at the University Institute of Forensic Medicine," Copenhagen, *9 Acta Medicinæ et Socialis* 83 (1956).] That index compares the frequency of a given father-mother-child blood constellation in a sample of actual fathers with the blood constellation in a sample of nonfathers and is related to the constellation obtained in the case in question. If the resemblance exceeds 95 percent or falls below 5 percent, the result is reported to the court.

At the outer limits, this approach produces *de facto* inclusions or exclusions. In less extreme cases, it produces interesting circumstantial evidence. It is of particular value, of course, when the relative likelihood of paternity of several possible fathers is being compared. At this point it should be noted that these methods all but obviate whatever need there once may have been for the *exceptio plurium*.

The use of statistical methods to estimate probabilities of paternity is not limited to Scandinavia. For example, one West German case considered detailed blood tests to establish a 99.55 percent probability of paternity [L. G. Köln. 13.10.1961, 16 *Monatsschrift Für Deutsches Recht* 309 (1962).] and, in a case reviewed in 1964, the West German Supreme Court decided that a blood test taken just 9 years earlier that had failed to exclude defendant as a possible father was not conclusive in view of newly developed, more sophisticated methods of blood testing that now might result in excluding defendant as a possible father. [BGH, 5.2.1964, 11 *Zeitschrift Für das Gesamte Familienrecht* 251 (1964).]

NOTE.—The Senate version of H.R. 1 and currently pending S. 2081 provide for the establishment in the United States of regional blood typing laboratories after the Scandinavian model. See S. Rept. 92-1230, 92d Cong., 2d sess., Social Security Amendments of 1972, at pp. 516-17, and S. 2081, § 458. 93d Cong., 1st sess.

In West Germany, the possibility of formulating a uniform method of using statistical computations in paternity cases is currently under review by the Federal Ministry of Health. Official standards may soon be formulated. While centralized laboratories following the Scandinavian model do not exist, a detailed set of regulations governs laboratory standards, the identification of subjects, the taking and shipment of blood samples, the efficacy and maintenance of testing sera, other laboratory procedures, the typing systems that (as of early 1970) are deemed scientifically reliable, necessary qualifications of blood typing experts, and the proper evaluation of results. ["Richtlinien für die Erstattung von Blutgruppenpöntachten." 13 *Bundesgesundheitsblatt* 149-53 (1970).]

Blood testing is not the only means of converting the ascertainment of paternity from a matter of opinion into a matter of fact. Other distinguishing and inheritable human characteristics are under investigation. Given some time, research, the accumulation of information and the development of techniques, it may be fully expected that the way toward positive parent-child identification will be opened. Very good prospects seem to lie in the development of knowledge in connection with transplant immunology.

room and to develop specific legislative proposals, possibly to be incorporated into the "Uniform Legitimacy Act" of the Commissioners on Uniform State Laws.²⁴

The confines of this paper prevent detailed discussions of these developments. The interested reader is referred to other sources.²⁵ The point to be made here is that it is not enough for Federal law to call for the establishment of paternity and the enforcement of support obligations if the States lack the apparatus that would enable them to comply. Nor would it be helpful to impose Federal penalties on interstate travel to avoid support obligations,²⁶ so long as support obligations continue to be imposed without basis in fact and without elementary regard for due process. On the other hand, Federal interest and assistance in reforming the paternity action could be very constructive and would bring unprecedented returns in terms of welfare dollars saved. The jurisdictional basis for rendering such help, at least in the context of the welfare program, is implicit in current law.²⁷ Last, not least, it should be noted that reform of the paternity action is needed as much to protect men who are falsely convicted in what in many States remains a criminal prosecution, as to provide support for the illegitimate child.

One additional point concerning the determination of paternity merits brief attention. Much has been made of a recent case which held that the mother's cooperation in ascertaining her child's father may not be coerced by the welfare authorities through denial of aid. The court did not reach a constitutional issue that was raised and based its decision on the ground that requiring the mother to cooperate puts an additional burden on the child's right to receive welfare benefits that is not mandated by the Social Security Act.²⁸ Whether or not this is an intelligent interpretation of the law,²⁹ this case has no bearing on the question whether the child has a right to know his father.³⁰ Such a right follows from the line of U.S. Supreme Court cases which establish the father-child relationship under the equal protection clause without regard to illegitimacy.³¹ Equal protection for the child born out of wedlock will remain an empty phrase if it is not combined with active efforts to find the man vis-a-vis whom the child is to have substantive rights. It follows that each child should have his paternity

²⁴ A summary of the project is contained in Newsletter, vol. XIII, No. 2, A.B.A. Section on Family Law (August 1972).

²⁵ The current draft of the "Uniform Legitimacy Act" is available from the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, 1155 East 60th St., Chicago, Ill. 60637. The work product of the joint A.M.A.—A.B.A. Committee will be published upon completion of the study. In the meantime, the author, who is cochairman of the project, should be glad to provide details to interested persons. On the use of medical evidence to ascertain paternity generally, see Krause, *supra*, note 5 at 123-148.

²⁶ S. 3019, 92d Cong., 1st sess. See also House Committee on Ways and Means, 92d Cong., 1st sess., Social Security Amendments of 1971 (H.R. 1), H. Rep. No. 92-231, at 191, and discussion, Senate Finance Committee, *supra*, note 3, at 272-74.

²⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 602(a) (17), (21), (22).

²⁸ *Doe v. Shapiro*, 302 F. Supp. 761 (D. Conn. 1969), App. dis., *Shapiro v. Doe*, 90 S. Ct. 641, 396 U.S. 488 (1970), reh. den. 397 U.S. 970 (1970). Cf. *Doe v. Swank*, (D.C. Ill. 1971) 332 F. Supp. 61, affd. *Weaver v. Doe*, 404 U.S. 987 (1971).

²⁹ See Judge Clairie's dissent at 302 F. Supp. 768.

³⁰ Majority opinion at 302 F. Supp. 767.

³¹ See *Franklin v. Julian*, 30 Ohio St. 2d 228, 283 N.E. 2d 813, 817 (1972).

ascertained at a time when there is a reasonable chance of success. For that, the child needs the aid of the State. And if, in a given case, the child's best interests would be served by ascertaining his father, the mother is no more—and no less—than a witness holding the key to the child's case. In her role as a witness, there is no reason why the mother should not be subject to the duty of testifying concerning the child's father. Subject to narrow constitutional limitations, any witness may be compelled to tell what he knows if his information is relevant to a legal proceeding. In short, the association with welfare payments has been unnecessary, unjustified, and unfortunate. Whether or not a child is a welfare recipient, the ascertainment of his paternity is his right.³²

It is not proposed that fathers be held financially accountable if they are unable to help their children, or if their own financial position is so precarious that the imposition of even a limited support burden would prove ruinous to themselves or to their new families. A reasonable compromise must be made with reality. There also may be situations in which it would not be in the child's best interest to involve the illegitimate or fugitive father. There has been a tendency, however, to transfer arguments that make sense in one context to situations where they do not apply. The cases in which it would serve no good purpose to go after the father furnish no analogy for the many cases in which the imposition of responsibility would make sense. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Richardson estimates that the percentage of absentee fathers who are in a position to make an economic contribution to their children is 32 percent of the total.³³ If this estimate is correct, the returns on a policy of enforcing support obligations would be enormous.

Another important consideration enters. Increasingly, our society is turning from wealth in the form of disposable assets to wealth (or at least well-being) in terms of social "entitlements." A man may have little cash, but he may be well off in terms of entitlements designed to secure his obligations to his family. The rights in question range from life insurance policies to survivors benefits under the Social Security Act and myriad private schemes, and include veteran's benefits, health insurance plans, workmen's compensation, and claims under wrongful death acts. In other words, even if a father is not in a position to make an immediate financial contribution, the ascertainment of his paternity ultimately may turn into a valuable asset for his child.

To conclude, if the child has not received his due, this has been so in large measure because of a lack of initiative in enforcement.³⁴ As proposed (and partially enacted) in 1968, the machinery of the Social Security and Internal Revenue authorities could go a long way toward tracing absentee fathers and, with appropriate changes in judicial paternity proceedings, a very large number of fathers could be ascertained with satisfactory certainty.³⁵

³² Cases cited in note 11 supra; Krause, supra, note 5 at 113-15.

³³ Senate Finance Committee, supra note 3, at 273-74.

³⁴ Cf. S. Kaplan, *Support From Absent Fathers of Children Receiving ADC 1955*, Public Assistance Report No. 41, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social Security Administration, Bureau of Public Assistance (1960).

³⁵ See Krause, supra note 5, at 277-78. Cf. H. Rep. 92-231, 92d Cong. 1st sess. at 190-91; W. Brockelbank and F. Infausto, *Interstate Enforcement of Family Support* (2d ed. 1971).

Unfortunately, the American welfare crisis suffers from a major complicating factor. The problem of child abandonment, parental support and illegitimacy has moved perilously close to the problem of racial discrimination. In consequence, issues have become obscured and objectivity has been lost. The fact is that black illegitimacy recently stood at 29.4 percent of live births, against a 4.9 percent white rate. The black-white discrepancy is accentuated further by the fact that some 70 percent of white illegitimate children are adopted whereas relatively few (between 3 and 5 percent) of black illegitimate children find families through adoption.³⁰ Without pretense of accuracy, we may gain some impression of the dimensions of the problem by applying the adoption rates to the actual birth figures. If that is done, it may be estimated that approximately 80 percent of all children disadvantaged by the operation of the illegitimacy laws are black. This means that the classification "illegitimate," which originally had nothing to do with racial discrimination, now often serves that function. In this manner, the AFDC-illegitimacy problem, which should be race neutral, has become sensitized with racial overtones and the enforcement of paternal support obligations has come to be opposed on ideological grounds.

One well-meaning commentator has argued that :

*** it may well be that instability, illegitimacy and matriarchy are the most positive adaptations possible to the economic conditions which Negroes must endure, and will only change with removal of these conditions.

*** Illegitimacy and the bearing of children generally have a different meaning in this population than in the middle class one. Adolescent Negro girls often invite pregnancy because having children is their way of becoming adults, and of making sure they will have a family in which they can play the dominant role for which they have been trained by their culture. If having children offers them a reason for living in the same way that sexual prowess does for Negro men, then alternate rewards and sources of hope must be available before illegitimacy can either be judged by middle class standards, or programs developed to do away with it. Until more is known about the functioning and effects of lower-class Negro family structure, the assumption that it is entirely or predominantly pathological is premature. It would thus be tragic if the findings of the Moynihan report were used to justify demands for Negro self-improvement or the development of a middle class family structure before further programs to bring about real equality are set up.³¹

Another feels that :

Professor Krause *** errs in suggesting that poor illegitimate children can be benefited by a systematic effort to force their fathers to pay support. First, such a program would not create more stable families. Rather, the effect would be to encourage fathers to desert their illegitimate children entirely. Second, many children would not benefit financially even if fathers did pay, since the support payments would be deducted from any welfare benefits.³²

Such attitudes are unfortunate. They perpetuate the status quo in which the black father is encouraged not to stand up for his child. Scientific support has been drawn from the development of matriarchal subculture theories. But it is not clear that a matriarchal subculture truly exists. The evidence cited for it may merely reflect the only

³⁰ For details see Krause, *supra* note 5 at 257-260.

³¹ Gans, "The Negro Family. Reflections on The Moynihan Report," *Commonweal*, Oct. 15, 1965, reprinted in M. Paulsen, *Family Law and Poverty* 1159, 1162-63 (1969).

³² Gray, Book Review, 46 *N.Y.U.L. Rev.* 1228, 1233 (1971).

possible adaptation to an economic situation in which the black male traditionally has been unable (rather than disinclined) to perform his paternal role.³⁹ One study involving a primarily black sample showed that, far from being disinterested or irresponsible, many unmarried fathers voluntarily aid their illegitimate children and the children's mother. Specifically, about 64 percent of the mothers studied had received some financial aid from the putative father at some time within 18 months after the child's birth. "At any one point in time, about 43 percent of the group were being aided by the putative father, and for about 24 percent the putative father was the main source of support for the mother and baby, while for about 15 percent he was the sole source of support * * * The father's own employment status was a key factor in his role as a source of support: employment was usually associated with contribution and unemployment with lack of contribution."⁴⁰ Whatever the truth in the academic debate about subculture theories, from a practical standpoint it seems clear that, while they might be beneficial in a period of transition, such theories hurt if they help to institutionalize a lack of viable institutions. Certainly, on the question of ability to pay, times have begun to change. Black men now are finding employment opportunities previously closed to them and black income has begun to move up.⁴¹

Let it be repeated that knowledge of his parents is a fundamental human right of each child. And if a child's parents have neglected or declined to comply with the formalities of the husband-wife laws, the parent-child laws should be adapted to that omission. Parentage is a question of fact, not of sexual morality. So long as ours remains a family-centered, two-parent culture, so long as we continue to think in terms of the primacy of individual instead of collective responsibility, so long as many quasi-welfare programs remain on an "earned-by-the-father" (rather than "need-for-the-child") basis, so long as the welfare system remains a stopgap measure to alleviate only extreme deprivation—for so long parental responsibility remains "relevant"

³⁹ See, e.g., Parker and Kleiner, "Social and Psychological Dimensions of the Family Role Performance of the Negro Male," 31 *J. Marriage and the Family* 500, 506 (1969) and Greenleigh Association, Inc., A Study of the Aid to Dependent Children Program of Cook County, Ill., in abridged form in F. Harper and J. Skolnick, *Problems of the Family* 286, 292 (rev. ed. 1962): "All but a few felt great guilt at having illegitimate children. Contrary to much of the literature on the subject of Negro cultural pattern, these mothers did not accept illegitimacy as a normal way of life. They resented their status and recognized the handicaps." Cf., Blood and Wolfe, "Negro-White Differences in Blue-Collar Marriages in a Northern Metropolis," 48 *Social Forces* 59 (1969); Aldous, "Wives' Employment Status and Lower-Class Men as Husband-Fathers: Support for the Moynihan Thesis," 31 *J. Marriage and the Family* 469 (1969); Goode, "Illegitimacy, Anomie, and Cultural Penetration," 26 *Am. Soc. Rev.* 910 (1961); Chilman, "Child-Rearing and Family Relationship Patterns of the Very Poor," 3 *Welfare in Review* 9 (1965); W. Kephart, *The Family, Society and the Individual* 206-11 (1966).

⁴⁰ Sauber, "The Role of the Unmarried Father," *Welfare in Review*, November 1966, pp. 15, 17.

⁴¹ U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1971, pp. 316, 322, 323 (1971).

and must take over where the sphere of public welfare ends, for so long each child is entitled to and needs the help of both parents.⁴³

INADEQUATE MOTHERS

Improved standards of economic assistance, in terms of public aid as well as more serious efforts to reach the child's father, are but one aspect of a new public approach to illegitimacy and paternal child abandonment giving priority to the best interests of the child. A new look also should be taken at the mother-child relationship. To what extent should public authorities supervise the manner in which the mother takes care of her fatherless child? How to define the circumstances under which the mother's power over her child should be curtailed or even terminated? ⁴⁴ The opposing interests are the child's welfare and the traditional concept of the parent's ownerlike power over his child.⁴⁵

All states have enacted some form of "neglect and dependency" statute.⁴⁵ Most such statutes objectively define "neglect" in terms of a minimum standard, such as "necessary support" or "parental abandonment."⁴⁶ In addition, however, subjective terms abound, including "injurious" environment, parental "debauchery," "depravity," or the

⁴³ In these troubled days, some speak of parental responsibility as a remembrance of things past. And it is clear that new institutions are evolving or at least that old institutions are being transformed. Ultimately, the rearing of children may become the responsibility of the state. Ultimately, parents may be relegated to a purely biological role, terminating for the man upon conception and for the woman upon birth. Many modern trends may point in that direction. See A. Toffler, *Future Shock*, ch. 11, "The Fractured Family" (1970). However, if that be the future, it is not the present. For the time being, parental roles remain as important as ever, simply because the job of raising the young remains as important as ever and society has not yet provided an alternative.

⁴⁴ Child neglect may also be the basis for a criminal prosecution of the guilty parent(s). See, e.g., N.C. GEN. STAT. § 49-2 (1966); PA. STAT. tit. 18, § 4732 (1963); WIS. STAT. ANN. § 52.05 (Supp. 1969); DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 13, § 502 (1953); MO. ANN. STAT. § 559.353 (Supp. 1968); S.C. CODE ANN. § 20-303 (1962); W. VA. CODE ANN. § 48-8-1 (1966).

⁴⁵ While it remains a basic tenet of our family-centered society that it is in the best interests of the child to be with its parents even if the parents are less than perfect, the notion of parental *right* is fading. In custody matters generally, it has been argued of late that the "best interests of the child" should control over "parental rights." See Kay and Philips, "Poverty and the Law of Child Custody," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 717, 718-20 (1966). Cf. *Painter v. Bannister*, 258 Iowa 1390, 140 N.W.2d 152 (1966), *cert. denied*, 385 U.S. 949 (1967); *In re Clear*, 58 Misc.2d 699, 296 N.Y.S.2d 184 (1969), upheld the material *right* although the court found that the termination of the mother's rights would be in the best interest of the child.

⁴⁶ Generally see S. Katz, *When Parents Fail* (1971). Statutes are listed in Sullivan, "Child Neglect: The Environmental Aspects," 29 *Ohio St. L.J.* 85, 85 (1969). While some statutes do not distinguish between neglect and dependency, if the distinction is made, "neglect" usually relates to parental fault whereas "dependency" is neutral on the fault issue and relates to the parent's inability to provide for the child. See generally H. Clarke, *Law of Domestic Relations* 635 (1968) (defines neglect); Comment, "The Custody Question and Child Neglect Rehearings," 35 *U. of Chi. L. Rev.* 478, 479 (1968).

⁴⁷ See, for example, ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 37 § 702-4(1) (a) (1969).

like.⁴⁷ It is true that these terms give the courts the flexibility they need to deal with difficult and diverse situations. On the other hand, "trial judges with disparate viewpoints may be given license to impose their theories of child rearing . . . on the community."⁴⁸ The danger of judicial arbitrariness is increased by the fact that few appeals are taken from neglect decisions and that such cases typically are tried without juries and in a relatively informal atmosphere.⁴⁹ Moreover, the failure of many laws to provide clear and objective standards allows investigating officers or social workers wide discretion in judging what parental conduct falls so far short of the norm as to constitute child neglect.⁵⁰ Thus, the decision whether a neglect case will or will not be brought, often depends on the personal "neglect threshold" of the individual social worker (or even on ulterior motives involving the welfare status of the mother).

In theory, the neglect and dependency laws apply alike to all parents and all children, rich and poor, legitimate and illegitimate, regardless of race. In practice, it appears that these laws are applied most often to lower class whites. It is a fair guess, however, that the need for the help offered by these laws would tend to be greatest in the case of poor and illegitimate children, among whom are a disproportionate number of blacks. Why this "discrimination"? First, most welfare agencies charged with the administration of the neglect and dependency laws lack the funds and personnel to do so effectively.⁵¹ In consequence, they can investigate only a small fraction of child neglect cases. Second, in sheer numbers, the problem of the poverty-stricken, fatherless ghetto child is so overwhelming that the enforcement of the neglect and dependency laws is not a practical possibility. Lack of funds and facilities is only one aspect of this problem. Another difficulty is that in many States the laws are overly preoccupied with

⁴⁷ See S. Katz, *When Parents Fail* 59 (1971). Statutory examples are ILL. REV. STAT. ch. 37, § 702-4(1)(b) (1969); IOWA CODE, § 232.41(d) (1966); N. MEX. STAT. ANN. § 13-9-2 (1953). See also Kleinfeld, "The Balance of Power Among Infants, Their Parents and the State," 5 *Fam. L.O.* 64, 85-86 (1971).

⁴⁸ Sullivan, "Child Neglect: The Environmental Aspects," 29 *Ohio St. L.J.* 85, 87 (1968).

⁴⁹ The adversary process has been resurrected in juvenile delinquency proceedings in the wake of *In re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1 (1967), but a return to a full adversary process in neglect cases is neither desirable nor mandated by *Gault*. Nevertheless, there is some judicial uncertainty on this question. See, e.g., *State v. Jamison*, 444 P.2d 15 (Oreg. 1968) which held that, in connection with the termination of parental rights, "the consequences of denial of counsel are as serious as they are in most criminal prosecutions." Cf. Rosenheim, "The Child and His Day in Court," in G. Newman, *Children in the Courts—The Question of Representation* 150, 161, 164-65 (1967).

⁵⁰ See Cheney, "Safeguarding Legal Rights in Providing Protective Services," 13 *Children* 87 (1966).

⁵¹ This is the case in many areas of Illinois, as indicated by the author's discussions with officials of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Cf. Kay and Philips, "Poverty and the Law of Child Custody," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 717, 733 (1966) who say of California that "low budgets and inadequate staff have made extended casework services for welfare families impracticable except for a few experimental projects." Existing child protective services in various States and the national trend toward the development of such services are discussed by Paulsen, "The Legal Framework for Child Protection," 66 *Colum. L. Rev.* 679, 703-710 (1966).

traditional definitions of the parent's sexual morality,⁵² and the relationship between that and the child's welfare is not always clear or direct. An Ohio juvenile court gave a particularly unfortunate example of punitive enforcement practices when it confronted the following "very narrow issue":

Briefly stated it is whether a woman who is so devoid of morals and intelligence as to bring forth a series of illegitimate children who must be supported by public funds, is entitled to retain the custody of those children. Is a woman who is incapable of ordering her own life in accordance with the prevailing legal and moral codes, capable of raising children without a father?

The moral and ethical questions that are involved in this problem are numerous and complex. If the mother of several illegitimate children is denied financial help when she has another such child, it is argued that the innocent children are being made to suffer for their mother's wrong. Conversely, it is said that if no distinction is made between legitimate and illegitimate children, public money is being used to encourage immorality, since the more illegitimate children a woman has, the more money she can get. * * * The primary consideration should be the welfare of the child.

Thus the question presented resolves itself to whether the welfare of the children here involved will be advanced by leaving them in their mother's care, without a father, stigmatized as illegitimate, supported mainly by public funds, and in an atmosphere completely lacking in moral decency, rather than by removing them completely and permanently from their natural mother, so that they may have the chance of normal upbringing in a decent home, with two loving parents.

* * * * *

Must this court sit idly and impotently by, and permit such unholy sequences to go on forever, particularly when the continuance must be at direct public expense? That cannot be the law, or if it be the law, some higher court than this must so declare it.

It will be the finding of this court that the two children in question are dependent children, and permanent custody will be granted to the Huron County Welfare Department.⁵³

In contrast, a recent California case held that

* * * the juvenile court law is designed not primarily for the reproof and improvement of erring parents; its purpose is to provide protection, guidance and discipline to children. * * * The unfitness of a home for a particular child is a relative concept. It cannot be determined except by a judicious appraisal of all available evidence bearing on the child's best interests including, in this case, a consideration of the doubtful proposition that a foster home or institutional placement is likely to be more fit for a 13-year-old boy than a home with his own mother even though her marital arrangement is irregular.⁵⁴

⁵² *E.g.*, CAL. CIV. CODE § 232 (West 1954):

"Persons entitled to be declared free from parental custody and control. An action may be brought for the purpose of having any person under the age of 21 years declared free from the custody and control of either or both of his parents when such person comes within any of the following descriptions.

* * * * *

"(c) *Persons whose parents habitually intemperate or morally depraved.* Whose parent or parents are habitually intemperate, or morally depraved, if such person has been a dependent child of the juvenile court, and the parent or parents deprived of his custody because of such intemperance, or moral depravity, for the period of 1 year continuously immediately prior to the filing of the petition praying that he be declared free from the custody and control of such habitually intemperate or morally depraved parent or parents.

* * * * *

"(e) *Person whose parents divorced on grounds of adultery.* Whose parent or parents have in a divorce action, been found to have committed adultery and been divorced on that ground, if the court finds that future welfare of the child will be promoted by an order depriving such parent or parents of the control and custody of the child."

⁵³ In *Re Duke*, 87 Ohio Abs. 483, 485-90, 180 N.E. 2d 647, 648-51 (1961).

⁵⁴ In *Re A.J.*, 78 Cal. Repr. 880, 882 (1969).

It should go without saying that illegitimacy as such is not a rational standard of child neglect. Most cases seem to bear this out.⁵⁵ Even as an important factor in establishing neglect, however, illegitimacy is suspect. It refers too dogmatically to prevailing (?) standards of middle class morality. However desirable these standards may be thought to be, their application is quite impractical in the inner city where every second child is illegitimate and nearly every child is underprivileged.

Asserting that the moral criteria prescribed in present law cannot be productively applied does not mean that the ghetto child does not need help. In the interests of the fatherless child with an unsuitable mother (as well as in the interest of the child with two bad parents), new standards need to be defined to meet the realities of urban life.⁵⁶ In defining these new standards, poverty as such cannot spell child neglect,⁵⁷ just as certainly as illegitimacy does not of itself spell child neglect. But there is an essentially reasonable link between the absence of a father, poverty, and the increased possibility of dependency or neglect. Therefore, a reasonably defined standard of child neglect (which must include basic economic factors) will of necessity result in a disproportionately higher incidence of child neglect cases among the poor than among the well to do.⁵⁸ Standing alone, this would not be discrimination against the poor (or black). It is unfortunate, however, that a number of States have enacted and administered their neglect and dependency laws in a punitive spirit. This practice has brought these laws under suspicion. The similar history of the "suitable home provisions" under the AFDC program has been discussed elsewhere.⁵⁹ Under the AFDC program, the threat amounted to stoppage of welfare support. A recent Mississippi law links welfare payments to illegitimacy and child neglect, with the threat that the child will be taken away.⁶⁰

A recent statement by California's State Social Welfare Board illustrates current trends in this area :

It is the position of the State Social Welfare Board that appropriate legislation should be enacted so as to * * * provide that a rebuttable presumption shall

⁵⁵ See, e.g., *In re Cager*, 251 Md. 473, 478, 248 A.2d 387, 388 (1968) ; *In re Shady*, 264 Minn. 222, 230, 118 N.W. 2d 449, 454 (1962).

⁵⁶ Cf. Weyrauch, "Dual Systems of Family Law : A Comment," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 781 (1965).

⁵⁷ See discussion by Paulsen, "The Delinquency, Neglect, and Dependency Jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court," in M. Rosenheim, ed., *Justice for the Child* 44, 66 (1962). See also S. Katz, *When Parents Fail* (1971).

⁵⁸ But cf. tenBroek, "California's Dual System of Family Law : Its Origin, Development, and Present Status," 16 *Stan. L. Rev.* 900, 978-81 (1964), 17 *Stan. L. Rev.* 614 (1965). The rejoinder by Lewis and Levy makes more sense. Lewis and Levy, "Family Law and Welfare Policies : The Case for 'Dual System'." 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 748 (1965). Cf. Meier, "Culturally Deprived Children : Implications for Child Welfare," 45 *Child Welfare* 65 (1966).

⁵⁹ W. Bell, *Aid to Dependent Children* 93-173 (1965).

⁶⁰ Mississippi laws of 1966, sec. 1, ch. 202, amended by Senate bill No. 2017, Apr. 24, 1968. Mississippi laws of 1968, sec. 1, ch. 189. While not related to neglect and dependency, another Mississippi statute makes giving birth to an illegitimate child a criminal offense, Miss. Code Ann. § 2018.6.1 (1964 Supp.). Louisiana has gone even further and has denied the parents of illegitimate children the right to vote La. Const., art. 8, §§ 1(5) (6).

arise that a mother is, in fact, morally depraved upon the birth of the third child out of wedlock and the appropriate public agency be directed to commence legal proceedings * * * to terminate the relationship of parent and the third illegitimate child and any subsequent children so conceived so that said child (ren) may be placed for adoption.⁶¹

This recommendation reaches unreasonably far. There is no merit in a blanket presumption that a parent who has a third child out of wedlock is therefore unfit or, indeed, morally depraved.⁶² Some cases of illegitimacy are symptoms of deeper trouble in the mother's home and others are not.⁶³ If illegitimate children as a class are more likely to be neglected and dependent than legitimate children as a class, that does not warrant putting the burden of proving her fitness on the mother.

On the other hand, honest concern for child welfare reasonably might result in the enactment of legislation that would call for a routine check into the fitness of any single-parent home.⁶⁴ Indeed, if the best interests of the child are to be safeguarded, the fair administration of such checks—without putting the burden of proving the home fit on the unmarried mother and without the implication of punishment or moral condemnation⁶⁵—would be an essential public task.⁶⁶ Indispensable to a large-scale program of this sort would be the formulation of clear and objective standards that are duly concerned with parental privacy,⁶⁷ but that—while allowing for genuine cultural diversity and differences in attitudes that exist in this society—nevertheless safeguard the essential interests of each child.⁶⁸

Judge Nanette Dembitz of the New York Family Court reports that:

Some child neglect or abuse cases have been brought to the family court as a result of the discovery of various difficulties by welfare home visits: for example, the mother's invalidism, alcoholism or heroin addiction; abnormal and

⁶¹ State of California, Human Relations Agency, Department of Social Welfare, State Social Welfare Board position statement: Illegitimacy at 11 (March 1972). Relevant portions of sec. 232 are quoted supra, note 50.

⁶² See, e.g., *In re Raya*, 255 Cal. App. 2d 260, 63 Cal. Rptr. 252 (1967); *In re A. J.*, 78 Cal. Repr. 881 (1971).

⁶³ Compare *In re Raya*, 255 Cal. App. 2d 260, 63 Cal. Rptr. 252 (1967), and *In re Cager*, 251 Md. 473, 248 A.2d 384 (1968), with *In re Dake*, 87 Ohio Abs. 483, 180 N.E. 2d 646 (1961) and *In re Turner*, 12 Ohio Misc. 171, 229 N.E.2d 764 (Ct. C.P. 1967).

⁶⁴ Cf. *Wyman v. James*, 400 U.S. 309 (1971).

⁶⁵ To avoid this implication, it may be best to remove the neglect and dependency laws from their currently prevailing association, in law and practice, with juvenile delinquency. Cf. Comment, "Observations on the Establishment of a Child-Protective-Services System in California" 21 *Stan. L. Rev.* 1129, 1145 (1966).

⁶⁶ "What is needed is legislation which assures state protection to all illegitimate children through compulsory reporting of illegitimate births to a State agency, which must then make or authorize inquiry into the situation of the child." H. Clarke, *Social Legislation* 363-64 (1957). See *Wyman v. James*, 91 S.Ct. 381, 400 U.S. 309 (1971); Dembitz, "Welfare Home Visits: Child Versus Parent," 57 *A.B.A.J.* 871 (1971); Burt, "Forcing Protection on Children and Their Parents: The Impact of *Wyman v. James*," 69 *Mich. L. Rev.* 1259 (1971).

⁶⁷ Cf. Handler, "Controlling Official Behavior in Welfare Administration," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 479, 480-81 (1966), in *The Law of the Poor* 155, 156-57 (J. 10 Broek ed. 1966); Handler & Hollingsworth, "Stigma, Privacy, and Other Attitudes of Welfare Recipients," 22 *Stan. L. Rev.* 1 (1969); Bendich, "Privacy, Poverty and the Constitution," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 407 (1966).

⁶⁸ Cf. Cheney, "Safeguarding Legal Rights in Providing Protective Services," 13 *Children* 87 (1966); Chilman, "Child Rearing and Family Relationship Patterns of the Very Poor," 3 *Welfare In Review* 9, 15-16 (1965).

unsafe housekeeping, such as never removing garbage or burning rags in dishes around the apartment; sharing the home with a psychotic and assaultive male or with homosexuals of the child's sex; permitting heroin sellers and addicts to gather in the home; or even, in an extreme and singular case described in the state's brief in the *James* case, the deaths of two children, apparently because of malnutrition and battering.

With some frequency, however, neglect in an AFDC home is brought before the court only through a fortuity rather than by the welfare worker—a fortuity such as a hospital social worker's initiating a home investigation after a child is hospitalized. For example, the mother of a 2½-year-old child who came before the court in that fashion had been a heroin addict since his birth and had been jailed several times on narcotics and prostitution charges. Although AFDC benefits had been paid on behalf of the child since his birth, even his physical whereabouts could not be reconstructed at the court hearing. As shown by a review of the background of juvenile delinquents from AFDC homes, unreported neglect during earlier years often appears to be an important cause of delinquency.⁶⁹

Unfortunately, in this explosive context the central issues have become obfuscated. An example is the following argument:

Professor Krause's naive view of the role of law in the lives of poor families is reflected in his argument that poor children could be helped by a stricter enforcement of child neglect and dependency laws. He is apparently aware that neglect laws are generally vague and irrationally punitive statutes which are often applied by biased and poorly trained judges who, in any event, lack any resources with which to actually help poor children. Nevertheless, the author suggests that increased State intrusion into the lives of poor families is needed to protect their children. The validity of this conclusion is, to say the least, doubtful. For example, the considerable experience of poverty lawyers in the New York City Family Court, sometimes considered a relatively enlightened institution, is that even well-intentioned judges are fundamentally incapable of assisting poor children. It can safely be said that the filing of a million more neglect petitions urging that poor children be removed from their homes and taken to corrupting juvenile centers will be of little help to anyone. Rather, public interference in the lives of poor families tends to destroy the very family structure (although not a white, middle-class one) which Professor Krause is at pains to encourage.⁷⁰

Some of this is true. There is no question that the development of fair standards to determine child neglect and dependency must go hand in hand with the development of institutions which will take over where the parent fails. This puts the finger on the courts. And we lack the court facilities to deal appropriately with child neglect and dependency. In the words of Judge Polier of the Family Court of New York:

* * * a recent study of juvenile court judges revealed that nearly one out of four of these judges were not licensed lawyers; almost 25 percent lacked the basic professional credentials deemed essential to preside over any court. Thirty-three percent of the full-time juvenile court judges who responded to a questionnaire stated that their courts were without probation officers or social workers. For courts in rural areas, the comparable figure was 54 percent. Eighty-three percent of the judges were without the help of psychologists or psychiatrists. The study concluded:

The profile of the juvenile court judge and his work * * * offers an image of a part-time judiciary, large components of which do not have adequate professional preparation or opportunity for in-service training and which operates under difficult caseloads and without adequate resources to properly discharge their assigned responsibilities.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Dembitz, "Welfare Home Visits: Child Versus Parent," 57 *A.B.A.J.* 871, 871-72 (1971), commenting on *Wyman v. James*, 91 S.Ct. 381, 400 U.S. 309 (1971), (footnote omitted).

⁷⁰ Gray, Book Review, 46 *N.Y.U. L. Rev.* 1288, 1233-34 (1971).

⁷¹ Polier, "Problems Involving Family and Child," 66 *Colum. L. Rev.* 305, 306 (1966) (footnotes omitted). cf. Paulsen, "Juvenile Courts, Family Courts, and the Poor Man," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 694 (1966).

Remedying the inadequacies of the judicial system would not of itself solve the problem. In cases of dependency and neglect, as contrasted with other areas of law, adjudication does not end public involvement. On the contrary, adjudication begins it. Public involvement takes several forms. Since a finding of neglect or dependency is not necessarily synonymous with termination of parental rights, in-home assistance may help mothers to make their homes acceptable.⁷² More extensive programs of instruction and education are needed to make the inadequate mother fit. Where this is not possible, intensive day care of the "head start" type may suffice to compensate for major shortcomings of the home.⁷³ Tragically, it is often ignored that a good day care center will provide values to the child that the marginal mother cannot provide. Instead, many experts argue in terms of short-run cost-benefit ratios and conclude that the establishment of day care centers is not sensible because such centers would cost more than the children's mothers could earn.⁷⁴ In some cases, finally, full removal of the child is and will continue to be the only practical solution. Under current State laws, removal from the home may be temporary or permanent and with or without termination of the parental relationship (as would have to occur if the child were to be freed for adoption). This raises the question of institutional or foster care.

Unfortunately, adequate temporary or permanent child care facilities are all but unavailable in many States and areas.⁷⁵ The bulk of available resources has gone to the vocal welfare adult. Social work agencies remain underfunded, understaffed, and underappreciated. They are a long way from providing adequate help to the fatherless child. Sweeping legislation proposing a vast child care program passed

⁷² The cost of removal of the child from its home so far exceeds maintaining it at home that no effort should be spared to keep it there. Cf., Polier, "Problems Involving Family and Child," 66 *Colum. L. Rev.* 305, 311 (1966) :

"While there is both grave reluctance to sever parental rights and unanimous agreement on the need for strengthening family life, our acts belie our commitments. Surely it is inconsistent, if not paradoxical, that in this great and affluent country, the increment provided for an additional child to a mother on ADC averages less than 60 cents a day. If it is found that the home is inadequate, or the mother unable to cope with the problems of so many children, the child is removed to the home of a stranger, or to the homes of a series of strangers, and assistance payments range up to \$7 a day. If the child is removed to an institution, up to \$14 a day is paid out of taxpayers' funds. Finally, if the child is found to be emotionally disturbed, payments from public funds will range from \$10 to \$25 a day. Thus, while preventive care in the child's own home remains niggardly, the farther the child is removed from his family, the more we are ready to pay for his support. No sane system can be operated in this manner."

⁷³ Cf. Williams and Evans, "The Politics of Evaluation: The Case of Headstart" 385 *Annals* 118 (1969).

⁷⁴ Cf. Senate Finance Committee, *supra* note 3 at 136-37, 280-81.

⁷⁵ deFrancis, "Child Protective Services"—1967, 19 *Juv. Ct. Judges J.* 24 (1968), summarizes a 328-page report prepared by the Children's Division of the American Humane Association on the subject of protective services currently available in the United States to neglected, abused, and exploited children. The conclusion reached was that "no community has developed a child protective service program adequate in size to meet the service needs of all reported cases of child neglect, abuse, and exploitation." *Id.* at 25. See also, Polier, "Problems Involving Family and Child," 66 *Colum. L. Rev.* 305, 310 (1966) ; Kay and Phillips, "Poverty and the Law of Child Custody" 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 717, 737-38 (1966) ; Keith-Lucas, "Child Welfare Services Today: An Overview and Some Questions," 355 *Annals* 1 (September 1964).

Congress in 1971 but was vetoed by the President.⁷⁶ While the \$2 billion a year scheme did involve some overkill, it would have helped to alleviate the neglect and dependency crisis. In consequence, not much has changed since the House Ways and Means Committee reported as follows:

In March 1966 nearly 574,000 children received services from public child welfare agencies, a 9-percent increase over March 1965. Just under half of these children lived with parents or relatives, about a third were in foster homes, 10 percent were in institutions, and 7 percent in adoptive homes. Total expenditures for public child welfare services in 1966 were over \$397 million.

In March 1966, the number of children receiving foster care through public child welfare agencies increased to about 245,600 or a 6-percent increase over March 1965. Expenditures for foster care payments in 1965 were about \$229 million, with State and local governments meeting 98 percent of the costs. They accounted for 65 percent of the total expenditures of State and local public welfare agencies for child welfare services in that year. In 1966 expenditures for foster care were over \$258 million.⁷⁷

These figures contrast sharply with total amounts spent in the United States for welfare purposes. In 1968, that amount came close to \$10 billion.⁷⁸ In 1971, welfare expenditures had risen to \$16.2 billion.⁷⁹ A survey of welfare agency activities in six metropolitan areas conducted in 1965 identified "protective services for children and adults" as "the first and most serious gap in resources."⁸⁰ Finally, the adequacy of child care facilities is not a question of money alone.⁸¹

For too long, State and Federal laws have been content to consign the welfare child to a life not only without means but also without hope of acquiring the skills to become a productive member of society. For too long, the welfare child has been overlooked as a factor in the social equation and has been treated as a chattel of his mother. It is time to recognize that the State has a responsibility to the child directly. Some dispute that society owes adults a living, but who would not agree that each child is owed at least a chance?

CONCLUSION

Substantive and procedural reform of the paternity action must have first priority in any intelligent program of enforcement of parental support obligations. Federal law demanding that the States hold absentee fathers responsible was enacted in a vacuum which

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1971, p. 1, col. 1. Cf. H.R. 1, 92d Cong. 1st sess., §§ 420-427.

⁷⁷ H.R. Rep. No. 544, 90th Cong., 1st sess. 114 (1967).

⁷⁸ *U.S. News and World Report*, p. 40 (Jan. 13, 1969).

⁷⁹ *U.S. News and World Report*, p. 63 (Oct. 25, 1971).

⁸⁰ Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Welfare Administration, Bureau of Family Services, *Operation Big City* at 6 (1965).

⁸¹ See Paulsen, "Juvenile Courts, Family Courts, and the Poor Man," 54 *Calif. L. Rev.* 694, 711 (1966) (discussing Anderson, "A Special Hell for Children in Washington," *Harper's*, November 1965, p. 51):

"The damage to the children is often irreversible. Treatment in Junior Village leaves them impaired 'in their ability to receive and return affection, to control their impulses, and to use their minds.' Ironically, it is expensive in terms of public money as well as in terms of the waste of human resources to keep a child in an institution. A child costs \$300 a month at Junior Village, a handsome sum which few middle-class people are able to mount for their own children's needs."

must be filled with new machinery. Only when the ascertainment of paternity takes place in an atmosphere of due process and regard for fact will enforcement of paternal duties of child support make sense. Then, however, such obligations should be enforced—with due regard for the father's ability to pay.

Thorough reexamination of the States' neglect and dependency laws is equally important. If a poor child is to have a fair chance in life, appropriate laws and institutions, ranging from enforcement machinery to temporary and permanent child care centers, must take over where the parent fails. Unlike current laws, new laws must allow for the genuine cultural diversity and divergent lifestyles that coexist in our society, but a line must be drawn where the essential interests of the child are in jeopardy.

Paradoxically, this discussion of the national welfare crisis has primarily involved State laws—and not State welfare laws, but State family law. The point to be learned is that Federal welfare programs from which we expect solutions are dependent on effective State action in the area of family law. Thoughtful family law reform could remove at least some causes of welfare dependency. This represents a longer run solution to be sure, but one that would reap disproportionate social and financial benefits. Federal support, encouragement, and coordination and the development of appropriate State legislation seems essential. The basis for Federal involvement is implicit in current law with respect to the paternity action⁸² as well as with respect to neglect and dependency.⁸³

⁸² 42 U.S.C. § 602(a) (17), (21), (22). Cf. H.R. 1, 92d Cong. 1st sess. §§ 402(a) (11), (14), (15), 420-427. H. Rep. No. 92-231, 92d Cong. 1st sess. at 190-91.

⁸³ 42 U.S.C. § 602(a) (16). Cf. H.R. 1, 92d Cong. 1st sess., § 402(a) (10); H. Rep. No. 92-231 92d Cong., 1st sess. at 191. Discussing *Wyman v. James*, 91 S.Ct. 381, 400 U.S. 309 (1971), Judge Dembitz concluded:

"One ground for the majority's conclusion that the warrantless visit is reasonable, and a basic difference between the majority and the dissenters, lies in the majority's statement that in the AFDC program of public assistance "The focus is on the . . . child's needs." As Justice Blackmun noted and the dissenting judges completely ignored, AFDC was especially established for the care of children in suitable homes, with the mother or other adult guardian receiving her maintenance in effect as caretaker. And Justice Blackmun unquestionably was correct in rejecting the lower court's view that methods other than home visits—investigation of records and interviews in the welfare office—would suffice to determine the whereabouts and welfare of children receiving AFDC, especially preschool children." Dembitz, "Welfare Home visits: Child Versus Parents," 57 *A.B.A.J.* 871, 872 (1971). Cf. S. 2007, *supra* note 71.

THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY IN THE POOR BLACK COMMUNITY

By CAROL B. STACK and HERBERT SEMMEL*

The nuclear family reflects the prevailing national pattern of the white middle-class family structure in the United States, and possibly of black middle-class families as well. These nuclear families are largely economically self-sufficient. Illness or death do not necessarily devastate the resources of nonpoor families. They rely on insurance, savings, pensions, and social insurance benefits to survive emergencies. Child-care arrangements do not necessarily require the cooperation of the extended family. Nonpoor mothers who work can often afford nursery schools or private in-home babysitters to provide child care. Middle-class American adults have come to rely less on their adult relatives for domestic support or assistance. Housing for senior citizens is only one reflection of the growing separation of the grandparent from the home of his children and grandchildren. The moral or familial obligation to support aged parents, let alone siblings and their children, receives diminished acceptance by the public. These changes in attitudes are reflected in changes in the laws. Support obligations in some States are being terminated except for spouse and children. In others, the nuclear family must provide parents and collaterals only limited amounts of support and only if the nuclear family's income exceeds the level deemed necessary for its own support.

The nuclear family, however, is not the only unit of domestic cooperation. This study of poor black families in a midwestern city reveals what other studies have shown,¹ namely that the universal functions of family life can be and are provided by other social units. One can find various assortments of adults and children cooperating in domestic units; as clusters of kin (often involving the father) who do not reside together but who provide some of the domestic functions for a mother-and-child unit in another location.

Although this study examines the family structures found among poor blacks, we do not mean to imply that these extended and complex family groupings are unique to poor blacks. We simply make no attempt to generalize these findings to other ethnic groups and to other income groups.

Poor families have virtually no financial reserves to meet emergencies.² Lack of regular employment deprives the poor of many of the

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¹ E.g., Gough, *The Nuyars and Definition of Marriage*, 89 *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institution*, 23-24.

² The U.S. Department of Labor minimum adequate budget in April 1972 required net income of \$6,200 (\$7,214 less \$1,016 payroll and income taxes), USDL 72-240 (Apr. 27, 1972). The official poverty line income used in governmental statistics was \$4,000. OEO Instruction No. 6004-1c (Nov. 19, 1971).

social and private insurance benefits available to those with steady employment. This paper argues that the poor black urban family has not developed along the nuclear pattern partly because of the need to provide an alternate system of savings and insurance. We find that various domestic networks of cooperative support sustain and socialize the family members. The membership in domestic networks is based largely on kinship, including that of the father of children. It usually includes three generations of lineal descent and some collateral kin. It may even include friends, although these arrangements are generally considered less binding by the group members and hence the attachment of a friend to the network tends to be less durable.

Where people sleep does not reveal the scope of the domestic network which may be diffused over several kin-based households. Where people eat and where they spend their time are as important to determining domestic networks as persons who sleep in the same household. Fluctuations in household composition, defined in terms of where people sleep, rarely affect the network of daily exchanges within the domestic network. A person may sleep in one household, eat in another, contribute to a third, and consider himself a member of all three households.

Domestic networks develop rights and obligations in much the same fashion as jural relations evolve in broader societal groupings. Indeed, the trading of goods and services pervades the whole social-economic life of the participants in the network. Trading refers to the offering of goods or services with the intent to obligate. It is, in one sense, a contractual relationship, based on offer and acceptance, with enforcement of the obligation left to kinship or community pressure and the risk of being excluded from the network. Failure to satisfy an obligation may result in someone else's child not eating that day.

Trading is the insurance and savings institution of the poor urban black, allowing him to call on others for assistance because he has paid his premium by having offered or supplied goods or services at a previous time. Poor blacks say, "You have to have help from everybody and anybody" and "The poorer you are, the more likely you are to pay back."

Members of poor black communities adopt a variety of tactics in order to expand the number of people who share reciprocal obligations with them. These strategies include the activation of kin ties, and the creation of kin-like ties among nonkin. For example, despite the comparatively smaller number of marriages which may occur between childbearing parents, if a father openly acknowledges his paternity, fathers and their kin may actively provide affection and economic aid to the father's children. Friends may also be incorporated in one's domestic circle; and if they satisfy one another's expectations, they may be called kin—"cousins," "sister," "brother," "daddy," and so forth. The expansion of the domestic network increases the security of the individual by expanding the circle of persons who may be called upon in case of need, risk spreading in the insurance analogy.

The study described below reveals that the families involved had strengths and stability previously unrecognized by most academic studies. The family structure developed by poor urban blacks appears to represent a flexible adaptation to the daily social and economic

demands of life on the poor urban family. Individuals who are members of different households align in domestic networks to provide the basic functions often attributed to nuclear families. These domestic networks are broad enough so that while some participants may move in and out of the network, a hard core usually remains constant, particularly adult female kin and siblings. From the standpoint of the child, the economic and psychological effects of the death, temporary absence or desertion of a parent may be less than in the nuclear family because the child has come to rely on a variety of adults to provide the multiple functions of a parent in the nuclear family. Equally important, adults readily assume responsibilities for the child without regarding them as unfair or unwanted burdens. In short, the domestic networks provide the assurance that all children will be cared for.

I. INTRODUCTION

The findings contained in this paper are based on a participant-observation study of the domestic strategies of urban born black Americans whose parents had migrated from the South to a single community in the urban North. Prof. Carol Stack, an anthropologist, conducted this study between 1968 and 1971 in the midwestern city of Jackson Harbor,³ a city in the 50,000-100,000 population range, 10 percent black. The families studied lived in the Flats, the poorest section of the black community of Jackson Harbor.

The study concentrated on family life among second generation urban dwellers whose families received public assistance during their childhood. Now adults in their twenties to forties, they were raising their own children and receiving public assistance under the program of aid to families with dependent children (AFDC). The main purpose of the study was to analyze the nucleus of social and economic cooperation which best characterizes the poor urban black family. This paper primarily portrays the domestic organization within kin network and concludes that such "domestic networks" are an adaptive strategy evolved by urban black people in response to poverty and racism.

Prior to the participant-observation study, Stack conducted a statistical study from data in the files of the welfare department in Jackson Harbor. A total of 188 AFDC case history records were examined. These included data on 951 children who were AFDC recipients—half of the total number of AFDC children in Jackson Harbor in 1969, and 373 adults, of whom 188 were "grantees" responsible for

³ The name of the actual city and the names of its residents have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved in the study. Although it cannot be said that Jackson Harbor is typical of every urban black community, it appears to be representative at least of mid-Western black communities, and possibly those in many other urban areas themselves. Blacks composed 10 percent of the population of Jackson Harbor, roughly comparable to the percentage of blacks in the State in which Jackson Harbor was located, and in the Nation. The county in which Jackson Harbor was located was among the 20 highest in income in the United States, according to the 1970 census, but 60 percent of the black families had incomes of under \$4,000 per annum. In 1968, a year of record low unemployment nationally, in Jackson Harbor there was virtually no white unemployment, but black unemployment consistently exceeded 20 percent, and two-thirds of employed blacks were in unskilled jobs. Nonetheless, Jackson Harbor also had a substantial black middle class.

the AFDC child. Confidentiality was insured by coding all data before removal from the welfare office.

Early in the study, Stack became immersed in the daily lives of one domestic family unit—the household of Magnolia and Leo Johnson—and their network of kinsmen which proved to number over 100 persons. Their home became her home base, a place where she was welcome to spend the day, week after week, and where she and her year-old son could sleep, usually sharing a bed with children in the household. Stack's presence in the home of Magnolia and Leo and their eight children enabled her to meet all of their relatives who resided in the Flats and those kin and nonkin who actively participated in their daily domestic lives. The network of people involved in this study expanded as she visited and shared experiences with individuals who were participants in the personal networks of those families who provided her with her first home base. Stack's personal network of informants expanded naturally in this process, coinciding with the social networks of participants in the study. Her home base changed as she became personally accepted by families, and ultimately she acquired a place to sleep whenever she wished at several unrelated households. Each of these households were participants in cooperative networks which radiated out to include over 300 individuals who Stack eventually visited, although the locus of her intensive observations was limited to 10 unrelated coalitions of kinsmen. It was in these homes where Stack's presence ultimately affected daily social relations the least.

Stack eventually spent almost 3 years in the Flats, attempting to comprehend the strategies which people evolved for coping with the everyday human demands of ghetto life. Early in the study, she became aware of coalitions of individuals trading and exchanging goods, resources, and the care of children. The intensity of their acts of domestic cooperation, and the exchange of goods and services among these kin and nonkin, was striking. Stack began to learn how participants in exchanges were defined by one another, who was eligible to become a part of the cooperative networks, how they were recruited, and what kept participants actively involved in the series of exchanges.

Stack found that the traditional emphasis on the nuclear family as the basic social economic unit constituting a family did not provide an adequate explanation of the patterns of domestic cooperation among poor urban blacks.

II. DOMESTIC NETWORKS IN THE URBAN BLACK COMMUNITY

Children are born into a network of relatives. Relatives on both sides of the family are kin and there is no clear-cut limit to the range of one's kinsmen. But cognitive reckoning by itself cannot distinguish between essential kin and others within the system. The choice of which relatives an individual traces and activates relationships with is by no means mechanical. Personal kindreds are ego-centered networks of essential kin. These networks are not residential units or observable groups. Participants change when kinfolk "fall out" with one another.

How individuals "cast their net" to create personal kindreds depends upon the culturally determined perceptions of jural (that is,

socially recognized rights and responsibilities) parenthood, the rules and criteria for including and excluding persons connected by blood and marriage to a particular kinsman, and the interpersonal relations between these individuals. These criteria determine which individuals acquire socially recognized kinship relations with others.

Young children exercise little choice in determining with whom they have kinship relations. They are born into a network of essential kin which is primarily the personal kindred of adults—their father, their mother, or the kinfolk responsible for them. As children become adults, they expand, contract and create their own personal networks. For many reasons such as geographical distance, interpersonal relations, or lack of acknowledgment of paternity, some relatives do not activate claims of responsibility toward an individual. These relatives effectively drop out of the individual's personal kindred. When a person drops out of someone's network, all of the people linked through him also tend to drop out. An important criterion, then, affecting the size and shape of the personal kindreds of adults is whether the relative who drops out of the network is genealogically close or distant. Sometimes close kinship links like that of a parent are broken. A father, for example, may claim that he doesn't "own the baby," thereby refusing to acknowledge paternity. When a close link such as that of a father is broken, this has a profound effect on the shape of the personal kindred since all of the father's kin will usually follow him out of the network.

The extent and complexity of a domestic network can best be appreciated by a detailed examination of one network that is not atypical. Although the immediate nuclear family is larger than most, the size and extent of the Johnson's tracking network did not differ from other trading networks observed by Stack.

The Domestic Network of Magnolia and Leo Johnson

Magnolia is 38 years old and has 11 children, eight of which are Leo's. When Magnolia was 25, she met Leo and she has lived with him ever since. Leo was then 47 years old and is now 60. Leo had two other daughters (now ages 40 and 38) by an earlier marriage in Mississippi. Leo still maintains close ties with these daughters and their mother, all of whom live near one another in Chicago.

Magnolia arrived in Jackson Harbor from the South when she was 16 along with her mother, father, four sisters (Augusta, Carrie, Lydia, and Olive) and two brothers (Pennington and Oscar). Magnolia's sisters and brothers and their families all live in the Flats in Jackson Harbor. The children of Magnolia and those of her brothers and sisters all received public aid at some time in their childhood and many of them now have children on public aid. This fact is not surprising since one-third of the 188 AFDC mothers in the statistical survey of welfare department records were themselves recipients as children.

Magnolia's oldest daughter, Ruby, was born shortly after Magnolia arrived in Jackson Harbor. Ruby, now 22, has two daughters and a son of her own, each by different fathers.

Magnolia's oldest sister, Augusta, is childless and has never been married. Augusta has maintained long-term "housekeeping" partner-

ships with four different men over the past 20 years and each of them have helped her raise some of her sisters' children and have maintained close, affectionate ties with the family over the years. Magnolia's youngest sister, Carrie, married Lazar, 25 years her senior, when she was just 15, and they lived together for about 5 years. After they separated Carrie married Kermit, separated from him and became an alcoholic. She lives with different men from time to time, but in between men, or when things are at loose ends, she stays with Lazar, who has become a participating member of the family. Lazar usually resides nearby his sister-in-law, Augusta, and Augusta's "old man," and Augusta usually prepares Lazar's meals. Ever since Carrie became ill, Augusta raised Carrie's son.

Magnolia's sister, Lydia, had two daughters, Lottie and Georgia, by two different fathers before she married Mike and gave birth to his son. After Lydia married Mike, she no longer received AFDC benefits for her children. Lydia and Mike acquired steady jobs, bought a house and nice furniture, and as long as they were economically secure, they effectively removed themselves from the network of cooperation for over 10 years.

Over the past 18 years, Magnolia's oldest friend has been Eloise. Eloise is the sister of the father of Magnolia's first son, Clarence. Clarence moved into his father's household by his own choice when he was about 12 years old, but this has not affected the close, sisterly friendship between Magnolia and Eloise. Eloise lived with her husband, her four children, and her oldest (17) daughter's infant son. Eloise's niece (husband's brother's daughter), Lily (20), and Lily's young daughter recently joined the household. Another one of Eloise's husband's brothers is the father of Eloise's younger sister's child, and that sister lived with Eloise and her husband when the child was an infant.

Billy Jones, a temperamental woman with three sons is Augusta's oldest friend. At one time, Billy ran a brothel in Jackson Harbor, but she has worked as a cook, written songs, and attended college from

time to time. Augusta has kept Billy's sons whenever necessary, when Billy leaves town or has periods of depression.

Another active participant in the network is Willa Mae. Willa Mae's younger brother, James, is the father of Ruby's second daughter. Even though James does not visit the child, and has not assumed parental duties toward the child, Willa Mae and Ruby, who are the same age, have helped each other out with their young children.

Leo's closest friend, Cecil, died several years ago. Cecil was Violet's husband. Violet, Cecil, and Leo came from the same town in Mississippi and their families have always been very close. Leo boarded with Violet's family for 5 years or so before he met Magnolia. Violet is now 70 years old. She lives with her daughter, Odessa (37), her two sons, Josh (35) and John (40), and Odessa's three sons and daughter. Odessa's husband was killed in a fight several years ago and ever since then Odessa and her family have shared a household with Violet and her two mature sons. Violet's sons, Josh and John, are good friends with Magnolia, Ruby, and Augusta and visit frequently. About 5 years ago, John brought one of his daughters to live with his mother and sister because his family thought that the mother was not taking proper care of the child; the mother has several other children and did not object. The girl is now 10 years old and is an accepted member of the family and the network.

The houses in the network of Magnolia and Leo are scattered within the Flats in Jackson Harbor, but none of them are more than 3 miles apart. Since only four persons in the network have cars, cabfare is spent practically every day, and sometimes twice a day, as individuals visit, trade, and help one another.

The extent and complexity of Magnolia's domestic network can best be appreciated by the following table describing the content of seven of the principal households in the network. A total of 51 persons live in these households; other members of Magnolia's network live elsewhere. The table also demonstrates how the network remains stable while housing patterns are continually changing.

- Household 1: Number of persons, 10. Magnolia (48) and Leo (60) live in a common law relationship with their 8 children (ages 4-18).
- Household 2: Number of persons, 6. Magnolia's sister Augusta and Augusta's "old man" Herman, share a 2-bedroom house with Magnolia's daughter Ruby (22) and Ruby's 3 children. Augusta and Herman have 1 bedroom, the 3 children sleep in the 2d bedroom, and Ruby sleeps downstairs in the living room. Ruby's boyfriend, Art, stays with Ruby many evenings.
- Household 3: Number of persons, 6. Augusta's girl friend Billy and Billy's 3 sons live on the 1st floor of the house. Lazar, Magnolia's and Augusta's ex-brother-in-law lives in the basement, alone, or with his ex-wife, Carrie, from time to time. Lazar eats the evening meal, which Augusta prepares for him, at household No. 2.
- Household 4: Number of persons, 6. Magnolia's sister, Lydia, Lydia's "old man," Lydia's 2 daughters (Georgia and Lottie), Lydia's son, and Lottie's 3 year old daughter.
- Household 5: Number of persons, 5. Willa Mae (26), her husband, and her son, her sister Claudia (32) and her brother James (father of Ruby's daughter) share a household.
- Household 6: Number of persons, 9. Eloise (37), her husband Jessie, their 4 children, their oldest daughter's (17) son, and Jessie's brother's daughter (20) Lily, and Lily's baby all live together.
- Household 7: Number of persons, 9. Violet (70), her 2 sons, Josh (35) and John (40), her daughter Odessa (37) and Odessa's 3 sons and 1 daughter live together; 5 years ago John's daughter (10) joined the household.
- Household composition unchanged.
- Augusta and Herman moved to household No. 3 after quarreling with Ruby over housekeeping and cooking duties. Ruby and Art remained in Household No. 2 and began housekeeping with Ruby's children.
- Billy and her 3 sons remained on the 1st floor and Lazar remained in the basement. Augusta and Herman rented a small, 1-room apartment upstairs.
- Lottie and her daughter moved out of Lydia's house to a large apartment down the street which they shared with Lottie's girl friend and the friend's daughter. Georgia moved into her boy friend's apartment. Lydia and her son (17) remained in the house with Lydia's "old man."
- James began housekeeping with a new girl friend who lived with her sister, but he kept most of his clothes at home. His brother moved into his room after returning from the service. Willa Mae, her husband, and son remained in the house.
- Household composition unchanged.
- Odessa's son, Raymond, is the father of Clover's baby. Clover and the baby joined the household.

Household composition per se reveals little about domestic organization even when cooperation between close adult females is assumed. The residences described above of some participants in Magnolia's and Leo's domestic network are determined by economic, affective, and rural relations. Magnolia, Ruby, and Augusta were all receiving food stamps, which they usually pooled. The women shopped together and when Magnolia's mother was alive, they and their children ate the evening meal together at Magnolia's mother's house or at Magnolia's. The children did not have a bed of their own, or a bed which they were expected to share with another child. They fell asleep and slept through the night in relation to the late evening visiting patterns of the adult females. Where, in fact, a particular child was living is difficult to say, since each child had clothing scattered around each of these homes and slept in any of them.

Marriage

Marriage is not uncommon in the Flats. Although marriages occur among young women, few women are married before they have given birth to one or more children. Short term sexual partnerships are recognized by the community even if a man and woman do not share a household and domestic responsibilities.

Contrary to the practice in some ethnic groups, where great stress may be placed on "respectability" leading to coerced marriage, economic circumstances in poor black communities often create strong pressures against marriage. Marriage invariably involves each spouse in the domestic network of the other. When a potential marriage arises, those in the domestic networks of the prospective spouses may weigh the loss to the network's contribution of money or services of the network member and the obligations to be assumed against the aid that may be forthcoming from the new kin through marriage. If the balance is unfavorable, the marriage may be discouraged. Ruby, Magnolia's daughter, offers her version of why she never married Otis, the father of her second child.

"Me and Otis could be married, but they all ruined that. Aunt Augusta told Magnolia that he was no good. Magnolia was the fault of it too. They don't want to see me married. Magnolia knows that it be money getting away from her. I couldn't spend the time with her and the kids and be giving her the money that I do now. I'd have my husband to look after. I couldn't go where she want me to go. I couldn't come every time she calls me, like if Leo took sick or the kids took sick, or if she took sick. That's all the running I do now. I couldn't do that. You think a man would put up with as many times as I go over her house in a cab, giving half my money to her all the time? That's the reason why they don't want me married. You think a man would let Aunt Augusta come into the house and take food out of the ice box from his kids? They thought that way ever since I came up.

"They broke me and Otis up. They kept telling me he was no good, that he wasn't good enough for me, that he didn't want me, and that he didn't want the responsibility. I put him out and I cried all night long. That same night I sneaked him back through the bathroom window and we went to sleep together. My younger sister was also staying at mama's and I told her not to tell. She went downstairs and

told. I locked the door and me and Otis went back to bed with the babies in there with us. I caused lots of trouble. But I figured this is my life and if I love him I gotta stick with him. And I really did love him. But Aunt Augusta and others kept fussing and arguing so I went and quit him. I would have got married a long time ago to my first baby's daddy, but Aunt Augusta was the cause of that, telling Magnolia that he was too old for me. She's been jealous of me since the day I was born.

"If I ever marry I ain't listening to what nobody say. I just listen to what he say. You have to get along the best way you know how, and forget about your people. If I got married they would talk, like they are doing now, saying he ain't no good and he's been creeping on you. 'I told you once not to marry him. You'll end up right back on ADC.' If I ever get married, I'm leaving town."

Ruby's perception of her kin's motives may be partially distorted. Network kin may be thinking of the best interests of the prospective bride or groom in measuring the economic consequences of marriage. In either event, the net result may be discouragement of marriage.

Men face additional intense pressures against marriage. Liebow, in *Talley's Corner*, has described the patterns of frustration which face poor black husbands. Their concept of their role as father and husband is that of prevailing standards, which prizes above all the good provider. But the bulk of the fathers of AFDC children in the Flats were unskilled or semiskilled workers, unemployed or employed in positions lacking long-term job security, and always at low wages. Their failure as provider cuts into their authority as head of the family, increasing the sense of failure and generating pressure to dissolve the marital household. Repeated examples of marital failure serve as warnings against marriage to both single men and women.

And the welfare laws operate to deter marriage. There is a general requirement fostered by the Social Security Act⁴ and implemented in a majority of the States, that AFDC benefits are payable only when one parent is absent from the home. It is economically unfeasible for a father to marry and cohabit with the mother of his children if he anticipates unemployment or has earnings below the level of AFDC benefits, for the father's presence disqualifies the family for AFDC benefits.⁵

The Perception of Parenthood

The perception of parenthood among people in the Flats provides a good starting point for understanding who is eligible to be a member of the personal kindred of a newborn child. Jural—that is, socially recognized—parenthood provides some of the clues because a child's personal kindred is initially determined by socially recognized parent-child connections, the relationship the mother has with the father, and the continued relationship the mother has with the father's family.

At birth, a culturally meaningful event, a child acquires socially recognized kinship relations with others. Goodenough suggests that

⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 606 (a).

⁵ Federal law permits payments to families with unemployed fathers in the home, 42 U.S.C. § 607, but only 20 States provide such benefits.

everything follows from what societies "make of" the birth of a child. We will now look at the perception of jural parenthood in the Flats and how a parent's sponsorship provides a child with kinfolk.

MOTHERHOOD

Men and women in the Flats regard childbearing and child-begetting as a natural and highly desirable phenomena. Lottie James was 15 when she became pregnant. The baby's father, Herman, the socially recognized genitor, was a neighbor and the father of two children. Lottie talked with her mother during her second month of pregnancy: "Herman went and told mama I was pregnant. She was in the kitchen cooking. I told him not to tell nobody, I wanted to keep it a secret, but he told me times will tell. My mama said to me, 'I had you and you should have your child. I didn't get rid of you. I loved you and I took care of you until you got to the age to have this one. Have your baby no matter what, there's nothing wrong with having a baby. Be proud of it like I was proud of you.' My mama didn't tear me down, she was about the best mother a person ever had."

In some societies some women are regarded as ineligible to bear children, but there are few if any restrictions on eligibility of black women to bear children, married or unmarried, young or old. Over one-fifth—23 percent—of the mothers in the AFDC study were in their teens at the birth of their first child.

The black community has long recognized the problems and difficulties faced by poverty mothers, young and old alike. Shared parental duties have long been the response. Despite the difficulties of raising children in poverty, the bond between mother and children is exceedingly strong.

Being eligible to bear a child at a young age does not necessarily mean that a young mother is considered emotionally ready to nurture a child. A girl who gives birth as a teenager frequently does not raise and nurture her first born child. While she may share the same room and household with her baby, her mother, mother's sister, or her older sister may care for the child and become the child's "mama." This same young woman may actively become a jural mother to a second child to which she gives birth a year or two later. When, for example, a grandmother, aunt or great aunt "takes a child" from its natural mother, this succession to parenthood often lasts throughout the child's lifetime. Although a child kept by a close female relative knows who his mother is, that is, who gave birth to him, his "mama," the one he loves and depends upon, is the woman who "raised him up." Ruby, who lived with her grandmother for much of her childhood refers to her as "mama" and to her natural mother as "Magnolia." Young mothers and their first born daughters are often raised as sisters, and strong sibling-like ties are established between these mothers and their daughters which continue over their lifetimes. A child raised by his grandmother may later become playmates with his half siblings who are his age (his natural mother's other children). But he does not share with his half siblings the same claims and duties and affective ties toward his natural mother.

A young mother who, in the eyes of the community, does not perform her duties as a mother in a sense has not validated her claim to

jural parenthood. Other close female kinsmen of the child (and sometimes nonkin) may assume those rights. In effect, a young mother may transfer some of her claims to jural parenthood without surrendering all of her rights to the child. There is nothing in the conception of parenthood among people in the Flats which prevents kinsmen of a child's socially recognized genealogical parents from having claims to jural parenthood. The person who actively becomes the affective mother, the "mama," acquires the major cluster of parental rights accorded to mothers.

The network that a child is born into is primarily the network of his jural parents. In the Flats, the jural mother (80 percent are the natural mothers) is the principal determinant of the child's kinship affiliation. She is one of the immediate sponsors of a child's personal kinship network. The blood relatives, and their spouses, of a black child's jural mother are eligible to be members of the child's personal kinship network. This reckoning of relatives through the immediate sponsor is especially useful when a child's residence changes during his lifetime. Even if a child is raised by a person who is not a blood relative (described below), he usually becomes a part of the network of the jural mother. To summarize, a jural mother in the black community of the Flats is culturally defined as the woman who nurtures the child.

FATHERHOOD

The fact of birth does not provide a child with a chain of socially recognized relatives through his genitor. Even though the community accepts the child, the culturally significant issue in terms of the economics of everyday life is whether a man involved in a sexual relationship with a woman provides a newborn child with kinship affiliations. A child is eligible to participate in the personal kinship network of his father if the father becomes an immediate sponsor of a child's kinship network.

When an unmarried woman in the Flats becomes pregnant or gives birth to a child, she often tells her friends and kin who the father is. The man has a number of alternatives open to him. Sometimes he publicly denies paternity by implying to his friends and kin that the father could be any number of other men, and that he has "information that she is no good and has been creeping on him all along." The community generally accepts the man's denial of paternity since it is doubtful that under these conditions this man and his kin would assume any parental duties anyway. The man's failure to assent to being the father leaves the child without jural kinship ties reckoned through a male. Subsequent "boyfriends" of the mother may assume the jural duties of discipline and support and receive the child's affection, but all jural rights in the child belong to the mother and her kinsmen.

The second alternative open to a man involved in a sexual relationship with a mother is to acknowledge openly that he is the genitor. The father may indicate "he owns it" by telling his people and his friends that he is the father, by paying part of the hospital bill, or by bringing milk and diapers to the mother after the birth of the child. The parents may not have ever shared a household and the affective and sexual relationship between them may have ended prior to the

birth of the child. By validating his claim as a jural parent the father offers the child his blood relatives and their husbands and wives as the child's kin—an inheritance so to speak. So long as the father validates his parental entitlement, his relatives, especially his mother and sisters, consider themselves kin to the child and jurally responsible. Even when the mother "takes up with another man" her child retains the original set of kin gained through the father who sponsored him. The frequency with which black children derive their jural kin through females only has been stereotyped and exaggerated in the literature on black families. In contrast, according to information supplied by AFDC mothers as reflected in their case records, fathers in the Flats recognized 484 (69 percent) of the 700 children included in the AFDC survey.

The more a father and his kin help a mother and her child, the more completely they validate their parental rights. But a common situation in the Flats occurs when a man assents to being the father, and offers his kinship affiliations to the child, but rarely performs a parental duty or claims any rights in relation to the child. Many American black males have little or no access to steady employment at adequate pay levels. The poor employment opportunities contribute to their difficulties in assuming stable roles as jural parents.⁶ People in the Flats believe a father should help his child, but they know that mothers cannot count on his help.

When economic resources are greatly limited, people need help from as many others as possible. This requires expanding their kin networks—increasing the number of people they hope to be able to count on. Mothers expect little from fathers, but hope they will help out. Mothers do expect something from his kin, especially from his mother and sisters. Mothers continually activate these kin lines bringing kin into the network of exchanging and obligating. Often the biological father's female relatives are also poor and also try to expand and increase the number of people on whom they can depend. The expansion and integration of networks thus is accomplished through the nexus of a newborn child.

A significant indication of the importance of the father and the father's kin to the child is revealed in the statistical survey of AFDC cases. Asked to rank in order who they would expect to raise each of their children if they died, one-third of the women listed the father or the father's mother as first choice even though the father was not residing with the children in almost all cases. The expectations and reliance which the mothers place on the father and his kin demonstrate the importance of the support available and expected from the father's kin, support dependent on the father's recognition of paternity.

Friendship and Kinship

Men and women in the flats know that their daily needs may not be met. They constantly reach out hoping to find solutions which will change their lives. They place their hopes in the scene of their life and action, in their community, in the people around them, kin and

⁶ Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (Little Brown, 1967).

friends, and in the many new friends they will have to make to get along. Friendships between lovers and between friends are based upon a precarious balance between trust and profit. As Ruby says, "You got to go out and meet people, because the very day you go out that first person you meet may be the person that can help you get the things you want."

When friends regularly share the exchange of goods and services they are called kinsmen. When friends live up to one another's expectations, their social relations are conducted within the idiom of kinship. For example, if two women of the same age are helping one another they call their friend "just a sister," or say that "they are going for sisters." Anyone in the community with whom a person has good social dealings can be classified as some kind of kin. When a friendship ends because individuals "let one another down" this concludes both their expectations of one another and their fictive kin relationship. In addition, a person defined as a fictive kin, for example a "sister," does not usually bring to the relationship her own relatives. Her mother is not necessarily her fictive sister's mother. Losing a fictive relative, therefore, does not dramatically affect the shape of personal network as does the dropping of a close kinship line. Usually individuals related to fictive kin are not, in the first instance, drawn into the network.

When a mother has a boyfriend, the community expects that he will assume some parental duties toward her children. This is especially true if the couple are "housekeeping," that is, sharing their domestic tasks. A nonparticipating biological father surrenders many of his rights and responsibilities to the mother's husband or current boyfriend. The attitude and behavior of the boyfriend toward the children defines his relationship to them. Clover compares her last two boyfriends and how they dealt with her children. "I stopped going with Max because he took no time for my kids, he just wanted them out of our way. I took it for a while cause I got things from him, but when he hit my boy I called it quits. If he can't care, he can't bully my kids. But Lee, he was something else. He was so nice to my kids that the babies cried when he left the house. Sometimes I had to yell to keep the kids from bothering him and get some time for myself. After we was housekeeping for about 6 months, Lee said to the boys that they should call him their play daddy. Lee and I quit last year and I'm sorry we did cause the kids really miss him. But he still comes over, especially when I'm out and they still call him their play daddy."

Fictive kin relations are maintained by consensus between individuals, and in some context can last a lifetime. If Lee maintains his interest in Clover's boys, he may remain a "play daddy" of theirs throughout the adult life of the children.

Children very often establish close and affectionate ties with their aunts and uncles, for example, with their mother's sister's "old man" and their mother's brothers "old lady." These aunts and uncles, on the basis of their original consensual relationship, can remain in a child's (fictive niece or nephew) personal network for a long time. Personal kinship networks are enlarged by the inclusion of these affines who can keep the relationship active for a long time. Ruby recently visited her uncle Arthur, one of her Aunt Rosie's "old men,"

in the hospital. "Uncle Arthur and I was always good friends," says Ruby, "even when he and Aunt Rosie weren't getting on. He was staying with Rosie, my grandmother and me when I was just a kid and he always treated me like something real special. Now he is just as nice to my kids when he comes over to see them. I really feel sad that he's old and sick, he has high blood, and I think he may die." Ruby is also attached to her Uncle Lazar who started going with her mother's youngest sister when her aunt was just 15. "My aunt has been married twice since, but Uncle Lazar just remained a part of our family. He's 58 now and he's been part of our family ever since I can remember. He always has been staying with our family too. Right now he's staying in the basement below Aunt Rosie's apartment and she cooks for him and her old man. He'll always be my Uncle and he and my Aunt never did get married."

Members of domestic networks in the flats are drawn from kin and friends. Of the two, the kin network is more enduring because all of an individual's effective kin are "recognized as having some duties toward him and some claims on him." Friendships end, and that is to be expected. New friendships can be formed. Some observers of black culture regard the friendship network as the "proven and adaptive base of operations" in lower class life. However, it would be more accurate to recognize that the resilience of poor black people can be attributed to the coalescence of personal kindreds and networks of friends.

III. TRADING, THE POOR'S OWN SOCIAL SECURITY

"Trading" or what people commonly call "swapping," is the most important form of distribution and exchange of the limited resources available to poor people in Jackson Harbor. Domestic networks are the primary institution within which trading takes place. The trading of goods and services within domestic networks pervades the whole social-economic life of the participants.

Trading in the flats generally refers to any objects or services offered with the intent of obligating the receiving party. Mauss' classic interpretation of gift exchange in primitive societies stresses the essence of obligation in gift giving, receiving, and repaying. Trading in Jackson Harbor evidences a similar obligatory nature. One who received is expected to give, to offer goods or services, even without any request. Strong pressures of community opinion and the sanction of expulsion from the domestic (trading) network serve to enforce the obligation.

Ruby Banks analyzes her own exchange behavior and the patterned expectations and obligations with clarity. "These days you ain't got nothing to be really giving, only to your true friends, but most people trade. Trading is a part of everybody's life. When I'm over at a girl friend's house and I see something I want I say, you gotta give me this, you don't need it no way. I act the fool with them. If they say no, I need that, then they keep it and give me something else. Whatever I see that I want, I usually get. If a friend lets me wear something of theirs, I let them wear something of mine. I even let some of my new clothes out. If my friend has a new dress that I want, she might tell me to wait till she wears it first and then she'll give it to me, or she

might say, well take it on. That's the way I do. Lots of people done wear lots of new clothes I had.

"My girlfriend Billy gave me a dress about a month ago and last time I went over to her house she gave me sheets and towels for the kids cause she knew I needed them. Everytime I go over there she always gives me something. When she comes over my house, I give her whatever she asks for. We might not see each other in 2 or 3 months. If she comes over after that and I got something, I give it to her if she wants it. If I go over to her house and she got something, I take it—canned goods, food, milk, it don't make no difference.

"My TV's been over to my cousin's house for 7 or 8 months now. I had a fine couch that she wanted and I gave it to her too. It don't make no difference with me what it is or what I have. I feel free knowing that I done my part in this world. I don't ever expect nothing back right away, but when I've given something to kin or friend whenever they think about me they'll bring something on around. Even if we don't see each other out of 2 or 3 months. Soon enough they'll come around and say, come over to my house, I got something to give you. When I get over there and they say, you want this, if I don't want it my friend will say, we'll find something you like and take it on.

"You ain't really giving nothing away because everything that goes round comes round in my book. If someone who takes things from me ain't giving me anything in return, she can't get nothing else. When someone like that, like my cousin, Lottie, comes to my house and says oooo, you should give me that honey, I can use it in my living room and my old man would just love to sit on it—well, if she's like my cousin, you don't care what her old man wants, you satisfied with what yours wants. Some people like my cousin don't mind borrowing from anybody, but she don't loan you no money, her clothes, nothing. Well, she ain't—. She don't believe in helping nobody and lots of folks gossip about her. I'll never give her nothing again. One time I went over there after I had given her all these things and I asked her, how about loaning me an outfit to wear. She told me, girl, I ain't got nothing. I ain't got nothing clean, I just put my clothes in the cleaners, and what I do have you can't wear cause it's too small for you. Well, lots of people talks about someone who act that way.

"They say you shouldn't trust nobody, but that's wrong. You have to try to trust somebody, and somebody has to try to trust you, cause everybody need help in this world. And I was sitting over at the laundry worrying that mama didn't have nothing to eat. I took a cab over there and gave her 10 more dollars. All I had left to my name was \$10 to pay on my couch, get food, wash and everything. But I ignored my problems and gave mama the money I had. Mama didn't really have nothing after she paid some bills. She was over there black and blue from not eating—stomach growling. The craziest thing was that she wouldn't touch the rent money. I gave the last \$5 dollars of my money to her. She didn't want to take no more cause I was helping her so much. Today she took \$25 out of the rent money. She paid her sister her \$5 and gave me \$5 to get the kids something to eat. I said what about my other \$10, but she put me off. She paid everybody else and I'm the one who's helping her the most. I could have most everything I needed if I didn't have to divide with my mother and her eight kids. But she's my mother and I don't want to turn her down."

Ruby Bank's rationale shows how people intentionally obligate others in the process of swapping objects and services back and forth. People give objects of exchange to others generously, new things, treasured items, furniture, cars and TV's, goods that are perishable, and innumerable services, especially child care. A value is placed upon the goods given away, but the value is not determined by the price or market value of the object. Many goods have been acquired through previous trades. Presumably stolen goods are bought at prices far below retail cost. The value of the object given away is based upon its retaining power over the receiver, that is, how much and over how long a time period the giver can expect returns on the gift. Two individuals rarely trade one thing in exchange for another at the same time and place. The object swapped is an object offered with the intent to obligate the receiver over a period of time.

The expectation of future return rather than immediate exchange illustrates the insurance-savings role of trading. This role is also revealed by the perceived nature of ownership of traded property. A giver retains "ownership" rights in the object. In some cases, the object itself may be reclaimed. More often the ownership is more directly analogous to a bank deposit; the depositor has no right to return of the specific money deposited but rather a claim against the bank which must be honored on the depositor's demand. So, in trading, goods or services are given on the understood condition that the giver can receive an equivalent in return, when needed, that the giver can, in effect, draw on the account.

As already noted above, participants in domestic trading networks constantly seek to expand their network, thereby increasing their sense of security. Here we see an application of the risk-spreading principle of insurance.

The relationship between trading networks and poverty is best illustrated by the case of Magnolia's sister Lydia, who was a participant in Magnolia's domestic network. Lydia married, and she and her husband both found steady employment. Economically, they moved into middle class status in Jackson Harbor, and Lydia dropped out of Magnolia's network, refusing to assist her network partners and ceasing to participate in trading. Such conduct was condemned by Lydia's kin but failed to change her conduct. Lydia no longer needed the security provided by the trading system. Given her circumstances, she would be expected to give more than she would receive, at least in the short run. However, after many years Lydia and her husband separated. Lydia immediately attempted to reobligate her kin to her by giving away many of her finest and most expensive possessions. Lydia was establishing credit for the hard times ahead.

IV. "FAMILY" IN POOR BLACK COMMUNITIES: IMPLICATION FOR PUBLIC AID POLICY

The family patterns illustrated in the previous sections represent an adaptation poor black families must make to survive. Public assistance, the primary income source for many of these families, does not provide income sufficient for even a subsistence level existence. Before examining how the domestic network adaptation should influence policy, it is important to point out that benefit levels available to public aid recip-

ients are exceedingly low. The Social Security Act leaves to the States the determination of the actual dollar grant paid to AFDC recipients.⁷ Each State prepares what is supposed to be a budget of minimum needs, but these have little meaning. Only 14 States pay 100 percent of "budgeted need," but many of these budgets are artificially low.⁸ Most States do not pay 100 percent of budgeted need to AFDC families; some pay reduced percentages of budgeted need, others impose flat dollar maximums per family or recipient.⁹

In March 1972, only one State, Connecticut, paid an AFDC family an amount sufficient to meet the barest survival needs measured by the official poverty level of \$4,000 per annum for a family of four.¹⁰ And this \$4,000 figure contemplates a diet likely to result in long run malnutrition, allowing only 91 cents per day per person for food. Eleven of the States paid maximum AFDC benefits of less than 50 percent of the minimum poverty level (less than \$167 monthly). Seven other States, for a total of 22, paid \$200 monthly or less. Mississippi computed the minimum needs of a family of four at \$277 monthly and paid that family \$60 per month. Maine computed need at \$349 monthly and paid \$168; in Delaware, the maximum was \$158.¹¹ Families that try to raise their total income through earnings face the frustration of seeing most of their earnings go to the State and Federal Governments in the form of reduced AFDC payments. Income from sources other than employment, including support payments, often result in dollar for dollar reduction in AFDC benefits even though the benefits are less than budgeted need.¹²

The patterns of residence, marital relations, and trading networks described above represent the strategy used by poor black families to survive within these low incomes. Since low AFDC benefits are likely to continue, we may expect that the observed family patterns are unlikely to change. In the next two sections, we point out the importance of considering these family patterns in determining: (A) the appropriate policy with regard to obtaining child support payments from fathers of children receiving AFDC, and (B) the appropriate definition of "family" in income maintenance programs.

A. *Child Support in Perspective*

On the question of support of children, general agreement exists as to two major objectives. There is little disagreement with the objective of achieving for all children adequate financial, social, and affec-

⁷ *Rosado v. Wyman*, 397 U.S. 397 (1970).

⁸ Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *State's Method for Determination of Amount of Grant for an AFDC Family Size of Four* (as of Mar. 31, 1972). Unpublished. Hereafter cited as HEW Survey.

⁹ HEW Survey. See also *Jefferson v. Hackney*, 406 U.S. 535 (1972); *Dandridge v. Williams*, 397 U.S. 471 (1970).

¹⁰ HEW Survey.

¹¹ HEW Survey.

¹² The Social Security Act requires the States to take into consideration in determining need any income or resource of any AFDC recipient, 42 U.S.C. § 602 (7), except for limited income from employment, see text at footnote 18.

tive resources.¹³ Nor is there substantial disagreement with the concept that parents, not the State, should be primarily responsible for the support of their children, or with its corollary, that the objective of providing for children be met with the least possible cost to the taxpayer.¹⁴

It follows from these propositions that the Government should attempt a large scale effort to obtain child support contributions only if the benefits in terms of taxpayer savings outweigh the enforcement costs, and if there is no substantial adverse effect on the resources available to the children involved.

1. EFFECTS ON CHILDREN OF VIGOROUS PURSUIT POLICY

Large scale efforts to seek contributions from nonsupporting fathers would do little or nothing to help dependent AFDC children. Some poor children may even lose previous financial and psychological resources as a result of a policy of vigorous pursuit.

First, whatever the increase in support payments from fathers of children receiving AFDC, nearly all the money would go to State and Federal governments in the form of reduced welfare payments. In 35 of the 50 States, any payment recovered from the father of a welfare child accrues solely to the State, the child receiving nothing.¹⁵ In 20 of these 35 States, the child receives nothing even though the State is paying public assistance benefits which are less than the State's own version of minimum needs. In West Virginia, for example, the standard of need for a family of four is \$265 monthly, but the State only pays \$138. If the father were to contribute or pay \$100 either voluntarily or by court order, the State payment is reduced to \$38, leaving the family with only \$138, still \$127 short of the budgeted figure for minimum subsistence needs. In nine other States, a portion of the father's payment goes to his children and a portion to the State, but the State receives the greater portion in most of these cases. In only seven States would a father's payment go entirely to the child and these States all pay assistance benefits less than budgeted need. Even in these seven States, as with the nine in which the child receives a por-

¹³ The Social Security Act provisions on AFDC stress the provision of "financial assistance and rehabilitation and other services" to dependent children and the importance of providing them with "continuing parental care or protection" and of maintaining and strengthening family life, 42 U.S.C. § 601. State welfare laws often speak in terms of providing sufficient income to protect the health and well-being of children. Judicial decisions abound with expressions such as "... protection of such [dependent] children is the paramount goal of AFDC," *King v. Smith*, 392 U.S. 309, 325 (1968).

¹⁴ Every State requires parents to support their children. A State which requires a biological father to support his legitimate children must also require support of illegitimate children. *Gomez v. Perez*, 93 S. Ct. 872 (1973). The Social Security Act requires the States to develop programs for obtaining support from AFDC fathers. 42 U.S.C. §§ 602 (11) and (17). However, benefits to eligible children cannot be denied even if the mother refuses to identify the father. *Doe v. Swanik*, 332 F. Supp. 61 (N.D., Ill. 1971), *aff'd sub nom Weaver v. Doe*, 404 U.S. 987 (1971).

¹⁵ HEW Survey.

tion of the support payment, the child benefits only to the extent that the public assistance payment plus his share of the father's payment brings the family up to the State's budget of minimum need. Thus, in the seven State group, (assuming a budgeted need of \$300 and a maximum public assistance payment of \$250) if the father pays \$100 support, the children receive only \$50, the other \$50 going to the State. It is therefore more accurate to describe the current situation on payments by AFDC fathers as "State reimbursement payments" rather than the commonly used expression "support payments."

Not only would AFDC children gain little or nothing from a vigorous pursuit of their fathers, but the net effect may be a reduction in the total resources available to the children. The findings of this study indicate that many children could lose the precious financial and psychological resources that absent fathers and their families now provide on an informal and voluntary basis. Stack's findings show that the crucial issue in terms of the resources available to a child is whether the father openly acknowledges the child to be his, thereby bringing the father's kin into the child's domestic network. The actual financial support from the father may be small or nonexistent, and the expectation of such support is low, particularly where the father and mother do not marry. The significant element is the variety of material and psychological resources the child obtains from the father's kin if the father openly accepts the child. These resources cannot be measured in terms of dollars; they include providing child care, feeding the child, providing furniture, sharing clothing which circulates among children in the network, including the child in social and recreational activities. On occasion the father's kin assume complete care of the child. Moreover, a substantial number of AFDC fathers maintain close relationships with their children and play an important parental role in affection and discipline, even though offering no financial support.

The importance of the supportive role of the father's kin must be evaluated in terms of the inadequacy of AFDC payments. The strengthening and expansion of domestic networks is vital to the survival of poor families. A child's network can be doubled in size by inclusion of its father's kin, but this is dependent on the father's acknowledgment of paternity.

A program which actively seeks legal sanctions against low-income black fathers who are not voluntarily contributing to the support of their children is likely to deprive some poor children of sorely needed material, psychological and social support which would otherwise be forthcoming from the father and his kin. We submit that it is a reasonable assumption that some fathers will refuse to acknowledge paternity to reduce the legal harassment that may follow. Because support proceedings against AFDC fathers was virtually nonexistent in Jackson Harbor, Stack could not have discovered actual cases of refusals to acknowledge because of fear of legal entanglements. We have found no reliable data in any other source. We submit that it is reasonable to expect that it will not be long before it is understood in poor black communities that open acknowledgment of paternity increases the speed and certainty of judicial decrees of support. *But whatever a court may decree, the father's determination will prevail as to whether the child receives support from his kin.* A court may or-

der support, but if the father loses his job, no funds will be received by either the child or the State. Even where a father has first accepted a child, his later disaffirmation usually results in a withdrawal of the father's kin from the child's domestic network (except that where close, long term relationships have developed between the child and certain of the father's kin, those kin may remain in the network).

In some cases, the pursuit of low-income fathers to reimburse the State for public assistance payments may result in a loss of additional financial benefits available to a child. A father may not offer regular support but may make occasional gifts of money, or pay some rent in a crisis, or buy the child clothing. Such cash outlays may occur on occasions when the father is able to obtain a job after a period of unemployment. The amounts may appear small to the more affluent, but a gift of \$30 is more than is generally budgeted by welfare authorities for food for a child for an entire month. In many States, small gifts not regularly received are not considered as resources or income and do not reduce the amount of public assistance payment; if technically a resource, they are unlikely to be reported.¹⁶ If a father is saddled with a reimbursement order, the likelihood that he will have the funds or desire to make an additional payment to his child is sharply reduced, if not negated. Public policy should encourage, not discourage, AFDC fathers to give assistance, however small, to their children living on below-subsistence incomes.

Vigorous support programs can have additional negative effects on poor families. Increasing the contributions of a low-income father can hurt the father's current family while not helping his children from a prior union, since the amount taken from the father will generally accrue to the State. Some low-income AFDC fathers are supporting or contributing to the support of children other than their AFDC child, and often living with those non-AFDC children and married to their mother. A division of the father's income to reimburse the State for its AFDC payments to a child by a prior union may result in adding his present family to the welfare roll, or driving that second family deeper into poverty. Or it may be the last straw which leads the already overburdened father, struggling at a thankless job at low pay, to give up the ghost. Gelhorn suggested that the financial return on support actions are achieved at the cost of "later social expenses for institutionalization of the parties, for lawlessness by men whose latent grudges against society are aroused, and for the economic and emotional wounds that may be suffered by the defendant's other family. In short, there are hidden as well as direct costs in collecting these moneys."¹⁷

¹⁶ The prospect of small sums of money received by an AFDC family going unreported to the welfare authorities raises for some the spectre of "welfare cheating," for others the issue of inequalities of administration. We are not referring to families with adequate income of their own committing fraud in its true sense to obtain welfare payments. We are speaking of eligible families living on below-subsistence welfare payments who must utilize every available resource to survive. It is the system which pays a family less than its minimum need, and then attempts to deprive the family of a father's occasional gift, that causes such "irregularities." If the suggestion herein were adopted and the family permitted to retain a father's contribution up to a standard of minimum adequate needs, the "nonreporting" issue would virtually disappear.

¹⁷ Gelhorn, *Children and Families in the Courts of New York City*, 196 (1954).

2. ALTERNATIVES WHICH MAXIMIZE RESOURCES TO POOR CHILDREN

The policy of legal proceedings against large numbers of low-income fathers of AFDC children is potentially harmful to children. But what are the alternatives? In this section, we suggest alternatives largely based on our findings concerning poor black families.

The decision as to whether a nonsupport proceeding should be instituted against the father should turn on whether the action will increase or diminish the totality of resources available to the child. The person best able to make this determination is the mother, not the district attorney or the social worker. Only the mother can measure the value of support available from the father's kin network and the potentiality of its loss if legal action is brought against the father. The mother too is more likely to know or be able to learn whether the father is earning enough on a regular basis to make a legal proceeding worthwhile.

Mothers, of course, must obtain financial benefits for their children if they are to pursue legal remedies voluntarily. As noted above, in most States there is an effective 100 percent tax on support payments from the AFDC father since they accrue entirely to the government.

We propose that the Social Security Act be amended to require that at least two-thirds of child support payments would not be counted as income for purposes of computing a family's AFDC grant. This change would allow welfare families to retain most of the child support money. Given the low level of AFDC benefits and the low income of most AFDC fathers, this proposal would not result in AFDC families with incomes substantially above minimal needs. The proposal applies to support payments the same concepts underlying the work incentive provision currently in effect. The Social Security Act¹⁸ provides that part-time earnings of AFDC children and the first \$30 monthly plus one-third of additional earnings by an AFDC mother may not be treated as income in computing need.

There are of course some cases where the father's income is more than adequate for his own needs and those of relatives he already is supporting voluntarily, and where a refusal of a mother to press for support of children fathered by such a man would be unreasonable. There is no reason why a simple system cannot be developed to collect support from AFDC fathers who are fully employed and perfectly capable of supporting their children. In fact, a model already exists for such a program. In some States, "responsible" adults are required to support their indigent adult relatives. For example, an adult son may be required to contribute to the support of his aged father who is receiving old age assistance. Federal regulations require that the State establish a scale of contributions based on sufficient income to warrant expectation that relatives can contribute to the support of applicants or recipients, "which income scale exceeds a minimum level of living and at least represents a minimum level of adequacy that takes account of the needs and other obligations of the relatives."¹⁹

¹⁸ 42 U.S.C. § 602(a)(8).

¹⁹ 45 C.F.R. § 233.20(a)(3)(vi). Arguably, the language of the regulation makes it applicable to child support as well as support of relatives other than children, but the States generally do not apply any uniform scale to child support payments. Rather, courts set support payments on a case-by-case basis. Changes to reflect fluctuations of income require additional court appearances.

The regulations require that "no request will be made for contribution from relatives whose net cash income is below the income scale." In other words, before support payments are required, the relative must have sufficient income to meet the minimum adequate needs of the relative and those directly dependent upon him.

State plans on file with HEW that set old-age assistance support standards for adults with needy aged parents offer a guide to appropriate income levels and required contributions for AFDC fathers. Some examples from different areas of the country and representing a spectrum of income contribution levels are:

*Contributions required of adult child for support of aged parent*¹

	Monthly income	Monthly contribution required
Ohio:		
Single person.....	² \$221	\$10
Do.....	632	80
With 3 dependents.....	² 440	5
Do.....	632	40
New Jersey:		
Single person.....	² 370	10
Do.....	1,200	380
With 3 dependents.....	² 730	10
Do.....	1,200	138
Virginia (higher income counties):		
Single person.....	² 475	10
Do.....	900	164
With 3 dependents.....	² 724	7
Do.....	900	86
California:		
Single person.....	² 533	10
Do.....	1,333	65
With 3 dependents.....	² 1,333	5

¹ Information supplied by Assistance Payments Administration, Social and Rehabilitation Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

² No contributions required if income is below listed figure.

Realistic income contribution standards would also insure that the Government did not push the father's current family into poverty and onto the welfare rolls in the process of recouping AFDC payments to children from the father's earlier union. They would also result in more fruitful collection efforts against those able to pay and avoid the waste inherent in pursuing low-income fathers with little or no ability to contribute. Realistic income contribution schedules would save endless hours of legal and judicial time since the outcome of legal proceedings would be preordained once paternity is established or acknowledged. The incentive to litigate in the hope of obtaining reduced payments would be eliminated.

3. SAVINGS FOR TAXPAYERS, MYTH OR REALITY?

The question remains as to whether the proposals above would result in any increase in the taxpayers' cost of supporting the welfare program for children. Even if it could be shown that some additional cost to the taxpayer is involved, we submit that it is far outweighed

by the benefits of maximization of resources to the children. If in fact the policies conflict here, our value judgment is clear. But we do not believe there is any such conflict in fact, for it has never been satisfactorily demonstrated that a broad scale of legal proceedings against AFDC fathers will produce any substantial savings for the taxpayer. Certainly no program should be undertaken which threatens the resources of poor children until the burden of proof has been met that the program will achieve some benefit for someone.

Available information from this and other studies on reimbursement payments from AFDC fathers indicates that an enforcement program against the broad population of AFDC fathers will lead to low per capita returns. Although Stack did not undertake a study of employment or income of AFDC fathers in the flats, her observation of the fathers permits an attempt to draw a composite picture of AFDC fathers in the flats. The father would be a young man between 18 and 35, a high school dropout, unskilled or semiskilled worker, unemployed or sporadically employed in low-paying positions. This profile conforms with the statistical information available concerning AFDC fathers and black males living in low-income urban areas. A national survey of AFDC families in 1971²⁰ found that among those fathers whose educational status could be determined, only 27 percent had finished high school.²¹ This rate of graduation is only one-half of the already low graduation rate for all black males in the labor force, age 22 to 34, living in low-income urban areas.²²

Additional evidence on the economic opportunities of black males in low-income areas shows much the same picture. In an analysis of 1970 census statistics for low-income urban areas, the National Urban League found the "real" unemployment rate among all blacks to be 23.8 percent.²³ This real rate includes those officially counted as unemployed and those "discouraged" workers who would accept employment if available but who no longer seek work actively because of repeated inability to find work. Earnings and occupations are other indicators of economic status. Of all black males living in low-income areas, 42 percent earned less than \$6,000.²⁴ Only 25 percent worked in a

²⁰ National Center for Social Statistics, "Findings of the 1971 AFDC Survey" (hereafter National AFDC Survey). Pt. I—"Demographic and Program Characteristics," DHEW Publ. No. (SRS) 72-03756. Pt. II—"Financial Circumstances," DHEW Publ. 72-03757.

²¹ National AFDC Survey, pt. I, table 20.

²² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Population: 1970 Employment Profiles of Selected Low Income Areas*. PHC (3) 1, January 1972 (hereafter Low Income Census), table 2(a).

²³ National Urban League, Inc., *Black Unemployment: A Crisis Situation (1972)*, table 3.

²⁴ Low income census, table H. A "study" by the California State Social Welfare Board, *Final Report of the Task Force on Absent Parent Child Support (1971)* included a tabulation (app. 3(c), item 9) which set forth figures which indicate that 53 percent of absent AFDC fathers whose income is "known" earn more than \$400 monthly. These figures are listed as if they were authorita-

white-collar occupation and only 12 percent worked as craftsmen or foremen.²⁵

The second piece of evidence against the belief that a vigorous pursuit policy would yield taxpayer savings is based on actual experience. The national survey of AFDC families by HEW's National Center for Social Statistics revealed that only 13.3 percent of the absent fathers of AFDC children were making "support" payments in 1971²⁶ and that the total of these payments comprised only 17.6 percent of the total income (including public aid) of the families to which they were contributing.²⁷ The average payment from contributing fathers was \$85 per month but more than half of these fathers contributed less than \$75 monthly.²⁸ These figures of actual payments are probably much higher than collections from an enforcement program against the entire population of AFDC fathers would be. In view of the limited and sporadic nature of enforcement proceedings against AFDC fathers, those actually making reimbursement payments are a select group, likely to represent a more highly paid, regularly employed group than would be found in the overall AFDC absent father population.

There is little data available on whether more widespread support enforcement programs against AFDC fathers would produce substantial income in excess of the costs of the program. The national AFDC survey for 1971 found that the whereabouts of 53 percent of absent AFDC fathers was unknown.²⁹ Whether this reflects actual difficulties in locating fathers or the lack of enforcement procedures is speculative.

Many State officials share the view of Arkansas welfare officials that an intensive program for securing payments "would not be worthwhile because most absent parents did not have the means to support their

five, and only one who reads the entire report discovers a sentence on p. 10 that "The informal study (app. 3) was not designed to meet the criteria for scientific sampling methods, and the size of the sample in relation to the universe is such that the results are not valid for reliable projection." Despite this admission, the California report and recommendations is based largely on the "findings" of the study. The statistics on incomes appear doubtful because they parallel the income figures for all black full-time year-round workers in low-income areas. (Low Income Census, table H.) There is no record, study, or observation that would suggest that incomes of absent AFDC fathers would be the same as the entire population of full-time working black people. In addition, the California statistics appear to have been compiled by asking AFDC mothers what was the income of the absent fathers, hardly an accurate means of obtaining information. Finally more than half of the fathers' incomes in the already inadequate sample were unknown, further rendering the remaining "statistics" useless.

²⁵ Low Income Census, table 5 (a).

²⁶ National AFDC Survey, pt. II, table 62.

²⁷ National AFDC Survey, pt. II, table 54A.

²⁸ National AFDC Survey, pt. II, tables 56 and 62.

²⁹ National AFDC Survey, pt. I, table 16. Thirty-eight percent of all AFDC fathers were unknown, but the computation included fathers in the home (18.7 percent) and fathers known to be dead, institutionalized or in a foreign country (9.1 percent). Therefore, of the absent fathers from whom support is theoretically available, the whereabouts of 53 percent were unknown.

families.”³⁰ In Jackson Harbor, support proceedings against AFDC fathers are rare. On the other hand, in the State of Washington, according to a study by the Comptroller General, reimbursement payments from AFDC fathers were claimed to be five times what State officials claimed were costs of collection.³¹ Whether this ratio, if accurate, is attributable to Washington’s well organized program for collection from AFDC fathers, as the Comptroller General assumed, or whether the ratio was not significantly different from other States is difficult to determine. In most States, responsibility for collection from AFDC fathers is spread among local welfare and law enforcement officials, making an accurate determination of collection cost difficult if not impossible. In Washington a centralized collection agency makes cost determination somewhat more possible, but not entirely accurate, and it appears that the Comptroller General uncritically accepted the cost estimates of State officials. For example, the cost figures used by the Comptroller General cover only the statewide central collections section of the State welfare agency. This section does not appear to employ any attorneys, enforcement proceedings being referred by the collection section to law enforcement officials.³²

No consideration was given to costs of law enforcement agencies in proceedings against AFDC fathers or to the costs of the judicial agencies involved, even though it appears that approximately 40 percent of the cases involved judicial proceedings.³³ These costs will be substantial in any broad experiment. For example, in Jackson Harbor with an AFDC caseload of approximately 500 cases, an attorney was paid \$3,000 per year by the State, supposedly as a fee for bringing support actions against AFDC fathers as well as for performing other legal services for the welfare agency. Computing the time available at the minimum established bar rate, the attorney could devote less than 2 hours per week to the business of the welfare agency.

The findings of the 1971 national AFDC survey sharply challenge the validity of the Comptroller General’s conclusion that “The State of Washington was more successful in collecting child support for AFDC children than were the other States (Arkansas, Iowa, and Pennsylvania) included in our review.” Washington differed from the national average in percent of contributing fathers by only 5.5 percent (18.8 percent to 13.3 percent) and in average contribution by

³⁰ Comptroller General of the United States, *Collection of Child Support Under the Program of Aid to Families With Dependent Children*, 22 (1972) (hereafter cited as Comptroller General’s report). See also Kaplan, *Support From Absent Fathers of Children Receiving ADO*, U.S. Bureau of Public Assistance Report No. 41 (1960). The author of a field survey of support enforcement in Kentucky doubted whether any substantial cost savings would result from a State enforcement program against AFDC fathers, 57 *Ky. L.J.* 228, 255 (1969), but favored such a program if the funds collected were primarily retained by the children, not the State. Under Kentucky practice at the time, 85 percent of AFDC support payments accrued to the State. Further, if a support order was in effect, the State reduced the AFDC payment on the assumption that the required payment would actually be made, so that the children suffered the loss of nonpayment while the State reaped the benefit even if the payment was never made. Gardner, *Maintaining Welfare Families’ Income in Kentucky: A Study of the Relationship Between AFDC Grants and Support Payments From Absent Parents*, 57 *Kentucky Law Journal*, 228 (1969).

³¹ Comptroller General’s report at p. 9.

³² Comptroller General’s report at p. 14.

³³ Comptroller General’s report at p. 17.

only \$3.63 monthly (\$88.52 to \$84.89). Pennsylvania, which appears to follow the usual pattern of limited pursuit of AFDC fathers (and which was criticized by the Comptroller General) does almost as well as Washington, Pennsylvania fathers contributing in 16 percent of the cases an average amount of \$92.88.³⁴

In short, no case has as yet been made that any net benefit would accrue to the taxpayer from laws such as that passed by the Senate in 1972 (but dropped in Conference) making nonsupport a Federal crime in certain cases, or from devoting substantial amounts of public funds to finance a vigorous program of enforcement of current State support laws.

B. Definition of Family

Welfare systems based on a determination of need must have a means of defining an economic unit for the purposes of determining eligibility and the amount to be paid in benefits. Under the AFDC program and many proposals for public assistance programs involving children, the economic unit is defined in terms of a "family", that is, in terms of a grouping of individuals rather than a single person. Such a grouping follows automatically from the inclusion of children. Children are incapable of self-support; hence a determination of their need depends upon a measurement of what is received or available from adults. Second, caring for children may require that one or more adults leave the labor market. The needs of the adult caretaker must then be included in determining needs of the child unless alternative publicly financed day care facilities are available. Third, excluding adults responsible for the care of children from the recipient unit would require a virtually impossible determination of how much of their income is actually available to the children. Otherwise, virtually all children would be eligible since they have no income other than that received from adults. Finally, since cash assistance cannot be paid directly to children, some person (usually the one acting as their caretaker) must be designated as "grantee" of public assistance.

Any attempt to define a "family unit" must, of course, be viewed in light of the purpose for which the definition is sought. For example, the concept of "family" under the Internal Revenue Code differs depending on whether the question is the right to file joint returns, claim allowances for dependents, deduct costs of child care or attribute control of income or property.³⁵ As Klein has noted, family unit at best "may connote a collection of notions of how certain relationships

³⁴ The Comptroller General's report (p. 34) prepared an analysis which concluded that "in Washington the percentage of absent parents making child support payments is significantly higher than that in other States." The basis for this assertion is a sample of only 50 cases out of a total AFDC caseload of 37,840, hardly a statistically valid sample. The national AFDC survey is based on a sample of 1 percent of caseload, seven times as great as that used in the Comptroller General's report. The difference in sampling alone requires a rejection of the impression given by the Comptroller General's report that 43 percent of absent AFDC fathers are making support payments in the light of the finding of only 18.8 percent by the national AFDC survey. The validity of the Comptroller General's sample is further vitiated by the fact that in only 3 cases out of 50 in its sample in Washington was the identity of the father undetermined.

³⁵ See Klein, "Familial Relationships and Economic Well-Being: Family Unit Rules for a Negative Income Tax," 8 *Harv. J. Legis.*, 361, 363 (1971).

(for example, dependency, proximity, consanguinity and responsibility) affect individual economic welfare".³⁶ And these notions may be applicable to one racial, ethnic, or economic group but not for others, whereas the promulgation of a law or regulation generally requires some degree of uniformity. Even within a given cultural group, there will be a wide variety of domestic patterns. Klein points out how even the simplest family grouping, a man and woman who are legally married, present complex variations which may require differing treatment under income maintenance programs.³⁷

The reality of family relationships for many poor black families is a complex domestic network, such as the one traced in section III. However, current welfare law and many welfare reform proposals fail to take account of the implications of these domestic networks on how best to define "family."

The basic definition of family in current welfare law is a mother and her children. This definition was shaped by the provisions of the Social Security Act establishing the AFDC program. The act was enacted in 1935, at the height of the depression, at about the same time as the massive public works program (commonly known as WPA) was instituted. The general theory was that the Government, as employer of last resort, would provide work for every able-bodied male; public assistance would be necessary only in families lacking a male breadwinner. Federally supported public assistance was therefore provided only to adults who were disabled, blind, aged and to families with children in which one parent was either dead, disabled or absent from the home. The "absent father" requirement was thus created and provided strong encouragement for unemployed or underemployed fathers to leave the home of their children so that they might receive AFDC benefits.³⁸ In 1961, Congress finally amended the Social Security Act to permit but not require the States to pay AFDC benefits to families where an unemployed father with a recent history of employment remains in the home,³⁹ but only 23 States and the District of Columbia now pay such benefits. In 30 States, the absent father requirement continues in effect. In these States, the presence of the father in the home renders his children and their mother ineligible for AFDC.

Definition of "family" in AFDC is further limited by a combination of Federal and State laws and regulations which limit eligible recipients to children and their parent or other caretaker, and in special circumstances, to another adult deemed "essential" to the well-being of the child. For example, the State law applicable in Jackson Harbor defines the "family" as a dependent child and his parent, parents, or other relatives standing in loco parentis to him who maintain a home for and provide him with care and supervision. This definition is a far cry from the reality of kin and nonkin who form the active basis of economic and social cooperation for each child. It does not take into account the actual number of people sleeping in or eating in a house-

³⁶ *Ibid.* at 362.

³⁷ *Ibid.* at 373-384.

³⁸ *King v. Smith*, 392 U.S. 309, 327-29 (1968).

³⁹ 42 U.S.C. § 607.

hold, even though they may have no income and are actually sharing the food and housing purchased with public aid funds.⁴⁰

In Jackson Harbor, the number of adults who may be included in budgeting need is limited to two. No adult may be included except parents and their children or a relative or foster parent acting in place of a parent. There is an exception for a relative deemed "essential" to provide care for the child. This is generally applicable only when the mother is incapacitated and unable to provide adequate care for the children or when the mother is working or in a job training program and therefore away from the home. If a household consists of an able-bodied mother and her children and the mother's mother, sister and brother, only the needs of the mother and children would be computed even though the other adults would be sharing the welfare benefits. If a mother and her children move into the household of the mother's mother so that the mother may enter a job training program, the grandmother may be deemed an essential person and included in the welfare budget if she cares for the children but none of the other adults living in the household would be included.

Relatives living with AFDC children may cause a reduction in the amount of welfare payments even though they have no income. In Jackson Harbor, a major part of the welfare budget, averaging about one-third of the total payment (depending on family size), is computed on the basis of rent and utilities. The maximum allowance for rent (excluding utilities) is \$97 per month. The rent maximum itself is unrealistic, even for the substandard housing in which most AFDC recipients live, and particularly for larger families. Nevertheless, if there is a noneligible relative living in the home with AFDC children, in computing AFDC grants, the rent portion of the grant is decreased by the proportion that noneligible relatives bear to the total occupants of the residence. This reduction in benefits is made even though the AFDC family is actually paying more rent than the \$97 allowance and even if the noneligible relatives contribute nothing toward the rent. If a mother and three AFDC children live in the same household with the mother's mother, sister, and brother (making a total of seven) and the rent for the house is \$145, then four-sevenths of \$145, or \$84 would generally be attributable to the AFDC recipients and included in their budget. But in Jackson Harbor, the budget will include only four-sevenths of the \$97 rent maximum, leaving only \$50 budgeted for rent. A similar proration is made for utilities.

The disparity between the reality of families as economic units and the definition of family in laws governing AFDC is a direct result of the truncated categorical nature of AFDC, limiting benefits to parents and children and excluding the working poor. In this one respect, the family assistance plan (FAP), which passed the House of Representatives in the 92d Congress but failed to win Senate approval, adds realism by taking account of sharing of households by relatives. Section 2155 defines "family" as—

⁴⁰The National AFDC Survey, table 11, reported that 34 percent of AFDC families had persons living in the household who were not in the assistance group. Information was not reported as to whether such persons had any income.

“(a) Two or more individuals—

“(1) who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption,

“(2) who are living in a place of residence maintained by one or more of them as his or their own home,

“(3) all of whom are residents of the United States, at least one of whom is either (a) citizen or (b) an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, and

“(4) at least one of whom is a child who is in the care of or dependent upon another of such individuals

“shall be regarded as a family for purposes of this title . . .”

Under this definition, all persons related by blood or marriage and residing in the same household are included within the family for purposes of determining eligibility and benefits. Thus, most, but not all, the persons residing in a household which is part of a domestic network will be included in computing the need of that household.

Unrelated individuals living in the household, even if they have become fictive kin, would continue to be excluded. Also excluded are all members of domestic networks that live outside the household. Problems of definition of family which are probably insoluble appear to preclude any broader grouping than kin by blood or marriage in the same household.

A broader definition of “family,” as provided in FAP, would not necessarily increase assistance payments to the family. Under current law, only contributions actually received by the AFDC group from relatives living in the same household are treated as income of the AFDC group which reduce the grant.⁴¹ This requirement of proof of actual contribution applies even to the husband of the mother of AFDC children by another man.⁴² Since it is virtually impossible to prove the amount actually contributed by relatives unless voluntarily reported, some AFDC recipients receiving financial aid from relatives receive higher benefits than other recipients who report such payments. A broader definition of family would reflect the true income of the group of relatives sharing a household. Since many able-bodied adults will earn more than the increase of the assistance grant attributable to their inclusion in the family unit, the net grant would be decreased.

Our findings indicate that residential patterns among poor urban blacks have a high degree of fluidity. One would expect that recipients will adjust residences to achieve the highest possible benefits. Thus, it is important to consider the impact of program rules on family and household groupings. Enactment of FAP may result in the separation of residential groupings which include children of two mothers. Such separation would result from the fact that FAP per capita benefits decline as the family size increases, benefits to a family with no income being:

\$800 per year for each of the first two family members, plus

\$400 for each of the next three, plus

\$300 for each of the next two, plus

\$200 for the eighth

with the maximum benefit \$3,600. Two sisters living together, each with two children, would receive total FAP benefits of \$3,100. Living

⁴¹ 45 C.F.R. § 203.1.

⁴² *Lewis v. Martin*, 397 U.S. 552 (1970).

separately, they would receive \$2,000 each for a total of \$4,000, an increase in benefits of 29 percent. An offsetting factor might be the loss of economies of larger residential units.

A second possible residential shift would be toward having unemployed or sporadically employed adults attaching themselves to households having related children, because FAP benefits are payable only to households containing children. In the example of the two sisters above, if one sister and her two children move in with her mother and aunt who are under 65 and living alone, the newly formed family unit of five will receive FAP benefits of \$2,800, less any nonexempt income of the mother and aunt. The other sister and her children would receive \$2,000.

In general, benefit schedules that provide equal grants per person will tend to encourage larger household groupings of relatives than schedules whose benefits per person decline with family size.

Despite its improvement over the limited AFDC definition of the benefit unit, FAP still may cause artificial residential shifts because of the exclusion from FAP benefits of households without children. Residential shifts to maximize benefits should be unnecessary. We submit that a national income maintenance program should offer assistance to all needy persons. Once need and the unavailability of employment is established, we see no reason to deny assistance merely because no children reside in the household.

BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURE: MYTHS AND REALITIES

By ANDREW BILLINGSLEY*

SUMMARY

The average black man wants a good job, a good home, good health, and a good education for his children. These are the requisites for a strong and viable family life.

The popular picture of black family life is far removed from reality. Myths concerning black families have been perpetuated because of superficial analysis by social scientists and misleading media coverage.

The first myth is that black families are largely broken families. The fact is that both father and mother bring up the overwhelming majority of black families. In those cases in which one parent is missing, the major cause appears to be economic. Among very poor black families there are large numbers of broken families. Among those black families with earnings of \$7,000 or more nearly 90 percent of the children live with both parents. Thus, black men and women are highly committed to marriage and to stable family life.

A second myth is that there are only two major types of families: (1) two-parent families, made up of a father, mother, and their children; and (2) one-parent or broken families, composed of a mother and her children. The reality is far more complex. Many of the one-parent and two-parent households contain relatives, such as grandparents, uncles, or nephews, friends, or boarders. The large variety of family compositions means that it is too simple to judge the functioning of all single-parent families by looking only at one type of family structure.

A third myth is that low-income black families, especially those headed by women, function poorly in rearing children. Again the facts belie the conventional wisdom. For example, child neglect is far less common among low-income black families than among low-income white families. Furthermore, children from low-income black families perform equally well whether the family head is male or female. Given the severe economic constraints facing poor families, black low-income families function exceedingly well. To do this, most parents need, elicit, and gain the cooperation of other poor families in their neighborhoods. Only a small percentage are in a perpetual state of "dysfunctioning." But even for these families, poverty and discrimination are responsible, rather than any inherent problems of family structure.

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I. MYTHS ABOUT BLACK FAMILIES

Much of the concern about black families in national policy formulations centers on a basic misconception about the structure of family life in the black community and the causes and consequences of family structure. Students of the family, particularly in this country and in Europe, generally consider the nuclear family normal and all other family forms deviant. Moreover, most of these students consider that there are only two major types of families. On the one hand, there is the nuclear family composed of the father, the mother and their children; on the other hand, there is something which is called the broken family or the single-parent family, consisting usually of a mother and her children. The first of these family forms is considered to be functional, and the latter dysfunctional. This is a naive conception of family life in the world. It is not even a correct assessment of American family life generally, and it is grossly incorrect when it comes to an analysis of family in the black community. The structure of black families is a highly complex matter. This is important because to understand the strength and weakness of a given family structure for child rearing and other family functions requires going beyond the simple categories of male head and female head.

The care children receive in nonnuclear black families is another subject that is not well understood. The conventional wisdom is that black families headed by women function poorly in bringing up children. This view is highly inaccurate, as many studies cited in this paper show. The real situation is complex. Through networks of cooperation between families and despite severe economic problems, most poor black families, including those headed by women, function well.

In *Black Families in White America*¹ and in *Children of the Storm*² we have referred to the strong social pathology orientation which governs most of the work done by scholars on black people and on poor people and particularly on black families that are poor. They tend to approach poor black families as if they are a problem and then they proceed to describe this problem and the causes associated with it all within the context of the family and the black community.

It is nearly 9 years since a governmental report concluded that family life in the black community constitutes a "tangle of pathology * * * capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world,"³ and that "at the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source [italic mine] of the weakness of the Negro community at the present time."⁴ This analysis, which placed the responsibility for the difficulties faced by black people on the family unit, was accepted as a key to understanding black people.

¹ Andrew Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

² Andrew Billingsley and Jeanne Giovannoni, *Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, 1972.

³ *The Negro Family: The case for National Action*, Daniel P. Moynihan, Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1965), p. 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Nearly 5 years later, two white social scientists who called themselves "militant integrationists" wrote a book based on their observations during a 9-month sojourn in a black community.⁵ It includes a chapter entitled "The Negro Ghetto Nonfamily," which perpetuates the analysis made so famous by Moynihan but which has been thoroughly discredited by more careful social analyses.⁶ Harry Etzkowitz and Gerald Schaflander state candidly their view of black people:

It is our own belief that there are practically no plusses in Negro ghetto culture. We see nothing but bitterness and despair, nihilism, hopelessness, rootlessness, and all the symptoms of social disintegration in the poor speech, poor hygiene, poor education, and the lack of security resulting from a nonfamily background in which the stabilizing paternal factor is absent and where there is no stable institution to substitute for the family.⁷

They go considerably beyond the Moynihan thesis of disintegrating family life in asserting without qualification "that love, warmth, hygiene, education, and family stability are absent for most Negroes."⁸ They add that "booze, gambling, drugs, and prostitution are the inevitable result of the absence of a stable family institution."⁹

They insist that the line of causation runs from the family to the society. After describing in extremely negative terms what they consider "momism"—represented by "the harassed, cranky, frustrated, churchgoing, overworked mothers who dominate their nonfamilies by driving young children into fierce competition"—these social scientists conclude that "the damage *resulting* [italic added] from this *typical* nonfamily life often leads to young dropouts and unwed mothers, and to crime, violence, alcoholism, and drug addiction."¹⁰

Despite the incorrectness of their analysis of the relationship between black family life and the white society, their views are similar to those held by many persons, including some members of the policy-making bodies of the Nation. The authentication of such views by social science scholarship supported by generous foundation grants serves to perpetuate this erroneous thinking. As a consequence enlightened people are stopped from getting on with the task of analyzing and helping remove the crippling consequences of institutionalized racism that the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* so correctly identifies as the most important cause of the difficulties black people face in this country and the most important cause of their outrage against oppression.

For scholars and policymakers trying to understand family functioning in the black community, the chief limitations of the type of analysis described above lie in the reversal of the cause and effect relationship between the black family and society and in the ignoring of the forces of institutionalized racism. It views that family—or at least black families—as more causal factors in society than products of society. An additional problem is that this type of analysis ignores

⁵ Henry Etzkowitz and Gerald M. Schaflander, *Ghetto Crisis: Riots or Reconciliations?*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1969.

⁶ See, for example, Elizabeth Herzog, *About the Poor: Some Facts and Some Fictions*, Children's Bureau Publication No. 451 (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1967).

⁷ Etzkowitz and Schaflander, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the variety and complexity of black family and black community life while concentrating on its negative features. Such analyses ignore both the existence of a black subculture and the strengths of the black community and the black family that have enabled black people to survive in a hostile environment for more than 300 years. These analyses are not based on the realities and complexities of life in the black community.

Contrary to the generally held views, most black families in most communities of any size meet the American test of stability. Most black families, even those who live in the ghetto, are headed by men. And most of the men are still married to their first wives. Furthermore, many black men and women heading families are employed full time but are still unable to lift their families out of poverty. What we need to know more about is how these families manage. How do they function? How do they meet the needs of their children? My own research, as well as an increasing number of other studies, suggest that black family life—even that of the lower class ghetto family—is much more varied than is generally recognized.

In our research we have found, for example, that the lower class consists of at least three groups rather than one.¹¹ Some lower class black families are managing well both economically and socially; these are the working nonpoor. The vast majority of the black lower class form a middle layer who work, but for poverty wages sometimes less than the official minimum wage (which is itself insufficient to move families out of the Government's official definition of poverty). These are the working poor. Most poor black families fall in this group. The third segment is composed of the relatively large number of families who are economically dependent, termed the underclass or non-working poor.

The complexity of family life in the black community has been emphasized by Ralph Ellison. When asked by a group of young black writers to comment on how they might more truly reflect the complexity of the human condition, using their own experience as a theme, he replied:

If [the black writer] accepts the clichés to the effect that the Negro family is usually a broken family, that it is matriarchal in form and that the mother dominates and castrates the males, if he believes that Negro males are having all of these alleged troubles with their sexuality, or that Harlem is a "Negro ghetto" . . . —well, he'll never see the people of whom he wishes to write. . . .¹²

Ellison's observations are not confined to fictional descriptions of black family life. He continues:

I don't deny that these sociological formulas are drawn from life, but I do deny that they define the complexity of Harlem . . . I simply don't recognize Harlem in them. And I certainly don't recognize the people of Harlem whom I know. Which is by no means to deny the ruggedness of life there, nor the hardship, the poverty, the sordidness, the filth. But there is something else in Harlem, something subjective, willful, and complexly and compellingly human.¹³

Josephine Carson, in a study of the role of black women in the South today, came to a similar conclusion. She found a strong attachment to familism in black communities.

¹¹ Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, pp. 136–142.

¹² "A Very Stern Discipline," interview with Ralph Ellison, *Harper's Magazine* (March 1967), pp. 76–95.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

They are together, the link is not broken. Black is intimate. Whatever the broken family is, one feels unbrokenness here more than brokenness:

My sister . . . My cousin . . . My mother keeps him while I work . . . This is a picture of my son . . . My daddy was a preacher . . . My granddaddy bought my grandma . . . Listen, with a man you has to put up with a heap o' things to stay, like you said you would, till death . . . The chillrun stops by my aunt's till I comes home . . .¹⁴

"There is" she concludes, "a chain of black being."¹⁵ Her description of the black women among whom she lives is quite in contrast to that of Etzkowitz and Schaflander:

The impression left is of a formidable woman: a worker, a believer; one who is patient, enduring, full of wit. A fortress. A matriach by default. Someone had to mother that estranged white South and try to bind the sundered black family. Negro society is no more matriarchal, no more addicted to her healing power than the South itself.¹⁶

Rather than considering black families to be the cause of the poverty they experience, Josephine Carson observes and remarks on the amazing ability of black families to survive and maintain stability in the face of poverty and other overwhelming odds: "Love and family solidarity sometimes survive the siege [of poverty]. In this neighborhood, with all its bitter poverty, the statistics show that only one-third are broken homes. Hard to believe."¹⁷

II. BLACK FAMILIES: THE STABLE MAJORITY

The focus on broken families in social science literature yields a distorted view of black family life. In spite of this public focus, the fact is the overwhelming majority of black families are stable.

The index of stability generally used is the share of families with children in which both parents are present. By this measure, more than two-thirds of black families are stable. Of greater importance is the fact that 92 percent of black families with earnings over \$7,000 are headed by males. The only sizable instability occurs among poor black families.

A full consideration of stability among black families should look beyond the family structure factor. One should recognize the educational advances by black youths that have taken place in the last decades. The share of black 5-year-olds enrolled in school rose from 51 percent to 72 percent between 1960 and 1970. Among 16- and 17-year-olds, the percentage enrolled grew from 77 percent to 86 percent in 1970.

Homeownership is another important measure of stability. By this measure, stability increased in the 1960's, as the share of black families owning their own homes rose from 38 percent to 42 percent. That this is an achievement is clear when one realizes that homeownership among whites increased from 64 percent to 65 percent in this decade. As of 1970, nearly two and a half million black families owned their homes. These families constitute a stable element in the black community that is not generally discussed in studies of black family life.

¹⁴ Josephine Carson, *Silent Voices: The Southern Negro Woman Today*, New York, Delacorta Press, 1969, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

III. THE COMPLEX REALITY OF BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURE

In *Black Families in White America*¹⁸ We have delineated 12 major types of family structures that are very common in the black community today. First, we show that among black families, the nuclear family is by far the most predominant pattern of family life, contrary to what is generally believed outside the black community and as portrayed by social science literature, newspapers, and television. Next, we point out that family structure may take a variety of forms in nonnuclear families.

Nuclear Families

One type of nuclear family is composed of a husband and wife living together in their own house with no children and no relatives present. This type of nuclear family is generally overlooked in the discussion of families in America today, yet it is a very important feature of family life in the black community. There is a large group of husbands and wives who live together and have deliberately decided to have no children. A few have not been able to have children, and some have had children who have died or have grown up and left the family home. There are very important, stable, viable, and generally self-supporting and productive members of the black community. Often both husband and wife work, and often both are very active in social, religious, and community activities. We have referred to this family type as the *incipient* nuclear family. We have estimated that roughly a fifth of all families in the black community are of this type.

A second type of nuclear family is the more traditional kind of nuclear family—a husband and wife and their own children living together in their own house. We have referred to this as a *simple* nuclear family. More than a third of the families in the black community are of this simple nuclear variety.

Still a third type of nuclear family consists of a mother or father, but not both, living with her or his own children in a household with no other relatives or persons present. Commonly referred to as a broken family, this family structure is most often thought about in discussions of family life in the black community. We have pointed out in our own work, however, that this family type, comprising somewhere between a quarter and a third of families in the black community, is in itself a complex and varied set of structures. We have identified ten major subtypes of this family form, which we call the *attenuated* nuclear family. Sometimes they are headed by women, sometimes by men, sometimes by people who are singles, married or divorced, separated or widowed. Each of these differences has an important impact not only on the structure of family life, but its functioning as well. So, even when we discuss these attenuated nuclear families, so-called one-parent families, we are not discussing a single type of family structure. In the black community they are almost never isolated entities. For the patterns of interaction and mutual assistance among family and nonfamily members mean, for instance, that very few of the children of such families are without the interest,

¹⁸ Billingsley, op. cit.

presence, concern, and assistance of both male and female adults and older children.

Extended Families

Robert Hill, in *Strengths of Black Families*,¹⁹ has found that strong kinship bonds characterize black families and that black families much more frequently than white families take other relatives into their household. The extended family is an important historic feature of the black community, which is still present today. The extended family form consists of those families where, in addition to parents and children, other relatives also live with the family.

One may designate three types of extended families in the black community. One type consists of a couple which has no children of its own, but which has other relatives living with it as a permanent feature of the family. Thus, a parent, uncle and aunt, cousin, nephew, or other younger relative may be part of, and with this couple constitute what we call an *incipient* extended family. Commonly, a young couple will care for an older relative as part of an ongoing family responsibility.

A second type, a *simple* extended family, consists of the family where a married couple has its own children and, at the same time, takes in another relative. A third type is the *attenuated* extended family, in which a single parent head living with his or her own children takes in other family members to live with them. When we speak of single-parent families, we are generally not speaking of an isolated instance of a mother and her children, but of a larger, though generally unknown, unappreciated network of family relationships that provide the context for childhood and family in the black community today. Extended familism and the cooperation it represents has saved many black families from the more crippling effects of poverty, and it has enabled many to achieve and maintain middle-income status.

Augmented Families

In addition to the various types of nuclear families and extended families, there is another major category that we have called augmented families. These families consist of those in which, in addition to the primary family members—parents, children, and other relatives—there are nonrelatives who become permanent features of the family. Thus, a boarder, or lodger, or relatively long-term guest often becomes an important feature of family life in the black community today, and these we call augmented families because the primary family members are augmented by a nonrelative who, nevertheless, is an important part of the social context of family life.

As we can readily see, these augmented families also constitute several subtypes. There may be *incipient* augmented families, *simple* augmented families, or *extended* augmented families, and in every black community of any size in the country today, all these varieties of family forms may be found living and working side by side. It may seem to be one whole community of single-parent families to the outsider, or one whole community of two-parent families. In either case,

¹⁹ Hill, op. cit.

it is a misleading conception, for the variety and complexity of family life is masked rather than revealed by these simplistic labels.

The Importance of Social Class

While it is important to note the distinctions of family structure, it is also important to note that these structures are themselves highly related to the social class structure in America. Thus, the greater the economic and educational well-being, and the more community support available to the family, the more likely the family form will approach the simple nuclear type. Among black families where there has been a history of economic security, a high level of education, and a great deal of acceptance in the larger society, family forms approach the simple nuclear form and the incipient nuclear form. Among those families at the bottom of life's resources there is likely to be a higher proportion manifesting the various attenuated forms of family life—whether nuclear, extended, or augmented.

Thus, poor families who have traditionally had very low incomes (with a 1969 income of under \$3,000, a condition which nearly a third of all black families still face) show a high incidence of attenuated family forms. Over half of the families in this income group were attenuated, most often reflecting a female head, but in some cases this means a male head who cares for his children with the help of relatives. If we examine families whose income ranged between \$5,000 and \$7,000 a year in 1969, the incidence of attenuated families falls to about a quarter. In other words, three-quarters of the families in this relatively low-income group had men as family head. Among the relatively high-income group of over \$10,000 a year, the share of black families with male heads increases to over 90 percent.

Family income also influences racial differentials in the share of males heading families. The difference between white families and black families in terms of the incidence of male heads in the \$10,000 and over group is less than 3 percent. But among the low-income group of under \$3,000, the difference between low-income white families and low-income black families is nearly 28 percent.

Thus, social class can be seen to have an important bearing on the structure of family life. The lower the social class, the higher the incidence of attenuated families. The higher the social class, the higher the incidence of simple nuclear families and simple extended families as well as incipient families which have a male head. But it is important also to point out that social class does not itself account for all of the differences. The racial factor is seen in the wide discrepancy between family forms in the low-income black and white communities.

IV. BLACK FAMILIES AND THE CARE OF CHILDREN

The socialization, care, and protection of children constitute a complex of the most important functions of family life. The extent to which black families function adequately in providing food, clothing, and shelter for their children, and protecting them from neglect and abuse, depends heavily on the types of social supports the family receives from the society. It also depends on the position of the family in the social class structure. Thus, working-class families, middle-class

families, and upper-class families in the black community provide a progressively higher level of protection to their children than families in the lower class, and the under class. This is due not so much to the nature of the family structure as to the nature of the resources available to the family to help them care for their children. A husband and father is one, but not the only important figure and function necessary to insure the well-being of children. In the black community particularly, other family members, relatives and friends, neighbors, and other role models often provide some of the screens of opportunity which enable some families to function better than others. Even among the lowest social classes in the black community, families provide better care of their children than white families in similar social circumstances. Black people are not nearly so alienated from their families, their children, or themselves as other people are.

It is not generally appreciated, for example, that child neglect and abuse are much more common in white families than in black families. Child neglect is much more common among lower class white families than among lower class black families. Child abuse is much more likely to occur in white families than in black families who live in similar, or even worse, economic circumstances. In a study of physical neglect and abuse of young children in low-income families in New York State, Leontine Young found that even though black families were overrepresented in the population she sampled (public welfare clients), neglect and abuse were much more prevalent among white families. She found a similar phenomenon in a series of studies she conducted in various cities across the Nation.²⁰

Further, the 1960 U.S. Census reported that although black children were overrepresented in institutions for delinquents, they were underrepresented in institutions for neglected and dependent children; only 8.4 percent of all children in institutions for the dependent and neglected were black, considerably less than their proportion in the population.²¹

A third study was part of my own research. In a randomly selected sample of 40 white and 40 black low-income families headed by women, the researchers found that the physical abuse of children was over twice as common among white mothers as among black mothers; 30 percent of the white mothers but only 13 percent of the black mothers abused their children.²² And in a study of 206 white and 239 black families in public welfare caseloads, it was found that 63 percent of the white families as compared with 43 percent of the black families were found to neglect or abuse their children.²³

Finally, in a study of 371 low-income mothers who delivered babies at San Francisco General Hospital between September and December 1966, it was found that black families were more likely to have taken

²⁰ Leontine R. Young, "The Behavior Syndromes of Parents Who Neglect and Abuse Their Children," doctoral dissertation (Columbia University School of Social Work, 1963).

²¹ U.S. Census of Population, 1960, *Inmates of Institutions*, P.C. (2) 3A, table 8I, p. 44.

²² Barbara Griswold and Andrew Billingsley, "Personality and Social Characteristics of Low-Income Mothers Who Neglect or Abuse Their Children" (unpublished manuscript, 1967).

²³ Andrew Billingsley, "A Study of Child Neglect and Abuse" (unpublished, School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, 1967).

advantage of prenatal care than were low-income white families.²⁴ Thus, 26 percent of the black mothers as compared with 5 percent of the white mothers were in the group that had received the most adequate care.

These data are not to be viewed as evidence that all black families function well in meeting the instrumental needs of their children. Rather, the point to be made is that there is what Robert Coles terms "sinew" in the black family; many unrecognized positive attributes and coping patterns have been generated in order to provide a measure of protection to children, although the coping behavior varies greatly. Many black families function very well indeed, all things considered. For these families, a little bit more money would solve whatever problem they have. Other families do not manage quite so well, and the care they give their children is marginal. Still others seem to be in a constant state of chronic dysfunction, and their children are likely to be grossly neglected.

When Hylan Lewis and his associates analyzed the attitudes and behavior of parental figures in Washington, D.C., they found a high degree of conformity to middle-class norms of child rearing among very low-income black mothers.²⁵ They also found, however, a high degree of vulnerability to "unguided, unplanned influences outside the family,"²⁶ which play an inordinately important role in the socialization of children.

These researchers identified three patterns of family functioning with respect to the adequacy of child-rearing behavior in these low-income families. One group of parents not only showed great concern for their children's health, education, and welfare but also behaved in such a manner as to assure the care and protection of their children. They were adequate parents. Lewis writes, "Working with what they have, [these adequate parents] show high 'copability,' self-reliance, and self-respect."²⁷

A second group of parents also had great concern for the welfare of their children, but they seemed unable to behave appropriately; their verbalized concern was accompanied by behavior that was inconsistent with their stated goals. These parents tended to be highly self-centered and demanding; they seemed to love their children, but they could not view them as individuals in their own right. The children were in constant danger of being neglected.

A third group of parents seemed unconcerned for the welfare of their children, and their patterns of behavior toward and on behalf of the children were dysfunctional. The result was the classic picture of child neglect; the children were undernourished, their physical ailments were untreated, and they were exposed to violence, harsh treatment, and arbitrary punishment. The parents tended to use their children as scapegoats for the frustrations they experienced in their

²⁴ Jeanne Giovannoni and Andrew Billingsley, "Social Determinants Affecting Prenatal and Well-Baby Care," paper presented to Western Society for Pediatric Research, Los Angeles, California, 1967.

²⁵ Hylan Lewis, *Culture, Class, and Poverty*, three papers from the Child Rearing Study of Low-Income District of Columbia Families (CROSSTELL), sponsored by the Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, Washington, D.C., February 1967.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

own lives. Dependent and lacking in self-confidence, self-reliance, or self-esteem, these parents seemed to resent their children's dependence on them.

A study made by Joan Gordon and her associates of low-income black families in central Harlem also supports the view that some of these families function amazingly well, others function marginally well, and others are characterized by inadequate social functioning.²³ This study also suggests some of the factors that make the difference: when the forces of the larger society fail these families, many of them are able to call upon the resources of their neighbors and their relatives to support the expressive functions of family life and to enable them to meet the needs of the children. These are rich resources for the very survival of many poor black families in a hostile society.

In her study Dr. Gordon used black interviewers to conduct intensive interviews with black mothers, most of whom were recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Although a great deal of attention has been focused on the presumed disorganization, estrangement, and alienation to be found in low-income black families in the ghetto, this study did not find these phenomena but rather several levels of social integration. Sixteen of the 46 mothers were considered to be highly integrated into the neighborhood system. Their behavior included helping each other in time of trouble, helping each other in time of illness, minding each other's children, and lending and borrowing food, money, and clothes. These highly integrated mothers also exchanged information with each other about the best place to shop, how to raise children, problems on the block, and problems with the public welfare department. Twelve of the mothers were considered to be moderately well integrated; they were involved in at least two of the four areas of mutual aid and at least two of the four areas of information exchange. Thus, almost two-thirds of the mothers were involved in a network of informal relations with their neighbors. The authors found a similar patterning with respect to kinship ties.

The researchers had not expected to find such a high level of group cohesion. "It is remarkable," they concluded, "* * * that given how little they have in the way of income or material resources and how beset they are with problems, so many, nevertheless, share what they have and try to help in critical times."²⁹ Fifteen of the 46 mothers did, however, reveal the classical picture of isolation and estrangement: they gave and received no aid or information.

In the area of child rearing, the researchers examined three dimensions of attitude and behavior: (1) the mothers' behavior, knowledge, and standards with respect to the education of their children; (2) the mothers' attitudes about selected child-rearing items; and (3) the mothers' preferences for child care arrangements. Again, the research found no support for the claim of universal ignorance, apathy, and absence of standards in the area of child rearing.

Thus, among the nonworking poor, family functioning, even among those attenuated nuclear families with the lowest incomes in the urban black ghetto, is far from uniform. Many families are given by their

²³ Joan Gordon, *The Poor of Harlem: Social Functioning in the Underclass*, a report to the Welfare Administration (Office of the Mayor, Interdepartmental Neighborhood Service Center, New York, 1965).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

immediate society, their neighbors, and their relatives the resources that enable them to do an amazingly good job in caring for their children. Others are given fewer of these resources. And still other families seem to have been utterly deserted, so that both the families and the wider society suffer the consequences.

Surely one of the most important resources for the care and protection of children is the presence of "a man in the house." Most studies of low-income black families are focused almost exclusively on the mother as a source of data and also as an object of analysis, in spite of the fact that most black families are headed by men. In 1966 R. C. Stone and F. T. Schlamp reported to the California State Department of Social Welfare on their study of 1,200 intact low-income families, 316 of which were black.³⁰ The study comprised families supported by AFDC and other low-income families who were self-supporting. The comments that follow are based on the findings concerning the role relations in the 316 black families with male heads.

TABLE 1.—*Family division of labor*¹

Kind of task	Usual performers (in percent)			
	Wife only	Husband only	Husband-wife jointly	Husband-wife plus others
Household:				
Laundry.....	59.8	3.4	18.4	18.4
Cooking.....	59.5	0	22.6	17.9
Dishes.....	38.6	1.2	14.5	45.7
Cleaning.....	33.7	2.4	20.9	43.0
Shopping.....	27.7	7.3	57.8	7.2
Child care:				
Child care.....	37.0	0	40.7	22.3
Child discipline.....	22.6	3.6	67.8	6.0
Child outings.....	18.8	2.5	68.7	10.0
Help with schoolwork.....	34.9	12.7	39.7	12.7
Control over spending money.....	36.9	14.3	47.6	1.2

¹ Ibid.

The division of labor for selected households and child-rearing tasks in the black families studied by Stone and Schlamp is shown in table 1. The family division of labor falls into a variety of patterns. Husbands are more likely to help their wives with child care tasks than household chores. In more than two-thirds of these families, the husband and wife are jointly active in disciplining the children and taking them on outings. And in two-fifths of the families there is joint participation in basic child care and in helping the children with schoolwork.

But having a man in the house is not always an unmixed blessing for the children who need care and the other family members who must provide that care. David Schulz, in a study of five families in a public housing project, found three different patterns of rela-

³⁰ R. C. Stone and F. T. Schlamp, *Family Life Styles Below the Poverty Line*, report to the State Social Welfare Board for Social Science Research (San Francisco State College, San Francisco, Calif., 1966).

tionships the fathers maintained to meet the instrumental needs of their families and children.³¹ One pattern he termed the indiscreet free man, a pattern in which the father shared openly his personal, financial, and other resources with one or more families outside his main household. He observed: "Such a father's interests reverberate upon his children, creating an intensified kind of sibling rivalry with his 'outside' children, who, in some instances, are known personally by his legitimate children. Life within such families is thus one of constant conflict and bickering."³² The second pattern, the discreet free man, is a relationship in which the father also has outside family responsibilities, but they are secondary and are not used to antagonize his wife and children. The third pattern is the traditional monogamous one in which the man's "home and family are his major concerns and receive his constant attention."³³ Since the study sample consisted of only five families, it is difficult to be sure that these three patterns are the only ones that characterize black fathers' relationships with their families.

Camille Jeffers spent 15 months studying child rearing and family life in a low-income housing project composed primarily of black families.³⁴ Her study provides further examples of patterns in family functioning and in child rearing in the black community. Her overall findings were much more positive than those of many observers who have spent briefer periods of time making their studies and have used more formal techniques of observation:

"My impressions after 15 months," she observes, "were that the overwhelming majority of parents cared deeply about, and were concerned about, the welfare of their children. Their concern took many forms and had many dimensions. Concern about children might be focused on attempting to obtain the basic necessities of life for them. . . . There was seldom total absence of concern about a child or children on the part of parents."³⁵

The three major patterns of family life she found were reflected in the well-being of the children. One group of families held themselves aloof from the other families in the housing project. Their reference group was made up of people who lived outside the project, and they aspired to be upwardly mobile. Usually, the husband had a secure job. They were more likely than other families to control the size of the family, and the children were generally well cared for. A second group consisted of families not unlike the first group in their orientation toward the children, but they were interdependent with other families in the project. In these families the husband's employment ranged from very stable to very unstable. Life was a bit more precarious for these families, but they maintained a considerable degree of control over the children. In a third group of families, income was uncertain and jobs unstable; money was constantly in short supply. These parents spent most of their time in the housing project; yet the children had more freedom of move-

³¹ David A. Schulz, *Coming Up Black: Patterns of Ghetto Socialization*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁴ Camille Jeffers, *Living Poor: A Participant Observer Study of Choices and Priorities*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1967.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

ment than those in other families and were less closely supervised:

As early as their second or third years, children from this third group of parents could be seen outside playing alone without adult supervision but, supposedly, under the watchful eye of a brother or a sister not much older than themselves.³⁶

This research also underscored the importance of mutual-aid relations with friends, relatives, and neighbors as a resource for child care:

It was impressive to see how quickly some mothers could parcel out their children and just as impressive to see the way some neighbors would rise to the occasion when such demands were made. . . . Some mothers had three or four persons upon whom they could call in an emergency to care for their children.³⁷

Thus, a series of careful and sensitive studies of family life in the low-income black community lends support to the theoretical perspective advanced at the beginning of this paper. Even in the black underclass, family life is considerably more varied than many of the negative generalizations made by well-meaning social scientists would suggest. Furthermore, these studies lift the veil from the mystery of why some families function better than others. Three patterns of family functioning have been identified. Some families manage well to hold themselves together and to meet the children's needs. Others function marginally, and the children are constantly on the verge of difficulty. Still other families are involved in an almost perpetual state of dysfunctioning. And it is the children of these families who are most likely to suffer the scars of racism, poverty, and family disruption.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE IN THE WORKING CLASS

By MARC FRIED and ELLEN FITZGERALD*

SUMMARY

Although there is widespread recognition of economic, social, and political inequalities in the United States, these are generally regarded as highly specific and readily modified. The debilities associated with poverty, minority status, aging, unemployment, and numerous other particular situations or characteristics are often conceived as the core problems. But these are not isolated characteristics or random events, nor do they fully reflect the wide range of inequalities in our own and in other industrial societies. The full scope of inequality as it is manifest in persistent differences in opportunity and in competitive positions for the entire set of societal rewards can only be adequately formulated as a social class structure.

The social class structures of advanced, technological societies are more complex, more varied, and often more subtle than those in early industrial or preindustrial societies. Because of evident opportunities for social mobility, moderate standards of living at all but the lowest levels, and many cultural and social experiences common to all people, there is less overt consciousness of class throughout all levels of the society. But the realistic opportunities for social mobility are, in fact, quite severely limited. And there are vast differences in standards of living even if we can boast of a chicken in (almost) every pot. Substantial variations in cultural and social experience and behavior also are associated with social class inequalities.

For most purposes, we can refer to the large segment of the population in the lower statuses as working class even though this includes, on the one hand, many people who do not or cannot work and, on the other hand, some workers whose incomes and standards of living place them beyond any traditional blue-collar work force. A broad definition of the working class includes approximately half the population of the United States. While such a definition is useful for delineating the sharpest divisions of status, opportunity, and competitive position, there are wide variations within this broadly defined segment of the people. For the most advantaged workers, white, male, married blue-collar craftsmen and operatives, median individual income was \$8,025 per year in 1969. But these men are the elite of the working class and their moderate job incomes are often supplemented by the incomes of

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their wives. Few other categories of workers fare nearly as well. Moreover people of lower occupational status most readily lose their jobs during cutbacks in employment. These problems are exacerbated for those who are black, new entrants into the labor market, or close to retirement age. Extensive correlations between parental status, own education, occupation, income, employment stability, job characteristics, and rates of social mobility reveal a pattern that can meaningfully be described as "them as has, gits." This holds across virtually all the lines of social class differences and is evident even among the subgroups within the working class.

Regardless of the frustration and discouragement implicit in these conditions, most people in our society have enormously high levels of tolerance. Thus, at a superficial level, most workers reveal a relatively high rate of job satisfaction. If the issue is pressed further, the dissatisfaction and hopelessness become more evident and certainly account for the large number of low-status workers who see nothing in the job other than earning a living. The absence of meaningful work opportunities and the general sense of class discrimination in social experience give particularly great significance to family and community, the relatively class-homogeneous micro-environments of working-class life.

Family life, of course, is important for people in all social class positions. For working-class people, with fewer options and resources available, family life often absorbs a very large part of the social investments that people make. At the same time, the crises and deprivations that often affect the lives of working-class people more readily undermine the potentialities of family life as a basic source of personal security and satisfaction. This is particularly true for those of lowest status, for whom strain and deprivation are most severe. It is among this group that actual disruption of the family unit is most likely to occur.

Inevitably, the material basis of family life is a more evident, self-conscious issue for working-class than for middle-class people. Most working-class people are acutely aware of the importance of minimal financial security for marital stability. And, taking less for granted, they are also very sensitive to the significance for family life of the concrete activities and interactions involved in household and family activities. However, most people at all status levels expect more from marriage than the fulfillment of material needs or the availability of household resources. A sense of mutual interdependence in marriage is essential for effective functioning whether it is reflected in reciprocity in meeting household responsibilities, gratifying one another's sexual and social needs, or sharing a sense of personal intimacy and companionship. However, the forms of mutuality tend to differ by social class position. For people in the working class, the sphere of household decisions and tasks provides a major opportunity for reciprocity. Young working-class husbands may participate somewhat less actively in these household functions than their middle-class age peers but the majority of working-class men fill many household responsibilities. Other marital role relationships, like joint social activities or companionship in marriage, occur less often in working-class families than in the middle class. Economic forces, other practical restrictions,

and different cultural orientations are all involved in these class differences.

Another feature of the micro-environment that is often of great importance to working-class people is the local neighborhood or community. Sometimes the community serves to supplement family life, sometimes it offers an alternative form of security and satisfaction. Its importance, however, stems largely from some of the same forces that influence the struggle for meaning among lower status populations in other spheres: exclusion from the larger society, the feeling of dispensability in the occupational world, the limited range of options.

Localism is a major attribute of working-class community behavior. Localism implies a coincidence of physical and social space, an emphasis on maintaining social interaction and on meeting routine needs within a relatively circumscribed residential area. The closeness of working-class neighborhood life is facilitated by the fact that the same persons are in contact with one another in a wide variety of different activities and local places. These extensive associations, in turn, lead to various forms of mutual assistance. Indeed, a feeling of the availability of neighbors in case of need and their willingness to help is crucial for effective community functioning in stable, working-class neighborhoods. That needs for help arise more often in lower-status areas makes this form of reciprocal expectation extremely functional.

Unfortunately, at the lowest levels of working-class status, even the possibility of stable, meaningful residential experience is often undermined. Extreme conditions of poverty, discrimination, residential instability, large-scale immigration, threats to the continued existence of an area, and other sources of precarious individual or group situations can make serious inroads on the stability and cohesiveness of the community. This is particularly apparent when several of these conditions exist simultaneously, as is often the case. These situations attract widespread attention, particularly when they are associated with a host of visible social problems that lead to "blaming the victim" rather than the conditions of victimization. However, these relatively disorganized conditions are atypical for working-class residential areas. Even in communities beset with social problems, the organization of neighborhood life frequently contains these problems and partially mitigates their disorganizing effects. Typically, the local neighborhood provides a highly stable, friendly, and responsive environment. In the face of the uncertainties and perils of working-class life in our society, such neighborhoods provide a micro-environment which offers a sense of self-esteem and a feeling of being a participant in a meaningful human community.

CONDITIONS OF WORKING-CLASS LIFE

Americans are generally reluctant to give much attention to social class differences in our society, almost as if naming the differences among people in status and prerogatives would itself create a social class structure. Yet the existence of status differences in the United States is widely recognized, overtly or covertly. Apart from the striking contrasts of poverty and affluence there are numerous variations in competitive positions for jobs, housing, education and access to

financial resources linked to social class status. At times distinctions by social class are less evident, when they are concealed by references to ethnic or minority group status, or when they appear in differences in opportunities for health care and other services and social experiences.

Despite these phenomena, there is a marked tendency to cling to the image of an open society, with almost unlimited access to all, and with great freedom for enterprise dependent only on the motivation and determination of the individual. But it becomes increasingly evident with each decade that while social mobility is widespread in all of the industrial democracies, its consequences are extremely limited. Opportunities for mobility are restricted and mainly due to structural changes in the economy. Moreover, they generally result in relatively small and insecure improvements in position. The organization of economic and political power in our society has drastically diminished the meaning of "free enterprise" as an accurate designation of the dynamics of social, political, or economic life in the United States. Similar forms of stabilization of social class patterns, moreover, appear to have developed in all modern, mass societies, whether their political structures and ideologies are conceived as capitalist, socialist, or communist. Highly structured social class systems are fundamental facts of life in advanced, industrial societies.

Despite the development of universal suffrage and the emergence of legislation to insure some of the rudiments of political democracy, there has been no serious reduction of social class differences in the United States but only a change in the form of the social class system. While social class differences are initially products of discriminatory differences in rewards and opportunities within the society as a whole, they gradually become embedded within cultural orientations, patterns of social relationships, and even personality. These different manifestations of social class position tend to reinforce one another, and help to perpetuate social class distinctions.

However, in describing working-class families, we must recognize both the reality of differences linked to social class position and more general social influences that penetrate into all social class levels in modern societies. Moreover, gradations between different social class positions in a complex society are subtle, and so many other factors influence behavior that few families will typify their social class in all respects. Differences in income, in education, in family background, in ethnic origins, in neighborhood and region of the country are all bound to create variations among people living at the same social class level. Marked differences in experience or situation, such as those associated with poverty or minority group status, are particularly likely to lead to variations in functioning.

Although the term "working class" is itself elusive and can be given a variety of different definitions, it is a more useful, comprehensive idea than more popular references to poverty or minority group status. Certainly poverty and minority group status designate very concrete situations of restriction or discrimination and imply many limitations of opportunity and experience. But poverty may derive from many different circumstances which are themselves as significant as the vivid fact of poverty. And the behavior of the poor is, to a very large degree, best understood as a response to severe economic deprivation among

working-class people. Similarly, minority status entails specific experiences of exclusion and restriction, but the specific response to these experiences, as well as more general patterns of functioning, is dominated by the social class positions of the individuals involved. Terms like "poor families" or "black families" create an impression of homogeneity that does not exist while the conception of a "working-class family," although oversimplified, leads to consistency in empirical findings and to theoretical clarification of causal patterns.

One of the more familiar ways of distinguishing the working class from people in other social positions is by occupation. The most familiar distinction is that between blue-collar and white-collar workers. Apart from agricultural workers, who are only a small minority in this country, almost half of the whites in the labor force (44 percent) and the majority of blacks in the labor force (66 percent) are blue-collar workers. This definition includes the U.S. Census categories of craftsmen, operatives, service workers (other than household) and nonfarm laborers.¹

Looked at another way, in 1970 there were 14.3 million white families and almost 1½ million nonwhite families headed by men employed as craftsmen or operatives.² This included over a third of all husband-wife households in the United States. Moreover, a very large proportion of white-collar workers (many of them women) are employed in low-status, routine jobs that properly qualify as working-class positions. Inclusion of families headed by household service workers, by low-status white-collar workers, and by individuals who are not in the labor force because they are unemployed and have been unable to find stable employment would expand these numbers and proportions considerably. At the other extreme, there are a large number of blue-collar workers whose wages and security, if nothing else, place them at the upper margins of the working class and might, in fact, qualify them for lower levels of middle-class status.³ Thus, in speaking of the working-class in reasonably broad terms, we include approximately half the families in the United States.⁴

During the past century, many changes have taken place in the structure of the working class in the United States and in the conditions of working-class life, changes that serve to define the modern, industrial class system of advanced, technological societies. In absolute terms, there has been considerable progress for working-class people, particularly since the beginning of the century. Some of this progress has been a direct consequence of changes in the occupational structure associated with technological development. Thus, in 1910 approximately 50.6 percent of the industrial labor force in the United States were classified as semiskilled and unskilled laborers. By 1967, the size of these categories had been reduced to only 37.8 percent of the labor force. Concomitantly, the categories of professionals, managers, officials, and proprietors grew from 11 percent to 23.7 percent of the labor force during the same period of time. Similarly the proportions of the population living at poverty levels has declined considerably since the early decades of this century.⁵

¹ Ginzberg, 1971.

² Miller, 1971.

³ Fried, to be published.

⁴ Ginzberg, 1971.

⁵ Fried, 1973.

During this same period, there have been improvements in conditions of work and of worker security as a result both of legislative controls and of union-management contracts and agreements. A comparison over a shorter time period reveals that in the past decade, income (in constant dollars) has increased by a fourth for white, male heads of families who are craftsmen or operatives and by more than two-fifths for nonwhite heads of families in the same occupational positions.⁶ For the past few years, however, much of this gain in income has been wiped out by higher and more regressive taxes.⁷ Another important change in the character of the labor force is the persistent rise in educational level of the population as a whole, a change that is particularly evident for low-status people. Even during the past 10 years, further gains in the proportions of the population completing high school and attending college have been recorded although these gains have begun to level off.⁸

When we turn from the evidence of absolute changes in education, occupation, or income to the significance of these changes for the American labor force, or to the relative positions of people at different social class levels, progress is less striking. Advances in educational levels seem to have outrun the structural changes in our society that could provide equivalent increases in occupational opportunities. As the educational level of the population increases, so do educational requirements for jobs. Since this is largely independent of changes in the actual demands of different jobs or of relative rewards, it creates the phenomenon known as "credentialism" in which education provides access to a given position without regard for any intrinsic need for that greater degree of educational achievement. In itself, this is a potential source of strain and creates pressures for social change that are frequently frustrated by the minimal influence of workers on the organization of work. Certainly it is clear that, in view of the fact that educational gains have outdistanced occupational gains, there are smaller rewards for greater investments for the majority of people in the labor force.

It is also a matter of considerable importance that, despite the absolute gains in income levels and standards of living of the American population since earlier in the century, the relative shares of income received by the lowest-income groups have remained almost unchanged for virtually half a century and possibly longer than that.⁹ In 1929, prior to the Great Depression, 20 percent of the population at the bottom of the income scale received approximately 4 percent of the total national income. Despite all the apparent change of the following decades, by 1965 the lowest 20 percent were still receiving only 5 percent of the national income. At the other extreme, the enormous incomes of the very few at the top of the income pyramid (the top 5 percent) declined during these same decades. But the very large incomes of those just below them in income level (the remaining 15 percent of the top 20 percent) rose by 3 percentage points to give them a greater relative share of the national income in 1965 than in 1929.

⁶ Miller, 1971.

⁷ Netzer, 1971.

⁸ Miller, 1971; Spady, 1967.

⁹ Fried, 1973; Haley, 1971; Miller, 1966. See also Kolko, 1962, who carries an equivalent analysis back to 1910, based on estimates to fill ambiguities and gaps in the data.

What is most startling about the comparison of income shares since 1929 is that the loss of incomes among that very small segment at the very top filtered down almost in decreasing proportions to groups who were successively lower on the income scale. Thus, the increase in the national income since 1929 was about as inequitably distributed as the initial, inequitable distribution of incomes. Indeed, the vast increase in social security benefits, in unemployment insurance, and in direct transfer payments to poor families has only served to maintain stability rather than to bring about any restructuring in the income shares of the population. It is this stability in the inequality of rewards, in spite of the absolute advance in levels of living, that gives to social differences the character of a social class structure.

ECONOMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL VARIATIONS IN THE WORKING CLASS

Within the working class there is wide variation from substantial deprivation and discrimination experienced by the least fortunate members of the working class to the relative affluence of some of the most highly skilled workers. Certainly it is the case that there are large differences in incomes among blue-collar workers. The variation within the blue-collar and the lower-white-collar occupational categories is greater than the differences in average income between them.¹⁰

Median individual income in 1969 for white, male, married craftsmen and operatives was \$8,025 per year.¹¹ Clearly white, male, married blue-collar craftsmen and operatives are among the most advantaged wage-earners in blue-collar categories. Thus, about a third of those in this more advantaged group (34 percent) had decent, moderate family incomes of \$12,000 or more. Almost as many (28 percent) had marginal incomes of \$8,000 a year or less, barely enough to support a family of four in urban areas. And the remainder had family earnings between \$8,000 and \$12,000 a year. However, the enormous increase in secondary workers, particularly among the wives of moderate income workers, contributed substantially to these levels of family income among the more fortunate blue-collar workers.

On the average, other blue-collar workers earned considerably less. Nonwhite craftsmen and operatives, male and married, had median individual incomes of only \$5,979, a difference of more than \$2,000 per year compared with equivalent white workers. Despite the substantial advances in income among nonwhite workers during the past decade, their median incomes were below those of white, male, married workers in the lower category of service workers and laborers. Women are also treated as a minority status group with respect to wages and salaries. The earnings of married women provide a welcome supplement to family incomes, and undoubtedly account for a large part of the increase in real incomes among families of moderate status over the last few decades. But problems of women workers in obtaining adequate compensation for work are extreme. A recent comparison indicated that three-quarters of the female heads of household who were employed full time earned below \$5,000, while only one-quarter of the male blue-collar workers received equally low full-time wages.¹²

¹⁰ Gordon, 1972; Rutzick, 1965.

¹¹ Miller, 1971.

¹² Ginzberg, 1971.

These comparisons omit any special consideration of those people, mostly of working-class status, whose positions are most seriously marginal and whose earnings are even more limited. Among these are elderly, disabled, irregular, or part-time male blue-collar workers and the many unemployed or partially employed women who are heads of households. Even when employed, these workers have the greatest difficulty in obtaining decent wages but, to make matters worse, they are in the poorest competitive position in the labor market and are likely to be the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Serious problems of poverty are widespread among them.¹³

One of the most serious and consequential aspects of social class differences lies in the fact that a vast array of differences in access to rewards, resources, prerogatives, and opportunities is highly correlated with such differences in occupational rank and actual incomes. Thus, for a great many low-status workers, problems of inadequate earnings are compounded by a host of other experiences of deficit and limitation. These differences, as well as sheer differences in income, define the enormous variations in life chances within the working class and between the working class and higher status groups.

Distinctions according to social class position begin to affect the future chances of individuals quite early in life. There is considerable documentation, for example, that parental educational and occupational achievements are the most important determinants of subsequent educational and occupational achievements of their children.¹⁴ While the dynamics of this process of social transmission may be complex, differences in quality of schooling, in encouragement by the schools, and in realistic expectations of the future have been implicated as potent influences.¹⁵ Each step, moreover, creates either limitations or opportunities for further development. Once the educational trajectory has been set, it defines a relatively narrow range within which people are likely to obtain their first jobs. And once people have started to work, future occupational decisions are even more thoroughly circumscribed. Thus, it becomes quite evident that, not only are the benefits of social mobility severely restricted, but they occur mainly through educational experiences. Nor is there substantial evidence, despite frequent claims and widespread beliefs, that these educational advances accrue primarily as a result of initial differences in ability.

Many work experiences and conditions also differentially affect workers of different status levels. Despite the experience of the recent recession which revealed some contrary tendencies, unemployment more frequently affects the lowest-status workers. In part this is due to the fact that these positions are the most dispensable. In addition, prior

¹³ In a recent study of lower-status residents in two neighborhoods in Boston, one predominantly black and one predominantly white, income was so much lower for the women-headed than for the male-headed families that there was little overlap between them (Fitzgerald, unpublished data). It is hardly surprising that female-headed families on welfare were extremely poor but even among those who worked, few could earn as much as \$4,800 a year. For most of these families, gainful employment produced limited improvement but did not raise them out of poverty.

¹⁴ Blau and Duncan, 1967; Coleman et al., 1966; Fried, 1973; Fried et al 1971.

¹⁵ See, for example: Becker, 1961; Caro and Pihlblad, 1964; Sexton, 1961; Spady, 1967.

job stability leads to seniority rights which, in turn, result in greater stability of employment. Given a situation of widespread unemployment, moreover, workers at lower status levels are likely to suffer further disadvantages due to less adequate coverage by social security and by unemployment insurance, to less widespread coverage by health insurance, to poor access to loans and other financial benefits. Certainly these workers are less likely either to have savings to tide them over, or to have kin and friends on whose hospitality they can rely. Other forms of disadvantage may further exacerbate status differentials.¹⁶

Two particular features associated with working-class situations and experiences deserve special attention, since they seem to dominate many behaviors and attitudes; insecurity and powerlessness. In a world that is seen as uncertain, powerful, and often threatening, and within an occupational system that offers only limited rewards, a sense of insecurity and feelings of powerlessness create a precarious life space.¹⁷ And it is this view of the larger society as a precarious life space that gives unique importance to the microenvironments consisting of family, community, and peer relationships. Certainly the quality of family and community life and of friendships and social relationships is of profound importance to most human beings. But at higher status levels there are alternative sources of security and satisfaction while at lower status levels these are among the only reliable resources.

During the last decade organizations have arisen that represent the poorest members of the population in their differences with and demands from the power of government, providing a countervailing power. But great masses of the underprivileged take their powerlessness so much for granted that they give minimal support to these efforts. In similar fashion, although for somewhat different reasons, the very organizations that most directly serve the stable working class like labor unions have never entirely succeeded in attaining a highly motivated, supportive membership except for specific purposes of affirming economic demands. One must wonder whether there is not an important feeling that, apart from demands for wages and work conditions, the unions have not reflected the desires or offered the relevant solutions to the needs of their membership in the world of work.

THE MEANING OF WORK

One of the more paradoxical findings in studies of worker experiences on the job is the relatively high rate of general satisfaction regardless of status.¹⁸ While there is some decline in work satisfaction with decreasing occupational status, it is not nearly so marked as one might

¹⁶ For example, the evidence of one recent study indicated that black respondents more often received welfare benefits than did white respondents. But this was almost compensated by the greater frequency of other forms of direct and indirect transfer payments among the white subgroup (for example, social security benefits, disability insurance, Veterans' Administration benefits). (Fitzgerald, unpublished data.)

¹⁷ Brown, 1965; Fitzgerald, 1963, 1971; Fried, 1973; Komarovsky, 1964; Lewis, 1961, 1966; Liebow, 1967; Orwell, 1933; Rainwater, 1970.

¹⁸ For some reviews and analysis of these studies, see Fried, 1966, to be published; Goodwin, 1972; Gurin et al., 1960; Kornhauser, 1965; Morse and Weiss, 1955.

anticipate in view of the differences in opportunities for satisfaction at work. However, if the issue is examined more closely, it becomes evident that there are wide variations in the sources of satisfaction. At lower-status levels, people expect relatively little from a job and, as a consequence, these minimal expectations are likely to be met. Their major sources of satisfaction lie in simply earning a living, in supporting their families, or in the opportunity for camaraderie with fellow workers. The price of ambition, for many blue-collar workers, is dissatisfaction since these ambitions are not likely to be fulfilled. There is considerable reluctance, even among blue-collar workers of highly skilled status and relatively high incomes, to accept opportunities for supervisory positions since this would imply losing their one major source of security in the association with fellow workers. But those blue-collar workers whose positions involve some opportunities for coping with challenge are much more highly satisfied and reveal a more basic commitment to their work.¹⁹

Normally, it is only at higher status levels outside the blue-collar world that intrinsic sources of work satisfaction, pleasure in the tasks themselves, are regularly available and enjoyed.

Indeed, one might go even further. At a wide range of lower-status occupations, people seem to be capable of more difficult, demanding, and challenging tasks than they are ever likely to confront. Many workers seem to find sources of interest and satisfaction even where, objectively, there seems to be minimal opportunity for such work pleasure. Far more widely, however, at all status levels the possibility of more interesting jobs arouses widespread involvement in work, commitments to work that extend beyond financial compensation or necessity alone.

In light of working-class job limitations, the degree of job commitment among working-class people is all the more startling. Numerous studies have inquired whether workers would continue working if they did not have to do so simply in order to earn a living. While responses to such questions in the unreal situation of an interview may only be approximations to real behavior under similar conditions, the observation is quite uniform that the large majority would continue working regardless of need.²⁰ Certainly there is a decrease in the proportions who would do so with decreasing occupational position. But even at lower levels, among blacks and whites alike, the majority are committed to the general work morality of our society. Only among women of the lowest status, who must work either because they have no other source of support or because their husbands' earnings are insufficient and who can only obtain the most menial jobs, is there a general sense of resentment of the necessity for working.

For the majority of lower-status workers, as for those of higher status, work is a highly desirable activity. Despite the limitations of blue-collar jobs, the opportunity to work, to take pride in the responsibility of working and of self-support and, even to a greater extent, the chance of participation in meaningful work situations appear to be of critical significance in creating a sense of personal esteem.

¹⁹ Blauner, 1964; Fried, 1966; Inkeles, 1960; Swados, 1957.

²⁰ See footnote 18 for work references. Also, see: Friedmann, 1961; Friedmann and Havighurst, 1954; Goldthorpe et al., 1968.

But unless far greater opportunities arise in the occupational world, work experiences for most working-class people inevitably remain important sources of social participation without providing the personal meaning all human beings require.

In the more restricted conditions of life engendered by jobs that are routine and dull, pay poorly, and provide minimal security, psychological mechanisms of compensation, avoidance, or displacement are encouraged. For some people, family and community ties take on heightened importance as sources of security and satisfaction. But the very frustrations and insecurities of such jobs situations create a more general psychological atmosphere of uncertainty that impedes the full enjoyment of family and community life. Experiences of escape can be found in peripheral forms of excitement, in spontaneous and even impulsive behaviors in daily life. An illusory sense of stability is sometimes achieved by drawing more closely to people of the same occupational status, the same religion, or the same ethnic origin and is reinforced by increased antagonism toward out-groups, toward people who differ in any or all of these respects. Even within the family or community, the latent sense of frustration and anger due to work experiences (or unemployment) is often displaced onto spouse, children, kin, or neighbors producing strain or overt conflict. Many of the family problems that come to attention in mental health and social service agencies indirectly reflect the corrosive effects of work experiences that may not lead to overt work dissatisfaction but fail to supply any sense of meaning in work. While family and community relationships are of the utmost utility for working-class people and a primary resource for providing a sense of personal meaningfulness, optimal participation in the household or neighborhood requires some freedom from urgent anxieties about work and employment. Under these relatively stable circumstances, family and community life take on special significance for working-class people, partly as compensations for restricted opportunities at work, partly as intrinsic forms of satisfaction with intimate, familiar, and reliable people who comprise the micro-environments which provide a sense of personal identity.²¹

SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Although the majority of households in the United States represent intact family arrangements, there can be little doubt that the United States and the Western world more generally are undergoing major changes in the patterns of household and family life.²² Rates of divorce and separation are only the most visible indicators of these changes. Some of the forces that influence the rates of marital disruption appear to be associated with widespread social changes while others are endemic conditions that have always created family problems. Deprivation and want continue, as in the past, to erode some of the practical basis for a household economy and stimulate antagonism among family members. At the same time, a new range of options and alternative potential sources of security and satisfaction in modern

²¹ For a general framework for the analysis of relationships between work and family life, see Rapoport and Rapoport, 1965.

²² U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1967.

societies mean that family roles and relationships must compete with other possible bases for meaning and gratification. While increased options are most likely to influence marital stability among people of higher status, they may also facilitate marital disruption among people for whom social and economic strains have induced conflict-laden family interactions.

In family life, as in other realms of social experience, working-class people confront the most serious dilemmas. On the one hand, the minimal degree to which occupational involvement offers either security or gratification means that a greater burden is placed on family relationships for fulfilling these needs. On the other hand, precarious conditions for meeting survival needs tend to undermine the potentialities of the family for stability, security, and satisfaction. It is, thus, not surprising that family disruption increases markedly with decreasing social class position, regardless of the measures one uses for determining social class status.²³

However, most working-class people find family relationships a major source of meaning and identity. Working-class men and women frequently ascribe great importance to their family relationships. They are likely to do so more often and more exclusively than do men and women of higher status, for whom personal accomplishments loom larger.²⁴ Family life, valued in its own right as a source of pride, of pleasure, and of hope, also creates the context in which other central aspects of life are defined. Desires for modest material security and progress are most frequently structured around family needs. Desires for a decent home in a stable and comfortable neighborhood reflect the wish to shelter and protect one's family. Homeownership, often a keystone of these aspirations, is frequently conceived as an integral part of household arrangements.²⁵ For those living in poor residential situations, the potential danger to children is a major source of anxiety.²⁶

Although it is important to distinguish some of the general characteristics of family life in the working class and to contrast them with family life in other social classes, such a comparison can easily exaggerate the differences. Many intrinsic features of family relationships have their own powerful dynamic. In such intimate relationships, personal characteristics influence the development of roles and interactions. Strains other than economic deprivation may create patterns of mutual isolation or conflict in families of high status. And the difficulties of economic life or feelings of frustration in other spheres may often be compensated by the satisfactions of family life among working-class people. Thus, within each social class or other subgroup there are many variations that prevent us from describing too simply a working-class family pattern, a middle-class family

²³ The social class differential is even more striking among blacks than among whites, the rate of marital disruption dropping from more than 50 percent among those of very low status to less than 10 percent among those of higher status. For a fuller discussion of class differentials in marital stability, see Fried et al. 1971; Fried, in preparation.

²⁴ Some of these observations are based on data, unpublished or in preparation for publication, from several different neighborhoods in Boston (West End, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain).

²⁵ Fitzgerald, 1971; Rainwater, 1971.

²⁶ Fitzgerald, 1971.

pattern, or a black family pattern. People's experiences of family life and their expectations and values about it vary dramatically along social class lines mainly when they are extremely privileged or extremely underprivileged. On the other hand, people's views of family roles and relationships do vary in quite subtle ways because of social conditions and cultural orientations associated with social class.

Family life consists of diverse activities, most of which can be conceived as aspects of different family role relationships. One of the most striking aspects of mutual interdependence in the family lies in the degree to which roles and relationships overlap with one another, and the wide range of different functions carried out by the same small group of people. In this respect, the family is a unique institution.

Husbands and wives fulfill critical economic and material functions for one another by working, by taking care of the household, by participating in child rearing. The daily lives of married couples are largely taken up with these activities. Though sometimes taken for granted, they are the vital substrate of family life. Thus, the kinds of relationships engendered in carrying out these routine functions are of the utmost importance for family experience, providing a major basis for positive or negative relationships in other spheres of family life. This is notably true in working-class families for a number of reasons: the greater uncertainty of financial circumstances, the relative lack of resources for obtaining extra-familial aid in managing the household, and a cultural orientation that focuses particular attention on the supportive nature of effective household organization.

Working-class people, taking less for granted, are usually acutely aware of the necessity for material security to insure marital stability. Work and the job are, thus, of great importance, as is the adequate performance of household management functions. Both of these are of great symbolic as well as practical significance. Health and personal stability of family members are also vital attributes for both husband and wife to be able to carry out their basic responsibilities. The image of the partner as a responsible coworker is central. At times, especially among working-class men, the partner is seen almost exclusively as a coworker whose function is to manage household and family activities efficiently. This is a frequent source of disappointment to working-class women, to whom emotional aspects of the marriage are almost always important.²⁷

Working-class men often feel that they have not provided adequately for their families. This is far more likely to be a source of self-rebuke than are other behaviors, like minimal joint sociability or lack of shared intimacies or extra-marital sexual experiences, which are often of central importance to the wife. However, a sense of material insecurity frequently dominates the marital experience of working-class women also. Even in the face of an adequate income, they are often apprehensive that their modest financial status may not last, that they may not be adequately provided for, that erratic employment or an illness or excessive drinking or other situations may interfere with

²⁷ Fried, to be published; Komarovsky, 1964; Rainwater and Weinstein, 1960.

momentary stability.²⁸ Fears of a basic level of want and deprivation are quite close to the surface for many working-class people, sometimes based on past experience, sometimes on knowledge gained from their parents or on observations of friends and neighbors. Such fears undoubtedly lie behind the frequent emphasis on stability and security even among people with modest but adequate incomes. The responses of a number of women, primarily of lower working-class status, to a question about the worst life they could imagine vividly reveal this concern: "husband to go back to drink," "be a widow," "have a war," "sick, no money, nobody care," "not having enough for food," "scraping the bottom of the pan."²⁹

Most married couples, however, have relationships that extend far beyond the maintenance of a household economy. Husbands and wives sleep with one another and procreate children. The satisfactions they derive from sexual activity, from merely sharing the same bed, and from relationships to children are also critical features of family role relationships that affect many other aspects of family interaction. Husbands and wives may spend more or less of their leisure time together and may share outside social and recreational activities. Family members often experience a sense of companionship and intimacy with one another. Intimacy and companionship may be limited to family members, extended to others outside the family, or may occur only outside the family. Some of the most important social class differences in family functioning are to be found in the precise form these role relationships take and the degree to which one or another role relationship is a major source of gratification or conflict.

Despite the importance of material security, most people at all status levels want more from marriage and family life than the fulfillment of material needs. But human desires for affection, responsiveness, involvement, understanding, and friendship are structured differently depending on class-linked values and expectations. Conceptions of life among working class people are, to a much greater extent than for people in higher status positions, embedded in cultural traditions. One important traditional orientation involves the expectation of a relatively sharp separation of interests and activities between the sexes and some subordination of the marital relationship to interaction with other close people: parents, siblings, children, relatives, and friends. This is manifest in many different spheres of family life.

Management of the household, including management of family finances, is often thought of as (almost) exclusively the woman's responsibility. Appropriate male and female task responsibilities may be very clearly distinguished with working class families. Visiting and other social activities may be carried out by husbands and wives together but separate social activities are normally expected by both husbands and wives. These only become problematic when they virtually preclude any joint social activities between husbands and wives. Simi-

²⁸ This discussion is largely organized around responses of West End men and women and of other working class people, white and black to questions about the ideal spouse and to a number of other questions about marriage (Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried et al., 1971; Fried, 1973). It also draws on numerous other descriptions, among the best of which are to be found in Gans, 1962; Hoggart, 1957; Komarovsky, 1964; Rainwater, 1965, 1971; and Young and Willmott, 1957.

²⁹ Fitzgerald, 1971, p. 65.

larly, a husband and wife are expected to care for one another and to be closely involved in family life. However, interpersonal closeness, companionship, and verbal intimacy are not ordinarily viewed as essential features of marriage at lower status levels. Close friendship and intimate exchange, in fact, are often seen mainly as relationships among people of the same sex. Major changes appear to have taken place over the past half century, however, reducing the differences in marital role relationships of people in different social class positions.

Among working-class people particularly, men continue to have a wider range of choice in the extent of their everyday involvement with marriage and the family than do women. This is a source of considerable unhappiness to many working-class women, despite the fact that both sexes may take this definition of the situation for granted. In this respect, greater employment involvement by working-class wives has served to create greater equality and more equitable distributions of family commitment between husbands and wives. Another frequent adjustment to this situation among working-class women is to be found in interaction with neighbors and with local friends and relatives, a form of interaction that includes mutual helping activities as well as more casual sociability. However, acute conflict and unhappiness develop when the husband, whether deliberately or through inner compulsion, abuses this freedom by drinking excessively or by spending a great deal of time away from home. This pattern is common enough but is rejected by the great majority of working-class people, men and women alike, for whom family responsibilities are of such primacy.

THE ORGANIZATION OF FAMILY ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

Without exaggerating the degree of difference between social classes or the degree of homogeneity within any social class, it is important to note some of the forms of family organization that are somewhat distinctive for people at different social class levels. These differences in behavior do not result only from differences in values and orientation. They are also markedly affected by current situational realities.

We have already discussed the great importance of household management for family life in the working class, not merely in its own right but as a basis for establishing a particular form and style of family role relationship. Despite a cultural tradition that locates the wife in the home, in most working-class families the husband is at least moderately involved in decisions that affect the household and children, in a range of household activities, and in child care. In a large minority of families, however, and considerably more often than in the middle class, there is evidence of the sharp separation of roles already mentioned.³⁰ The degree of segregation of family roles appears to increase with small decreases of status within the more broadly defined working class. Household and family management, as well as leisure activities, are more likely to be shared among those of higher working-class status than among those of lowest status.³¹

³⁰ For class differences in household management roles, see Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Bott, 1957; Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, to be published; Komarovsky, 1961, 1964; König, 1957; Lang, 1946; McKinley, 1964; Mogy, 1957; Rainwater, 1965. These are among the best documented differences in family organization among different social classes. Only one study, Herbst, 1954, reports contradictory findings.

³¹ Berger, 1968; Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973; Komarovsky, 1964.

When roles are segregated in this way, the husband is generally responsible for supporting the family and limits his household responsibilities to a few traditional masculine tasks. In parallel fashion, the wife takes on most of the responsibility for household management and much of the responsibility for child care. The structuring of roles in households of this kind appears to be relatively inflexible. It does not readily change even in the face of dissatisfactions with the situation on the part of either spouse. There is some evidence that even if the wife takes a job, the husband is likely to increase his participation only minimally since he, and possibly both of them, prefer to see the household as the woman's preserve.³²

The amount of time devoted to shared leisure pursuits outside the home varies considerably among different families. Despite variations within any social class level, people at higher social class levels do have more extensive joint social activities.³³ The range of social activity is also considerably broader among people of higher status, partly as a function of economic considerations and partly due to other sources of opportunity. For working-class families, the most frequent shared leisure activity outside the home is visiting, generally with relatives.³⁴ Local social activity with neighbors and friends is common but this is rarely as formal as visiting and frequently is based on unisexual groups. Occasionally, social activities among married couples also take on a neighborhood character if there are appropriate bars or inexpensive eating places locally available. Similar activities, often in groups of couples, may occur outside the local area; but going to shows or nightclubs or dances are most often matters of special occasion.³⁵ Formal organizational activity is relatively rare among working-class people and is not likely to involve both husbands and wives in the same activities.

The degree to which people in different social class positions differ in total family participation in leisure activities has not been widely studied. That working-class children more frequently join their parents in such activities as visiting and participate in other adult entertainments seems clear. And there appears to be a greater frequency of some joint activities in the working-class home, such as watching television.³⁶ There seems to have been an increase during recent decades in joint family outings, particularly during the spring and summer months. And with a gradual increase in vacation time for working-class people, family vacations have become quite widespread except at the very lowest levels of status.

³² Among the West End respondents, if household decisions were left to the wife, the husband was unlikely to give more help with household tasks even when the wife worked outside the home (Fitzgerald, 1967). Blood and Wolfe, 1960, described the same pattern among their very low-income, low-occupation black respondents.

³³ Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried et al., 1971; Fried, 1973; Komarovskiy, 1964; Scheuch, 1962; White, 1955.

³⁴ Berger, 1968; Fitzgerald, 1967, 1971; Fried, 1973; Gans, 1962; Komarovskiy, 1964; Townsend, 1957; Young and Willmott, 1957.

³⁵ Berger, 1968; Fitzgerald, 1967, 1971; Fried, 1973; Gans, 1962.

³⁶ The use of television seems generally to be more widespread at lower than at higher-status levels. How much of this is due to the opportunities provided by television for fulfillment in fantasy of vague dreams and aspirations that cannot be approached in reality remains unknown. But the binding effects of television for many working-class people suggest that this may be an important function of many such programs.

Role segregation in household management tends to increase with increasing age.³⁷ In one working-class community, almost all of the youngest couples revealed some form of joint participation in household management, but this fell off quite rapidly with small increases in age.³⁸ A similar phenomenon occurs with respect to joint social activities but, by contrast with household management, it seems to be a more direct function of the presence of children. With increasing age, and especially during that period of the life cycle when children are young and cannot be left alone, there is a general diminution in joint social activities.³⁹ Patterns of joint sociability are gradually reestablished as the children grow older. Although the overall trend is quite similar for people in different social class positions, the arrival of children has the greatest and longest-lasting impact among those of lowest status. There is virtually no joint social activity between lower-status husbands and wives in most families while the children are young. It is hardly surprising, in this light, that being tied to the home and lack of freedom for social activity is a frequent complaint among working-class wives.

To a greater extent than in other social classes, family life in the working class seems integrally related to neighborhood and community life and to relationships in the local area with neighbors, friends, and kin. One idea that has obtained widespread currency is that much of the segregation of marital roles can be attributed to separate outside involvement of husband and wife.⁴⁰ This conception is attractive in view of the fact that such involvement in closeknit networks is particularly frequent in many working-class neighborhoods and, at the same time, segregated family role relationships are relatively frequent among working-class people. But the evidence to date reveals no such causal pattern. Indeed, working-class people who maintain extensive contact with people in the local area are also somewhat more likely to share family role relationships.⁴¹

Once a role relationship pattern is established, it generates its own dynamics and its own effects regardless of the forces that led to it originally. The forms of marital and family role relationships that are established have considerable bearing on the sense of closeness and companionship that develop in marriage, and on the level of marital satisfaction. With an increase in shared involvement in household roles and in social activities, there is an increase in the closeness of the relationship between husbands and wives at all social class levels.⁴² Similarly, sexual mutuality is much greater among those couples who maintain less-segregated role relationships in other spheres.⁴³

That there are overall differences in marital satisfaction with differences in social class position has been frequently observed. It is particularly striking, however, that much of this difference is not due directly to differences in economic or social opportunities, but rather to differ-

³⁷ Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973; Fried et al., 1971; Neugarten, 1956; Townsend, 1957; Wolgast, 1958; Young and Willmott, 1957.

³⁸ Fitzgerald, 1967.

³⁹ Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973; Fried et al., 1971.

⁴⁰ Bott, 1957.

⁴¹ Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973.

⁴² Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973; Fried et al., 1971.

⁴³ Rainwater, 1965.

ences in shared or segregated family role relationships.⁴⁴ While a high degree of segregation of roles may be infrequent among families of higher status, when it occurs it leads to a marked reduction in the level of marital satisfaction. Conversely, while a high degree of sharing of marital and familial roles is not widespread among people of lower status, such sharing of family roles is generally accompanied by a high degree of marital satisfaction. For younger people, in particular, some sharing of marital roles seems virtually essential for marital satisfaction. With increasing age, a higher degree of marital role segregation can be tolerated without producing marital dissatisfaction.

In view of the great importance of sharing of marital and family role relationships for marital satisfaction, one may wonder why so many family styles, particularly at lower-status levels, are of the segregated type. A number of different considerations are involved. In the first place, sharing or segregation in marital and family role relationships is itself affected by forces outside the marriage. Strain, insecurity, and the absence of options in social life create pressures toward role segregation and help to account for the higher level of role segregation in working-class family life. Thus, external pressures have some clear and discernible influence on the nature of the marital relationship itself. This influence may be relatively simple and direct, for example, when chronic illness or poverty reduce the opportunities for social life. It can also occur in more subtle ways as husbands and wives more or less consciously alter their styles of interaction while attempting to adapt to difficulties in their situations.

The segregation of roles reduces both the amount of interaction between the members of a social unit and the frequency with which they are each responsible for accomplishing the same goals or objectives. To this degree, it serves to reduce the opportunities for disruption of the relationship by conflict. In this respect, role segregation is an important mechanism for insuring the continuity of a relationship or the effective operation of a social unit in which there is great potential for conflict or strain. At the same time, of course, but rather incidentally so far as the role partners are concerned, role segregation reduces the likelihood of gratification and of personal fulfillment within that particular relationship. Role segregation also reduces the critical nature of the role of any one individual and mitigates the effect of marital disruption, whether due to death, divorce, separation, or more transitory or subtle splitting of family relationships. In view of the greater likelihood of such fragmentation of family role relationships at lower-status levels, prior segregation of roles within the family allows continuity of the family and household in spite of the actual or psychological absence of a central member of the unit.⁴⁵

Role-segregated patterns are traditionally sanctioned and defined in the working class although, as we have pointed out, cultural orientations do not fully explain overt behaviors. But it inevitably entails some negative consequences in a society which places great demands on effective and meaningful social interaction within the family. As we have already indicated, role segregation in the family, at all status

⁴⁴ Fried, 1973.

⁴⁵ For a more extensive treatment of the theoretical and empirical issues involved in marital roles, in their segregated or shared forms, and in the effects on marital satisfaction, see Fitzgerald, 1967; Fried, 1973.

levels, reduces the degree of marital satisfaction, but this effect is most striking when the level of segregation is extreme. This is exacerbated at lower-status levels by economic pressures and deprivation which create strains on marriage and impede marital satisfaction most seriously in segregated relationships. Acute pressures, as when the head of household is unemployed, may have a serious influence on marital satisfaction even when patterns of joint functioning are maintained.⁴⁶ In view of the constraints on role satisfaction for people of lower status, particularly the limited possibilities in economic and occupational life, lower levels of marital satisfaction are especially unfortunate. Indeed, regardless of status, and among whites and blacks alike, marital satisfaction is the most critical component of total life satisfaction.⁴⁷

Although we may recognize the inevitability and legitimacy of diverse family and household arrangements, a serious price is often involved. Marital dissatisfaction and, in the extreme, marital disruption appear to be more frequent among people of lower status than among those in more secure economic and social positions. But their frequency is not indicative of any major difference in values. The absence of marital satisfaction and stability is generally a source of the most profound regret at all social class levels. The effects of marital conflict and instability upon children are less clear but one can anticipate similar, if not more serious, consequences. In this sense, the conditions of working-class life, especially for those of lowest status, that undermine other sources of gratification and make inroads even on relationships within the family create a double indemnity for the least privileged members of our society. While marital dissatisfaction and disruption are highly personal matters and may occur among people in all social positions, the absence of security, of a sense of self-esteem, of feelings of pride in economic and occupational accomplishment, undermine those very marital and family relationships that might otherwise serve as major bases for personal stability, social participation, and a feeling of satisfaction in life.

WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITY LIFE

Relationships formed at work, at school, in the neighborhood, or in clubs and organizations, as well as long-term associations with kin and friends, can and often do become integrated with the functioning of the nuclear family. Patterns of local affiliation involving the family as a unit are common and often of very great importance: visiting and being visited, neighborhood and community interactions, affiliations with local organizations. Such associations may be of fundamental significance for the stability of family organization. Close relationships between household members and members of other local social units may be of particular importance in instances of family disruption due to death or separation, providing some of the role relationships that remain unfulfilled in the absence of a spouse or parent. But these local community affiliations are of great significance in their own right for a great many working-class people.

⁴⁶ Fitzgerald, 1963.

⁴⁷ For the full-scale analysis of these issues, see Fried, 1973; Fried et al., 1971.

Recent evidence has indicated that contact with kin is more widespread in the United States than had previously been thought to be the case.⁴⁸ Such relationships with kin are rarely intense outside the working class, but they are frequent and valuable social resources throughout the society. Their importance in the working class, however, stems partly from the fact that kin so often live in the same neighborhoods and, thus, kinship and community ties are blended. Furthermore, the results of community studies suggest that quite apart from kinship ties, the neighborhood and local residential areas are of far greater importance for many people than had been recognized in previous studies of the urban environment. As with kinship contact, involvement in the micro-environment of the neighborhood is often of particularly great importance for working-class people and may supplement family role relationships in creating stability and evoking satisfaction.⁴⁹ Community affiliations are among the few reliable sources of a sense of esteem and of involvement for people of lower status.

Systematic information about patterns of community living in different social classes is relatively meager but some broad trends can be discerned.⁵⁰ Despite the great advance of urbanization in the United States and Western Europe, the small community and local neighborhood life remain important bases of personal and social identity for many people. Variations in neighborhood interaction in different types of urban and nonurban settings, however, are less clear. The most extensive data about community and neighborhood life in the working class derive from studies of central city slum areas. But a relatively large and growing proportion of the working class and of the poor live outside of central cities and outside of major urban areas. This is a matter of some importance in trying to generalize about working-class community functioning.

Despite these and other variations in the community distribution and experience of working-class people, there are several themes in working-class community life that appear to be quite general. Of central significance is the dominance of localism in working-class community behavior. Localism refers to the concentration of activity, social interaction, and a sense of involvement or commitment in the local neighborhood. In the extreme, the working-class neighborhood may become a bounded urban village in which people participate extensively in localized activities and feel like strangers outside their familiar precincts.⁵¹ Even in less extreme instances, however, the local area has great importance for most working-class people and a very large part of their daily lives is spent within the neighborhood. In

⁴⁸ Litwak, 1960a, 1960b; Sussman, 1963.

⁴⁹ Fried, 1973.

⁵⁰ In fact, there is an extensive literature on community patterns. But close examination reveals that it deals with a limited array of types of communities and the data are often noncomparable. A systematic study of some of these patterns is being undertaken by one of the authors (Fried) under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems of NIMH.

⁵¹ For some examples of communities representing this form of "urban village," see: Fried, 1973; Gans, 1962; Hartman, 1963; Hoggart, 1957; Jennings, 1962; Moger, 1956; Safa, 1968; Seeley, 1969; Townsend, 1957; Whyte, 1943; Willmott, 1963; Young and Willmott, 1957.

essence, localism implies that the meaningful social community coincides quite closely with the actual physical community. It is this coincidence of physical and social space that is most distinctive of community experience among working-class people.

Several other related features of community behavior in the working class stand out. In all social classes and in areas at all levels of urbanization people tend to know many of their neighbors.⁵² But these neighborhood contacts are rarely as widespread in other social classes as they are in the working class. More important than widespread familiarity is the fact that many relationships with neighborhood persons involve people in an entire series of overlapping roles. The same persons are seen in the street, are met while shopping, are parents of children in the same schools, and are involved in similar activities whether these be in the settlement house, in ethnic clubs, in church, at the bar, or on the streetcorner. Moreover, there is considerable regularity to these encounters so that people come to expect such meetings and to form their activities around interpersonal relationships while they are engaged in performing routine functions.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that these relationships are frequently extended to include joint social activities and various forms of mutual assistance. A great many working-class people define their friendships on the basis of mutual help or, at least, the expectation of such help when it is necessary. And while the frequency of such reciprocity varies considerably from one working-class community to another, some expectation of the availability of neighbors in case of need seems to be a crucial component of effective community life in working-class areas. That needs for help arise more frequently among people of lower status makes such an orientation eminently functional.

Working-class localism most typically involves the use of neighborhood facilities and resources where they are available. Although the array of shopping facilities is bound to vary considerably from one working-class neighborhood to another, there is a strong preference for local shopping among many working-class people. The local food store, particularly if it is a small shop rather than a supermarket, takes on special significance. It is readily available, permitting frequent purchases and eliminating the necessity for stocking food. It is based on a personal relationship between customer and owner. And in some working-class neighborhoods, it also allows credit purchases in which payment is made when the wage check arrives. Such credit arrangements, based on long-term personal relationships, also allow for greater security in conditions of economic duress. While the small storekeeper cannot maintain a customer on credit for very long periods of time, he is often able to tide them over during shorter periods of unemployment or illness.⁵³

⁵² Axelrod, 1956; Bell and Boat, 1957; Bracey, 1964; Fava, 1958; Foley, 1950; Gans, 1967; Greer and Kube, 1959; Kuper et al., 1953; Pfeil, 1968; Rainwater et al., 1959; Willmott and Young, 1960.

⁵³ The disruption of stable, working-class communities, as in forced relocation, often invades these relationships and creates new and pernicious credit patterns between customers and storekeepers who do not know one another and have little reason for mutual trust. For a vivid analysis of the credit relationship among low-status people under conditions of lack of mutual trust, see Caplovitz, 1963.

Extensive patterns of local shopping serve other social functions in the community as well. Such local stores, widely used, become centers of social interaction. People meet one another while shopping, have opportunities to exchange conversation, and develop a greater sense of continuity in social interaction in the neighborhood. Indeed, stores in working-class areas tend to become major resources as communications centers. These are the places where one obtains information about local affairs, about what is happening to neighbors, about major events that might affect the community, and even about the facilities available for handling personal affairs.

When other facilities are present within the neighborhood, they may serve similar functions. Such facilities may include the public school, clubs and organizations, settlement houses, even health and social service agencies in which people can meet and establish or maintain close contact with one another. The greater the opportunities for such interaction, for the use of local places as social centers, the more extensively do those forms of relationship describe as "closeknit networks" develop. These become prime sources of security and satisfaction in working-class communities. Some of those working-class communities without these patterns of local social interaction reflect a deprivation in social experience without having achieved any alternative patterns of personal fulfillment.

Closely related to the extensiveness of local contact is the significance of street life in working-class areas. In a large number of working-class communities that have been observed, the street is far more extensively used both as a part of one's residential space and as a locus of social interaction than occurs among people of higher status. It is this characteristic that has led some observers to emphasize the importance of visibility as a form of protection against illicit behavior, robbery, and personal violence.⁵⁴ Many working-class areas, particularly the fairly dense urban slum but extending at times into more suburban settings, are notable for the presence of people of the streets. The apartment spills into the hallway and the building spills onto the street with considerable freedom. Privacy is of considerable importance, but reliance is placed on the natural sense of tact of others rather than on impersonality and physical distance. Nor is it only a matter of spending more time in the streets. Working-class people more often use the streets as places to be with others, in contrast to the more characteristic conception of the street in middle-class areas as a passageway from home to some other place. The rising demand for housing space that includes a wide variety of community facilities and opportunities for local social interaction reveals the potential significance of more active engagement in the local residential area for people in all social class positions. However, while people of higher status often maintain some neighborhood ties, they are more likely than people of lower status to participate actively in roles and relationships outside the local area. For people in the working class, on the other hand, local commitments and associations more often dominate their total life space.

The physical structure of working-class housing, for all of its limitations as dwelling space, often facilitates intimacy and informality in

⁵⁴ Jacobs, 1961.

social relationships. In general, the greater the degree of face-to-face contact engendered by a physical arrangement, the more likely are people to establish social relationships with one another. This relationship holds true independent of social class position but is stronger at lower than at higher status levels. The sheer population densities of many working-class neighborhoods allow us to predict that these will encourage a maximum of direct contact. Other features of the physical organization of working-class areas also facilitate extensive and close social interaction. House types, location of stores and shops, and the character of the streets or their utility for street life, all influence the extent to which local social relationships develop. These housing and residential arrangements encourage local interaction in many lower status areas while, with the increasing social status of areas, physical design is oriented to privacy and, thus, generates interpersonal separation and isolation.⁵⁵

A number of other factors are involved in the dominance of localism in the working class. Some of the more evident economic forces are certainly influential. There are economic costs to transportation whether by public facilities or a private automobile. The inadequacy of many low-income dwellings may discourage the use of the apartment or house as a place for guests and visitors and may encourage more active street life which, in turn, leads to wider familiarity with neighbors and with the neighborhood. Many working-class people trace their origins to less urbanized places; and more recent migrants to an area are more restricted to their immediate residential locations, moving out beyond these only slowly and gradually.⁵⁶ Other differences in status add further explanatory components. Education and acculturation to the larger society certainly expand the social horizons of people and facilitate feelings of comfort in more diverse surroundings. Contacts with formal organizations and with diverse groups encourage a broader range of travel beyond the local area. Such experiences and opportunities supplement economic factors in restricting or expanding the microenvironment in which people function and help to account for the dominance of localism in working-class life.

But an understanding of localism in working-class life also requires an appreciation of two contrasting considerations. Even apart from the most extreme and obvious forms of minority group discrimination, working-class people tend to feel excluded by the larger society. The invidious distinctions implicit in large differences in social background, rewards, and opportunities are inevitably experienced as forms of derogation. Moreover, most working-class people sense the subtle and implicit status orientations that pervade interpersonal relationships. Friendships, neighborhood contacts, even work associations are very much limited to people of similar status and few working-class people have had frequent or close relationships with people of higher class. Most situations of daily life that involve peo-

⁵⁵ Appleyard and Lintell, 1972; Festinger et al., 1950; Fried and Gleicher, 1961; Hartman, 1963; Kates and Wohwill, 1966; Kuper, et al., 1953; Merton, 1948.

⁵⁶ Numerous studies of migrants indicate that the newcomer participates far less actively in many activities in the new area, and that this is most marked for people of lower status (e.g., Brody, 1970; Gordon, 1964; Zimmer, 1955). A recent study of blacks in Boston (Fried et al., 1971) demonstrates the combined effects of status, prior urban experience, and length of residence on freedom of movement outside the local area quite clearly.

ple of different status evidence these covert status discriminations. The lower a person appears to be on the status scale and the sharper his ethnic differences from the American majority, the more marked is such discriminatory behavior. These situations and experiences evoke an often unstated sense of discomfort and estrangement in the wider society and, by contrast, reinforce a sense of ease and self-respect among familiar, similar people in familiar places.⁵⁷

The sense of exclusion, derogation, and disrespect experienced in the wider society is certainly a critical influence on the cohesiveness of working-class communities. The strong feeling of mutual support and the extensive patterns of local friendliness that characterize many working-class areas are partly compensations for these conditions. But there are also intrinsic gratifications, and often fragments of cultural tradition, that give special meaning to local community life. Working-class communities often develop an ethnic of communal relationships that embraces most of the people in their neighborhood. Mutual support may occasionally be shattered by inter-ethnic conflict but this occurs mainly in special conditions. Massive invasion by a new ethnic group challenges the traditional protective arrangements of the inhabitants of a working-class community and leads to working-class exclusivism. In such circumstances, much of the latent anger toward the larger society is displaced toward the relatively powerless newcomers. Ordinarily, however, this underlying protective and friendly orientation to other people in the local area extends even to people who are known only peripherally. Fortunately, the importance of localism for working-class people has become more widely known and greater emphasis has been given during recent decades to the expansion of local facilities in working-class neighborhoods. Similarly, it is due in part to an appreciation of localism that black communities have stressed the need for community cohesiveness in confronting limitations in the larger society. To stress these features of working-class environments that frequently facilitate the development of the close-knit, local social relationships should not obscure many differences. Variables such as the level of working-class status of the residents, the urban-suburban character of the area, regional variations associated with differences in climate or tradition, and the age or residential stability of the community itself seem to modify the patterns of community behavior. A large proportion of the central city, working-class slums that have been studied follow quite closely the model of the "urban village" in which stable and highly integrated communities develop with closely interlocking networks of relationships to kin, neighbors, and friends. Many of these communities, in the United States and in other countries, have been dominated by immigrants or by migrants from deprived, rural areas who develop an ethnic culture or tradition that blends the common features among people of diverse, but similarly underprivileged origins. Working-class suburban areas appear to share many of the characteristics of the central city working-class slum with less emphasis on active street life and somewhat greater emphasis on home life and informal visiting.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ In one central city working-class district, many people felt they did not really know many places outside their residential area, even if they went there very often, because they felt they did not belong and came and left as strangers (Fried, to be published).

⁵⁸ Berger, 1968; Bracey, 1964; Gans, 1967; Jackson, 1968; Kuper et al., 1953; Mitchell and Lupton, 1954; Willmott, 1963.

Indeed, the few studies of affluent workers in modern, technologically advanced industries suggest that the persistence of the same basic conditions of life encourage the persistence of many similar orientations and behaviors in attenuated form, despite increased incomes, status, and education.

At the lower end of working-class position, poverty discrimination, insecurity, or stresses deriving from other sources may make serious inroads on the stability and cohesiveness of the community. Those residential areas, whether of privately owned or public housing, in which a large proportion of the population is extremely poor have greater difficulty in establishing the organization and stability necessary for cohesive and interactive community life.⁵⁹ Often it is difficult to determine the precise factors involved in situations of unstable or loosely knit working-class communities since different influences overlap one another. But communities that include not merely a large proportion of very poor people but many newcomers from rural areas often show less striking and less widespread forms of social relationships. The same is true for communities that have few local facilities around which relationships can develop, or those that have experienced a long term attrition of population due to external pressures on the community—for example, plans for urban renewal. In one instance we have examined, the relative infrequency of close patterns of neighboring and of close-knit network relationships was due in part to a high degree of transiency, encouraged by a slow-moving highway renewal program.⁶⁰ This situation was further compounded by low residential densities, and by a high degree of suspicion and fear because of extensive neighborhood problems.

However, more often than not, the conception of “disorganized” neighborhoods is vastly overstated and refers, at best, to extensive individual or family difficulties rather than to disorganization within the neighborhood itself. There is an old and widespread belief, unfounded in any available evidence, that neighborhood contagion encourages housing neglect, delinquency, alcoholism, drugs, and a host of other evils. Certainly a combination of economic and social restrictions lead to the concentration of these problems in certain areas. It is also true that among the very poor, and even more strikingly when poverty is attended by discrimination, extremely poor housing, and widespread anxiety, the forms of local reciprocity that have been described for many working-class areas fail to develop or emerge only in tentative and sporadic forms. Extreme degrees of underprivilege and insecurity can shift the entire focus of people’s lives to the most rudimentary concerns of finding meager sources of support and grasping transitory pleasures when they can.

But even in neighborhoods beset with social problems and occasionally with violence, the organization of neighborhood life frequently contains these problems and mitigates their disorganizing effects. Many of these areas reveal important fragments of local organization and maintain a semblance of community order, in spite of the corrosive

⁵⁹ Studies of extremely poor black communities demonstrate the ways in which poverty, discrimination, and other difficulties can have mutually reinforcing effects. See: Brown, 1965; Drake and Cayton, 1945; Liebow, 1967; Rainwater, 1970.

⁶⁰ Fitzgerald, 1971.

effects of poverty and discrimination, insecurity and anxiety, or conflicts and schisms between segments of the community. Even in the most impoverished and underprivileged communities, modest forms of social interaction often develop within the small units of a building or a street, relationships that supplement the lives of individuals and provide them with social resources for coping with a vast array of personal difficulties and uncertainties.

Social problems, personal difficulties, ethnic segmentations all occur more frequently in working-class communities than in those of higher status by virtue of the fact that the economic and social conditions that precipitate them are more widespread at lower status levels. But these are neither typical for working-class people nor dominant in most working-class neighborhoods. Indeed, what has become most apparent in studies of such communities during the last quarter of a century is the extraordinary degree of residential and social stability and organization that characterizes many of them. The typical working-class community is a family-based area, with informal patterns of social organization linking people to one another and providing some compensation for the sense of strain and derogation that people experience in their outside lives. Usually these intimate ties are limited to the closest kin, parents and siblings. But even relationships with neighbors and friends have some of the characteristics of kinship association: informality of interaction, mutual assistance, frequent contact, long-term stability, and an ascriptive significance by virtue of common residence.

In many instances, kin and close friends and neighbors in the community make working-class family life more viable in an immediate sense. Women without husbands or those whose husbands are only sporadically available often find a great deal of security in their interactions with neighbors and local kin and friends. Men who find their family lives or their relationships with their wives unsatisfactory can often find solace in neighborhood "hanging" groups or in the local bar. But even among those people living in stable and meaningful families, the people in the community are frequently major resources for both the women and the men. Indeed, it is quite striking that many working-class people at the highest blue-collar levels find these community associations so meaningful that they resist leaving their residential areas despite incomes and social orientations that would allow their transition to new areas of higher status.⁶¹

Despite changing patterns of urban and suburban neighborhood life at all social class levels and a new emphasis on community forms, middle-class patterns of neighboring and of community involvement rarely approximate the more extreme examples of localism and local commitment to be found in working-class areas.⁶² Much can undoubtedly be learned for planning purposes by extrapolating from patterns of working-class neighborhood life and extending these observations

⁶¹ These observations are drawn from published and unpublished data on the pre- and post-relocation situations of working-class people in the West End of Boston.

⁶² After comparing a working-class slum in London and a nearby, middle-class suburb in which there was a great deal of community interaction, Willmott and Young observed that interaction in the middle-class suburb did not have the intensity and feeling of closeness and informality that occurred in the working class slum. Willmott and Young, 1960.

to middle-class residential areas. But people of higher status do have a wider range of options. They can achieve more meaningful social participation in the larger society and need not rely as exclusively on family and community life to give relevance to their existence.

For the working class, even in the midst of greater affluence for some blue-collar workers, family and community life remain essential resources. It is all the more tragic, in this light, that the extremes of economic deprivation and insecurity undermine the stability both of family relationships and of community resources, and thus vitiate the possibility of attaining a semblance of security and satisfaction within these micro-environments. Only with the diminution of these extremes of economic and social inequality can we hope to provide that modicum of security that is necessary for maintaining reciprocity and cooperative endeavor in family and community experience. Adequate incomes and a degree of security that one can take for granted are necessary conditions for maintaining stable family and community ties. Even these are only minimal conditions that do not guarantee the most effective forms of reciprocity and the greatest degree of satisfaction in social life. Engagement in the occupational life of society through meaningful and respected work activities is essential for providing a sense of participation and pride which stimulates self-respect and feelings of worthiness. These are the personal sources of freedom of choice and of equanimity that sustain close involvement and gratification in family and community relationships.

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