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A study of twenty-five selected cases of neglect known to the children's division of the Fulton County department of public welfare Atlanta, Georgia 1945 to 1948

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A STUDY OF TWENTY-FIVE SELECTED CASES OF NEGLECT KNOWN TO THE
CHILDREN'S DIVISION OF THE FULTON COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA
1945 TO 1948

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

DORIS ELIZABETH WEBB RILEY

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The development of social work with children has been extremely gradual, and in the process of passing from one stage of growth in the care of the neglected children to another has been a slow one. Some of the forms of are used most frequently in the past have been almshouse care, indenture, orphan asylums, and foster free homes.

It was not until the middle of the last century that any consistent attempts were made to consider the rights of a neglected child as an individual. At that time, Charles Birtwell, of the Boston Children's Aid Society, gave eloquent expression to the new ideal of suiting the type of care provided to the real needs of the individual child. From that time society has since been increasingly conscious of the necessity of providing for individual differences.

If a child has to be given care away from his own home, all of his essential needs must be met as they would be by a good and capable parent. The prevision of adequate food, clothing, and shelter is not sufficient. The task is rather one of developing a feeling, thinking, and acting person, equipped for the responsibilities of family life and citizenship. Physical fitness, healthy habits, adaptability to life and people, appreciation of the moral and spiritual values of life, sound judgment, initiative, and thrift, care typical of the purpose upon which foster care should concentrate.¹

In general, our children can lay claim to three fundamental rights: (1) home life, (2) opportunities for education, recreation, and vocational training, and (3) moral, religious, and physical development in harmony with professed American ideals.

In spite of this general trend, the history of care of the dependent and neglected Negro child has been mainly one of institutional care. As early as 1930, it was stated at the White House Conference on Child Care and Protection:

> Resources for social welfare work among Negroes are everywhere limited. Many agencies caring for needy white children receive no Negro children. Mother's Aid grants to Negroes are limited in number and amount. The development of resources for family care of dependent Negro Children through boarding out and free placement will reduce the troublesome care where the several races are handled under the same roof. Fortunately an increasing number of trained Negro workers is entering the field and through them may be expected methods of care more flexible in scope and more sensitively adjusted to the Negro racial needs.¹

In the light of these salient facts concerning child welfare in general and Negro child welfare in particular, it should be interesting to study cases known to the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare, 1945 to 1948.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study has been to examine the records

of twenty-five cases of neglect in an effort to throw light on the significance of neglect in the commitment of Negro children to the custody of the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare pending location of suitable foster home accommodations.

Scope and Limitations

This study has been confined to case records constituting a third of the total case load involved. These case records were selected for their representativeness. Although some of the cases had been referred to the Juvenile Court before this period, actual treatment in every case was in effect between 1945 and 1948.

Procedure

In addition to summaries of the twenty-five case records on the basis of a prepared schedule,\(^1\) this study utilized materials gained from personal interviews with agency personnel.

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\(^1\)See Appendix A.
CHAPTER II

FULTON COUNTY PRACTICE IN THE DISPOSITION OF CASES OF NEGLECT

If a child's parents willfully fail to provide for him or treat him cruelly, he is "neglected." Such parental neglect is a serious social problem. No community is free of it. Many communities feel it is alarmingly on the increase.

Before the Social Security Act was enacted in 1935, only one-fourth of the states, and this did not include the state of Georgia, had made provision for local public services for neglected children through county organization under state leadership. The latter part of 1935, the Georgia State Welfare Board was established and immediately secured, without cost, a survey of child welfare services in Atlanta and Fulton County, under the direction of the United States Department of Labor. As one result of this survey, there was established the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare.

Sources of Referrals

Most of the children committed to the custody of the Children's Division have been referred by the Juvenile Court of Fulton County. However, referrals have been accepted from

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private agencies and interested individuals, as well as by transfer from other divisions of the Department of Public Welfare.

The fundamental purpose of the Juvenile Court has not been to determine whether or not a child has committed a specific offense but to ascertain eligibility for becoming a state ward. An order of commitment to the Children's Division by the Juvenile Court invariably read:

A hearing being had and it appearing that the above named child is in a state of neglect and under insufficient and improper guardianship and control, the court takes custody for such care, assistance, placement, and supervision as said Department shall find needful and practicable until further order of the court.¹

Georgia State authorities have ultimate responsibility for children who are in need of special care by reason of unfortunate home conditions, physical or mental handicap, or delinquency. While the Children's Division of the Department of Public Welfare of Atlanta and Fulton County may undertake to discharge this responsibility for the state, it must do so under the supervision of that ultimate authority.

The care, placement, and supervision of needy, dependent, neglected, and handicapped children up to sixteen years of age is the main function of the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare. Most of these children come from broken homes, having been either denied parental

¹Interview with Judge W. W. Woolfolk (Fulton County Juvenile Court, Atlanta, Georgia, September 6, 1948).
support for various reasons or having been ill treated by their parents. Since these children in many instances suffered serious deprivations, they are apt to be below par physically, and their education has, as often as not, been seriously neglected. They tend to be academically retarded.

Types of Care Given Children

_Foster homes._—Most children needing continuous care and supervision are placed in foster homes. When the investigation is made for the placement of a child, consideration is given to many circumstances of the home, among them: health, mentality, character, family history, reputation among neighbors, ability to furnish adequate moral and spiritual training, experience, education, and sympathetic attitude toward the child.

The child in turn, before being placed in a foster home, is investigated for state of health, mentality, social adjustment, and family history. Any physical defects or active diseases are made known to the foster parents.

The agency assumes responsibility for monthly board, clothing, school lunches, medicines, medical services, and other emergency expenditures as required. One dollar monthly is issued to teen-age children for their personal use.

_Institutional care._—By "institutional care," the Atlanta authorities no longer mean, exclusively, care in "homes" (such as orphan asylums) but, also, hospitalization, training school
commitment, and the like. If the investigation discloses that the child is crippled or is suffering from an infectious or contagious disease, hospital care is indicated. If he presents a social problem, such as incorrigibility, commitment to a Training School may be indicated. If there is a need for immediate removal from the home or care over a short period of time outside the home, he may be placed for the time being in the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home, the only institution in Atlanta for the care of dependent or neglected Negro children.

The Carrie Steele-Pitts Home

Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization...Children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons. Except in unusual circumstances the home should not be broken up for reasons of poverty. The carefully selected foster home is for the normal child the best substitute for the natural home. For the temporary or more less permanent care of children different methods are in use, notably the plan of placing them in families, paying for their board, and the plan of institutional care. Unless and until such homes are found, the use of institutions is necessary.¹

This institution was located in a mediocre but steadily improving Negro residential district. Care was given on the congregate plan, all of the activities centering in one large building. There were two large and two small dormitories the children ate together in a single dining room. The boys and girls each had a well-equipped living-room, and there was an abundance of play equipment in a spacious yard.

¹Ibid., p. 79.
The institution depended on the public health nurse for regular physical and dental examinations. A Negro physician was on call in return for a small retaining fee. There was a full-time professionally trained case worker, two house mothers, a cook, a janitor, and four part-time employees on the staff.

The Carrie Steele-Pitts Home was financed by (1) Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare, which paid one dollar per day per child, (2) Fulton County appropriation, (3) Community Chest, (4) Private boarders (Children per diem for whom defrayed by parents and other interested individuals), and (5) The Whitehead Foundation (a philanthropy established by an officer of the Coca Cola Company).

Case Work Procedure at the Children's Division

Available information would seem to indicate that the individual worker's caseload at the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare far exceeds the fifty to one hundred maximum recommended by the United States Children's Bureau. Under the circumstances, thorough-going casework can scarcely be expected. When one confines oneself to the consideration of the Negro caseload alone, this state of affairs becomes very evident: there is but one professionally trained Negro caseworker on the staff, and she carries a caseload, apparently, of several hundred.
CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Man is a social being. He springs from the soil of family life, from it he draws sustenance, to it he is bound by innumerable fibers. When for any reason he is uprooted, his well-being demands that he be transplanted and nurtured with the same tender solicitude for conditions of atmosphere, soil, and sun that the careful gardener displays toward his seedlings. From infancy through adolescence the fundamental need of a human being is the opportunity for undisturbed growth. A child should be deeply rooted; and bound to his environment on every side by ties of interest, habit, and affection. Only so can he attain the stability to withstand the storms of later life and make his fullest contribution to society.¹

It is obvious that without a thorough knowledge of the social forces which mold habits and create behavior patterns, without an understanding of the interaction and interrelations of the various members of the family group, it is exceedingly difficult, if not almost impossible, to influence or motivate individuals in such a way as to work out a consistent plan of treatment.

One primary institution is the home. If this institution is disorganized, children are usually torn by conflicts of loyalty between parents.

Negro Family Disorganization

Disorganization in the Negro Family is usually traced

back to slavery. Slavery influenced the disruption of these families by prohibiting legal marriage and consequently, the normal rearing and social control of children. Families usually lived in small cabins which offered little, if any, privacy. The mother of the family worked most of the day; hence, she had only a brief period to spend with her children. Usually, when the opportunity presented itself, the father of the slave family escaped to the north, often severing all connections with his family. This left the sole responsibility for the children with the mother. As time went on, she became dazed, irresponsible, and discouraged. Deprivation, coupled with dependency, had its demoralizing effects upon even the most stable.

When slavery was abolished, there was a carry-over of slave practices in family life among Negroes. The father continued to neglect and to desert the family and to leave responsibility for the children to the mother. She was forced to spend long hours working for meager wages to support her family. The children almost wholly lacked parental supervision.

The "Normal" Family

Professor E. W. Burgess sees, "...the characteristic types of the behavior of the person (as) fixed in the matrix

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of social relations in infancy and childhood. He recognized the potency of original differences in mentality, in temperament, and involition, but he concerned himself primarily with the impact upon them of the social factor, that is, the modification they undergo through education and through social interaction in the play group and the family. What, he asks, are the earliest social forces which mold a personality? What social influences are at work in shaping a philosophy of life? What are the social copies which the person takes for models? What appears to the child to be the realization of his most ardent wishes? The phase "bringing up the child" for him connotes, above all, the shaping of behavior patterns by the family.

A normal family, in a certain sense of the word, is one in which the mother and father are both living in the home. Yet, out of twenty-five cases of neglect known to the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare, only six of the children lived in a home where both parents were residing. Ten children, the largest single category, lived with their mothers only.

The Occupational Factor

During the period following the first World War, Negroes


2Healy and Bronner, New Light on Delinquency and Its Treatment. (New Haven, 1946), p. 25.
migrated to the city from surrounding small rural communities seeking employment and "easy money." Most of them came from farms, which represented the only type of occupation with which they were familiar. Their education was limited, and, because of this fact, the masses were given jobs as common laborers. Income from this employment was fairly adequate, and the families joined their husbands and fathers in their new home.

The depression of 1929 and the decline in industry forced large numbers of Negro families out of employment. Many families were compelled to seek relief from social agencies for the first time. In numerous instances, fathers left Atlanta to seek jobs in other cities and states. Frequently, they hesitated to send for their families and often severed connections completely. Therefore, the mother was left again with all responsibility for the home and the care of the young.

The Aid to Dependent Children Benefits of the Federal Social Security Act have done much to assist such mothers to remain in their own homes and supervise their children. Two of the families studied were receiving this benefit. It was often found inadequate, however, and the mothers frequently worked one or two days per week to supplement this grant.

At an early age, the boys and girls of low income families sought employment after school and on Saturdays to provide themselves with necessities their parents were unable
to afford. The boys usually worked in grocery stores as delivery-boys and general helpers. Many of these boys, by virtue of being forced to work late evenings, slept during class-time in school and consequently failed in their grades. They often became discouraged academically, and, when they reached the age of sixteen, dropped out of school permanently.

The Emotional Factor

The corollary of socio-economic circumstance is the psychological patterning of the family group. Here the first point to be considered is the emotional tie between the two parents. The information has been available in all of the cases studied. Of this number, only one set of parents could be regarded as maintaining an emotionally healthy relationship.

A socially healthy relationship of the parents means that they are living together congenially; a fair relationship implies gross incompatibility but without open break; a socially unhealthy relationship is reflected in separation, divorce or desertion.

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1Ibid., p. 73.
2Ibid., p. 92.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF CASES

The theoretical considerations presented in the previous chapter are of no small etiological importance. It is impossible, however, to discuss such factors in the abstract alone one must cite specific cases.

Case 1

Samuel, age eleven, was referred to the juvenile court by his parents for constantly running away from home and truanting. Their home was located in a fairly good neighborhood. The father and mother both worked away from the home. They left for their employment early in the morning before the children were awake and returned late at night when the children are preparing for bed. These children received no direct parental supervision either before going to school or when they returned in the afternoon.

Samuel started associating with older boys at the age of ten. It was at this time that he first ran away from home and his father had him picked up by a policeman, who found him hiding in the dark stairway of a questionable hotel. He was brought before the juvenile court and placed on probation. His parents were advised by the judge to give more supervision and attention to the children. The mother was advised to discontinue her job and stay at home with the children; she refused to do this as she thought her money was needed in the home.

A week later, the father phoned the probation officer and reported that Samuel had been gone a week and that they did not know his whereabouts. The boy was located and placed in a foster home for detention care until a second court hearing. In the foster home, he made no attempt to run away and appeared fond of his foster mother. At the second court hearing, it was decided to place him in the State Training School for boys. Samuel "has made a very good record" at the Training School, where he "has become a favorite with both children and staff members."

The Aid to Dependent Children Benefits of the Federal
Social Security Act have done much to assist mothers to remain in their own homes and supervise their children. It has been found that the grant is often inadequate with the result that the mothers have had to work at least one or two days per week to supplement the grant, as in this case. In addition, we seem to have here a perfect picture of the consequences of parental rejection. That parental rejection was the central issue is borne out by the record of successful adjustment to the temporary foster home situation. It is not at all clear just why the court preferred Training School to foster home placement under the circumstances; however, it is noteworthy that Samuel, for reasons of personableness or sound basic adjustment or both, did succeed in fitting into the Training School picture, which would seem all the more definitely to point up the fact that the central difficulty was a sense of nonbelonging in the original home.

Case 2

Sallie, age thirteen, lived in a rented garage apartment with her mother, stepfather, and younger sister. There was considerable friction between the sister and Sallie, the latter feeling her parents were partial to the former. Sallie and her mother were both "high-tempered" and engaged in frequent quarrels. The stepfather beat and abused Sallie and often tried to have intercourse with her. She was in the sixth grade and seemed to have a passive attitude toward school and life in general.

After running away from home twice within the same month, Sallie was referred to the juvenile court. When questioned by the probation officer, she admitted spending a considerable amount of time in "juke joints" and drinking beer and whiskey. She further acknowledged the
fact that she stayed in a hotel with a man whom she had met on the street and had had intercourse with him. For this act, she stated, he paid her a quarter.

Sallie was placed in Carrie Steele-Pitts Home until more permanent provisions could be made. During this period, she ran away and was picked up by the probation officer. She told him that while absent from the institution she had intercourse for as little as ten cents. One of the men whom she had contacted was found to have syphilis. Sallie was given a physical examination and found to be infected. She was committed to the State Training School for Girls, where, among other things, she was treated for syphilis. Her adjustment in the Training School was fair.

In this case we find a disorganized home of distinctly hazardous moral tone. There does not seem to be any family bond: each member is left primarily to his own interests, which bear no relation to the family as a group. There was evidence of an exaggeratedly passive attitude on the part of the delinquent's natural parent toward the child and her problem. Sallie was distinctly a rejected child.

Case 3

Clara, age nine, Andrew, age seven, and DeWitt, age six, were referred to the juvenile court by the probation officer. The children had earlier been brought to the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home by the maternal grandmother, on complaint of the children being homeless. The grandmother had further stated that the mother was then locked up for being drunk and disorderly. (The grandmother was sick with tuberculosis and had been keeping the children in one room.)

At the court hearing, it was decided by the judge they should be placed temporarily in Carrie Steele-Pitts Home and that the father, who had been separated from the mother for four years, be compelled to pay board at the rate of three dollars a week each for their children. The adjustment of the children was fair.

Cases of this type account for the greater part of the
Case 4

Jack was a twelve year old boy of superior intelligence. He was committed to the Children's Division by the juvenile court, after having deserted the home for almost a week and stolen fifteen dollars from his father. The father was the petitioner, and the thing that the father was primarily concerned about was the boy's taking the money. In addition, it developed that during the previous two years, the boy had deserted his home at least eight times. (There appeared to be no history of waywardness.)

The parents came from Elberton, Georgia. The father had been unemployed since 1931, when he began suffering from a leg injury caused by a shot several years earlier. The mother suffered from heart trouble. The family was maintained by small sums that the mother earned from her washings. There had been some conflict in the home between the parents, because of the father's failure to provide for the family. The home had been broken up several times, and various relatives had to help support the family.

The boy's school record was poor, and he was regarded as "mischievous." There seems to have been a great deal of disagreement between the parents and the school personnel about the boy's behavior, so that it would seem that some of the school's unfavorable impressions of the boy may have been a part of their hostility toward the family group.

For a time, the boy was interested in Boy Scout activities but usually spent his time doing some kind of work. He seldom attended church. Jack's adjustment in the Training School was considered poor.

Jack appears to be an immature, insecure boy of superior intelligence, who has been severely disturbed by a destructive home situation, poverty, mistreatment by the father, removal from a home which he evidently found more satisfying, and lack of opportunity to develop in a well-integrated, stable family unit. He had been given to such over-compensatory mechanisms
as working around the clock and escaping through fantasy. In any case, due note would not seem to have been taken of his superior intelligence.

Case 5

John was a fifteen year old boy of dull normal intelligence. He was committed to the Training School on a first juvenile court appearance, for entering an apartment, stealing some valuables, threatening to assault a woman who lived there, and masturbate repeatedly in her presence. He was severely retarded in all school subjects and unable to read or write. He was a habitual truant from school and was defiant and antagonistic in his attitude toward his teachers.

The father had been born in Columbus, Georgia, and the mother in Alabama. The parents had a history of syphilis. The mother had experienced ten miscarriages. Although she had received anti-luetic treatments prior to the boy's birth, Philip, the second of the three living children, had congenital lues. The boy's oldest sister was a patient at the State Hospital for Mental diseases.

There was a history of marital discord, which finally resulted in the temporary separation of the parents. The father had accused the mother of being interested in another man. A reconciliation was soon effected, however. John's adjustment in the Training School was considered good.

John's identification was completely with the mother because of the father's non-interest in the children. His sexual maladjustment may well have resulted from this maternal identification coupled with inability to realize many of the normal satisfactions of adolescence in consequence, partly, of his low intelligence. He presented a picture of an immature, somewhat effeminate, anxious, unstable individual. He showed definite feelings of insecurity and inferiority.
Case 6

Harvey was an obese, fourteen-year-old boy of seemingly dull normal intelligence with a slight speech stammer. He was committed to the Children's Division on his second court appearance, on the charge of having entered a wholesale confectionery store with another boy and having stolen a large sum of money in currency.

The parents had been born and reared in rural South Carolina, with little schooling. The family had long been known to various social agencies, and the general opinion seemed to be that the parents were "easy-going" and irresponsible and had shown little ability to super-the boy.

Besides Harvey, there are six children in the family. The older sister had recently borne a child out of wedlock. The financial situation of the family had been poor for a number of years, with resulting overcrowdedness in the home and inadequate living standards generally.

The family income was derived from the father's barbering, small contributions by an older brother and a sister, who were gainfully employed, and the mother's day work.

Harvey was poorly adjusted in school after having been successively enrolled in fifteen different public schools. His adjustment at Carrie Steele-Pitts Home while awaiting foster home placement was considered poor.

Harvey's poor school adjustment could easily be attributed to the family's frequent movings, coupled with his apparently low intelligence.

Case 7

Arthur was a medium-sized, somewhat undernourished fourteen-year-old boy, with a tentative diagnosis of epilepsy. He was of dull-normal intelligence. Arthur was first in court for extorting money from other boys, threatening to beat them up if their money were not given to him. He was placed on probation. He was committed to the Training School on his second court appearance on the complaint of his mother that he was keeping late hours, truanting from school, and spending his time on the street.
The father had deserted the mother and the two children about thirteen years earlier, since which time his whereabouts had been unknown. The family was supported by an ADC grant, and they lived in a three-room apartment which was well kept and fairly well-furnished, in a poor neighborhood.

Arthur had lived in South Carolina from the age of six months to nine years and was in the care of his maternal grandmother during that time. Subsequently, the boy found it hard to accept the mother's authority, and the maternal grandmother's living nearby created considerable conflict in supervision. At home, he felt that the mother favored the older brother. This was particularly hard for him to take in view of his having been the maternal grandmother's "pet" in earlier years.

In school, his serious academic retardation made him completely frustrated. He made constant bids for attention in the classroom and also threatened and bullied other pupils.

On the street, he associated a great deal with adults, and he expected the mother also to accept him on an adult basis. He worked at odd jobs, running errands for various people in the neighborhood.

He was heterosexually precocious. In Atlanta, his custom had been to engage in sexual intercourse "only once a month" because his uncle had told him "not to do it more frequently, since he might get some disease." Arthur was referred to the Children's Division for foster home placement after his release from the Training School. His adjustment in the foster home was considered poor.

Arthur is a boy of rural background who has found it difficult to make satisfactory adjustment to urban life. In addition, his behavior was symptomatic of the absence in the home of a father person, coupled with his experiencing inconsistency of maternal relations following transfer from an over-protective grandmother to a rejecting natural mother.

Case 8

Oscar and Clifford were referred to the Children's
Division by the Child Welfare Association. The investigation revealed that the future welfare of both children was jeopardized because of the mother's poor health; she was suffering from tuberculosis and was not able to provide adequate supervision and maintenance.

The case had been known previously to the Assistance Division. The record indicated that the mother had applied for aid in 1934 after the death of her husband from tuberculosis; the family was known continuously from that opening date until the time of the mother's death, except for intervals when the mother found work. The record also indicated there were no relatives who could provide a home for the boys.

Oscar and Clifford were placed in Carrie Steele-Pitts Home for continued care. To date, neither child had given evidence of suffering from tuberculosis. The adjustment of the boys at Carrie-Pitts Home has been good.

This again is a typical case of being orphaned in consequence of both parents being stricken with a fatal disease. While the mother was living, she was sufficiently accepting of the children, apparently, to insure their adjusting with relative ease to the parent substitute provided by institutional care.

Case 9

Allie, age sixteen, Bernice, age fifteen, and Evelyn, age two, were referred to the juvenile court by Family Service, because the girls were in a state of neglect and under insufficient and improper guardianship. The investigation revealed that the two oldest girls had been reared by an older sister who, apparently, took a punishing attitude toward them. A questionable hotel had been raided, and Allie and Bernice had been arrested. They admitted having lived the life of a prostitute for several years.

The three girls were placed in Carrie Steele-Pitts Home, from which, almost immediately, the two older ones ran away, and their whereabouts have remained unknown. Evelyn's adjustment at Carrie Steele-Pitts Home has been
The mother-substitute, in the person of an older sister, aggravated the children's sense of rejection by maintaining a punitive attitude toward them. The consequence was their developing hostility toward adult authority of any kind, seeking acceptance through sexual promiscuity and, apparently, making their adjustment to life in terms of professional prostitution. It is not too clearly indicated from the record to what extent low intelligence, poor school adjustment, or inadequate community resources may have contributed to this outcome.

Case 10

The Child Welfare Association referred Marion to the Children's Division because they felt that the child was dependent and would require long-time care. Apparently, Marion had been born out of wedlock and had resided with the mother until her death, some nine months earlier, when she had been placed in the care of a neighboring family by the putative father. At the time, it was understood that the family would adopt the child. Subsequently, the prospective foster parents separated and took Marion to her father's home. The father, married to another, was unwilling that Marion live with him lest family discord result: he felt that other members of the family would resent the child's presence in the home. Marion had a four-plus Wasserman.

At the court hearing, the judge decided that the father must assume responsibility for the child and provide a home for her. After six months, it was found that the child was not, however, receiving proper supervision. It was then decided by the juvenile court that the Children's Division had best provide care in a foster home.

Marion has remained in the foster home for six years, and her foster mother and father have adopted her. Her school work has shown unusual promise.
Marion is, apparently, a child of unusually high intelligence and distinct personableness. It would appear that her natural mother has been fully accepting of her, with the result that her nine months of paternal rejection have left no serious scars on her. Notwithstanding, the first judicial decision would seem to leave much to be desired; this student can not conceive of any such conclusion being reached by a competent juvenile court justice enjoying the benefit of sound case-work counsel.

Case II

Erma, age four, was referred to the Children's Division by the juvenile court after neighbors, all of them Negro, had complained that the family had a white child in the home. The social history revealed that mother of the child was white and that she was known to the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare at the time when the child had been committed to the foster care of the Negro family in question. Although the mother did not want the child taken from her at the time, there had long since ceased to be any communication between mother and child. Because of the racial barrier, the child was simply considered "abandoned," and the case workers had been instructed to make no further reference to the mother-child relationship.

Erma was affectionate and seemed to recognize objects and people. However, due to her being a mental defective, no permanent plan could be made for her. At the age of four she could not walk, talk, or control her bowel movements. Successive foster home placements had been attempted. During the last foster home placement, she had tried to strike her foster mother. It was at this time that a mental test was given, and it was decided that the child was feebleminded. She was committed to the State Hospital at Milledgeville.

It is scarcely conceivable that the child's feeblemindedness could have escaped notice by a competent case-worker until
her fifth year. Her mental limitations alone could account for her difficulty in adjusting to a foster home situation. The hostility surrounding her in consequence of her anomalous racial identification only served to aggravate the frustrations she experienced in consequence of her grave mental handicap. The crowning misfortune of the child would seem to be her commitment to a State Hospital for mental diseases; there is no institution for the juvenile feeble-minded in the state of Georgia.

Case 12

Dorothy, age eleven, and Mable, age thirteen, were referred to the Children's Division by the juvenile court. The case history revealed that the mother had died eight years earlier, leaving her two daughters with the father. The father was, however, mentally and physically unable to work; therefore, he could not support them. Assistance was necessarily forthcoming from the Department of Public Welfare.

Since the father was a veteran of World War I, he was eligible for treatment at the Veteran's hospital at Tuskegee. With his leaving, it became important that the children be committed for placement. Accordingly, foster home care was provided. Their adjustment here has been fair.

To all intents and purposes, these children were total orphans. They had, apparently, been deprived of a wholesome paternal relationship since birth and of maternal care since the ages of three and five, respectively.

It is not clear from the record just how the father had been able to provide any kind of home for the children even with the benefit of Public Assistance and Veteran's pension,
his mental limitations being such as they were. Perhaps, the disabilities of the father, far from preventing his playing the role of a mother substitute, actually furthered his acceptance of this role. In any case, it would seem that the children did not suffer so serious a sense of social rejection as to prevent their making a fair adjustment to a foster home.

Case 13

Grace, age thirteen, was referred to the Children's Division by her foster mother when, after twelve years, the child showed signs of being a mental defective. The foster mother told of the child's attacking her with a brick while she slept. Grace was committed to the State Hospital, where she was found to be a manic-depressive; prognosis, however, was "good." Subsequently, the Children's Division arranged foster home placement for her. Adjustment in the home and school has been so successful as to result in her adoption by the foster parents involved.

It is not clear from the case record to what extent the child's manic depression has been the result of an unduly rejecting or punishing attitude by the child's foster mother. It is at least conceivable, of course, that the mental illness in question was exclusively the consequence of difficult pubescence. In any case, it would seem that her response to psychiatric treatment was excellent and that, given the continance of a happy home situation, she need experience no relapse into mental difficulty except, perhaps, at the time of such crises as giving birth or during menopause.

Case 14

Willie, age five, Dorothea, age four, Robert, age
ten, and Frank, age twelve, were placed on probation after a juvenile court hearing at which it was alleged that Frank had stolen two bicycles from a suburban residence. Investigation of the family situation revealed that Frank and the other children were under insufficient guardianship. None of the children of school age had ever attended school, and Frank seemed below par mentally. The father had deserted the family three years earlier.

A visit was made by the worker to explain the rules of probation, but it was not felt that they were understood. Frank informed the worker during the interview that he intended to steal another bicycle "even though it is the wrong thing to do."

The case in question represents another instance of sketchy recording. In the absence of a more detailed picture of the home background, one can only guess what was involved. However, in the light of the fact that none of the children had been enrolled in school on reaching school age, it is more than a matter of conjecture to picture the mother as at least indifferent toward the educational factor in the lives of her children. It is not too clear whether the theft of the bicycle was an effort to compensate for other forms of deprivation or a symptom of rejection.

Case 15

Hubert, age fourteen, was referred to the juvenile court by the Child Welfare Association. Hubert's mother had disappeared, and the boy had no relatives who were interested in him. A neighboring family had taken him in and had indicated their willingness to constitute a permanent foster home. It was felt that Hubert was a public responsibility, and it was asked that he remain in his present foster home, however, while the Children's Division provided board, clothing, and medical care. Subsequently, Hubert refused to attend school and resisted supervision by the foster mother, who now notified Children's Division that she refused to keep him any
Another home was found where his adjustment was considered fair. However, he had taken up the habit of molesting white and colored children on their way to and from school. Reports were received of his becoming a general nuisance in the community. The agency, accordingly, requested Hubert's foster parents to continue caring for him only until more adequate provision could be made for him elsewhere.

Curiously, the caseworker did not see fit to record anything about Hubert's father. Be this as it may, there would seem to be clear evidence that Hubert was a totally rejected child of, perhaps, inadequate intelligence, with the result that he developed various symptomatic traits requiring more intensive casework treatment than the Department of Public Welfare was in a position to afford.

Case 16

Alvin and Melvin, ages ten and thirteen respectively, were referred to the juvenile court because they were in need of material relief and, apparently, suffered from improper guardianship. The investigation revealed that the boys had been born out of wedlock, each of a different father, and that the mother was still promiscuous and neglecting her children. Mother and children lived in a two-room, dilapidated frame house in a thickly-settled, unpaved alley. Alvin was suffering from a respiratory disorder and found it quite difficult to carry on normal play activity. A foster home was chosen where the boys could be together, and adjustment proved excellent.

This would seem to be a clear case of two intelligent children suffering from deprivations characteristic of being reared by a rejecting, insecure, inadequate mother, without the help of an adequate father person. Given an adequate home environment, the children readily realized satisfactory
Case 17

The Family Welfare Society referred Albert, age fourteen, and James, age twelve, to the juvenile court, because the boys were suffering from adult-type tuberculosis and not receiving proper care. The mother and father were both illiterate. The father was apparently psychotic, suffering from marked paranoia. The mother's breadth of experience was so limited that she had yet to traverse the length of the city and knew where only one store was located.

At the time of commitment, the family lived in one room. There was no running water within a half-mile. Plans were made for the children to be hospitalized. Prognosis was, however, poor.

It would seem as though the boys' tubercular infection could have been diagnosed much earlier, at least by the time they enrolled in school. (It is curious, incidentally, that there is no mention of either their academic achievement or failure by the parents to facilitate the children's attendance at school.) In any case, the situation would appear to indicate the functional inadequacy of community resources, both public and private. The case had, in the main developed past the point where casework therapy could accomplish much.

Case 18

Henry, age ten, was referred to the Children's Division by the juvenile court after being picked up for "roaming the streets." Henry's father stated he had done everything he could but that Henry continued to stay out late at night and to be missing for two or three days at a time.

The worker talked with Henry alone, and he said, "I like to get about and see what's going on. Grandma makes me sit up in a chair all day and look at her; I
don't like to do that." Further discussion revealed that Henry would pick up milk bottles and sell them; after these sales, he would go to the movies to spend the day.

The home of an aunt was approved for foster home care. Henry's adjustment here was considered excellent.

It would appear from the sketchy data available that Henry's mother was not in the home and that his father had arranged to domicile him with the paternal grandmother, who, however, because of her advanced years, proved unable to meet the needs of so active a child. The consequence was that he sought satisfaction for these needs elsewhere. It would seem that the aunt to whom he was finally entrusted was, by virtue, among other things, of being a young woman, in a better position to meet Henry's needs, with the result that his behavior pattern was altered almost overnight.

Case 19

Jack, age fifteen, was referred to Carrie Steele-Pitts Home by neighbors, who said that his foster mother had beaten him without let-up throughout the previous day. The worker's investigation revealed that Henry had started working for the corner grocer after school in order to buy the clothes he needed. His foster father drank heavily and demanded that Jack turn over his salary to him. When he refused to do this, his foster mother beat him. Plans were made for Jack to remain in the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home indefinitely, where his adjustment proved excellent.

In only rare instances did a referral remain at the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home for more than the minimum period required to effect satisfactory disposition. In this case, it would appear that the boy involved was sufficiently mature to livelihood and simultaneously complete his high school
education. He had, apparently, passed the age where he required parental supervision of a definitely limiting nature and could be expected, in the not too distant future, to set about establishing a home of his own. Under the circumstances, the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home would seem to constitute almost as good a placement as any.

Case 20

Seven children (aged one through seven), belonging to a family domiciled in a Federal Housing project, were referred to the juvenile court because the parents were unable to provide care and supervision. Reports showed that the mother continually refused to cook for, bathe, or clean the children, and allowed the apartment to remain so filthy and disorganized that the housing authority was constantly threatening to evict the family. The mother seemed to have little love for the children. Frequently, she beat them without cause and threatened to kill one or the other. She had been particularly hostile toward those children whose complexions were as dark as her own. After the birth of each child, the mother became even more indifferent toward father and children alike. She had borne ten children, one for each year she had been married.

Both father and mother were known to the Mental Hygiene Clinic. They had some insight into their mental condition; however, they refused to cooperate, and the condition was tending to grow worse.

The children were now placed in a rural foster home, where their adjustment was poor.

It is not clear from the record just why a rural foster home placement was preferred to an urban, apart from the obvious difficulty to be found in maintaining seven children under a common roof in a urban setting. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how one could expect early happy adjustment in a rural setting of children reared in as distinctly
urban an atmosphere as that characteristic of a Federal Housing Project in the city of Atlanta.

Case 21

Bobbie, age three, and Carrie, age five, were referred to the Children's Division by the juvenile court. The allegation made by the petitioner was that the mother had died a month earlier of tuberculosis and that prior to her death Bobbie and his sister had been living in the home with her. The children had been born out of wedlock, and there was no one on the scene to care for them. Carrie had been severely burned sometime earlier and had been treated for first and second degree burns about the body. She had been hospitalized to date for fifteen months, and during this time it had been necessary to amputate her right arm at the shoulder. An x-ray photograph showed that Bobbie had adult type tuberculosis. The doctor had filed application for his admittance to a sanitorium. Pending discharge from hospital and sanitorium, neither child required placement. For the time being, they were on the files of the Children's Division as cases to be activated in due course.

There is nothing in the case records to indicate what problems of emotional adjustment were involved. Obviously, neither child was likely to reach adulthood with any pronounced sense of social acceptance expect as institutional personnel might come to constitute adequate father or mother substitutes.

Case 22

Marvin, age fourteen, the oldest of four children, was referred to the juvenile court by his father, who complained that he was ungovernable, a chronic runaway, and a truant. Following a visit to the home by the probation officer, it was reported that the mother seemed to reject her children completely. The case did not come up for hearing, but the mother received a lecture from the probation officer about the need for supervision and training in the home and her responsibilities in this connection.

Obviously, this situation calls for sound case work and
not an autocratic of approach to the inadequate mother-person involved. It is not at all clear from the case record what strengths there were in the personality make-up of the mother, but it is abundantly clear that no effort was made to build upon these strengths.

Case 23

David, age thirteen, was referred to the juvenile court by the principal of the high school when he came to school bleeding from his nose and carrying welts on his face and neck. Investigation revealed that David had been born out of wedlock to the mother in question. She denied that he had been mistreated and stated that he had been giving a lot of trouble by forging the name of his stepfather, stealing, and telling the neighbors that he was abused.

Placement was found for David in a foster home where he failed to adjust. Later, he was placed in the State Training School for Boys.

The behavior disorders in this case are characteristic of rejected children. It is hardly to be wondered at that, by the time David reached the age of thirteen, he was constitutionally incapable of adjusting to any home situation.

Case 24

Pauline, age nine, Bertha, age five, and Robert, age seven, were referred to the juvenile court by a neighbor, who said that the children had been left in her care by the mother and that the mother had failed to return. The Children's Division arranged to place the children at Carrie Steele-Pitts Home until permanent plans could be made. Medical examination revealed that Bertha had drunk lye early in the week and that her throat was gradually closing up; the prognosis was poor.

The mother was located and denied that she had abandoned the children. She said that her husband was in the army and that she had been working hard and needed a
vacation. She apparently was not worried over the children's condition. The agency accepted responsibility for care of the children in Carrie Steele-Pitts Home until the father could be reached. Following his discharge from the army, the children were given into his custody.

This would seem to be a clear case of maternal rejection. It is not clear whether the father's enlisting in the army was with a view to escaping an uncongenial home-life. The fact does remain, however, that he seemed to show willingness to play the mother role required of him by his wife's inadequacies. Whether this would suffice to bring about a final solution to the mother's difficulties, can hardly be conjectured from the data at hand. Whatever the case, intensive, long-term case-work would seem to be indicated.

Case 25

Mary and Dorothy, ages ten and twelve, respectively, were referred to the Children's Division by a neighbor. The mother of the girls had died two years before and they had initially been living with various relatives. Apparently, the relatives had been punishing toward and rejecting of the children to the point where they finally consented to the children's being comiciled with a willing neighbor. This neighbor told the worker that if help was not given she would have to have them removed from her home. The investigation revealed that the home in question was a suitable foster home, and assistance was given so that the children might remain. Adjustment of the children was considered good.

No mention is made of the children's father relationship. However, it would seem that their adjustment in the original home had been such as to insure their encountering rejection at the hands of relatives without developing pronounced social hostility. Their adjustment in the foster home would seem to
point up this last.

The incompatibility of parents represented one factor in the failure, by the parents studied, to provide the security and affection required by the growing child. In addition, the date clearly demonstrated that a broken or tense home situation almost inevitably made for emotional instability in the child.

The standards of all the families studied seemed inadequate. Deliberate neglect by parents and guardians was not uncommon.

The intelligence of almost every child seemed low. Certainly, they were for the most part, retarded academically.

To a very large extent, the caseload at the Children's Division seemed to be made up of two groups: first, boys and girls in social situations so unsatisfactory that they required, immediate, if temporary, institutional care, and secondly, those who problems, seemingly less serious, had resulted in failure to make satisfactory adjustment in the foster homes where they had been placed to date.

The difficulties leading to the court's adjudging neglect were, principally, stealing, assault, sexual maladjustment, incorrigibility, and the mental or physical ill-health or decease of the parents. In the background, in every case, were economic underprivilege, an unfavorable neighborhood environment, minority group status, and inadequate community resources.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed primarily to yield a picture of the manner in which Negro cases of neglect have been handled by the Children's Division of the Fulton County Department of Public Welfare, 1945 to 1948.

Whether it was a matter of supervision and supporting children in their own homes or arranging for their care elsewhere, it would most likely appear that the most loyal apologist for the existing social welfare pattern would insist on anything approaching the claim that genuine adequacy exists. The content of the case records studied would seem to point up the need for (1) a sizeable increase in the Department's appropriation for personnel salaries, (2) better-trained personnel, (3) a sizeable increase in the number of well trained caseworkers, (4) appropriate reduction in the per capita caseload, (5) the multiplication of community resources, (6) the extension of the function of existing resources, such as schools and churches, to include a thorough-going program of social outreach, and, most basic of all, (7) the enlargement of economic opportunity to the point where no employable individual would be denied the vocational role for which he had special aptitude.

Out of a total caseload of about five hundred, there were some seventy-five cases of neglect. Of these seventy-five
neglect cases, one third were selected for study on the basis of their representativeness.

"Neglect" in this study is defined as "the absence of adequate supervision and care by parent persons." It was found that most such cases had been thus adjudged by the Juvenile Court, to which referrals had been made variously. Ultimate responsibility, in any case, remained that of the State of Georgia. Court commitment could be to an institution, a foster home, or back to the child's original home. In the main, temporary detention was provided by the Carrie Steele-Pitts Home, a quasi-private agency for the care of Negro children.

A variety of difficulties characterized the selected cases of neglect with which this study has been concerned. Maternal rejection resulted often from the necessity of the mother's seeking gainful employment in virtue of the inadequacy of the usual ADC grant. Family inadequacy rested back upon pronounced infantilism, where not out-right degeneracy, on the part of the parents. There was a high incidence of tuberculosis, with resulting early decease of parents and behavior patterns characteristic of tubercular patients. There seemed to be a pronounced reluctance in the courts to take individual differences into account, particularly in the area of intellectual endowment, with the result that children of superior intelligence were handled in exactly the same fashion as those of dull-normal or borderline intelligence. (Those of
low intelligence incidentally, seemed to adjust to the Training School environment more readily than those of high intelligence.) There appeared to be a very real problem of adjusting rural families to urban situations. Many ramifications of this and other problems, however, might not have arisen had there been adequate father person in the home. In the absence of an adequate father person, notwithstanding, the mother person seemed able on occasion, even when handicapped by chronic illness, to insure the happy social adjustment of her children. A punishing attitude on the part of a parent substitute seemed likely to result in an attitude of non-acceptance toward adult authority in general and the search for adult affection through sexual promiscuity, sexual precociousness, or outright prostitution. The work of the Juvenile Court in handling such situations would seem to leave something to be desired, as witness insistence by the court that an otherwise happily married father incorporate into the family picture the person of a daughter born out of wedlock to a woman other than his wife. There was repeated indication, furthermore, of the inadequate resources provided for the care of the mentally defective. Yet, at least one seriously mentally limited father could successfully incorporate the role of the mother person. Manic-depression in early adolescence seemed responsive to expert therapy, with resulting successful adjustment to a foster home situation. There was evidence of the need for a more zealous enforcement of compulsory school attendance statutes. Special
care seemed especially indicated in the case of the totally rejected child of inadequate intelligence, lest he become a serious chronic offender. Conflicts resulted from placement with too elderly a mother substitute. Under certain circumstances (e.g., the case of Jack, who at 15, was capable of realizing limited self support simultaneously with achieving academic success), congregate institutional care proved satisfactory. The substitution for sound casework of an autocratic approach to an inadequate mother was encountered. Limited evidence existed that one could rarely expect the totally rejected adolescent to adjust successfully to a foster home situation. These was, finally, every indication that, given complete acceptance during the first ten years of life, the child can survive subsequent acts of rejection by relatives or others without developing a generalized attitude of social hostility. In short, it would seem that the measure of "neglect" is less a matter of outward appearance than of the child's inner sense of having an accepted place in organized society; here, the parent person can, for a fact, work miracles, especially where the parent person is the State.
A STUDY OF TWENTY-FIVE CASES OF NEGLECT KNOWN TO THE FULTON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 1945-1948

1. Case No.

2. Name_________________Classification: A____B____C____

3. Source of Referral: Parent__________Relative__________
   Interested individual_________Other agency___Specify____

4. Marital Status of Natural Parents: Married__Widowed__
   Separated________Divorced______Unmarried Mother____

5. Number in Family Group: Total___________
   Age groups: Father____Mother____Boys_______Girls____

6. S.S.I. Registration: Cleared____Not cleared____
   Known____Not known____Specify and give date____

7. Head of the Household: Specify________
   (a) Employment Status: Employed____Unemployed____How long?____
   Reason for Unemployment_______________________________
   Source of income_____________________________________
   (b) Educational Status of: Grammar School Grade____
   High School Grade____College____

8. Reason for application:
   (1) Mental illness or mental defect of parent_of child
   (2) Physical illness of parent____________________________
   (3) Adjustment of child_______________________________
   (4) Marital harmony______________________________
   (5) Intactness of home_______________________________
   (6) Superior Court Investigation?_____________________
   (7) Inadequate supervision of child, due to long working
       hours of parent or guardian________________________
   (8) Desire of parent to give up child for adoption____
   (9) Other (Specify)_______________________________
   (10) Comment on reason checked____________________

9. Nature of Service requested:
   (1) Foster care in
       (a) boarding home______ (b) adoptive home_______
       (c) institution______ (d) wage home_______
       (e) free home______ (f) other________________
       Specify____________________
   (2) Relief in own home
(a) rent _______ food _______ clothing _______

(3) Medical care

(4) Other (Specify)

10. Disposition of case
(1) Minor services
  OTI
  referred
(2) Withdrawn
(3) Rejected

11. Nature of Service Rendered: (1) Information given with regard to community resources

(1) Foster care provided for in:
  (a) boarding home
  (b) adoptive home
  (c) institution
  (d) wage home
  (e) free home
  (f) otherwise (Specify)

12. Financial responsibility assured by: Parent _______ Wholly _______
  Partially _______ agency _______ wholly _______ partially _______
  others _______
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