Psycho-social factors in economic dependency in twenty-five selected cases of families receiving aid to dependent children grants, Hinds County Division of Public Assistance, Jackson, Mississippi

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PSYCHO-SOCIAL FACTORS IN ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY IN TWENTY-FIVE SELECTED CASES
OF FAMILIES RECEIVING AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN GRANTS,
HINDS COUNTY DIVISION OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE,
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
LEADING TO ILLEGITIMATE PREGNANCIES WHILE
RECEIVING AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN GRANTS

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

BY
ESTHER ELLIS SAMPSON

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1951
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgments are made to Miss Sara P. Ricks, Director, State Division of Child Welfare, for clearing administrative policies in order for the case studies to be used; to Mrs. Pauline Smith, Child Welfare Supervisor, for controlling the case load during the research at the agency; to Miss Nathalie Dunn, Hinds County Welfare Agent, for permitting use of the files, and for allowing time to interview visitors; to Mrs. Nell Ruffin, Mrs. Kathleen Peart, Mrs. Marie McElroy, and Mrs. Katie V. Wilson for supplying case records and information through interviews; to Dr. V. Horatio Henry for assistance with the technical part of the study; and to Mrs. Amanda Watts and Miss Barbara Baskerville, thesis advisors.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Some of the mothers receiving Aid to Dependent Children grants have expressed their feelings about inadequate grants and the difficulties involved in securing employment to supplement their grants. A study of these and other economic and social factors in these families were thought to be timely. In order to supply their unmet needs, they stated that they accepted financial assistance from male companions who offered it and this sometimes resulted in illegitimate pregnancies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to secure factual information from the mothers who are receiving grants to learn whether or not environmental factors and economic dependency tend to influence illegitimacy. The study was also concerned with the family background of these mothers so that their attitudes toward environmental factors and their economic dependency could be learned.

Method of Procedure

Case records and interviews with workers were employed as the methods of securing information for this study. This information was recorded on schedules. Related theory from the field was used as the sphere of reference.
Scope and Limitations

The study was limited to twenty-five selected families from the case-loads of the workers at the Hinds County Division of Public Assistance, Jackson, Mississippi, illustrating the phenomena to be studied in relation to economic dependency and factors involving illegitimacy. Only mothers from twenty-two to thirty-five years of age were selected. Mothers younger than twenty-two were omitted because it was felt that mothers who were adults would have more maturity in handling their situations and that the findings would therefore be more meaningful. A sufficiently large number of mothers aged thirty-five were chosen to make inclusion of older mothers unnecessary. The span of age was thought to be sufficiently short to be fairly homogenous. Illustrative cases chosen by the workers were used. The study covers the period of time between January, 1946 and December, 1949.
CHAPTER II

LEGAL PROVISIONS

The Creation of the State and County Departments

The Mississippi Department of Public Welfare was created by Section 7217, Mississippi Laws of 1936, chapter 175; and including 1940, chapter 298. The legislature created the State and County Departments of Public Welfare, a State Commissioner of Public Welfare, and such other positions as may be established pursuant to this act.

Section 7216 set forth definitions as used herein the act; the term "department" means the State Department of Public Welfare; "commissioner" means the State Commissioner of Public Welfare; "board" means State Board of Welfare; "applicant" means a person applying for assistance under this act; "assistance" means money payments made to needy persons hereunder; "county department" means the County Board of Public Welfare, the County Welfare Agent, and such other personnel as may be authorized in said department by the State Department of Public Welfare. The state department functions in an administrative capacity as the county department supervises the services.

The state and county departments of public welfare were authorized by state laws that permit Mississippi to enjoy the benefits of the Federal Social Security Act of 1935 and its later amendments. From the beginning of the program, federal funds have provided approximately half of the
money used for assistance to old people, blind people, and dependent children. The Federal Government has also provided about half of the cost of administration of these programs. Under the 1946 amendment, federal funds pay more than half of the assistance grants.

In addition to the money, the state department benefits by having the consultation and help of members of the Regional Staff of the Federal Security Administration. Through that agency the department also has access to information about the work in other states which may be helpful in developing the best possible program for Mississippi.

The Governor of Mississippi appoints the State Board of Public Welfare of three people, one from each Supreme Court district. The board establishes policies and selects the commissioner. The commissioner is the administrative head of the department. To assist him, he has a cabinet of Directors of the different Divisions, and a merit system council. In addition to these, a Director of Legal Research gives special service to any one of the Divisions needing a particular type of work done.

All of the state Divisions function in an administrative capacity to the county department by means of the staff of District Supervisors. Each of these supervisors serves a particular group of counties and helps those county welfare agents to understand the policies and procedures of the state department and to carry out the state-wide policies. The supervisors also assist the county department with the local problems which affect the work of the department in that community. The county welfare board and the county welfare staff share joint responsibility to plan for the utilization and development of all resources available within the county for the promotion of public welfare.
The county department has the authority of administering and supervising the Aid to Dependent Children program. Each person who applies for a grant must meet eligibility requirements as set forth by the state department of public assistance.

The Aid to Dependent Children Program

Section 7171, Aid to Dependent Children—Assistance may be granted under this act to any dependent child who is living in a suitable family home meeting the standards of care and health fixed by the laws of this state and the rules and regulations of the state department.

"Dependent child" means a needy child under the age of eighteen if found by the state department to be regularly attending school, who has been deprived of parental support or care by reason of the death, continued absence from the home, or physical or mental incapacity of a parent, and who is living with his father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, stepsister, uncle, aunt, great uncle, great aunt in such a place of residence as his or their own home. Provided further that for the purposes of this act, all such relatives shall qualify as such whether the relationship be acquired by birth or adoption, and that neither divorce nor death shall terminate any such relationship.1

"Assistance" means money payment with respect to a dependent child or children.

Section 7173 authorized the amount of assistance. The amount of assistance which may be granted for any dependent child shall be determined by the county department with due regard to the resources and necessary expenditures of the family and the conditions existing in each of the family and in accordance with the rules and regulations made by the state department, and shall be sufficient when added to all other income and support

1Mississippi Laws, Laws, 1936, chapter 175.
available to the child, to provide such child with reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health. The first dependent child in each family may receive $15.00 per month; the second child $10.00 per month; and each additional child an amount not exceeding $5.00 per month.\(^1\)

The mothers who apply for assistance under this act make application at the county department of the county in which the dependent child resides. The application is made upon a form prescribed by the state department. The relative with whom the child lives makes the application and supplies information in regard to age, residence, dependency, and such other information as required by the rules and regulations of the state department. One application may be made for several children of the same family if they reside with the same relative.

Whenever an application is made for assistance, an investigation and record are made of the circumstances in order to ascertain the dependency of the child. The investigation includes a visit to the home of the child or relative with whom the child lives during the time the application is studied for eligibility and after assistance has been granted.

Upon the completion of the investigation, the county department decides whether the child is eligible for assistance under the provisions of the act, and determines the amount of such assistance and the date on which such assistance shall begin. The county department notifies the applicant of its decision.

\(^1\)Mississippi Laws, Laws, 1940, chapter 298.
CHAPTER III

THE HISTORY OF THE MOTHERS

Family Background

Illegitimacy and Aid to Dependent Children have been widely discussed by authorities in the field of public assistance. Some authorities have argued that public assistance to dependent illegitimate children tends to increase the rate of illegitimacy while others say economic dependency and personal insecurity are the principal factors involved. However, it is highly probable that financial assistance to dependent illegitimate children is a factor to be considered in the case of mothers involved in illicit relationships. It is a known fact that economic dependency is a social ill that stems from many circumstances. It is closely related to the psycho-social factors in illegitimacy. It can be said that illegitimacy and dependency are closely interwoven in the cultural and social pattern.

This study is not made to prove either of the factors stated above, but is made to point up and emphasize that environmental factors and economic dependency are powerful influences in the creation of illegitimacy. The study was also made to look into the family background of mothers receiving Aid to Dependent Children and to learn of their attitudes toward the environmental factors determining their economic dependency. In order to make this study, 25 selected case records were used. Through these the various data showing the related facts stated in the hypotheses were gathered and analysed so that future situations might be met and
treated with profitable results.

There are many factors which produce unmarried motherhood. However, whether mothers are married or not, certain physical realities, such as pregnancy and planning for the expected baby inevitably must be faced. But the unmarried mother has additional complications; there is the lack of status, sense of shame, need for help in practical planning, lack of a husband with whom to share responsibility, need for financial assistance with medical care, and disposition of baby. In the final analysis all these problems may be placed under the category of personal insecurity and economic dependency.

The case of Mrs. S., aged 31, clearly showed a defined pattern that can serve as a basis for the other cases studied. Mrs. S. was reared by her mother for she never knew her father. She was told her father died when she was a baby. Although Mrs. S.' mother never married, five siblings were born into the family. Each illegitimate pregnancy caused the family to suffer severe deprivations since her mother was the sole breadwinner. Mrs. S.' early childhood experiences with her own unmarried mother and other siblings developed a cultural attitude of acceptance towards illegitimacy which greatly affected Mrs. S.' behavior in adult life.

At 17 years of age, Mrs. S. had completed the eighth grade but had to leave school to work so that she could help her mother in the support of the other siblings. Mother and daughter made employment plans whereby when one was working the other stayed home as the homemaker. Their plan worked satisfactorily until Mrs. S. met and married an irresponsible young man and they established residence in another section of the city.
Mrs. S. and her husband had marital difficulties but managed to stay together until a child was born. Shortly afterwards Mrs. S. and her husband separated but still remained on friendly terms. He was permitted to visit Mrs. S. and his child often, but he did not contribute to their support. Mrs. S. was forced to place her child with different people while she secured irregular employment which provided meager subsistence for her and the baby. It was at this stage that she became very intimate with other male companions who contributed to her partial support.

Mrs. S. and her husband continued their friendly relationship until he was called into the armed service. After the husband had been inducted, Mrs. S. learned she was pregnant but did not let her husband know about her pregnancy because she was not sure he was the father of the expected baby. Her husband, through correspondence with friends at home, learned of his wife's pregnancy. He denied paternity and according to Mrs. S. secured a divorce while in service. The case record, however, did not mention whether Mrs. S. applied for an allotment for the child.

During early pregnancy, Mrs. S. began common-law living with another man who supported her and the child. Nine months after the birth of her second child, this man deserted her, leaving her pregnant and with the added responsibility to support two small children. Mrs. S. returned to the home of her mother who took her in and gave her assistance until the baby was delivered and she was able to do part time employment. However, during Mrs. S.' pregnancy, her mother had to support her own family of five in addition to Mrs. S. and her two children on a salary of $60.00 per month.

While living with her mother, Mrs. S. met a married man who operated
a cafe nearby. They became very good friends and he gave assistance with her maternity expenses. Mrs. S. was aware that this man had a fourteen-year-old daughter by another union, and was not legally free to marry her, but she continued her courtship with him.

In January, 1948, Mrs. S. came to the public assistance office to apply for Aid to Dependent Children for her two dependent illegitimate children. It was not until October of the same year that eligibility for aid was established and an initial grant of $11.00 per month was approved. The information as to how the agency established eligibility is in. The chief concern in this chapter is to analyze the causal facts pertaining to personal insecurity and economic dependency.

Relationship of Mothers to Own Parents

Another aspect of the early childhood experiences of Mrs. S. should be considered as to the effect on her adult life. Mrs. S.' earliest identifications were formed with her mother. In a normal family, the child is aware that the mother is loved by the father and she too wants to be loved by him and wants to have a child like mother. Mrs. S. was denied the presence of a father figure and became emotionally confused in her psychosexual development when her mother presented her with many father figures who were inadequate and could not meet her need for a real father. If Mrs. S. had been reared in a normal home situation where happy relationships existed with her father and mother, she would have given up her infantile love object, her father, in adolescence, and later accepted another man

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1Babette Block, "The Unmarried Mother. Is She Different," The Family, (L.P.A./, 1945), XXVI, 163-164.
and had a child by him. Unfortunately the normal transition from child to adult did not occur for Mrs. S. and she was thwarted in her emotional development. This disturbance in Mrs. S' emotional development reproduced in her a spirit of competition with her mother by her becoming illegitimately pregnant by many men instead of having one love object (husband).

Mrs. S.' personal insecurity had its roots in lack of family morals and ideals, lack of an opportunity to grow up, lack of recreation and wholesome companionship. Mrs. S. was totally unprepared for family life of her own for she had had no satisfying family relationships within her own family group. She was ignorant about the biological facts of life and used male companionship "just for sex play".

Lack of a higher formal education also handicapped Mrs. S. in securing adequate employment for higher wages to supply an average living for herself and children. She had to accept menial domestic jobs since she was not equipped with any vocational skills to demand better employment and higher wages. These menial jobs tended to accentuate her economic dependency rather than alleviate it, because at no time was she ever able to satisfy her needs completely. It was necessary for Mrs. S. to pay someone to care for the three small children during her employment. When her current living expenses were taken care of and the baby sitter paid, Mrs. S. usually had nothing left to cover her own personal needs. Her continuous disappointments in not being able to buy sufficient clothing for herself and children, to procure adequate food, and to pay her rent on time, made Mrs. S. accept whatever promises male companions offered in the hope of deriving some pleasure from living as well as covering some of her current and immediate expenses.
The causes of illegitimacy are diverse and may vary from case to case. However, the general findings of research are that illegitimacy stems from psychological insecurity, economic insecurity, a particular ignorance of the facts of life, and a lack of education in general. The cases that have been studied definitely showed the following facts as being component parts in creating illegitimacy.

The living conditions of the mothers studied showed most of their families were large, irregular in family organization and economically poor. Their homes were small and in need of repairs. Often both parents and children slept in the same room and the children were exposed to adult sex relations. Parents discussed sex life before their children without any embarrassment with the result that sex play became a matter of fact and part of their cultural inheritance. In a social situation that does not rigidly censure common-law marriage among adults, a moderate emphasis on restraints for the children would perhaps be expected. Freedom from traditional sex controls is rooted in economy rather than in the romantic factor of love, courtship and marriage. The majority of these mothers have never gone beyond the eighth grade.

Other Identifying Information

**TABLE 1**

**EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF MOTHERS AT INTAKE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades Completed</th>
<th>No. of Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that of the twenty-five mothers studied, eight finished the eighth grade, four finished the sixth grade, only one reached freshman college level, and one completed only the third grade. This indicates these mothers were not educationally equipped to compete for more profitable job opportunities, and even if they secured them, their lack of skill would still render them insecure. They had no training in the field of vocational skill and this forced them into the acceptance of all manner of poorly paid menial jobs.
Table 2 reveals that many children are born while the mothers are receiving aid even though they are aware of the economic problems involved in caring for the children they already have. There were 12 illegitimate children among the mothers in 1946, and by 1947 the number had increased to 26. In 1948 the number had reached 39 and by the end of 1949 the total was 52.
TABLE 3
HEALTH OF MOTHERS AT INTAKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The term "Fair" with reference to health means troubles resulting from inadequate medical care during the pre-natal stage, at delivery, and during post-natal care.

Table 3 shows that six of these mothers were illegitimately pregnant at intake and unable to work due to advanced pregnancy. Six were in fair health with physical trouble from inadequate prenatal care, improper medical attention from home deliveries with midwife in attendance, and no post-natal care. Five were in poor health attributed to the effects of venereal diseases, arthritis, or the need of surgery for a physical complaint. Five were in good health but did not have any relatives with whom they could leave their children during their employment nor could they pay a person to give care to them. Their health needs were not included in the budgetary assistance nor was the financial grant sufficient to allow them to remain in the home. The result was that they continued suffering severe deprivations of the necessities of life, and to get these necessities they continued their way of living."
Table 4 reveals that of the twenty-five mothers studied, eight were thirty-five years of age, and one twenty-two years of age. Mothers younger than twenty-two were omitted because it was felt that mothers who were adults would have more maturity in handling their situations and that the findings would therefore be more meaningful. A sufficiently large number of mothers aged thirty-five were chosen to make inclusion of older mothers unnecessary. The span of age was thought to be sufficiently short to be fairly homogenous.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Mothers at Intake</th>
<th>Number of Such Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

ATTITUDE OF MOTHERS TOWARD AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN POLICIES

Attitude of Mothers Toward Economic Dependency

An attitude of acceptance of the Aid to Dependent Children policies was prevalent among the twenty-five mothers studied. Most of the mothers cooperated in establishing eligibility and furnished whatever proof was necessary toward getting their grant approved. A few mothers kept additional illegitimate pregnancies a secret. In their ignorance they believed that their grant would be cancelled if their condition was known to the visitor. Technically their condition was the result of sex relations, and if the man was known, he would be required to establish paternity and assist with the medical expenses involved and the support of the expected child. After delivery the mothers usually notified the visitor in order to have the new baby added for an increase in the grant. Mrs. S.' attitude was typical of that of the other mothers. She came to the Welfare Office to bring the birth certificate of her baby and almost demanded that the baby receive what he was entitled to since she thought the Aid to Dependent Children was set aside for children born without fathers. Here is demonstrated the concept created by ignorance of the purpose of the Aid to Dependent Children program. Table 1 indicates their educational level and gives a clue as to why they behaved in such a manner. Mrs. S. had no idea where the putative father was for he deserted her just before she was to be confined. Nevertheless, she felt confident that the Welfare Department had extra money from the government and that her baby should have his share.
Attitude of Mothers Toward Grant

All twenty-five of the mothers stated that the grants were entirely too low and that they covered only a small portion of their actual needs. They complained about the high cost of living and their inability to secure employment to supplement their grants. They did not have enough money to pay for the care of their children during employment and the grant was not large enough to allow them to remain at home without suffering severe deprivations.

When these mothers were questioned concerning the responsibility of the putative fathers, they demonstrated a passive attitude and generally made no effort to bring them into the picture. Fear out of ignorance on the part of these mothers made paternity a most difficult fact to establish. These mothers indicated that their relationships with the putative fathers were very casual in nature. In some instances they knew only the first names of the men and nothing about their family background. The following information given by Mrs. S. is typical: "I met him while he was here on a Singing Engagement. He was a member of the Gospel Choir. When he left I found myself pregnant. I do not know how to get in touch with him. He is on a singing tour." In other cases they were ignorant of the marital status, employment record, or general habits of the men. In a few cases, some mothers knew the putative fathers' names but would not divulge them because they were married.

1See Chapter V—Employment Limitations.
TABLE 5

NATURE AND REGULARITY OF SUPPORT FROM PUTATIVE FATHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Support</th>
<th>Regular</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that six mothers received irregular money support from the putative fathers for their own child among the siblings. Twelve mothers received no support because the putative fathers deserted. None received financial assistance toward maternity expenses. The dominant family pattern among the lower-class Negro is that the mother is expected to assume her role as the bearer of the family burdens.¹

During slavery, the family was loose in structure. Families were frequently broken up. The husband or wife was sold to another plantation but the children usually stayed with the mother. The mother was considered a valuable piece of property because she could bear more children who would be future hands to be sold at a profit. Thus promiscuity was tolerated and encouraged in order to increase the number of slave children who were considered an economic asset. Thus slave culture still permeates the lower-class Negro society. It is mostly the upper socio-economic class of Negroes who attach a stigma to illegitimacy because they have assimilated some of

the culture of the patriarchal family organization.

The case studies made it clear that these mothers accepted their roles passively. In some cases, the mothers protected the putative fathers from the criticism of the community for their desertion of the family at the most difficult time of their advanced pregnancy. Later, they accepted them back in the home after childbirth.

**TABLE 6**

**MARITAL STATUS AT INTAKE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No. of Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In the State of Mississippi, common-law living over and above a period of 3 years is recognized, and children born within this union are legitimate.*

Table 6 reveals that of the twenty-five mothers studied, seven were single and had only a casual acquaintance with putative fathers, three were legally married, six lived by common-law marriage but men deserted during second or third pregnancy, four mothers had for years been separated from their legal husbands but had not secured a divorce, and five were widows.

**Attitude of Mothers Toward Illegitimate Children**

Regardless of the marital status of these mothers, all were unwilling to discuss separation from their illegitimate dependent children. There was a strong filial bond between the mothers and children. Here again the
matriarchal nature of the family of the lower-class Negro was evident. These mothers regarded their children as an economic asset, a sort of old-age insurance. The children also served as a focus for economic aspirations. In any society children contribute to the cohesion of the family group. In the lower-class families, their role is more potent due to the matriarchal cultural pattern. These mothers concentrated their hopes and their efforts in their children.
CHAPTER V

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY OF MOTHERS

Eligibility Requirements for Aid to Dependent Children Grants

Aid to Dependent Children is a service provided by law. It is part of a broad, social plan of public services to children which includes education, health, welfare, and the social insurances. Aid to Dependent Children provides them the opportunity to grow up in a setting of their own family relationships. This is a program to which the mothers have a right to apply. This right is safeguarded by such provisions as eligibility requirements set forth by state and federal laws. It is the duty of the public agency to help all mothers, who make application for aid, establish whether or not they are eligible.

Mrs. S. came to the agency to apply for financial assistance for her two dependent illegitimate children. A male friend of Mrs. S. was giving her enough support to cover the needs of her legitimate child. Mrs. S. was mainly concerned about the illegitimate children because their fathers had deserted. Mrs. S. had heard about the Aid to Dependent Children program through a friend of hers who was an unwed mother receiving financial assistance for her four dependent illegitimate children. When Mrs. S. came to the agency, she knew enough about Aid to Dependent Children to discuss

\[1\text{See Chapter II, page 7.}\]
it freely with the visitor.

Mrs. S. supplied the identifying information needed to fill the forms\(^1\) for application and promised to return later with the birth certificates of the children. Mrs. S. applied for financial assistance in January, 1948. From that time until October, 1948, when her application was approved, the visitor made numerous visits to the home to see the children, the home situation, and to work out a family budget with Mrs. S. and her mother.

The family budget serves the purpose of showing the financial ability or inability of the family or relatives to meet its own basic minimum requirements. It was not until August, 1948 that Mrs. S. and visitor were able to develop a family budget. During the interim of eight months, Mrs. S. worked two weeks at a time and earned enough money to cover some of the family's urgent needs; but since employment was only of an irregular nature, there could be no long range planning because she was uncertain not only as to where or when she would work but also as to how much she would receive. The irregular employment plan of mother and daughter prolonged the time for determining need for financial assistance.

When eligibility was established, an initial grant of $11.00 per month was approved. The maximum State allowance was $15.00 per month for the first child, $10.00 for the second child, and $5.00 for each additional child. Although the Federal government allowed $24.00 for the first child and $15.00 for each additional child, the State government had to limit this amount further. In computing the budget, the visitor listed the

\(^{1}\text{See Appendix for forms used to establish eligibility—Form PA-1, Form PA-1a, Form PA-11, Form PA-23.}\)
minimum monthly requirements of the family on the form\textsuperscript{1} along with the monthly family income. The total income was subtracted from the total requirements which left a deficit of $11.37; thus the initial grant of $11.00. The budget was prepared with Mrs. S. and her mother while the visitor thoroughly explained to them how it was computed. Mrs. S. seemed satisfied with her grant and the visitor did not have any further contact with Mrs. S. until six months later.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Type of Employment & Number of Mothers \\
\hline
Total & 25 \\
Maid service & 11 \\
Home laundry & 6 \\
Part time laundry work & 3 \\
Seasonal workers & 5 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Employment of Mothers at Intake}
\end{table}

Table 7 shows distribution of employment of these mothers. Eleven were maids earning from eight to twelve dollars a week. Six washed and ironed at home for $1.25 to $2.25 per bundle per week. Three were employed part time at a city laundry averaging about twelve dollars per week. Five were seasonal workers. "Seasonal" means working by the day in the rural sections hoeing or picking cotton; shaking pecans; picking strawberries; or picking-up pecans. These mothers, along with their walking children, are picked-up by truck each morning and returned in the evening. The infants are usually cared for by neighbors until the mothers return. In

\textsuperscript{1}See Appendix for "Budget on Applicant and Essential Persons"—Form PA-23.
most instances, these mothers are paid by the day and the money is spent by the day for food and urgent needs. As pointed out in Table 1, the educational level of these mothers limits their ability to secure high salaried jobs and they are forced to accept the menial jobs with little pay.

"Redetermination of eligibility" for continued financial assistance for Aid to Dependent Children is made every six months as required by law. In May, 1949, the visitor visited the home to redetermine Mrs. S.' need for financial assistance. She found Mrs. S. in bed suffering from an accidental fall which Mrs. S. said occurred while on her job at a local cafe. Because she voluntarily informed the visitor that she would be able to return to work in a week or two, the budget was reworked with Mrs. S.' assistance and the grant of $11.00 remained the same.

In July, Mrs. S. came to the agency to request that her grant be raised because she had lost her job at the cafe and her health was bad due to advanced pregnancy. When the visitor questioned Mrs. S. concerning the putative father, she could give no specific details other than that he was her boy friend but they had no intentions of marriage. He was a friend to her when she needed one and she was obligated to him. Other than that, there was no basis for their relationship. When visitor tried to interpret to Mrs. S. her lack of understanding of the purpose of the Aid to Dependent Children in relation to her ability to use it effectively, Mrs. S. only responded in a passive way. The budget was reworked and the grant was raised from $11.00 to $25.00 per month. During the time between application and grant, Mrs. S.' current and immediate needs were mostly covered by the earnings of Mrs. S. with some supplementation from her mother and friend. Mrs. S., however, continued her illicit relations with this man
and others. Here again Mrs. S. demonstrated her psycho-cultural traits as inherited from living with her unmarried mother during early childhood. Her personal insecurity was of an economic origin. Studies show that the un-wed mother has a tendency to gravitate toward unskilled occupations, principally those in the field of domestic and personal services.\(^1\)

Methods Used to Supplement Grants

Illegitimacy is accepted by the group in the lower economic strata of the Negro population.\(^2\) The un-wed mother often lives with her mother who is dependent upon her own labor as a domestic servant to support the family group.

It is an accepted fact that money is important in our economy and it has a direct effect upon our lives. In many instances, deprivations and hardships cannot be relieved by the assistance grants, and many problems arise and are intensified by the failure of these grants to meet basic economic necessities. When there is no additional income, financial supplementation is necessary for the family's existence as shown in the case of Mrs. S.

In all twenty-five cases studied, little or no financial assistance was given by relatives. In some cases the unmarried mothers returned home to live with their mothers for support during pregnancy and during the time

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\(^1\) Clifford Brenner, "Illegitimacy and Aid to Dependent Children," Public Welfare, (October, 1950), p. 175.

they could not work and provide for their family. There seems to be a healthy social attitude on the part of parents and relatives of unmarried mothers in their willingness to take them in. No matter how small or crowded is the house, there is always room for more. As underprivileged members of society, it has been necessary for these mothers to call on all the resources in their families if they are to survive. The children are accepted easily into the families on the simple basis of life and eventually are indistinguishable from any of the other children.¹ So important is the role of the woman as compared to that of the man, in terms of common American convention, that the adjective "matriarchal" has come to be employed in recent years when describing this family type.² This type of family practice has built up a family organization conducive to social health for no stigma or guilt is attached to illegitimacy. Only when these practices are brought into closer contact with the norms of other cultures such as the Caucasian do they tend to break down partially and to cause the demoralization of some individuals.³

¹Charles S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 67.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Illegitimacy is a term commonly applied to children born out of wedlock; that is, without legal sanction. However, it is difficult to classify these children when common-law relationship is accepted by the lower-class and no stigma is attached to it. This acceptance can be attributed to a carryover of the inheritance of a slave culture in which the family was more or less matriarchal.

The factors which are alleged to affect illegitimacy are many and varied. This study of mothers receiving aid for dependent illegitimate children is based on limited statistical evidence for only twenty-five case studies were made. They reveal that the following must be taken into account:

1. Socio-Psychological Considerations:

   The social causes center in the character of home life and of parents. These in turn are the products of community habit and custom where very often parents and children slept in the same room and the children were exposed to adult sex functions. The result was that sex play became matter-of-fact and part of their cultural inheritance. This in turn affected the presence or absence of social stigma attached to the unmarried mother or the illegitimate child. In this particular study, it is the carry-over of a slave
culture in which the matriarchal society is the rule.

2. Socio-Economic Considerations:
The economic pressure is so great in the struggle for survival that the question of morality easily gives place to expedience at any price. There is less formal marriage and easier separation. The greater freedom from sex taboos and controls is rooted in an economy rather than in the romantic factor. These in turn accent the situations still the more and further illegitimacy results.

3. Educational Considerations:
Lack of adequate education soon creates the vicious circle of occupational stratification in the form of poor and underpaid employment. This in its turn produces the perpetuation of the economic pressure. This aspect deprives them of the knowledge not only of birth control practices but even the common facts relating to life itself.

4. Environmental Considerations:
There is the situation of poor and overcrowded housing located in the deteriorated and disorganized sections of the Negro community which allows children, growing up in the atmosphere of sexual indifference, to become themselves indifferent to the same situation. Added
to this there is the problem of resultant poor health and communal participation in that struggle for life. The living condition of the lower-class group re-enforces its defective cultural inheritance.

The limited investigation from this study has proven that there is a primary responsibility of the public agency for meeting in a larger measure the economic needs of those mothers if they are to provide suitable homes for their children. An adequate budget for every family must be made up in order to assure some economic stability.

The recent changes in the program for Aid to Dependent Children show improvement in the amount of grants for children receiving public assistance. Heretofore, grants paid in part by the States and in part by the Federal government have been sent monthly for the care of needy children, but no provision was made for the mothers or other relatives who provided a home for the children. Since one of the principal reasons for the program is to give children a chance to grow up in their own family, cherished by someone who loves them, then denying payment to the mother or other relative was defeating the purpose of the program. Now federal funds can be used to match payments to one adult relative who cares for dependent children. Along with this new change in the financial part of the program, and with more adequate case work services to the families, there is hope for a brighter and happier future for dependent illegitimate children.
APPENDIX A

FORMS USED TO ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY
DEPARTMENT PUBLIC WELFARE
APPLICATION FOR ASSISTANCE
Case No._____
Date received ________
Race________
Received by ___________ COUNTY Sex ________
NEW ☐ TRANSFERRED ☐ FORMERLY REJECTED ☐ RE-OPENED ☐

I, ____________________________(Last name) ____________________________(First name) ____________________________ (Middle name)
hereby make application for ____________________________ as provided by the laws of Mississippi.

OLD AGE ASSISTANCE ☐

I am sixty-five years old or over. I was born ________ (Month) (Day) (Year) ________

I have lived in Mississippi from ________ (Month) (Year) to ________ (Month) (Year) ________

I am not an inmate of an institution of any kind.

I have not transferred property within the past two years for the purpose of becoming eligible for assistance.

I have not sufficient income or resources to provide myself with a reasonable standard of living.

AID TO THE BLIND ☐

I have no vision or my vision with glasses is such that I cannot perform ordinary activities for which eyesight is required.

I am not an inmate of a public institution.

I am not receiving old age assistance.

I have not transferred property within the past two years for the purpose of becoming eligible for assistance.

I have not sufficient income or resources to provide myself with a reasonable standard of living.
AID TO DEPENDENT CHILDREN

The children named below are living in my home.

These children have been deprived of parental support or care by reason of ______ the death, ______ continued absence from home, or ______ physical or mental incapacity of a parent.

I am not reasonably able to provide adequate care and support for them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Child</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
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I have read, or had read to me, this application. I have been informed of the requirements for receiving assistance and of my rights in this matter. I authorize the county welfare department to secure any necessary information concerning my finances and physical condition. I agree to notify the county welfare department of any change in my address or of any change in my circumstances.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

ADDRESS

(Mailing) (Distance and direction from nearest neighborhood)

WITNESS

ADDRESS OF WITNESS
Mississippi
Form PA-la
3-1-46

CASE FACE SHEET

Date Filed
Name of Worker
County

Case Number
Race
Sex

1. NAME OF APPLICANT
(Last) (First) (Middle) (Or Initials)

2. ADDRESS
(Mailing) (Distance and direction from nearest neighborhood)

3. DATE OF BIRTH (Month) (Day) (Year)
PLACE OF BIRTH (Town) (County) (State)

4. EDUCATION
(Grammar) (High School) (College or Vocational)

CHURCH PREFERENCE

5. MARITAL STATUS. If ever married, give following information regarding husband or wife. If woman, give maiden name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Date Married</th>
<th>Place License Secured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. HOUSEHOLD. Present living arrangements: Owner Renter In home with others. MEMBERS IN HOUSEHOLD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Health Condition</th>
<th>Employment or School</th>
<th>Income</th>
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</table>
7. CHILDREN AWAY FROM HOME AND OTHER RELATIVES (wife, husband, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, spouse's children by former marriage, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Kind of Employment</th>
<th>No. of Dep.</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

8. INSURANCE AND ANNUITIES. List all insurance and annuity policies carried by the applicant and spouse. If no policy is carried, write the word NONE in space below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Policy</th>
<th>Name of Company</th>
<th>Policy Number</th>
<th>Name of Insured</th>
<th>Beneficiary</th>
<th>Type of Insurance</th>
<th>Monthly Premiums</th>
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Is there any loan value on policy? ______ If so, give amount $ _______.
How much has been borrowed? $ _______ Date borrowed _______.

9. PERSONAL PROPERTY. Cash on hand $ _______ Building and loan shares $ _______
Bank and Postal Savings accounts $ ______ Name and address of banks, post offices, and companies ______________________________

Personal property not listed above: Chickens _______ Cows _______
(No.) (No.)
Other cattle _______ Hogs _______ Work Stock _______ Auto _______
Kind of Auto _______ Other property ______________________________
CASE FACE SHEET

10. REAL ESTATE. List all property (other than household furnishings) owned by husband and wife. If there is no property, write the word NONE in space below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real Estate</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Assessed Value</th>
<th>Unpaid Mortgages</th>
<th>Unpaid Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Is land rented? _____ To whom ____________ Rental agreement ____________

Acreage: In cultivation _____ In pasture _____ In timber ____________

In waste land ____________

MORTGAGES: ____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Mortgage Holder</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>1st or 2nd Mortgage</th>
<th>Amount of Mortgage</th>
<th>Rate of Interest</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Have you made any sale, assignment, transfer or other disposition of property within the last five years, or at any time divided property with your children or other relatives? ______. If so, explain fully in narrative. Have you sold mineral rights or leased land for minerals? ______ Amount $______.

11. MILITARY SERVICE. Are you a veteran of any war? ______ Do you draw compensation from the state or federal government? ______ Confederate? ______

Spanish American? ______ World War I or II? ______ Do you receive an allowance from a relative in the armed forces? ______ Amount per month $______

12. PREVIOUS ASSISTANCE. Welfare agencies, churches, organizations, individuals interested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Service Given</th>
<th>To Whom</th>
<th>Will Service Continue?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>


13. REFERENCES. Give names of three persons who can supply information concerning you, if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Position or Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF PARENT

Case Number

(County Welfare Department)

Age Sex

(Patient's Last Name—First Name)

Usual Occupation

(Patient's Present Address)

(ABOVE INFORMATION IS TO BE FILLED IN BY VISITOR PRIOR TO EXAMINATION BY PHYSICIAN)

(POINTS 1 to 9 ON THIS FORM ARE TO BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN BY THE EXAMINING PHYSICIAN)

1. Symptomatology:

2. Date of Onset:

3. Laboratory or Special Diagnostic Tests:

4. Diagnosis:

5. Etiology of incapacitating condition:

6. Prognosis as to probable duration of illness and ultimate recovery:

7. Extent of Incapacity:
   
   Bedridden
   
   Able to care for self entirely
MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF PARENT

Able to climb stairs: ________________________________

Requiring considerable care from others: ________________________________

8. Recommendations:

a. Diet: ________________________________

b. Rest: ________________________________

c. Special precautions necessary to safeguard health of other members of family: ________________________________

d. Is examination of other members of family indicated? ________________________________

e. Medical, surgical, psychiatric, or other treatment including special laboratory work or examination by specialist: ________________________________

f. Re-examination (indicate approximately when): ________________________________

g. Employment: Is patient permanently disabled for any employment? __________________

If not, is it anticipated that patient will be able to return to:

1) Full-time employment in his normal occupation? __________________

   If so, when? __________________

2) Limited employment in his normal occupation? __________________

   If so, when? __________________

3) Employment in another occupation? __________________

   If so, what? __________________ When? __________________

h. Would you advise vocational rehabilitation? __________________

9. Remarks: ________________________________

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
(Date of Examination)  (Signature of Physician)

__________________________________________
(Address)
Mississippi
Form PA-23
3-1-46

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
Budget on Applicant and Essential Persons

County__________________________ Case No.____________
Name of Applicant__________________________ No. Included in Budget____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTHLY INCOME</th>
<th>MINIMUM MONTHLY REQUIREMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's Contributions</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relatives' Contributions</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation, OASI*</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions, Insurance, Investments</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages — Regular</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotment/Allowance</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent, Boarders &amp; Lodgers (Net)</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent — Land</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produce — All Kinds</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash Income From Crop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
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<td>Other (specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Needs ———— $________
Total Income ———— $________
Deficit ———— $________

Award Granted ———— $________
Date budgets prepared____________

*Old Age Survivors Insurance
Form PA-23
(Continued)

Budget on Family With Whom Applicant is Living

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Income</th>
<th>Minimum Monthly Requirements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children's Contributions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Relatives' Contributions</td>
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<td>Compensation, OASI* &amp; Veterans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pensions, Insurance, Investments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wages — Regular</td>
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<td>Allotment/Allowance</td>
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<td>Rent, Boarders &amp; Lodgers (Net)</td>
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<td>Produce — All Kinds</td>
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<td>Cash Income From Crop</td>
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<td>Other (specify)</td>
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<td>Other (specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Needs — — — — $________
Total Income — — — — $________
Deficit or Surplus — — — $________

Signed________________________

*Old Age Survivors Insurance
APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE
SCHEDULE

I. Case No.:

II. Time between application and receipt of check:

III. No. of children receiving grant: illegitimate_______ legitimate_______

IV. Mother

1. Date of birth
2. Family background

3. Educational status: grade reached_______
4. Occupation at intake:

5. Marital status at intake: S_____ M_____ Sep._____
   Des.____ Div.____ Wid.____

6. Physical status at intake:

V. Attitude of Mother Toward Economic Dependency

1. Attitude of mother toward ADC policies:

2. Attitude of mother toward grant:
SCHEDULE

3. Attitude of mother toward alleged father:

4. Attitude of mother toward illegitimate child:

5. Attitude of mother toward own parents:

VI. Environmental Factors Involved in Economic Dependency of Mother

1. Eligibility requirements:

2. Employment limitations:

3. Methods used to supplement grants:

4. Amount of support from relatives:
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Article


Pamphlet


Laws

Mississippi Laws, 1936, chapter 175.

Mississippi Laws, 1940, chapter 298.