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KINDRED AND EXCHANGE NETWORKS IN A BLACK COMMUNITY

BY

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DEDICATION

Dedicated with respect and admiration
to my parents, Ruth and Isidore Berman.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		Page
I.	THE RESEARCH SCENE	1
	Selecting Initial Contacts	1
	The Initial Experiences of the Researcher	5
	The Role of the Observer	11
	The Setting	20
II.	INTRODUCTION	27
	Theoretical Issues	27
	New Assessments	36
III.	SWAPPING	43
	The Obligation To Give	46
	The Rhythm Of Exchange	53
	Social Networks	57
IV.	PERSONAL KINDREDS	63
	Personal Kindreds	65
	The Perception Of Parenthood	69
	Motherhood	70
	Fatherhood	74
	The Idiom Of Kinship	80
V.	DOMESTIC NETWORKS	88
	Kin-Structured Local Networks	89
	Residence And Domestic Organization	91
	The Domestic Network of Magnolia and Calvin Waters	91
VI.	CHILD-KEEPING	106
	Domestic Arrangements	109
	Statistical Patterns	117
	Transactions in Parenthood	124
	Jural Implications	137
VII.	LIFE CYCLE AND POVERTY	147
	"They Don't Want Me Married"	149
	Conclusions: The Domestic Cycle and Poverty	161

Page

EPILOGUE IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY 172

Defining The Family Unit 175
Support From Fathers 179

APPENDIX

1. AFDC CASE HISTORY SURVEY. 184
2. OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW TOPICS 197

LITERATURE CITED. 207

VITA. 215

LIST OF TABLES

Table | Page

1. Frequency of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data. 107
2. Frequency of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data. 118
3. Status and Location of Biological Mother 120
4. Patterns of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data 122
5. Laterality of Child-Keeping, Residence Histories . . 122
6. Laterality of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data 124

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart Page

A. Grandparental Link Broken 68

B. Parental Link Broken. 68

C. Spatial Relations in Magnolia and Calvin's Domestic Network. 96

D. Kin-Structured Domestic Network 97

the floor and added that "the dirt on the floor could kill a white baby."

That morning Magnolia and I had been casually chatting about the days before she met Calvin, and her relationship with James Henderson, the father of her two oldest children. When Ruby entered the living room, Magnolia continued our conversation, telling me how much Ruby looked like her father. Ruby broke into the conversation, pulled up a stool, sat down and lectured to me in a high-pitched voice, "James Henderson, he's no father to me! I don't even speak to him. I don't really own him because of the way he did me. The only father I know is my step-father, Calvin, and there's no better man in the world."

Ruby was angry at Magnolia because she appeared to be distorting Ruby's description of the world in which she lived. Ruby pulled her stool even closer to me, shook her head and hand, and shouted, "Don't you believe a word of what she says. If that's what Magnolia been telling you, you better come over to my house and get things straight the way I see them." At that point Magnolia chuckled to herself, grabbed my son's bottle and yelled at one of the children to fill it with milk. Ruby looked at my year old son, grunted a sound of experience, and said, "That boy should have been off the bottle six months ago."

The following afternoon I visited Magnolia. She asked me to take Ruby's youngest daughter, who spent the night at her

house, back over to Ruby's. Given Ruby's invitation, it seemed like a good time to visit, and I was happy to run the errand. Ruby shared a house with Magnolia's sister, Augusta, across town (about a $1.75 cab fare). This was the first of hundreds of trips I made across town as I began to participate in daily visiting patterns in The Flats.

When I arrived Ruby was wringing out hand-washed clothing in an old handwringer. Her five year old daughter was changing a baby's diaper, and her two younger children were playing on the porch. Ruby called me into the kitchen and together we finished wringing out at least ten pounds of wet clothing. When we sat down to rest, Ruby completed her story about her father.

"I first met my father," Ruby told me, "when I was in the third or fourth grade. I was in a grocery store and my mother introduced me to him and he looked at me and said, 'You sure have grown,' and patted me on the head. I looked up at him and asked, 'Is that really my father?' Magnolia said, 'Yes.' Easter was coming so I said to him, 'How about buying me a pair of shoes since you never have given me nothing in your life and you never did nothing for me?' He told me to come over to his house on Bell Street and ask for him and he would give me the money for the shoes. When I went it so happened he wasn't there. His wife came out and pushed me off the porch. I was small and she shook me and called me all kinds of low-down names and told me that I didn't have no father.

Then she hauled off and hit me and pushed me in the car and told me never to come back there again."

"My mother knew my father's people and my Aunt Augusta is real good friends with Aunt Ann, my father's sister. Some of my father's people really took to me. Uncle Leon came around the house to see me when I was really small and that's how I got to know him. Aunt Ann welcomed me to her house any time I got ready to go over there. She's the only one I go and see now, she and Aunt Betty. The rest of them are snobs and they don't care nothing about me. I have a half brother by my father and he cares lots for me. Whenever he sees me, if he got money he give it to me. My other half brother, he's just like his mother. He thinks he so much."

"I don't speak to my father, but when he sees me he still tells his friends that he own me—but he tells his wife that he don't have a daughter. I know I'm a Henderson, and there's no way that the law and nobody else can say differently, but my mother put her name on my birth certificate because she knew that I would hate my father when I grew up. Right today I wish that she had never told me who my father was."

"A child wants a father to play with, to laugh with, and to hug. I wouldn't give my step-father up for anybody in this world. I really appreciate what he did for me. It reminds me of a record that came out called 'Color Him Father." It's about a man who ran away from his wife and left her with

their children. Then another man came into the picture and helped them out so much that they called him 'color him father.' That record speaks of my life. It reminds me of my real father and how he treated me and my mother. My mother couldn't hardly get him to buy a light bulb. But, he tells a different story about how much he loved my mother, so who's to say."

After Ruby told me about her father and his kin, we began to talk about the difference between Magnolia's, Ruby's, and Ruby's father's explanations of their relationships. Ruby told me that to learn anything about her family, or family life in The Flats, I would have to talk to many people in order to interpret any single event. This advice, learned so early in the field experience, guided my observations.

During the following months Ruby and I began to spend a great deal of time together and with our children. Ruby's attitudes towards men, kin, friends and children shook many of my views, and I am still in the process of re-shaping them today. Likewise, Ruby would get mad, amazed, and amused at some of the views I held. Ruby's probes into my thought patterns made it clear that she was observing and interpreting my perceptions just as I was interpreting hers. At times over the three years of our friendship, we would find different ways to try out our perceptions of one another. Sometimes when we were alone we would act out a parody of one another,

or at times we would imitate one another in front of friends.

Most of our day was spent in The Flats in the company of Ruby's friends and kin. Occasionally, when Ruby and I were in the company of individuals who did not know me or who were apparently hostile, Ruby would use a technique of cussing, teasing, or "signifying" to my face. If my response was equally insulting or foul this would immediately put people at ease. After such a scene Ruby would frequently scold me for not coming up with as good a response as she could have given herself. There is no doubt in my mind that meeting Ruby and gaining entree into social relationships in The Flats through her made much of this study possible. Ruby had a quick, affirmative way of letting others know that my presence was acceptable to her, and "damn well better be acceptable to them." For example, at a large family gathering, when relatives from out of town came to see Ruby's step-father, who was sick, some of them didn't know me, nor how to relate to me. Ruby sensed their hostility and insecurity and turned towards me and said, "What is your white ass doing sitting down when there is so much cooking and work to do in the kitchen?" I responded similarly, saying to her, "My white ass can sit here as long as yours can." With that, we both got up, went into the kitchen and got to work.

The Role of the Observer

My mode of transportation varied with the weather. During the first Spring and Summer of my field work in 1968, I walked or rode my bicycle. People in The Flats walk year round and ride bicycles in good weather. In the process of shopping, visiting, washing clothes, and paying bills, many individuals walk over five miles a day. Time consumed in walking often involves more than one trip to the same place. If the laundry has been washed, and clothes are ready at the cleaners, and a daily shopping has to be done, one or two or three members of a household, including younger children, may make three or four trips during the day to carry the load of goods home. Walking across town, sharing the work load, carrying packages, riding the cab, and visiting kin and friends showed me about the pace of life in The Flats and the patience with which the residents endured pain, misfortune, and disappointment. Early in the morning people in a household would be excited about a large house which they heard was for rent, or a decent refrigerator for sale. In the summer when the children were not in school, a large group of us, including five to ten children, would take a walk to see the house or refrigerator, only to arrive too late.

Picking through piles of clothing at the local Good Will or the Salvation Army Stores was another frustrating job which was made even more difficult without a car. Towards the

end of the summer many of the women and their children in The Flats began to make daily trips to these second-hand stores located outside The Flats in the Jackson Harbor business district in order to pick out enough clothes for all of their children to begin school. For three consecutive summers I spent most of the month of August walking to second-hand stores with families, helping them find the right size dresses, shirts, pants, socks, coats, and shoes for their children. The children would help out in the process of looking for clothes for themselves, their brothers, sisters, cousins, etc. Although the children would be enthusiastic when they found a piece of clothing which would fit someone, I gained more insight into their attitude towards these ventures one afternoon when a woman I knew well, Ophelia, asked me to take her eleven year old son to Good Will because "he didn't have a shirt to cover his back." She told us to buy three shirts. Sam and I walked to the store and began the search for his shirts. In a relatively short time the two of us found five shirts his size and to me he appeared quite pleased. I told him to pick out the three shirts "he liked best." His response taught me how ethnocentric that statement was. Sam shook his head and said, "Caroline, to tell the truth, I don't like any of them. You pick out three and then let's go show mama that we got the job done." Sam's eleven year old mature, resigned response to the necessities of life began to teach me the extent to

which my own interpretations of events were influenced by my biases.

For the first four months of this study my day consisted of intimate and frequent contact with a few families. I was immersed in their daily efforts, and I began to acquire a cross-section of interpretation from them on the same processes and events. Homes which bustled with activity when the children were at home, became empty and quiet when the children were in school. During school hours, when adults had little money to spend, no car, and little to do, people welcomed an attentive listener, a willing companion to take visiting, shopping or to the laundry.

In the fall of 1968 I decided to buy an old car which I could use in my field work. I thought the car would aid my mobility and enable me to visit a variety of people across town while also spending most of the day at my current home base. In addition, I thought I could help reduce the tremendous amount of money people spent on cab fare visiting and shopping, but especially in "carrying" sick children to the doctor or the hospital for an emergency. I talked it over with Ruby and with others. They all thought it was a fine idea.

There were obvious advantages and disadvantages to my acquiring a car, but I had not anticipated some of the disadvantages. My car did not substantially change the extent of daily visiting which occurred between participants in

domestic networks, but it did increase the flow of goods and the communication of information between people. For at least two months my role in the community, and in the lives of those people I had become closest to, changed. Before I bought the car I had been able to spend most of the day in the company of others, sharing and observing their daily experiences. Once I had the car, people continually asked me to run errands--taking children, goods, and gossip between households. For a while all I seemed to be doing was taking half a pot roast from one house to another, picking up the laundry from a home with a washing machine, going to liquor store for beer, or waiting with mothers in the local medical clinics for doctors to see their sick children. Although the children of these households often rode around with me, giving me an opportunity to talk to them alone, the intensity of the social contact with others was lost. The mobility I gained with a car kept me "running" from house to house, and whenever I would try to spend an afternoon with someone, a new compelling errand had to be run.

During this stage of field work I met many people. As I drove around The Flats, sometimes a person would come up to the car at a stop sign, recognize the children or adult in the car and say to me, "You are white Caroline, we heard about you," and then tell my companion to bring me by their home to visit. My contacts also expanded as I would drive a companion to her friend's home to borrow or gain back something from a

past exchange. I began to observe, first hand, the content and style of social relationships between residents in The Flats. These errands also enabled me to begin observing social relations between residents in The Flats and white doctors, dentists, social workers, landlords, shop keepers, and residents of Jackson Harbor.

Many of the doctors and medical clinics in the city refuse to make appointments for welfare recipients and their children. Some of those that do, do not take the time and interest necessary to improve health. I took one young mother and her sick baby to three different local pediatricians. One of them yelled at the mother for not feeding her baby properly and then quickly scribbled down instructions to a mother who could not read. When the mother took the note to the nurse for help, the nurse yelled at her for taking up too much time and for missing a previous appointment. Then the nurse threatened that if this mother missed another appointment, the clinic would never see her babies again.

My car also enabled me to assist in the search for new housing when people I knew were evicted or were living in condemned houses. The search for housing brought residents in The Flats into direct confrontation with white landlords and social workers. In the two or three months I spent in the process of looking for housing with companions, I became directly aware of the indifference and racism of the larger white society towards Flats residents. Just one case history

should be sufficient to illustrate the housing problems facing a large, Black family when they are forced to move.

In the Fall of 1968 Jessie and Eloise and their household, including six children and Jessie's niece, were forced to move after their rented home was comdemned. At the time Jessie was unemployed and Eloise received AFDC benefits for her children. Eloise went to the welfare office to tell her case worker that the family would soon be moving. The case worker told Eloise that she was "probably not paying her rent." Eloise was extremely insulted, rode a cab home and returned in a cab to show her case worker rent receipts for the past three years. She told the case worker, "I would be a fool not to pay my rent and have my large family put out on the street."

Eloise, Jessie, their kin and friends looked for housing every day for at least a month and a half. At times, when I was present, we would track down false hopes--houses that appeared to be abandoned, unrented, or available, but were actually inhabited. When Eloise finally found a large house for rent, the landlord wanted several references. Since he had seen me in the company of the family on several occasions, he would not accept my recommendation. Eloise called her social worker asking her to call the landlord and to tell him that she had seen Eloise's rent receipts for the past three years. The social worker refused and said, "I am not supposed to get involved in anything like that."

After some pressure on the part of Eloise's kin, the social worker eventually called the landlord. Before she called him, he had stated that he was willing to rent his house to this family if only he could get some references. After the conversation with Eloise's case worker, he changed his mind, saying that the case worker had "nothing good to say about Eloise." The next day Eloise and I drove to the local welfare office to complain about her case worker. As we climbed the steps to the welfare building Eloise said to me, "Here we are where the devils is."

With my car I had played an easily explainable role in the lives of the families I knew. Neighbors and friends of those families realized that my car, my daily assistance with the children, the shopping, the problems with "papers," the welfare office, and sick children were obviously supportive to the families.

When my car broke down I decided not to fix it. This began a very important stage of the research. Without the car, my presence in the community was less apparent. Once again I was able to spend long days in the homes of people I had met, participating in their daily lives. I had already developed tentative hypotheses on the style of social relations in The Flats, and the ways in which people expand their network of social relations to incorporate participants in exchange. I began to focus my attention on how networks were expanded, who the participants were, and how residents in The Flats see and interpret this process.

As I learned the rules of gift giving and reciprocity, I began to try them out. If someone asked a favor of me, a few weeks later I would ask a favor of her. If I gave a scarf, a skirt or a coat to a woman who admired it, later on when she had something I liked, I would tell her and she would usually give it to me. I began to "keep" the children of those I was closest to, and they began to take care of my son. During this stage of the study, which lasted at least two years, I became involved in the complexities of swapping back and forth with participants in several domestic networks.

My role in the community at this point was no longer that of an outsider. To many families I was another link in the systems of exchanges which were part of their daily existence. Ophelia once told me that people look at you when you have a white friend, saying that you are really on the white man's side and that you do everything they want you to do. But Ophelia said to me that people understand what friendship means. Friends can ask any favor of one another, any time of the night, and it shouldn't make any difference. No one will say you shouldn't have a friend you can trust. Ruby Banks said that from the first day we started going around together, people started saying that we looked alike, and that we did so much together that we seemed just "like sisters."

At this point in the study I began to develop procedures for deciding the meaning of various events. I knew enough

people well who were closely related so that after any family scene, gathering, or fight, I could put together interpretations of the event from the view points of different individuals. This procedure was used most often in scenes where there were conflicts over rights in children (see Chapter VI).

In addition to taking multiple observations of the same event, I began to ask others to assist me in the study. I hired three Flats residents, two women and one man, as part-time assistants in the project. I selected individuals from the families I knew, who appeared interested in the study, and who were creative thinkers. At times these assistants became informants, and we engaged in the process of generating questions on various topics. The research schedules used in this thesis are an outcome of mutual attempts of my assistants and myself to map out meaningful questions on daily life. Although the assistants never used some of the schedules, the questions which they raised mapped out their perceptions of a variety of behavior patterns and the way in which they order the world in which they live. Cicourel (1964) in his book, _Method and Measurement in Sociology_, develops this issue.

> While engaging subjects in conversation during field research, asking them unstructured or structured questions, or using a questionnaire, the scientific observer must take into account the common-sense constructs employed by the actor in everyday life if he is to grasp the meanings that will be assigned by the actor to his

> questions, regardless of the form in which they are presented to the actor (1964:61).

The lengthy quotes and passages selected from taped discussions and interviews which are found throughout this study represent my common-sense model of the individuals I studied in The Flats. The constructs which enabled me to order the data I gathered are, for the most part, the section headings in each chapter: social networks, reciprocity, jural parenthood, personal kinship networks, domestic networks, kin-structured local networks, and the idiom of kinship. The rationale for selecting these constructs emerges in the following chapters.

The Setting

This study took place in an urban Black community I call The Flats: the poorest section of a Black community in the mid-western city of Jackson Harbor (these names are fictitious). The city of Jackson Harbor is located on a major rail line connecting Chicago and several southern states. It is along this rail line that a large fraction of the Black people residing in The Flats migrated from the South to Jackson Harbor. The railroad provides a relatively cheap and convenient means for the Blacks living in The Flats to maintain contacts both with relatives in the South and with friends and relatives in Chicago. The 1960 census shows that only 12% of the Black adults are natives of Jackson Harbor and only 29% are natives of the State.[1] A large fraction of the

remaining individuals was born in the South. By 1970, 40% of the residents in The Flats were urban born. Interchange with kin and friends residing in Chicago is important to people in The Flats, for it provides a model for an urbanized life style, contacts for interchange of goods not as easily available in Jackson Harbor, and a reduction of the sense of isolation often felt by a repressed minority in a small city.

The U.S. census defines Jackson Harbor as an "urbanized area" since its population exceeds 50,000. A rather large state-run institution is by all measures the city's major employer. However, only 3% of its 5000 employees are Black, while the city's population is over 12% Black. By and large those 3% are in the most menial jobs. In recent years intensive efforts by liberal groups to increase the institution's percentage of Black employees have met with only limited success.

There is little other industry in Jackson Harbor. An electronics firm which employed almost 2500 people, over half of whom were women, recently closed down. A food processing factory with about 800 employees provides most of the industrial employment for Black men. Since the craft and construction unions are strongly segregated, they provide few jobs for Blacks.

In 1968, a year of record economy in the country, unemployment among Blacks in Jackson Harbor exceeded 20%.

Among those working, over 33% were service workers, and another 30% were either laborers or found work in the private households of the professionals in the community. In 1959, while 80% of the white families made over $4000 per year, 60% of the non-whites made less than that amount. Thus, those who found work were often not significantly better off than those without employment.

Jackson Harbor has been rated one of the ten most expensive cities in the United States in terms of living costs. The income necessary for a family of four to have a modest standard of living has been estimated at over $8000. In terms of average family income, the county which includes Jackson Harbor ranks in the highest twenty nationwide. Thus, most of the white population who have chosen to live in Jackson Harbor can afford to live there.

Housing throughout the community is mainly one and two family units. Apartments are rare, and no large public housing projects exist. The population density is much lower than in a typical urban environment such as Chicago, but, for the Blacks in The Flats, this does not obviate the crowding within dwellings. Most of the homes in The Flats are small, wood-framed houses, bungalows, and shacks which are in need of major repairs. The streets are spotted with small grocery stores, house front churches, bars, snack shops, sweetshops, and hat shops. Housing is generally overcrowded because of the large family size per dwelling, and the streets

and front yards are cluttered with broken glass, beer cans, and old cars. Old tires and bed springs fill back yards. Porch doors, screens, and broken windows go unfixed. During the winter snow storms, the streets in The Flats, many of which are unpaved, are the last in the city to be cleared.

While only 10% of whites live in housing termed "deteriorating" and 1% termed "dilapidated," among Blacks the percentages are 26% and 13% respectively. We visited few houses which were not roach infested. In one home I estimated a density of roaches exceeding one per square foot on all of the walls inside the house. Children sleeping in this house were covered with sores and scabs from insect bites.

Although temperatures go below zero in Jackson Harbor without fail each winter, many houses have doors and windows that do not fit tightly. A common trick to seal cracks in the window casements is to fill them with water on a freezing day. This provides a frigid seal until the first thaw.

Health care for Blacks in Jackson Harbor is also predictably inadequate. Despite increasing public assistance for medical needs, many Black people put off seeing a doctor as long as possible. Feelings of mistrust run deep. Until recently the few doctors who would take Black patients held separate office hours for them in the evenings so as not to offend their white patients. A free health clinic has recently been opened in The Flats, but communication is poor

and few people use it. The way in which one dies often tells something about the way one lives. In 1965 over 9.1% of deaths among non-whites were due to diseases of early infancy while only 4.6% of deaths among whites were attributed to infant diseases. In addition, over 10% of non-white deaths were due to accidents or homicide compared to less than 5% for whites.

Dental care is equivalent in quality to medical care. Few Blacks over the age of twenty-five have many of their original teeth. It is not uncommon to find people who had all their teeth pulled on their first visit to the dentist. Among young women this usually occurred when they were in their early twenties and were covered by the same AFDC health benefits as their young children.

Patterns such as those described above are repeated in many aspects of the daily lives of Blacks living in The Flats. I could include all of the statistics, but they are generally the same as for Blacks residing in any "urbanized area" in the country. Likewise, in all their interactions with the dominant white culture, Blacks in Jackson Harbor are treated with some form of institutional or personalized racism. At best this takes the form of a benign paternalism which is easily apparent. At worst the reminders are in the form of bullets. In the last three years, in two widely publicized cases, Blacks have been murdered by white policemen. Neither was about to be arrested for charges

more severe than speeding, and neither Black was armed. No punishment was given either policeman. No Black residing in The Flats was surprised by these acts.

Despite the similarities in economic, political, and racist forces acting upon large inner-city slums in Chicago, and upon smaller Black communities in cities surrounding Chicago, people in The Flats perceive differences between their lives and the lives of their friends and relatives residing in Chicago. An elderly woman residing in The Flats recalls that many years ago before she and her husband left Arkansas, people said to her, "If you want to lose your man just go north." Today she qualifies this advice, "If you stay out of Chicago there is a chance a woman can hold her man." Although there are few alternatives, and no funds to move elsewhere, many people residing in The Flats say that they have chosen to live there.

Footnotes

[1]The statistics cited in The Setting are derived from U.S. Census (1960-1970). In order to conceal the identity of the city and the individuals involved in this study, the statistical facts presented in this section have been altered. Nevertheless, the description accurately depicts the setting.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Issues

The past fifty years have witnessed a massive migration of rural, southern Blacks to urban centers in the United States. Between 1940 and 1960 one million farms disappeared, and twenty million people, mostly Blacks, left the South for a new life in the cities.[1] Many of the first hopeful participants in this great migration are now middle aged or elderly residents who have lived a lifetime in poverty and are now seeing their grandchildren entrapped in the same poverty-stricken conditions.

In the Spring of 1968 I began a participant-observation study of urban poverty and the domestic strategies of urban born Black Americans whose parents had migrated from the South to a single community in the urban North. The study concentrated on family life among second generation urban dwellers who were raised on public welfare.[2] Now adults in their twenties to forties, they are raising their own children on welfare (AFDC).[3] The main purpose of the study was to depict the nucleus of social and economic cooperation which best characterizes the second generation welfare family. This study primarily portrays the domestic organization within kin networks as an adaptive strategy evolved by urban Black people in response to poverty and racism.

Early in the study I became involved in the daily activities of Magnolia and Calvin Waters--and their network of kinsmen which proved to number over 100 persons. Their home was my first home base, a place where I was welcome to spend the day, week after week, and where my year old son and I could sleep, usually sharing a bed with children in the household. My presence in the home of Magnolia and Calvin and their nine children enabled me to meet their relatives residing in The Flats, and those individuals actively participating in their daily domestic lives. My personal network of informants expanded naturally in this process, coinciding with the social networks of participants in the study. As I became personally accepted by additional individuals, my home base changed, and ultimately I was welcome at several unrelated households. Members of each of these households were participants in cooperative networks which radiated out to include over 300 individuals whom I eventually visited. My most intensive observations focused on fifteen unrelated coalitions of kinsmen; it was in these homes where my presence least affected daily social relations.

I spent almost three years in The Flats attempting to comprehend the strategies which people evolved for coping with the everyday human demands of ghetto life. Early in the study my presence in the Waters' home made me poignantly aware of the coalitions of individuals trading and exchanging goods, resources, and the care of children. The intensity of their

acts of domestic cooperation, and the exchange of goods and services among these persons, both kin and non-kin, were striking. Their social and economic lives were so entwined that to not repay on an exchange signified that someone else's child would not eat. People would tell me, "You have to have help from everybody and anybody," and "The poorer you are the more likely you are to pay back."

In this study I began to question how participants in domestic exchanges were defined by one another, what performances and behaviors they expected of one another, who was eligible to become a part of the cooperative networks, how they were recruited, and what kept participants actively involved in the series of exchanges. My approach to these questions can be divided into three central concerns: how people are recruited to kin networks (Chapters III, IV); the relationship between household composition and residence patterns (Chapters V, VI); and the relationship between reciprocity and poverty (Chapters III, VII, VIII).

One of the most challenging problems in this study was to evaluate why people so readily responded to the pressures to exchange within kin networks. In the final months of this study it became apparent that poverty creates a necessity for the exchange of goods and services among the poor. The needs of families living at bare subsistence are so large compared to the average daily income that it is impossible for families to independently provide for fixed expenses and daily

needs. Lacking any surplus of funds, people are forced to use most of their resources for major monthly bills: rent, utilities, and food, and after a family pays these bills, they are penniless. The poor cannot smooth out fluctuations in their expenses as can those who earn a slight surplus of money.

The complex forces that prevent the poor from changing their economic situation are in sharp contrast to the explanations provided by the well-known culture of poverty concept (Lewis 1959, 1966a, 1966b; Harrington 1962). The culture of poverty notion explains the persistence of poverty in terms of presumed negative qualities within a culture: family disorganization, group disintegration, personal disorganization, resignation, and fatalism. An underlying assumption of the culture of poverty notion is that the social adaptation of the poor to conditions of poverty would be disfunctional if these conditions were altered. It is assumed that the sub-culture would be left with no culture, or with wholly negative qualities. Hannerz (1969) convincingly shows that many of the features characterizing the culture of poverty--unemployment, low wages, crowded living quarters--are definitions of poverty itself rather than cultural attributes.

In The Flats, the employment available to those hopeful of achieving social mobility consists of low-paying, seasonal and temporary jobs. This is a major factor preventing

individuals from breaking out of poverty. In addition, the collective expectations and obligations created by cooperative networks of poverty-stricken kinsmen in The Flats result in a stability within the kin group.[4] The success of these networks of kinsmen depends upon this stability. Therefore, those who attempt social mobility must carefully evaluate their job security before they risk removing themselves from the collective help of kinsmen.

People living in poverty adopt a variety of tactics in order to expand the number of people who share reciprocal obligations towards them. In The Flats these strategies include the activation of kin ties, and the creation of kin-like ties among non-kin. For example, despite the small number of marriages which occur between child-bearing parents in The Flats, if a father openly acknowledges his paternity, fathers and their kin may actively provide affection and economic aid to the father's children. This observation led me to a careful examination of what counts as socially recognized parenthood in The Flats--the folk jural interpretation given to the chain of parent-child connections. This line of investigation clarified how people acquire socially recognized kinship relations with others (Chapter IV). Friends may also be incorporated in one's domestic circle; and if they satisfy one another's expectations they may be called kin--"cousin," "sister," "brother," "daddy," etc. (Chapter IV).

People are continually immersed in a domestic circle of a large number of kin folk who will help them. Those sharing reciprocal obligations towards one another are actively linked participants in an individual's personal kindred. A problem that arises is how to characterize this web of social relations and obligations. There has been a productive controversy in the anthropological literature questioning whether the kindred is an ego-centered group (Goodenough 1970), a category of relatives having some reciprocal claims and duties (Fox 1967; Keesing 1966), or a category of persons which comes to life for a focal purpose (Fox 1967). In this study, personal kindreds comprise the fully activated, ego-centered network of jurally responsible kin and others defined as kin.

The overlapping personal kindreds of individuals constitute a cluster of action-oriented individuals who can each bring others into the domestic network (Chapter V). Participants in domestic networks in The Flats move frequently and hold loyalties to more than one household grouping at a time. The members of the households to which individuals hold loyalties share mutually conceived domestic responsibilities. For example, children may be cared for by their parents, by other participants in their parents' domestic network, or they may be transferred back and forth from the household of their mother to the households of other close female kin. The patterns of residence of children in The Flats raises problems over the distribution of rights in children, the criteria by

which persons are entitled to assume parental roles (Chapter VI), and how to define the family in The Flats.

Traditionally, anthropologists have defined the husband, wife, and their offspring as the basic social-economic unit constituting a family. This unit was regarded as the universal family grouping that provided sexual, economic, and reproductive and educational functions (Murdock 1949). Through the fifties many scholars in America did not distinguish the nuclear family grouping from the household unit. For example, both Murdock (1949) and Lewis (1950, 1965) assumed that the household and family were identical units, and that the family typified a small, bounded, social system. Guided by these misconceptions, they singled out the nuclear family, or household, as a natural unit of study.

Ethnographic accounts of matrilineal (Gough 1961; Richards 1950) and consanguineal (Kunstadter 1963; Gonzalez 1965, 1969, 1970) societies provide striking exceptions to these assumptions. Social, economic, and educational functions are vested in the brother-sister relationship among matrilineal people such as the Nayar; among the Black Carib these responsibilities are carried out by a consanguine family of blood relatives. These exceptions are ordinarily taken as raising questions about the "universality of the nuclear family" and whether the triad in question is everywhere a culturally recognizable basic entity. The data in this study suggests that the answer cannot be given simply on the basis of whether

the triad can be defined by, or is contained in a single household. If it is not contained in a single household it may or may not be a culturally defined social-economic unit. In Southern Nayar it is not; in Black poverty communities it is. This is a separate issue from whether the triad is universal as a fundamental structure of genealogy. Some authorities argue that this is the same thing as arguing for the universality of this triad as a nuclear family, but clearly that is false.

Exceptions to the nuclear model led Adams (1960), Bohannan (1963), Fox (1967), Goodenough (1970), and others to search for a more generally applicable definition of the nuclear family group. Ultimately they defined a woman and her dependent children as the basic nuclear familial group in human societies. Goodenough (1970:19) defined the family as "a woman and her dependent children plus whomever else they are joined to through marriage or consanguinity in a minimal functioning group, whatever the group's functions may be." These definitions represent attempts to create a generalized vocabulary for studying the family cross-culturally. They do not represent an ethnographer's search for what may be the nucleus of familial cooperation in any particular society.

One of the objectives in this study was to derive a definition of the family from the constructs used by residents in The Flats to describe regularities in their familial life.[4] I gathered multiple interpretations of cultural scenes and

events from participants in the study, and categories emerged that people regarded as relevant units for analysis of their family life. As the study progressed, I tried to map out these functional domains of domestic life. It became clear that the "household" and its group composition was not a meaningful unit to isolate for analysis of family life in The Flats. For example, a resident in The Flats who eats in one household, may sleep in another, and contribute resources to yet another. He may consider himself a member of all three households. Eventually I defined the "family" as those kin and non-kin who form the active basis of the personal domestic network of economic and social cooperation for each individual at a given time. The family network is diffused over several kin-based households and fluctuations in household composition do not significantly affect cooperative familial arrangements. The culturally specific definitions of certain concepts such as family, kin, parent, and friend that emerged during this study made much of the subsequent analysis possible. Clearly an arbitrary imposition of widely accepted definitions of the family, the nuclear family, or the matrifocal family blocks the way to understanding how people in The Flats describe and order the world in which they live.

New Assessments

Few studies of the Black family in the United States have highlighted either the adaptive strategies, resourcefulness, and resilience of urban families under conditions of perpetual poverty, or the stability of their kin networks. Most of the classic studies of Black family life have compared the Black family to the white middle-class model. For over fifty years, leading scholars of Black family life have been content to pigeon-hole Black culture into preconceived concepts of the nuclear or matrifocal model, hardly questioning the cultural validity of these categories.

Despite the stated intentions of scholars, from the thirties and forties (Drake and Cayton 1945; Frazier 1939; Johnson 1941; Myrdal 1944) through the sixties (Abrahams 1963; Bernard 1966; Hannerz 1969; Keil 1966; Schulz 1969), studies tended to reinforce popular stereotypes of the Black family as deviant, matriarchal, and broken. Given the prevailing academic biases, it is not surprising that few attempts have been made to view Black families in their own terms and recognize the validity of the interpretations Black people have of their own cultural patterns.

Models of social relations should be understandable and sensible not only to outside observers but also to the actors within a cultural community. The more a model explains, the more powerful it is. Students of Black family life have

generally ignored the interpretations which Black people have of their own life experience. Moreover, they have defined the "poverty problem" in the United States from the point of view of white society, without regard for the explanations constructed by the poor.[6] But, the explanatory power of such models is obviously weak.

Many published reviews demonstrate this inadequacy of the Black study literature and the failure of social scientists to comprehend the reality of Afro-American culture. The more recent reviews of Black study literature are excellent. I refer the reader to the following: Gonzalez (1969), Black Carib Household Structure (Chapter VI); Whitten and Szwed (1970), Afro-American Anthropology (Introduction); Ladner (1971), Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman (Chapter I); Valentine (1972), "Black Studies and Anthropology: Scholarly and Political Interests in Afro-American Culture."

Little or nothing in the classic works advances our knowledge of how Black people organize and interpret their own cultural experience with the notable exception of the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois made a fundamental contribution in this direction. In The Souls of Black Folks (1903), he passionately speaks of the "double conscousness"--the conflicting and warring identities between being a Black and an American in a white world. The theme of a Black identity and the conflict between racism and the ideology of the

American dream have since been expressed in the writings of many Black poets and novelists.

This theme has been reinterpreted in political and economic terms in the recent, penetrating writings of Valentine (1972), Willhelm (1971), Piven and Cloward (1971), and to a lesser extent by Ladner (1971) and Liebow (1967). Valentine's early work (1968) challenged the culture of poverty concept (Lewis 1959, 1966b) and questioned whether a self-perpetuating culture of poverty exists among poor Blacks. He later (1970) raised important political issues suggesting that the cultural differences in behavior among the poor are structurally imposed by the workings of the stratified, national social-economic system. Between 1968 and 1972 Valentine's explanation of poverty in the United States changed from an apperception of poverty in terms of inequality to a recognition of institutionalized, economic racism. Valentine's participant study of the material conditions of ghetto life had a decisive effect on his thinking. He relates the significant changes in his own views (1970:39): "Participant experience in ghetto existence has brought home to me not only the crushingly determining material conditions of under-class life, but also the integrated economic-ideological functions of all major institutions of the wider society in perpetuating these conditions."

By 1972 Valentine and others (Willhelm 1971; Piven and Cloward (1971) argue persuasively that the present economic

order in the United States is dependent upon cheap labor and economic racism that confines Blacks to low-skilled jobs, low wages, and unsatisfactory employment. Giving support to this interpretation Piven and Cloward (1971) argue that relief-giving in America is a supportive institution that serves the larger economic and political order. Piven and Cloward show the functions of public welfare in their book Regulating The Poor:

> Historical evidence suggests that relief arrangements are initiated or expanded during the occasional outbreaks of civil disorder produced by mass unemployment, and are then abolished or contracted when political stability is restored (1971:xiii).

Social scientists have only begun to interpret the impact of social-economic institutions on the Afro-American experience. Joyce Ladner (1971) is one of the leaders in this endeavor. In Tomorrow's Tomorrow she depicts the effects of poverty, discrimination, and institutional subordination on the lives of Black adolescent girls in a big-city slum. Ladner represents their response as a healthy, creative adaptation to unhealthy environmental conditions.

The impact of economic oppression on men in the Black community is described by Liebow in Talley's Corner (1967), a study of daily lives of street corner men. Liebow portrays the psychological effect of "double-consciousness" on Black men who continue to hold mainstream values even though they are prevented from achievement and employment. Valentine (1970)

responds to this issue, identifying the sources of inequality that are external to Black culture in the United States. He shows the poignant contrast between the Black Americans' commitment to middle class values and the structural barriers to their attainment of those highly valued goals. Valentine's (1970) study of a large, multi-ethnic, but predominantly Black ghetto in the Northeast is by far the most comprehensive recent study of racial oppression in the United States. He contributes a much needed holistic study of urban culture, an approach more typically taken by non-urban ethnographers.

The adaptive responses within the Black community to social and economic oppression are demonstrated in the works of Ladner, Liebow and Valentine. Their contributions are essential to our understanding of the viability of Black culture. In this study I illustrate the collective adaptations to poverty of men, women, and children within the social-cultural network of the urban Black family. Moreover, the complex forces prohibiting the poor from changing their economic situation are vivified by the lifeways of The Flats.

Footnotes

[1]See Piven and Cloward (1971) for a detailed description of the migration to the cities and the welfare explosion.

[2]Between 1935 and 1939 most states adopted legislation to make use of categorical grants-in-aid. States were slow to implement categorical assistance programs for dependent children (AFDC) and by December 1940 only 360,000 had been put on the nation's AFDC rolls (see Piven and Cloward 1971; Steiner 1971).

[3]AFDC was first called Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) but was later renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). I shall use AFDC in the text of this study, although many of the people quoted throughout the study still refer to the program as "ADC."

[4]In Black Families in White America, Andrew Billingsley (1968) was one of the first social scientists to recognize the Black family as a resilient and adaptive mechanism for the socialization of its children. Billingsley's viewpoint is a philosophical position, based upon analysis of the social science literature, the United States Census, etc. Based upon field research in the West Indies and the United States, R. T. Smith (1970) formulated some important hypotheses regarding Black family organization. He suggests that "there are differences in the normative structure of familial relations and these differences distinguish lower from middle class family structure irrespective of whether household composition is the same or is different" (1970:60). Smith's work constitutes a major contribution to our understanding of the normative kinship system of Afro-Americans. His suggestions which lend support to hypotheses in this study are the following: (1) lower-class kinship lacks the ideological and normative emphasis upon the isolated nuclear family; (2) Lower-class persons continue to be involved with other kin even if they live in a nuclear family; (3) Household boundaries are elastic; (4) There exist clusters of close-female kin constituting co-operating groups; (5) There is a tendency to keep as many kinship links open as possible; (6) Transactions of mutual help are not confined to the bounds of a nuclear family unit. Smith has suggested the existence of cooperative groups extending beyond the nuclear family. I expressed a similar view of the Black family (Stack 1970:311), suggesting that participants in domestic units of cooperation align to provide the basic functions often attributed to nuclear family units. Smith's work is a fundamental step toward our understanding of the normative structure of lower class families, but his analysis

does not shed light on how the structure works in daily life. Although he recognizes that kin help one another, he concludes that "this is not to say that one finds large co-operating groups of kinsfolk among the lower class (1971:68)...." In contrast, this study demonstrates the stability and collective power of cooperative kinsmen even among the poorest Black families in The Flats.

[5]This approach has been labeled "ethnomethodology" or the "naturalistic method." The aim of field work to the ethnomethodologist is to reduce the distance between the scheme an outsider uses to explain social order, and the constructs employed by those studied (see Cicourel 1964; Denzin 1970; Strauss 1959). The most readable explanation of this methodology is Cicourel's (1964) Method and Measurement in Sociology.

[6]Joyce Ladner (1971) has commented that the inherent biases of the social sciences and the distance between the oppressed and the oppressor prevents the social scientist from comprehending the essence of Black life. She states, "It has been argued that the relationship between the researcher and his subjects, by definition, resembles that of the oppressor and the oppressed, because it is the oppressor who defines the problem, the nature of the research, and to some extent, the quality of the interaction between him and his subjects." Ladner's argument is powerful and there are many studies which prove her point, but I cannot accept the ultimate bias in her own assumptions. Although different life experiences produce a difference in perceptions, I think that ultimately these perceptions can be mutually shared. Just as the three years I spent in The Flats broke apart and re-assembled my life and existence, the perceptions and biases which I brought to the study shook and shaped the views of those individuals who I became the closest to in The Flats. Members of a culture have biases which blind their perceptions of themselves and their lifeways: outsiders bring biases to the cultures they study. What is necessary and may be emerging is the possibility that cultural communities can be studied from within and without. The real bias which Ladner overlooks is who pays for the studies of the "oppressed," why social scientists are encouraged to study the poor, and the moral imperative which demands that social scientists now study those who have the power.

CHAPTER III

SWAPPING

"Everything That Goes Round Comes Round"

Black families living in The Flats need a steady source of cooperative support to survive. They share with one another because of the urgency of their needs. Alliances between individuals are created around the clock as kin and friends exchange and give and obligate one another. They trade food stamps, rent money, a TV, hats, dice, a car, a nickel here, a cigarette there, food, milk, grits and children.

Few if any Black families living on welfare for the second generation are able to accumulate enough surplus of basic necessities to be able to remove themselves from poverty or from the collective demands of kin. Without the help of kin, fluctuations in the meager flow of available goods could easily destroy a family's ability to survive. Kin and close friends who fall into similar economic crises know that they may share the food, dwelling, and even the few scarce luxuries of those individuals in their kin network. Despite the relatively high cost of rent and food in urban Black communities, the collective power within kin-based exchange networks does not let people go hungry.

As low-skilled workers, the urban poor in The Flats cannot earn sufficient wages and cannot produce goods. Consequently, they cannot legitimately draw desired scarce goods

into the community. Welfare benefits which barely provide the necessities of life--a bed, rent, and food, are allocated to households of women and children and channeled into domestic networks of men, women and children. All essential resources flow from families into kin networks.

Whether one's source of income is a welfare check or wage labor, people must borrow and trade with others in order to maintain a flow of daily necessities. The most important form of distribution and exchange of the limited resources available to the poor in The Flats is by means of trading, or what people usually call "swapping." As people swap, the limited supply of finished material goods in the community are perpetually redistributed among networks of kinsmen and throughout the community.

Trading of goods and services among the poor in complex industrial societies bears a striking resemblance to patterns of exchange organized around reciprocal gift-giving in non-Western societies. The famous examples of reciprocal gift-giving first described by Malinowski (1922), Mauss (1925), and Levi-Strauss (1969) provide a basis for comparison. Patterns of exchange among people living in poverty, and reciprocal exchanges in cultures lacking a political state are both embedded in well-defined kinship obligations. In both types of these social systems strategic resources are distributed from a family base to domestic groups, and exchange transactions pervade the whole social-economic life of participants.

Neither industrial poor, nor participants in non-industrial economies, have the opportunity to control their environment or to acquire a surplus of scarce goods (Dalton 1961; Harris 1971; Lee 1969; Sahlins 1965). In both of these systems a limited supply of goods is perpetually redistributed through the community.

The resources, possessions, and services exchanged between individuals residing in The Flats are intricately inter-woven. People give various objects of exchange to others generously: new things, treasured items, furniture, cars, goods that are perishable, and services which are exchanged for child care, residence or shared meals. Individuals enlarge their web of social relations through repetitive and seemingly habitual instances of swapping. Lily Jones, a resident in The Flats, had this to say about swapping: "That's just everyday life, swapping. You not really getting ahead of nobody, you just get better things as they go back and forth."

This chapter illustrates the salient features of the exchange system among the poor in The Flats. My purpose is to animate the structures which will be presented in the following chapters, and to demonstrate the intimate bond between exchange transactions and social relationships. The following sections illustrate the mechanics of exchange in The Flats, the scene of action, and the web of social relationships spun from exchange transactions.

The Obligation To Give

"Trading" in The Flats generally refers to any objects or services offered with the intent of obligating. Mauss's (1954) classic interpretation of gift exchange in primitive societies stresses the essence of obligation in gift giving, receiving, and repaying. An object given or traded in The Flats represents a possession, a pledge, a loan, a trust, a bank account--given on the condition that something will be returned; that the giver can draw on the account; and that the initiator of the trade gains prerogatives in taking what he or she needs from the receiver. A gift received is not owned, and sometimes can be reclaimed by the initiator of the swap. A person who gives something which the receiver needs or desires gives under a voluntary guise (Mauss 1954:3). But the offering is essentially obligatory, and the obligation to repay carries kin and community sanctions.

An individual's reputation as a potential partner in exchange is created by the opinions others have about him (Baily 1971). Individuals who fail to reciprocate in swapping relationships are judged harshly. Julia Rose comments on her cousin Mae's reputation: "If someone who takes things from me ain't giving me anything in return, she can't get nothing else. When someone like that, like my cousin Mae, comes to my house and says 'ooo, you should give me that chair, honey, I can use it in my living room, and my old man would just love

to sit on it'--well, if she's like my cousin, you don't care what her old man wants, you satisfied with what yours wants. Some people like my cousin don't mind borrowing from anybody, but she don't loan you no money, her clothes, nothing. Well she ain't shit. She don't believe in helping nobody and lots of folks gossip about her. I'll never give her nothing again. One time I went over there after I had given her all these things and I asked her, 'how about loaning me an outfit to wear?' She told me, 'girl, I ain't got nothing. I ain't got nothing clean, I just put my clothes in the cleaners, and what I do have you can't wear cause it's too small for you.' Well, lots of people talks about someone who acts that way."

Degrees of entanglement among kinsmen and friends already activated into networks of exchange differ in kind from casual swapping. Those actively involved in domestic networks swap goods and services on a daily, practically an hourly basis. Ruby Banks, Magnolia Waters' twenty-five year old daughter, portrays her powerful sense of obligation to her mother in her words, "but she's my mother and I don't want to turn her down." The following passage communicates Ruby's conflicting sense of obligation and sacrifice towards her mother and kinsmen.

"I swap back and forth with my mother's family. She wouldn't want nobody else to know how much I'm doing for her, but hell, that's money out of my own pocket. We swap back and forth, food stamps, kids, clothes, money and everything else. Last month the AFDC people had sent me forty dollars to get a couch.

Instead of me getting a couch I took my money over to mama's and divided with her. I gave her fifteen dollars of it and went on to wash because my kids didn't have a piece clean. I was washing with my hands and a bar of face soap before the money come. I took all the clothes I had, most of the dirty ones I could find, and washed them. It ran me up to six dollars and something with the cab that my sister took back home. I was sitting over at the laundry worrying that mama didn't have nothing to eat. I took a cab over there and gave her ten more dollars. All I had left to my name was ten dollars to pay on my couch, get food, wash and everything. But I ignored my problems and gave mama the money I had. She didn't really have nothing after she paid some bills. She was over there black and blue from not eating--stomach growling. The craziest thing was that she wouldn't touch the rent money. I gave the last five dollars of my money to her. She didn't want to take no more cause I was helping her so much. Today she took twenty-five dollars out of the rent money. She paid her sister her five and gave me five to get the kids something to eat. I said, what about my other ten, but she put me off. She paid everybody else and I'm the one who's helping her the most. I could have most everything I needed if I didn't have to divide with my people. But they be just as poor as me and I don't want to turn them down."

Close kin who have relied upon one another over the years often complain about the sacrifices they have made, and the

deprivation they have endured, for one another. Statements similar to Ruby's were made by men and women describing the sense of obligation and sacrifice they feel towards female kin: their mothers, grandmothers, or "mamas." Commitment to mutual aid among close kin is sometimes characterized by actors as if they were practically "possessed" or controlled by the relationship. Eloise describes how she is captured by the incessant demands of her mother: "A mother should realize that you have your own life to lead and your own family. You can't come when she calls all the time, although you might want to and feel bad if you can't. I'm all worn out from running from my house to her house like a pin-ball machine. That's the way I do. I'm doing it cause she's my mother and cause I don't want to hurt her. Yet, she's killing me."

The ebb and flow of goods and services among kinsmen is illustrated in the following example of economic and social transactions which occurred during one month in 1970 between participants in a kin-based cooperative network in The Flats.

> Cecil (35) lives in The Flats with his mother Willie Mae, his oldest sister and her two children, and his younger brother. Cecil's younger sister Lily lives with their mother's sister, Bessie. Bessie has three children and Lily has two. Cecil and his mother have part-time jobs in a cafe and Lily's children are on aid. In July of 1970 Cecil and his mother had just put together enough money to cover their rent. Lily paid her utilities, but she did not have enough money to buy food stamps for herself and her children. Cecil and Willie Mae knew that after they paid their rent they would not have any money for food for the family. They helped out Lily by buying her food stamps, and then the two households shared meals

> together until Willie Mae was paid two weeks later. A week later Lily received her second ADC check and Bessie got some spending money from her boyfriend. They gave some of this money to Cecil and Willie Mae to pay their rent and gave Willie Mae money to cover her insurance and pay a small sum on a living room suite at the local furniture store. Willie Mae reciprocated later on by buying dresses for Bessie and Lily's daughters and caring for all of the children when Bessie got a temporary job.

In coping with the everyday demands of poverty, the people living in The Flats cannot keep their resources and their needs a secret. Everyone knows who is working, when welfare checks arrive, and when additional resources are available. Members of the middle class in America value privacy concerning their income and resources. But the daily intimacy, which is created by exchange transactions in The Flats, insures that any change in a family's resources becomes "news." If a participant in an exchange network acquires a new car, new clothes, or a sum of money, this information is immediately circulated through gossip. People are able to calculate on a weekly basis the total sum of money available to their kin network. This information is necessary to their solvency and stability.

When Flats residents, Magnolia and Calvin Waters, acquired a sum of money through inheritance, information about the money spread quickly to every member of their domestic network. Within a month and a half all of the money was absorbed by participants in their network whose demands and

needs could not be refused. This example of the obligatory nature of exchange transactions is described in detail in Chapter VII.

Social relationships between kin who have consistently traded material and cultural support over the years reveal feelings of both generosity and martydom. Long-term social interactions, especially between female kin, sometimes become highly competitive and aggressive. At family gatherings or a family picnic it is not unusual to see an exaggerated performance by someone, bragging about how much he has done for a particular relative, or boasting that he provided all the food and labor for the picnic himself. The performer often combines statements of his generosity with his sacrifice and martyrdom. In the presence of other kin, the performer displays loyalty and superiority to others. Even though these routines come to be expected from certain individuals, they cause hurt feelings and prolonged arguments. While everyone wants to create the impression that he is generous and manipulative, no one wants to admit how much he depends upon others.

The themes expressed by boasting female performers and gossiping kin and friends resemble themes which have emerged from Black myth, fiction and lore (Abrahams 1963; Dorson 1956, 1958). Conflicting values of trust and distrust, exploitation and friendship, the "trickster" and the "fool," have typically characterized patterns of social interaction between Blacks and

whites; notions of trust and distrust also suffuse interpersonal relations within the Black community. These themes become daily utterances between cooperating kinsmen, who find themselves trapped in a web of obligations. But the explosive struggle between the need to trust others, and feelings of distrust, are most conspicuous in the competitive framework of swapping among friends.

Many students of social relations within the Black community have concluded that these relations are embedded in an atmosphere of distrust. However, intense exchange behavior would not be possible if distrust predominated over all other attitudes towards personal relations. Distrust is offset by improvisation: an adaptive style of behavior acquired by persons using each situation to control, manipulate and exploit others. Wherever there are friendships, exploitation possibilities exist (Abrahams 1970b:125). Friends exploit one another in the game of swapping, and they expect to be exploited in return. There is a precarious line between acceptable and unacceptable returns on a swap. Individuals risk trusting others because they want to change their lives. Swapping offers a variety of goods and something to anticipate. Michael Lee talks about his need to trust others: "They say you shouldn't trust nobody, but that's wrong. You have to try to trust somebody, and somebody has to try to trust you, cause everybody need help in this world."

A person who gives and obligates a large number of individuals stands a better chance of receiving returns than a person who limits his circle of friends. In addition, repayments from a large number of individuals are returned intermittently: people can anticipate receiving a more or less continuous flow of goods. From this perspective swapping involves both calculation and planning.

Obtaining returns on a trade necessarily takes time. During this process, stable friendships are formed. Individuals attempt to surpass one another's displays of generosity; the extent to which these acts are mutually satisfying determines the duration of friendship bonds. Non-kin who live up to one another's expectations express elaborate vows of friendship and conduct their social relations within the idiom of kinship (see Chapter IV). Exchange behavior between those friends "going for kin" is identical to exchange behavior between close kin.

The Rhythm Of Exchange

Exchange transactions create special bonds between friends. They initiate a social relationship and agreed upon reciprocal obligations (Gouldner 1960; Foster 1963; Sahlins 1965).[1] In the following passage Ruby Banks describes the ease with which individuals are drawn into exchange relationships. "These days you ain't got nothing to be really giving, only to

your true friends, but most people trade. Trading is a part of everybody's life. When I'm over at a girl friend's house, and I see something I want, I say, you gotta give me this, you don't need it no way. I act the fool with them. If they say no, I need that, then they keep it and give me something else. Whatever I see that I want I usually get. If a friend lets me wear something of theirs, I let them wear something of mine. I even let some of my new clothes out. If my friend has on a new dress that I want, she might tell me to wait til she wear it first and then she'll give it to me, or she might say, well take it on."

Exchange relationships are based upon reciprocal obligations which last as long as both participants are mutually satisfied. Individuals remain involved in exchange relationships by adequately drawing upon the credit they accumulate with others through swapping. Ruby Banks' description of the swapping relationship which developed between her and myself illustrates this notion. "When I first met you, I didn't know you, did I? But I liked what you had on about the second time you seen me, and you gave it to me. Alright, that started us swapping back and forth. You ain't really giving nothing away because everything that goes round comes round in my book. It's just like at stores where people give you credit. They have to trust you to pay them back, and if you pay them you can get more things."

Since an object swapped is offered with the intent of obligating the receiver over a period of time, two individuals rarely simultaneously exchange things. Little or no premium is placed upon immediate compensation (Sumner 1901); time has to pass before a counter-gift or series of gifts can be repayed. While waiting for repayments, participants in exchanges are compelled to trust one another. As the need arises, reciprocity occurs.

The rhythm and timing of exchanges is illuminated in Opal Jones' description of exchange transactions within her social network. Opal's description also illustrates the powerful obligation to give that pervades inter-personal relationships. "My girl friend Alice gave me a dress about a month ago, and last time I went over to her house, she gave me sheets and towels for the kids cause she knew I needed them. Every time I go over there, she always gives me something. When she comes over to my house, I give her whatever she asks for. We might not see each other in two or three months. But if she comes over after that, and I got something, I give it to her if she want it. If I go over to her house and she got something, I take it--canned goods, food, milk, it don't make no difference."

"My TV's been over to my cousin's house for seven or eight months now. I had a fine couch that she wanted and I gave it to her too. It don't make no difference with me what it is or

what I have. I feel free knowing that I done my part in this world. I don't ever expect nothing back right away, but when I've given something to kin or friend, whenever they think about me they'll bring something on around. Even if we don't see each other for two or three months. Soon enough they'll come around and say, 'Come over my house, I got something to give you.' When I get over there and they say, you want this, if I don't want it my kin will say, well find something else you like and take it on."

When people in The Flats swap goods, a value is placed upon the goods given away, but the value is not determined by the price or market value of the object. Some goods have been acquired through stealing rings, or previous trades, and they cost very little compared to their monetary value. The value of an object given away is based upon its retaining power over the receiver; that is, how much and over how long a time period the giver can expect returns of the gift.[2]

Gifts exchanged through swapping in The Flats are exchanged at irregular intervals although sometimes the gifts exchanged are of exactly the same kind. Despite the necessity to exchange, on the average no one is significantly better off. Ruby Banks captured the pendulous rhythm of exchange when she said, "You ain't really giving nothing away because everything that goes round comes round in my book."

These cooperating networks share many goals constituting a group identity--goals so inter-related that the gains and

losses of any of them are felt by all participants. The folk model of reciprocity is characterized by recognized and urgent reciprocal dependencies and mutual needs. These dependencies are recognized collectively, and carry collective sanctions. Members of second generation welfare families have calculated the risk of giving. As people say, "The poorer you are the more likely you are to pay back." This criterion often determines which kin and friends are actively recruited into exchange networks.

Gift exchange is a style of inter-personal relationships by which local coalitions of cooperating kinsmen distinguish themselves from other Blacks--those low income or working class Blacks who have access to steady employment. In contrast to the middle class ethic of individualism and competition, the poor living in The Flats do not turn anyone down when they need help. The cooperative life style and the bonds created by the vast mass of moment-to-moment exchanges constitute an underlying element of Black identity in The Flats. This powerful obligation to exchange is a profoundly creative adaptation to poverty.

Social Networks

The most typical way people involve others in their daily domestic lives is by entering into an exchange relationship. Through exchange transactions, an individual personally

mobilizes others as participants in his social network. Those engaged in reciprocal gift-giving are recruited primarily from relatives and from those friends who come to be defined as kin. The process of exchange joins individuals in personal relationships (Boissevain 1966). These inter-personal links effectively define the web of social relationships described in this study.

Kinsmen and others activated into one another's networks share reciprocal obligations towards one another. They are referred to as essential kin in this study.[3] Strings of exchanges which actively link participants in an individual's network define that individual's personal kindred. The personal kindreds described in Chapter IV are ego-centered networks: a given individual's personal kindred can be referred to by his name. Each person in the kindred is linked by a dyadic relationship to ego. Even the personal kindreds of half siblings differ slightly; each half sibling shares some kin, but relates uniquely to others. Personal kindreds are not a category from which individuals are recruited, but a selection of individuals mobilized for specific ends (Goodenough 1970; Keesing 1966).

In the process of exchange, people become immersed in a domestic web of a large number of kin folk who can be called upon for help and can bring others into the network. Domestic networks comprise the network of cooperating kinsmen activated from participants' overlapping personal kindreds.

Domestic networks are not ego-centered; several participants in the network can recruit kin and friends to participate in domestic exchanges. Similar to personal kindreds, domestic networks are a selection of individuals mobilized for specific ends.

The network perspective, as it is used in this study, allows for the integration of various theoretical orientations such as role theory, exchange theory, and action theory to interpret the same social phenomena (Whitten 1972:24). For example, the ramifying series of exchanges and role relationships in domestic networks can be clarified from the perspective of network analysis. From the vantage point of exchange theory, strings of exchanges can define the networks and link individuals in dyadic relationships. Individuals linked by exchanges, or recruited to serve some short-term goal have been labeled action-sets by Mayer (1966). If action-sets are mobilized on successive occasions Mayer refers to them as quasi-groups. Mayer claims that action-sets are ego-centered. However, Crissman (1969:77) has convincingly shown the difference between ego-centered networks and action-sets. Action-sets, which have defined purposes, can be generated by more than one person drawn from different personal kindreds. The domestic networks described in this study (Chapter V) have the characteristics of action-sets as defined by Crissman: They can be mobilized for extended periods of time.

The inter-dependence of participants within cooperative social networks in The Flats is based upon reciprocal domestic needs and responsibilities. Most descriptions of Black American domestic life (Frazier 1939; Drake and Cayton 1945; Abrahams 1963; Moynihan 1965; Rainwater 1966) have overlooked the inter-dependence and cooperation of kinsmen in Black communities. Instead they have taken female-headed households and illegitimacy as signs of broken homes and family disorganization. These studies fail to account for the great variety of domestic strategies in urban Black communities. Whitten (1972:41) perceptively suggests that one of the advantages of network analysis is that the researcher can avoid mere categorizing of social systems as "disorganized."

Theories are needed for explaining patterned social relations which do not comprise identifiable and easily recognized social groups. Social network analysis has proved useful as a field technique for gathering data on daily social relations (Bott 1971; Liebow 1967; Young and Willmott 1957), but there has been little advance in network theory (Barnes 1969b; Barth 1966; Boissevain 1968; Epstein 1961; Mayer 1966; Mitchell 1966; Sahlins 1965). If the concept of social networks is to have theoretical utility, it must begin to fill the gap between the myriad of role relationships between individuals and the social organization of groups (see Crissman 1969).

In this study, the network model provides a mode for explaining a particular web of social relations from several points of view. Domestic networks can be elaborated in terms of symbolic exchange, in terms of lifelong dyadic relationships, and in terms of the role content of these relationships. This chapter has focused on material and symbolic exchange between participants in domestic networks. The following chapter elaborates the basis of recruitment to personal kindreds. Chapters V and VI clarify the dyadic relationships formed over the life cycle of individuals. The role content of these relationships is considered in Chapter VI. Throughout this study a network perspective is used to interpret the basis of inter-personal links between those network participants mobilized to solve daily problems.

Footnotes

[1]Foster's (1963) model of the dyadic contract includes two types of dyadic contractual ties: colleague ties between individuals of approximately equal socio-economic positions and patron-client ties between individuals of unequal social position. The underlying principles of exchange transactions discussed in this chapter approximate features of the dyadic model of colleague ties. According to Foster's model, colleague ties are expressed by repeated exchanges; they are informal and exist so long as participants are satisfied; they are usually of long duration; and exact or perfectly balanced reciprocity between partners is never achieved.

[2]The value of commodities in systems of reciprocal gift giving is clearly characterized by Levi-Strauss (1969:54): "Goods are not only economic commodities, but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion...."

[3]Essential kin refers to members of the culturally specific system of kinship categories and others who activate and validate their jural rights by helping one another, thereby creating reciprocal obligations towards one another (see Chapter IV). Firth (1970) distinguishes between 'effective kin' (those kin with whom one maintains social contact) and 'intimate kin' (those kin with whom contact is purposeful, close and frequent members of the immediate family circle).

CHAPTER IV

PERSONAL KINDREDS

"You Can't Care For No One That Don't Give A Damn For You"

Throughout the world, individuals distinguish kin from non-kin. Moreover, kin terms are frequently extended to non-kin, and social relations among non-kin may be conducted within the idiom of kinship. Individuals acquire socially recognized kinship relations with others through a chain of socially recognized parent-child connections (Goodenough 1970). The chain of parent-child connections is essential to the structuring of kin groups.

Although anthropologists have long recognized the distinction between natural and social parenthood (Malinowski 1930; Radcliffe-Brown 1950; Goodenough 1970; Carroll 1970), until recently most ethnographic data has not clarified those social transactions involving parental rights. This omission has led to the persistent belief that each person is a kinsman of his natural mother and father who are expected as parents to raise him (Scheffler 1970). Much of the controversial and misleading characterizations of kinship and domestic life among poor Black Americans can be attributed to this assumption and to the lack of ethnographic data on transactions in parenthood.

In this chapter I suggest that jural, i.e., socially recognized parenthood, is the basis of the creation of

personal kindreds (Davenport 1959, 1964; Mitchell 1963; Keesing 1966; Fox 1967). Individuals "cast their net" to create personal kindreds on the basis of culturally determined perceptions of jural parenthood.

Young Black children are born into the personal kindreds of those adults responsible for them. Sometimes a biological parent does not actuate claims of responsibility towards a child. Of the two closest relatives the father is more likely to drop out of a child's personal kindred. This is due to the widely known fact that the Black males' persistent lack of jobs, skills, and opportunity has made it practically impossible for him to fill the American dream of jural fatherhood. This factor has led to the classification of Black families as matrifocal, implying a matrilineal structure for linking families in the same community (Stack 1970). But the dichotomy between nuclear, biparental families and matrifocal families does not adequately describe domestic organization or the creation of personal kinship networks among welfare families in urban communities.

Domestic arrangements and strategies among the Black poor in The Flats usually assure that children are cared for, and that kin and friends in need will be helped. Participants in domestic networks are primarily drawn from personal kindreds. R. T. Smith (1970:68) has stated that although there is a tendency among lower classes to keep kin links open, this does not mean that large cooperating groups of kinsmen are

found among the lower classes. By comparison, this study suggests that one does find domestic networks of cooperating kinsmen among the poorest Black people. Kinship networks have stability because the needs of the poor are constant. Friendships, on the other hand, are continually changing and friends drop in and out of one another's networks while assuming a stable position in their own kinship network. From the individual's viewpoint, he is immersed in a domestic circle in which he can find help (Stack 1970). Friends pass in and out of his domestic network, just as he passes in and out of theirs.

Personal Kindreds

American middle class children are born into a network of relatives which in principle is infinite. Relatives on both sides of the family are kin, and there is no clear-cut limit to the range of one's kinsmen. But cognatic reckoning by itself cannot distinguish between essential kin and others within the system.[1] The choice of which relatives an individual chooses to trace and activate relationships to is by no means mechanical. Networks which urban Black children are born into include some individuals who are "kin folk" and others who are not essential kin. Billy, a young Black woman, was raised by her mother and her mother's "old man" (husband). She has three children of her own by different

fathers. Speaking about her kin Billy says, "Most people kin to me are in this neighborhood, right here in The Flats, but I got people in the South, in Chicago and in Ohio too. I couldn't tell most of their names and most of them aren't really kin folk to me. Starting down the street from here, take my father, he ain't my daddy, he's no father to me.[2] I ain't got but one daddy and that's Otis, the one who raised me. My kids' daddies, that's something else, all their daddys' people really take to them--they always doing things and making a fuss about them. We help each other out and that's what kin folks are all about."

How individuals cast their net to create personal kinship networks depends upon the culturally determined perceptions of jural parenthood: the rules and criteria for including and excluding persons connected by blood and marriage to a particular kinsman, and the inter-personal relations between these individuals. These criteria determine which individuals acquire socially recognized kinship relations with others.

Personal kindreds of adults are apparently ego-centered networks of essential kin.[3] These networks are not residential units or observable groups, and they change participants, for example, when friends "fall out" with one another. From the individual's viewpoint personal kindreds comprise the people who are socially recognized as having reciprocal responsibilities. These people become acting and reacting participants for some focal purpose (Fox 1967:167).

Young children exercise little choice in determining with whom they have kinship relations. They are born into a network of essential kin which is primarily the personal kindred of the kin folk responsible for them. As children become adults they expand, contract and create their own personal networks.

Geographical distance, inter-personal relations, or acknowledgment of paternity discourage some relatives from actuating claims of responsibility. These relatives effectively drop out of the individual's personal kinship network, and all of the people linked through him also tend to drop out. Thus, an important criterion affecting the size and shape of the personal kinship network of adults is whether the relative who drops out of the network is genealogically close or distant. Sometimes close kinship links like that of a parent are broken. A father, for example, may claim that he doesn't "own the baby" thereby refusing to acknowledge paternity. When a close link such as that of a father is broken, this has a profound effect on the shape of the personal kindred.

The following chart shows the genealogical categories in American kinship (consider the "child" as EGO). If a child's grandparents through his father, for example, break a link, all those more distant relatives related through the grandparents tend to drop out. On Chart A the dark area indicates those individuals related through the grandparents who effectively have dropped out of the child's personal kinship network. Chart B shows the shape of a network in which a father has broken a kinship link.

CHART A: GRANDPARENTAL LINK BROKEN

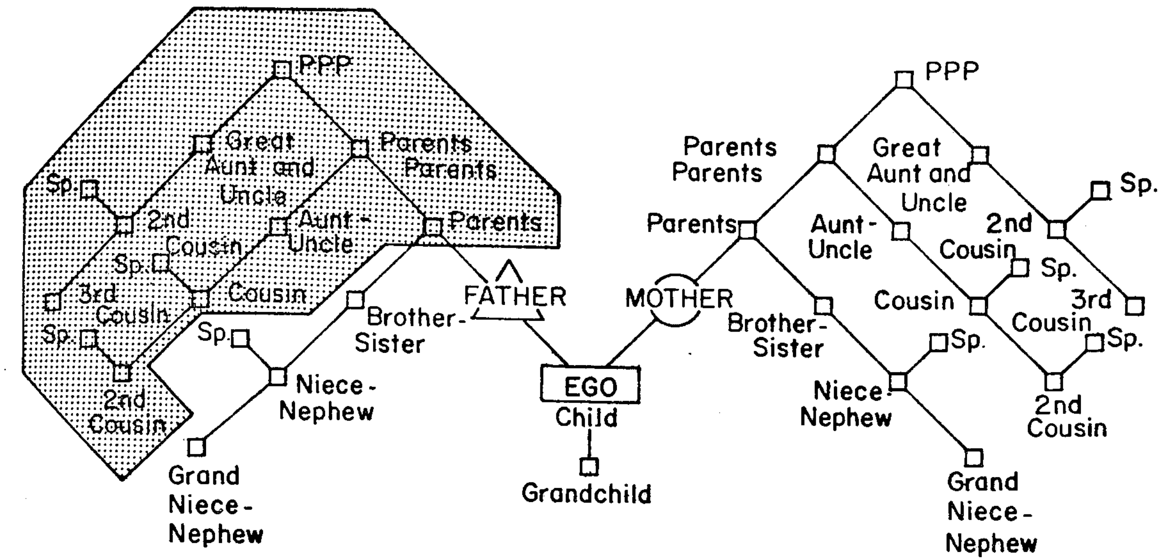
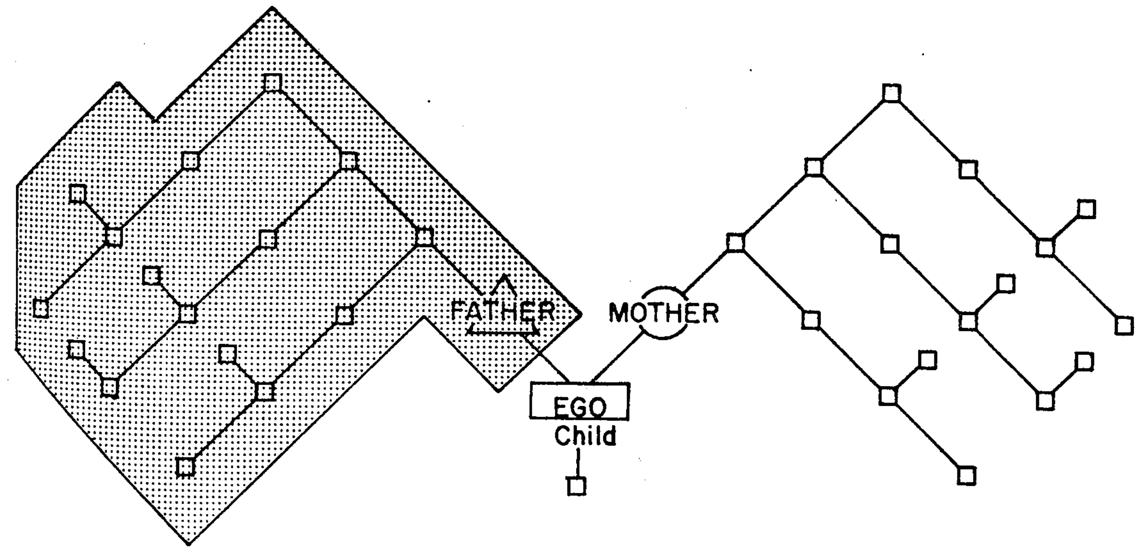


CHART B: PARENTAL LINK BROKEN



Because any relative can break a link, personal kindreds can take any number of shapes. But the networks are skewed roughly in proportion to the nearness of the kinship links which are ineffective. In principle, the dropping of a father from a network affects the shape of the network in the same way as if other more distant relatives on either side were to drop out. But the effect of dropping a close relative is obviously much more profound. In the following discussion I will explain the creation of and recruitment to personal kindreds.

The Perception Of Parenthood

The folk system of parental rights and duties in The Flats provides a good starting point for understanding who is eligible to be a member of the personal kinship network of a new-born child. This system of rights and duties should not be confused with the official, written, statutory law of the state. The local, folk system of rights and duties pertaining to parenthood are enforced only by sanctions within the community. Community members clearly operate within two different jural systems: the folk system, and the legal system of the courts and welfare offices.[4] In this paper, jural is used in relation to the folk system. Folk notions of jural parenthood provide the basis for recruitment to personal kindreds.

At birth a child acquires socially recognized kinship relations with others. Goodenough (1970:23) suggests that everything follows from what societies "make of" the birth of a child. The residents of The Flats have their own perception of how a mother's sponsorship provides a child with kinfolk.

Motherhood

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

Unlike in many societies, Black women in The Flats feel few if any restrictions about child-bearing. Unmarried Black women, young and old, are eligible to bear children, and frequently women bearing their first children are quite young.

A girl who gives birth as a teenager frequently does not raise and nurture her first born child. While she may share the same room and household with her baby, her mother, mother's sister, or her older sister will care for the child and become the child's "mama." This same young woman may actively become a jural mother to a second child she gives birth to a year or two later. When, for example, a grandmother, aunt or great aunt "takes a child" from his natural mother, acquired parenthood often lasts throughout the child's lifetime. Although a child kept by a close female relative knows who his mother is, his "mama" is the woman who "raised him up." Young mothers and their first born daughters are often raised as sisters, and lasting ties are established between these mothers and their daughters. A child being raised by his grandmother may later become playmates with his half siblings who are his age, but he does not share the same claims and duties and affective ties towards his natural mother.

A young mother is not necessarily considered emotionally ready to nurture a child; for example, a grandmother and other close relatives of Clover James decided that she was not carrying out her parental duties. Nineteen when her first child, Christine, was born, Clover explains, "I really was wild in those days, out on the town all hours of the night, and every night and weekend I layed my girl on my mother. I wasn't living home at the time, but mama kept Christine most of the time. One day mama up and said I was making a fool of her,

and she was going to take my child and raise her right. She said I was immature and that I had no business being a mother the way I was acting. All my mama's people agreed and there was nothing I could do. So mama took my child. Christine is six years old now. About a year ago I got married to Gus and we wanted to take Christine back. My baby, Earl, was living with us anyway. Mama blew up and told everyone how I was doing her. She dragged my name in the mud and people talked so much it really hurt." Gossip and pressure from close kin and friends made it possible for the grandmother to exercise her grandparental right to take the child into her home and raise her there.

Nothing in the conception of parenthood among people in The Flats prevents kinsmen of a child's socially recognized genealogical parents from having claims to jural parenthood (Goodenough 1970:17). Kinsmen anticipate the help they may have to give to young mothers, and the parental responsibilities they may have to assume towards the children of kinsmen. The bond between mothers and children is exceedingly strong, and the majority of mothers in The Flats raise their own children. Of the 188 AFDC mothers surveyed, 30% were raising their own children, 5% were raising younger siblings, and 7% were raising their grandchildren, nieces or nephews.[5]

In the eyes of the community, a young mother who does not perform her duties has not validated her claim to jural parenthood. The person who actively becomes the "mama"

acquires the major cluster of parental rights accorded to the mothers in The Flats. In effect a young mother transfers some of her claims to jural parenthood without surrendering all of her rights to the child.

Just how a jural mother provides a child with concerned relatives can best be viewed in terms of Fischer's (1958) notion of sponsorship.[6] Fischer, in his discussion of residence, calls attention to the question of who is an individual's immediate sponsor in a residence group. This terminology refers to the residence of individuals rather than of couples, thereby flexibly providing information on residence over an individual's life history. The terminology can also be applied to the creation of personal kinship networks for the new-born child. Determining who becomes one of the immediate sponsors of a child's network clarifies its initial formation, the kinship links that are effective, and the shape of the network.

In The Flats the jural mother (80% are the natural mothers) determines the child's kinship affiliations through females. She is one of the immediate sponsors of a child's personal kinship network. A Black child's jural mother's blood relatives and their husbands and wives are eligible to be members of the child's personal kinship network. How the relationship between a child's natural mother and his or socially recognized genitor determines a child's kin affiliations through males is described below. When a child is raised

by close female relatives of his mother in a more or less stable situation, the immediate sponsor of the child's personal network is the jural parent, the "mama." This reckoning of relatives through the immediate sponsor is especially useful when a child's residence changes during his lifetime. Even if a child is raised by a person who is not a blood relative (described below), he usually becomes a part of the network of the jural mother.

Fatherhood

People in The Flats expect to change friends frequently through a series of encounters. Demands on friendships are great, but social-economic pressures on male-female relationships are even greater. Therefore, relationships between young, unmarried, childbearing adults are highly unstable. The community usually does not evaluate male-female relationships in terms of duration. Some men and childbearing women in The Flats establish long-term liaisons with one another, some maintain sexual unions with more than one person at a time, and still others get married. However, very few women are married before they have given birth to one or more children. When a man and woman have a sexual partnership, especially if the woman has no other on-going sexual relationships, the man is identified with children born to the woman. Short-term sexual partnerships are recognized by the community even if a man and woman do not share a household and

domestic responsibilities. The offspring of these unions are publicly accepted by the community; a child's existence seems to legitimize the child in the eyes of the community. People in The Flats do not, however, automatically label as a marriage sexual partnerships which produce a child.

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

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

mother may assume the jural duties of discipline and support and receive the child's affection, but all jural rights in the child belong to the mother and her kinsmen. The pattern, whereby Black children derive all their jural kin through females, has been stereotyped and exaggerated in the literature on Black families. In fact, fathers in The Flats recognized 484 (69%) of the 700 children included in the AFDC survey.

The second alternative open to a man involved in a sexual relationship with a mother is to acknowledge openly that he is the genitor. The father can acknowledge the child by saying "he own it," by telling his people and his friends that he is the father, by paying part of the hospital bill, or by bringing milk and diapers to the mother after the birth of the child. The parents may not have ever shared a household and the affective and sexual relationship between them may have ended prior to the birth of the child. By validating his claim as a jural parent the father offers the child his blood relatives and their husbands and wives as the child's kin--an inheritance so to speak. So long as the father validates his parental entitlement, his relatives, especially his mother and sisters, consider themselves kin to the child and jurally responsible. Even when the mother "takes up with another man" her child retains the original set of kin gained through the father who sponsored him.

The more a father and his kin help a mother and her child, the more completely they validate their parental rights. However, when a man assents to being the father and offers his kinship affiliations to the child, he rarely performs a parental duty or claims any rights in relation to the child. Out of 699 fathers who acknowledged paternity of AFDC children only 84 (12%) gave any financial support or assistance to their children. Since many American Black males have little or no access to steady and productive employment, they are rarely able to support and maintain their families. This has made it practically impossible for most poor Black males to assume stable roles as jural parents. People in The Flats believe a father should help his child, but they know that a mother cannot count on his help. Community expectations of fathers do not generally include the father's duties in relation to a child. They do, however, assume the responsibilities of the father's kin. The Black male who does not actively become a jural father, but acknowledges a child and offers his kin to that child, in effect, is validating his jural rights. Often it is the father's kin who activate the claim to jural rights in the child.

Jural fatherhood, then, belongs to the presumed genitor if he, or others for him, choose to validate his claim. Jural kinship through males is reckoned through a chain of socially recognized genitors. If the father fails to do anything beyond merely acknowledging the child, he surrenders most jural rights

in the child, and this claim can be shared or transferred to the father's kin, whose claim becomes strengthened if they actively participate as essential kin. By failing to perform parental duties the father retains practically no rights in his child although his kin retain rights if they assume active responsibility.

A non-participating father also shares some of his rights and duties with his child's mother's current boy friend or husband. In this sense Goodenough's observation that "jural fatherhood whether it belongs to the genitor or the mother's husband derives from the marital relationship" is useful (1970:28). When a man and woman have a continuing sexual relationship, even if the man is not the father of any of the woman's children, he is expected by the mother and the community to share some of the parental duties of discipline, support, and affection. Goodenough's definition of marriage as a transaction whereby persons establish a "continuing claim to the right of sexual access" is appropriate to these relationships (1970:12). This definition allows for the possibility that the "married" persons do not necessarily form a domestic or household unit, and that the relationship need not be of any specified duration.

As jural relatives, a child's father's kin take an active interest in the nurturing of children. Both the mother's and the father's close female relatives have the right to observe and judge whether a woman is performing her duties as a mother.

If a young woman is unable to care for her child, nothing prevents a father's close female relatives from claiming jural parenthood. When 188 AFDC mothers listed in rank order who they would expect to raise each of their children (total of 1,000 children) if they died, one-third of the women listed their own mother as their first choice and one-third listed either their child's father or the father's mother as the first choice. The remaining one-third (second through fifth choice) were close kin to the mother (her mother's sister, her own sister or brother, and her daughter). In crisis situations such as a mother's death or sickness, a child's jural kin through his mother and father are equally eligible to assume responsibilities of jural parenthood.

The chain of sponsored parent-child connections determines the personal kindreds of children. Participants in active units of domestic cooperation are drawn from personal kinship networks. How a particular individual, say a mother, works to create the active networks which she depends upon for the needs of her children, depends largely on sponsorship or parental links. Commonly, the mother's personal domestic network includes the personal networks of her children, who are half siblings with different fathers. Each child will grow up into a slightly different personal network from his brothers and sisters. Mothers expect little from the father, they just hope he will help out. But they do expect something of his kin, especially his mother and sisters. Mothers continually

activate these kin lines and since the biological father's female relatives are usually poor they too try to expand their network. The exchanges and daily dependencies get very complicated, but they constitute the main activity of daily life for these women.

Daily life is also complicated as individuals expand their own personal networks in part by recruiting friends into their own domestic networks. When friends live up to one another's expectations they are identified as kin. The following section shows that friends often participate in the personal networks of others within the idiom of kinship, and that some kin exhibit the interactive patterns of friends.

The Idiom Of Kinship

Men and women in The Flats know that their daily needs are unlimited and they constantly reach out hoping to find solutions which will change their lives. They place their hopes in the scene of their life and action: in the closed community, in the people around them, in kin and friends, and in the many new friends they will have to make to get along. Friendships between lovers and between friends are based upon a precarious balance of trust and profit. Magnolia describes this balance in the following passage: "I don't have nothing great and no more than nobody else. It doesn't matter. I'm happy with my kids and I'm happy with the friends that I got.

Some people don't understand friendship. Friendship means a lot, that is if you can trust a friend. If you have a friend you should learn to trust them and share everything that you have. When I have a friend and I need something, I don't ask, they just automatically tell me that they going to give it to me. I don't have to ask. And that's the way friends should be, for how long it lasts. But sometimes when you help a person they end up making a fool out of you. If a friend ain't giving me anything in return for what I'm giving her, shit she can't get nothing else. These days you ain't got nothing to be really giving. You can't care for no one that don't give a damn for you."

Even in newly formed friendships, individuals begin to rely upon one another quickly, expecting wider solutions to their problems than any one person in the same situation could possibly offer. As a result the stability of a friendship often depends upon the ability of two individuals to gauge their exploitation of one another. Everyone understands that friendships are explosive and abruptly come to an end when one friend makes a fool out of another. Life, therefore, as Abrahams so clearly shows, is "conceived of in terms of a series of encounters with a large number of individuals" (1970:120). As Ruby says, "You got to go out and meet people, because the very day you go out that first person you meet may be the person that can help you get the things you want."

Individuals in The Flats continually evaluate their inter-personal relationships by gossiping and conversation. They talk about whether others are "acting right" or "doing right by them." They define personal relationships in terms of their dual expectations of friends and kin. When friends more than adequately share the exchange of goods and services, they are called kinsmen. When friends live up to one another's expectations, their social relations are conducted within the idiom of kinship. For example, if two women of the same age are helping one another they call their friend "just a sister," or say that "they are going for sisters." Anyone in the community with whom a person has good social dealings can be classified as some kind of kin. When a friendship ends because individuals "let one another down" this concludes both their expectations of one another and their fictive kin relationship. In addition, a person defined as a fictive kin, for example, a "sister," does not usually bring to the relationship her own personal genealogical entailments. Her mother is not necessarily her fictive sister's mother and her father's father is not her fictive sister's grandfather. Losing a fictive relative, therefore, does not dramatically affect the shape of personal networks as does the dropping of a close kinship link.

The open-ended extension of kin terms to "those who help out" is a way people expand their personal networks. A friend

who is classified as a kinsman is simultaneously given respect and responsibility. For an example of how social relations are conducted within the idiom of kinship, let us turn once again to fatherhood.

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

Fictive kin relations are maintained by consensus between individuals, and in some contexts can last a life time. If Lee maintains his interest in Clover's boys he may remain their "play daddy" throughout their adult life.

Children very often establish close and affectionate ties with their aunts and uncles, for example, with their mother's sister's "old man" and their mother's brother's "old lady." These aunts and uncles, on the basis of their original consensual relationship, can remain in a child's (fictive niece or nephew) personal network for a long time. Personal kinship networks are enlarged by the inclusion of these affines who may keep the relationship active. Ruby recently visited her Uncle Arthur, one of her Aunt Augusta's "old men," in the hospital. "Uncle Arthur and I was always good friends," says Ruby, "even when he and Aunt Augusta weren't getting on. He was staying with Augusta, my grandmother and me when I was just a kid, and he always treated me like something real special. Now he is just as nice to my kids when he comes over to see them. I really feel sad that he's old and sick, he has high blood, and I think he may die." Ruby is also attached to her Uncle Lazar who started going with her mother's youngest sister when her Aunt was just fifteen. "My Aunt has been married twice since, but Uncle Lazar just remained a part of our family. He's fifty-eight now and he's been a part of our family ever since I can remember. He always has been

staying with our family too. Right now he's staying in the basement below Aunt Augusta's apartment and she cooks for him and her old man. He'll always be my Uncle and he and my Aunt never did get married."

Just as these "aunts" and "uncles" stay a part of the personal kinship networks of their nieces and nephews, so best friends may remain in each other's domestic network on the basis of original friendship, even if the friendship has ended. Sometimes when non-kin become a part of a family and are given a fictive kin term, no one remembers just how the tie began. Billy tried to remember how cousin Ola became a part of her family. "My mama once told me," said Billy, "but I hardly remember. I think cousin Ola was my mama's oldest sister's best friend and they went for cousins. When my mama's sister died, Ola took her two youngest children, and she has been raising them up ever since."

In the above examples, social relations are conducted within the idiom of kinship. Members of the community explain the behavior of those around them by allowing behavior to define the nature of the relationship. Friends are classified as kinsmen when they assume jural responsibilities of kinsmen. Likewise those kin who cannot be counted upon are severely criticized. Harsh evaluation of the behavior of others accounts for some of the constant ups and downs in the lives of friends and kin. Expectations are so elastic that when one person fails to meet another's needs disappointment is

cushioned. Flexible expectations and the extension of kin relationships to non-kin allow for the creation of mutual aid domestic networks which are not bounded by genealogical distance or genealogical criteria. Much more important for the creation and recruitment to personal networks are the practical requirements that kin and friends live near one another.

Members of domestic networks in The Flats are drawn from kin and friends. Of the two, the kin network is more enduring because all of an individual's essential kin are "recognized as having some duties towards him and some claims on him" (Fox 1967:167). Friendships end and that is to be expected; new friendships can be formed. But the number of relatives who can be called upon for help from personal kinship networks is limited. As a result a cluster of relatives from personal kinship networks have continuing claims on one another. Some observers of Black culture regard the friendship network as the "proven and adaptive base of operations" in lower class life (Abrahams 1970b:128). But the adaptive base of operations of the poorest Black people can be attributed to personal kindreds as well as networks of friends.

Footnotes

[1]On this point in particular, and many others throughout this paper, I wish to thank F. K. Lehman.

[2]Schneider (1968) maintains that distinctions between terms of reference (father) and terms of address (pa, pop, daddy) increase ethnographic error because they are synonyms which are equally referential, and are equally names of categories. Schneider's observation clearly is not adequate for dealing with the terminology from the above passage. The kinship term father in the passage refers to the socially recognized genitor. "Daddy," which informants themselves put in quotations by intonation, refers to an essential kin such as the man who raises a child. Black people in The Flats, then, distinguish between the 'pater' (effective kin), the jural father (socially recognized genitor), and the 'genitor.' This perception of fatherhood does not fit into the long-accepted dichotomy between 'pater' and 'genitor' (Radcliffe-Brown 1950).

[3]The following distinction between relatives, kin and essential kin will be used through the study: a) Relatives: In cognatic reckoning the universe of cognates is in principle unlimited in the number of genealogical categories (not persons) it contains. A relative is any person who is genealogically defined within the cognatic web; b) Kin: Some relatives (at least) and some others who are members of the culturally specific system of kinship categories which have behavioral entailments with respect to one another; c) Essential kin: At least some of the above kin and others who activate and validate their jural rights by helping one another, thereby creating reciprocal obligations towards one another.

[4]I wish to thank Ward Goodenough for clarifying this point, and for other valuable suggestions.

[5]AFDC data reported in this study is part of a statistical analysis from AFDC case histories which I conducted of the residence patterns and kin relationships of 1000 children and 200 grantees on the AFDC program in the County in which this study is located. The data was coded and analyzed before I began my field work (see Appendix 1).

[6]I am grateful to Jan Brukman for suggesting this idea.

CHAPTER V

DOMESTIC NETWORKS

"Those You Count On"

Many of the people involved in this study move once or twice a year. They move to houses or apartments just a few blocks away and in similar condition. Moving may be a flight to better oneself or a temporary relief of depression and blues. People regard every move as short term, and call a residence a "place to stay."

Household composition in The Flats expands or contracts with the loss of a job, the death of a kin, the beginning or end of a sexual partnership, or the end of a friendship. Houses get condemned, landlords force tenants to move, and people come to spontaneous and abrupt decisions that they must move. It is sometimes difficult, as R. T. Smith (1970:66) suggests, "to determine just which household a given individual belongs to at any particular moment." Residents in The Flats characterize household composition according to where people sleep, eat, and spend their time. Those who eat together are also considered to be part of a domestic unit.

Welfare workers, researchers and landlords have long known that the residence patterns of the poor change frequently. What is much less understood is the relationship between household composition and domestic organization in the Black community. In The Flats domestic organization is

diffused over many kin-based household units which themselves have elastic boundaries. But fluctuations in household composition rarely affect the exchanges and daily dependencies of participants.

Kin-Structured Local Networks

In The Flats the material and cultural support needed to sustain and socialize community members is provided by cooperating kinsmen. Local coalitions formed from networks of kin and friends are mobilized within domestic networks.

From the individual's viewpoint, he is immersed in a domestic web of a large number of kin and friends who he can count on. From a social viewpoint, relationships within the community are "organized on the model of kin relationships" (Goodenough 1970:49). Kin-constructs such as the perception of parenthood, the culturally determined criteria which effect the shape of personal kindreds, and the idiom of kinship (see Chapter IV), prescribe kin who can be recruited into domestic networks.

There are similarities in function between domestic networks and domestic groups which Fortes (1962:2) characterizes as "workshops of social reproduction." Both domains include three generations of members linked collaterally, or otherwise. Kinship, jural and affectional bonds, and economic factors affect the composition of both domains and residential

alignments within them. There are two striking differences between domestic networks and domestic groups. Domestic networks are not visible groups, because they do not have an obvious nucleus or defined boundary. But since a primary focus of domestic networks is child-care arrangements, the cooperation of a cluster of adult females is apparent. Participants in domestic networks are recruited from personal kindreds and friendships, but the personnel changes with fluctuating economic needs, changing life styles, and vacillating personal relationships.

Due to the absence of unilineal descent groups and local clan or lineage groupings (Murdock 1949; Leach 1961), in some loosely and complexly structured cognatic systems, kin-structured local networks (not groups) emerge. Localized coalitions of persons drawn from personal kindreds can be organized as networks of kinsmen. Goodenough (1970:49) correctly points out that anthropologists frequently describe "localized kin groups," but rarely describe kin-structured local groups (Goodenough 1962; Helm 1965). The localized, kin-based, cooperative coalitions of people described in this chapter are organized as kin-structured domestic networks. For brevity they are called domestic networks throughout this study.

Residence And Domestic Organization

Statistical patterns based on where people sleep in The Flats do not say anything about equally important patterns of domestic cooperation among kinsmen. An individual may eat in one household, sleep in another, and contribute resources and services to yet another, and he may consider himself a member of all three households.

In this section the connection between households and domestic life is illustrated by the cooperating kinsmen and friends who were mobilized within one large domestic network in The Flats. Domestic networks are of course not centered around one individual, but for simplicity the domestic network is given the name of key participants in the network, Magnolia and Calvin Waters. The description is confined to four months between April and July 1969. Even within this short time span individuals moved and joined other households within the domestic network.

The following description of Magnolia and Calvin Waters' domestic network focuses on the context in which individuals were brought into the network, changing residences within the network, and the relation between residence and domestic responsibilities.

The Domestic Network of Magnolia and Calvin Waters

Magnolia Waters is forty-one years old and has eleven children. At sixteen she moved from the South with her

parents, four sisters, Augusta, Carrie, Lydia and Olive, and two brothers, Pennington and Oscar. Soon after this she gave birth to her oldest daughter, Ruby. Ruby is now twenty-five and has two daughters and a son, each by a different father. Magnolia's sisters and brothers and their families all live in The Flats and each of her sister's children has received public aid. The second generation of children born to the family in The Flats are also AFDC recipients. This is not surprising since 33% of the 188 AFDC mothers studied were themselves AFDC children.

When Magnolia was twenty-five she met Calvin, who was forty-seven years old. They lived together and had eight children. Calvin is now sixty years old; Calvin and Magnolia plan to marry soon so that Magnolia will receive Calvin's insurance benefits. Calvin has two other daughters, ages thirty-eight and forty, by an early marriage in Mississippi. Calvin still has close ties with his daughters and their mother who all live near one another with their families in Chicago.

Magnolia's oldest sister, Augusta, is childless and has never been married. Augusta has maintained long-term "housekeeping" partnerships with four different men over the past twenty years and each of them has helped her raise her sisters' children. These men have maintained close, affectional ties with the family over the years. Magnolia's youngest sister, Carrie, married Lazar, twenty-five years her senior, when she was just fifteen. They stayed together for

about five years. After they separated Carrie married Kermit, separated from him, and became an alcoholic. She lives with different men from time to time, but in between men, or when things are at loose ends, she stays with Lazar, who has become a participating member of the family. Lazar usually resides near Augusta and Augusta's "old man" and Augusta generally prepares Lazar's meals. Ever since Carrie became ill, Augusta has raised Carrie's son.

Magnolia's sister, Lydia, had two daughters, Lottie and Georgia, by two different fathers, before she married Mike and gave birth to his son. After Lydia married Mike, she no longer received AFDC benefits for her children. Lydia and Mike acquired steady jobs, bought a house and furniture, and for at least ten years they effectively removed themselves from the network of kin cooperation. They refused to participate in the network of exchanges which Lydia had formerly depended upon; whenever possible they refused to trade clothes, lend money, of if they gave something they did not ask for anything in return. During this period they were not participants in the domestic network. About a year ago Lydia and Mike separated over accusations and gossip that each of them had established another sexual relationship. During the five month period when the marriage was ending, Lydia began giving some of her nice clothes away to her sisters and nieces, a couch to her brother, and a TV to a niece. Anticipating her coming needs, Lydia attempted to reobligate her kin by carrying

out the pattern which had been a part of her daily life before her marriage. After Lydia separated from her husband, her two younger children once again received AFDC. Lydia's oldest daughter, Lottie, is over eighteen and too old to receive AFDC, but Lottie has a three year old daughter who has received AFDC benefits since birth.

Eloise has been Magnolia's closest friend for many years. Eloise is Magnolia's first son's father's sister. This son moved into his father's household by his own choice when he was about twelve years old. Magnolia and Eloise have maintained a close, sisterly friendship. Eloise lives with her husband, her four children and her oldest (17) daughter's infant son. Eloise's husband's brother's daughter, Lily (20), and Lily's young daughter recently joined the household. Eloise's husband's youngest brother is the father of Eloise's sister's child. When the child was an infant, that sister stayed with Eloise and her husband.

Billy Jones, a tempermental woman with three sons, is Augusta's closest friend. Billy once ran a brothel in The Flats, but she has worked as a cook, written songs, and attended college from time to time. August has kept Billy's sons whenever Billy leaves town, has periods of depression, or beats the children too severely.

Another active participant in the network is Willa Mae. Willa Mae's younger brother, James, is Ruby's daughter's father. Even though James does not visit the child and has

are

not assumed any parental duties towards the child, Willa Mae and Ruby, who are the same age, help each other out with their young children.

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

Chart C shows the spatial relations of the households in Magnolia and Calvin's domestic network in April, 1969. The houses are scattered within The Flats, but none of them is more than three miles apart. Cab fare is spent practically every day, and sometimes twice a day, as individuals visit, trade, and exchange services. Chart D shows how individuals are brought into the domestic network.

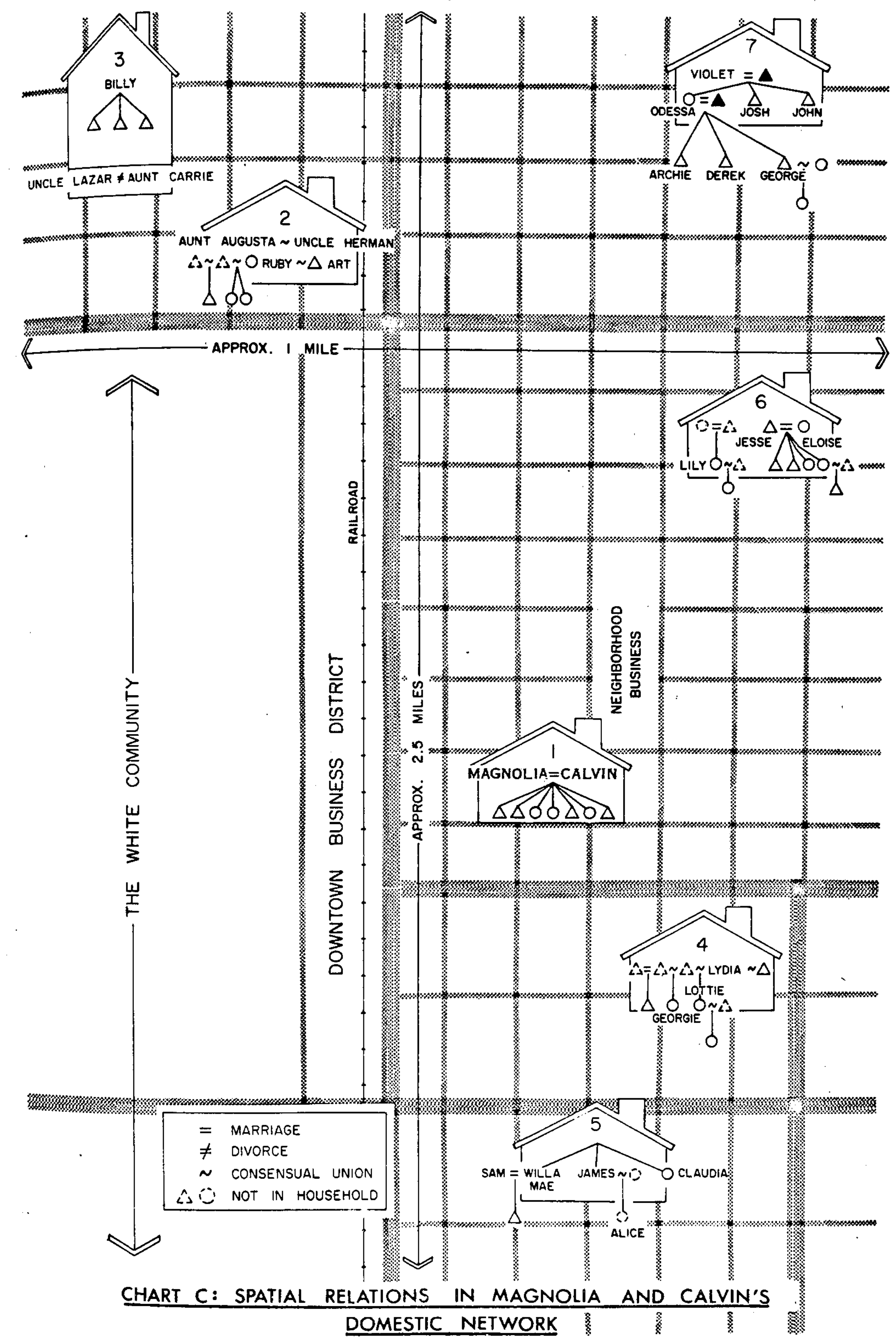


CHART C: SPATIAL RELATIONS IN MAGNOLIA AND CALVIN'S DOMESTIC NETWORK

The outline below shows residential changes which occurred in several of the households within the network between April and June, 1969.

April, 1969

Household	Domestic Arrangements
1	Magnolia (38) and Calvin (60) live in a common law relationship with their eight children (ages 4-18).
2	Magnolia's sister Augusta and Augusta's "old man" Herman share a two-bedroom house with Magnolia's daughter Ruby (22) and Ruby's three children. Augusta and Herman have one bedroom, the three children sleep in the second bedroom, and Ruby sleeps downstairs in the living room. Ruby's boy-friend, Art, stays with Ruby many evenings.
3	Augusta's girl friend, Billy, and Billy's three sons live on the first floor of the house. Lazar, Magnolia's and Augusta's ex-brother-in-law, lives in the basement alone, or with his ex-wife, Carrie, from time to time. Lazar eats the evening meal, which Augusta prepares for him, at household #2.
4	Magnolia's sister, Lydia, Lydia's "old man," Lydia's two daughters, Georgia and Lottie, Lydia's son, and Lottie's three-year-old daughter live in Lydia's house.
5	Willa Mae (26), her husband, her son, her sister, Claudia (32), and her brother, James (father of Ruby's daughter), share a household.
6	Eloise (37), her husband, Jessie, their four children, their oldest daughter's (17) son, and Jessie's brother's daughter Lily (20), and Lily's baby all live together.
7	Violet (70), her two sons, Josh (35) and John (40), her daughter, Odessa (37), and Odessa's three sons and one daughter live together. Five years ago John's daughter (10) joined the household.

June, 1969

Household	Domestic Arrangement
1	Household composition unchanged.
2	Augusta and Herman moved out after quarreling with Ruby over housekeeping and cooking duties. They joined household #3. Ruby and Art remained in household #2 and began housekeeping with Ruby's children.
3	Billy and her three sons remained on the first floor and Lazar remained in the basement. Augusta and Herman rented a small, one-room apartment upstairs.
4	Lottie and her daughter moved out of Lydia's house to a large apartment down the street which they shared with Lottie's girl friend and the friend's daughter. Georgia moved into her boy friend's apartment. Lydia and her son (17) remained in the house with Lydia's "old man."
5	James began housekeeping with a new girl friend who lived with her sister, but he kept most of his clothes at home. His brother moved into his room after returning from the service. Willa Mae, her husband, and son remained in the house.
6	Household composition unchanged.
7	Odessa's son, Raymond, is the father of Clover's baby. Clover and the baby joined the household which includes Violet, her two sons, her daughter, Odessa, and Odessa's three sons and one daughter and John's daughter.

Typical residential alignments in The Flats are those between adult siblings of both sexes, mothers and adult sons and daughters, close adult female relatives, and friends defined as kin within the idiom of kinship. Domestic organization is diffused over these kin-based household units. A look, in greater detail, at the domestic network of Magnolia and Calvin Waters shows kin-constructs at work in the recruitment of

individuals to the network and in the changing residences within the network.

Residence patterns among the poor in The Flats must be considered in the context of domestic organization. The connection between residence and domestic organization is apparent in examples of a series of domestic and child care arrangements within Magnolia and Calvin's network a few years ago. Consider the following four kin-based residences among Magnolia and Calvin's kin in 1966.

Household	Domestic Arrangement
1	Magnolia, Calvin and seven young children.
2	Magnolia's mother, Magnolia's brother, Magnolia's sister and her sister's husband, Magnolia's oldest daughter, Ruby, and Ruby's first child.
3	Magnolia's oldest sister, Augusta, Augusta's "old man," Augusta's sister's (Carrie) son, and Magnolia's twelve-year-old son.
4	Magnolia's oldest son, his father, and the father's "old lady."

Household composition *per se* reveals little about domestic organization even when cooperation between close adult females is assumed. Three of these households (1, 2, 3) were located on one city block. Magnolia's mother rented a rear house behind Magnolia's house, and Magnolia's sister, Augusta, lived in an apartment down the street. In addition to the close proximity of these associated households, Magnolia, Ruby and

Augusta usually pooled the food stamps they all received for the children. The women shopped together and everyone ate the evening meal together at Magnolia's mother's house or at Magnolia's. The children did not have a bed of their own, or a bed which they were expected to share with another child. They fell asleep and slept through the night wherever the late evening visiting patterns of the adult females took them. Where, in fact, a particular child was living is difficult to say since each child had clothing scattered around each of these homes and slept in any of them.

Another example of kin-based residential alignments is illustrated in the description of the social context in which children change households (see Chapter VI). Adult migration, unemployment, sickness and desertion necessitate a residential change. Most often these changes are determined by the need for child-care arrangements. When deciding which adult female relative should keep a child, families consider kin criteria and social criteria such as geographical location, source of income, age, marital status, the composition of the woman's household and compatibility.

Children in Viola and Leo Jackson's domestic network frequently live with relatives other than their natural parents. The kinship links which most often are the basis of new or expanded households are those links children have with close adult females such as the child's mother, mother's mother, mother's sister, mother's brother's wife, father's mother, father's sister, and father's brother's wife.

Here are some examples (Stack 1970:309).

Relational Link	Domestic Arrangement
Mother	Viola's brother married his first wife when he was sixteen. When she left him she kept their daughter.
Mother's mother	Viola's sister, Martha, was never able to care for her children due to her nerves and high blood. In between husbands, her mother kept her two oldest children, and after Martha's death, her mother kept all three of the children.
Mother's brother	A year after Martha's death, Martha's brother took Martha's oldest daughter, helping his mother out since this left her with only two children to care for.
Mother's mother	Viola's daughter (20) was living at home and gave birth to a son. The daughter and her son remained in the Jackson household until the daughter married and set up a separate household with her husband, leaving her son to be raised by her mother.
Mother's sister	Martha moved to Chicago into her sister's household. The household consisted of the two sisters and four of their children.
Father's mother	Viola's sister, Ethel, had four daughters and one son. When Ethel had a nervous breakdown her husband took the three daughters and his son to live with his mother in Arkansas. After his wife's death, the husband took the oldest daughter to join her siblings in his mother's home in Arkansas.
Father's mother	When Viola's younger sister, Christine, left her husband in order to harvest fruit in Wisconsin, Christine left her two daughters with her husband's mother in Arkansas.
Father's sister	When Viola's brother's wife died, he decided to raise his two sons himself. He kept the two boys and never remarried although he had several girl friends and a child with one. His residence has always been near Viola's and she fed and cared for his sons.

The flexibility of the Blacks' adaption to daily social and economic problems is illustrated in these kin-based domestic units. The basis of these cooperative units is mutual aid among siblings of both sexes, the domestic cooperation of close adult females, and the exchange of goods and services between male and female kin (Stack 1970). The examples do indeed indicate the important role of the Black female. But the cooperation between male and female siblings who share the same household or live near one another has been underestimated by those who have considered the grandmother-headed household (especially mother's mother), and the female-headed household, as the most significant domestic units among the urban Black poor. The close cooperation of adult siblings arises from the residential patterns typical of young adults. Due to poverty, young females with or without children do not perceive any choice but to remain living at home with their mother or other adult female relatives. Even if young women are collecting AFDC they say that their resources go further when they share goods and services. Likewise, jobless males, or those working at part-time or seasonal jobs, often remain living at home with their mother, or if she is dead, with their sisters and brothers. This pattern continues long after men have become fathers and have established a series of sexual partnerships with women, who are living with their own kin, friends, or alone with their children. A result of this pattern is the striking fact that households almost always have men

around: male relatives, affines, and boy friends. These men are often intermittent members of the households, boarders, or friends who come and go; men who usually eat, and sometimes sleep, in the households. Children have constant and close contact with these men, and especially in the case of male relatives, these relationships last over the years.

The most predictable residential pattern in The Flats is that individuals reside in one of the households of their natal kin, or the households of those who raised them, long into their adult years. Even when persons temporarily move out of the household of their mother or of other close relatives, they have the alternative open to them to return to the residences of their kin if they need to. R. T. Smith (1970:66) has referred to this pattern and observes that even when lower class Blacks live in a nuclear family group, what is "most striking is the extent to which lower-class persons continue to be involved with other kin." N. Gonzalez (1970: 232) suggests that "the fact that individuals have simultaneous loyalties to more than one such grouping may be important in understanding the social structure as a whole." The importance of this observation with regard to social structure in the Black community will become even more apparent in the following chapters which consider the residence patterns of children and the dynamics of household formation over the life cycle of individuals. The cooperative potential of kin is recurrently

utilized in child care and the socialization of young children. The following chapter furnishes examples of the patterns of rights and duties towards children in The Flats.

CHAPTER VI

CHILD-KEEPING

"Gimme A Little Sugar"

The Black community has long recognized the problems and difficulties which all mothers in poverty share. Shared parental responsibilities among kin have long been the response. As kinsmen change residence, children may be dispersed in households which do not include their biological mother. Many children growing up in The Flats move back and forth from the household of their mothers to households of close female kin. The woman who temporarily assumes the kinship obligation to care for a child acquires the major cluster of rights and duties ideally associated with "motherhood." The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which parental responsibilities distribute socially, and to draw out the criteria by which persons are entitled to parental roles.

Child-keeping corresponds to general characterizations of fosterage (Carroll 1970; Goody 1966; Keesing 1970a; Sanford 1971). Keesing (1970a) and Sanford (1971) have defined fosterage as the housing of a dependent child in a household which does not include the mother or father. Carroll (1970) views fostering in more specific terms as a temporary obligation of kinsmen to take care of one another's children. Goody (1966) contrasts kinship fostering in crisis situations to the rights of kinfolk to take children and rear them apart from their own parents.

The responsibility of caring for children in The Flats is a kin obligation. It is not necessarily a role required of a single actor. Rights in children are delegated to kin who are participants in domestic networks of cooperation. In 1970 four-fifths of the children in The Flats were being raised by their mothers. One-fifth of the children were living with adult female kin rather than with their mothers.

Table 1

Frequency of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data

	Frequency	Percentage
Children raised by biological mother	559	81
Children raised by adult female kin	127	18
Children raised by non-kin	8	1
	694	100

Within a network of cooperating kinsmen, there may be three or more adult women with whom, in turn, a child resides. In this cycle of residence changes, while younger children usually sleep in the same household as their mother, the size of the dwelling, employment, and many other factors determines where older siblings sleep. Although patterns of eating, visiting and child care may bring mothers and their children together for most of the day, the adult woman immediately

responsible for a child changes with the child's residence. The residence patterns of children in The Flats have structural implications for both the ways in which rights in children distribute socially and also the criteria by which persons are entitled to parental roles.

From the point of view of the child, there may be a number of women who act as "mothers" towards them; some just slightly older than the children themselves. A woman who intermittently raises a sister's or niece's or cousin's child regards their offspring as much her grandchildren as children born to her own son and daughter.

The number of people who can assume appropriate behaviors ideally associated with parental and grandparental roles is increased to include close kinsmen and friends. Consequently, the kin terms "mother," "father," "grandmother," etc., are not necessarily appropriate labels for describing the social roles. Children may retain ties with their parents and siblings and at the same time establish comparable relationships with other kinsmen. There is even a larger number of friends and relatives who may request a hug and kiss, "a little sugar," from children they watch grow up. But they do not consistently assume parental roles towards those children.

Parental role behavior is a composite of many behavior patterns (Keesing 1969). In this chapter the attempt is made to clarify the content of parental rights and duties in The Flats and to suggest under what circumstances these rights

and duties can be shared or transferred to other individuals. In the first section of this chapter the residence changes of children are described to illustrate the situations which lead to child-keeping, the types of child-keeping, and how people make those decisions. Following a section on statistical patterns of child-keeping in The Flats, the situations in which transactions in parental rights are involved are explored to clarify the criteria by which people are entitled to parental roles and the jural consequences.

Domestic Arrangements

People in The Flats generally view child-keeping as a part of the flux and elasticity of residence. The constant expansion and contraction of households, and the successive recombinations of kinsmen residing together, require women to care for the children residing in their household. As households shift, rights and responsibilities in children are shared.

The following passages provide examples of some circumstances which require mothers to sleep in households apart from their children, and which require co-residence kinsmen to take care of one another's children. These examples show how misleading it is to regard child-keeping apart from residence, alliance, and daily exchanges of other kinsmen in the domestic network of the child.

The responsibility for providing care, food, clothing and shelter for children in The Flats is diffused over many kin-based household units. While household boundaries are elastic and frequently change, cooperative networks generally maintain the same participants over time.

> Most of our kin lived in two apartment buildings which were joined together. I decided it would be best for our five children if we moved in too. My husband's mother had a small apartment, her sister had one in the basement, and another brother and his family took a larger apartment upstairs. My husband's brother was really good to us. He got the kids things they wanted and controlled them too. All us women kept the kids together during the day. We cooked together too. It was good living.

Close kin may fully cooperate in child care activities during periods of time when they are not co-resident. In addition, individuals may insist upon joining a household in order to help raise children.

> Even when me and my two sisters were pretty young my mother had a hard time keeping track of us. My grandmother was old then and receiving a pension and some help from her son. She decided to move in with us to "bring us up right." She stayed on about four years, but she and my mother didn't get on, they fought a lot. All our kin in The Flats was helping us out and we didn't want for nothing. One of my uncles kept us and fed us every Thursday and Sunday night, another uncle got us all our clothing. We was really being kept good.

Kin networks change with birth and death. Likewise, natural processes and events in the life cycle of individuals create new child care needs and new household alignments. Fluctuations in inter-personal relationships over the life

cycle account for changes in the residence of children. It is not uncommon for young children to reside in the home of rather aging kin, who eventually become too old to care for the children.

> I was staying with my great grandfather (momofa) for the first five years of my life, but he just got too old to care for me. My mother was living in The Flats at the time, but my "daddy" asked my mother's brother and his wife to take me cause he really trusted them with me. I stayed with them and their three kids, but my mother came by and took care of us kids lots of times. When I was about nine years old my mother got married and from then on I stayed with her and her husband and he gave me his name.

Occasionally adolescents decide on their own that they want to live with a kinsman other than the one with whom they are residing. Boys, for example, who have maintained a close relationship with their natural father may choose to go and live with their father.

> When my brother was about half grown his father started buying him clothes. When he was sixteen he decided to go stay with his father who lived right down by the center of town. He's been staying with him ever since.

When a young girl becomes pregnant, the closest adult female kin of the girl or of the unborn child is expected to assume partial responsibility for the young child. Usually rights in such children are shared between the mother and appropriate female kin. If the mother is extremely young she may "give the child" to someone who wants the child--for example to the child's father's kin, to a childless couple, or to close friends.

> I ran away from home when I was fourteen. I ran off to Chicago first and then to The Flats. The friends of kin who took me in had two sons. I gave birth to the oldest boy's baby, but I was in no way ready for a baby. The baby's grandmother (famo) wanted the baby so I gave the baby to her and she adopted her as her own.

Children are sometimes given to non-kin who express love, concern and a desire to keep a child.

> My girl friend had six children when I started going with her, but her baby daughter was really something else. I got so attached to that baby over about two years that when her mother and I quit, I asked if she would give the baby to me. She said fine, and my "daughter" has been living with me, my mother, my grandmother and my sisters and brothers ever since. My daughter is ten years old now. She sees her mother now and then, and her father takes her to Church with him sometimes, but our family is really the only family she's ever had.

Entering a new marriage or consensual relationship, a woman with children often temporarily disperses her children among kin (Goody 1966; Midgett 1969).

> My old man wanted me to leave town with him and get married. But he didn't want to take my three children. I stayed with him for about two years and my children stayed in town with my mother. Then she told me to come back and get them. I came back and stayed.

Just as the beginning of a male-female relationship can split a mother from her children, the end of a marriage or consensual union may cause a family to separate.

> I left my husband cause I knew he had been fooling around. After that my family was really split in parts for a while. I sent my three oldest children to stay with my husband's Aunt (humosi), my middle girl stayed downstairs with my husband's mother, and my two youngest stayed here with my mother.

one another's children and yet they recognize the rights of kinsmen to take children and raise them apart from their own parents (Goody 1966). In the latter situation, individuals allow kinsmen to actively create alliances and obligations towards one another which may be called upon in the future.

The uncontrollable spectrum of economic and legal pressures from outside society constitutes the external forces acting upon domestic groups. Unemployment, migration, welfare requirements, housing shortages, high rents, eviction, and prison necessarily lead to a change in residence. Disasters and calamities such as death, murder, accident, and fire also require residence changes. Most often these changes are closely related to the need for child-care arrangements (Stack 1970).

People in The Flats are evicted from their dwellings by landlords who want to raise rents, tear a building down, or rid themselves of tenants who complain about rats, roaches and plumbing. The landlord can then rent to a family in such great need of housing that they will not complain for a period of time. When families are evicted, other kinsmen usually take them in. Such moves alter the residence of children and the adults who acquire authority over them.

> Soon after we moved to The Flats me and my kids were evicted. The landlord said he was going to tear the building down and build a parking lot. He never did. The place is still standing and has folks living in it today. My husband's mother and her husband took me and the kids in and watched over them while I had my baby. We stayed on after her husband died, and my husband joined us.

Individuals fail to pay their rent for many reasons: they may be temporarily "cut off aid" if the welfare office has some reason to be suspicious of their eligibility; some portion of the rent money may be given to a kinsman who is not on aid in order to help him through a crisis or illness; and money loaned to kin or friends may not be returned in time for the rent. People receive eviction notices almost immediately after they fail to pay the rent.

> My oldest sister was cut off aid the day her husband got out of jail. She and her husband and their three children were evicted from their apartment and they came to live with us. We were in crowded conditions already. I had my son, my other sister was there with her two kids, and my mother was about going crazy. My mother put my sister's husband out cause she found out he was a dope addict. He came back one night soon after that and murdered my sister. After my sister's death my mother couldn't face living in Chicago any longer. One of my other sisters who had been adopted and raised by my mother's grandmother (famo) visited us and persuaded us to move to The Flats where she was staying. All of us moved there--my mother, my two sisters and their children, my two baby sisters, and my dead sister's children. My sister who had been staying in The Flats found us a house across the street from her own.

Murder, accidents, and personal injury resulting from fights within the community coincide with ghetto life, overcrowded conditions, unemployment and poverty. Likewise, bad housing conditions and unenforced housing standards result in hazardous living conditions.

> My son set fire by accident to our place one night when the gas lines sprung a leak. We had to move. The place belonged to my husband's

> sister-in-law's grandfather. We had been living there with my husband's mother, his brother's children and our eight children. My husband's father lived in the basement cause he and his wife were separated.

Overcrowded dwellings and the impossibility of finding adequate housing in The Flats have long-term consequences on where and with whom children live.

> I married my first baby's father when the baby was three months old. We couldn't find or afford a place of our own, so we moved in with my husband's mother and her old man and my husband's brother.

> My brother stayed with my Aunt (mosi) and her husband until he was ten, cause we didn't have enough room--but he stayed with us most every weekend. Finally my Aunt moved into the house behind ours with her husband, her brother, and my brother and my other brothers and sisters and I lived up front with my mother and her old man.

The above passages illustrate the various circumstances of residential changes which lead to child-keeping and shared responsibilities of child care. It might appear that the events described above contribute to a rather random re-location of individuals in dwellings, and a random distribution of the rights individuals acquire in children. But this is not the case. Individuals constantly face the reality that they may need the help of kin for themselves and their children. As a result they anticipate these needs, and from year to year they have a very clear notion of which kinsmen would be willing to help. The calculation is simple because it is an outcome of calculated exchanges of goods and services between

kinsmen. Consequently, residence patterns and the dispersing of children in households of kin are not haphazard. This issue is taken up in the following section in which the norms and expectations of folk fosterage are compared with the statistical patterns of fosterage in The Flats.

Statistical Patterns

From time to time most of the adults involved in this study had been fostered by kinsmen. Some of their own children are currently residing in the homes of kinsmen, have been kept by kinsmen in the past, or may join the household of a close kinsman in the future. These are alternatives which enable parents to cope with poverty; they are possibilities which every mother understands.

Information on the frequency of fosterage collected from AFDC case histories shows that one-fifth of 694 dependent children were assigned to the welfare grant of a close female kinsman other than their mother. This means that the adult female responsible for the child is not the child's mother. Table 2 shows the frequency of fostering based upon AFDC case histories, and the relationship of Grantees to AFDC children on their grant, and in their households.

Table 2

Frequency of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data

Relationship to Grantee	Frequency	Total	Percentage
Children raised by biological mother	559	559	81
Children raised by adult female kin:			
Younger sibling	34		
Sibling's child	34		
Grandchild	24		
Other kin	35	127	18
Non-Kin	8	8	1
		694	100

These statistics on the frequency of fostering are in fact much lower than actual instances of child-keeping in The Flats. According to the AFDC case histories, 81% of the dependent children are being raised by their own mothers, and 18% by close female kinsmen. Grantees must claim that a dependent child is residing in their household in order to receive benefits for the child. But my personal contact with individuals whose case histories make up the statistical survey clearly shows disagreement between the record and actual residence patterns. Mothers temporarily shift the residence of their children in response to changes in their own personal relationships, illness or pregnancy, or housing problems.

to AFDC grants of female kinsmen. According to the female kin now responsible for the children (Table 3), only 8% of the mothers had actually deserted their children. Three-fourths of the biological mothers of these children were living in The Flats at the time of the survey. They resided intermittently in the grantee's household, the household of a kinsman, or from time to time in a separate residence with male or female friends.

Table 3

Status and Location of Biological Mother

Status and Location of Biological Mother	Frequency	Percentage
Married Adult (over 18) Resides in Grantee's House	34	24%
Adult Lives in The Flats	34	24%
Unmarried Adult Resides in Grantee's House	19	14%
Mother Deserted Child	11	8%
Married or Unmarried Minor Resides in Grantee's House	9	6%
Not Ascertainable	32	24%

The examples above point to the confusion which can arise when statistical data is interpreted out of context. Statistical patterns do not divulge underlying cultural patterns. This confusion between statistics and cultural patterns underlies most interpretations of Black family life.

Another clear example of this confusion is the assumption that Black children derive all their jural kin through females. Widely popularized statistics on female-headed households have contributed to the classification of Black households as matrifocal or matriarchal and to the assumption that Black children derive nothing of sociological importance from their father. In fact, 69% of the fathers of AFDC children recognized their children and provided them with kinship affiliations. In Chapter IV it is brought out that a father's kin play an active role in the nurturing of his children. Data in Chapter IV focus specifically on the significance of jural, i.e., socially recognized, parenthood in the formation of personal kinship networks.

A further demonstration of the importance of the kinship links a child acquires through his mother and father is given in patterns of fostering. In the preceding section we saw that couples, mothers with children, and children continually join the households of the kinsmen. Table 4 shows the residence of children temporarily fostered in households of kinsmen at one point in time.

Table 4

Patterns of Child-Keeping, AFDC Data

	Frequency	Percentage
Mother's Kin	57	74
Father's Kin	20	26
	77	100

Analysis of changes that have occurred in the residence of children in The Flats over the past fifty years is provided in residential life histories. The data show the residence patterns of children being fostered during time changes in the domestic groups in a community (Otterbein 1970). Table 5 shows residence patterns of children kept in the households of kinsmen based on information derived from life histories of adults and children.

Table 5

Laterality of Child-Keeping, Residence Histories

	Frequency	Percentage
Mother's Kin	43	69
Father's Kin	19	31
	62	100

The ratio of children kept in the homes of kinsmen related through a child's mother or father is approximately similar in Table 4 and Table 5. Although the majority of children in this study lived with their mother or her kin, based on the statistical study of AFDC case histories, one-fourth of the fostered children lived with their father's kin; based on life histories, one-third of all children fostered are living with their father's kin.

Expectations and mutual demands of kinsmen are rarely fulfilled to satisfaction. But individuals in The Flats have a fairly clear notion of which kinsmen they can count on in times of crisis or stress. When mothers apply for AFDC benefits for their dependent children they are required to list, in rank order, whom they expect to raise each of their children if they die or are unable to maintain custody of the child. The responses of mothers in Table 6 reflect their "expectations" regarding which kinsmen would be willing and able to raise their child.

When asked by welfare workers who they would expect to raise their child in the event of their own death, mothers of 228 children named their own blood relatives; mothers of 76 children named the child's father's kin. The agreement between the expectations of adult females regarding child-keeping and the statistical patterns of child-keeping over the life cycle is striking.

Table 6

Laterality of Child-Keeping Expectations, AFDC Data

	Frequency	Percentage
Mother's Kin	222	73
Father's Kin	83	27
	305	100

Black family life has been continually characterized as "broken" and "disorganized." But it is clear that the individuals involved in this study are aware of the choices, criteria, and norms regarding fostering in The Flats. They understand their child-keeping practices to the extent that their expectations are borne out by actual events. Their expectation regarding the laterality of fostering approximately predicts the correct statistical patterns of fosterage.

Transactions in Parenthood

The purpose of this section is to explore the ways in which rights in children distribute socially, and to draw out the criteria by which parents are entitled to parental roles. Discovering the criteria by which kin are eligible to assume parental roles is not an easy task. One must identify the cultural nature of folk rights and duties in relation to

children and then observe when and by whom these behavior patterns are assumed. The content of rights and duties in relation to children differ cross-culturally; residents in The Flats find it difficult to spell out particular rights and duties in children. The elaboration of rights pertaining to children is best elicited from observed scenes.

Scenes in which rights in children are in conflict must be analyzed in terms of the social context in which they occur. The social context of situations includes at least the following considerations: the participants present, the specific life histories of the participants, the socially meaningful occurrences which preceded the event, and the rules which come into play. The scenes described below reflect tension or conflict among kinsmen over rights in children. These scenes provide a basis for identifying parental behaviors which may be shared.

The first scene takes place on the front porch of a house which Georgia (30) and her three children share with Georgia's Aunt Ethel (50) and Ethel's boy friend. Just before the incident occurred, Georgia and Ethel had fought over the division of housework and the utility bills. Aunt Ethel was angered at Georgia's lack of respect, and her unwillingness to support her with the AFDC benefits Georgia received for her children. Georgia was willing to pay the rent but insisted that Ethel's boy friend pay the utilities and that Ethel take over more of the cooking and housework.

Following the argument, Ethel's brother dropped by to visit. Ethel, her boy friend, and her brother sat in the sunshine on the porch. Georgia and her children joined them. Georgia's daughter Alice was bothered by her first loose tooth. Alice continued whimpering on the porch as she had for most of the afternoon.

SCENE I

> Aunt Ethel yanked Alice's arm, drawing Alice nearer to her on the porch. Trouble over Alice's loose tooth had gone far enough. Ethel decided to pull the tooth. Without nudging it to see how loose it really was, Ethel fixed her fingers on the tooth and pulled with all her strength. Alice screamed with fear, kicked, and tried to bite her Aunt. Alice's mother, Georgia, sat near by, her tense body and bulging eyes voicing silent resistance to her Aunt's physical act. After some moments of the struggle passed, a friend who happened to be visiting said, "Maybe the tooth isn't ready, Ethel," and Ethel let the child go. Georgia's tensed face and body relaxed as her daughter sprang into her arms in tears. Georgia turned to her friend, her eyelids lowered, expressing relief that her friend's quick words had stopped Ethel's performance.

Georgia had lived in the same household with her mother's sister Ethel for most of her life. Ethel helped Georgia's grandmother raise Georgia. After the grandmother's death, Ethel assumed responsibility for Georgia. Georgia's mother lived close by, but she had nine other children to raise on her own. Ethel has been married twice, but she never had any children. She refers to Georgia as her daughter even though she did not become head of the household in which Georgia was

raised until Georgia was thirteen. In recent years Georgia has been much closer to her mother than to her aunt. Nevertheless, Ethel regards Georgia's children as her own grandchildren.

Ethel's assertive behavior with regard to Alice was not an isolated event. In Georgia's presence, Ethel frequently demonstrates the right she holds to love, discipline and even terrify Georgia's children. Ethel feels intense love, obligation, and bitterness towards Georgia's children. Not so long ago Georgia left her children with Ethel and ran off with a serviceman. When Georgia returned six months later she complained that Ethel had neglected her children, their clothes, their hair, and had not fed them well.

In the context of the previous fight between Ethel and Georgia, Ethel's action is partly a performance. Ethel is demonstrating the rights which she shares and may be expected to assume in relation to Georgia's children. Ethel forcefully attempted to pull Alice's tooth. She was angered by Georgia's arrogance just minutes before. In response, Ethel strongly asserted and strengthened the rights she has in Georgia's children, rights which she simultaneously shares with Georgia.

Commenting on the event, Georgia said, "Whatever happens to me, Ethel be the person to keep my kids. She already kept them once before. Mymother, she ain't in no position to take them with all of her own, and I wouldn't have Aunt Flossie take them noway." The event disturbed Georgia. She didn't

want to sit quietly and allow her child to be hurt. But she found herself powerless to act considering her expectations that Ethel might be required to nurture her children.

The second scene takes place during a train ride to Chicago. It includes some of the same participants as those in the first scene. Kin to Ethel and Georgia rode the train together for a 4th of July celebration with relatives. The group traveling together included Ethel's sisters Wilma and Ann, their children and grandchildren, and Georgia and her children--fourteen children in all.

SCENE II

> The three sisters, Ethel, Wilma and Ann, sat towards the rear of the train, dressed fine for the occasion, ignoring the children's noise. Georgia sat across from them with her girl friend. A coke bottle struck against the iron foot railing broke into pieces. Shrieks of laughter traveled from seat to seat where most of the small children--all cousins--were sitting together in the front of the train. Instantly Ethel walked forward to the front of the train by Wilma's young boy and began beating him harshly with her handbag. Then, showing she meant business, Ethel grabbed the boy next to the window who was laughing and gave him a few sharp slaps on the cheek. Wilma paid no attention to the cries of her two young boys. But when Ethel returned to her seat, Ann told her, "Don't you lay a hand on my granddaughter."

Throughout the trip Ethel shouted, beat, and teased the children. Her sisters enjoyed the train ride and generally ignored the children. But Ethel's rights regarding each of her sister's children are not equivalent. From time to time

Ethel helped Wilma raise her children, including Georgia. Ethel has cared for or lived with Georgia's children for the past five years. Her rights in Wilma and Georgia's children are recognized by both the mothers and the children. During the train ride, in the presence of her sisters and her niece, Ethel demonstrated her right to discipline the children of these kin. Likewise, the children observed the authority Ethel had over them.

On the other hand, Ethel's sister Ann had been married and was living fairly well. Ann was not an active participant in the domestic network of the sisters: she did not participate in the daily flow of exchanges among the sisters, and more often than not, Ann avoided exchanges of services which might obligate her to her sisters. Ann's daughters are self-supporting adults. It is quite unlikely that Ethel, Wilma or Georgia would be expected or required to raise Ann's granddaughters. In fact, Ann and her daughters consider themselves "better" than Ethel and Wilma. Usually Ann does not even allow her granddaughters to play with Wilma's children except for short periods of time. Rights over children come into conflict indicating who is excluded from parental rights in children. The third scene provides an example of who is not eligible to assume parental behavior patterns.

Vilda, Ann's daughter and Ethel's niece, had the opportunity to get a job she wanted. But she had to begin work immediately. Ann was working and Vilda had difficulty finding

someone to care for her daughter, Betty (4). She asked her cousin Georgia to take care of her daughter during the day and offered to pay Georgia $10.00 a week.

SCENE III

> Betty cried and put up a fuss at breakfast because she didn't want her mother to go to work and she didn't want to stay at her Aunt Georgia's house. Betty said that Georgia beat her and yelled at her. Vilda and her mother, Ann, took the child to Georgia's house together that morning. They told Georgia that they didn't want her to yell or lay a hand on Betty.

This incident clearly communicated to Georgia that her cousin did not respect her and did not consider her an equal. Georgia made a big issue over this event to her friends and close kin. She said that Ann and Vilda were spoiling Betty and that "Betty was nothing but a brat." In turn, Georgia was unwilling to share rights in her children with Vilda and Ann. During the following summer during a large family barbecue with many kin and friends present, Georgia made this clear.

SCENE IV

> Georgia's daughter took a hot poker from the fire and ran after the younger children threatening them. Ann quickly took the poker away from her niece and slapped her. Georgia jumped into the scene, grabbed her daughter from Ann and said, "You won't let me touch your granddaughter, so don't you tell my child what to do."

Although it is common for rights in children to be distributed among close female kin in The Flats, scene four shows that standards other than kin criteria are operative. Ann is not an active participant in the domestic network of her sisters; she and her husband are both employed and economically secure. Ann is the adult female kin least likely to be willing to accept responsibility for her nieces, nephews and grandnieces and nephews.

Scenes one and two are examples of circumstances in which a cluster of parental rights (the discipline of children, administering folk cures, etc.) are shared by the biological mother with eligible kin who are common members of her household. There are, however, circumstances in which clusters of rights and entailing behaviors are transferred from one individual to another. In these situations, mothers still retain the folk and legally jural right to acquire physical custody over their child if the right is disputed, the right to take their child as heir, and the rights of cognatic descent. But the major cluster of behavioral entailments of parenthood are shared or transferred to the woman currently raising the child.

When a child resides with its mother, the ordering of jural rights of motherhood is unimportant. But when a child resides with other kinsmen, the parental rights in the child are redistributed. In these cases, parental rights are shared among eligible kinsmen, but the hierarchy of rights in children

is reordered. Descent, inheritance and physical custody are folk and legal jural rights the biological mother has claim to by virtue of her having borne the child. She retains these rights when her child resides with other kinsmen.

Within the folk system of shared parental rights in children, time and intent play an important role. How long a child resides in a household apart from his mother may determine the extent to which the mother, in the eyes of the community, retains or transfers rights in the child to the responsible female. Likewise, whether the biological mother views the situation as a permanent or a temporary response to her personal problems is an important factor.

In scene five a young mother, Violet, married and moved to another state with her husband and her two youngest children by a previous union. She left her two older daughters with their grandmother (momo), Bessie, because at the time the couple could not afford to take them along. Violet intended the situation to be temporary, but it lasted over seven months. Before Violet left the state she told Bessie not to let her children see their father. Violet feared that the father would try to acquire custody of the children by claiming that the mother had deserted them. After about seven months Violet learned through gossip that her children were spending a lot of time with their father and had been staying with him on weekends. She took the train back home as soon as she could in order to get her daughters and take them to her new home out of state.

SCENE V

> Violet was angered by her mother's decision to let the granddaughters stay with their father every weekend. She told her mother, "You wasn't sposed to let him see them." Bessie said to Violet, "You ain't doing nothing for your child--the child's lucky her father and his kin take an interest in her."

Two issues complicate this situation. While Violet was living in The Flats with her children, she was willing to have her children's father buy their clothes and take them places. At least once a month the children would spend the weekend with their father at his sister's house. But when the father began "keeping house" with a new girl friend, Violet became very jealous and told her friends, "The girl wants to take my babies from me."

The issue of paternity is a further complication in this scene. The father considered himself father only to Violet's oldest child. Violet told her second born child that she and the oldest child had the same daddy. The father's kin showed much more concern and responsibility towards the oldest child and teased Violet, saying, "Soon, girl, you going to push all your children off on him." When Violet was in town she demanded that this man treat her two oldest children as his own. One time the second child became very emotionally upset when the father said to her, "I ain't your daddy." Violet was afraid that in her absence he would say it again, or hurt the child. Although Violet's mother Bessie was aware of both of

these issues, Bessie decided that while she was responsible for her grandchildren, she would decide what was best for them. Bessie exercised the rights she acquired in her grandchildren when Violet left town and left her children.

The conflict between Violet and Bessie over this issue was so great that Violet returned to town to regain physical custody of her children. Late one winter evening, she rode the Greyhound Bus into The Flats with winter coats for her two daughters. She took a cab to her mother's home, woke her daughters, put on their coats, and took the same cab back to the bus station. Within two hours Violet and her daughters were on the way out of town. The father had no knowledge of what had happened until several days later. He made no attempt to contact Violet.

Violet did not have enough money with her to buy tickets to travel out of the state. In fact, she only had enough money to buy one way tickets to Chicago. She and her daughters took the bus to Chicago and she called one of her closest girl friends, Samantha, to pick them up at the bus station. Violet and her daughters stayed with Violet's friend, Samantha, and her three children for nearly a month.

Violet and Samantha considered themselves kin. They lived down the street from one another while they were growing up, attended the same schools, and dated boys who were close cousins or best friends. Five years ago, just after Samantha

gave birth to her second child, she became very ill. Violet insisted upon "taking" Samantha's year old son to help Samantha. Scene six was told to me by Violet three years following the event.

SCENE VI

> That day I went over to visit Samantha, I don't know how the good Lord tell me, since I hadn't been seeing her for some time. The last old man she had didn't like me, so I stayed away. He sure was no good. Left her right before the baby come.
>
> I went over to her place. She had a small, dark little room with a kitchen for herself and those two babies. The place look bad and smell bad. I knew she was hurting. I took one look around and said to her, "Samantha, I'm going to take your boy." I hunted up some diapers and left the house with her year old son. She didn't come by my place for over a month, but her younger sister brought me a message that Samantha was feeling better. A week or two later she came by to visit. Her boy hardly knew her. She came by more often, but she still seemed pretty low. I told her one day, "Samantha, I don't have any sons, just daughters, so why don't you just give me this boy." She said that if he didn't favor his father so much she'd let me keep him, but she was still crazy over that man. Her boy stayed with me three or four months, then she came and got him. Soon afterwards she moved to Chicago with her two kids and her new old man.

When friends in The Flats have good social dealings with one another they often call each other by kin terms and conduct their social relations as if they were kinsmen. Close kin form alliances with one another to cope with daily needs. Close friends assume the same style of dealing with one another. Samantha and Violet shared an exchange of goods and

services over the years and lived up to one another's expectations. They obligated, tested, and trusted one another.

The exchange of children, and short-term fosterage, are common among female friends. Child care arrangements among friends imply both rights and duties. Close friends frequently discipline each other's children verbally and physically in front of each other. In normal times, and in times of stress, close friends have the right to "ask" for one another's children. A woman visiting a friend and her children may say, "Let me keep your girl this week. She will have a fine time with me and my girls. She won't want to come back home to her mama." This kind of request among kin and friends is very difficult to refuse.

Among friends, temporary child-exchange is a symbol of mutual trust. Furthermore, given the fragility of the social and economic conditions of poverty, friends use this privilege as a performance. It provides a means of acquiring self-confidence in the presence of others. For example, when a woman "takes" a friend's child, she may walk around town to "show off" to others how much her friend must trust her to give her the child. Likewise, as a field worker, I found that people began accepting my trust and respect for them when I began to leave my son with them for an hour, a day, or overnight. After such an event, kin and

friends of the person who had "kept" my son would be sure to tell me that they saw my boy with their kin.

Temporary child care services are also a means of obligating kin or friends for future needs. Women may ask to "keep" the child of a friend for no apparent reason. But they are, in fact, building up an investment for their future needs. From this perspective it is clear that child-keeping in The Flats is both an expression of shared kin obligations towards children and an important feature of the distribution and exchange of the limited resources available to poor people in The Flats.

Jural Implications

The scenes in which conflicts arise between kin over rights in children provide a basis for pin-pointing the patterns of rights and duties in relation to children in The Flats.[2] From the viewpoint of the white middle class the kinship term "mother" is an idealized combination of behavioral roles expected to be assumed by a single person (Keesing 1969). In striking contrast, the scenes just described are illustrations of a sharing among close kinsmen of obligations towards children.

Close female kinsmen in The Flats do not expect a single person, the natural mother, to carry out by herself all of the behavior patterns which "motherhood" entails. When

transactions between females over the residence, care and discipline of children run smoothly, it is difficult for the field worker to clarify the patterns of rights and duties to which kin and non-kin are entitled. But scenes in which these rights and duties come into conflict show which behaviors may be shared.

Keesing (1970b:432) suggests that "where the division of behaviors usually performed by a single actor among two or more actors follows lines of cleavage established by and standardized in the culture, then we are dealing with separate "social identities." Goodenough (1965:3) has defined social identity as "an aspect of self that makes a difference in how one's rights and duties distribute with respect to specific others." A kin term such as "mother" entails a cluster of social identities which we will define as distinguishable social positions. A set of appropriate behavior patterns apply to each social position; and more than one person can occupy the same social position at the same time (Keesing 1969; 1970b). For example, if two or more women customarily assume behavioral roles towards individual children which could be performed by a single actor, then these women occupy a social position which has behavioral entailments with respect to those children.

Scenes from the preceeding section illustrate patterns of rights and duties towards children in The Flats and furnish examples of social positions which kinsmen occupy

with respect to one another's children. As stated earlier, it is impossible to fully elaborate the rights and duties in children within a culture. But from scenes in which these rights come into conflict, some of the following more apparent social positions stand out (Keesing 1970b).

(1) Provider

(2) Discipliner

(3) Trainer

(4) Curer

(5) Groomer

These social positions represent the composite of typical parental behaviors which may be shared primarily among a child's close female kinsmen. They are categories of behavior which have predictable, non-jural rights and obligations.

Economic PROVIDERS are expected to share in providing subsistence and scarce goods, daily meals, food stamps, a bed, a blanket, clothes and shoes. DISCIPLINERS are allowed to participate in the control of children. At their own discretion they may beat, threaten, terrify, blame or scare children for unacceptable social behavior. TRAINERS not only discipline but teach moral values and respect for adults. They instruct by example, teaching children the consequences of their acts. If a child is found playing with fire, a trainer may strike a match, holding it close to a child's skin in order to teach the consequences of playing with fire. CURERS provide folk remedies for physical ailments. They have the right to attempt to heal

rashes, remove warts, pull teeth, and cure stomach ailments of children. A GROOMER has the obligation to care for the physical appearance of children, wash and press hair, bathe children, wash clothing, and check children's bodies for rashes and diseases. In addition to eligible adults, older female siblings are also expected to groom their younger siblings.

Let us now turn to the criteria by which persons are entitled to assume these social positions. Adult females who share parental rights in children are recruited from participants in the personal domestic network of the child's jural mother. This includes cognatic kin to the mother, the child, and close friends. But the rights that eligible kinsmen or close friends share in one another's children are not equal. Other factors such as economics and inter-personal relationships within domestic networks come into play. A detailed look at scenes from preceeding sections provides important clues about eligibility.

Consider SCENE I. What factors underlie the mutual expectations that Ethel and Georgia share concerning Ethel's rights in Georgia's children?

(1) Ethel raised Georgia and assumes grandparental rights in Georgia's children.
(2) Ethel assumed full responsibility for Georgia's children when Georgia abandoned them and left town temporarily with a serviceman.
(3) The behavior patterns which Ethel assumes with respect to Georgia's children are appropriate independent of whether or not they are co-resident.

(4) In the presence of others Ethel frequently exhibits the rights she shares in Georgia's children and Georgia acknowledges these rights.

It appears that Ethel is demonstrating the rights which she shares and may be expected to assume in Georgia's children. Georgia's own words reinforce this interpretation: "Whatever happens to me, Ethel be the person to keep my kids."

SCENES II, III, IV and VI illustrate that standards other than kin criteria effectively exclude individuals from assuming parental rights in children. Close friends who are active participants in domestic networks may be expected to "keep" children. On the other hand, relatives who are not participants in the domestic networks of kinsmen are not eligible to assume parental roles.

(1) Ann was not a participant in the domestic network of her sisters.
(2) Ann is excluded from parental rights in her sister's and niece's children.
(3) Ann's sisters do not have parental rights in Ann's children or grandchildren.

These situations show that even siblings' rights regarding sister's children are not equivalent.

Kin and friends in domestic networks establish mutual ties of obligation as they bestow rights and responsibilities upon one another. As these responsibilities are met with satisfaction, the depth of the involvement between kinsmen and between friends increases. Simultaneously, females acquire reciprocal obligations towards one another's children and

rights in them. As responsibilities towards specific children are amplified, females are ultimately allowed to occupy parental roles towards children which are recognized by both adults and children. When women consciously perform duties as PROVIDER, DISCIPLINER, TRAINER, CURER, and GROOMER, then they have accepted the reality that they may be required to nurture these children. These are the women who come to be next in line to nurture and assume custody of the children to whom their obligations apply.

Our concern up to now has not been with jural motherhood itself, but the criteria by which rights and duties in children distribute socially and may be delegated to other kinsmen. At this point it is necessary to take a close look at Goodenough's (1970:24) definition of jural motherhood.

> If we try to define jural motherhood by the kinds of rights and duties comprising it, we are in trouble, as the societies we have already considered reveal. For the ways in which rights in children distribute socially and the very content of the rights themselves vary considerably cross-culturally. We are dealing with a jural role, then, but can identify it cross-culturally not by its content but by some constant among the criteria by which people are entitled to the role (1970:24).
>
> With the foregoing in mind, we may say that jural motherhood consists of the rights and duties a woman has claim to in relation to a child by virtue of her having borne it, provided she is eligible to bear it and provided no other disqualifying circumstances attend its birth (1970:25).

Potential nurturers of children share or transfer non-jural rights in children in the process of child-keeping. Individuals do not acquire rights of jural motherhood in the temporary exchange of children. But some child-keeping situations which were intended to be temporary became permanent. And child-keeping can ultimately involve the transfer of jural rights in children.

There is no specific time period after which child-keeping becomes a permanent transfer of jural rights in the eyes of the community. The intentions which the jural mother makes public, the frequency of her visits, the extent to which she continues to provide for the child, and the extent to which she continues to occupy all of the social positions of parenthood are all factors in folk-jural sanctions over rights in children.

Some mothers whose children are being kept by kin or friends eventually stop visiting and providing goods and services for their children. In such cases, the child-keeper may ultimately become the jural parent in the eyes of the community. Later attempts by the biological mother to regain custody of her child may be met with disapproval, threats, and gossip within the domestic group.

In the eyes of the community, individuals who acquire jural rights in children have the jural right to make decisions over the subsequent transfer of custody of the child. In the following situation a great grandfather "kept" his great granddaughter for eight years. During this time the

mother showed little concern for her daughter, and the great grandfather came to be considered the jural parent. When the grandfather decided that he was too old to care for the child, the mother wanted the child back. But the grandfather decided to give custody to another relative whom he considered more responsible. This decision was supported by their kinsmen.

> I was staying with my great grandfather (momofa) for the first five years of my life, but he just got too old to care for me. My mother was living in The Flats at the time, but my "daddy" asked my mother's brother and his wife to take me cause he really trusted them with me.

Folk sanctions concerning the transfer of jural rights in children are often in conflict with the publicly sanctioned laws of the state. The courts are more likely to award child custody to the biological mother than to other kinsmen. Individuals in The Flats operate within the folk and legal system. Mothers have successfully taken close kinsmen such as their own mother or aunt to court in order to regain custody of their natural children. But such acts are strongly discouraged by kinsmen who regard children as a mutual responsibility of the kin group. Children born to the poor in The Flats are highly valued, and rights in these children belong to the networks of cooperating kinsmen.[3] Shared parental responsibilities are not only an obligation of kinship, they constitute a highly cherished right. Attempts of outside social agencies, the courts, or the police to control the residence, guardianship, or behavior of children

are thwarted by the domestic group. Such efforts are interpreted in The Flats as attempts on the part of the larger society to control and manipulate their children.

Footnotes

[1]Residence life histories are detailed chronological accounts of the residence changes from birth to the present (Stack 1970). For each move or change in household composition, I gathered data on 1) the age of the person for each residence change, 2) the situation which precipitated the move (context), 3) and the kinship links between members of each newly formed household (see Appendix 2).

[2]This section reflects theoretical advances in the analysis of transactions in parenthood (Goodenough 1970) and role analysis (Goodenough 1965; Keesing 1969, 1970a, 1970b).

[3]Rivers (1924) makes a strikingly similar statement in his book, Social Organization. He says that "A child born into a community with societies or clans becomes a member of a domestic group other than the family in the strict sense."

CHAPTER VII

LIFE CYCLE AND POVERTY

"If I Ever Get Married I'm Leaving Town"

People in The Flats maintain lifelong bonds to the residential groupings of kin. External pressures such as high rents and unemployment force individuals to maintain this loyalty, and kin exert internal sanctions upon one another to further strengthen the bond. Joining one another's households in times of crisis provides security to the poor; social mobility away from the network of kin involves great risk. In this chapter the dynamics of these and other issues are illustrated by the life history of one participant in the domestic network of Magnolia and Calvin Waters.

Residence life histories[1] provide insight into residence strategies over the life cycle. Residence patterns, child-care arrangements, and the dynamics of household formation come out dramatically in residence life histories of adults and children. In addition, life histories may clarify the situations which lead to a change in residence, the kin bonds between co-resident adults, and the kin bonds between co-resident adults and children.

The following passages are taken from a detailed residence life history of Ruby Banks, Magnolia Waters' twenty-five year old daughter. Her description of her life and the crises which necessitated major residence changes illustrates the forces

which maintain kin-based household groupings over the life cycle. Every detail of her story was substantiated by discussions with her mother, her aunt, her daughter's father, or his sister.

Ruby Banks lived in The Flats with her mother and two brothers in her maternal grandparents' home almost continuously from birth until she was five years old. When Ruby was four, Ruby's mother, Magnolia, took her young children and moved into a separate apartment in order to receive AFDC benefits. Their tiny apartment was one-half block from the grandparents and they continued to eat all of their meals and spend their time at the grandparents' home. Magnolia received an eviction notice stating that the owner planned to tear down the building in which they were living. Magnolia and her children returned to the grandparetns' home and Magnolia gave birth to another son. Magnolia found a job and Ruby's grandmother, Claudie Mae, cared for the children.

Claudie Mae and her husband were separated when Ruby was six years old. Magnolia, who had always been very close to her father, remained living with him and her sons, cooking and keeping house for him. Claudie Mae decided to "keep" Ruby with her since Ruby was sickly. Ruby and Claudie Mae moved up the street into the home of Ruby's maternal aunt, Augusta, and her maternal uncle. Claudie Mae continued to take care of Ruby and her brothers during the day while Magnolia worked.

Magnolia began a long-term common law relationship with Calvin when Ruby was six years old. Calvin was not the father of any of Magnolia's children, but since they began housekeeping twenty years ago Magnolia and Calvin have had eight children together. Ruby lived with her grandmother and her maternal aunt and uncle until her grandmother's death when Ruby was sixteen. During those years Ruby became deeply attached to her grandmother.

> My grandmother was just like some fairy tale. She was a big smile when you get home. If you had a pain she had that soft touch to rub you, or grease you down in goose grease or sardine oil when you had the mumps. When you scared, she's there to comfort you; when you have problems she there to help you out. She's someone special you really love and want to be with all the time. When something happen to her, it hurts you more than anything.

The following passage from Ruby's life history begins when Ruby was sixteen, just prior to the birth of her first child, and prior to her grandmother's death. It concludes when Ruby is a twenty-four year old mother of four.

* *

"They Don't Want Me Married"

Before my grandmother died I had everything in the world. I didn't have nothing to think about. "Mama" did everything for me. She was better to me than anyone in the whole world besides my mother. When she died it hurt me so bad that I thought I was dying. I cussed Jesus Christ, I cussed him til

I thought I couldn't cuss no more. I hated the earth he walk on. But he gave me forgiveness. There's an old saying, "When they die he sposed to laugh, when they come into this world he sposed to cry."

When my baby come, I didn't understand nothing. Every time the baby cry I'd say, I don't want this old baby, putting it on my grandmother. Mama helped me raise Julia before she die, helped me raise Alice too.

They accused me of mama's death, that I worried her to death. But they did just as much as I did. I know I made mistakes by staying out in the streets, not taking care of my own baby. But it wasn't all my fault. It wasn't me by myself. Aunt Augusta was always arguing, getting drunk and clowning with her old man. I didn't have no old man staying with me. I had respect for my grandmother. But they said I was the cause of mama's death.

After mama died Aunt Augusta and her old man charged me $40.00 a month for one lousy room no bigger than a bathroom. I wasn't paying mama but $20.00 a month plus buying some food. Aunt Augusta wanted me to buy my own groceries and pay half the bills. I wasn't getting that much and I had two babies. Aunt Augusta got mad cause I washed the babies so often. She told me she be glad when I move because she was getting tired of me running up the water and light bill.

Me and Aunt Augusta couldn't get along after mama's death. She was the boss of the house, and wanted everything to go

perfect. I couldn't leave a diaper laying around, she couldn't stand to hear the kids cry, and the old man that she had I could not stand. We got to fighting and I told her she wasn't going to hit me unless I hit her back. I threw her down, then she come after me with a pipe. Her old man was going to cut me, so I left. After everything cooled down that night I made up my mind. I said, "I'm grown, I'm leaving, and you don't want me here no way."

Aunt Augusta told mama a lie one time that I'll never forget. That's the reason why I don't care for her too much. I'd care if she died! To tell the truth I love her in a big way, but in my own way. Aunt Augusta told mama that I was having Otis, my second baby's daddy, upstairs. We was upstairs watching TV and wrestling. I had taken a shower and had my house coat on. Aunt Augusta told mama that I didn't have no clothes on and that I was going to enter with another baby. Yet they was up there screwing away when I walked in on them just the night before. I told mama too. Aunt Augusta is a god damn liar.

Me and Otis could be married, but they all ruined that. Aunt Augusta told Magnolia that he was no good. Magnolia was the fault of it too. They don't want to see me married! Magnolia knows that it be money getting away from her. I couldn't spend the time with her and the kids and be giving her the money that I do now. I'd have my husband to look after.

I couldn't go where she want me to go. I couldn't come every time she calls me, like if Leo took sick or the kids took sick, or if she took sick. That's all the running I do now. I couldn't do that. You think a man would put up with as many times as I go over her house in a cab, giving half my money to her all the time? That's the reason why they don't want me married. You think a man would let Aunt Augusta come into the house and take food out of the ice box from his kids? They thought that way ever since I came up.

They broke me and Otis up. They kept telling me he was no good, that he wasn't good enough for me, that he didn't want me, and that he didn't want the responsibility. I put him out and I cried all night long. That same night I sneaked him back through the bathroom window and we went to sleep together. My younger sister was also staying at mama's and I told her not to tell. She went downstairs and told. I locked the door and me and Otis went back to bed with the babies in there with us. I caused lots of trouble. But I figured this is my life and if I love him I gotta stick with him. And I really did love him. But Aunt Augusta and others kept fussing and arguing so I went and quit him. I would have got married a long time ago to my first baby's daddy, but Aunt Augusta was the cause of that, telling Magnolia that he was too old for me. She's been jealous of me since the day I was born.

After I moved out of Aunt Augusta's place, Otis and I decided to stay together. Before he came home from work I

would have his dinner fixed and the house and kids clean. When he come home he would take his shower, and I'd bring his food to the bed. I'd put the kids in bed and get into bed with him. We may get in a little piece and then go to sleep. When we wake up in the morning we do the same thing.

But if you start necking and doing the same thing that you've been doing with your man, and he don't want it, you know for sure that he is messing with someone or don't want you anymore. Maybe Otis didn't want me in the first place. He wanted me and he didn't want me. I really liked him, but I wasn't going to let him get the upper hand on me. I found out that he was messing with someone else. I said to myself, "I was doing it too, so what's the help in making a fuss." But after that I made him pay for being with me!

I believe that if a man want me he going to have to give me money for my time and for the time he done spent with me in bed too. I made Otis pay the rent. I was still on aid, getting a check every month. I would take that money and buy me clothes. I bought my own wardrobe and I gave Magnolia money for keeping the kids while I was working. I was working here and there while I was on aid and they were paying my rent. So I really didn't need Otis. But that was extra money for me. When he asked me what happened to my check I told him I just got cut off and couldn't get back on. Magnolia knew. She didn't care what I did so long as I didn't let Otis make an ass out of me. The point is, a woman has to have her own pride.

She can't let a man rule her--she can't be henpecked. You can't let a man kick you in the tail and tell you what to do. Anytime I can make an ass out of a man, I'm going to do it. If's he doing the same to me, then I'll quit him and leave him alone.

I put Otis in a trick. I know that he didn't care nothing for me so I made him jealous. I put him a trick because I was in love with him and he hurt me. He was nice to the kids, but he failed to show me that he was still in love with me. I started going with somebody else. Charles would be outside the house and honk the horn for me and I'd run outside where he was. Me and Otis fought a lot. One night me and Charles went to a motel room and stayed there all night. Magnolia had the babies. She got mad cause I should have come back home for the babies. It's just the idea that I was trying to hurt Otis. When I got home me and Otis got into it. He called me all kinds of names. I said he might as well leave. But Otis said he wasn't going nowhere. So he stayed and we'd sleep together, but we didn't do nothing. Then one night something happened. I got pregnant by Otis. After I got pregnant, me and the other guy quit, and I moved in with a girl friend for a while. Otis chased after me. We started going back together, but we stayed separate.

I was pregnant with my third baby when me and my babies were staying with my mother, Calvin, and seven of their

children. It was awfully crowded. Magnolia and I shared the work and our checks, and I was taking pretty good care of the kids.

About that time I met Leon. Me and Helen, his cousin, grew up side by side, went to school together, worked side by side, and wore each other's clothes. We was really two friends. Whatever one did the other did. When we started going with boy friends, she went with my brother and I went with her cousin. If one was in a fight with her old man the other would jump in. We was really uptight when I met Leon. I thought that he was the cutest Black boy that I'd ever met and I fell in love with him the first sight I seen. I was running about with Leon a lot. Then I got sick and lost the baby. I kinda cracked. I couldn't make up my mind between Leon and Otis and I really lost my mind.

Leon asked me to go on up to Michigan and I just took off with him. We went to Benton Harbor where his family is. I just left the kids with Magnolia. I didn't even tell her I was going. My checks kept coming so she had food for the kids, but I didn't send them nothing. But I didn't know then that Leon was the way he was. I didn't know he let his people tell him what to do.

While we was up in Michigan Leon started messing with another girl. He said he wasn't, but I caught him. I quit him, but he told me he wasn't messing, and I loved him so much that I took him back.

Then I got to thinking about it. I had slipped somewhere. I had let myself go. Seems like I forgot that I wasn't going to let Leon or any guy make an ass out of me. But he sure was doing it. I told Leon that if he loved me we would go and see my people and we would take them things and tell them about we's getting married and we'd pick out our rings. Leon didn't want to come back to The Flats cause he was scared I would stay. I tricked him and told him I really wanted to come home. I picked out my ring and made Leon pay thirty dollars on it. I had him buy my outfit that we was getting married in. He went along with it. What's so funny about it was when we come here and he say, "You ready to go back?" I told him, "No, I'm not going back." He said, "I thought you and me going to get married." I told him, "I never will marry you."

Leon got mad and left for Michigan. I really took revenge and made an ass out of him. I shouldn't have did it but Leon did me wrong.

My uncle was renting a large place next door to Magnolia's and he had an extra room. Me and the kids moved in. Aunt Augusta had a room there and so did Otis. He'd been staying there so he could be close to the kids and help Magnolia out. Leon came back to town and we started back together. Me and Leon stayed together at my uncle's house and the kids was mainly staying with Magnolia. When the babies stayed with me they'd sleep on the floor on a mattress and I'd feed them everyday. But me and Otis, anytime Leon

would go somewhere, we'd get together. When Leon go to work, I would sneak into Otis's room and spend half the day with him. Before long I got pregnant, but Leon didn't know I was pregnant by Otis. Leon would work every day. He had a good job and brought in good money every Friday. I didn't ask Otis for nothing. But he would feed the kids and buy a few pieces for them, and he gave Magnolia money.

I really had it made. I was going with two men at the same time. I was getting some money from Otis, but Leon didn't know it and Magnolia didn't know. Not much, maybe thirty or forty dollars a week, whatever I asked for. But then Otis left for Vietnam. By that time he found that he loved me more than he loved anybody else, so when he come home we would get married. He told me that he wanted to live together when he come home again and have no more with Leon. So I had quit Leon and he went back to Michigan.

Leon started sending lots of things from Michigan for me and the kids. For about three or four months he would send me sixty or seventy dollars a week. He didn't miss a week. With Leon and Otis gone I had no man for about four or five months.

There was a lot of arguing at my Uncle's house so I started looking for a house after my baby was born. I found one with two bedrooms on the other side of town. Aunt Augusta and her new old man took one bedroom and the kids took the other. I slept downstairs with the baby. I was sposed to do the cleaning and Aunt Augusta was to do the cooking and help

with the utilities. But she didn't cook worth shit for the kids. She really just cooked for herself and her old man.

Several months later, Aunt Augusta and her old man moved into an apartment house up the street cause they just couldn't take the noise. I was living by myself with the kids when I met Earl. After I met Earl I called Leon and said that I wasn't going with him anymore and I wouldn't take his money. Earl said he was going to help pay for the utilities. He's going to get me some curtains and pay on my couch.

While Earl was working he was so good to me and my babies that Magnolia and them started worrying all over again. They sure don't want me married. The same thing that happened to Otis happened to many of my boy friends. And I ain't had that many men. I'm tired of them bothering me with their problems when I'm trying to solve my own problems. They tell me that Earl's doing this and that, seeing some girl. I ain't heard nobody say nothing, just my kin. They look for trouble to tell me every single day.

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

* *

In the ten years following the birth of Ruby's first child, Ruby and her children frequently exchanged residence and immediate dependencies within a small network of kinsmen. A close look at the sequence of household groupings shows that the same kinsmen are active participants in one another's domestic networks for long periods of time. The following chart shows the sequence of residence changes from Ruby's life history. The successive recombinations of kinsmen sharing households is represented chronologically.

RUBY BANKS AND HER CHILDREN
Residence History

Age	Household Composition and Context of Household Formation
birth	Ruby lived with her mother and her maternal grandparents.
4	Ruby and her mother were required to move out of Ruby's grandparents' house so that they could receive AFDC. They moved into a separate residence two houses away, but ate all meals at the grandparents.
5	Ruby and her mother returned to the grandparents' house and Ruby's mother gave birth to a son. Ruby's mother worked and her grandmother cared for the children.
6	Ruby's maternal grandparents separated. Ruby's mother remained living with her father and her two sons (one more born). Ruby and her grandmother moved up the street and lived with her maternal aunt and maternal uncle. Ruby's grandmother took care of Ruby and her brothers, and Ruby's mother worked and cooked and cleaned for her father.
7-16	Household composed of Ruby, her grandmother, grandmother's new husband, Ruby's maternal aunt and her boy friend, Ruby's maternal uncle, and Ruby's younger sister. At age sixteen Ruby gave birth to a daughter.

Age	Household Composition and Context of Household Formation
17	Ruby's grandmother died. Ruby remained living with her maternal aunt, her aunt's boy friend, her maternal uncle, and her daughters.
18	Ruby fought with her aunt. She moved into an apartment with her two daughters. Ruby's first daughter's father died. Her second daughter's father stayed with Ruby and her daughters in the apartment.
19	Ruby broke up with the father of her second daughter. Ruby and her two daughters joined Ruby's mother, her mother's "husband" and her ten half-siblings. Ruby has a miscarriage.
19½	Ruby left town and moved to Michigan with her boy friend. She left her daughters with her mother. She remained there one year, then her mother insisted that she return home and take her children.
20	Ruby and her daughters moved into a large house rented by her mother's sister and her mother's brother. It was located next door to her mother's house. Ruby and her children ate at her mother's house. She cleaned for her aunt and uncle. Ruby gave birth to another child.
21	Ruby found a house and moved there with her daughters, her mother's sister, and her mother's sister's boy friend. Ruby did the cleaning, and her aunt cooked. Ruby and her mother, who lived across town, shared child care, Ruby's cousin's (mosidada) daughter stayed with Ruby.
21½	Ruby's aunt and boy friend move out because they are all fighting and they want to get away from the noise of the children. Ruby has a new boy friend.

Conclusions:
The Domestic Cycle and Poverty

Ruby's account of her residence patterns over the past twenty years pinpoints the incompatibility between long-term marriages and the expectations of kinsmen. Her description brings out some striking structural similarities between matrilineal descent groups and kin-based local networks in The Flats. The basis of this comparison is primarily related to the sex role of the in-marrying husband-father with respect to female kin and children; the incompatibility of stable marriages with either matrilineal descent groups or cooperative domestic networks; and the solidarity of the sibling group.

In matrilineal descent systems every mother is a member of a descent group in which her male kin hold some authority. Husband-fathers acquire weak ties to their children and wives, and their children belong only to the child's mother's group. The authority of husbands over wives is limited because life-long ties between husbands and wives put pressure on matrilineal descent groups. Likewise, the authoritative roles which males assume in their matrilineal descent group are in conflict with the role of a husband. The organization of domestic life in matrilineal descent systems does not require (but does not preclude) a male to fill the role of husband-father, and the authority of fathers over their children is in any event limited (Schneider and Gough 1961; Richards 1950).

Although American Blacks acquire their relatives through both male and female lines, the economic insecurity of the Black male, and the availability of welfare to the female-child unit, makes it very difficult for an unemployed Black husband-father to compete with a woman's kin for authority and for control over her children.

A father and his kin in The Flats can have a continuing relationship with the father's children if the father has acknowledged paternity, if his kin have activated their claims on the child, and if the mother has drawn these people into her personal network. In contrast to matrilineal descent systems, neither the father's interest in his child, nor the desire of his kin to help raise the child, strains the stability of domestic networks. In fact, the cooperative potential of these people is welcomed. Similar to matrilineal descent systems, the strongest conflict arises between kin-based domestic units and lasting ties between husbands and wives. When a mother in The Flats has a relationship with a non-economically productive man, the relationship draws upon the resources of others in the domestic network. Participants in the network try to break up such relationships in order to maximize their potential resources and the services they hope to exchange.

When young women in The Flats bear their first child, the mother and father do not usually set up house-keeping

together in a separate dwelling. Instead, the mother and father remain living in the homes of those kin who raised them. When a mature woman who has several children and a place of her own gives birth, it is very likely that she and her children will rejoin the household of her mother, her sister, or other female kin until she is strong enough to get along on her own. This pattern is brought out in the residence changes of Ruby and her mother, Magnolia.

Women with children have far more economic security than men and women who do not have access to welfare. But forces in the outside society and demands among kin make this security more apparent than real. Welfare regulations encourage mothers to set up separate households, and women want independence, privacy, and an improvement in their lives. But these ventures do not last long. It might appear to outside observers that there are many single-parent (female-headed) households among low income Blacks (Moynihan 1965; Bernard 1966). But census statistics on female-headed households do not accurately reveal patterns of residence or domestic organization. Life histories of adults show that the attempts by women to set up separate households with their children, and husbands, or boy friends, are short-lived. Lovers fight; houses get condemned; and needs for services among kin arise. Ruby's residential changes as a child, and the residences of her own children and kin, reveal that the same factors that

contribute to the high frequency of moving in general bring women and their children back into the households of close kin.

People in The Flats move or rejoin the households of kin one or two times a year. Unemployment, eviction, fire, public welfare requirements, birth, death, marriage, desertion, old age, illness, personal conflicts, and exchanges of services among kin--these and other economic forces, calamities and crises--contribute to the constant shifts in residence. But fluctuations in household composition rarely affect exchanges and daily dependencies among kin. Newly formed households are successive recombinations of the same adults and children, quite often in the same dwellings.

Households have shifting membership, but on the average they maintain a steady state of three generations of kin: males and females beyond child bearing age; a middle generation of mothers raising their own children or children of close kin; and the children. This observation is supported in a recent study by Joyce Ladner (1971:60) who writes, "Many children normally grow up in a three-generation household and they absorb the influences of a grandmother and grandfather as well as a mother and father." A survey of eighty-three residence changes among AFDC families, whereby adult females who were heads of their own household merged households with kin, shows that the majority of moves created three-generation households

of mothers, daughters and grandchildren. Consequently it is difficult to find a structural beginning or end to household cycles in The Flats (Buchler and Selby 1968; Fortes 1958; Otterbein 1970). However, authority patterns within a kin network change with birth and death. With the death of the oldest female kin in a household, the next generation assumes authority. Ruby's Aunt Augusta acquired dramatic influence over her kin after the grandmother's death. The birth of a child belonging to a new generation recreates a three generation household after the loss of an elderly member. With this loss and addition household groupings maintain themselves.

A consequence of the elasticity of residence patterns is that even when persons form separate households, their social, economic, and domestic lives are so entwined with other kin that they consider themselves simultaneously a part of the residential groupings of their kin. Kin expect to absorb and help one another out. That one can repeatedly join the households of kin is a great source of security and dependence among those living in poverty.

Marriage and its accompanying expectations of a home, a job, and a family built around the husband and wife, has come to stand for an individual's desire to break out of poverty. It implies the willingness of an individual to remove himself from the daily obligations of his kin network. People in The Flats recognize that one cannot simultaneously meet kin

expectations and the expectations of a spouse. While cooperating kinsmen continually attempt to draw new actors into their personal networks, they fear the loss of a central character in the network, especially a person with the ability of Ruby Banks.

Each time Ruby Banks attempted to marry, members of her kin group passed gossip and information to her which would undermine her trust in her man. These forms of social control made Ruby afraid to take the risks necessary to break out of the cycle of poverty. Instead, she maintained her security in the resilience and stability of her kin group. Ruby fully realized that to make a marriage last, she would have to move far away from her kin: "If I ever get married I'm leaving town." While this study was in progress, Ruby married and left the state with her husband and her youngest child.

Forms of social control working both within the kin network and in the larger society work against the success of conjugal unions. Couples rarely chance marriage unless a man has at least a temporary or seasonal job. Even these temporary jobs are low paying and insecure. Workers are arbitrarily laid off the job whenever they are not needed.

Women realize that welfare benefits and ties within the kin networks provide greater security for them and their children. In addition, caretaker agencies such as public welfare are insensitive to individual attempts for social mobility. A woman may be immediately cut off the welfare rolls

if a husband returns home from prison, or if she gets married. Couples are not given any guidance nor encouragement so that they can successfully make the transition.

Unless there is either a significant change in employment opportunities for the urban poor, or a livable guaranteed minimum income, it is unlikely that urban low-income Blacks will form lasting conjugal units. Even if a man and woman set up temporary housekeeping arrangements, they continue to maintain strong social ties with their kin.

Why marriage is unstable is an intricate weave of cause and effect. Kin regard any marriage as both a risk to the woman and her children, and as a threat to the durability of the kin group. These two factors continually augment each other. The combination of arbitrary and repressive economic forces and social behavior which has been modified by successive generations of poverty, makes it almost impossible for people to break out of poverty. There is no way for those families poor enough to receive welfare to acquire any surplus cash which can be saved for emergencies or for acquiring adequate appliances, a home or car. In contrast to the middle class, who are pressured to spend and save, the poor are not even permitted to establish an equity.

The following example from Magnolia and Calvin Waters' life illustrates the ways in which the poor are prohibited from acquiring any surplus which might enable them to change their economic condition or life style.

In 1971 Magnolia's Uncle died in Mississippi and left an unexpected inheritance of $1500 to Magnolia and Calvin Waters. The cash came from a small run-down farm which Magnolia's Uncle sold shortly before he died. It was the first time in their lives that Magnolia or Calvin ever had a cash reserve. Their first hope was to buy a home and use the money as a down payment.

Calvin had retired from his job as a seasonal laborer the year before and the family was on welfare. AFDC alloted the family $100.00 per month for rent. The housing that the family had been able to obtain over the years for their nine children at $100.00 or less was always small, roach infested, with poor plumbing and heating. The family was frequently evicted. Landlords complained about the noise and often observed an average of ten to fifteen children playing in the household. Magnolia and Calvin never even anticipated that they would be able to buy a home.

Three days after they received the check news of its arrival spread throughout their domestic network. One niece borrowed $25.00 from Magnolia so that her phone would not be turned off. Within a week the welfare office knew about the money. Magnolia's children were immediately cut off welfare, including medical coverage and food stamps. Magnolia was told that she would not receive a welfare grant for her children until the money was used up, and she was given a minimum of

four months in which to spend the money. The first surplus the family ever acquired was effectively taken from them.

During the weeks following the arrival of the money, Magnolia and Calvin's obligations to the needs of kin remained the same, but their ability to meet these needs had temporarily increased. When another uncle became very ill in the South, Magnolia and her older sister, Augusta, were called to sit by his side. Magnolia bought round trip train tickets for both of them and for her three youngest children. When the Uncle died, Magnolia bought round trip train tickets so that she and Augusta could attend the funeral. Soon after his death, Augusta's first "old man" died in The Flats and he had no kin to pay for the burial. Augusta asked Magnolia to help pay for digging the grave. Magnolia was unable to refuse. Another sister's rent was two months overdue and Magnolia feared that she would get evicted. This sister was seriously ill and had no source of income. Magnolia paid her rent.

Winter was cold and Magnolia's children and grandchildren began staying home from school because they did not have warm winter coats and adequate shoes or boots. Magnolia and Calvin decided to buy coats, hats and shoes for all of the children (at least fifteen). Magnolia also bought a winter coat for herself and Calvin bought himself a pair of sturdy shoes.

Within a month and a half all of the money was gone. The money was channeled into the hands of the same individuals

Footnotes

[1]For a detailed outline of the data included in a Residence Life History, see Appendix 2.

EPILOGUE

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

"Where The Devils Is"

Most applicants for welfare benefits are mothers whose children's fathers cannot find adequate employment to support their families. Because of the "dead or absent father" requirement of the federal law, AFDC has been an inducement to fathers to leave the home upon losing a job so that the family could become eligible for AFDC. In 1965 the Social Security Act was amended to permit but not require the states to grant AFDC benefits to families with an unemployed father in the home (AFDC-U). Only twenty states, including Illinois, have adopted such provisions, even in their limited form which requires a detailed work history form from the father prior to his unemployment. This requirement often cannot be met by young Black fathers who have never found steady work. The unemployment rate for Black males ages 16-25 is 25% to 33%. In 1971 there were only 4.6% AFDC-U families receiving aid.[1]

Welfare systems must have a means of defining the "family unit" to whom benefits are paid, both for purposes of eligibility and for determining the amount to be paid in benefits. The welfare system induced the father to leave his home so that his children could receive AFDC benefits by authorizing benefits to only the mother and her dependent children. Subsequently, the welfare "family" was defined as

"a dependent child and his parent, parents, or other relatives standing in loco parentis to him who maintain a home for and provide him with care and supervision."[2] This definition is a far cry from the reality of kin and non-kin who form the active basis of economic and social cooperation for each child in the Black community. The purpose of this epilogue is to show the contradiction between present definitions of the welfare family and the natural units of social and economic cooperation which best characterize family life among the urban poor.

The major public assistance program in the United States is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). About 11 million of 15 million welfare recipients in the United States receive benefits under AFDC. Seven million AFDC recipients are children; most of the balance are mothers of these children.[3]

The AFDC program was created in the height of the depression of the 1930's (1935). It was enacted about the same time as the massive public works program (commonly known as WPA) was instituted, with the objective of providing work to every able-bodied man. Consequently, AFDC benefits were limited to families with children in which one parent was either dead, disabled, or absent from the home. The theory was that in a father-mother headed family, a job would be provided by the government for the father, hence welfare

benefits were unnecessary. WPA never achieved its objective of full employment and it expired with the advent of World War II.

After the war, unemployment returned and has persisted, particularly among minority groups where the rate of unemployment has consistently been at least twice the white rate. Currently, the official unemployment rate for Blacks is approximately 12%, but this reflects only those actively seeking work (i.e., "in the labor market") and does not reflect the large group of Blacks who have given up hope of obtaining employment and are not considered to be in the labor market.

AFDC is governed by both federal and state laws. Title IV of the Social Security Act (SSA) provides for grants of money to states which adopt a system of AFDC benefits which comply with requirements of federal law. However, the single most important issue of welfare programs--the amount of benefits payable--is left completely to the states' discretion. Ironically, the system of federal grants actually reimburses the states a higher percentage of the total welfare payments, the lower the monthly benefits paid. In the "higher" benefit states, the federal reimbursement comes to 50% of the total AFDC benefits paid under the state law.

No state provides a level of benefits necessary for a minimum adequate standard of living, currently computed by the Department of Labor at $7,500 per year for a family of four.

Only a handful of states at most even pay benefits which approach the official government poverty line which is currently $4000 for a family of four. Some states keep benefits low by computing budgeted need at ridiculously low levels. Others fix an arbitrary maximum payment below budgeted need or simply pay a percentage of budgeted need (e.g., 1/2 or 2/3). Since 1969 there has been no legal requirement that reflects increases in the cost of living. Illinois has not increased its budget in two years although living costs have risen approximately 12%.

Defining The Family Unit

In order to determine both eligibility and the amount of aid, welfare authorities look to the "resources" available to the "family unit" as defined by law. Neither the federal or state laws defining the "family" for the basis of AFDC benefits take into account the actual number of people sleeping or eating in a household. Under the present welfare system this is a necessary situation--otherwise numerous relatives would gravitate to a home where AFDC eligible children live for the purpose of having their needs included in the welfare budget. However, given the reality of the distribution of scarce resources from mother-child units into networks of kin, the current AFDC system of computing need

completely fails to meet its objective. It does not provide a subsistence level for needy children.

The scarcity of housing in Black communities, the high rent, and the need for mutual aid and shared child care among the poor all necessitate the overcrowded conditions in which kin join one another's households. Current Illinois law allows inclusion of only two adults in budgeting family need regardless of the number of persons actually sleeping in the household or eating its food.[4] Furthermore, Illinois regulations limit the adults who may be included in the budget to the parents, step-parents or other relatives having primary responsibility for the children. Thus, if a household consists of a mother and her children, and the mother's mother, and her sister or brother, only the needs of the mother and children would be computed even though the other adults would be sharing the benefits. There is an exception in Section 1503 which would permit one additional adult relative of the children to be included in the budget when the presence of the relative in the home is "essential" to provide care for the children. This exception is generally applicable only when the mother is incapacitated and unable to provide adequate care for the children or when the mother is working or in a job training program. Even here, the number of adults in the budget is limited to two. Thus, if a mother and her children move in with the mother's mother's household in order to be able to obtain employment, the other relatives living in the household,

many of whom are permanently unemployed, will share in the welfare proceeds--even though they are not considered for welfare budgeting purposes.

The situation becomes worse when one considers the special regulations governing the relatives of "illegitimate" children. In Illinois a father of an illegitimate child, and his relatives, cannot be a "grantee" (person primarily responsible for care of child) unless paternity is established by court action, a rare event among poor Black families. Moreover, these sections require that the child live with the grantee. Thus there appears to be no method of paying AFDC benefits in Illinois to an "illegitimate" child living with his father or father's relatives, although this is not an uncommon situation. Furthermore, if a relative of the father of an "illegitimate" child lives with the mother to assist in child care, unless paternity has been established by court action, the father's relative would not be considered in budgeting (the regulations are not entirely clear on this point).

Unemployed relatives living with AFDC children are not only excluded from the budget, they may also cause a reduction in the amount of welfare payments. In Illinois, a major part of the welfare budget, averaging about 1/3 of the total payment (depending on family size), is computed on the basis of rent and utilities. There is a maximum allowance for rent (excluding utilities) of $97 per month (slightly higher in

Chicago). This figure is established by a legislative committee. The rent maximum itself is unrealistic, even for the substandard housing in which most AFDC recipients live, and particularly for larger families. Nevertheless, if there is a non-eligible relative living in the home with AFDC children, in computing AFDC benefits, the rent must be prorated, not on actual rent paid but on the basis of the maximum $97 allowance.[5] Thus, if a mother and three AFDC children live in the same household with the mother's mother, sister and brother (making a total of seven) the AFDC payment will be reduced by 1/3 of $97, or $32 monthly, even if the actual rent paid is more than $97. A similar adjustment is made for utility costs.

One would expect that if these seven people lived in a household and paid rent of $145, 2/3 or $97 would be attributable to the AFDC recipients and would be included in their budgeted needs, but in fact their reduced rent allowance is $65. The post office will not forward Aid to Dependent Children checks to a new address without authority from the county department. Such laws prevent AFDC families from manipulating their residence to maximize AFDC benefits.

The contradictions between welfare laws and the residence and domestic patterns among poor Black families are due to the failure of the United States to provide a comprehensive scheme of income maintenance for all needy persons. If all of those

individuals unemployed, untrained, and in need, were covered by programs, there would be no need for the artificial attempts to define the mother-child unit as "family" as the current categorical aid system requires.

The current program of federally supported welfare payments covers only the aged, disabled and blind, and children and those caring for children. Most father-mother families are excluded, most of the working poor are excluded, and adults under 65, not caring for children are excluded. Even the President's Family Assistance plan is limited to families with children.

Support From Fathers

Present laws and regulations governing child support for AFDC children present a confused and contradictory situation. Every father is required by law to support his children (except in two states where support for illegitimates is not required). The Social Security Act requires each state, as a condition of obtaining federal welfare subsidies for its AFDC program, to initiate procedures for the collection of support payments from AFDC fathers. In practice, however, support from fathers has not been regularly pursued by welfare authorities, except for occasional spurts initiated by punitive motives or political pressures against "high costs" of welfare. AFDC fathers are characterized by high unemployment, changing or interrupted employment for those working, and substantial mobility in living

arrangements. All of these factors render an attempt to enforce support as costly, if not more so, than the amount that may be recovered. Furthermore, many AFDC fathers are already supporting other children, with whom they may be living, so that the possibility of any substantial payments to AFDC children are negligible.

In Illinois, support actions against AFDC fathers are supposed to be brought by lawyers appointed as Special Assistant Attorneys-General for this purpose. However, the fees are small ($2500-3000 downstate) and the jobs are considered political patronage. If the lawyer actually undertook any substantial duties, the patronage element would be lost. Under current minimum bar rates, $2500 a year would buy less than two hours per week of a lawyer's time.

To further confuse the situation, federal regulations covering AFDC have been construed by the Supreme Court to prohibit the states from terminating or reducing benefits to an AFDC family because the mother refuses to divulge the name of the father of her children. This, of course, further frustrates enforcement of support. This federal regulation can, of course, be changed simply by an administrative order of the Secretary of H.E.W., and there is substantial political pressure in the current "anti-welfare" atmosphere to bring about a change. In June 1972 legislation was pending in the United States Senate to require disclosure of the name of the father.

Except in the rare case where the AFDC father has substantial income (over $9-10,000), attempts to obtain support payments have a substantially negative effect on the children who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the AFDC program. The resources available to the child from the father and his family more often than not far exceed any small payment which a legal support action might bring (Chapters III and V). If the father openly acknowledges the child as his own, the whole range of supportive services: living arrangements, food, clothing, child care services, and participation in exchange networks becomes available to the child from the father's family. In addition, at least a substantial number of AFDC fathers maintain close relationships with children even though they are not regularly living with them, and children may live with the father or his family from time to time.

Fathers and their kin who are harrassed by welfare authorities for petty sums frequently dismiss previous acknowledgement of their responsibilities towards the child, thereby depriving the child of the supportive services of the father's family and the social and psychological benefits of a close relationship with their father and his family. The father, facing unstable employment and numerous pressures, may even decide to leave the community. If, in addition, he was supporting other children, the support order may become the straw that breaks the camel's back, causing the father to abandon his family and adding another family to AFDC rolls.

If the father does not desert, his income is likely to be so low that he cannot support two families. He may simply move out of the home of some of his children--again the result is to add another family to the rolls. Thus, attempts to obtain support payments will have little or no effect on welfare expenditures.

An examination of the actual supportive role of fathers of poor Black children, and of equally important support for children available from the father's kin, requires a re-examination of policies and demands for rigid enforcement of legal support obligations of fathers. In terms of the welfare of the child, legal pursuit of a father may be counterproductive. Fathers and their kin bring material, social and psychological support to a child. Legal support proceedings may deter such public acknowledgements of paternity or cause them to be withdrawn, depriving the child of a much needed resource. Support proceedings against a father produce at best minimal reductions in public expenditures for public aid and they almost never produce any benefits for the child.

Footnotes

[1]Statistical Abstracts of the United States (1971). United States Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, p. 297.

[2]See definitions in Public Aid in Illinois, 1965. Published by the State of Illinois, Department of Public Aid, pp. 41-42.

[3]See Statistical Abstracts of the United States (1971), p. 292.

[4]See Illinois Public Aid Manual, 1970, Section 1503.

[5]Illinois Public Aid Manual, 1970, Section 81504.

APPENDIX 1

AFDC CASE HISTORY SURVEY

The AFDC case history survey is a statistical study of kinship and residence patterns from 188 case records of Black recipients of AFDC in the county in which this study was located. The study includes data on 951 children who are AFDC recipients--half of the total number of AFDC children in the county in 1969, and 373 adults, of whom 188 were "grantees" responsible for the AFDC child.

My observer experience in The Flats and in an earlier study (Stack 1970) challenged many of the hypotheses concerning Black family life which had been supported by data taken from the United States Census and other surveys. For example, early in the study I began to observe that a considerable number of children resided temporarily or permanently with their father's kin, or received supportive aid and care from their father and his kin. In addition, I had difficulty finding and isolating the "female-headed households" which were claimed to account for one-quarter of the households in low-income Black communities. Beginning observations such as these made me suspicious of both the typicality of my sample and the accuracy of existing statistical data.

I decided to do my own survey based on data derived from AFDC case histories in the local Public Aid Office. The objective in using the AFDC case files was to quickly read as

many case histories as possible in order to gain acquaintance with a broad spectrum of AFDC families, and to be exposed to the biases of the social workers' definitions of the "problems" confronting these families.

The files included face sheets containing statistical data on the names, ages and place of birth of grantees and their children, and long, detailed and highly personalized comments written by case workers over the years. The oldest case records contained information on some of the first families to become ADC recipients in the late thirties. They were thick records of two and sometimes three generations of welfare recipients within one family.

In the process of reading at least 100 case histories I began to search for the kind of data which appeared consistently in each of the case histories, and which appeared to be reliable data (some of course was not). I drew up about 200 questions on adults and children which were coded on a trial basis by two trained assistants so that we could clarify the assumptions we held for each question and write a list of instructions for coding.

A SSUPAC program (Fortran is part of the general system) was designed to analyze the data which was coded and punched on call cards. In order to attain coder reliability, the coders randomly selected one out of every five cases and cross coded so that assumptions could be compared for any differences in coding.

The following are drafts of the information which was coded on grantees, other adults in the household, and children in the case histories.

I

DRAFT OF CODING SYSTEM FOR ADC CASES
CARD 1: The Grantee

COLUMN #	TITLE OF COLUMN AND ITS CODE
1,2,3	Case Number Begin 001, 002, etc.
4	Card Number Code 1
5	Type of Case 1. ADC 2. ADCU
6,7	Year (19__) of date of first application of present grantee
8	Sex of grantee 1. Female 2. Male
9,10	Birthdate of grantee (19__) 00. Not ascertained

11,12 Birthplace of grantee

SOUTH	CENTRAL	MOUNTAIN
01. Kentucky	18. Ohio	39. Montana
02. Tennessee	19. Indiana	40. Wyoming
03. Alabama	20. Illinois	41. Idaho
04. Mississippi	21. Michigan	42. Colorado
05. Arkansas	22. Wisconsin	43. Arizona
06. Louisiana	23. Minnesota	44. Utah
07. Oklahoma	24. Iowa	45. Nevada
08. Texas	25. Missouri	
09. Delaware	26. No. Dakota	PACIFIC
10. Maryland	27. So. Dakota	46. Washington
11. District of Columbia	28. Nebraska	47. Oregon
	29. Kansas	48. California
12. Virginia		49. Hawaii
13. W. Virginia	ATLANTIC	50. Unknown
14. No. Carolina	30. New York	51. In Service
15. So. Carolina	31. New Jersey	52. Dead
16. Georgia	32. Penn.	
17. Florida	33. Maine	
	34. New Hampshire	
	35. Vermont	
	36. Massachusetts	
	37. Rhode Island	
	38. Connecticut	

13 Birthplace of grantee by geographic area
- 0. Not ascertained
- 1. SOUTH (if 11,12 was 01-17)
- 2. CENTRAL (18-29)
- 3. ATLANTIC (30-38)
- 4. MOUNTAIN (39-45)
- 5. PACIFIC (46-49)

14 Number of rooms in household up to date
- 0. Not ascertainable
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

15 Number of individuals in household up to date
- 0. Not ascertainable
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

16 Number of ADC children in household under 18 up to date (include a minor ADC mother)
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more
- 0. Not ascertainable

17 Number of adult males in household over 18 up to date
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

18 Number of children in household under 18 (ADC plus others) up to date
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

19 Number of adult females in household over 18 up to date, including mothers
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

20 Total number of spouses (wives, husbands, common law, etc.) of grantee as far as case history goes
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

21 Total number of fathers in the case history that the female grantee lists as fathers of all these children (she may not be the mother). Rule: make an intelligent guess when possible.
- 0. Not applicable or not ascertainable
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

22 Is the grantee's spouse (or ex-spouse) a member of the household up to date (include common law, etc.)
- 0. Not ascertainable or not applicable
- 1. yes
- 2. no
- 3. sometimes
- 4.
- 5.

23 If yes to #22, what is the relation of spouse to grantee?
- 0. Not relevant
- 1. Legally married
- 2. Common law (stated as such)
- 3. Free union (living together for less than seven years)
- 4. Marriage annulled
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

24 Number of spouse units (common law, etc.) in the household up to date
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

25 Number of (single mother)/child units in the household up to date (single means that there is no husband/father for this unit in the household)
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

26 Number of father/child units in this household up to date (unit means a father and all his children)
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

27 Number of step-father/child units in this household up to date (unit means a step-father and all his children)
- 0. None
- 1-8
- 9. Nine or more

28,29 From the time of application if the grantee has ever changed his/her household unit to join or be joined by another relative(s) household, what is the relationship between the grantee and the adult heads of the new household which they joined or merged with? Code for first move.

MASTER CODE: RELATIONSHIP

30,31 Same as 28,29 for 2nd move, use MASTER CODE

32,33 Same as 28,29 for 3rd move, use MASTER CODE

34 Is there a 3/5 card on this case which summarizes residence facts which I should read, or an interesting aspect of this case?
- 1. Yes
- 2. No

35,36	Relation of grantee to "responsible relative" listed first on list	
39,40	(listed 2nd)	
43,44	(listed 3rd)	
47,48	(listed 4th)	
51,52	(listed 5th)	MASTER CODE: RELATIONSHIPS
55,56	(listed 6th)	
59,60	(listed 7th)	
63,64	(listed 8th)	
67,68	(listed 9th)	
71,72	(listed 10th)	
75,76	(listed 11th)	
37,38	Location of responsible relative coded above at time of application	
41,42	2nd	
45,46	3rd	
49,50	4th	
53,54	5th	MASTER CODE: PLACES, I, 11,12
57,58	6th	
61,62	7th	
65,66	8th	
69,70	9th	
73,74	10th	
77,78	11th	
79,80	Relation of grantee to migrant or temporary resident in household, or relation of grantee to person sharing kitchen, bath or meals (pick first visitor mentioned who stayed for a while)	

RELATIONSHIPS: MASTER CODE

00. Not ascertainable, not relevant

CONSANGUINES

Female	Male	Kin term used
01. Mo	18. Fa	35. Aunt
02. MoMo	19. FaFa	36. Uncle
03. FaMo	20. MoFa	37. Niece or Nephew
04. FaFaSi	21. FaBr	38. Grand Niece
05. MoFaSi	22. MoBr	39. ½ Sibling
06. FaSi	23. FaFaBr	40. Grand Nephew
07. MoSi	24. MoFaBr	41. Grand daughter
		42. Grand son
08. Si	25. Br	43. Step mother
09. Da	26. So	44. Step father
10. DaDa	27. DaSo	45. Step child
11. SoDa	28. SoSo	46. Step mother's family
12. BrDa	29. SiSo	47. Step father's family
13. SiDa	30. BrSo	48. Great grand child
14. FaBrDa	31. FaBrSo	49. grantee marries
15. FaSiDa	32. FaSiSo	
16. MoBrDa	33. MoBrSo	
17. MoSiDa	34. MoSiSo	

AFFINES, IN LAWS, RELATIVES BY MARRIAGE

Female	Male	
50. Wife	73. Husband	93. 01 and 18
51. HuMo	74. HuFa	94. 91 and 42, 44
52. WiMo	75. WiFa	95. 08 and 79
53. HuBrWi	76. HuBr	96. 25 and 58
54. WiBrWi	77. WiBr	97. 09 and 78
55. HuSi	78. DaHu	98. None of these
56. WiSi	79. SiHu	99. Non-Kin
57. SoWi	80. HuMoBr	
58. BrWi	81. WiMoBr	
59. HuMoBrWi	82. HuFaBrSo	
60. WiMoBrWi	83. WiFaBrSo	
61. HuFaMo	84. HuSiSo	
62. WiFaMo	85. WiSiSo	
63. HuFaBrSoWi	86. HuBrSo	
64. WiFaBrSoWi	87. WiBrSo	
65. HuSiDa	88. FaSiDaHu	
66. WiSiDa	89. SoDaHu	
67. HuBrDa	90. MoSiHu	
68. WiBrDa	91. FaSiHu	
69. FaBrSoWi	92. 02 and 20	
70. SoSoWi		
71. FaBrWi		
72. MoBrWi		

II

DRAFT OF CODING SYSTEM FOR ADC CASES
CARDS 2 and 3: DATA ON CHILDREN

COLUMN #	TITLE OF COLUMN AND ITS CODE
1,2,3	Case Number Begin 001, 002, 003
4	Card Number Code 2 or 3 or 4
5,6 23,24 41,42 59,60	Child's brithdate (19__) (Serves as identification) 00. No data for this card 01. Unknown
7 25 43 61	Sex of child being coded 1. Male 2. Female 3. Unknown
8 26 44 62	Is child being coded currently on ADC?° 1. Yes 2. No 0. Not ascertainable
9 27 45 63	Is child being coded currently in the grantee's household? 0. Not ascertainable 1. Yes 2. No 3. No further data
10,11 28,29 46,47 64,65	Child's birthplace Code as Card I, 11,12
12,13 30,31 48,49 66,67	Relation of child to Grantee from Grantee's point of view (Grantee is EGO) MASTER CODE: RELATIONSHIPS

14	Are child's parents in Grantee's household up to date?
32	0. Not ascertainable
50	1. No
68	2. Mother is in household
	3. Father is in household
	4. Step father is in household
	5. 2 and 3
	6. 2 and 4
	7. Step mother is in household
	8. 4 and 7
	9. 3 and 7
15	Location of mother of child (biological) <u>CODE THESE IN THE ORDER LISTED</u>
33	0. Not ascertainable
51	1. Not applicable
69	2. In household
	3. In Jackson Harbor
	4. In Chicago
	5. In Crawfordsville
	6. In Illinois other than above
	7. In the South
	8. Other
	9. Dead
16	<u>IF THE MOTHER IS NOT THE GRANTEE</u>, what is the status of the mother of the child up to date? <u>CODE THESE IN THE ORDER LISTED</u>
34	0. Not applicable
52	1. Unmarried minor in household
70	2. Married minor in household
	3. Unmarried adult in household
	4. Married adult in household
	5. She deserted this child
	6. She is divorced and living elsewhere
	7. She is divorced and in the household
	8. She is an adult living outside the household
	9. None of these
17,18 35,36 53,54 71,72	If the child physically is moved out of grantee's household, what is the relationship between the child being coded and the adult heads of the new household? (<u>Household head</u> means the responsible adults in the household.)
	CODE RELATIONSHIP FROM CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW MASTER CODE: RELATIONSHIPS

19 Status of biological father of child
37 0. Not ascertainable
55 1. Legal father
73 2. Putative father
3. Unknown father
4. Marriage annulled
5. Dead
6.
7.

20 Does grantee imply that the biological father of this child has admitted to fathering the child (like he piad the hospital bill or intended to) (code impression before decision is made at court hearing)
38 1. Not ascertainable
56 2. Yes
74 3. No, she implies that he denied it

21 Source of support (full or partial) for child being coded
39 1. Father of child where father lives in the household
57 2. Father of child where father lives outside the household
75 3. Step-father who lives in the household
4. Step-father who lives outside household
5. Mother who lives in the household
6. Mother working who lives outside household
7. None
8. Other
9. Not ascertainable

22 How long has this child been a member of the grantee's household?
40 0. Not ascertainable
58 1. Less than a month
76 2. Less than a year
3. 1-3 years
4. 4-6 years
5. 7-10 years
6. 10 years or more

77 Female adult relatives who were on ADC
0. Not ascertainable
1. Mo
2. MoMo
3. MoSi
4. FaMo
5. FaSi
6. 1 and 2
7. 1 and 4
8. 2 and 4
9. Other

III

DRAFT OF CODING SYSTEM FOR ADC CASES

CARD 4: Data on Adults living in the household other than the Grantee, or on adults who have lived in the Grantee's household

COLUMN #	TITLE OF COLUMN AND ITS CODE
1,2,3	Case Number Begin 001, 002, 003
4	Card Number Code 5
5	Is there data on this card? 0. No 1. Yes
6 13 20 27 34 41 48 55 62 69	Sex of adult (over 18). Code any adult other than grantee who is currently residing in the same household as the grantee, or who has resided there since the date of application. Code according to the chronological order. (include ADC turned 18) 0. 1. Female who has ever been an ADC child on this grantee's case 2. Male who has ever been an ADC child on this grantee's case 3. Female not an ADC child on this grantee's case 4. Male not an ADC child on this grantee's case
7,8 14,15 21,22 28,29 35,36 42,43 49,50 56,57 63,64 70,71	Date of birth of adult being coded (19__) 00. Not ascertainable 01. Born in 1899 or 1900

Columns	
9,10	Relation of grantee to adult being coded
16,17	(grantee as EGO)
23,24	
30,31	CODE: MASTER CODE: RELATIONSHIPS
37,38	
44,45	
51,52	
58,59	
65,66	
72,73	
11	Does the adult have any children or step-children
	in this household?
18	0. Not ascertainable
25	1. No
32	2. 1 son
39	3. 1 daughter
46	4. Two children
53	5. Three children
60	6. Four children
67	7. Five children
74	8. Six children or more
12	How long was this adult a member of the Grantee's
19	household? (fairly continuous)
26	0. Not ascertainable or relevant
33	1. Less than a month
40	2. Less than a year
47	3. 1-3 years
54	4. 4-6 years
61	5. 7-10 years
68	6. 10 years or more
75	

APPENDIX 2

OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW TOPICS

The following descriptive interview schedule proved useful to my assistants and myself as guides for gathering data. These guides were a joint effort, written by my field assistants who were Flats residents and myself. Our purpose was to develop questions on daily life and family organization which were meaningful to Flats residents. We selected questions in the general areas of social and domestic relations, kinship and residence, and child-keeping. Generally one assistant taped interviews with Flats residents using the guides, another asked residents what was misleading about the questions, and the third used the questions as a starting point for long discussions on a single issue.

A. Social and Domestic Relations

1. Daily Lives

<u>Comment</u>: This interview is hard to do unless you know the person really well. The aim is to learn how people spend their time from the moment they wake up in the morning until they go to bed at night. We are trying to learn who they visit, which relatives they see daily or weekly, what they do for each other, whether they exchange goods and services, and how these exchanges are arranged.

a. Ask the person to describe a typical day in great detail. Help them along by asking detailed questions.

b. Who does the person visit each day, each week? Which relatives (relationship), boy friends, friends, fathers of their children, etc.

c. Did they trade clothes, money, child care with anyone this week? With whom?

d. What did they do for someone else this week? Did anyone help them out?

e. What guys (girls) do they see each week (not names); for example, fathers, boy friends, mothers of their children, sisters, etc.

f. Do they give to any of the individuals listed in E? Do they receive money from any of the individuals listed in E?

2. The Acquisition of Goods

Comment: Ask the person to name all of the items (furniture, pictures, radios, etc.) in each room in their house. Give each item a number and ask the following questions about each item.

a. Give a physical description of the item.

b. How long has it been in the house?

c. Was the item in anyone else's home before? Whose?

d. Does it belong to anyone in the house? Who?

e. Where did it come from? Was it bought at a store? Where?

f. Was it bought for cash, credit?

g. Was it bought new or used?

h. Who bought it?

i. Who made the decision to buy it?

j. How much did it cost?

k. Was it a gift or a loan?

l. Who loaned or gave it to you?

m. Who will it be given to or loaned to?

n. Is it home-made? Who made it?

o. What else should we ask you about it?

3. Finances

Comment: Everyone has a hard time making it on the money they get and so you have to get some help from others. The aim is to try to figure out how people make it financially, how their daily and weekly budget works. This gets very complicated because some people live together, others eat together, and others share their income.

a. Learn who is living in the house of the person you are interviewing (list relationships) and how they contribute to the finances of the household (rent, utilities, food, etc.).

b. Who eats in the household? Which meals? Who pays for the food? Who cooks?

c. Try to learn the source of income of everyone in the household and how much they earn (you may have to guess).

d. Learn other ways people in the house get money and the amount; for example, from boy friends, children's fathers, parents, etc.

e. Try to write down a complete budget which includes how much money comes into the house and from where, expenses, who pays for what.

4. Leisure Time and Sex Roles

Comment: Men and women have leisure time to spend and finances to organize. We are trying to learn who people spend their free time with, and the differences between men and women's buying habits.

a. In whose name are the insurance policies?

b. In whose name is the car, the house?

c. Does your wife or girl friend (husband, boy friend) buy your clothes or do you buy your own?

d. Where do you sleep, keep your clothes, records?

e. Where and with whom do you eat breakfast, lunch, dinner?

f. How and with whom do you spend your day?

g. Which bills do you pay?

h. What housework do you do (shopping, scrubbing, cooking, dishes, etc.)?

i. When and how much time do you spend with your own children? Your nieces and nephews?

B. Gossip

1. How do you keep up on what's happening to people you don't see very often?

2. Who do you gossip with?

3. How much time do people spend gossiping? How much time did you spend gossiping this week? Give an example.

4. What is the difference between gossip and when someone comes over to your house and says to you, "Your man's creeping on you?" What do you call something that someone tells you to your face but is not true?

5. What do people gossip about? Give examples.

6. Do you learn anything about how people should act from gossiping?

7. What is the difference in what people gossip about in front of someone or behind their back?

8. How much do people believe gossip?

9. How does gossip spread? If you tell a friend something how long would it take for your mother to hear about it?

10. How many people gossip together at a time? Who, if anyone, is left out of the group?

11. What kind of people do people gossip about the most? What do they say?

12. What makes a person a good gossiper? How do these people get their information?

13. Why do people gossip?

C. Kinship and Residence

1. Who are your relatives?

   Comment: The study of American kinship has left many unknowns. Students of Black kinship do not have an agreed upon American kinship model which they can compare to Black kinship. Some of the unknowns in the study of American kinship which are of interest in the study of Black kinship are the following:

   a. In the Black community, who is considered to be a relative or kin? Who counts as kin? There are many possibilities: blood relatives on the mother's side, the father's side, or both; in laws; friends.

   b. In order to get at this very basic question you have to be very "open-ended." You can't make the mistake of giving people answers, or examples, because they catch on very quickly to the kind of answers you want.

   c. Begin by asking the question, "Do you have any relatives?"

   d. If the answer is 'yes,' then ask, "Who are your relatives?"

   e. List the names the informant gives. Have him/her look at the list and decide whether he wants to add anyone to the list. At this point don't say, "Well, does Joe have a brother, a wife, kids?" You want to get their own view of who their relatives are without you prompting or helping out.

   f. After you have the list of names, then find out the relationship of the person to the informant. You will end up with a list of kin-types (daughter, mother, father, etc.) and non-kin, friends, etc.

   g. At this point you know how many relatives are listed, the order in which they were given, the kin types listed on the informant's mother's and father's side, which includes kin terms like step, great, grand, etc. When these terms are given, find out what it is; for example, what is a grand nephew?

   H. For each person listed find out what the informant calls the person.

2. The Basic Genealogy

<u>Comment</u>: In contrast to "Who are your relatives?" when you gather the informant's genealogy, you want to push as far as you can to get the informant to list every blood relative and relative by marriage that he can possibly remember. Even if the informant can't remember names, if he is aware of a great grandfather who had six brothers, put these down on the chart. The purpose of gathering this extensive list of kin is so that you can eventually gather all sorts of genealogical information (residence, employment, etc.) about the relative. The easiest way to start is to begin with the informant's (EGO) own generation and work down, because these people are freshest in his mind. Once he catches on then you can work upwards to his parents' generation, and grandparents' generation.

a. Ego's Generation: Write down the names of Ego's brothers and sisters.

   i. Write down the name of Ego's children, and the names of his brother's and sister's children.

   ii. Write down the names of all of Ego's children's fathers/mothers. Elicit the relationship of Ego to the parent of each child.

   iii. Write down the names of Ego's siblings' children, the children's fathers/mothers, and the relationship of those parents to Ego's brothers and sisters.

   iv. Write down any additional spouses or consensual unions of Ego, and Ego's siblings which are not already included.

   v. For each of Ego's partners (spouse, consensual union, parent to Ego's child) get their brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, etc., and repeat ii-iv for each of them.

b. Ego's Children's Generation:

   i. For each of Ego's children, and for Ego's siblings' children, repeat ii-v. To do this consider each child as Ego when you are asking the questions. This way you can learn about half siblings.

informant's sister's daughter. For comparison with the computer study be sure and keep point of view clear.

c. Age at time of move.

d. For each change in residence since birth get the following information:

i. Relation of child to adult male in new household: state relationship from point of view of child.

ii. Relation of child to adult female in new household: state relationship from point of view of child.

NOTE: For i and ii take adult to mean responsible adults in household. If a child moved to a household and the informant says he moved to "my sister's house," write down that relationship for ii even if the sister's mother and others are also in the household. When in doubt write down more than one response for i and ii.

e. Other relatives in the household.

f. Location of household (city and state).

g. Reason for move: Ask informant to describe the content of situation in which the change took place (eventually we will have this information from several points of view).

h. Who made the decision?

i. What alternatives were open? What other relatives were considered? Non-kin?

5. Residence Life Histories: Adults

Comment: Begin with the adults in the informant's genealogies (Ego and his siblings) and work up the genealogy to great grandparents, etc., on both sides. Basically we want the same data as gathered for children, but the adult residence charts might be more sketchy as you get to older and more distant kin. For each adult gather the following data from birth to the present, or the death of the individual.

a. Name of adult.

b. Relation to informant from informant's point of view.

c. Age at time of move. Year of move.

d. Location of household (city, state). This information gives us a picture of migration, where they moved, when, who joined whom, etc.

e. Relation to adult male in new household: state relationship from point of view of person whose life you are detailing.

f. Relation of adult female in new household: state relationship from point of view of person whose life you are detailing.

g. Other relatives in that specific household.

h. Other relatives living in the general area near household (especially if this move is part of migration).

i. Reason for the move.

j. Who made the decision?

k. What alternatives were open (other places to move, other relatives to join)?

D. Child-Keeping and Fosterage

Comment: For each example of extended child-keeping or fosterage (over six months) found in the Residence Life Histories of Children, get the following information wherever possible.

1. Decision Model

   a. Who was involved in making the decision?

   b. What is their relationship to the child?

   c. How was the decision made?

   d. Social context of the decision.

e. What possible alternatives were considered?

f. How long has the child lived in household? What were the original intentions?

g. What rights have the male and female in the household acquired over the child? What rights do they not have?

2. The Mother

a. Number of children she has living with her.

b. Marital status, economic status.

c. Social relationship of fathers of her children to children living with her.

3. The Child

a. Age, place in family he was born into (eldest, youngest).

b. Residential history: has the child been "kept" before? By whom?

c. Social relationship to his biological father.

d. Social relationship to his biological mother, siblings.

e. Kin map: who does the child consider to be his relatives.

f. Terms of reference: for adults in household and for his biological parents.

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