



6-1958

A Study of the Recognition of Non-Financial Problems and Needs in Interviews with Applicants for ADC

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth Powers entitled "A Study of the Recognition of Non-Financial Problems and Needs in Interviews with Applicants for ADC." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Social Work, with a major in Social Work.

Freddy Weaver, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Frances Clay, Gideon W. Fryer

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

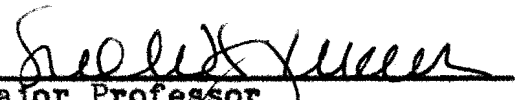
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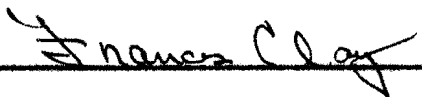
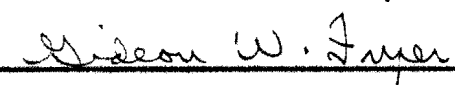
May 25, 1958

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Elizabeth Powers entitled "A Study of the Recognition of Non-Financial Problems and Needs in Interviews with Applicants for ADC." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Social Work.


Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

A STUDY OF THE RECOGNITION OF NON-FINANCIAL PROBLEMS
AND NEEDS IN INTERVIEWS WITH APPLICANTS FOR ADC

A THESIS

Submitted to
The Graduate Council
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science in Social Work

by
Elizabeth Powers

June 1958

27
23

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CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE EMPHASIS IN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

In no other way does a democracy more clearly demonstrate its conviction regarding its responsibility for the total welfare of its people than in its social legislation. And our present public assistance laws may be viewed as the highest expression of that conviction. The enactment of their most recent revisions, the 1956 Public Assistance Amendments to the Social Security Act, afford a very broad legal base on which the public assistance agency can act to convert the ideals of service to needy individuals and families into reality.

Just how public agencies must establish policies for effecting the service provisions of the amendments and the methods they must design for implementing those policies is not of concern herein. These are the responsibilities of the higher levels of public assistance administration. There may be concern, however, as to the concept of service with reference to what it means at the lower levels. There may also be varying opinions as to the point at which the giving of service should begin. It goes without saying, of course, that the problem which indicates a need for service and the individual's capacity to use such service constructively must first be recognized. It is on this truism, together with a belief that

service should begin at the logical beginning, at intake, that this study was pursued.

But before going further it seems important to take a brief look at the origin and development of service in its current frame of reference, lest one get the mistaken impression that present applications of the service principle are only experimentation for the purpose of proving the soundness of a newly projected social casework idea or process.

The service idea began more than a century ago; so the giving of service per se, as differentiated from the giving of financial assistance only, is far from new. The more comprehensive approach, a helping process approach which was concerned "with efforts to place distressed people above the need of relief and, in doing this, to study and release their latent possibilities,"¹ was first introduced in the early years of the nineteenth century. The idea had its real beginnings in England in the minds of those earliest social reform leaders who would not be shaken from their belief that dole-giving alone was not the all-encompassing answer to the problem of meeting the needs of individuals.

This small but determined social reform nucleus struggled at times against almost insurmountable opposition, strongest of which was that group which held fast to the "economic" approach. The reform concept of helping needy individuals did not totally exclude the importance of economic assistance;

¹ Mary E. Richmond, Social Diagnosis (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917), p. 29.

rather, it embraced the idea of giving not only from the standpoint of the need presented but also with some or equal consideration of the individual who had the need.

During the period of more than a century following the beginning of this shift in emphasis in the helping process the practice of social work, and the profession of social work itself, gradually emerged.

Until the enactment of federal emergency relief measures in the early 1930's, social casework was the exclusive function of voluntary social agencies. A sizeable number of outstandingly able professional social workers were early drawn into the federal programs from these unofficial agencies, bringing with them the highest degree of social work knowledge, skill and leadership. The services of many others, equally able, were sought and retained on an advisory or consultative basis. It was through the vision and efforts of these leaders of the social work profession that the service aspects, the basic social casework process, became an important intent of the first federal programs for the relief of the nation's then hungry millions.

The Social Security Act as it was originally enacted August 14, 1935, was a part of that vast federal program for rescuing the nation from its near collapse economically. Financial assistance to needy persons was therefore the principal focus of the three titles of the act which then were known as the public assistance program.

It must be pointed out, however, that the service intent of the original assistance program was not overlooked by the Bureau of Public Assistance when the bureau was initially given the responsibility for setting up standards for administration of the program. The bureau "deemed inadequate any state program which has not included service, as well as assistance to persons in need"² and stressed the need for preventive work and rehabilitation. It also emphasized the importance of proper guidance for dependent children.

The states in which there was already a legal base for such action thereupon promptly wrote service provisions into their public assistance plans. In 1956, twenty-one years later, the Eighty-fourth Congress, in amending the Social Security Act, strongly re-emphasized the importance of service in the administration of the public assistance programs. Most states, however, as well as the federal Bureau of Public Assistance, had not waited for the final passage of the amendments before beginning a concentrated re-examination of their service programs, particularly services with reference to the aid to dependent children program.

² Jane M. Hoey, "The Federal Government and Desirable Standards of State and Local Administration," Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1937, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937), p. 442.

In 1954, the Bureau of Public Assistance and the Children's Bureau, at the request of the Commissioner of Social Security, prepared a Draft Report on Services in the Aid to Dependent Children program. The report was distributed to states and regions for study and discussion, following which the agencies and regional groups submitted comprehensive reports of their deliberations to the two federal bureaus. An analysis based on the reported study by states and regions of the draft report was then completed by the bureaus.

One of the five objectives established by the working group of the two bureaus in implementing the draft report project was: ". . . (2) clarifying what is meant by service." The analysis clearly indicated that the states were not in general agreement on the concept of services to families receiving aid to dependent children. This lack of general agreement was more pointedly brought out when, in summarizing the material from the states with reference to their major areas of concern reflected in their group meetings, the working group reported as the first of these three areas "clarification of the meaning of services in the aid to dependent children program."³ Some of the states placed the responsibility for defining services on the "higher levels of

³ Services in the ADC Program: Implications for Federal and State Administration, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bureau of Public Assistance, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. 12.

administration" and some states specified the federal and state agencies as these higher levels.

As if by mandate from all of the lower levels of administration, the law-making branch of the federal government responded by taking action which might be considered as "legislative groundwork for conceptualization." In the Declaration of purpose of the 1956 Public Assistance Amendments to the Social Security Act, the Eighty-fourth Congress affirmed three of the four⁴ purposes as follows:

. . . (b) to promote the well-being of the Nation by encouraging the States to place greater emphasis on helping to strengthen family life and helping needy families and individuals attain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable, (c) to assist in improving the administration of public assistance programs (1) through making grants and contracts, and entering into jointly financed cooperative arrangements, for research or demonstration projects and (2) through Federal-State programs of grants to institutions and traineeships and fellowships so as to provide training of public welfare personnel, and (d) to improve aid to dependent children.⁵

It is noted that the Congress did not at this point stipulate the form or forms which its encouragement to the states (to place greater emphasis on helping to strengthen family life) would take; however, the third declared purpose is supported in the declaration by specific provisions for grants to states for research and training.

⁴The first of the four declared purposes is omitted here since it involved medical care in all of the assistance programs.

⁵Sec. 300, 1956 Amendments, U. S. Social Security Act.

In declaring the fourth and last purpose a more direct action by the Congress is noted; that is, the conciseness of the statement offers little or no ground for questioning the fact that improvement in the aid to dependent children program was needed. In this connection, again, the Congress did not hold itself responsible for designating the means or methods to be employed in bringing about the needed improvement, but the statement's almost terse brevity in itself suggested the urgency of such need.

In looking at the Declaration of Purpose from another point of view, one might see the second and fourth purposes as having implications for immediate action, and the third as the relatively long-range purpose.

From still another point of view one might see the whole Declaration as providing public assistance administration with (1) new and explicit program goals; (2) general and/or specific means for attaining these goals; and (3) a broad, as well as a legal base for either defining anew, or revising and synthesizing its earlier concepts of service.

However, difficulties in, and lack of agreement on authoritative conceptualization had long been one of the larger problems in the practice of social casework. But those charged with the responsibility for forming a sound concept of service for the public assistance programs set to work toward this end, and in 1957, the Bureau of Public Assistance

issued Public Assistance Report No. 30, as the first of a series of monographs in the area of social services. It is indicated that the report is one of the initial steps toward carrying out the basic purposes of public assistance as emphasized in the 1956 Declaration. One stated purpose of the report is "to clarify the nature of service, deepen understanding of the needs of public assistance clients, and to further extend the scope and quality of the services the agency provides."⁶

If, with reference to clarification of the nature of service, it may be assumed that "nature" is synonymous with "concept," the report does indeed present a new and somewhat formalized approach to the concept of service in public assistance. In this new view, services toward strengthening family life and helping individuals attain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable are any of those services which tend to enable families and individuals to secure or maintain those standards or values which in this country are essential for our personal and community well-being. The bureau enumerates some of society's standards and values-- those relating to money, those important to older people and to families when the parent is gone, and those important to the disabled. Appropriately, many of the values are expressed in terms of opportunities.

⁶ Services in Public Assistance: The Role of the Case-worker, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Assistance Report No. 30, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. 4.

The fact that there are factors which may keep people from realizing society's values is not overlooked in the report and it is in this connection that the new concept embraces preventive services. Set in opposite relation to each of the four suggested sets of values, is a corresponding set of some predictable effects of such handicapping factors as financial need, increasing age, absence of the father, and disability.

It is emphasized that the report's listings of predictable effects

. . . are not intended to be comprehensive nor to be used as a checklist of what will happen to each and every family or individual thus affected. Rather they are intended as general guides to give direction to the worker's thinking and understanding in working with his clients and to give him more seeing eyes to observe what is happening in the lives of the people in his caseload.⁷

A positive or constructive working relationship between worker and client may be seen as a sort of sub-theme of the report throughout which frequent reference is made to the term and its essential nature in giving appropriate service.

It would seem that the Bureau of Public Assistance fully accepted one "clear mandate" expressed in state and region 1 reports on the draft report (discussed above) for "further delineation of the concept of service."⁸

⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁸Services in the ADC Program, op cit., p. 17.

In clear and unmistakable language, the report presents a basic statement of services in public assistance. With such basic statement available, it would seem that services to strengthen family life and help individuals attain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable, can take on a new and a more realistic meaning for all lower levels of public assistance administration.

CHAPTER II

SERVICES AND THE INTAKE PROCESS

State Law and Policy

Most states, prior to the enactment of the 1956 Amendments to the Social Security Act "had basic public assistance laws which permitted ample authority for rendering services. . . ." ¹ In the state in which this study was made the law creating the Department of Public Welfare provided that one of the functions of the department shall be,

To promote the use of such measures as are designed to restore persons to a condition of self-support in the community and to foster the preventive aspects of its work including the provision, so far as possible for such services to those liable to become destitute or handicapped as will prevent their becoming public charges. ²

This general statement of the department's services function provided a broad legal base on which to establish services policy and define administrative responsibility for its implementation. The two general goals set by and in the statement of function are clear: The first goal is to restore

¹Services in the ADC Program: Implications for Federal and State Administration, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bureau of Public Assistance, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. 10.

²Tennessee Public Welfare Manual, Public Assistance Policies and Procedures Governing Cases, Vol. 11 (Nashville: Tennessee Department of Public Welfare, 1957), p. 901.

persons to a condition of self-support; the second is to prevent their becoming public charges. In view of the principle of public responsibility for public welfare, however, there would seem to be no justification for questioning the intent, or the motive, or the action of the law-making body in placing primary emphasis on the economic aspects of such a broad program of public financial assistance.

One might interpret that portion of the statement of the department's function which sets forth the provision for preventive services as containing a contradiction if it can be said that an individual places himself in the position of becoming a "public charge" when he applies for public assistance and if it is intended that the literal definition of the term "preventive" be applied. This, of course, would be an irrational and undesirable interpretation, as well as one which would not find its way into sound, workable, comprehensive policy with reference to services.

Most states, then, following the 1956 Amendments to the Social Security Act, began a concentrated effort toward re-examination of their assistance programs for the primary purpose of determining the gaps in services. Consequently, in response to the new statements of the purpose of public assistance and policy therein defining the scope of social services in public assistance developed by the federal Bureau of Public Assistance, the state in which this study was made set about not only to re-

examine but also to "overhaul" completely its services program. The revised program became effective July 1, 1957. This statement of policy is very clear, its definitions being so stated that its over-all intent is unmistakable.

The state's new policy on services strongly emphasized the importance of service in public assistance in general but placed especially strong emphasis on services in ADC: Services toward strengthening family life and toward helping families obtain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable. This extra emphasis on services in ADC was reflected to some extent by the fact that these services were defined and interpreted in a policy statement under a separate title: Casework Services To and In Behalf of ADC Families.

It is in this latter statement of policy that the responsibility of the intake worker is spelled out in no uncertain terms, including the ability and skills he must possess in order to assume that responsibility:

Although a discussion of the methods of implementing the intensive services aspect of the ADC program would be inappropriate here, apropos of the skills requisite to providing these services will be the selection of the intake person, who has the skills necessary for the careful screening of cases. He must be able to recognize the nature and seriousness of the circumstances and conditions responsible for the situation in which the family finds itself, whether it is simply a problem of inadequate income or severe behavior disorders of parents or children, or problems involving physical or mental health.³

³Ibid., 910. (Underscoring is the writer's)

Thus, the intake worker is assigned a most important role in carrying out the services program; but there may be some question as to how this particular part of the program is to be implemented. For example, one may ask what the intake worker is to do about or with his recognition of "the nature and seriousness of the circumstances" during the first interview. There may also be questions around the matter of how the intake worker is to indicate his recognition of serious behavior disorders of parents or children, and whether this is something all public assistance intake workers are able to do. It is not the purpose of this study to attempt to answer these questions. However, this responsibility of the intake worker in the area of recognition is the basis for the central theme of this study.

The Intake Worker

The role of the intake worker in a public welfare agency is not without its limitations. These limitations are so widely recognized that an attempt to enumerate them here would have little or no value. However, as between the two general sources from which limitations stem, those within the worker himself, and those outside the worker, set by law and administrative policy, it is accepted that the former far more seriously handicap the worker in the intake position.

It may be assumed further that the better equipped personally the intake worker, the less those outside limitations will handicap him or serve, consciously or unconsciously, to deter him in his determination to try first to understand the applicant as another human being with a problem or problems with which he, the applicant, believes the agency might help him.

It is not within the province of this study to attempt to present a detailed discussion of the personal qualities, knowledge and skills which are essential for public assistance workers in general and for intake workers in particular. If the intake worker possesses all of these essentials and is able to use them with appropriate effect in his initial contact with the person asking for assistance, he will have conveyed to that person "the understanding that this is a joint and cooperative venture in which the agency stands ready to use its resources in helping the client use his."⁴

Most important in this initial understanding is the recognition by, and the constant awareness of the intake worker that a good working relationship is the all-purpose tool through the use of which the agency's service function can be made to work effectively. In fact, the extent to

⁴Services in Public Assistance: The Role of the Case-worker, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Assistance Report No. 30, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. 4.

which the meaning of a positive working relationship is understood by the intake worker and the extent to which its development is initiated in the first moment of the application interview will largely determine the extent to which the agency can be of real service to the applicant as a person.

The intake worker, if he is aware of his important responsibility for setting the stage for a good working relationship, must be much more than an eligibility technician. His perspective is grossly out of balance if he takes the measure of the applicant from only the standpoint of eligibility or ineligibility for assistance. This does not imply disregard of the fact that the intake worker in a public agency is responsible for determining whether or not an applicant is potentially eligible for financial assistance; rather, the implication is that in the process of such initial determination the worker must be held responsible for beginning the foundation upon which will be patterned the total service structure most appropriate for this particular individual; most appropriate, that is, from the applicant's own point of view and in accordance with his own expressed desires and his capacities to use such services.

Families and individuals who face the necessity of applying for public financial assistance are very seldom persons who have only the problem of unmet economic need. The need for money to provide necessities may be the stated immediate need of the applicant, but it is on the situation

or problem which precipitated this need that the major part of the applicant's anxiety is centered. Therefore, many individuals who ask for public assistance are appealing for help with more than one problem. In many, or in most instances they are not able on their own initiative to bring out their feelings about the precipitating causes, and in many instances the public assistance intake worker may not be equipped to help them express such feelings comfortably and freely. In all such instances the application interview becomes a relatively sterile process which may not only cause the applicant to have doubts as to the public agency's ability to give him the help he is perhaps unconsciously seeking, but may also serve only to further intensify his problems. The intake process then results in disservice instead of service.

As Charlotte Towle so well said more than a decade before the passage of the 1956 Amendments to the Social Security Act:

We, as public assistance workers, therefore enter the family scene at a time of instability when the life of the group is reshaping itself or is being refashioned by circumstances. Our service and the way it is rendered, as a new and foreign element in a changing scene, may play a decisive part in the family's future. It is well that we have some awareness of our part both in order that we may not unwittingly interfere either with the formation of new inter-family patterns or with the old inter-relationships which still serve a purpose and that we also may lend ourselves to constructive, rather than destructive, use in the interplay of the group.⁵

⁵ Charlotte Towle, Common Human Needs, Public Assistance Report No. 8, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1945), p. 85.

How crucial, then, the personality, ability, knowledge, understanding, attitudes -- the "whole" intake worker -- in the interview situation in which he may serve as "that small force acting for quite a short time (which) produces lasting changes which that force could never produce either beforehand or afterwards."⁶

With reference to this delicate control which the intake worker holds, it would perhaps be in order to turn at this point to the plan which was developed to make possible a somewhat closer examination of some results of the intake worker's use of such controls.

Purpose, Scope and Method of This Study

The purpose of this study is to attempt to find out to what extent the intake process as defined in policy is enabling intake workers, in interviewing applicants for ADC, to recognize problems which might have relevance to a program of service. It may be recalled that the policy which defines the intake worker's responsibility to recognize such problems is unmistakably clear, and that the specified range of problems is all-inclusive. It should be kept in mind too that the policy makes the ability to assume such responsibility mandatory.

⁶Gerald Caplan, "The Role of the Social Worker in Preventive Psychiatry," Medical Social Work, 4:144-159, September 1955.

The best, and actually the only medium through which a study of the recognition of non-financial problems and needs could be pursued objectively was the recorded application interviews. It was decided therefore that a sample of those interviews would be studied for the purpose of examining the results yielded over a specified period of time after the policy had been in official use. It was of course necessary to refer to face sheets regarding birthdates, sex, race, etc.

The sample included thirty-eight application interviews which represented every fifth new application filed in this agency from July 1, through December 31, 1957. No re-application interviews were studied, nor were any applications studied which were cancelled or otherwise disposed of without a personal interview. In other words, all applications studied (1) contained a complete, recorded interview and (2) were applications by persons who were applying for ADC for the first time.

In order further to carry out the purpose of the study, a schedule (See Appendix A) was devised which would (1) give sufficient significant descriptive and family data to reflect the several types of family situations from which one might expect problems other than, or in addition to that of financial need to be presented and (2) allow for adequate coding of the various problems recognized as well as for indicating whether the problem or problems affected members of the aid group or other members of the household, if any.

In support of the objectivity with which the study was attempted, it was necessary to place certain limits on the meaning of several terms. "Recognition" is a mental process which may be expressed or unexpressed; in this study the word is qualified by the implied phrases "as specified" and "in the recorded interview." "Non-financial problems and needs" refers to those problems and needs having no direct bearing upon, nor immediate relation to eligibility for a money payment. For determining "the recognition of non-financial problems and needs" the declarative statement was obviously the only medium which could be used. These declarative statements were found at various points in the recorded interview which followed an application interview outline of six headings: Applicant's request, reason for application, evidence of eligibility, social security number and veterans status, action taken, and directions to home. "Family groups" refers to all of those persons making up a household, including the aid group and all other persons, related and/or not related, living "under a common roof."

It was necessary to develop a list (See Appendix B) of non-financial problems which could be used for coding. The list included forty-one items or problems grouped under six general headings: Recreation, health, home, school, adult behavior and child behavior. The thirty-eight application interviews were studied with reference to the recognition of problems in these general areas.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CASES STUDIED

Family situations as reflected in certain characteristics of ADC cases are generally indicative of the existence of certain problems or types of problems.

The thirty-eight application interviews in this study were examined from the standpoints of six characteristics: Relationship of applicant to children; race; number, ages and sex of children; basis for deprivation of parental support or care; housing status; and other persons in the household. It may be assumed that the first three of these characteristics are more or less basic to any study of ADC families; therefore, the three last named provided the data for the major focus of this study of problem recognition at intake.

An explanation of the basis for including deprivation of parental support or care in a study of any phase of the ADC program seems hardly warranted. True, there are other factors which must be considered in determining eligibility for ADC, but it is the act of depriving, itself, which gives rise to the most serious problems and, frequently, causes irreparable damage to family life.

The removal of a parent from his parental role for any reason, whether self-motivated or due to circumstances beyond his control, is a trauma which some families are able to han-

dle and from which they are able to recover by calling into use their own resources. Many other families, not so well equipped to mobilize their strengths and capacities quickly, must turn to outside sources for help when such family loss occurs. It is these latter families in which the deprivation has occurred before they turn to the public assistance agency for help which doubly test the effectiveness of the agency's program of service toward strengthening family life. These families are

. . . not basically different from those who do not need financial help. Their problems, goals, rights and responsibilities are the same as those of other families in the community. . . . The only distinction between them and other families is that they have a certain combination of needs that makes them eligible for public assistance.¹

It seems trite to add that the dominant need or problem in this combination is that around the factor of deprivation of parental support or care.

The bases for deprivation and the number of children deprived on each basis in the thirty-eight families included in this study are presented in Table I. The basis of absence was divided into four sub-bases on the assumption that certain kinds of problems have peculiar relevance to the type of absence which resulted in deprivation of the children.

Housing status of ADC families was included in this study on the assumption that the location of the home, as

¹Eunice Minton, "Services for Children in Public Assistance," Casework Papers 1957 (New York: Family Service Association of America), pp. 77-78.

TABLE I

REASONS FOR PARENTAL DEPRIVATION
IN THE CASES STUDIED

Reason for Deprivation	Number of Cases
TOTAL	38
ABSENCE:	
Paternity not established	11
Incarceration	9
Desertion	8
Divorce	5
INCAPACITY	5

between urban and rural, and the source of shelter provision, whether the family owned its home, rented, or was supplied shelter without cost in the homes of others, has considerable significance in relation to the basis for deprivation of parental support or care and to the number and types of problems existing in families applying for ADC. There is, for example, something in family ownership of a home which seems to suggest more family solidarity or unity. This is not to say ~~that~~ there is no family disruption when the home is owned. The connection made here is with reference only to those families whose state of dependence, even though temporary, forces them to turn to a public assistance agency for help with their problems. The extent to which this assumption was supported in the findings is presented at several subsequent points in the study.

Another characteristic of family situations which may be indicative of the existence of additional problems is "other persons in the household." Mary Richmond said:

Relatives of the husband or of the wife often form a part of the family group, whether with a clearly defined share of family responsibility or with none. Sometimes they carry far more than their share of the family burden; sometimes their influence is so disturbing as to disrupt the home--a mischief often wrought by relatives who live elsewhere, but more completely achieved by those under the same roof.²

This is not to say that this characteristic was examined in this study with the expectation that all ADC applying

²Mary E. Richmond, Social Diagnosis (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917), p. 156.

families living in households which included other members would necessarily suffer a disturbing, disruptive influence of such others. It was assumed, however, that the dependent ADC family with its web of problems and needs is generally found in, or clings to a group which perhaps has similar problems and needs and with which it can most easily relate. The situation is more perplexing, then, when there are perhaps two or more networks of problems and needs in the same household.

It was observed that twenty-four of the households represented in the thirty-eight applications included one or more other persons related to the members of the aid group. And it was thought significant that 27 per cent of the total number of non-financial problems and needs recognized at intake were problems of those other members of the household; that is, the need of these applicants for help with their own problems was further complicated by their concern about the problems of the relatives. In contrast, no problem other than the need for financial assistance was recognized in 71 per cent of the fourteen households which included no persons other than members of the aid group.

With these assumptions regarding the relevance of certain case characteristics to the existence of certain problems and needs in families applying for ADC, the examination of the thirty-eight application interviews proceeded.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECOGNITION OF NON-FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND NEEDS IN RELATION TO THE BASIS FOR DEPRIVATION

Several ways of presenting the findings in this study were considered before deciding that whatever plan was followed should be one in which the focus on the family would not be lost. It is generally accepted that the effects of parental role failure on families can be rather accurately predicted. These effects, in one sense, are the problems and needs which the other parent or relative brings to the agency when he applies for ADC. The major factor in considering how the agency can best help these families handle these problems and needs is the particular act or circumstance which resulted in parental failure. It therefore seemed reasonable to present the findings in this study in terms of the bases on which families are deprived of parental support or care.

Further in support of the concept of family, the plan for reporting the findings includes for each of the four sub-bases of absence and the basis of incapacity the following areas: Number of families and children in this deprivation basis, assumptions about the conditions of families thus deprived, nature and types of problems recognized and expected but unrecognized, examples of problem recognition and non-recognition, and summary.

Paternity Not Established

During the interview with the applicant for ADC the intake worker may be expected to bring into appropriate use her knowledge of the predictable effects of absence of the father. Some of these predictable effects are: Added physical burdens on the mother, added burdens on the children, interference with social relationships, and difficulty of the father in establishing his position.¹ It is interesting to note that all of these predictable effects and their expression in terms of added burdens, certain interferences and difficulties seem to refer only to families in which the father was legally married to the mother and in which the father had been a member of the family group, living with them under a common roof. How many times, then, these predictable effects must be multiplied, and how many times more handicapping for the unmarried mother and her children.

The interviews with the eleven applicants who were requesting assistance for a total of twenty children whose paternity had not been established represented 29 per cent of total cases studied and 17 per cent of the children. Four of the applicants were of the white race and seven were non-white. In these eleven interviews a total of six problems other than financial need were recognized. No non-financial problems were

¹ Services in Public Assistance: The Role of the Case-worker, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Assistance Report No. 30, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. IV.

recognized in seven applications. The six problems were distributed among four applications as follows: Three under health (one of which was the health problem of another member of the household), one school problem (other than attendance which is an eligibility requirement), one under "other home," and one problem in the area of peer and neighborhood relationships.

In addition to the many problems which are the burden of any child born out of wedlock, the very situations in which these unmarried mothers and their children were living could be expected to provide fertile ground for the introduction and development of multiple other problems. For example:

Miss M states that she has been living in the home of her mother and step-father on X Street, but that the step-father has stated he will no longer give help to these two girls with illegitimate children (Miss M and her sister made application at the same time) as it is depriving his own children of the things they need. The step-father feels that these girls should be out on their own helping themselves and not depending on him for support. M and S both said that they had moved from their mother's home and were now living in the home of a cousin on Y Avenue. Neither of the girls knew how long they would be living at this address but did state that they would notify worker of any change of address.

Although a considerable number of problems may be expected to exist in a situation such as the above, none could be considered as having been recognized in the sense in which the term is defined for purposes of this study. One may understand the feelings of the step-father concerning his unwillingness to support these mothers and their children; but

they might have been asked what plans they themselves had thought about for their children's future. Although this question may at first seem rather far-fetched in situations such as these, there is no way of estimating the ultimate gains which might accrue. There can be no gain, however, if the question is simply asked and then promptly and permanently forgotten. Also it may be possible to determine at this point what capacity the unmarried mother has for planning for the future of herself and her child or children. The extent of the agency's follow-up in the area of services will depend on the applicant's responses on this point. There is no reason why the unmarried mother who applies for ADC cannot be helped to understand, depending on her capacity for understanding, that she can be a good mother to her children, that, in fact, she will demand of herself that she be a better mother than others if she wants her children to take their rightful place in society. The time to "plant the seed" for this long-range goal is at intake.

It is not realistic, however, to expect the "average" intake worker in a public assistance agency today to be "psychoanalytically oriented." In fact, "we must guard against becoming too preoccupied with symptoms of personal pathology or against letting our concern with the client's problems obscure our view of his potentialities."²

²Ibid., p. 11.

Therefore, it would not be reasonable to expect the "average" intake worker in a public assistance agency to be alert to hints or clues such as would enable them to "diagnose" these unmarried mothers as presenting "compulsive and unrealistic guilt reaction, feelings of deep-seated inferiority," and the like; it is expected only that they accept the unmarried mother as another human being in need and try to make her comfortable in giving information about her needs and problems so that she will not withhold information through fear of rejection by the agency or for any other reason. In so doing, the intake worker may learn much about the mother's own feelings, her feelings toward her child or children, toward the putative father or fathers, toward her own parents and relatives that will provide the worker with a good basis for a working relationship that will enable the agency to be of real help. This help may start with only a few words of encouragement on one small specific aspect or problem in the applicant's situation which the worker sees as something the applicant can do for herself, the worker, hopefully, having recognized in the applicant some small strength or capacity for handling such problem independently.

The unmarried mother presents a highly individualized and complex problem. . . . The unmarried mother requires more skilled handling than almost any other type of case with which the social worker has to deal. . . . The problem is difficult and has to be dealt with by the worker quickly. No other type of case requires the worker to get in rapport with the client's feelings more quickly. If the worker does not achieve this initially, she may not have another opportunity. . . . The cases are all

different; no two are alike. . . . The worker's responsibility is not only to the unmarried mother herself but to the child.³

The soundness of the above principles for quick action based on sound judgment by the intake worker cannot be questioned. It is interesting to note, however, that Dr. French's comments seem to have been developed around the-unmarried-mother-with-one-child idea, with the related assumption that most of the girls or women who become illegitimately pregnant rush to the nearest voluntary family service agency for help with their problems. How much more difficult, then, the situation in which the unmarried mother with several children comes to the public assistance agency to apply for ADC. For example:

Miss B is applying for assistance for herself and her children since she says she has no other place to go at this point except to ask for public assistance which she finds pretty embarrassing considering her 'shape.' Her 'shape' is that she has five illegitimate children and she is physically unable to secure employment to support them and her father and mother are at this point not able to provide for themselves, much less for the applicant and her five children. . . . The applicant says her physical condition is pretty poor and she thinks that it is becoming worse. She suffers from bronchitis and has a heart murmur, she says, and is in a generally run-down condition. If she were to find employment her mother would not be able to take care of her children as she (her mother) must have someone close by to take care of her.

³Thomas M. French, "The Importance of the First Interview With the Unmarried Mother," (Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, Children's Bureau, 1952) (Mimeographed), p. 3.

In this application one problem was considered as recognized: That of the applicant's health, not the problem of providing care for her children if she were able to accept employment since employment does not come within the definition of non-financial problems and needs as used in this study.

There are apparently no "special" casework methods and guiding principles for public assistance agencies to employ in giving services toward maintaining and strengthening family life for multiple illegitimacy situations such as this. But this lack does not negate the responsibility of the public agency to place greater emphasis on this maintaining and strengthening process and, in addition, to "help needy families and individuals attain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable."⁴

The recognition of only six non-financial problems and needs in the applications for ADC on the basis of the children's paternity not having been established was seen as incidental, as was the case in all of the other instances of recognition in the thirty-eight interviews studied. Although it can be assumed that many times six non-financial problems existed in these unmarried-mother families, it cannot be assumed that failure to recognize a larger number of problems and more difficult and complex problems was altogether the

⁴Compilation of the Social Security Laws, Senate Document No. 156, Eighty-fourth Congress, Second Session, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 243.

failure of the individual intake worker. It would not be possible herein to attempt to point out all of the specific reasons for such failure. Most of them, however, lie largely in that closely, and sometimes obscurely interwoven network of dynamic forces in the enterprise process known as administration, and the term as used here refers to the higher levels of administration.

Incarceration

In nine of the thirty-three applications based on absence of a parent, twenty-six children, or 23 per cent of the total number of children, were deprived of parental support or care because the father was incarcerated. In these nine interviews a total of twelve non-financial problems were recognized, the largest number of such problems recognized among the four sub-bases of absence. Five of the problems had to do with health, three with adult behavior, two with the home (living arrangements), and two with child behavior. It should also be pointed out that the twelve problems came out in five of the interviews, which implied that in four applications for a total of nine children there was no problem other than that of needing and becoming eligible for financial assistance. In two of the five interviews in

which other needs were recognized, one non-financial problem was recognized in each, both of which were not problems of the deprived family but of another member of the household in which the applicant and children were living.

The reasons for deprivation of parental support or care, considering the four sub-bases of absence as four more or less separate bases, seemed somehow at this point to fall naturally into two general classes: Those which may be looked upon as "respectable" or "legal" reasons: Death, divorce and incapacity; and those which may be considered as being "less respectable" or as having "illegal" implications: Desertion, unestablished paternity, and incarceration. It would be expected that children deprived for any of these latter three reasons would present, not only more problems but also problems more emotionally charged. For the child whose father has been sentenced to jail or prison, one of the two principal figures in that pattern of mutual love and interpersonal security so necessary for enabling him to acquire the roles appropriate for the social system in question⁵ has been taken away from him. In many of these family groups it is possible that those basic parental strengths so indispensable for helping a child grow and adjust satisfactorily may never have been developed. The child may have been

⁵Florence Kluckhohn and John P. Spiegel, Integration and Conflict in Family Behavior, Report No. 27, (Topeka: Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1954), p. 5.

born into a setting which was fraught with all of the different kinds of psychopathological distortions of family life.⁶ He has become a child whose role-learning on the basis of imitation and identification is drawn from parental figures who are themselves products of defective parental relationships.

Nevertheless, the father's being suddenly taken away to serve a term in prison does not necessarily mean that he just as suddenly loses his identification as father in the eyes of his children. Nor does the father's incarceration signal the loss of his love for his child or children. In many instances these feelings for family seem to become stronger. It is therefore very important that the intake worker learn if possible the status of the father-mother and the parent-child relationships and give support toward helping maintain these ties, especially if those of the absent parent to the child are thought to be strong.

If the intake worker in the public assistance agency must be able to recognize the many conditions responsible for the situation in which the family finds itself, whether it is simply a problem of inadequate income or severe behavior disorders of parents or children, he can perhaps be afforded no better opportunity to use such ability than in interviewing

⁶ Laretta Bender, "There Is No Substitute for Family Life," Child Study, Spring 1946, (Reprinted for the Federal Security Agency, Social Security Administration, U. S. Children's Bureau), p. 1.

the mother of children whose father has been sentenced to serve a term in a penal or correctional institution. These are the situations of the "problems-on-top-of-problems" type. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from one of the application interviews studied:

Mr. B is presently released from jail on bond and can put off his trial until his family has been taken care of. He even thinks he could put the trial off long enough to secure employment and get his family placed where they would be able to live while he is in prison.

Mr. B explained that his wife for many years has been on the verge of a mental collapse and has been in and out of _____ State Hospital a number of times. He thinks the last time she was in the hospital was around 1952. He explained that for a few weeks in the year his wife more or less 'goes hay-wire' and during this period she develops an intense hatred for him and he finds it necessary to leave home for a few weeks, in which time she files suit for divorce and then after a period will return to normal and Mr. B is able to return home, and everything goes along smoothly until she 'goes off again' the next year. However, the past year she has seemed a little improved. Last year the home in which the family was living burned down and burned most of their household goods. Mr. B said the family is now using what was salvaged from the fire. It is thought in the neighborhood that his wife was responsible for the fire.

On _____ Mrs. B had an appointment at which time Mr. B called the worker to explain that Mrs. B was mentally upset due to his trouble and that he himself would like to come in and explain the situation before it was necessary for him to go to prison. During the telephone conversation Mr. B completely broke down and cried while worker was talking with him. It seems that on that day he had been notified that he would not be eligible for any unemployment compensation due to the nature of his loss of employment.

Mr. B was asked if he would like to request free lunches for his daughter at _____ School and he explained that he did not wish to embarrass J any more than was absolutely necessary and was afraid if she had to take free lunches she would be embarrassed. He said her aunt had sent her \$5.00 for a Christmas present and she was using this to buy her lunches with at present. He said if he could possibly manage without asking for free lunches he would like to do so. Mr. B said he thought that he would be able to send his wife and child to _____ to live with relatives in the beginning of the trouble, but his wife's brother-in-law had rejected the plan and it was necessary for another solution to be worked out to provide for Mrs. B and J when he is imprisoned.

Although the intake worker recognized problems in the above situation, there was no indication that an attempt had been made to recognize the conditions which caused the problems. The act which the father committed which led to his conviction and sentence was known, but there was no attempt to go into the area of a developmental analysis of the basic causes of the father's anti-social act nor to try to determine the causes of the mother's mental illness. Moreover, this was not a situation which would have warranted such attempts. This was not the kind of help this father was seeking at this time. One can only try to "predict the effects of the added burdens" on the young daughter of this convicted father who seemed to have strong ties to both his child and his mentally ill wife.

It was of interest to note that in only one of the thirty-eight interviews examined was inquiry made as to whether the applicant had thought about plans for the future of her family. In this situation the father had been sentenced to a term in the county workhouse and there were seven children ranging

in age from under two years to the upper 'teens:

In talking with applicant concerning her plans for the future as far as a permanent separation and eventual divorce from her husband were concerned, we got the impression that she is not seriously thinking of divorce at this time. . . . She definitely does not want her husband to return to the home. The children have become upset when he drinks and raises a disturbance and she does not think he will ever quit drinking.

At another point in the interview the applicant gave her reason for not considering divorce at this time: She was keeping in mind the possibility of future veterans' benefits and social security benefits for the children and herself.

The incidental recognition of a total of twelve non-financial problems by intake workers in nine applications for assistance for twenty-six children whose fathers had been sentenced to terms in penal institutions may give rise to several questions relating to intake policy and responsibility. One is inclined to believe that many more non-financial problems were present in these families who became dependent on the basis of this particular type of parental deprivation. But this is a study of results, and not one of causes. There is no hesitancy, however, to say that under the circumstances the intake workers themselves did better in the area of problem recognition than might otherwise have been expected.

Desertion

Third in number among the applications made for children on the basis of the "less respectable" or "less legal" types of

absence were eight applications for aid for twenty-seven children whose fathers had deserted their families.

What were some of the characteristics of the situations from which these applications came? To begin, this was the first of these three groups in which the number of white applicants exceeded the number of non-white.⁷ In no case did the deserted family own its home. And in all cases in which desertion occurred the family maintained residence in an urban setting. Six of the eight families were living in households in which there were other related persons, and four of these six families were dependent on other family groups to provide shelter without cost.

"In strengthening family life, we must always remember that the mere fact that a father has deserted does not remove that father from the child's life."⁸ Not only does the father remain a part of the child's life, but his choosing to absent himself in this particular way seems to signal the beginning of more and deeper problems for his child.

On the other hand, it must be accepted that not all fathers who desert continue to be interested in their children. Some do and some do not. Some have never had normal paternal

⁷In paternity not established and incarceration the proportion of non-white and white applicants were, respectively, seven and four and five and four.

⁸Mary Evelyn Parker, "Strengthening Family Life Through Administrative Planning," Public Welfare, 15:91-94, July 1957.

interest in their children because they did not have the capacity to develop such interest.

A man who deserts his family is obviously fleeing from a situation which he cannot face and work out. . . . (T)his is (not) very much different, in a broad sense, from the psychotic who retreats from the world around him because it is too painful for him to live in Nor (is it very much different) from the neurotic who is paralyzed with fear by the world around him but does function . . . even though at impaired capacity.⁹

If many of the parents involved in desertion are not much different from neurotic and even psychotic personalities, what kind of opportunity have their children had for learning the social role behavior, and the techniques of adjustment to the situations they will meet as adults? Here again an innate right of children has been denied them. And one can predict with certainty that the effects of the father's desertion of his family will serve not only to deepen his children's anxiety but also, in most instances, to leave them in a situation from which they can expect little or no help from figures in the remaining group toward handling their anxiety. Certainly, then, these families should have been expected to present veritable webs of inter- and intra-personal problems.

In the eight interviews with applicants who asked for financial aid for children whose fathers had deserted them, a total of six non-financial problems and needs were considered

⁹Jacob T. Zukerman, "The Role of the Public Agency With the Deserted Family," Public Welfare, 15:101-106. July, 1957.

as having been recognized by the intake worker. Three of these problems had to do with school, two with the home, and one with child behavior. Four of these problems were recognized in one interview and two in a second interview, which indicates there were no non-financial problems in six applications for twenty-one deserted children.

Below is an excerpt from an interview in which problems not only were recognized but also in which help was given by the intake worker to meet them. The situation was that of an aunt who was asking for help for two of her deceased sister's children whose father had technically deserted them. He had remained in the other state following his wife's death and had arranged for these two children to come to this state to live with their maternal aunt, but had not sent any money for their support as he had agreed to do. Although ADC was denied because the children did not meet state residence requirements, the application was accepted as a service case and remained active until the two services had been completed.

Worker inquired about employment of Mrs. A. S., (deceased, mother of the two children in the F home). We were told that she worked a good bit prior to her death. We pointed out to applicant the importance of her securing Mrs. S's social security number, since she might possibly have worked long enough in covered employment to enable the children to be eligible for survivor's benefits. She agreed to do this as she was not aware that someone could file for compensation on behalf of the minor children. . . . We explained to Mrs. F the free lunch program, suggesting that this is a service she might be able to secure for the children.

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Mrs. F has applied for social security for V and RS. She is in the process of securing additional verification of the birth of the children and it seems sure that they will be eligible for some benefits. . . . Mrs. F followed up on our suggestion about free lunches for the children and it is our understanding that they are now receiving the lunches.

The above seems to illustrate the kind of problem recognition at intake which Joseph E. Baldwin had in mind when he said, "At the point that an applicant walks into a welfare department he might, on the basis of the assets he himself recognized, be eligible for assistance. During the interview, services performed by the caseworker may have developed other assets -- eligibility for unemployment compensation, for example -- which the applicant did not know he possessed."¹⁰

Somewhat different, yet providing similar implications for a number of other problems was the interview from which the following is an excerpt:

She said the children are really grieving their hearts out for their father, and of course she is too, but she is trying to 'hold up' for their sake.

This father simply disappeared, walked away from the home one evening, leaving his wife and six children. The mother, following every reasonable clue, had made every effort possible to try to locate him but without success. She had initiated action through proper legal channels before making application.

¹⁰Joseph E. Baldwin, "Present Status of Public Welfare Services," Social Work, 2:22-31. April 1957.

It seemed that she had not taken any action as a punitive measure but only to try to locate and protect her husband.

In the application interview from which the above excerpt was taken, no problems other than need for financial assistance were recognized. The excerpt was the only statement in the rather lengthy interview which touched upon the feelings of the mother and children about the father's disappearance. There may be some question as to whether young children have feelings of "grief." More important in this situation was to know in what ways they were reacting to their loss of their father. How were they showing their grief? If the mother was "holding up" completely, there was little likelihood that her own grief would have carried to her children. The concern here may have been not so much on the fact that the mother might have been handling her own conflict, but on the probability that she was solving her own problem by manipulating her children.¹¹ Therefore, the children may not themselves have been grieved but frightened over the grief and worry exhibited by their mother in using them as an outlet for her own emotional burdens.¹² The mother said merely that she was trying to hold up for the children's sake but one does not get a clear picture as to how she was trying nor to what extent.

¹¹Gerald Caplan, "The Role of the Social Worker in Preventive Psychiatry," 4:144-159. September 1955.

¹²Services in Public Assistance, op. cit., p. 29.

Although there may be a very strong feeling that the number of non-financial problems and needs recognized by intake workers in these interviews with deserted mothers was much smaller than the number of such problems which actually existed, this small number itself is a hopeful indication. The end result depends on policy with reference to the intake process itself, the interpretation and intent of such policy, and the extent of the intake worker's understanding of all of these.

. . . policies regarding services should also be realistic. The services that we offer in policy should be consistent with what we can reasonably expect of staff in both quantity and quality. To have services stated in policy and not be able to give these services actually weakens the program.¹³

Divorce

The smallest number of applications for ADC among the four sub-bases of absence came from five family situations in which the parents had been divorced or in which such socially and legally sanctioned termination of the marital union was in process. The five applications also included the smallest number of children: Sixteen. It was interesting to note that all five of these applications were by persons of the white race and that in none of these households were there persons other than the

¹³ Mary Evelyn Parker, op.cit., p. 94.

members of the applying family. In the thirty-eight interviews studied, the only urban family owning its home was in this group.¹⁴

The fact of the social and legal sanction of divorce does not mean that divorce erases the possibility of problems as numerous and as serious as those expected, and existing, in other families from which the father is absent for other and perhaps, as the community views them, "less respectable" reasons. In fact, the divorce procedure itself, not to mention the damaging effects of the disturbing familial relationships leading up to the final court action, can produce new and more complex problems for these children; for example, when a struggle over the children's custody takes place, or when there is bitter disagreement over the visitation provisions of the divorce decree,

A few of the predictable effects on "children of divorce" as well as on all children who "have known" their absent fathers are: Possible undefined worry that they have had some responsibility for their father's leaving, possible resentment against their mother because their father is gone, inability to understand what has happened and feeling of loss and uncertainty because father has gone, confusion over their separate relations to parents and why they must divide their time between parents

¹⁴ The largest number of home owners was found in the rural families applying for assistance.

if this is provided in the divorce or separation arrangement.

But in the five applications in which divorce of parents deprived sixteen children of parental support and care, no problems other than a rather urgent need for financial assistance were recognized.

Although on first reading the following excerpt may seem to indicate recognition of non-financial problems, the discussion of the problem of care of children while the mother worked was considered to be under the subject of employment which, in this state, has a bearing on eligibility for ADC:

Sometimes she works only four or five hours and does not require a baby sitter; however, when she needs one a neighbor boy, age 16, looks after Sammie, age 2, until applicant gets home. We realized that she was doing the best she could as far as a competent baby sitter was concerned but we wondered if the 16-year-old boy could provide adequate care. Applicant said she could not get anyone to look after the baby and she had gotten this young boy to help temporarily. She did not seem the least bit concerned that he might not qualify as a good baby sitter and thought nothing of the fact that he is only 16.

It does not seem altogether reasonable that there would be no problems other than a need for financial assistance in this number of families in which the father was absent because of divorce. The outline which intake workers must use for recording their application interviews might be examined as a possible limiting factor.

Incapacity

Twenty-six, or 23 per cent of the 115 children in the thirty-eight applications for ADC were deprived of parental support or care because of physical or mental incapacity of the father. Requests for aid for these children were made in five applications.

It was of interest to note that all five of these families were of the white race and that all lived in a rural area. Four of the five owned their own homes and the fifth family lived in rented shelter. In none of the households were there persons other than members of the immediate family. Of further interest was the observation that in each of three of the five applications there were eight children under eighteen years old, while the largest number of children in any one of the other thirty-five applications was six.

After a relatively concentrated study of families applying for ADC because of the absence of the father and the many attendant and resultant problems which the father's absence produces on the remaining family, one may be inclined to reason that the father's presence in the home means that there are no problems, or that there are fewer and less serious problems. With reference to certain stable, independent families this may be a valid assumption; but it can not be supported with reference to families applying for ADC because of the incapacity of the father.

In the first place, the family applying for ADC is at the time an economically dependent group. In the second place, the breadwinner has become unable to work and support his family. The existence of either of these two problems would seem to be enough to deal with, and either of them often gives rise to other and more serious problems; but when both exist simultaneously, the combination seems to set off a sort of a chain reaction with respect to derivative problems.

The effects of the incapacity of the father on the other members of the ADC family can be predicted with some degree of certainty. These effects have been discussed to a great extent in the literature; in fact, authoritative books written on the subject of illness (incapacity) devote considerable portions of their discussions to an emphasis on the importance of knowing what the effects of illness on the other members of the family may be and knowing how to try to prevent them. The effects do not follow any given pattern. As Caroline H. Elledge said:

The effects of illness on an individual, his family, and his close associates can have as many different meanings as there are possible combinations of such factors as personality development, social conditions, environmental pressures, ways of becoming ill or handicapped, methods of treatment, and possible end results. In general, we know that illness, as a life experience, can mean that a person gets to know himself in a new and better way, that families are reunited in a stronger and more positive relationship, that friendships are deepened. Or, it can mean that a person who is ill embarks upon a tyrannical reign over the lives of others or withdraws from association with others or shows increased hostility, frustration and resentment towards others or resigns himself to impending death. Illness

and disability may be a great shock, a source of satisfaction. . . . An illness can have tremendous significance in the life of an individual and those other individuals closely associated with him. It can be either a positive or a negative experience. Therefore it is impossible to consider illness as an isolated entity.¹⁵

As pointed out elsewhere, deprivation of parental support or care has already taken place when the remaining able parent or relative brings the family's need and problems to the attention of the public assistance agency. Again, and to repeat, the agency can do nothing to "prevent" what has already happened to precipitate the family's present critical situation. But one must not fail to recognize the great opportunity the agency, beginning with, and in the person of the intake worker, has for starting or trying to start the family on the road back toward rehabilitation and eventual self-dependence.

Such turn-about can not be effected, however, unless the intake worker can begin the interview in terms of positive, goal-directed effort on the part of the family with the help of the agency. If, however, various limitations and required procedures of the agency make it impossible for the intake worker to conduct a less highly structured interview, he must, of course, function within the prescribed boundaries.

It is not suggested that discussing with the family the assets it may have and use toward effecting family "recovery"

¹⁵Caroline H. Elledge, "The Meaning of Illness," Medical Social Work, 2:49-65. April 1953.

will ensure the effecting of such recovery. But

what a difference it may make to the disabled person if the worker who secures the necessary factual data needed in the first interview says only such additional words as: 'What plans have you been thinking about?' Such words can have enormous morale value to the disabled person. To him they may mean, 'This person thinks I am able to do something about my situation and is interested in helping me or he would not ask.'¹⁶

Such seemingly simple inquiry at intake with reference to the family's capacity for planning may very well serve to initiate the development of a good working relationship which will be essential and must be constant if the agency is to give the quality of service that really makes for strengthening family life and for helping the family regain the maximum economic and personal independence of which it is capable.

In the five interviews with applicants for ADC on the basis of the father's incapacity, a total of six non-financial problems and needs were considered as having been recognized. The six problems recognized were distributed as follows: Three with reference to school (other than the eligibility factor of attendance), two to health, and one to adult behavior. One of the school problems and the adult behavior problem were problems of other non-aid-group members of the immediate family. No problems were recognized in two of the families. In one of the remaining three families the inca-

¹⁶ Services in Public Assistance, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

pacitated father was a recipient of old age assistance applying for aid for the youngest child, a teen-age son. It was in this interview that the adult behavior problem was stated: The pregnancy of a twenty-two-year-old unmarried daughter in the home.

How clearly the following situation reflects broad opportunity for trying to determine the feelings and attitudes of the parents with respect to their handling of problems around the matter of possible changes in family role relationships due to the father's having become incapacitated!

Mrs. M states that her husband has been told that only surgery would help him in any way to ever be able to return to work and then that may not be successful, but Mr. M has not been able to enter the hospital for surgery since he felt that his family could not manage without him. Although he has been unable to work himself, he has been able to care for the two pre-school children. Now that his condition has become so much worse with no prospect of any improvement, he has agreed to have surgery provided Mrs. M could have some assured income, mainly in the form of an ADC grant.

It should be remembered that all of these families were applying for ADC for the first time, and that the crisis which had brought some of these families to the agency was possibly years in its building up. Nevertheless, the intake worker need not feel complete resignation to utter hopelessness as far as recognition of problems other than financial need and available services for helping the family meet them is concerned.

Take for example, the following situation:

Mrs. C stated that Mr. C was committed to X State Hospital six weeks ago after he had attempted to commit

suicide by cutting his throat. He was committed by the oldest son. Upon questioning, worker learned that Mr. C had previously attempted suicide by taking poison. She said that he was never dangerous to anyone except himself. He was in the armed services during World War II and during that three months interval, was in a mental institution for about two weeks, she believed. With such a large family (there have been eleven children) the family has never had a good standard of living apparently, and there has been a great deal of financial strain. . . . Worker learned that the oldest girl, R, is not actually in the home but is in a 'preparatory school' at _____. Later, after Mrs. C had left the office, worker cleared by telephone and learned that the girl's father had insisted that an investigation be made as the girl was working and living away from home and he did not approve of this. It was learned that the Court went into the case but found no misconduct on the part of the girl, and in order to help her be able to finish her schooling, had sent her to school at_____.

In the above application one non-financial problem was recognized: A school problem of an older child who was not included in the aid group. One can not assume that a multitude of problems must exist in every family which applies for assistance; but the well-equipped intake worker through skillful exploration will not fail to try to determine whether or not there are other problems which are handicapping the family to the extent that it is unable to maintain a "healthy" status in the community. The two examples presented above seem themselves to be replete with inferences and implications for many more than two non-financial problems and needs. In one sense, it can not be said definitely that problems were not recognized; it can be said, however, that it is possible that the failure lay in the recording, which must follow a somewhat restrictive outline.

To summarize, a total of thirty non-financial problems and needs were considered as having been recognized in thirty-eight applications for 115 children. It is reasonable to assume that many more than thirty problems of this kind existed in these families. Under the circumstances, even the incidental recognition of thirty problems is cause for some encouragement toward a more effective implementation of the State's services program.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The public is justified in its expressed concern about certain social problems which are reflected in the public assistance caseload, such as desertion, children born out-of-wedlock, and the problems of mothers who work. But these are not problems of public assistance. They are problems of our society which are desperately in need of concerted study and long-range remedial measures. The responsibility for spearheading such study and social planning rests with the social work profession as a whole.¹

Comforting though the above thought may be to the public assistance agency, it does not negate the agency's responsibility for strengthening family life and helping families and individuals attain the maximum economic and personal independence of which they are capable. Detracting somewhat from the comforting aspect is the charge of an additional responsibility: A proportionate share of effort and participation by the public agency in concerted study and long-range remedial measures. The longer problems are permitted to exist, the more difficult they are to solve. The goals have been established and a large portion of the vehicles for attaining them have been provided. If the public agency is to assume its due share of the responsibility for study and long-range remedial measures, it must begin at the beginning, with the resources it has, and now.

¹ Eunice Minton, "Services for Children in Public Assistance," Casework Papers 1957 (New York: Family Service Association of America), p. 81.

All levels of administration are held accountable for the success or failure in reaching program goals. It is true that many factors and groups of factors enter into the administrative process which is directed toward goal achievement; but whether these factors serve helpfully or in a handicapping manner, administrative accountability remains unchanged.

In the limited study just completed, an attempt was made to examine the results, not of a specialized area of casework practice, but of the yield from a single specific statement of administrative policy. This was the policy which makes it mandatory that the intake worker in the public assistance agency be able to recognize any or all of a wide range of problems from financial need to severe behavior disorders.

Intake plans differ among agencies in accordance with the total resources which each agency has and with the area of emphasis on which the executive chooses to concentrate. In this agency, although there are two full-time intake workers, all members of the casework staff take applications under certain circumstances. Every caseworker, therefore, is on occasion an intake worker. Since the application interviews were selected for examination on a random sample basis, there was opportunity to study interviews recorded by fourteen workers. (During the six-month period from which the interviews were drawn one full-time intake worker resigned, but by the end of the period her position had been filled.)

Of the thirty-eight interviews studied, fifteen, or 40 per cent were held by three (variously) full-time intake workers. Of the thirty non-financial problems and needs considered as recognized by intake workers in application interviews, fifteen, or 50 per cent, were recognized by the full-time workers, which of course means that one-half of the total number were recognized by "regular" caseworkers. The full-time intake workers held eight of the twenty-four interviews in which no problems other than financial need were recognized. This meant that the remaining sixteen interviews in which no problems were recognized were held by eleven regular workers.

Although these figures may have different significance when examined from different viewpoints, the conclusion here is that there is a very wide gap between the intake worker's specified responsibility in the area of other services as defined in policy, and this worker's fulfilling such responsibility effectively. There is no way of determining the number of other problems existing in these thirty-eight applications for aid for 115 children; but, as stated previously, it is certain that almost all parents or relatives applying for ADC have problems other than the need for financial assistance, especially when one considers those acts and circumstances which deprive children of the support and care of a parent.

But in examining progress in implementing a program of service toward strengthening family life and attaining maximum economic and personal independence, it must not be overlooked

that the agency's responsibility for the administration of the public financial assistance programs still retains first priority. It would seem therefore that the gap between policy and effective implementation could be narrowed greatly by more emphasis on constructive use of the eligibility determination process, lest the policy with reference to recognition of problems at intake be considered as "too ambitious in the light of present staff qualifications".² This realistic shift in emphasis would involve in addition to other reassessments, a clear definition of the services the agency expects to provide, no matter how simple, which can be understood by the worker as an integral part of his job and which would lead to more concrete results than the expectation of higher goals encompassed in generalities about services.³

If it should be thought unwise or inadvisable to make such a shift in emphasis in policy while the program is "in motion," some thought might be given to the matter of procedures. Changes in this area, however, depend greatly on the degree of confidence those who formulate state policy have in the capacity of their local unit staffs to perform effectively under any other than a highly structured plan of operation.

²Services in the ADC Program: Implications for Federal and State Administration, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Bureau of Public Assistance, (Washington: Government Printing Office, undated), p. 20.

³Loc. cit.

To be more specific, in this agency a formal interviewing and recording outline, which is described in policy as including the minimum information essentials to be obtained at the point of application, is strictly adhered to. This outline was last revised June 1, 1955. It would seem, therefore, in view of the magnitude and impact of the 1956 Public Assistance Amendments, that the outline could be revised to provide workers with opportunity to see and talk with ADC applicants as people also, each of them representing a complete or an incomplete family group needing help with its non-financial, as well as with its financial problems, not as depersonalized entities who either fit or do not fit the agency's eligibility requirements. Such revised outline in and of itself, however, can not ensure appropriate and full recognition of all non-financial problems and needs presented at intake. Recognition to this extent requires much, much more than an outline, regardless of how comprehensive and how perfectly adapted such outline may be. A revised outline could (1) stimulate the intake worker toward a sharper awareness of the existence of other problems; (2) serve as encouragement to the worker to try to make appropriate effort to recognize the problems; (3) provide him with an opportunity to record his recognition; and (4) probably serve to help bring his responsibility for problem recognition as defined in policy closer to reality.

But in examining and/or revising policies, procedures and outlines with a view toward long-range planning, it is imperative that the importance of research be given its proper place in the new perspective. This does not mean that an effort should be made to turn public agency staffs into research specialists, but it does mean that staffs should be helped to develop some degree of research-mindedness. They can be helped to understand that much social research in the future will depend on what they are today recording in their cases and how they are recording it. Future values for research in public assistance will depend altogether on the view which higher administration takes with reference to the part research can play in long-range remedial measures.

The preceding comments regarding conclusions reached as a result of this study are not presented as all-inclusive. However, it must be said again that the most important of the related networks of forces is that which is responsible for establishing, interpreting, and providing for the effective implementation of policy. The extent to which the ADC services program succeeds will depend on the extent to which administrative authority effectively discharges its responsibility which will, in turn, depend on our convictions. "If we have convictions about our job and about people and if we acquire the necessary skills to do our job well, we need have no fear about

people seeking our services and about our contribution to society."⁴

⁴ Mary Evelyn Parker, "Strengthening Family Life Through Administrative Planning," Public Welfare, 15: 91-94, July 1957.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

I. NAME _____ RELATIONSHIP OF APPLICANT TO _____
CASE NO. _____ CHILD(REN) _____

RACE: WHITE NON WHITE

II. NUMBER OF CHILDREN			III. BASIS FOR DEPRIVATION OF PARENTAL SUPPORT OR CARE	
AGE GROUP	SEX			
	M	F		
Under 2	_____	_____	1. Death	_____
2 to 5	_____	_____	Absence:	
6 to 12	_____	_____	2. Div. or leg sep.	_____
13 to 18	_____	_____	3. Desertion	_____
			4. Incarceration	_____
			5. Pat'y not est.	_____
			6. Incapacity	_____

IV. PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLD OTHER THAN THOSE IN AID GROUP			V. HOUSING		
TOTAL NUMBER			STATUS	URBAN	RURAL
Age Group	Related	Not Related	Home owner	_____	_____
Under 18	_____	_____	Renter	_____	_____
18 through 21	_____	_____	Shelter suppl.	_____	_____
22 " 64	_____	_____	Other	_____	_____
65 and over	_____	_____			

VI. PROBLEMS OR NEEDS, OTHER THAN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SPECIFIED IN RECORDED APPLICATION INTERVIEW--AND PERSONS AFFECTED

A. PROBLEM - NEED		CODE	B. PERSONS AFFECTED		
			CODE	AID GROUP	OTHERS IN HOUSEHOLD
Recreation (01)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Health (2 thru 12)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Home (13 thru 18)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
School (19 thru 25)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Adult Behavior (26 thru 38)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Child Behavior (39 thru 41)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

VII. DISPOSITION OF APPLICATION AT INTAKE: ACCEPTED _____ REJECTED _____
IF REJECTED, REASON _____

APPENDIX B
PROBLEMS OR NEEDS

1. RECREATION, LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES

HEALTH

- 2. Diagnostic
- 3. Medical care
- 4. Hospitalization
- 5. Medications
- 6. Immunizations
- 7. Prostheses
- 8. Special Equipment
- 9. Special Diet
- 10. Dental Care
- 11. Nursing Care
- 12. Other Health (Specify) _____

FAMILY & INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 35. Marital Conflict
- 36. Desertion
- 37. Parent-Child Conflict
- 38. Peer & Neighborhood Rels.

CHILD BEHAVIOR

- 39. Delinquent Act(s)
- 40. Other Anti-Social Act(s)
- 41. Adjustment Problems

HOME

- 13. Inadequate Housing
- 14. Undesirable Location
- 15. Household Equipment
- 16. Clothing
- 17. Home Management
- 18. Other Home (Specify) _____

SCHOOL

- 19. Irregular Attendance
- 20. School Failure
- 21. Special Education
- 22. School Supplies
- 23. Vocational Education
- 24. Lunches
- 25. Transportation

ADULT BEHAVIOR, INADEQUATE CHILD CARE

- 26. Neglect
- 27. Abuse
- 28. Abandonment
- 29. Improper Placement

BEHAVIOR CONTRIBUTING TO FAMILY BREAKDOWN

- 30. Excessive Drinking
- 31. Illicit Sex Activities
- 32. Illegitimacy
- 33. Delinquent Acts
- 34. Other Behavior Problems