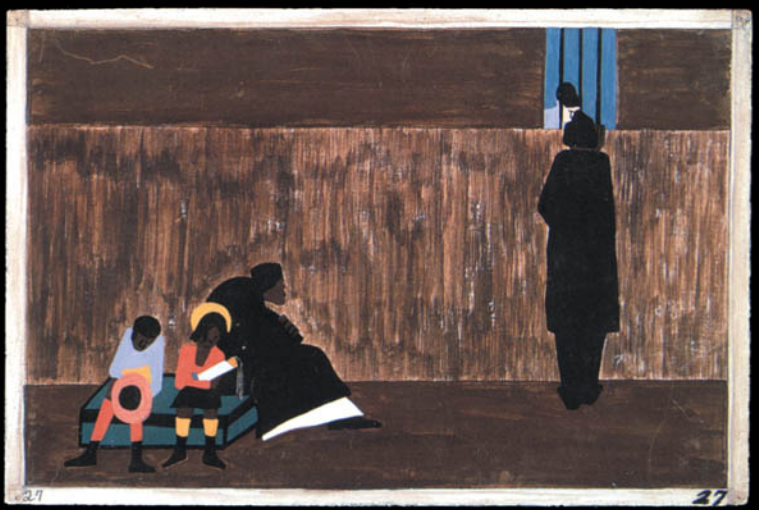
ENSURING INEQUALITY

The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family



DONNA L. FRANKLIN

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The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family

Donna L. Franklin

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For my parents, Donald and Helen Franklin,
whose love and belief sustained me;

my grandmother, Blanche Ballard,
a queen among women; and

in memory of my brother, Glen Anthony Franklin

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FOREWORD

The publication of this book could not be more timely. In the face of a rising number of solo-parent families and out-of-wedlock births, the nation is embroiled in a debate about family values. In August 1996 Congress passed and the president of the United States signed a controversial welfare reform bill that effectively ends the federal entitlement to subsistence income for poor families in need. Assumptions about the breakdown of the American family and the factors that have contributed to it are featured in both the debate over family values and the welfare-reform legislation.

Donna Franklin points out that even though a national opinion poll reveals that a substantial majority of Americans believe that children are better off if one parent stays home, there is little support for the idea that welfare mothers should be compensated for staying at home. One possible explanation for this position was provided by the Harvard sociologist Theda Skocpol. She stated that "when mothers' pensions became federally subsidized with Aid to Dependent Children in 1935, Americans still presumed a mother's place was in the home. But in the late twentieth century, they no longer do. Across the class structure, father and mother alike hold paid employment. People will no longer accept a welfare system that ostensibly pays poor mothers to stay home."[1]

Conservatives call for work and responsible parenthood. But we have yet to create social policies that make it possible for all Americans, poor and nonpoor, to work while raising their children. Meanwhile, the number of solo-parent non-

working families continue to grow, and it is asserted that welfare is the single most important contributing factor, even though scientific evidence consistently contradicts this claim.[2] Since the 1994 congressional elections, welfare mothers have been publicly demonized by many conservative politicians.

As I pointed out in my book, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, the increasing attacks on welfare mothers are part of a larger reaction to the growing problems of social dislocation in our nation's inner cities.[3] Even though the number of white AFDC recipients was roughly equal to the number of black recipients in 1995, many people associate welfare with young, unmarried black mothers having babies. The increasing number of African-American AFDC recipients has been linked in public discourse to such larger problems as the dissolution of the family and the decline in family values. It is argued that welfare exacerbates these problems, and that ending welfare would force people to assume personal and family responsibility, thereby reversing the trend of rising inner-city dislocations, including family breakups.

However, as shown in this book, the issues involved in the decline of nuclear black families are far more complex than those involved in the simplistic welfare arguments. Professor Franklin identifies and shows the cumulative effects of five factors that have transformed the African-American family structure over time. These five historical factors include slavery, the northern migration that resulted in the loss of communal institutions, AFDC policies, decreasing job opportunities for lower-class black men, and social isolation in neighborhoods of high poverty concentration.

In addition to these five factors, the structure of black families, like that of white and other ethnic families, has also been affected by changing values in our society that increased the independence and autonomy of all women, by changes in traditional gender roles not only within the family but in the workplace as well, and by more liberal attitudes toward out-of-wedlock births and single parenthood. As Professor Franklin puts it, "these changes have placed the traditional nuclear family under much greater strain and have predictably had the most devastating impact on African-American families."

Professor Franklin feels that it is important for policymakers to address the problems of many African-American families with an understanding that the high levels of nonmarriage are very likely irreversible and that therefore changes in public policy should be directed at ways to strengthen relations within the family, including the mother-child dyad. For example, "If the mother is drug-free, motivated to be a good mother, and considered fit to rear her child," states Franklin, "resources should be directed at fortifying the mother-child dyad by strengthening the mother's parenting skills."

Nonetheless, regardless of the structure of African-American families—whether

solo-parent or nuclear—the survival of many of them as viable and healthy units will depend on social policies that make it possible for parents to work while caring for their children. Others, particularly middle class and professional black families, have the social and economic resources that strengthen family relations and provide a healthy environment for child development.

The African-American family is not a monolithic entity. Sixty-five percent of those families with children under eighteen whose level of educational attainment features a bachelor's degree and 69 percent of those with a graduate/professional degree are married-couple units. The corresponding figures for those with only a high school degree (or GED) or who have not graduated from high school are 45.8 percent and 37.9 percent respectively.[4] And in many ghetto neighborhoods the proportion of married-couple families is even lower. For example, in the inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago only one-quarter of the families with children under eighteen are husband-wife families.[5] These are the families, many of whom are on welfare, especially in need of progressive social policies that make it possible for the parents to work while caring for their children. It is very important that work opportunities be provided for both men and women.

As I pointed out in *The Truly Disadvantaged*, comprehensive economic policies that "enhance employment opportunities among the truly disadvantaged—both men and women—are needed."[6] The central problem facing inner-city workers is that changes in the economy have shifted the demand for labor away from low-skilled workers.[7] Despite claims by conservative analysts that low-skilled workers fail to take advantage of labor-market opportunities,[8] available evidence strongly suggests that it is harder for low-skilled inner-city workers to find employment today.[9] For example, the anthropologists Katherine Newman and Chauncy Lennon found that during a five-month period there were fourteen applicants for every individual who was hired in fast food businesses in Harlem. They also found that among those applicants who were not hired, three-quarters had not found a single job a year later. They concluded that the people of Harlem pounding the pavement looking for work far exceeded the number of jobs to be found.[10]

With the new welfare reform legislation we have created a situation in which long-term AFDC recipients in the inner city will flood a pool already filled with jobless adults looking for work. Indeed, according to one report, given the current rate of growth in the New York City economy, if every new job were given to the city's current welfare recipients, it would take twenty-one years to absorb them into the economy.[11]

A similar point was made by Donna Franklin. She points out that

> a study released in 1995 by the Manhattan Borough President found that at any given time about 50,000 jobs, of all types (not just entry level), are

> available in New York city If they were all filled by welfare recipients, 300,000 more jobs would be needed for the remaining adults on welfare, and an additional 200,000 jobs would be needed for other unemployed New Yorkers. Thus while the welfare discussions have shifted to the problematic behaviors of nonworking black mothers, the opportunities for all low-wage workers have been deteriorating and the black poor have increasingly been isolated in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty.

But the problem for many lower-income African-American families is not simply the creation of jobs, however basic this is to their own economic survival. Franklin's comprehensive analysis reveals the need for a combination of social interventions to overcome the severe consequences of ghetto life, consequences that impede healthy family relations. These include the development of community-based family services agencies to "combat the effects of isolation and helplessness of low-income mothers and to enhance their coping skills related to living in urban poverty"; the expansion of the network of social services to increase "pregnant women's access to prenatal care and information on early childhood nutrition"; the creation of innovative and more effective approaches for children placed in foster care; the economic revitalization of the inner city through enterprise zones and community development corporations; and black self-help efforts, "which must include the participation of more affluent blacks who are willing to establish and maintain links with the poorest blacks."

I would add one additional intervention to this list—the creation of public sector jobs. Franklin recognizes the need for "government endeavors directed specifically at inner cities." The gap between the number of low-skilled workers and the supply of low-skilled jobs is so great in some urban areas that public-sector employment will be needed to supplement private sector hiring. Without the infusion of public-sector jobs it will be difficult to prevent the creation of a large number of homeless welfare families when they reach the time limit for receiving welfare.

The challenge facing America is great. We not only have to increase our commitment to confront the problems associated with the structural transformation of the African-American family, we also need to develop a greater understanding of the complex set of factors that caused this transformation. The reading of this comprehensive book by all concerned citizens is an important step in helping to achieve both of these objectives.

Harvard University WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON

Notes

1. Theda Skocpol, "Bury It," *The New Republic.* August 12, 1996, 21.

2. See, for example, Greg J. Duncan, "Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means Hearing on Early Childbearing," U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C., 1994; Saul D. Hoffman, Greg J. Duncan, and Ronald B. Mincy, "Marriage and Welfare Use Among Young Women: Do Labor Market, Welfare and Neighborhood Factors Account for Declining Rates of Marriage Among Black and White Women?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, December, 1991; Greg J. Duncan and Saul D. Hoffman, "Teenage Underclass Behavior and Subsequent Poverty: Have the Rules Changed?" in *The Urban Underclass,* ed. Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 1991), 155–74; and Mary Jo Bane and David Ellwood, *The Dynamics of Dependence and the Routes to Self-Sufficiency* (Cambridge, Mass.: Urban Systems Research and Engineering, 1983).

3. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Black Population" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1990).

5. Wilson, *When Work Disappears.*

6. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 150.

7. Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, *America Unequal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

8. See, for example, Lawrence Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), and Lawrence Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty: The Working Poor in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

9. Danziger and Gottschalk, *America Unequal.*

10. Katherine Newman and Chauncy Lennon, "Finding Work in the Inner City: How Hard is it Now? How Hard will it be for AFDC Recipients?" Russell Sage Foundation Working Paper #76, October 1995.

11. Alan Finder, "Welfare Recipients in Big Cities Outnumber Jobs They Might Fill," *New York Times,* August 25, 1996, 1, 17.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In his best-selling book, *The Celestine Prophecy*, James Redfield writes, "Whenever people cross our paths, there is always a message for us. Chance encounters do not exist. . . . If we have a conversation with someone who crosses our path and we do not see a message pertaining to our current questions, it does not mean there was not a message. It only means we missed it for some reason." During the years when I was working on this book, countless people crossed my path, and I had the opportunity to ask numerous questions. Although I may have missed many of the messages, the most important ones were given to me by Barbara Solomon, Dolores Norton, and William J. Wilson.

Barbara Solomon is responsible for launching me into my academic career. She guided me through both graduate degrees and chaired my doctoral committee. In addition, she gave my name to the Search Committee at the University of Chicago when they called requesting qualified applicants. By successfully combining a strong marriage, motherhood (four children, to be exact), and a highly productive academic career, and just being a kind and caring individual, she gave me the message to reach for my dreams.

If Barbara demonstrated that you could combine marriage, motherhood, and a career, Dodie Norton showed me that you could successfully juggle single parenting and unwieldy academic responsibilities. When I arrived at The University of Chicago in 1982, just out of a marriage and a first-time single parent, she always managed to find the time in her hectic schedule to be encouraging and understand-

ing. In addition, any written materials I gave her were read carefully and critically, and returned within a short period of time. Dodie gave me the message that I could have a successful academic career in spite of any obstacles that were put in my path.

In 1984 the black faculty at the University of Chicago convened a conference to commemorate the work of Professor Allison Davis. Davis, a pioneer researcher on African-Americans, had retired quietly without any recognition of his years of exemplary service and scholarship. (Professor Davis died shortly after this conference was held; it was almost as if he were waiting for his colleagues to acknowledge their debt to him.) This conference offered me the opportunity to cross paths with messengers like the late St. Clair Drake and John Hope Franklin. With hindsight, I realize that encountering these great minds was an important factor in the formation of my ideas for this book.

In working with the faculty committee on the Davis conference, I had an opportunity to become better acquainted with some of my colleagues at the university. The first was Bill Wilson. If Barbara and Dodie taught me that I could successfully juggle the disparate areas of my life, he showed me how much you could get accomplished if you had a supportive mate. Bill, a generous man, not only read my dissertation in the early stages of our professional relationship, but assisted me in organizing my ideas so that I could get some publications out of it. Bill gave me the message that I could achieve my goals if I were focused, hard working, and disciplined.

The other colleague with whom I became better acquainted as the result of working on the conference committee was Ann Dibble Jordan (then known as Ann Cook). Ann had been working in the Chicago Lying-In Hospital for more than twenty years as a social worker and field instructor for social work students at the university. She worked directly with black mothers who came into the hospital for obstetrical care and unselfishly shared her valuable insights into some of the complexities of the family patterns found among black women living in poverty neighborhoods. Many of the ideas that flowed from our conversations have probably found their way into this book.

The year following the conference, Bill made the decision to pull together an interdisciplinary group of faculty to conduct research on poverty in the city of Chicago. When he invited me to join the team as a co-investigator, I realized that this was the opportunity of a lifetime. It was my participation in this project, that crystallized my ideas for the book.

During the four years of the project, Bill invited scholars with national reputations to present papers on issues related to the black family. The list of guest presenters included individuals from both sides of the ideological spectrum—scholars such as Elijah Anderson, Mary Jo Bane, Lawrence Mead, Glen Loury, Greg

Duncan, Tamara Hareven, and the late Michael Harrington, to name a few. The stimulating question-and-answer periods forced me to articulate my own arguments and, more importantly, to think about whether my evidence sustained these arguments. I also had the opportunity to meet and confer with some of the individuals who served on the project's advisory board, such as Eleanor Holmes Norton and Lee Rainwater.

In 1987, I was invited by Professor Peggy Dilworth-Anderson to make the featured presentations, along with Linda Burton, at the Third Annual Life Span Family Conference at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. During the question and answer session, a question about the Moynihan Report and the "matriarchal" structure of the black family provoked some of the strongest reactions from conference attendees. I also noticed that black and white participants had different reactions to Moynihan's analysis. Whereas there was strong disagreement among the blacks in attendance with the contents of the Moynihan Report, the white audience members seemed to be in agreement with it. I left this conference with the message that there were many more questions than answers on the complicated subject of black family structure.

It was Richard English, however, the Dean of the School of Social Work at Howard University, who gave me the message that I should write a book and with that the first opportunity to begin work on it. He invited me to be a Visiting Professor at Howard during the 1989–90 academic year. The inducements were clear: first, a chance to get better acquainted with members of his faculty whose substantive area of study was the black family (e.g., Harriet McAdoo and Joyce Ladner); and second, access to two important archives—the National Archives and the Moreland Spingarn Archives.

I will be forever grateful to Jerry Cates, then a member of Howard's faculty, who personally escorted me on my first trip to the National Archives and gave me my initial introduction to the use of the system. Without his support, I am not sure I would have persevered. Some of the figures in the book that provide the most convincing evidence on the economic vulnerability of black families when compared with white families during the 1930s in five northern cities were found in the National Archives. These data were found in an obscure place in the archives; therefore this is probably the first time this information has been reproduced in print.

Meeting Leon Dash and reading his book, *When Children Want Children*, was yet another stimulus in organizing my ideas for this book. (Leon won a Pulitzer Prize for his next project.) In this book, Leon traced the patterns of adolescent childbearing he found in Washington, D.C., to sharecropping in the South. I was initially both fascinated by and skeptical of his journalistic ("unscientific") approach to establishing these linkages. I wondered whether more scholarly investi-

gations had been conducted on this topic. When I discussed my concerns with Leon, he directed me to Charles S. Johnson's book, *Shadow of the Plantation.* This turned out to be a critically important book in shaping my understanding of how sharecropping influenced the family patterns of African Americans.

Isabel Wilkerson, another Pulitzer Prize–winning black journalist (the first black female), wrote a comprehensive story for the *New York Times* on an innovative welfare-to-work program in Chicago. This program was established to train former welfare recipients, primarily women, in construction jobs. Isabel's report documented the challenges American cities will face as they try to put welfare mothers to work and was one of the earliest to appear in the print media. My summary of her report appears in the book's final chapter. It was also helpful to discuss this project: how she got the story, some of her candid reactions to the program and its participants, why she felt the program wasn't more successful, and her hopefulness about welfare reform.

The Urban and Family Life Conference convened in 1991 at the University of Chicago and research findings from Wilson's project were presented. Not only was the paper that I presented with Susan Smith carefully critiqued by Linda Burton, but I also got messages from some audience members that I might need to reexamine some of my thinking on the book. I also remember having an energizing luncheon discussion with Erol Ricketts, Ron Ferguson (Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government), and Ron Mincy (currently at the Ford Foundation). This exchange was particularly helpful in further developing my ideas for this book.

I have benefited enormously from the comments of colleagues who read the earliest drafts of this manuscript: Mimi Abramovitz, Walter Allen, Thomas Holt, Margaret Rosenheim, Rosemary Sarri, and Adele Logan Alexander for the chapter on slavery. I must give a special thanks to two individuals, however, Laurence E. Lynn and Martin Rein. They both read chapters and wrote a plethora of critical comments—always urging me on. It was Marty who really inspired me to get it finished, in spite of this anxiety. Others who gave me important messages either directly or indirectly were Clifford Alexander, Gina Barclay-McLaughlin, Mary Becker, Robert Booker, Karen Crawford, Eloise Cornelius, Vera Dexter, Laura Epstein, Karen Frehl, Eileen Gambrill, Chris Gamwell, Sharon Hicks-Bartlett, Barbara Ransby, Aisha Ray, Theda Skocpol, Diana Slaughter-Dafoe, Susan Smith, and Michael Sosin.

Aaron Geib, Dana Gambill, and Mario Prietto patiently endured and responded swiftly to the vagaries of my requests for rare books, journals that were no longer in circulation, and any and all of the documentation that was needed for the book. In addition, Dana drafted all of the tables for the book. I would also like to thank Rino Patti, the dean at the University of Southern California, for his support during the final phase of the book. Finally, I would like to express my profound appre-

ciation to Dolores Cross, the president of Chicago State University, who offered me a Distinguished Visiting Professorship in the Department of Sociology, with a reduced academic work load, so that I could continue work on the book; Gene Tanke and Jessie Combre for their editorial assistance; Gioia Stevens, my editor at Oxford, for both her persistence and her patience during my periods of ambivalence; and Faith Childs, my literary agent, for going beyond the call of duty in providing guidance and support.

Many close friends and family members have contributed to this effort as well. My sisters, Vicki, April, and Stephani have nurtured, reassured, and cared for me during this process. My brother Greg provided support and admiration. (My siblings have truly been the "wind beneath my wings.") My niece Alexis organized my office and tried to keep everything categorized for me. I thank Bart for moving to Chicago so that he could share the parenting responsibilities for Myisha, and for becoming a friend. Once he arrived, I realized that although I was still a single parent, I was no longer a solo parent. I appreciate Reggie's clairvoyance and intuitive insights, and I thank my closest friends—Dodie, Elizabeth, Fran, J.R., Jessie, Marion, Pam, Reuben, Shepard, Stephen, and Donna—for their honest appraisal and sometimes for just being there.

I have been fortunate enough to have parents and a grandmother who have followed my efforts with interest and love—this book is dedicated to them. My deepest gratitude, however, is reserved for my daughter Myisha. She is the one who had to live with me and endure my obsession with this book on a daily basis. She willingly sacrificed my attention so that I could devote unrestricted energies to this book. At the same time she "normalized" my life by pulling me out of the project when I needed a break. She has been the most extraordinary gift. I would want her in my life even if she were not my daughter.

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INTRODUCTION

Exponential increases in the number of children who are growing up in father-absent families have evoked concern in the minds of the American public that traditional family values are on the decline. Reactions to these anomalous trends have even begun to appear in newspapers and popular journals.[1] Proposed changes in public welfare policies would discourage unmarried mothers from having families. And the compromise advanced by a bipartisan coalition of governors has empowered some states even to deny welfare benefits to single mothers under the age of eighteen.

Currently, African-American women, compared with white women, are more likely to bear children as teenagers, less likely to ever marry, more likely to experience marital instability, and more likely to become parents outside of marriage.[2] As a result, a much higher proportion of African-American women are likely to become single parents and enter poverty. Furthermore, when the fathers are absent in African-American families, more than half of those families live in poverty, compared to about one-quarter of white father-absent families.[3]

Why do the marriage and family experiences of African-Americans differ from those of white Americans? How are we to explain the evolution of the African-American family over the past three centuries? More specifically, how do we explain the disproportionate number of unmarried adolescent black mothers? What are the implications of these changes in family structure?

Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831 and made some observations regarding the institution of marriage and slavery:

> There exists, indeed, a profound and natural antipathy between the institution of marriage and that of slavery. A man does not marry when he cannot exercise marital authority, when his children must be born his equal, irrevocably destined to the wretchedness of their father; when, having no power over their fate, he can neither know the duties, the privileges, the hopes, nor the cares which belong to the paternal relation. It is easy to perceive that every motive which incites the freedman to a lawful union is lost to the slave by the simple fact of his slavery.[4]

Racial differences in marriage and family experiences have existed over time: These changes did not begin in the last two decades or even the past half-century, they have been 300 years in the making. However, the more recent pronounced changes in the family formation patterns of African-Americans represent a dramatic departure from the family life that was documented by scholars during an earlier period.

When David Ellwood critiqued the "situation" versus "culture" arguments on poverty, he characterized them as the "most confused and perplexing intellectual histories of any topic related to the disadvantaged."[5] These polemical discussions have been confusing because they have not taken into account the historical, cultural, and social evolution of the African-American family.

It is the purpose of this book to contribute to this debate by providing a more comprehensive historical study of the evolution of black family life than has been offered in the past. My premise is that a full understanding of the contemporary African-American family requires attention to its entire historical development. This understanding, if grasped by policymakers, would alter current approaches to the problem.

The problems of the African American family are a reflection of the broader social problems in the populace. Whenever American has undergone a moral dilemma, it has the greatest impact on the most vulnerable citizens. Samuel Johnson once observed that, "A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization."[6] By that gauge, how society provides for the most disadvantaged mothers and their children tells us something about our basic values as a society.

The most recent gauge of American civility is the passage of the Republican welfare legislation that would cut $56 billion in spending and give states new powers to remove millions of poor mothers and their children from the welfare rolls. This legislation passed overwhelming in the House and the Senate. The House approved the measure 328 to 101, the Senate approved a similar version by a vote of 74 to 24, and President Clinton signed the measure on August 22, 1996.

In endorsing the Republican bill, Mr. Clinton has acquiesced in the most sweeping reversal of domestic social policy since the New Deal.

Prior Explanatory Frameworks

A number of formulations have been advanced over the past century to explain the differences between black and white family structures. Scholarly explanations of the origins and evolution of the black family can be divided into four groups. The first is the anthropological and African-origin approach, whose earliest proponents were George W. Williams and Carter G. Woodson. These scholars argued that it was the African heritage of black Americans that most influenced their beliefs and practices. In recent years, there has been a resurgence in the scholarship linking African-American family patterns with their African legacy.[7]

Melville Herskovits carried this analysis further than other scholars in his book *The Myth of the Negro Past.* When Herskovits discussed the causes underlying the "matriarchal Negro family," he traced this phenomenon to the polygynous West African societies. In his view, this social organization had important implications for understanding kinship groups and the strength of the bond between the black mother and her children. In polygynous African societies, the "responsibilities of upbringing, discipline, and supervision are much more the province of the mother than of the father."[8]

The second approach is sociological, and was put forward by E. Franklin Frazier, W. E. B. DuBois, and Daniel P. Moynihan, all of whom both blamed slavery for disrupting black family life and are generally credited with developing the "matriarchal argument" to describe the black family structure. According to their view, the institution of slavery destroyed the African heritage (although DuBois was ambivalent and changed his position over time), undermined the authority of the black male, and thus contributed to the development of the matrifocal family structure.

The third approach developed out of the arguments of scholars who were principally historians and opposed the idea of the matriarchy. These include Herbert Gutman, John Blassingame, Eugene Genovese, Robert Fogel, Stanley Engerman, and Orville Burton. When these historians studied the institution of slavery, they generally agreed with the sociological school that slavery was a source of the family problems of African-Americans. However, Gutman, Blassingame, and Genovese deviated from the earlier tradition in that they viewed black culture as a synthesis of the slaves' African heritage and white culture. The disagreements among these scholars are discussed in chapter 1.

The fourth approach is the most recent development and is being set forth primarily by social scientists who have rejected earlier sociological traditions. These

scholars abandoned Moynihan's matriarchal thesis and reevaluated the "disorganization" of the black family within the context of the northern migration of African-Americans within the United States. This analysis places blame on the more recent social forces that have been linked to blacks' difficult transition from the rural South to life in an urban environment. Diminishing employment opportunities, especially for black males, have also been cited as a major factor in the changing African-American family structure.[9] One example of this approach can be found in a paper by Frank Furstenberg, Theodore Hershberg, and John Modell which asserts that Gutman's statistics support their contention that the "female-headed family . . . emerged, not as a legacy of slavery but as a result of the destructive conditions of northern urban life."[10] Books on the northern migration have likewise focused renewed attention on life in the urban North as a major factor in the changes found in black marriage and family patterns.[11]

Another dimension of black family life that has to do with family structure, but is rarely included in this discussion, is the issue of adolescent childbearing among African-Americans. Although adolescent childbearing did not emerge as a social problem until the 1970s, in fact a greater proportion of black teenagers, when compared to whites, have historically become parents.[12] The study of adolescent childbearing is rarely integrated into the study of the structure and family patterns of African-Americans and is usually investigated as an isolated phenomena. I will include this most important dimension.

These rival explanations of differences in family structure among blacks are not so much wrong as incomplete. The arguments blaming "slavery only," "migration only," and the "male marriageable pool," or the independent investigation of adolescent childbearing among African-Americans are insufficient to explain much of the variance in family structure between whites and blacks. Furthermore, these explanatory approaches have not been applied to understanding the poverty found among black mother-only families who reside in inner-city neighborhoods.

The Framework of This Book

Arguments that focus on recent social forces, which are insufficient to explain much of the variance in poor blacks' family structure, only serve to perpetuate the development of policies that will continue to be ineffective in addressing their needs. This book has developed a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration the additive and cumulative effects of various factors on the black family over time. The black family is traced from slavery to its contemporary state. In addition, this book incorporates the historical evolution of adolescent childbearing in its study of the causal circumstances that have transformed African-American family structure.

Part I of this book examines the experiences of the black family through World War II; Part II describes the events affecting it from the 1950s through the 1980s; and the final chapter discusses what can be done to break the cycle of poverty among the most disadvantaged African-Americans.

Chapter 1 provides a historical context for examining the impact of slavery on the African-American family, offering a critical analysis of the historical scholarship on the institution of slavery. The major ideas set forth by each of the eminent scholars are examined, with special attention to the contributions of DuBois, Frazier, Fogel, Gutman, Genovese, and Blassingame.

Chapter 2 examines the imprint that sharecropping left on black family life. The Freedman's Bureau attempted to impose patriarchal authority on the black family rather than to facilitate the egalitarian relations that had existed during slavery. A rural proletariat emerged with a distinctive set of family formation patterns, produced by slavery and exacerbated by the sharecropping system.

Chapter 3 examines the emergence of public benefits for mother-only families. Societal notions about the deserving and undeserving poor guided the development of social policies for the poorest single mothers. When the New Deal policies were developed, agricultural labor and domestic service—the occupations in which black women were overrepresented—were not covered. The only New Deal program that most black mothers qualified for was also the most stigmatizing—Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). The differing characteristics of white and black women on welfare during this period are also discussed.

Chapter 4 focuses on the hardships black families faced as they made the transition from an agrarian to an urban existence. The economic disaster of the Great Depression, coupled with the demographic shift of blacks to urban areas, had a devastating impact on the black family. With a high rate of family desertion by black fathers as they encountered numerous obstacles to finding employment in the North, the 1930s was the decade in which mother-only black families had the greatest increase. The beginnings of a class stratification within the black community are discussed along with the emergence of "underclass" patterns of behavior among the poorest blacks.

Chapter 5 highlights the effect of World War II on the African-American family. Although defense industries contributed to growth in the economy during the war, once the war ended and these industries shut down, government policies that had been created to ensure fair employment practices were abandoned. Most of the gains blacks made during the wartime boom were wiped out. Postwar economic dislocations stranded many families, especially blacks, in new communities where job opportunities dwindled. Evidence presented in this chapter documents a high rate of black marital disintegration and an increase in the number of births to unmarried black women and adolescents.

Chapter 6 discusses changes in public policies, especially on housing and welfare, that had a devastating impact on the black family. This period witnessed not only the construction of the first high-density public housing projects, but the initiation of "suitable homes" policies by AFDC administrators that placed black mothers receiving welfare under surveillance. Urban ghettos became increasingly isolated from mainstream society, and the social and economic gaps between the black "haves" and "have-nots" widened.

Chapter 7 considers the events of the 1960s, which include the impact of the Moynihan Report and the evolution of the National Welfare Rights Organization. Two elements that are generally overlooked in discussions on the report are covered: the tensions between black women and men that spilled over into the public sphere for the first time; and Moynihan's recommendation that black males retreat to an "utterly masculine world . . . a world away from women, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority."[13] The examination of the NWRO sheds light on the tensions between black men and women during this period, in that George Wiley took a paternalistic view of the abilities of poor women and excluded them from leadership roles in the NWRO.

Chapter 8 discusses poverty researchers' observations of some dramatic recent changes in the behavioral patterns of the most disadvantaged blacks who are residing in poverty neighborhoods. These persons are becoming increasingly involved in street crime, becoming more disconnected from the formal labor market, experiencing longer spells of poverty, and becoming increasingly dependent on welfare. Concepts like "social isolation," "concentration effects," and "the urban "underclass" have appeared in the lexicon on poverty to explain the emerging phenomena. The explanations set forth in the social science literature are critically analyzed.

Chapter 9 reopens the old debate on the consequences of family structure for African-American children, the community, and the nation as a whole. It addresses some of the questions most often debated: What are the underlying issues in welfare reform? Are black mothers willing to work? What do we do about the most disadvantaged black mothers? What can be done to break the cycle of poverty?

Notes

1. See, for example, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle was Right," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993 47–50; Margaret L. Usdansky, "Single Motherhood: Stereotypes vs. Statistics," *New York Times*, February 11, 1996, E4.

2. Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Thomas Espenshade, "The Recent Decline of American Marriage: Blacks and Whites in Comparative Perspective," in *Contemporary Mar-*

riage: Comparative Perspectives of a Changing Institution, ed. Kingsley Davis and A. Grossbard-Schechtman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1986), 53–90; Neil G. Bennett, David E. Bloom, and Patricia H. Craig, "The Divergence of Black and White Marriage Patterns," *American Journal of Sociology* 3(November 1989):692–722.

3. Department of Commerce, *Poverty in the United States: 1991* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1991), 1.

4. Quoted in Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage, 1976), xxi.

5. David Ellwood, *Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 195.

6. Quoted in Jack Rothman, "Tinkering Won't Work on Welfare." *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1996, B9.

7. For additional sources on the African legacy found among slaves see, for example, Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) and Melville Herskovitz, *Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941). Scholars reconsidering the influence of the African legacy on the family formation patterns of African-Americans include Caroline Bledsoe, "Transformation in Sub-Saharan African Marriage and Fertility," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 510 (July 1990):115–125, and Niara Sudarkasa, "Interpreting the African Heritage in Afro-American Family Organization," *Black Families*, ed. Harriette McAdoo (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981):37–53. For an ethnographic analysis of a Mississippi community which concluded an African heritage most influenced the black family, see Demitri B. Shimkin, Edith Shimkin, and Dennis Frate, eds., *The Extended Family in Black Societies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978). Finally, for an examination of the ethnic and cultural aspects of race and family, see Andrew T. Miller, "Social Science, Social Policy, and the Heritage of African-American Families," in *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History*, ed. Michael Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993):254–292. For a valuable discussion on matrifocality, especially his definition, see N. Tanner, "Matrifocality in Indonesia and Africa and among Black Americans," in *Women, Culture, and Society*, eds. M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere.

8. Herskovitz, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 169.

9. For example, William J. Wilson reviews the literature on the transferral of poverty and welfare dependency from the South to the North and contends that more recent social forces are primarily responsible for northern poverty, e.g., the "male marriageable pool"; *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987). When Paul Lammermeier studied seven cities in the Ohio Valley, he suggested reappraising E. Franklin Frazier's studies of the black family in urban cities "in light not of a cultural holdover from slavery . . . but as the result of urban life caused by poverty and discrimination;" "The Urban Black Family in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Black Family Structure in the Ohio Valley, 1850–1880," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35(August 1973). Elizabeth Pleck found in her studies of the city of Boston that female-headed households were a product of the urban economic structure. She asserted that "the combined effects of poverty, sterility, and declining community regulation