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CHILDREN AND INCOME IN NEGRO FAMILIES*

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IN THE January 1945 issue of Social Security Bulletin, Thomas J. Woofter had an article on the maldistribution of children and income in nonfarm families with income from wages and salaries only.¹ In that article the author dealt chiefly with the country as a whole, though in some of his tabulations he considered regional differences and presented statistics on nonwhite

region. This article undertakes such an analysis of nonfarm Negro families.

In Table 1 there is presented a comparison of the situation regarding children and income in nonwhite (practically all Negro) families and all the families in the southern region.² The first fact of importance is that among Negroes 51 percent of the families as compared with 37 percent of all the families in the South have no children. Although the disparity is not as great, the percentage of Negro families with 1, 2, and 3 or more children is smaller in each instance than in the entire population. As the size of the Negro families increases, the differences between the percentage of Negro families and all families in each category decreases. When the entire child population is considered, the percentage of children in Negro families with 1 or 2 children is smaller than the percentage for the entire child population of the South. But in Negro families with 3 or more children, one finds 65 percent of the children as compared with 58 percent for all families in the South. Thus it results that, though a smaller percentage of Negro families have 1, 2, and 3 or more children, a much higher percentage of Negro children is to be found in the families with 3 or more children than in the population as a whole. In less than a fifth of the Negro families there are nearly two-thirds of the Negro children in the South.

TABLE 1
FAMILIES, CHILDREN IN FAMILIES, AND MEDIAN FAMILY UNIT INCOME, BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILY FOR THE SOUTH

(Nonfarm families, 1940, with only wage or salary income in 1939)

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	NONWHITE			ALL CLASSES* (WHITE AND NONWHITE)		
	Percent of families	Percent of children	Median family unit income	Percent of families	Percent of children	Median family unit income
Total	100	100	184	107	100	330
No child	51	0	221	37	0	435
1 child	19	16	189	26	18	362
2 children	12	19	152	17	24	303
3 or more children (4.252)**	18	65	126	20	58	189

* Thomas J. Woofter, Jr., "Children and Family Income," *Social Security Bulletin* (January 1945), p. 2.

** 4.322 for male heads of family and 4.076 for female heads—weighted together.

families. It was suggested by Dr. Woofter to the senior author of this article that an analysis be made of data on Negro families in the southern

* The authors are indebted to the Statistical Unit of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, for assistance in the computation of income and family unit figures in the accompanying article.

¹ Thomas J. Woofter, "Children and Family Income," *Social Security Bulletin* (January, 1945) p. 1.

In Table 1 the median family unit income of Negro families is 44 percent less than that for all families in the South.³ But when we compare

² The States included in the southern region for purposes of this study are: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

³ The concept of family unit income employed here is the same as that used by Woofter, *loc. cit.*, p. 1. "To measure the individual supporting power of incomes of various types of families, it is necessary to relate average income to average size of family—that is, to use a form of capita income. For present purposes, family size is

these figures with those in Woofter's article for white families only, the median family unit income for Negroes is found to be 56 percent less than that for white families.⁴ The family unit income of Negro families which is highest for families with no children, declines with the increasing number of children as it does for all families in the region. However, the family unit income for Negro families with 0, 1, and 2 children is about half that of all families in the South. The difference is less in regard to families with 3 or more children for the family unit income of Negro fami-

the country have income less than \$500, and about 12 percent of the children are in these families. In the case of southern Negro families, 40 percent of them have incomes less than \$500 and about 40 percent of the Negro children are in such families. Forty-two percent of the southern Negro families have an income from \$500 to \$999, thus making about 82 percent of the Negro families with incomes less than \$1,000. Then, whereas about 30 percent of the families of the country have an income of \$2,000 or more and about 24 percent of the children are in such families, only 2.4

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOUTHERN NONWHITE AND ALL FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN HUSBAND-AND-WIFE FAMILIES BY WAGE OR SALARY INCOME

(Nonfarm families, 1940, with only wage or salary income in 1939)

FAMILY INCOME	NONWHITE FAMILIES				ALL FAMILIES*			
	Families		Children		Families		Children	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	611,540	100.0	860,370	100.0	12,063,000	100.0	15,074,000	100.0
\$1-499	243,260	39.8	342,400	39.8	1,246,000	10.3	1,822,000	12.1
500-999	253,760	41.4	359,470	41.8	2,315,000	19.2	3,279,000	21.8
1,000-1,499	76,440	12.5	106,790	12.4	2,643,000	21.9	3,468,000	23.0
1,500-1,999	23,700	3.9	32,080	3.7	2,322,000	19.2	2,838,000	18.8
2,000-2,499	8,420	1.4	12,150	1.4	1,508,000	12.5	1,686,000	11.2
2,500-2,999	2,980	.5	3,060	.5	778,000	6.5	789,000	5.2
3,000-4,999	2,680	.4	3,150	.4	1,011,000	8.4	967,000	6.3
5,000 and over	300	.1	270	—	240,000	2.0	235,000	1.6
Median Income	\$623				\$1,487			

* Thomas J. Woofter, Jr., "Children and Family Income," *Social Security Bulletin* (January 1945), Table 2, p. 2.

lies is only 28 percent less than that of all families. It is reasonable to assume that if we had separate tabulations for white families only, the difference between the family units income of Negro and white families in each of the four categories would be greater than when Negro families are compared with all families in the region.

When we compare the figures in Table 2 with the table in Woofter's article for the entire country, a number of important differences appear. About 10 percent of the families in the nonfarm areas of

expressed in terms of family units, assigning full unit value to an adult and a half unit to a child."

⁴ In Woofter, *loc. cit.*, Table 5, p. 4, the median nonfarm wage or salary income per family unit for southern whites is \$419 as compared with \$179 for southern nonwhites.

percent of the southern Negro families have incomes of \$2,000 or more and 2.3 percent of the Negro children are in these families.

It is next of interest to examine the figures in Table 3 on the family unit income of different types of families with and without children. The median income of the average Negro family in the South is shown to be \$505. But it will be noticed that this is about one-sixth less than that of families with male head and wife. On the other hand, the median income for the average family is considerably higher—21 and 55 percent—than the incomes of the two types of broken families. The broken families with a male head are much better off than those with a female head since in the former type of families there is over 40 percent more income in the families with children than in

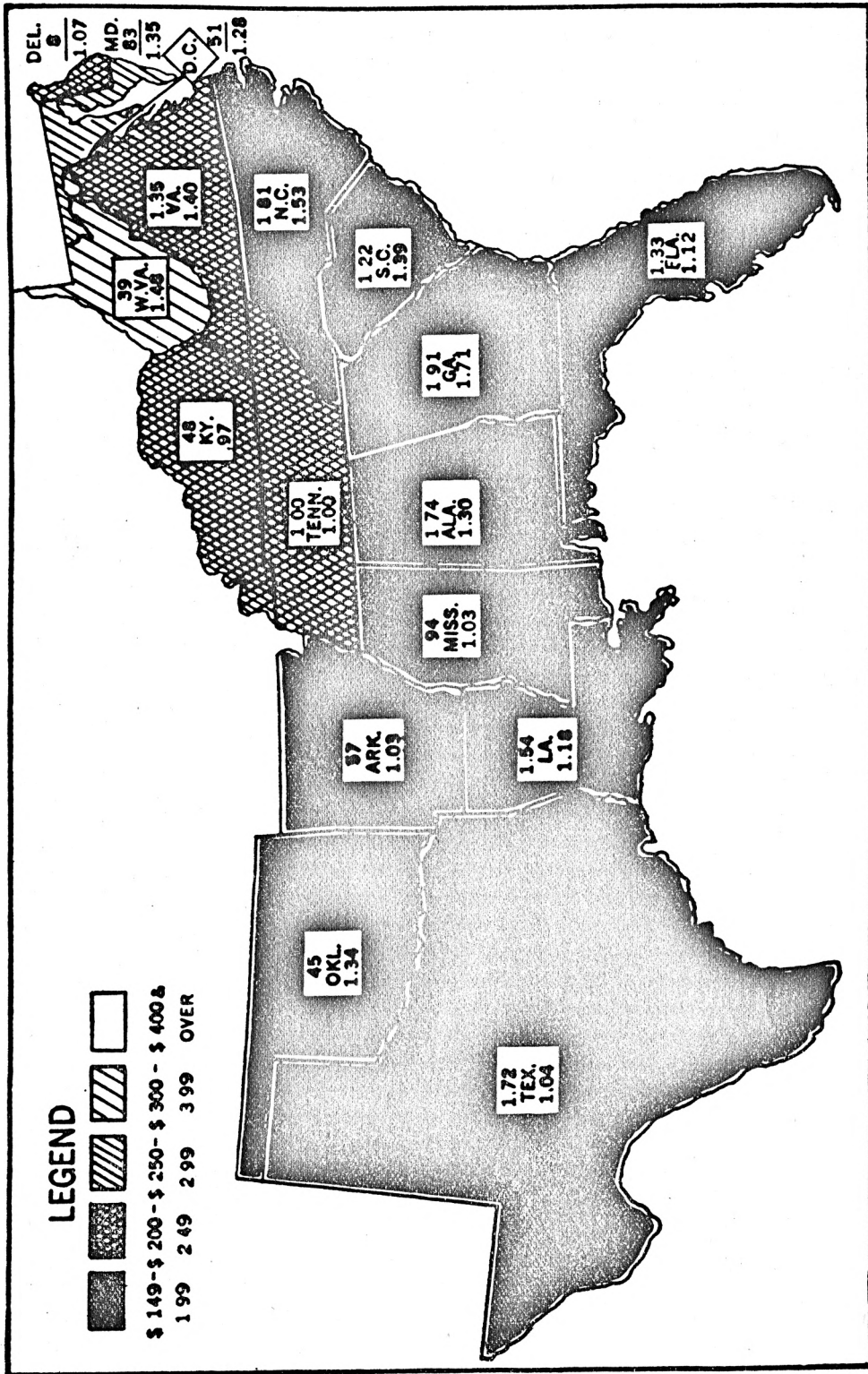


CHART I. NONFARM NEGRO CHILDREN, 1940, AND UNIT INCOME OF NONFARM NEGRO FAMILIES, 1939, BY STATE
 Upper Figure: Total Nonfarm Negro Children in Thousands. Lower Figure: Average Number of Children per Nonfarm Negro Family.

those without children. In the families with female heads there is not only the lowest income but those families with children have less than 10 percent more income than those without children. This is of considerable importance since among Negroes in the larger cities of the South from a fourth to a third of the tenant families have female heads.

In all three types of families the family unit income is highest in families with no children and

TABLE 3

NONWHITE FAMILY UNIT INCOME OF NONFARM FAMILIES, BY TYPE OF FAMILY, FOR SOUTHERN REGION

(Nonfarm families, 1940, with only wage or salary income in 1939)

TYPE OF FAMILY	FAMILY UNITS	MEDIAN INCOME	FAMILY UNIT INCOME
Average family.....	2.74	\$505	\$184
Male head with wife:			
No children.....	2.39	623	261
One child.....	3.05	629	206
Two children.....	3.65	612	168
Three or more.....	4.60	620	135
Male head other:			
No children.....	1.41	417	295
One child.....	2.77	590	213
Two children.....	3.42	605	177
Three children.....	4.32	592	137
Female head:			
No children.....	1.77	326	184
One child.....	2.46	350	142
Two children.....	3.20	355	111
Three children.....	4.10	357	87

decreases as the number of children increase. The median income of Negro families with "male head with wife" is the same in families without children whether there are 1, 2, or 3 or more children. Consequently, as the number of children increases, the family unit income declines. In fact, the family unit income of these families is less than that of the broken families with a male head or other. The family unit income is lowest for the families with a female head. In such families, which comprise from a fourth to a third of the Negro families in larger cities of the South, the family unit income in families with 3 or more

children is \$87 or about a half of that in the two children families with a male head or other.

For the South as a whole the average number of children, i.e. persons under 18 years of age, is slightly higher for Negro families than for total families in the region.⁵ This is not true, however, in all the southern States. When the figures in Table 4 are compared with Woofter's, a number of

TABLE 4

NONFARM NONWHITE CHILDREN, 1940, AND UNIT INCOME OF NONFARM NONWHITE FAMILIES, 1939, FOR SOUTHERN STATES*

	NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 18	NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY		FAMILY UNITS	MEDIAN INCOME PER FAMILY UNIT
		Non-white families	All** families		
	(000)				(Dollars)
Alabama.....	174	1.30	1.28	2.81	177
Arkansas.....	57	1.03	1.11	2.50	260
Delaware.....	8	1.07	.97	2.65	240
District of Columbia.....	51	1.28	.78	2.82	409
Florida.....	133	1.12	.97	2.59	182
Georgia.....	191	1.17	1.17	2.76	165
Kentucky.....	48	.97	1.21	2.62	208
Louisiana.....	154	1.18	1.17	2.72	173
Maryland.....	83	1.35	1.01	2.84	283
Mississippi.....	94	1.03	1.11	2.56	189
North Carolina.....	181	1.53	1.40	3.00	197
Oklahoma.....	45	1.34	1.10	2.53	158
South Carolina.....	122	1.39	1.37	2.86	149
Tennessee.....	100	1.00	1.19	2.68	215
Texas.....	172	1.04	1.11	2.56	181
Virginia.....	135	1.40	1.23	2.86	224
West Virginia.....	39	1.48	1.45	2.89	338

* Wage or salary income only.

** From Chart 5, Thomas J. Woofter, Jr., "Children and Family Income," *Social Security Bulletin* (January 1945), p. 5.

variations appear.⁶ In Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas, there is a smaller number of children per Negro family than for total families in the respective States. The number of children is the same or practically the same in Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, and West Virginia. In the remaining States in Table 4 the number of children in Negro families is higher than for total families in the respective States, the number being

⁵ Woofter, *loc. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

conspicuously higher in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Oklahoma, and Virginia.

We do not have the statistics which would enable us to compare the family unit income of Negro families with that of white families or the total families in the various southern States. If in Chart I we had used the legend which Woofter used in his article where black was used for States with a median family unit income of less than \$300, all of the States with the exception of the District of Columbia and West Virginia would have been black. Even with our legened, there are ten black States with a median family unit income for Negroes ranging from \$149 in South Carolina to \$197 in North Carolina. In the next group there are four States—Delaware, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia—within the range from \$200 to \$249. Maryland with a median family unit income for Negroes of \$283, West Virginia with \$338, and the District of Columbia with \$409, comprise the three highest classifications of incomes represented on the chart.

In his article Woofter pointed out the implications of his analysis for social insurance and as-

sistance. Since what he has said concerning families generally has special relevance for Negroes, we need only emphasize some points brought out in his article. First, there needs to be emphasized that the combination of large families and low incomes among Negroes results in even greater insecurity because incomes are lower and the relative number of such families is greater. Then it should not be forgotten that despite the shift from farm to industrial labor during the War, over a third of the male and nearly two-thirds of the female Negro workers are still to be found in agriculture and domestic services, occupations not covered by social insurance.⁷ Moreover, the Negro is concentrated to a far greater extent in the States where public assistance is limited by the tax-paying capacity of the State and in his case by certain traditional notions concerning his needs. Thus the extension of the insurance features of the Social Security Act and strengthening of its public assistance features are bound to enhance the security of Negro families.

⁷ *Monthly Labor Review*, 60 (January 1945), p. 4.