THE AMERICAN BLACK SLAVE FAMILY: SURVIVAL AS A FORM OF RESISTANCE

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DEDICATION

To my family, especially my Mother, who made it all possible through their encouragement and confidence in my ability.
To my adviser, Professor Tulla Hamilton, for her advice, counsel, and criticism in gathering material for and construction of this study.
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, there has been a profusion of scholarship on the institution of slavery. It challenged former authorities, notably Ulrich Phillips, W.E. Woodward, Frederick Jackson Turner, and others who projected slavery as a racial adjustment which had arisen in response to environmental pressures and human needs, adhering to, basically the arguments of pro-slavery. Consequently, the institution of slavery has been probed at every spot, often with passionate intensity. New lines of inquiry have opened within which emerged the probe of the Black family. It has also become the subject of countless studies. Substantial research and increasing volumes of publications have characterized the Black family.

What accounts for such an immediate increase which has resolved in some degree, a transformed view of the institution? The Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the Sixties might have prompted this amplification. Within these confines might be found the growth of social work. The general political sphere of the Sixties and the increase in urban problems might be cited. Another observation lies in the urgency of the Civil Rights movement which focused attention on white racial prejudice, particularly on its psychological and historical origins. 1 Blacks were regarded as problems, the expansion may have emerged in the hope that
answers may be found. One may cite one or more of these concepts as motives, nonetheless, an increase in the study of slavery transpired, resulting in an increase in the study of the Black family.

The Black family frequented the topics of countless studies as a result of the upsurge in the study of slavery, as noted previously. Accordingly, new light has been shed on the original Black family in America - the slave family.

Prior to the emergence of new evidence on the slave family, historians and sociologists alike had not credited it with the evolution of any positive concepts about itself. Daniel Moynihan contends that the institution of slavery had far reaching effects on the Black family. These effects can be felt by contemporary Black families, whom he notes, are approaching the stages of a complete breakdown. E. Franklin Frazier, a noted sociologist, viewed the Black family as an outgrowth of free Black families and a group whom he labeled "Black Puritans". These groups are credited with being the "custodians of the gains which the Negro has made in acquiring culture and civilization." His study concluded that the slave family had very few opportunities for developing emotional ties, therefore if stability and solidarity characterized a family, it was quite by accident. Kenneth Stampp declares that, considering the conditions under which the slave existed, the lack of stability was hardly a surprise.
It has been previously cited that the institution of slavery has been probed at every spot. Yet the explosive debates have left few questions settled. "Virtually no fact or opinion of the early scholarly wisdom has gone unchallenged." As a result new lines of inquiry opened and the character of debate was transformed. Historical evidence accumulated by Herbert Gutman, Eugene Genovese, Robert Fogel, Stanley Engerman, John Blassingame, and George Rawick suggests that American Blacks had far more family stability and security during the slave regime than for which they have been accounted.

Prior to the expansion of interest in the Black family, few studies utilized it as a topic. Likewise, the slave family was the sole subject of limited research. This may have emerged from the immense ambiguity which surrounds the subject. Many early sources on slavery including those written by plantation owners, historians, and general writers contended that encouragement of a slave family would undermine the principals of slavery, itself. Hence, many general works on the slave regime failed to acknowledge the existence of stable relations between slave members. Yet, contemporary sources such as those previously cited allege that slaves did in fact maintain families who performed the duties assigned to them by American society as much as possible.

The slave family was an integral part of the lives of its members and the lives they created for themselves.
independent of the master. Common to families in all societies its purposes were multidimensional. Through the unique socialization process engaged in by slave parents, the family served to sustain its members from many blows of the institution. Despite its precarious situation, it was the pillar of survival for its members. It taught children how to manage best under the yokes of bondage. The stability developed in slave families reinforced the will of slaves when it was desperately needed.

It is the purpose of this study to expose the slave family as a solid viable family unit which developed these features in spite of the institution. The stable family was a buffer between its members and the yokes of bondage. The mere fact that the institution was harsh, cruel, and brutal to the extent of undermining many, many slaves who weren't as sturdy and resilient as those who were fortunate enough to achieve these sentiments in their home attest to the remarkable resistance of these slaves to slavery. Through the evolution of families featured by love and endurance which sustained them, they defied the masters' recognition of them as brutes, incapable of professing human emotions and developing meaningful family relationships. This resistance is witnessed through the sufferings, miseries, and hardships of the slave family member which he endured to maintain immutable ties between his family. Sources propose that slaves engaged in an aggregation of activities which alluded
to the preservation of his family and the deep sentiment he retained for them. In order to define the objective of this study, it is essential to examine specific conceptions. Therefore, the maintenance of slaves, conventional views of the slave family, master's influence over slave families, and the resistance and resilience of slaves will be assessed.

Economically, slavery was considered the most inexpensive source of labor, in as much as the only wage afforded a slave was his upkeep. Maintenance alludes to food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. It is reviewed from the position of the family: the supplies they received, how well they fared with their allowances, and what, if anything they did to alleviate the problem when one existed in regard to welfare. What effect did the act of supplementing maintenance have on the family, when it occurred?

In as much as slave families were characterized by separation and a lack of legal status, the study continues by lending itself to the conventional views taken of the slave family. These views contended that it was virtually impossible for a slave to develop and maintain a stable family life. Yet, despite the treacheries of slavery, many of its victims did maneuver this feat.

The master's influence over the slave is analyzed at this point, to the degree that he dominated marital ties between slaves and preserved white women while thoroughly abusing slaves.
The stability developed by some slave families will be examined by reviewing the structure and functions of slave families. Finally, each of these sections combine in exhibiting the means by which the slave resisted slavery by surviving.

Sources utilized in this study are diverse. Those general studies on the institution primarily noted as authorities are employed. Sources on the slave himself are needful of scrutiny. It is obvious that sources from slaveholders, travelers, and slaves themselves, cannot be solely relied upon in isolated incidents when objectivity and some degree of accuracy is sought. Travelers frequenting slaveholding regions had different values and attitudes and remained in regions dissimilar periods of time. Slaveholder's papers can hardly be accepted as objective. Original slave narratives were sometimes edited or written by Northern abolitionists. Ballingame in *The Slave Community* described distinct features which can be detected in narratives written by abolitionist. They are very short, stress generalization rather than details, focus on the escape from, rather than the routine of slavery, and finally are diatribes on unbelievably fiendish masters who terrorized the perfectly angelic slave. Also in regard to this matter, slaves were sometimes exceptional who were able to publish their life stories. Incongruent to these slaves were those who were not fugitives and did not have any abolitionist amusements. 6

Those narratives in which slaves were interviewed by
the Federal Writers in the 1930's are used very carefully. Several incidents prescribe this caution. Initially, the slaves were elderly when the interviews took place. Secondly, the interviewers were white which possibly influenced responses, and finally these ex-slaves lived most of their lives as free people. Through a collective comparison of information drawn from each of these sources, those things which were agreed upon with some degree of resemblance and accuracy were utilized. The topic of this study also falls under the auspices of sociology. Consequently, studies relating to the Black American family are employed.

Centuries have passed since the arrival of the first slaves on American soil. Yet, contemporary America remains uncertain of the existence of any sizable extent of Africanisms in the United States. Traditionally historians have agreed that they were stripped of their culture, language, and history through the operation of a brutal slave system that reduced them to a state of complete dependency and compelled them to adopt the characteristics and habits of their masters and oppressors.

E. Franklin Frazier adhered to this school of thought. He maintained that Blacks forced to migrate across the Atlantic did not retain any aspects of their culture in the face of an oppressive slave system in which all vestiges of Africanisms were systematically destroyed. He stated, “When educated Negroes of the present generation attempt to
resurrect the forgotten memories of their ancestors, they
are seeking in the alien culture of Africa a basis for race
pride and racial identification.7

Robert E. Park had a similar opinion as he asserted:

My own impression is that the amount of
African tradition which the Negro brought to the
United States was very small. In fact, there is
every reason to believe, it seems to me, that the
Negro, when he landed in the United States, left
behind him almost everything but his dark complex-
ion and his tropical temperament. It is very
difficult to find in the South today anything
that can be traced directly back to Africa.8

Roger Bastide and Melville Herskovits both maintain that
slaves did retain remants of their past. The former, in his
work *African Civilizations in the New World* concluded
that it was "no surprise that in America we find whole
enclaves of African civilization intact, or at least to a
very substantial extent."9 Herskovits, commenting on the
assertion that the Negro is a man without a past contended:

...it is seen that the African past is no
more to be thought of as having been thrown
away by those of African descent than it is to
assume that the traits that distinguished Italian
or Germans or old Americans or Jews...from the
total population of which they form a part can
be understood in their present forms without a
reference to a preceding cultural heritage.10

A review of documents which based their studies on
field research in Africa acknowledges that slaves indeed
did retain portions of their African past, some of which
can be found in contemporary America.
Elements of the African past were manifested in different degrees in various areas. Each area focuses interest on certain activities more than others, since particular aspects of culture are of greater importance to one group of people than to another.

Despite the fact that Africanisms can be found in America, Africans brought to the United States relinquished more of their culture than those taken to any other region.  

American slaves extracted from West Africa passed through an acculturation process. Countless factors characterized this process. It must be recalled that Africanisms did not survive in the same degree everywhere. Certain generalizations can be made in reference to the Africanisms which survived the passage across the Atlantic. Differences in the degree of contact between bearers of European and African traditions occurred. A variety of situations existed under which certain types of slaves had greater opportunity for contact with their masters than others. Slaves accommodated themselves differently to various aspects of 'ground.' Opportunities presented themselves to learn and imitate white behavior in various degrees for diverse categories of slaves, or were spread over the population as a whole.

Finally Africans who were exposed to whites the most, through incongruent mechanisms were able to retain Africanisms.
Newly arrived Africans retransmitted African features. Slaves released from immediate supervision also could reabsorb Africanisms, as when they were permitted to supplement provisions supplied by the master or released for holiday celebrations. Numerous instances are related to the former heading. In specifying some of them, they were events where slaves were allowed to take produce or chickens, and eggs to market, or where they were permitted to go into swamps or uncleared forests to gather wood or trap possum and other game. In the latter category fall such activities as those at Christmas, a holiday whose celebration on some plantations and in some regions extended into to New Year. These occasions were featured by games, tales, songs, and dances, many of which being African in nature were transmitted from one generation to another. "These gatherings also afforded unusually good opportunities for other African cultural elements, such world view and magical practices to be learned and thus kept living."

It is obstensible that forms of African technology, economics, and political institutions had but a relatively minute possibility of survival. However, other factors of African society remained intact throughout slavery, which survived the Middle Passage. Those aspects of African culture which have been most tenacious are survivals in folk literature, religion, art, the dance, music, and
Religion is an element characteristic of all societies in some form. It obviously has different connotations in each of them, nonetheless, it exists. Geoffrey Parrinder expounded on the existence of religion:

Religion is not just the province of one particular class, though there are specialists in ritual. Nor is it only for those who feel piously inclined, though there are difference in temperament. But religion enters into the life of every individual... Moreover religion provides the sanctions that society cannot fully supply of itself, its moral and legal norms which could not be kept in being as body, by secular sanctions. 15

Religion played a major role in the lives of slaves. If functioned as a sustainer which constantly renewed the exhausted faith and hope of the victims of the peculiar institution. This most significant aspect of the slave's life was a remnant of his African past.

The power of religion was one of the greatest forces in traditional Africa.16 It was essential, and quite meaningful to Africans as a result of being deeply integrated into the daily round. "The forces of the universe, whether they worked good or evil, were ever at hand to be consulted in time of doubt, to be informed when crucial steps were to be taken, and to be asked for help when protection or aid was needed."17 These overt features of African religion alone for its transmutability. It was such an intimate segment of the lives of Africans. No doubt, it was highly utilized during the dehumanizing experiences of the Middle Passage and Africans found themselves
property of other human beings.

Religion had the most striking, if not the most numerous amount of African survivals. African religious practices, in some measure as recognizable survivals, could be found in every region. These practices often times outweighed survivals in other realms of culture. Some slaves were given the opportunity to conduct their own religious services more than they were granted other types of privileges.

Magic held its own prominent position in the slave culture, as many bondsmen held in great awe those persons who were known as sorcerers or conjurers. The retention of this aspect of African culture prevailed in many areas throughout the duration of the institution of slavery. It was perpetuated by the slaves using it to construct "a psychological defense against total dependence on and submission to their masters." Countless problems arise which can seldom be solved by purely rational methods "thus people perforce to turn to magic."  

Other elements of African culture were manifested in the slave community. Folk tales, songs, and dance were the major components of the slave's recreational activities. These musical survivals were quite distinctive in regards to their origin. African culture was dominated by music as the following excerpt:

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The music produced by the slaves.
Although a number of scholars acknowledge the existence of African features in slave music, others counteract it by contending that a forced assimilation into Western culture resulted in an influence by white music. 21 Yet, in spite of this exposure to the white musical environment, the Black in America only borrowed to suit himself and this choice was dictated by his traditional African attitudes. 22

Profuse parallels and identical tales unite Africans and Southern slaves, so much so, that little doubt is left in one's mind that folk tales found among American slaves are African in origin. "The quiet with which the tales are told, plus their appeal to the whites as stories to their children, made the retention of this element of African culture as ubiquitous as it is in the New World." 23

African linguistic and art survivals were also retained to some extent by Africans who were compelled to leave their homes. 24 Though linguistic survivals were not as evident as other aspects of the African culture, nonetheless some parts have remained intact. The influence of African languages in the form of vocabulary, sounds, syntax, and word-formations can be found in certain sections of America, especially in the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia in the Sea Islands. In this region can also be found the retention of aspects of African art. It had less chance of...
conditions surrounding the slave, yet metal working, wood carving, and weaving found in this area is clearly influenced by African art.

Cultural traits which survived the Middle Passage can be found in secular life according to Herakovits. A precise method of planting, bearing burdens on the head, wearing headkerchiefs, motor habits, and hair braiding have all been filtered down from African ancestors. Attitudes about death and the proper procedure in burying one's relatives, adherence to codes of polite behavior and dispositions on abnormal births also survived the trip across the Atlantic. African cuisine was also implemented into the slave culture. The importance attached to names and naming children in addition to the discipline method used in child rearing adhered to by slaves were descendants of their African ancestors.

Finally, in examining the Africanisms brought to America, the traditions underlying nonrelationship groupings must be included. Secret societies were quite common in Africa. These types of groupings sprang up among Blacks in the United States. "This feeling for mutual helpfulness inherent in this tradition contributed directly toward the adjustment of the African to his new situation, for without some formula of mutual self help, he could scarcely have supported the oppression he suffered." This Africanism persisted as is indicated by the
number which emerged after Emancipation especially in the Sea Islands. These were quite common to those in West Africa. One factor in preserving African sanctions in institutions of this sort has been the sense of importance of leadership that characterized all types of African social institutions. The principle of order and regularity, induced by discipline exerted through responsible headship, permeates African life, and this, reinforced by the very submission to authority demanded of the slave, has in many ways flowered under freedom.27

One cannot debate that slaves did, in certain areas assimilate themselves into Western culture. This assimilation varied in degrees in different regions. Yet, the slave was able to remarkably retain elements of the culture he was forced to leave. The presence of these elements can be found in varying degrees in different areas. The observation of African survivals is enhanced when one considers that, after the discontinuation of the slave trade, many slaves were not in direct contact with Africans born on the continent. Finally, the slaves combined features from the culture they were forced to leave and the new European culture to develop one for themselves.

"The slave ships carried not only men, women, and children, but also their gods, beliefs, and traditional folklore."28 On the same note:

The survival of varying degrees of African culture in America does not suggest that there
has been only a limited adjustment of the Negro to the New World situation. To the contrary, it merely points up the fact that he came out of an experience that was sufficiently entrenched to make possible the persistence of some customs and traditions. There is some validity in the view that in the conflict of cultures only those practices will survive whose value and superiority give them the strength and tenacity to do so. African survivals in America also suggest a pronounced resiliency of African institutions. There had been sufficient intertribal and interstate intercourse to give Africans the important experience of adopting many of the practices of those with whom they came in contact, while at the same time retaining much of their earlier way of life.  

"The family is a universal concept — not only for man but for all species in all times."  

It would be a relatively simple term to deal with if it were a unique, simple social form. Yet the term denotes quite the contrary. There are an endless variety of families. There are families composed of single parents and their dependent offspring, childless couples, both parents with one to a dozen or more children, unmarried sisters and brothers trying to make a home for themselves in the absence of both parents, and young, middle aged, or elderly couples struggling for existence.  

As will be noted further in this section, family also comprise a man, his wives, and their offspring or a woman, her husbands, and their offspring. Variations in families also result from locale, experiences, and economics. Koller expounds on these variations:

Some families are rural and some are urban. Some are deeply immersed in ethnic religious or racial experiences and others are not. Some
are impoverished and others live at the peak of prestige and opulence, with myriad variations in between.\textsuperscript{32}

Depending upon the approach, family has been defined in diverse manners. E.W. Burgess described it as "a unity of interacting personalities.\textsuperscript{33} On the same note, the Encyclopedia of Social Workers define it as "a group of individuals in interaction."\textsuperscript{34} Harold F. Christensen depicted it as "a set of statuses and roles acquired through marriage and procreation.\textsuperscript{35}

Despite the diversity exercised in defining the family, one significant point can be yielded. An organizing theme or conceptual approach aids in the understanding of family.\textsuperscript{36} Every framework reveals an important facet of family life. Taken together, these approaches may, sometime in the future explain fully the complicated phenomena we have chosen to call the family.

Contemporary Black families in America are the future generations of a people uprooted from their native land. Africans were forced to abandon their homes, consequently they had to relinquish many of their customs and cultural elements which slaveholders deemed undesirable.

What customs were African families forced to relinquish? Did the structure of slave and African families bear resemblances which were recognizable? In a study aimed primarily at the Black family during the slave regime, a review of features of its predecessors is essential.
For the purpose of this study, general characteristics of the West African marriage and family structure will be outlined, inasmuch as most slaves transported to America were procured from this area. Nigeria, Dahomey, and the Gold Coast served as primary locales for slave traders. Slaves were plundered from other areas also. These slaves however, were not numerous enough to impart any cultural traits upon people around them.

African society was quite complex, varied, and highly civilized. As one historian noted, African civilization was thousands of years old when it was invaded in the seventh century. Despite European labeling, it was a viable civilization, economically, politically, and culturally. 37

African family structure as is anything else diverse from that found in the Western world - has been frowned upon. Quite opposed to the elementary family which consists of two parents, and their children or the monogamous family featuring marriage to only one wife at any given time, West African families are characterized by polygyny. It is defined as the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently. 38 Hence the polygynous Joint family, consisting of a man, his wives, and their children was the ideal of most Africans.

An aggregation of people whose common denomination was consanguineal kinship ties occupied homes in a common village or homestead under a single head. This group
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consisted of elementary and polygynous families. It was distinguished as an extended family. This may be a group consisting of a man and his sons with their wives and minor children or woman and her daughters with their husbands and minor children.

Family life was highly articulated with the remainder of society. Two or more families united through a network of extended kin had considerable influence on the family and considerable responsibility for its development and well-being. It was the basis of economic, religious, and political life. The influence it had over its members were inestimable. The family was the basis of West African civilization. It was enmeshed in centuries of tradition, ritual, custom, and law.

In contrast to Western society, kinship took specific forms in African families. These forms subsequently dictated the family. Kinship traced through the father was recognized as patrilineal, while a trace through the mother was matrilineal. Though the eldest male was usually the head of the house, the latter kinship was quite common. Unknown to many West Africans was double descent where kinship was traced through both parents. The majority of the peoples of this region were patrilineal.

The widest group between whose members such relationship can be traced is described as a lineage. That group of people which normally resides and labors together is a section of a
lineage or extended family. Herakovits in his study of the Dahomey acknowledged their practice of patrilineal descent.\textsuperscript{42} The Yoruba of South Western Nigeria traced their descent through males, also.\textsuperscript{43} The Ashanti, however, traced their kinship through the matrilineal descent.\textsuperscript{44}

There is a standard pattern of the polygynous joint family in a patrilineal society.\textsuperscript{45} Conflict often arises in the matrilineal family between the father (who wants his wife and children under his authority) and the claims of the lineage kin who wants to keep the woman and children with them. Various groups solve this problem in different ways.

All families which claimed a common ancestor was a clan, an enlarged family. It developed in the same area. As a clan increased, families separated if there were opportunities elsewhere. The family which left the clan was still considered as family members, unless they left under negative terms. Once a separation occurred, the clan slowly disintegrated to the point where the clan members could not identify one another.

West Africans define marriage similar to Europeans in that both groups enter into matrimony wherein mutual support will be expected of each member, and the procreation and rearing of children occurred. At this point, African marriages tended to alter. They usually engaged, in addition
to the couple to be married, and the parents, groups of kin. A marriage might have formed an alliance between kinship groups, particularly the members of the lineage of each. Ceremonies and exchange of property characterized West African marriages. Murdock cited two basic types of weddings: those marriages based on the initiation of the two consenting partners and those based on the initiative of their parents and kin, in his Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History.

Kin groups may or may not have regulated marriage. Any social group which did not regulate marriage or, which prescribed neither that its members marry amongst themselves nor that they marry outsiders was labeled agamous. A group which did regulate marriage was called endogamous, if in-marriage was favored, exogamous if out-marriage was strongly preferential.46

The Ashanti was divided into exogamous clans. A person of one clan could under no possible circumstances marry or have sexual intercourse with any one who belonged to his or her clan. Infringement of this law was punishable by death, or expulsion from the clan, for both parties concerned.47 The Ewe-speaking people favored endogamous marriages.48 These were marriages within the clan but with people of different lineages.

Each marriage required the consent of an older person. This person may have been the nearest male relative or the lineage head. Though this consent was required, partners
and parents alike had to consent favorably. In relating the choice which an individual had in his marriage Fair contends:

Individual choice is limited by prohibitions against marriage with related persons, the extent of which varies from tribe to tribe but is nearly always much wider than in the Western world, often including all the members of a lineage by rules laying down that the partner should be chosen within a limited range of other relatives, which again vary but sometimes narrowly restrict the choice of possible mates, by the wishes of the seniors to make one alliance rather than another, by their judgement of the personal character of the proposed spouse.49

Some societies such as that in Nigeria allowed betrothal before puberty, sometimes a long time before. The Ibo practice infant betrothal. As diversity abounds among tribes of West Africa, so it does in the choosing of a marriage partner.

West African marriages are complex arrangements. They differed from one society to another. The most diverse feature between European and West African marriages was the practice of polygyny.

Features of West African marriages are prolix and intricate affairs. Hence, in this study, only those which tend to be highly significant will be given. Radcliffe-Brown noted several important aspects of marriage which are found in West Africa.50 First, the marriage involves an alteration or partial rupture of the relations between the bride and her immediate kin. When the bride leaves her family, her family feels the impact it has on the
family unit or solidarity. A member of the family has been lost. This rupture is often symbolized at the wedding ceremony by a show of resistance by the bride, her kin or both.

Another is that the husband and his relatives are given certain rights in relationship to his wife and the children she bears. These acquired rights vary in different systems.

The wife's kin surrenders certain rights they previously had over her. This act assures the husband to certain legal rights over his wife. The marriage payment may be regarded as a legal transaction in the transfer of rights.

In the Western world, authority vested in designated persons make them able to legally bind a woman and man in matrimony. These persons are civilly or religiously affiliated. Western society deems specific means by which marriage may legally occur.

Africans have various means in which they become legally married. This usually involves a man asserting himself as a woman's legal husband and the legal father of her children through diverse procedures. "They all involve some form of 'quid pro quo' given by the husband or his senior relatives on his behalf to the parents or other senior relatives of his wife." This has been misinterpreted for a number of years. Two essential features characterize the 'quid pro quo,' the transfer and the goods. Transfer designates the legal status of the marriage and the legitimacy of the children. Goods confirm the maintenance of the
marriage through a pledge. If a divorce occurs the goods are returned.

The phrase 'quid pro quo' has assumed the contemporary equivalent of marriage payment. Bride price, formally the common name, undoubtedly suggested as sale, when it actually symbolized the wife's value to her new husband. She was formally part of a very important unit. Hence in some instances the bride price was compensation or indemnity to the woman's family for the loss of a member. The payment also symbolized the relevance of the marriage contract.

Marriage payment is a complex institution having many varieties in form and function. In relation to any system, to be totally reviewed it has to be reviewed as a reference to the whole system of which it is a part.

The payment itself is commonly made in cattle, especially in those societies where cattle is used as a part of the economy. In such a marriage, it is made legal by a pledge or the actual transferral of cattle from the man's father to the wife's father, the former of whom is responsible for his son's payment, even if the payment is cash. They are provided by the man's father and received by the wife's father who may distribute some of them to relatives. These relatives have significant interest in the maintenance of the wedding and are expected to give the wife protection any given time. If a marriage ends in divorce the cattle are returned in accordance to the number of children the
couple have.

Cattle was not kept, nor used as economic commodities in all areas. In these areas, marriage payment was made in hoes, cloths, spears, cowry, shells, copper rings, iron bars, or beer. These type payments do not determine the amount of payment to be returned as related to the number of children in case of divorce as much as is found in cattle-based payments. This type of marriage was common to the Talleasi, and the Bamenda tribes excluding Nsaw, Pupe, and Mende.

West Africa also united a couple by service and payments. A man may provide prescribed services and payments to the bride's parents (father) prior to the wedding. Service marriages also took the form of a man, prior to and after the marriage, taking permanent residence with the woman's father and continuously working for him.

The Ajukru, Attie, and Eve-speaking people practiced marriages characterized by services rendered by the man in addition to a substantial marriage payment.

West Africa also practiced an exchange marriage, wherein a man exchanged a woman of his lineage for the woman he was to marry. The Afo of Southern Nigeria practiced that type of marriage.

Dahomey practiced numerous forms of marriage in which payment, service, and or exchange were featured. The two basic forms were marriages in which control was vested in the
father and marriage where in control was vested in the mother. Both forms had overlapping features. For example, the namamana we is an exchange marriage featured by groom-rendered services.

People in the Western world usually practice the neolocal pattern of residence after marriage. This pattern contends that both partners leave their homes and maintain a home in a new location. This location was not determined by parental ties.

Unilocal, a pattern which maintains that the partners live with either one or the other of their kin was the more common type of residence adhered to by Africans. This pattern has several varieties, one of which is partilocal. West Africans adhered to the latter pattern more than any other. It dictates the husband's household and kin as the couple's residency.

The basic foundation has been disposed for the actual analysis of the slave family by the diverse segments of this section. The diversity was necessary in order to expose to some extent the controversy which surrounds the Black family in America and with which contemporary historians searching for truth have had to contend. Contrasting views on a given subject is a prerequisite to drawing accurate conclusions. Hence the various convictions of scholars on the sections were needful.

The Black American slave family remained, until recently
one of the most obscure aspects of the institution. Prior to the pioneer works of Genovese, Blassingame, and other noted scholars its achievements under the slave regime were disavowed. It was simply inconceivable that members of a slave family could genuinely care for one another. How could they? They were not really married. Masters could separate them at any time. They were not equivalent to whites, in any respect, hence their emotional capabilities were limited to those of a beast.

Yet, a revelation of new sources and reinterpretations of some earlier ones suggest that the slave family despite the sometimes brutal impediments of the peculiar institution did compose a family life characterized by stability and affection. The evolution of these attributes was the slave's method of resistance to a system which was devised to denounce such family involvement by slaves and more emphatically, the mere idea of a slave having a family, other than biologically. The family was a survival technique. The slave's resistance to the system was channeled through his ability to survive, despite it.

In this account, it may appear that the "favorable" or unfavorable aspects of slavery are depicted. This is not the case. Quite the contrary, this is simply an account of the beginnings of the Black family under the institution of slavery wherein slave families developed stability and initiated
tradition which has been transmitted through the centuries. It must be constantly reiterated that all aspects of slavery occurred in varying degrees throughout the slaveholding region. Consequently, all or not even a majority of families could be cited as secure units with sentimental ties between members.

In diverting our attention to the slave family itself, their mode of maintenance will be reviewed initially. The slave was legally the responsibility of his master. Did this obligation, continually, if at any time, prove beneficial to the slave in regard to his food, clothing, and shelter?
Notes


11. Ibid., p. 122.

12. Ibid., p. 131-132.
13 Ibid., p. 132.


16 Ibid., p. 9.


18 Bastide, African Civilizations in the New World, p. 91.


21 Ibid., p. 41-42.

22 Ibid., p. 42.


24 Turner in Haynes, Blacks in White America, p. 68, 72.


26 Ibid., p. 140.

27 Ibid.

29. Franklin, John Hope, *From Slavery to Freedom*.


32. Ibid.


Ibid.


Mair, African Marriage, p. 2.

Murdock, Africa, p. 27.


Mair, African Marriages, p. 4.


Mair, African Marriages, p. 5.

53 Mair, African Marriages, p. 6.
54 Murdock, Africa, p. 255.
55 Herskovits, Dahomey, p. 302.
CHAPTER ONE
SLAVE MAINTENANCE

The background information on the slave has set the stage for analyzing the slave family itself. Initially, the maintenance of the family is discussed.

Slaveholders were responsible for the food, clothing, and shelter of slaves. It is commonly acknowledged that overall slave maintenance was lacking in quality and quantity. As one ex-slave from North Carolina commented, "We ain't had half nuff ter eat most o' de time, an we ain't had no shoes till we was twenty-one. We had just a few pieces of clothes, an' dey wuz of de wust kind. Our cabins wuz shacks." 1

Despite conditions which prevailed regarding maintenance, pro-slavery factions suggested that it was necessary that slaves be adequately sustained if they were to produce to the utmost of their capacity. Defenders of slavery believed that common sense and self-interest, as well as justice and humanity, caused the master to provide adequately for his slaves' material needs. The master knew that "men, like animals," cannot work unless there is furnished them the necessary comforts which by nature they require. 2

Slave treatment varied from one owner to another. Slaveholders were all different people...
regarding the institution of slavery. Hence, each of them treated their chattel dissimilar.

Stampp contended that there were several motives which dictated the amount of money a slaveholder spent for food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, and the quality and quantity he conceived as essential:

First, it depended upon how well informed the master was about such subjects as diet, hygiene, and the causes and treatment of disease. Even a well-intentioned master could, from sheer ignorance, cause his bondsmen much misery. Second, it depended upon where the master lived. In new regions, where semi-frontier conditions still prevailed, the master himself enjoyed few of the amenities. Third, it depended upon the slave’s status. A domestic, a skilled artisan or a foreman was usually the recipient of more of the master’s bounty than a common field hand. Fourth, and most important, it depended upon the master’s disposition — how close to the margin of subsistence he chose to keep his slaves.

One might assume these terms could be applied to countless numbers of slaveholders. They certainly appear to be quite feasible.

Different aspects of the peculiar institution became legal components of state codes in regard to maintenance. The American Slave Code states that “the slave, as a Chattel, is fed or famished, covered or uncovered, sheltered or unsheltered, at the discretion or convenience of his Owner, like other working Animals.” This was quite true indeed, as Proposition II of the South Carolina slave code stated that “the master may supply the slave with such food and
clothing only, both as to quantity and quality as he may think proper or find convenient." The Four states - North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana enacted codes which prescribed "to the slave owner the kind or amount of food he must furnish his slaves." Failure to adhere to these codes did not lead to punishment of the slaveholder as slaves could not testify against whites, hence these laws were literally useless.

The basic diet of slaves consisted of corn and pork. Three and one half pounds of salt pork or bacon and a peck of corn meal per week was the standard ration of slaves as agreed by historians of different schools. Though this was considered standard, many slaves only received the corn meal. Frances Kemble acknowledged that the slaves on the plantation on which she resided in Georgia only received corn meal or hominy. On the same note, a traveler recalled, "On the most valuable plantation, with one exception, which I visited in the South, no meat was regularly provided for the slaves, but a meal of bacon was given them occasionally. The food is everywhere however, coarse, crude, and wanting in variety, much more so than that of our prison convicts." The general consent of witnesses whose testimony is recorded in American Slavery As It Is, regarding the variety of food which slaves were given held that they received corn and a small allowance of meat.

Charles Ball recalled inquiries he made regarding the
food provisions supplied by a new master. A fellow bondsman responded:

...they never had any meat except at Christmas, when each hand on the place received about three pounds of pork; that from September, when the sweet potatoes were at the maturity of their growth, they had an allowance of potatoes as long as the crop held out, which was generally until about March; but that for the rest of the year, they had nothing but a peck of corn a week, with such weeds and other vegetables as they could gather from the fields for greens—that their master did not allow them any salt, and that the only means they had of procuring this luxury, was, by working on Sundays for the neighboring planters, who paid them in money at the rate of fifty cents per day, with which they purchased salt and some other articles of convenience.12

Times Kendricks, an ex-slave from Georgia reported that chattel on the plantation on which he resided usually ate greens, turnips, peas, and side meat, which was cut quite thin. He added, "us always had a heap of corn meal dumplings and hoecakes."13 John Brown remembered the rations provided slaves by one of his masters:

Our allowance of food was one peck of corn per week to each full-grown slave. We never had meat of any kind, and our usual drink was water. Sometimes, however, we got a drink of sour milk or a little hard cider. We used to make our corn into hominy, hoe, and Johnny-cake, and sometimes parch it, and eat it without any other preparation. The corn was always of inferior quality and weevil-eaten, so that though we got a peck, it did not yield in meal what it would have done had it been sound. It's outside value might have been about three-pence English money.14

William Marshall, an ex-slave from South Carolina, related as a bondsman, he was given home-made molasses, peas,
Food rations were distributed once a week, usually by families. Slaves were then either allowed to prepare food in the cabins or it was prepared in a common kitchen. Designated slaves prepared food in these kitchens. Each family would provide the cook with a portion of their rations from which she would prepare food for all of the slaves.16

"The unwillingness of most slaveholders to establish a common kitchen implicitly demolished the claim that slaves had no strong sense of family."17 Slaves chose to eat as families with some measure of privacy, when at all possible. After an exhausting day, many slave wives painstakingly prepared their evening meals. When their husbands lived on another farm or plantation and visited once or twice a week, those evenings became a special occasion.

Some slaveholders did permit cooking in common kitchens. Often times, food for slaves and the master's family was prepared in these communal kitchens. An ex-slave from Georgia described the common kitchen on the plantation on which he lived:

Just a few of the slave families was allowed to do their own cooking because Master kept cooks up at the big house what never had nothing else to do but cook for the white folks and slaves. The big ol' fireplace in that kitchen at the big house was more than eight feet wide and you could pile whole sticks of cordwood on it. It had racks across to hang pots on and little ovens and big, thick, iron skillets with long handles and hefty iron
lids. They could cook for a hundred people at one time in that big ol' kitchen easy. At one time there was tables across one end of the kitchen for the slaves to eat at, and the slaves chillun ate there too. When these kitchens existed, children were often fed similar to pigs. Frederick Douglass vividly portrayed the manner in which children were fed on his old master's plantation:

Our corn-meal mush, when sufficiently cooled, was placed in a large wooden tray, or trough, like those used in making maple sugar here in the north. This tray was set down, either on the floor of the kitchen or out of doors on the ground, and the children were called, like so many pigs; and like so many pigs they would come, and literally devour the mush-some with oyster shells, some with peices of shingles, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most, and he that was strongest got the best place, and few left the trough really satisfied.

Despite the existence of codes in those states which enacted them, slaves remained at the will of their owners in regard to food, clothing, and shelter. State codes regarding maintenance definitly did not facilitate the slave as suggested by those in North Carolina which were designed for the benefit, not of the slave, but of the persons, from whom a hungry slave might steal a subsistence.

Slaves found other means, though. A slave might supplement his subsistence by theft. As one slave phrased it, "If we did not steal, we could scarcely live. I believe every master is plundered of corn, hogs, chickens, turkey's and such like, to a very large extent by slaves." Countless
slaves indulged in theft as means of supplementing their meager diets. 22

Slaves also trapped animals and fished at night and on Sundays to augment their scanty diets. Slaves were sometimes given a plot of ground which also aided their diets, if they had the time to spare for their upkeep. 23

The clothing afforded slaves was often barely enough to cover their bodies. "Men and women have many times scarce clothes enough to hide their nakedness and boys and girls, ten and twelve years old, are often quite naked among their master's children." 24

Clothing was distributed twice a year. It was made of homespun, which was sometimes woven on the farm or plantation. Clothes were also made from different fabrics which earned the title-Negro cloth. These were calicoes, nankeens, calmarbs, towes, linsley-woolsleys, cassimeres, ducks, kerseys, and Kentucky jeans. Stampp describes the manufacturing of slave clothing:

On large, well managed plantations several slave women might spend most of their time making clothing under supervision of the plantation mistress or the overseer's wife. On smaller establishments, the mistress often made the clothing herself, but frequently each slave family made its own. Although some slaves force included a shoe-maker, Negro-brogans' were customarily purchased ready-made. 25

John Thompson recalled that slaves on his master's plantation were granted a shirt, pair of pants and a jacket in winter. In the summer, they were given

JAMES JAMES
L. Smith depicted the clothing worn by slaves on the plantation which he resided:

Our dress was made of tow cloth, for the children, nothing was furnished them but a shirt, for the older ones, a pair of pantaloons or a gown, in addition, according to sex. Besides these, in the winter season, an overcoat, or a round jacket; a wool hat once in two or three years for the men, and a pair of course brogan shoes once a year.  

House slaves were generally dressed better than field hands as they upheld the prestige of the families to whom they belonged. This was especially the case if the planters were wealthy.  

A mythical generalization has been drawn from the fact that a few slaves were usually clothed exceptionally well. "Family servants, waiters, and hotel attendants must needs appear decently clad. And kept mistresses of gentlemen are often arrayed extravagantly. Superficial observers and shallow thinkers, seeing this, report the happy conditions of slaves in general, having never seen the 'negro quarters' on the plantations." 28 Frederick Olmsted noted the clothing of a Virginian house slave as being neat. 29 Slaves sometimes used clothes to identify with their masters. 30 Louis Hugé, a house servant, depicted his feeling upon receiving a new suit of clothing. "I had known no comforts, and had been so cowed and broken in spirits, by cruel lashings, that I really felt light-hearted at this improvement in my personal appearance, although it was merely for the gratification of my master's pride, and I thought I
would do all I could to please the Boss. 31

Adequate housing was debatable in its connotation between slave and master, also. Small farmers supplied their slaves with small cabins near their homes. Slaves dwelling, on large plantations lived in the quarters. The shacks which compiled the quarters were usually shabby and crudely built. They had dirt floors, were void of windows, and were often full of cracks. Masters seldom supplied furnishings but industrious slaves constructed their own.

As recorded in Goodell's Slave Code, slave dwellings, usually took the following form:

These generally contained but one apartment, and that without floor, no partition to separate the sexes, —nothing that a Northern laborer would call a bed —sometimes built by themselves of stakes and poles, and thatched with palmetto leaf, sometimes of clay, —no window glasses or sashes —not sufficient to keep off the inclemency of the weather —sometimes built of logs on old plantations sometimes of frame and clapboards, size 8 feet by 10, or 10 by 12, and 8 feet high, without any chimney, a hole at top to let the smoke out —generally put up (in Georgia) without a nail ill ventilated... Chairs, table, nor bedstead, on the cold ground they must lie without covering and shiver while they slumber. 32

One contemporary historian contends that the common run of slave cabins were cramped, crudely built, scantily furnished, unpainted, and dirty. 33

A traveler going through South Carolina commented that the slave cabins were of such deplorable condition
for the chimney, he would have thought that it had been built for a powder house - or perhaps an ice-house, never for an animal to sleep in. Austin Steward stated, "Slave cabins were not as good as many of our stables at the North." An ex-slave from South Carolina recalled living in a long cabin made "wid mud between de logs." Wooden beds lacked slats. They used tightly stretched ropes to compensate for the slats. Another ex-slave noted the danger which prevailed in the cabin in which he lived. The chimney was composed of sticks and red mud. They were fire hazards, often bursting into flames. Windows were openings cut in the logs. Doors were composed of "planks," beds of wooden frames, and mattresses of coarse, "home-wove" ticks filled with wheat straw.

Over generalizations should not be made on the institution of slavery. Though slave housing on many plantations was quite deplorable as attested to by autobiographers, others attested to the neat housing given them by their owners. An ex-slave from Louisiana had the following response about housing on the plantation on which she lived:

In the cabins it was nice and warm. They were built of pine boarding, and they was one long row of them up the hill back of the house. Near one side of the cabin was a fireplace. The beds was made out of punchpots fitted in holes, bored in the wall, and planks laid cross them poles. We had ticking mattresses filled with corn shucks. Sometime the men build chairs at night.
The amount of medical attention provided for slaves differed from one slaveholder to another. Many provided physician care for their slaves while many others relied on their own medical expertise. Absentee owners sometimes charged their overseers with their slaves' health. In opposition to any medical attention, many slaveholders possessed neither a sense of duty nor a practical concern for the protection of their property.

The health of slaves remain another source of controversy among scholars. Many major sources suggest that efficient medical practice for chattel was exception rather than rule.

Plantations and farms had their own medical experts. Some relied upon older men and women. The latter was especially useful during childbirth. An ex-slave recalled that the doctor on the plantation upon which he resided was "an old colored man." Physicians' care was deemed unnecessary by many slaveholders who felt that slave women did not bear as much pain as white women. A Massachusetts minister expressed the horror involved in treatment of ill slaves. He continued, "When women are confined they have no physician, but are committed to the care of slave midwives."

Home remedies were used on many plantations. Yellow root tea and black-hall tea were used in the treatment of colds, while willow tea was used in the treatment of fever.
Another tea made from the droppings of sheep was used as a remedy for the measles. Some masters gave their slaves soury grass tea combined with honey to cure abdominal ailments and required them to wear asafetida sacks which had been soaked in turpentine around their necks to "keep diseases off."

Slaveowners and overseers diagnosed most cases, excluding maternity problems. They also prescribed prescriptions. A physician was deemed the last choice on many plantations and farms. Solomon Northup was extremely ill once. He received the lash in response to his fevers, chills, and weakened state. He declared:

I continued to decline until at length the whip became entirely ineffectual. The sharpest sting of the rawhide could not arouse me. Finally...I was unable to leave my cabin. Up to this time I received no medicine, nor any attention from my master or mistress. The old cook visited me occasionally....

When it was said that I would die, Master Epps unwilling to bear the loss, which the death of an animal worth a thousand dollars would bring upon him, concluded to incur the expense of sending to Holmesville for Dr. Wines. He announced to Epps that it was the effect of the climate, and there was a probability of his losing me. He directed me to eat no meat, and to partake of no more food than was absolutely necessary to sustain life. Several weeks elapsed, during which time, under the scanty diet to which I was subjected, I had partially recovered.42

Colonel Robert H. Watkins, of Lawrence County, Alabama owned about three hundred slaves. After employing a physician among them for some time, I insisted on seeing one.
alleging as the reason, that it was cheaper to lose a few negroes every year than to pay a physician.\textsuperscript{43} In cases where physicians were employed, as a normal practice, poor quality of medical professions may well have "resulted in worse conditions for slaves than for those who had to rely on folk medicine and trust to nature."\textsuperscript{44}

Other slaveholders maintained a hospital for slaves. A Mississippi planter depicted the medical care which he afforded his slaves:

I have a large and comfortable hospital provided for my negroes when they are sick; to this is attached a nurse's room and when a negro complains of being too unwell to work he is at once sent to the hospital, and put under the charge of a very experienced and careful negro woman, who administers the medicine and attends to his diet, and where they remain until they are able to work again. This woman is provided with sugar, coffee, molasses, rice, flour, and tea, and does not permit a patient to taste of meat or vegetables until he is restored to health.\textsuperscript{45}

One wonders at the response his slaves would have given to an inquiry about the hospital. Again, rarely were neat, clean hospitals made available for use by slaves. A description of a slave hospital rendered by a viewer suggest the condition in which many were maintained. Upon entering the observer noted:

But half the casements of which there were six, were glazed, and these were obscured with dirt, almost as much as the other windowless ones were darkened by the dingy shutters, which the shivering inmates had fastened in order to protect themselves from the cold. In the enormous chimney glimmered the powerless embers of a few sticks of wood, round which, however, as many of the sick women as could approach were cowering, some on wooden settleins, some on thre
on the ground, excluding those who were too ill to rise, and these last poor wretches lay prostrate on the floor, without bed mattress, or pillow buried in tattered and filthy blankets, which huddled round them as they lay strewn about, left hardly space to move upon the floor.46

These deplorable conditions prevailed in many areas according to sources. "Whatever the reason, neither humanity nor self interest induced the generality of masters to protect the health of their bondsmen as well as they might have done."

The food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention afforded to slaves remains debatable among historians. It was not the purpose here to enter into the dispute, but to set forth evidence suggested by sources in regard to maintenance.

Slave maintenance served to unite the family and contribute to sentiment between family members. Family members supplemented their diets by fishing, hunting, and other measures. Their affection for their families prompted men to make those addends to cabins as possible. Slave women sometimes added to their families wardrobe by making clothing to add to that furnished by masters. Though they were generally of the most deplorable quality, the family managed to alleviate these conditions through other means.
Notes


4. Ibid., p. 280.


20 Goodell, p. 138.


22 See B.A. Botkin, ed., Lay My Burden Down, p. 3-4, 6, 25, 26, 59; Josiah Henson, Father Henson's Story of His Own Life, p. 21-22; Unwritten History of Slavery, p. 45.


24 Goodell, p. 145.
25 Stampp, p. 291.


28 Goodell, p. 147.

29 Olmsted, p. 42.

30 John Slassingame, The Slave Community, p. 192.

31 Louis Hughes, Thirty Years a Slave. (Detroit: Negro History Press, 1896), p. 63-64.

32 Goodell, p. 147.

33 Stampp, p. 294.

34 Olmsted, Cotton Kingdom, p. 161.


37 Killion and Waller, p. 93.


American Slavery as It Is, p. 45.


American Slavery As It Is, p. 45.

Genovese, p. 62.


Kemble, p. 33.

 Stampp, p. 315.
CHAPTER TWO
CONVENTIONAL VIEWS OF THE SLAVE FAMILY

The past two decades in America have witnessed an expansion of scholarship on the institution of slavery. Consequently, scholars have began surveying the family suppressed by this institution - the American Negro slave family. E. Franklin Frazier and Eugene Genovese are two of the more notable scholars who have pursued research in this area. Their findings among a number of others, are impressive and quite incongruent to those revealed by earlier scholars. Modern historians reflect the slave as a person, instead of a beast who is incidentally a human being.

Former historians cited diverse features of slavery to refute the existence of any type of significant family life among slaves. In a study of the slave family, it is requisite to assess those contentions used to deny the fact that slaves, in their precarious situation did succeed in the creation of family lives that were relatively crucial to the sustenance of their members. These aspects of slavery comprise the conventional views of the slave family. However, studies continuously reveal conflicting characteristics of the slave family unit to those proposed by earlier historians.

The separation of members of the families was used as
a primary argument in negating the existing of a solid, stable life among slaves. It was one of the major atrocities of the institution, yet it was quite a frequent occurrence. As Proposition VI of the South Carolina Slave Code stated, "The slave, being a personal chattel, is at all times liable to be sold absolutely, or mortgaged or leased at the will of his master."¹ This aspect of slavery was apt to transpire at any given time and did take place in the course of the lives of most slaves. Families were created by the master's consent and dissolved as easily. Katie Rowe, an ex-slave from Arkansas declared, "I seen children sold off and the mammy not sold, and sometimes the mammy sold and a little baby kept on the place and give to another woman to raise. Them white folks didn't care nothing 'bout how the slaves grieved when they tore up a family."²

Often the contingencies of family fortunes such as changes in the economic status and deaths affected the security of slave families. They were separated from their children and children from their sibling to compensate for certain debts owed upon a master's death. Louisiana was the only state which prohibited the sale of a child from his parents prior to a certain age.³ Josiah Henson described the situation which occurred after his master's death:

My brothers and sisters were bid off first, and she by one, while my mother, paralyzed by illness, had been by the hard. Her turn came, and she was bought by Isaac Wiley of Montgomery.
County. Then I was offered to the assembled purchasers. My Mother, half distracted with the thought of parting forever from her children, pushed through the crowd, while bidding was going on, to the spot, where Riley was standing. She fell at his feet, and clung to his knees, entreating him in tones that a mother only could command, to buy her baby as well as herself, and spare to her one, at least, of her little ones. Will it, can it be believed this man thus appealed to, was capable of not merely turning a deaf ear to supplication, but of disengaging himself from her with such violent blows and kicks, as to reduce her to the necessity of creeping out of his reach, and mingling the groan of bodily suffering with the sob of a breaking heart?

John Thompson depicted the scene which transpired at the trader's house prior to the sale of his sister:

Here the first thing that saluted my ears was the rattling of the chains upon the limbs of the poor victims. It seemed to me to be hell upon earth, emblematical of that dreadful dungeon where the wicked are kept, until the day of God's retribution, and where their torment ascends up forever and ever.

As soon as my sister saw our mother, she ran to her and fell upon her neck, but was unable to speak a word. There was a scene which angels witnesses: there were tears which, I believe, were bottled and placed in God's depository, there to be reserved until the day when He shall pour His wrath upon this guilty nation.

When mother was about to bid farewell to my sister, and reached out her hand to grasp hers, she burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming aloud, Lord, have mercy upon me! I well remember her parting words: Mother she said, don't grieve, for though we are separated in body, our separation is only for a season, and if we are faithful we shall meet again where partings are no more. Mother, will you try to meet me?

Slaves were sold often times to compensate for debts owed by their masters. Archer Alexander's master was in
financial difficulties. Seeking to alleviate them, he
sold one of his prime hands - a slave called Aleck. Upon
hearing the news of the transaction, Aleck's wife, Chloe
was dumbfounded. "She sat down, rocked her body back ward
and forward, and groaned aloud, O Lord God, oh dear Jesus,
what has ole massa gone and done? O Lord Jesus, what
was you wher he don it! But there was no hope for her.
The next day's work must go on, so she cooked and washed
as usual, heavy-hearted but silent." Solomon Northup's
master sold eighteen slaves to abate his debts owned to
a number of people. Another slave recalled his brother and
sister being sold to secure capital for debts owed.

Slaveholders' wills sometimes dictated the procedures
to be followed in distributing their slaves. These methods
varied, but always the slaves were most effected, regardless
of the means employed. Slaves highly feared separation
itself, in addition to the fact that a new owner might be
worse than the present one. At the death of his old
master, Frederick Douglass and other slaves on the plantation
were severely afraid of being placed in the possessions
of Master Andrew, a man known for his cruelty and intemperance.
One slave's master's will stipulated that "the slave-
property be equally divided amongst the mother and the three
daughters, when the youngest married." Sources suggest that families were sold in entire units,
which have been a frequent site. One separation
is recorded wherein the slaves "were placed in five lots, and these were so arranged as to keep the families together." Some masters were highly sympathetic during the course of slave trading, hence they would not sell their slave children away from their mothers. Others willed that upon their deaths, their slave families were not to be severed.

A family was constantly at the mercy of the economy. Economic grounds were considered as significant motives in dispersing family members. An increase in the price of cotton may be noted in this regard. It prompted the sale of a ten year old boy for three hundred and ten dollars. Also, a demand for slaves in the lower South perpetuated an enlargement of their economic value. Economy prompted the sale of William Craft's parents. His master attributed old age as the motive. He declared they would soon become totally worthless in the market.

Often during the course of separating and selling slaves, slave traders were employed. They tended to disregard family ties more than any other group. Slave trading was a degrading business which used human beings as commodities. Frederick Douglass commented on the spectacle:

What an assemblage: Men and women, young and old, married and single, moral and intellectual beings, in open contempt of their humanity, leveled at a blow with horses, sheep, horned cattle and swine! Horses and men - cattle and women - pigs and children - all holding the same rank in the scale of social existence, and all
subjected to the same narrow inspection to ascertain their value in gold and silver - the only standard of worth applied by slaveholders to slaves! How vividly, at that moment did the brutalizing power of slavery flash before me! Personality swallowed up in the sordid idea of property! Manhood lost in chattelhood!14

This description depicted the separation of the slaves on the Maryland plantation after his old master died. Such scenes enhance the argument that, their acknowledgement by slaveholders as mere commodities negated their status as human beings hence subsequently refuting their ability to maintain families.

Western society maintains that a family is initially formed by individuals who are legally married. Marriages are made legal in America by following specific procedures terminating with vows spoken before any person who has been given the rights to join couples in matrimony. That person may be a civil official or an ordained minister. Hence marriage is sanctioned always as a legal act in addition to being recognized by the church.

Most Blacks in America prior to 1685, were excluded from the legal and religious realms which surrounded marriage. Slave unions were based solely on the consent of the slaveholder. A mere word could bind or put asunder two human beings embracing perfectly sound minds. Marriage among slaves did not bring them together in acceptable ways by American society, nor did it sustain and regulate marital affairs. Consequently, the union between two
slaves was not considered legal by the church or the state. They were considered as chattel instead of citizens.

As the American Slave Code contended:

The slave has no rights. Of course, he or she cannot have the rights of a husband, a wife. The slave is chattel, and chattels do not marry. The slave is not ranked among sentient beings, but among things, and things are not married.15

Slaves were denied the status of human beings. "Slaveholders regarded their slaves not as human beings, but as mere working animals or merchandise. The whole vocabulary of slaveholders, their laws, their usages, and their entire treatment of their slaves fully establish this. The same terms that are applied to slaves are applied to cattle."16 Stroud gave an overall view of the slave's status in regard to marriage:

...a slave cannot contract matrimony, the association which takes place among the slaves and is 'called' marriage being properly designated by the word contubernal - a relation which has no sanctity, and to which no civil rights are attached. A slave has never maintained an action against the violator of his bed. A slave is not admonished for incontinence, or punished for fornication or adultery, never prosecuted for bigamy, or petty treason for killing a husband being a slave. Any more than admitted to an appeal for murder.17

According to T.R. Cobb of Georgia, "The contract of marriage not being recognized among slaves, of course none of its consequences follow from the contubernal state existing between them."18 Slaves testified against their spouses. In the case of State v. Samuel, for example, it
was held that the recognition of this state of concubinage, in many statues of North Carolina, does not legalize the marriage so as to give any of the effects of the marriage relation thereto.19

Having established the legal status of slave marriages, it follows that slaves cannot constitute families since "the family relation originates in the institution of marriage, and exists not without it."20 "Being Property, Goods, and Chattels Personal, to all intents and purposes whatsoever, they have no claim on each other - no security from Separation - no Marital Rights - no Parental Rights - no Family Government - no Family Education - no Family Protection."21 Judge Jay contended that "A slave has no more legal authority over his child than a cow over her calf."22

The slave had no legal marriage, legal family, or legal control over children, since all children born of slave mothers belong to the master of their mother.23 Hence the slave family could not have possibly performed the specific functions which Western society deem an essential responsibility of a family unit.

The dominant functions are socialization, social placement, provision of goods and services, and an outlet for emotional release.24 One might suggest that socialization is the most significant of these functions. This important process is defined by Sewell as the process by which
individuals selectively acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives current in the groups or which they are or will become members. The family serves as a basis for status or position in society. It provides a variety of goods and services. The most basic of which are housing, food, clothing, and protection. It also provides entertainment, rest, storage of property, and nursing of the ill, injured, or elderly. Dedication is a service offered by the family which can not be measured in monetary value. It is highly regarded as service which comes natural. The family finally serves as a safe release from emotional strains. Only in the midst of understanding and sympathetic family members can emotional outbursts occur with little fear of reprisal.

The slave family did not socialize its offspring neither did it shelter them in any way from the pangs of slavery. The family could not provide services, material or otherwise. The slave children saw food distributed by the master. He did not witness his father as an authoritative figure in any capacity. Slave parents were first and foremost servants to their masters, while their parental roles were secondary. A historian expounds on the subject:

The slave woman was first a full time worker for her owner, and only incidentally a wife, mother and house-maker. She spent a small fraction of her time in the house she often did no cooking or clothes making; and she was not usually nurse to her children or husband during illness. Parents frequently had little to do with the raising of their children, and the children soon learned that their
parents were neither the fount of wisdom nor the seat of authority. Lacking autonomy, the slave family could not offer the child shelter or security from the frightening creatures in the outside world.

The husband was not the director of an agricultural enterprise; he was not the head of the family, the provider, or the protector. If his wife or child was disrobed and whipped by master or overseer, he stood by in helpless humiliation. In an age of patriarchal families, the male slaves' only crucial function within the family was that of offspring. The husband was at most his wife's assistant, her companion, and her sex partner.26

In addition to the limited roles played by slave parents, there is an insistence that slave mothers displayed minimal affection for their children while they lavished it upon the master's.

Combining the inability of slave families to perform functions prescribed by society, the minor social and economic significance, and the highly limited roles of slave parents, conventional views of slave families contend that one would hardly find it surprising that slave families were highly unstable.

Despite the legal and religious status of slave marriages, they were encouraged to wed. Slaveholders maintained various motives for sanctioning unions between slaves. Granted, some slaveholders did permit marriages to transpire as a result of some degree of paternity they embodied for their chattel. Yet, convention holds that initially slaves were property. Consequently, they were
usually allowed to marry for the master's economic gain, ordered to marry as a matter-of-fact routine included with other written duties to be performed on a given day, or forced to marry by mistresses as a result of promiscuous husbands. Under such awesome circumstances which made the marriages necessary, how could stable, sacred marriages have existed among slaves?

In addition one might cite other significant motives which prompted the unity of slaves. As previously stated, economy dictated slave marriages at times. Couples were forced to marry to increase the master's slave population. The family served as an administrative unit in regards to the distribution of food, clothing, and the provision of shelter. More importantly, a family was quite beneficial in serving as an instrument in maintaining discipline. Strong family attachments tended to discourage misconduct by slaves.

The usual grounds for marriage - love or security among others - did not prompt marriages between slaves. Their lack of sanction by the church and state denied them the ability to develop any type of stable family life. Their status as chattel which allowed separation at any given time also negated the fact that they could have possibly developed any unity among family members. A Virginian slave holder said conventional views in his terms after a slave

...ently pursued her chores following the sale of her
husband:

You see how it is, these niggers don't have no feelings like white folks. Anyhow, it's only as if her old man had died. The thing happens everyday, and has got to happen. It's the order of Providence.27
Notes

5. Thompson, Life of John Thompson, p. 14-16.
7. Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, p. 75.

15 Goodell, American Slave Code, p. 105.

16 American Slavery as It Is, p. 110.

17 Stroud, Sketch of the Laws, p. 41.


20 Goodell, American Slave Code, p. 113.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.


24 Koller, Families, p. 4-5.


26 Stampp, Peculiar Institution. p. 343-344.

CHAPTER THREE  
EXTERNAL AUTHORITY:  
MASTER'S INFLUENCE OVER THE SLAVE

The analysis of the conditions under which slave families prevailed leads to an examination of the master's influence over them. One might immediately suggest that the master had control over the entire realm of the slave's life. This was indeed true. This chapter however proposes to display the overt influence which the slaveholder exercised over the marriages of his slaves and the abuse demonstrated by the former to slave women.

The slave had to secure the master's permission to marry. This consent was necessary from both slaveholders if two were involved. An ex-slave described the procedure employed by his master and surrounding ones regarding marriage of slaves:

I would say, I want So- and So's girl.
I would ask him, if I wanted his girl; and if
I was a negro that was profitable and would increase other families, I could marry. Then I
would ask my master, and if he gave his consent, too, I could marry, but without it, I couldn't. I

Some slaveholders extended their influence beyond the point of issuing consent. In addition to selecting mates, some 'forced' their slaves to marry partners they had chosen. Sally Williams was forced to marry one of the slaves owned by her mistress at the age of thirteen. As
recorded in her biography:

Sally had never seen him, and knew nothing about the matter, till one day when she was in the house, her mistress said—"Well, Sally you're thirteen years old, and I want you to be married. There's a young man over on the plantation who'll make you a good husband. He'll come here soon, and you'll see him, and then followed an enumeration of his good qualities."

An ex-slave from Texas recalled that her master compelled her to reside with a slave against her wishes. Another slave recounted the manner in which his master united slaves:

When he saw a young man and woman engaged in any little sport together, or noticing each other in any way, if he thought they would make a good match, he ordered the overseer to build them a house....

When the house was finished, the master ordered Bob, the head man to bring Joe and Phyllis and put them into their house. Then putting a small padlock on the door, he gave the key to Bob, saying, Here, Bob, I have put my seal on this door, now here is the key; you keep this nigger and this wench together, or, by 'dings,' you'll pay for it. Do you make Joe build a fire for Phyllis, and see that Phyllis cooks for Joe, and washes his clothes, and mind, Bob, I shall look to you.

No expostulations from either party could alter his decree. He had been to the trouble of building a house for them, and now they should live in it, or take the consequences of brave his authority.

Mistresses forced slaves to marry as a means of controlling the master's sex relations. John Thompson's sister was obliged to marry hastily in accordance to her mistress's wishes. This enraged the master. Seeking revenge, he whipped the young girl, after his wife refused to consent to her disposal by sale.
Masters perpetuated their restraint over slave marriages by strongly encouraging marriage between slaves on the same plantation. Governor James Hammond's of South Carolina instructions to his overseers under the title of marriage included the following statement. "Permission must always be obtained from the master before marriage but no marriage will be allowed with negroes not belonging to the master." According to the regulations stipulated by the "Management of Slaves," "Taking wives and husbands among their fellow servants at home, should be as much encouraged as possible; and although intermarrying with those belonging to other estates should not be prohibited, yet it is always likely to lead to difficulties and troubles and should be avoided as much as possible. Furthermore, they cannot live together as they ought, and are constantly liable to separation in changing of property."

Many slaves counteracted their master's actions by striving very hard to marry slaves from other plantations or farms. Male slaves had reasons which can well be understood for marrying women from other plantations or farms. If they married slaves belonging to their owners, they would be forced to watch the women as they were "beaten, insulted, raped, overworked, or starved without being able to help."

The masters maintained their reasoning by the fact that any children fathered by their slaves by women belonging to other slaveholders would not belong to them. The laws of
slavery maintained that children inherited the condition of their mothers.

In cases wherein two slaveholders were involved in the consent permitting a couple to be married, one owner sometimes opted to purchase the other partner. This was a fairly common practice, as it often served to instill loyalty in a slave if his owner purchased his spouse. Yet, this purchasing act did not always cause such an effect. Henry Bibb was sold to his wife's owner with which he was much dissatisfied:

...to live where I must be eye witness to her insults, scourings, and abuses, such as are common to be inflicted upon slaves, was more than I could bear. If my wife must be exposed to the insults and bear the stripes of the lash laid on by an unmerciful tyrant, if this is to be done with impunity, which is frequently done by slaveholders and their abettors, Heaven forbid that I should be compelled to watch the sight.

Austin Steward elaborated on the husband's position in the event that his wife was whipped:

The slave husband must submit without a murmur, to see the form of his cherished, but wretched wife, not only exposed to the rude gaze of a beastly tyrant, but he must unresistently see the heavy cowhide descend upon her shrinking flesh, and her manacled limbs writhe in inexpressible torture, while her piteous cries for help ring through his ears unanswered. The wild throbbing of his heart must be suppressed, and his righteous indignation find no voice, in the presence of the human monster who holds dominion over him.

Acquiring authorization was the major problem confronting two slaves hoping to be married. Blassingame contends
that the ceremony usually consisted of getting permission and moving into a cabin together. However, other types of ceremonies also were indulged in by slaves. Many alluded to a ceremony which required the couple to 'jump the broom.' It was quite common during slavery, but scholars have been unable to determine its origin. Millie Evans, an ex-slave from North Carolina informed interviewers that her master employed the white minister to marry his slaves, but a neighbor chose to use the broom method. Fred Brown from Baton Rouge recalled that sometimes a couple was given extra food for supper as part of a ceremony. Another ex-slave depicted the method of jumping the broom used on his plantation:

A preacher was never used to perform a wedding ceremony on the Ormond Plantation. After the man told the master about the woman of his choice and she had been called and had agreed to the plan, all that was necessary was for the couple to join hands and jump over a broom which had been placed on the floor.

Slaves were also sometimes afforded "formal" weddings. Various motives might prompt such action by mistresses. Slaves who occupied the positions as house servants or who were 'favorites' to their mistresses sometimes received lavish weddings. Usually not as frequent, field hands were also given ceremonies, though they weren't as lavish as those given house servants. These weddings were sometimes officiated by white ministers. In North Carolina and Tennessee, white ministers reputedly regularly married the slaves on
farms and plantations. An ex-slave portrayed slave marriages as they transpired on the plantation upon which he lived:

When slaves got married, the man had to ask the gal's ma and pa for her and then he had to ask the white folks to allow them to get married. The white preacher married them. They hold right hands and the preacher ask the man; do you take this gal to do the best you can for her? And if he say yes, then they had to change hands and jump the broomstick, and they was married. Our white folks was all church folks and didn't allow no dancing at weddings but they give them big suppers when their slaves got married.17

This practice may have become widespread, yet it was limited by the number of slaves who preferred marriage by a Black minister.18

Wedding parties were sometimes conducted by mistresses. Genovese suggest that they often went to considerable lengths to prepare big wedding parties for their house servants and sometimes for the field hands.19 Invitations were issued to friends, neighbors, and relations, as they wanted their bridal parties especially to remember a joyous occasion. Louis Hughes depicted his wedding as being pleasant. Slaves from neighboring owners were invited. The parish minister conducted the ceremony. He recalled, "Matilda and I stood in the parlor of the Mc Gee house and were solemnly made man and wife."20 One slave's wedding was quite 'elegant.' She was dressed in a white muslin frock complimented by a bright waist-ribbon and a handkerchief for her head-dress. This attire was furnished by the mistress.
The groom wore some of the master's old clothes. All of the servants were invited. The ceremony was performed by the "colored" Methodist minister. Afterwards, cake prepared by the mistress was served. A dance followed, terminating the event. An ex-slave from Mississippi recounted slave weddings which sometimes transpired on the plantation:

"Dey had big weddings' and de young white ladies dressed de brides up like dey was white. Sometimes dey sent to New Orleans for a big cake. De preacher married 'em with de same testimony dey use now. Den everybody'd have a little drink and some cake. It sure was larrupin'. Den everybody'd get right. We could dance near about all night."

Henry Lewis, an ex-slave from Texas depicted his wedding as being 'big.' He continued, "She dress all in white.

I have de nice hat and suit of Black clothes and Daddy a shoemaker and make me de good pair of shoes to get marry in. Us stand front of Massa Mayer and he read out de Bible. Us had a real supper and some de white folks give us money." 

Tempie Herndon remembered her wedding. She narrated it to a fellow slave:

"I married Exter Durham. We had a big weddin'. We was married on de front porch of de Big House. Marse George killed a shoot and Mis' Betsy had Georgians, de cock, to bake a big weddin' cake all iced up white as snow with a bride and groom stand in de middle holdin' hands. De table was set out in de yard under de trees, and you ain't never seen de like of eats. All de niggers come to de feast and Marse George had a drama for every body. Dat was some weddin'. I had on a white dress, White shoes, and long white gloves dat come to my elbow, and Mis' Betsy done make me a weddin' veil out of a white net window curtain. When she played de weddin' march on de piano, me and Exter marched down"
de walk and up on de porch to de altar Mis' Betsy done fixed. Dat de prettiest altar I ever seed. Back tables filled with flowers and white candles. She done spread down a bed sheet, a sure'nough linen sheet, for us to stand on. Exter done made me a weddin' ring. He made it out of a big red button with his pocket knife. He done cut it so smooth dat it looked like a red satin ribbon tied round my finger.

Uncle Edmond Kirby married us. He was de nigger preacher dat preached at de plantation church.24

Kenneth Stampp, in The Peculiar Institution, suggested that whites found profound joy in slave weddings. They were simply mockeries of ceremonies they themselves had. The slaves would mispronounce words in an earnest attemp at officiating over a ceremony. The entire wedding party, though solemn, was quite akward. This simply delighted slaveholders to watch such fiascos.25

Despite the mockery by whites and slave holders, slaves valued and cherished their wedding ceremonies as much as the ruling class. 'Jumping the broom' ceremonies were also valued. Regardless of the type of ceremony, marriages entered into by slaves were not legal. They were property, designated as things and things could not marry. Perhaps one can associate the total disregard of female slaves as women, by slaveholders, with their status as things. Things could maintain no virtue therefore, slave women did not have to protect or sustain their virginity and self respect.

The slaveholder exercised his influence by sexually abusing Black women in bondage. Regardless of the nature of
the relationship, whether it was one in which the master
designated the slave as head of his household or one in
which the master simply coerced the slave to succumb to
his wishes, all sexual relationships between masters and
their chattel were exploited and aspersed. Such relation-
ships were prevalent throughout the slave holding regions
of America. As stated, they were merely things. What prompted
slaveholders to seek sexual privileges from 'things'? One
might suggest that the ideals adhered to by nineteenth
century American women impelled their husbands to engage in
such activity. These Victorian views tended to shape the
lives of women of 'class'. They were featured by four
cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and
domicity.26 Women who practiced these virtues were
promised happiness and power.

Religion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the
source of her strength. She was religious by divine right.
'This 'peculiar susceptibility' to religion was given her
for a reason: the vestal flame of piety, lighted up by
Heaven in the breast of woman would throw its beams into the
naughty world of men. So far its candlepower reach that the
Universe might be Enlightened, Improved, and Harmonized by
Woman!!' 27

Religion was deemed highly important. It did not
take a woman from her home, neither did it decrease her
submissiveness. Her home was her 'proper sphere'. If her
marriage was unsatisfactory, if her husband appropriated all her funds and mistreated her, there was little she could do legally or socially, but she was encouraged to find solace in religion, the great tranquilizer. 28

Purity was crucially significant and could not be guarded enough. Its absence was unnatural and unfeminine. "A fallen woman was a fallen angel unworthy of the celestial company of her sex." 29 Women's magazines of the century maintained that loss of purity designated a woman as being a member of a lower order. Therefore, women were highly encouraged to protect their virginity, in spite of men who would, by their nature try to attack it. Thomas Branagan suggested in The Excellency of the Female Character Vindicated that if a woman adhered to men's desires, she would be left in silent sadness to bewail her credulity, imbecility, duplicity, and premature prostitution.

Purity enabled a woman to bestow her greatest treasure upon her husband on her wedding night. This was the single greatest event of her entire life. Thereafter, he would regulate her life absolutely, from choosing her friends to dictating her every move. 30 She would be kept completely ignorant of his business and financial affairs.

"Southern women sought diligently to live up to the prescriptions, to attain the perfection and the submissiveness demanded of them by God and man." 31 It was emphasized as an absolute necessity for the wife - even when she knew
herself to be in the right and her husband to be wrong. Men were active doers while women were passive, submissive responders. Woman then in all her roles accepted submission as her lot. George Fitzhugh spelled out the virtue of submissiveness:

So long as she is nervous, fickle, capricious, delicate, diffident, and dependent, man will worship and adore her. Her weakness is her strength, and her true art is to cultivate and improve that weakness... If she is obedient, she is in little danger of maltreatment, if she stands upon her rights, in course and masculine, man loses and despises her and ends by abusing her. 32

Southern women were upheld in their gentility, goodness, and purity. These ideals were internalized by both men and women. Both sexes practiced them in their own way. Slaveholders guarded the purity of their women while they abused Black women. This mis-use of slave women - sexually, transpired in all slaveholding towns and cities. White men justified their sexual relationships with slaves by pointing out that they protected the chastity of white women. Her virtue was being upheld. The slave was property, hence she could be used to serve in any capacity. The slaveholder did not have to disgrace the women of his class with such vile activities as forced sexual encounters. The lady was frowned upon who entertained the slightest notion of sex. Hence, the Southern woman was spared thought and deed through the exploitation of the slaves.

In addition to the previously stated grounds, Black
women were naturally licentious. Their families were characterized by incontinence, fornication, adultery, and bigamy, all of which carried no punishment and were the rule. Reuter, the sociologist, elaborated on the issue. He expressed the generality that the sex association of the Negro girls and white men was not in general a matter of compulsion. "The slaves were without a body of inhibiting sex standards."\(^{23}\) They had no virtue to sustain, because they were slaves and African. Winthrop Jordan attested to the original association of Africans with potent sexuality and licentiousness. He stated, "Long before first English contact with West Africa, the inhabitants of virtually the entire continent stood confirmed in European literature as lustful and venereal."\(^{26}\) Another sociologist asserted, "When the persistence of African morals is coupled with the pressure imposed by slavery, it is not to be wondered at that a large proportion of women of color were of easy virtue."\(^{25}\) Finally, slaveholders upheld their sexual encounters with slaves by citing the increase in slave property.\(^{26}\) Nonetheless, few white women appreciated these arguments. "The bitterness of Southern women on this subject came out again and again."\(^{37}\) One Southern mistress remarked, "We Southern ladies are complimented with the name of wives, but we are only the mistress of seraglions."\(^{38}\) "...Sexual contacts between the races were not the
rare aberrations of a small group of depraved whites but a frequent occurrence involving whites of all social and cultural levels. Genovesa contends that most of the relationships between slave and ruling class occurred in the towns and cities, yet when it did transpire on the plantation it tended to be more violent and cruel.

It is hardly necessary here to attempt to generalize numerically the extent of relationships between slaves and whites. Acknowledgement of occurrence and diverse means will suffice in addition to the effects on the slave family.

Frederick Douglass declared that the "slave woman is at the mercy of the father, sons, or brothers of her master." These associations were featured by force oftentimes. "Some slave women because of devotion to their husbands, or because of a belief that it was morally wrong or for some other inhibiting reason, did not voluntarily have sexual relations even with their masters." If they submitted, it was only under coercion. Lack of cooperation usually resulted in flogging. Malinda, a wife and mother, was twice flogged for refusing to succumb to her master's will. A threat to sell her child did not bend her determination.

Another slave narrative stated a similar incident:

Thomas James, Jep's second son, had cast his eyes on a handsome young negro girl, to whom he made dishonest overtures. She would not submit to him, and finding he could not overcome her, he swore he would be revenged. One night he called her out of the jin-house, and then had me and two or three more, strip
her naked; which we did. He then made us throw her down on her face, in front of the door, and hold her whilst he flogged her - the brute - with the bull-whip, cutting great gashes of flesh out of her person, at every blow, from five to six inches long. The poor unfortunate girl screamed most awfully all the time, and writhed under our strong arms, rendering it necessary for us to use our united strength to hold her down. He flogged her for half an hour, until he nearly killed her, and then left her, to crawl away to her cabin.\footnote{44}

Milton Clarke's sister Delia was sold South after persuasion nor floggings could induce her to submit to her master's diabolical wishes.\footnote{45}

Favors were also employed to coerce slave women to yield to sexual desires of white males. Hence, they were 'forced' to offer themselves 'willingly.' Small gifts and other rewards were imparted upon female slaves for their peaceful compliance with the white man's wishes. Cynthia, a slave, was offered the choice of being placed in her master's home as housekeeper or sold as a field hand to the worst plantation on the Mississippi River.\footnote{46} Eliza was promised her freedom if she lived with her master. After nine years, instead of freedom, she was sold South.\footnote{47} Some women succumbed willfully under the hopeful assumption that uncommon rewards of some type would be granted. Ordinarily, these women may have rejected white men. All sexual affairs between slaves and whites did not pursue the same course. Historians agree that some relationships developed into concubinage which lasted for long periods
of time. 43 Some whites 'loved' their Black mistresses, treating them as their wives. Sources suggest that it was not a rare occasion which revealed a man had purchased his Black concubine and placed her in his household in some favorable position. If the men were single, they placed her in head of their households. Slave narratives reveal such relationships some of which involved men living in open contempt of their wives.

For those men who were unable to follow the previous methods of action, engagement in alternatives such as separation, a secret alliance, or 'life beyond the pale of respectable white society' dictated their relationship with slave women. Regardless of what method chosen by some men, their wives did not tolerate it. Court actions citing involvement with slaves prompted divorces and separations. These were not tremendously common, yet they were not rare. In the case Hansley v. Hansley, a North Carolina wife sued for divorce and alimony. He had not only bedded with Lucy - a slave - but placed in her full possession - domestic duties. 49 Another woman divorced her husband for living in adultery with a Negro woman. 50 In Tennessee, a woman was granted a divorce after her husband committed adultery with the slave Polly. 51

Regardless of the type of relationship, slave women were exploited. Exploitation occurred because of the mere fact that they were slaves, subservient to men in the ruling class.
Offspring were products of many associations involving white men and slave women. Members of the ruling class dealt with them in different ways. Though a man may not have 'loved' the child's mother, he sometimes provided for his freedom and that of his mother's by placing emancipation clauses in his will. These clauses did not always acknowledge the connection between master and slave. Others did not compel their offspring to await their death to gain freedom. Some attempted to buy freedom for their offspring. A South Carolina man sent his mulatto son to Indiana, where he had him settled and financially cared for, after futile attempts to emancipate him.\textsuperscript{52} Countless white males merely disregarded their mistresses and offspring. They were treated as all other 'property' was treated. Others sold the women and children.

Sexual activity between slave and master doubtless induced heartaches in the cabin. They took the shape of different forms in slave life. Slave girls could seldom maintain their purity to the age of marriage while white women of the times were forced to do so. Female slaves were the objects of abuse and torture of mistresses and rebuked white men, alike. Husbands had to contend with the initial abuse and later the mulatto children.

The master's influence reached into the inner-most sphere of slave life. When a marriage occurred between slaves, it took an ever-prevailing effort to sustain it.
Slaves - women and men - were affected more by influence of masters. They could prevent their uniting, or allow them to marry but retain their rights of ownership, in regards to slaves obey your masters at all times. These times included obeying his sexual wishes. Husbands had to contend with these wishes, also. One can wonder about the choices in such a situation. It took immense restraint to subdue oneself in such a predicament. This did not always transpire. Josiah Henson commented, "My father would have killed him but for the entreaties of my mother and the overseer's own promise that nothing should ever be said of the matter." The overseer tried to compel his mother to adhere to his sexual wishes.

Slave women on the other hand were the victims of such brutal acts. They paid a higher price than the white women or the men, white and Black, for it was they who suffered the violence and the attendant degradation of being held responsible for their own victimization - while their white mistresses became, with or without their own consent, symbols of asexual purity. Those families that were characterized by stability had horrible conditions with which to contend.
Notes

5 Thompson, Life of John Thompson. p. 33-34.

8 Blessingsame, Slave Community. p. 86.

9 See Bontemps, Great Slave Narratives, p. 207; also Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, p. 142; and B.A. Botkin, Lay My Burden Down. p. 185.

11 Steward, Twenty Two Years a Slave, p. 18.
12 Blessingsame, Slave Community. p. 87.
15 Ibid.
18 Unwritten History, p. 74.
20 Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*, p. 94.
21 Aunt Sally, p. 51-54.
22 Yetman, *Voices from Slavery*, p. 218.
23 Ibid., p. 206.
25 See Aunt Sally, p. 53.
27 Ibid.


36 Scott, *Southern Lady,* p. 53.

37 Ibid.

38 quoted from Carter G. Woodson, "Beginnings of Miscegenation of Whites and Blacks," *Journal of Negro History,* 3, No. 4 (1918), 350.


43 Bibb, *Narrative,* p. 98.


47 Northup, Twelve Years a Slave, p. 31.

48 See Blassingame, Slave Community, p. 83 and Stampp, Peculiar Institution, p. 335.

49 Catterall, Judicial Cases, II, p. 139.

50 Ibid., p. 160.

51 Ibid., p. 505.

52 Ibid., p. 375.

53 Henson, Father Henson's Life, p. 3.

54 Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll. p. 428.
CHAPTER FOUR
INTERNAL RESPONSE: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

The master's influence shaped the slave family in such intimate courses, many of which people are quite unaware. Yet, such odious deeds as sexual maltreatment of female slaves or forcing complete strangers to marry did not obstruct the development of some durable, stable families among slaves. An inquiry into the nature of the structure and functions of the slave family is set forth at this point to substantiate the acknowledgement that slaves in spite of a horrid life in bondage did create a family life. The critical relevance of a stable family was perpetuated by the ceaseless reality of separation.

In viewing the nature of the structure of the family, it will be examined as a group having social relations and fulfilling diverse roles as is common to families in most societies. The family satisfied functions which embraced 'surviving' a social life for itself out of the stringent rules of the master.

Slaves have been portrayed as being generally promiscuous. A lack of morals constantly plagued their characteristics according to many slaveholders. They were not legally married. How could they possibly care for their spouse of offspring? Designated as things and likened to
beast, it was commonly assumed that most slaves were not capable of possessing or exposing positive emotions. A minister from North Carolina contended that Negroes did not regard marriage as strictly as they ought. He further asserted that they married carelessly and separated easily, and the result was much licentiousness. Students of history could hardly disagree that some slaves were lascivious. Lewdness does not e]ect its color. Many slaves no doubt did take advantage of the availability of the opposite sex. Despite the loose morality of the quarters, a great deal of respect existed for the monogamous family. Many slaves had only one partner. This may have resulted from religious teachings, the requirements of the master, or the deep affection between mates. Affection was the base of many unions which endured for decades.

This aids in resolving the actions of many slaves who ran away, hoping to find their mates who were sold or lived in other areas. Advertisements acknowledging that a run away slave may have been in the vicinity of his mate and family were quite frequent. "A slave name Jack, who had gone to a new master and then disappeared for six months was supposed to be lurking about Mr. Maybank's plantation with his wife." A similar notice appeared for a young Negro carpenter named Primus, who had also changed owners recently. "He pass'd over Combahee Ferry about 6 weeks ago, and is suspected to be at Port Royal Island, having a
Wife at or near Mr. Hazard's Plantation." A fifty dollar reward was offered for Pauladore, a slave. His owner indicated in the advertisement that he was probably "lurking" about the plantation on which his family resided.

Durant Rhodes placed in a July, 1838 issue of the Wilmington (N.C.) Advertiser, the following announcement. "Ran away my negro man Richard. A reward of $25 will be paid for his apprehension, Dead or Alive. Satisfactory proof only will be required of his being killed. He has with him, in all probability, his wife Eliza, who ran away from Col. Thompson, now a resident of Alabama, about the time he commenced his journey to that State."

Death is ultimately the greatest punishment one can receive. Certainly, action that warranted it confirmed the love some slaves had for their families.

Slaveholders were forced to realize the strength of the tie that bound families together which compelled a man to endure punishment for seeking his loved ones. Thus some slaveholders sold families of slaves together or more often in the neighborhood of their mates. As recorded in a South Carolina court in 1845 in the case of Pell v. Bull, it was decreed that the Negro slaves be sold in lots according to families. Three thousand two hundred dollars were paid for a Negro, his wife, and his two small daughters. Harry, his wife Hannah, and their child Mildah were sold together. Despite the conventional views surrounding the
stability of the slave family, evidence suggest that slave families were as much as possible stable within the framework of the institution. Oftentimes, the presence of offspring strengthened the bonds in a family. Stability was obviously very difficult to initiate. The slave family faced seemingly insurmountable odds in his struggle. Solidarity and stability were not attributes of all families. It is the purpose here to acknowledge and describe these features as they originated through various forms, for they did indeed characterize some families. Autobiographers lay a tremendous amount of stress upon the significance of a stable family among slaves. Those who were not as fortunate as others who were surrounded by their families were unlucky indeed.

As noted earlier, one would debate the possibility of the slave family actually developing any security about itself, in the ever-present face of separation, and the legal ground upon which it stood. Yet, narratives consistently speak of families wherein members cherished each other as much or more as those in the ruling class. The family was source of strength for its members, having created immutability despite the system.

Many slaves held their marriages sacred inspite of the accuracy of Du Bois' account of slavery's features. Countless instances were recalled by older people of the South of the life-long fidelity and affection which existed between the slave and his concubine. Josiah Henson and
his wife were married for over forty years in addition to
the births of twelve children. Slaves, like other human
beings were capable of exhibiting positive emotions in
family units.

Habitual association in a common household has been
credited with playing a part in the solidarity developed
by some slave families. Contrary to earlier views,
genuine affection often developed between spouses and
between parents and children. According to a South Carolina
minister, "Despite trying conditions, stable alliances
were far from unknown to the average slave, who would labor
during every free moment in support of his family and
all that is dear to him in this world." A slave couple
in the church of one minister was cited for their fondness
for each other and their offspring. Thomas Jones recalled
the affection and joy found in his home during his
childhood:

I remember well that dear old cabin, with
its clay floor and mud chimney in which for nine
years I enjoyed the presence and love of my
wretched parents.

Privacy and engagement in common activities served as
a substantial basis for evolving family unity. Though
economy was repeatedly the predominant motive, some masters
exercised non-interference in family affairs. The major
concern was production. Its sufficient output was rewarded
to families through privacy grants in their dwellings and
family affairs. This also served to check the separation
of families, though it was a common occurrence. This privacy was highly valued by slaves.

Gardening was a frequent activity which many slaves engaged in together. It served as a supplement to the food allotted by masters in addition to consolidating a family in a task which benefited all members.

Enduring sentiments developed within family circles which served to tighten the bonds between members. These bonds were sometimes bound tighter between children whose parents were dead or had been sold. The natural bond of sympathy and affection appeared in their devotion and sacrifices for one another. William Wells Brown's sister and mother were owned by a neighboring man. His sister was later placed in jail prior to being sold South. Upon visiting her, he witnessed a scene long to be remembered. He recounted it:

Never, never can be erased from my heart the occurrences of that day! She was seated with her face towards the door when I entered. As soon as she observed me, she sprang up, threw her arms around my neck, leaned her head upon my breast, and burst into tears. As soon as she recovered herself sufficiently to speak she advised me to take Mother, and try to get out of slavery. She herself must live and die a slave. After giving her some advice, and taking from my finger a ring and placing it upon hers, I bade her farewell forever...19

Booker T. Washington's brother generously 'broke in' a new flax shirt for him on several occasions. A young slave girl tried to comfort her brother after their father's death by telling him to "Take Courage, brighter days will
come by and by.21

These accounts attest to the solidarity often achieved in family groups. The slave family regardless of the affectionate bonds attained was constantly preyed upon by the domestic slave trade. Any degree of family unity was treasured, for a slave was always aware that his relatives might be divided at any given time due to death, economic difficulties or a host of other motives.

The structure of the slave family is viewed through the roles assumed by different family members. These roles are the basis of the significance of the slave family which attest to their stability. The family was structured in such a manner that it had a renown effect on its members. The roles assumed by family members were incongruent, for certainly all slaves did not position their family as their top priority. It is the objective here to portray primarily those roles played by slaves which served to enhance the stability and unity of their families. The steady family was not the rule, yet neither was it the exception. It was, however, much more common than has been perceived in early works on the institution.

Nineteenth century America categorised the male as the head of the family. Patriarchy dominated the society. These norms have been used by critical scholars to measure the slave family which have terminated in a grave injustice to it.22
The father's role in the slave family was initially restricted by his master. He could countermand any decision made by the slave father. One historian asserted that the Negro child had no satisfactory father image other than the master. The real father was virtually without authority over his child. These conditions obviously affected the child. He was often unaware of his father by name or person. Fathers living on other plantations were allowed to visit their families similar to an uncle visiting his nieces and nephews. These relationships were more or less casual between male and child.

In spite of that casual role of many fathers, evidence also suggests that there were families within which the father was truly the dominant figure. "If many men lived up to their assigned irresponsibility, others, probably, a majority, overcame all obstacles and provided a positive male image for their wives and children." Slave fathers displayed true paternal affection through actions and words. "Fathers regaled their children with fascinating stories and songs and won their affection with little gifts." Such activity was much more important if the father lived on another plantation. The two weekly visits of the father then often took on celebration-like features. Indeed, fathers who visited at intervals played significant roles in their families sometimes. Elizabeth Keckley's father was only allowed to visit twice a year, yet he was highly regarded."
Charles Ball's father lived on a near-by plantation. He visited on Saturday nights and "brought some little present, such as the means of a poor slave would allow—apples, melons, sweet potatoes, or, if he could procure nothing else, a little perchcd corn, which tasted better in the cabin because he had brought it."28

Many slaves were lucky enough to have masters who refused to intercede in family affairs. Thus many slave parents had complete control over their children, even to the point of punishment. Absentee owners often presented the male slave with an unchallenged role in regard to authority over his family. Overseers did not interfere in the male slave's authority even when they beat their wives, sometimes. "A black man whose authority in the house rested on his use of force may have picked the worst way to assert himself, but in a world in which so much conspired to reduce men to 'guests in the house' and to emasculate them, even this kind of assertion however unmanly by external standards, held some positive meaning."29

Many slave fathers loved their children very much. This affection can be witnessed in Mark's (a slave) reply to his master in response to the questioning of his being asleep. "Masa Nelson, I think I had as much right to sit up wid my sick chile as you had to sit up wid little Masa Eddie de other night."30 Mark was immediately struck, and
later sold down South for being impudent. Slave men provided for their families to a greater extent than has been appreciated. They gained status in their families in several ways:

Whenever possible, men added delicacies to their family's monotonous fare of corn, fat pork, and molasses by hunting and fishing. If the planter permitted the family to cultivate a garden plot or raise hogs, the husband led his wife in this family undertaking. The husband could also demonstrate his importance in the family unity by making furniture for the cabin or building partitions between cabins which contained more than one family. The slave who did such things for his family gained not only approbation of the wife but he also gained status in the quarters.31

Lucinda Miller's father hunted rabbits and oppossums and carried them to her mother.32 Vina Smith and her children always had decent clothing, thanks to Peter's (her husband) industry and self-denial. Their cabin boasted many convenient articles of furniture, such as slaves seldom possess. They had also better food than most of their companions, for to the scant allowance of bacon and corn meal which was doled out to Vina on Sunday mornings, Peter often found means to add a little coffee and sugar, or a few pounds of sugar.33

Extra work allowed slave men to buy delights for their families to eat and provide extra clothing. Many men exercised any and all possible means to enlighten their lives in bondage.

Sentiments developed between family members were also
indicated by the protection men gave their wives, especially, even to the point of death. There was an attempt on the life of Col. Ben Sherrod's overseer - Walker, by three slaves because of the treatment he had rendered their wives. 34 Another was eventually sold South for attacking an overseer who had tried to abuse his wife sexually. 35 Countless slaves did their best in the midst of others who succumbed.

Most slave children usually did have an image of a strong Black man before them. Fathers that placed their families first through words and deeds filled these images. Attempts at making life easier, kindled respect and love for male slaves. Sometimes, even submission, if the best possible outlet at a given time commanded respect.

Models of sturdy Black men were available for children whose homes lacked adult males. These men may have been overseers, skilled artisans, or field hands who shared time with children. Some of these men sometimes substituted as surrogate fathers. They taught children survival techniques necessary in a hostile white world. "The norm in the quarters called for adults to look after children, whether blood relatives or not." 36 Most Black children had some notion of male assertion whether first or second hand.

Father's abuse of children is substantiated by evidence, yet those who loved their children have found their ways into narratives also. It is not surprising that more slaves
spoke lovingly of their mothers oftener than their fathers, since so many slaves who recorded their lives had white fathers or weren’t aware of them.

The male’s role has been severely diminished by historians enlarging the role of the female. It is quite true that countless households did not know a father which enhanced the mother’s role as head of the family. Deprivation of the role of provider, refusal to dignify their marriages or legitimize their issue, compelled to submit to physical abuse in the presence of their women and children, the dire choice between remaining silent while their wives and daughters were raped or seduced, and risking death obviously was too much for countless men to bear. Consequently, there existed many irresponsible husbands and indifferent fathers. Yet, the assertion that the typical slave family was matriarchal in form and the husband was at most his wife’s assistant has been refuted by contemporary historians. 37

The slave mother’s role cannot be contested in any respect. It was she whom many slaves knew as their only parental figure. Often the mother ultimately provided the child’s needs and at the cost frequently of great suffering defied the master. Milton Clarke recounted how his mother endeavored to aid his sister while she was being punished by Logan, their master:

Sister asked me to speak to mother. I ran and called her; she hesitated a good deal, but the shrieks of her child at length overcame every fear,
and she rushed into the presence of, and began to remonstrate with, this brute. He turned around with all the vengeance of a fury, and knocked poor mother down, and injured her severely; when I saw the blood streaming from the shoulders of my sister, and my mother knocked down, I became completely frantic.  

Slave mothers were highly regarded. William Wells Brown wanted to escape from slavery but he could not bear to leave his mother. 39 Neal Upson, an ex-slave from Georgia declared that his mother was so smart that they always had plenty to eat as a result. 40 Bishop L.J. Coppin described his mother as being wonderful. He continued to elaborate on her:

Great men are not the only men who have great mothers. Some obscure men who have not been much more known in the world's great movements, than a match starts a blaze and immediately perishes, have also had great mothers. ...What is it that could make a mother persist in clandestinely having her child taught to read and write when there was no visible prospect whatever of it ever being of service to him; and besides, when, it being in violation of the law, it could only be done at peril. 41

Travelers' accounts as well as historians suggested that many slave mothers regarded the master's children with much esteem while they displayed indifference to their own offspring. The rewards granted, harsh experiences attending motherhood, and forced pregnancies might alone for the former part of the statement, while the latter part requires examination. 42 It is true that some slave women took little interest in their offspring. A closer look at such action reflects reasons slaveholders did not care to expand upon
when making the statement alluding to the assertion that slave women cared more for their (Master's) children than their own. An indifferent attitude exhibited toward their offspring may have been some mothers' method of conditioning them for their future in bondage. One prominent reason that explained their actions was that they did not want their children to endure the pains and suffering so characteristic of slavery which included separation at any time. Hence, many of them developed a 'self-protective hardening' which enabled some of them to appear quite calm when a child died or was sold. As most slaves were Christians, death offered a child a better home than slavery. Overwork, minimum allotment of time for child care, and general demoralization which so often accompanied slaves' lives caused some slave women to disregard their children. It is debatable whether or not disregard under such severe circumstances was by choice.

It might be noted here that slave narratives utilized in this study failed to mention that children were systematically disregarded by slave mothers. They did allude to the fact that the slave regime imposed upon the mothers various inhibitive actions which did not allow them to show the love and affection they felt at all times. However, most Black women welcomed their babies, loved them, and braced themselves for inevitable losses and heartaches.43

The position of slave women as wives desired more
analysis than has been granted by historians and sociologists. The women's attitude toward house work, especially cooking, and toward their own femininity by itself belies the conventional wisdom according to which the women unwittingly helped ruin their men by asserting themselves in the home, protecting their children, and assuming other normally masculine responsibilities. Genovese explicitly depicts the roles assumed by many slave women as wives:

A remarkable number of women did everything possible to strengthen their men's self-esteem and to defer to their leadership. What has usually been viewed as a debilitating female supremacy was in fact a closer approximation to a healthy sexual equality than was possible for whites and perhaps even for their families in a full and direct sense, but they did everything they could to approximate it. They could have scored few successes without the sympathetic cooperation of their women, many - by no means all - of whom yielded their own prerogatives. This female deference represented an effort by the women to support their men - an effort that could only have flowed from a judgement on what men ought to be and an awareness of the terrible ravages being wrought by slavery. On whatever level of consciousness, many women - perhaps a substantial majority - understood that the degradation of their men represented their own degradation as Black women and that of their children. They wanted their boys to grow up to be men and know perfectly well that, to do so, they needed the example of a strong Black man in front of them.45

The roles played by slave men and women who loved and cherished their families sought to establish an immutable stability. Members helped each other endure bondage through dedication and devotion, both by provision of mental and material support.
Offsprings of slaves also must be viewed in the structure of the family. There were few families that were childless, inasmuch as offspring were of grave importance to the slaveholder's economic security. The roles displayed in this study which were assumed in regard to the slave's family in many ways did not benefit the slave infant. They were often deprived of their care. Slave mothers were given only a few days or sometimes weeks off to care for their new born children. Masters established a pattern whereby mothers returned to the cabin to feed them or took them to the field. Usually if the fields were a considerable distance from the cabins, the infants were taken to the fields.

Old women were retained as watchers for the children. Henry Bibb's wife Malinda labored in the field most of the day while there was no one in the cabin to care for their daughter Frances. "She was left at the house to creep under the feet of an unmerciful old mistress, whom I have known to slap with her hand the face of little Frances, for crying after her mother until her little face was left black and blue, as described by her father."

Some plantations with large slave populations provided a lodging which served as a nursery. A Mississippi planter depicted the nursery of a plantation:

A large house is provided as a nursery for the children, where all are taken at daylight, and
placed under the charge of a careful and experienced woman, whose sole occupation is to attend to them, and see that they are properly fed and attended to, and above all things to keep them as dry and cleanly as possible, under the circumstances. 47

These nurse maids have filtered through history incongruously. They have been noted for their incompetence, laziness, and on the other hand conscientiousness and good work. For they sometimes supplied religious instructions to the children. "Without denigrating the role of these old women, ... it is necessary to correct the false impression that they, or more preposterously the plantation mistresses had the major role in raising the children whose parents worked in fields all day." 48 By and large the children raised each other. The nurses did not so much attend to the younger children as supervise the older children who attended them. Olmsted noted a nursery on a Charleston rice plantation on which the nurse-maid watched the younger girls care for the children. She paid very little attention to the children themselves. 49

Older children were often placed in complete charge of the care of the younger ones. Late in life, many slaves recalled raising children and being raised by older children. 50

These young nurse-maids cared for the children often with a healthy sense of responsibility and considerable kindness as suggested by many sources. Cleanliness nor amenities were primary features of the young nurse-maids,
but they did offer the children attention and endearment. These things, their parents could not offer them during the day.

Slave children were left alone if there was not an old woman or an older child to care for them. Mothers put their trust in a Higher Being and left them to 'fend' for themselves. Vina Smith's children were left in the cabin while she went to the fields. To assure herself of their being fed she left bread where they could get it when they became hungry. When they were too small to get bread for themselves she tied a little mush in a rag around their fingers. When they put their fingers in their mouths they could procure the mush. 51

After his master's death, Josiah Henson's family was separated. As a young child alone on a new plantation, he had no one to care for him especially when he became ill. He said, "Of course nobody cared for me. I had been left alone, crying for water, crying for Mother; the slaves, who all left at daylight, when they returned, caring nothing for me." 52

When slave infants were cared for by women or older children, they were often neglected. 53 They were fed irregularly and suffered from an assortment of diseases. As one slave commented, "Almost all slave children have to do the nursing, the big taking care of the small, who often come poorly off in consequence. I know this was my little
brother's case. I used to lay him in the shade under a tree sometimes, and go to play, or curl myself up under a hedge sometimes and take a sleep." 54 Fanny Kemble denounced the practice of children caring for children, suggesting that the older children should be given more meaningful jobs and the children were poorly tended. 55

Slave children who were able to endure infancy shared many pleasures of childhood. Within limits they were able to feel and enjoy life. They were spared the brutal elements that would compliment their lives when they joined the laboring ranks. One slave autobiographer contended that it was in the advantage of pride and financial interest that prompted masters to allow children to enjoy their youthful days. 56 Obese slave children were permitted to play in the yard of the master, especially during the presence of visitors. Good food and healthy growth aided in building well-proportioned slaves which was the master's aim. They would command the highest price paid for chattel.

Slave children devised and played games to pervade their time. Contrary to what some historians might suggest, slave children engaged in games which are reviled by children today. Marbles, stick ball, hand ball, and jump rope, were the most frequented games. Also, like children of today, slave children devised games of impersonation. Their favorites were of whippings and auctions. An ex-slave reported that she played Susanna Gal, jump rope, calling cows, running, jumping
skipping, and just anything they could think of. Jenny Proctor recalled that she played a few games such as Peep Squirrel Peep, and You Can't Catch Me.57

Young slave children often played with young white children, quite unaware of their dissimilarities.56 They engaged in all types of childish deeds. There was a period in many slaves' lives when they actually were treated almost as equal to the master's children. It was not uncommon to witness children of each race seeking their playmates.

Though many slaves had relatively happy childhoods, all certainly did not. John Thompson in describing his childhood revealed how cruel his master's young son was:

...when home from school, he would frequently request his grandmother's permission, to call all the black children from their quarters to the house to sweep and clear the yard from weeds, in order that he might over-see them. Then whip in hand he walked about them, and sometimes lashed the poor creatures who had on nothing but a shirt, and often nothing at all, until the blood streamed down their backs and limbs, apparently for no reason whatsoever, except to gratify his own cruel fancy.59

J.W.C. Pennington attested to the tyranny of his master's children whom he labeled as another source of evil to slave children. He contended, "My master had two sons, about the ages and sizes of my older brother and myself. We were not only required to recognize these these young sirs as our young masters, but they felt themselves to be
such; and in consequence of this feeling, they sought to
treat us with the same air of authority that their father
did the older slaves. 60

The slave who had several cheerful years eventually
became older. The status did not remain intact indefinitely.
Indeed the time did arrive when the slave child was informed
of his station in life. This might have been at the birth
of a white child whom the enslaved was forced to call - Young
Massa or young Missus or later when he was assigned a task.
Frederick Douglass contended that it was a long time
before he knew he was a slave. 61 Another slave reported
that she was six years old when she learned she was a slave. 62

Slavery incorporated its younger victims into some
type of labor between the ages of ten and twelve, sometimes
younger. 63 They performed such chores as cleaning the yard,
digging potatoes, heavy kitchen duties, and carrying water
for field hands. Some children cared for younger ones, while
the older children had to work in the field with the other
slaves. Sally, at the age of nine began running errands,
sweeping the leaves from the walks, and weeding the garden. 64
Austin Steward's duty, beginning at the age of eight,
was running errands. He was always to be ready when the
master's family commanded anything. 65 One slave recalled
he and his brother were hired out at the age of nine. 66
George Womble had several chores as a child. He waited tables,
cleaned house, drove cove to and from the pasture, and helped plant fields.67

Once a child felt the pangs of labor, he promptly felt the savagery of slavery, if he had not prior to this time. He no longer was spared the whip as most children were, if their masters deemed it. Many slave children were not struck with the same object used on adults. This was not the case always, as is obvious. In 1857, the Supreme Court of Georgia upheld the conviction of a planter for manslaughter in the whipping of a thirteen year old girl. The Supreme Court agreed with the lower court's decision that a girl of that age ought not to be hit with anything more than a switch and indignantly suggested that the only error in the case lay in the failure to convict for murder.68

These adult roles rendered here were not played by all slaves. Yet enough of them lived out these roles, so that one may conclude that some slaves made the best of their situations by etching out the best possible life for themselves and their families. Such actions strengthened ties and developed stability in family units. The slaves that resided in these units were indeed fortunate. Observance of slaves who weren't as fortunate served to remind family slaves of their position.

Parents in all societies tend to do those things to make life easier for their offspring. Western society, as noted earlier designates certain functions as being primarily the responsibility of the family. Conventional views
simply declared that slave families could not have possibly accomplished any of them, since parent and child were chattel, all property. Socialization could not have been a successful process in the slave family, a family of brutes. How could they have furnished any goods or services when the master provided all that was necessary? Evidence suggests that families did actually attain the feat of providing functions for their members. Briefly recalling the major functions, they were socialization, social placement, provision of goods and services and an outfit for emotional release.

The slave family provided functions which aided its members in faring best under the institution. The mere provision of these functions kindled unity and enduring sentiments between members. Only love could be felt for the father who labored long-endless hours to create pieces of furniture for an otherwise barren home, or the mother who risked punishment in a master's physical abuse of her offspring.

Socialization could possibly be designated as having been the most significant function of the slave family. For the family was the unit which shielded its members from abuse and taught them how to best survive in the chains of bondage. Slave parents had tremendous burdens on them but they made every feasible endeavor to protect their children. The socialization process engaged in by slave families was
shaped in different forms, some appearing largely incongruent to others. None the less, the slave was taught all types of instructions all of which contributed to his continuous safety and well being during his life as property of another man.

Historians comply that one of the most critical features of survival was keeping one’s mouth closed. Slave parents had to use all possible methods to insure their children never repeated what they heard or saw in the cabin. Consequently, they had to shield them from knowing too much and had to install reticence in them at the earliest possible age. Lizzie Davis of South Carolina told the interviewers, “Cose I speak bout what I catch cause de olden people never didn’t allow dey chillun to set an hear dem talk no time. No mam, de olden people was might careful of de words dey let alip dey lips.” Repeated conversations sometimes caused severe punishment to be administered to parents. This ruthless situation was perpetuated by the fact that masters sometimes employed slave children to spy on their parents.

Some parents required children to leave the room when serious conversation began or waited until they retired for the evening. Jacob Stroyer’s father had a strict rule which was adhered to faithfully. All of his children retired early in the evening, for they could not enter important conversation with their parents. Children as a substantial part of their being are inclined to talk, just as they eat or sleep. Consequently, these methods did not always prove
successful. This 'training of the tongue' usually required strict discipline to make sure conversations and sights weren't recited. Many slaves recalled the severity with which they were handled as children. They realized that it was important simply not to 'spare the rod' and doubly important that they be thoroughly instilled with the maxim rule that they shouldn't repeat what they heard. Slave parents had a very tedious task. "Since they struggled so hard to give their children as carefree a childhood as possible - since they shielded them as much as possible from an early knowledge of their fate as slaves - they had to be all the more tyrannical and severe in discouraging behavior that, however innocent in other environments, would be dangerous in the quarters."74

Slave parents tried to instill in their children morality, good manners, and religious practices. Pious parents taught children to respect all adults, Black and white. These rules were implemented to help the slave child manage in a white dominated world. Slave children were also taught to refrain from rebellion. This was a hard lesson to learn. Acceptance of abuse and punishment passively whether inflicted upon him or his relatives was also a difficult lesson for the slave child to learn. Countless slaves witnessed the punishment of their loved ones. Helplessly they stood silently by, for they knew, inertness was best for all involved. One slave was quite a young man when he observed his sister entertain
a flogging. He recalled the harrowing scene:

What a spectacle was that, for the sight of a brother? The God of Heaven only knows the conflict of feeling I then endured; He alone witnessed the tumult of my heart, at this outrage of manhood and kindred affection. God knows that my will was good enough to have wrung his neck; or to have strained from his heartless system its last drop of blood: And yet I was obliged to turn a deaf ear to her cries for assistance, which to this day ring in my ears. Strong and athletic as I was, no hand of mine could be raised in her defense, but at the peril of both our lives: - nor could her husband, had he been a witness of the scene, he allowed any more than unresisting submission to any cruelty, - any indignity which the master saw fit to inflict on his wife, but the other's slave."

Prizms, a slave witnessed his wife receive such a number of floggings that he felt suicide-murder would be the only alleviation of the torture. He did not succeed in his efforts but such drastic measures render the fondness he had for her. Ben Simpson, an ex-slave from Georgia watched the overseer as he shot his all-age mother while en route to Texas. Another slave's mother heard him receive three hundred lashes. He commented, "Mother was in the house, and heard my screams but did not dare to come near me."

The socialization of the slave child is precisely summed in the words of a contemporary historian:

"The lessons the slave child learned about conformity were complex and contradictory. Recognizing the overwhelming power of the whites, parents taught children obedience as a means of avoiding pain, suffering, and death. At the same time, they did not teach unconditional submission. Instead, children were often taught to fight their masters and overseers to protect their relatives. On many occasions the children saw their parents disobey and sometimes fight the master. Listening to stories of runaways and seeing slaves interact"
in the quarters, the slave children had many models of behavior... he saw his parents playing two contradictory roles. In the quarters... his father acted like a man, castigating whites for their mistreatment of him, being a leader, protector and provider... at work the father was obedient and submissive to his master. Sometimes children internalized both... Since, however their parents' submission was on a shallow level of convenience directed toward avoiding pain, it was less important as a model of behavior than the personality traits they exhibited in the quarters.

The socialization process engaged in by slave parents was of grave prominence for the entire family. The parents who were unable to accomplish the process realized the precarious predicament in which they were. Everyone was well aware of the consequences.

Slave narratives dispute the claim that slaves could not provide goods or services. Quite the contrary, they furnished goods in and out of the limits of the system.

The master's supplies and maintenance of cabins were usually not sufficient. Gardening and hunting were engaged in for the purpose of supplementing their meager meals. Rachel Adams, an ex-slave, recalled the possum, fish, and rabbits, that were eaten in her house. They also had a garden, "and it had something of just about everything in it." Mary Reynolds from Louisiana recounted that they grew potatoes and "goobers to help fill out on the victuals." Slaves worked on their cabins to make living in it less like living out of doors. Thomas Jones narrated how his parents remodeled their cabin:
Father and Mother tried to make it a happy place for their children. They worked late into the night many and many a time to get a little simple furniture for their home and the home of their children; and they spent hours of willing toil to stop up chinks between the logs of their poor hut, that they and their children might be protected from the storm and the cold.\footnote{25}

Protection was provided by the stringent socialization process slaves used. The family also provided love, devotion and loyalty. It served as a unit upon which emotions could be released. This was most necessary especially after a slave had received his first flogging or viewed a family member being punished. Such occasions encouraged young slaves to entertain the ideal of rebellion or escape. J. W. C. Pennington decided to flee after his father was whipped. He declared, "Although it was some time after this event before I took the decisive step, yet in my mind and spirit, I never was a Slave again."

The family was there to dissuade either rebellion or escape for they knew they would result in worse punishment, though that was not the case of Mr. Pennington. The slave, safe in the surroundings of his family could release the tensions which mounted after such events. Anger is a powerful emotion and expression through the wrong channels could have resolved in dire consequences. Anger and other negative emotions could be released in the presence of loving, sympathetic family members with little fear of reprisals. Hence, one of the slave family's most valuable functions was serving as an emotional safety valve.
Stronger family ties and affection between members resulted from the provision of these goods and services. The family established consequently a secure, stable unit.

Social activities are provided by the family in some societies. The slave family provided entertainment, also. Social life for slaves surprisingly might be viewed as varied when one considers the stringent rules of the institution. They etched out a social existence for themselves which served as an outlet for their emotions. "However oppressive or dehumanizing the plantation was, the struggle for survival was not severe enough to crush all of the slave's creative instincts. The slave implemented various social and cultural activities which lightened their burden of oppression, promoted group solidarity, provided ways for verbalizing aggression, sustaining hope, building self-esteem, and often represented areas of life largely free from the control of whites." Slaves did indeed create for themselves a social life.

Much of the social activity for slaves revolved around their families. These activities included fishing and hunting. These two were placed in the social category as well as basis of supplement to the daily diet. These activities enhanced a man's status in the family and quarters in general.

Wrestling, running races, dancing, playing marbles, gambling, drinking alcoholic beverages, and conversing with
friends were also engaged in by slaves. Folk tales, musical instruments and songs also played major roles in the slave society. Children received old tales before bed which had sometimes been handed down to their parents.

Musical instruments and songs had a distinct place in the social lives of slaves. They were part of the prominent components of the slave culture. The importance of music can not be overstated. It was through songs that the slaves expressed their hopes, desires, frustrations, and troubles. Spirituals, work, and secular songs were the more popular among slaves. Spirituals were most noted, for it was through them that the slave expressed his day-to-day experiences and sentiments, as do Blacks in America today. Home-made musical instruments were also popular among slaves. They played banjos, drums, fiddles, fifes, and tambourines.

Religion had its own individual position in the slave community. One might suggest that there was not anything that could replace this in the lives of slaves. It furnished solace unlike that which could be found in any thing else. It also endowed him with Someone to turn to when there was no one else or when life appeared to be at best a living "hell."

All masters did not allow their slaves to engage in religious activities, especially if they themselves were not pious men of some degree. Yet the entire social realm of the slave's life indicated that the master's approval did not always dictate his actions.
Many slave children were engaged in religious activities in the home. They were taught to pray, that the Lord would one day deliver them from bondage. They watched as their parents took their troubles to him, for they felt He alone could assist them in the dilemma of the peculiar institution.

Social events were the highlights of slave entertainment. Parties occurred at various intervals on most plantations. They usually transpired on holidays, especially Christmas and 'freed' the slave from his constant labor by granting several days vacation. Though the master may have entertained motives which prompted permission of social events - mainly control, it cannot be disputed that the slave enjoyed them to the utmost. Frederick Douglass was most explicit in stating that, "These holidays serve the purpose of keeping minds of slaves occupied with prospective pleasure, within the limits of bondage." Insurrection and escape thoughts were suppressed.

Recreational activities and religion combined to rescue the slave from the omnipresence of his condition. He was able to focus his energies upon something besides the dreadfulness of his existence. Religion especially served as a sustainer, for the slave could always find solace in the One above. It afforded him the hope and faith necessary to live as another's property. These aspects of the slave's life combined to bolster his self-esteem, assurance, and fortitude. Most of all it gave him the strength to endure
on a hopeless journey. Activities engaged in by the family strengthened their links as a unit. Sentiment between family members was enhanced. It provided an outlet for those emotions harbored from one incident to another.

Initially, the slave family was property, owned by other human beings, likened to beast of the field. It has been contended here through evidence that, despite such things as the previous comparison, the slave indeed struggled and sometimes made the best of the situation. Likewise, the family was of dire importance for it alone strove to do its best for its members in a world which often times offered little hope for a brighter future. It somehow managed to implement and maintain a stable, solid life. The family member himself has best attested to the importance of the enduring family. Such families were providers of love, and sympathy often in a manner uncommon to anyone else. They could offer shields that protected members from each blow of slavery, especially children. In conclusion, the roles played by slave parents, the various functions fulfilled by the family, and the social aspects of slavery combined to engender an unwavering steadfast relationship between family members which sometimes transcended tragic separation.
Notes


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid., p. 120.


11. Ibid., p. 599.


27. Ibid.
28. Ball, Fifty Years in Chairs, p. 12.
34. American Slavery as It Is, p. 47.
35. Henson, Father Henson's Story, p. 7.

37. See Fogel and Engerman, Time on the Cross, p. 141, also Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, p. 491.


40. Killin' and Waller, Slavery Time, p. 103.


43. Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, p. 496.

44. Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, p. 500. See Jessie Bernard, Marriage and Family Among Negroes, p. 68, 73, for a defense of this belief.

45. Ibid.

46. Bibb, Narrative, pp. 42–43.


50. Rawick, II, p. 119, III, p. 10; IV, p. 66; III, p. 189; VI, p. 43, IX, p. 209. Also any volume may be consulted at random.

51. Whiteman, Kidnapped and the Ransomed, p. 163.
57. Blassingame, *Slave Community*, p. 94.
68. Aunt Sally, p. 27.
69. Steward, *Twenty Two Years a Slave*, p. 20.
73. Koller, *Families*, pp. 4-5.

72. *Unwritten History*, p. 110, also Rawick *American Slave*, II, p. 227, XIII, p. 34.


75. Steward, *Twenty Two Years a Slave*, p. 97.


78. *Narratives of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke*, p. 75.


82. Chapman, *Steal Away*, p. 73.


CONCLUSION

Blacks in America who lived in bondage developed effective protest techniques in the form of direct and indirect retaliation to their enslavement. Some of these techniques have been entitled - day-to-day resistance methods.

Resistance is defined by the New Grolier Webster International Dictionary of the English Language as the act of resisting, whether actively or passively; the quality or property in matter of not yielding to force or external impression, a force acting in opposition to another force so as to destroy it or diminish its effect. The family, did in effect, actively and passively resist the institution of slavery, and equally important, act as a force to diminish the effect of slavery by developing sentimental ties and family unity which enabled it to survive.

Day-to-day resistance methods embraced destruction of property, indifference to work, maltreatment of tools and livestock, and feigning illness. Slaves also engaged in more overt forms of resistance. Escape, self mutilation, suicide, theft, arson, rebellions, insurrections, and murder were primary courses taken by slaves who wished to unambiguously display their attitude toward the institution of slavery. These resistance patterns constantly refute the
tradition that existed wherein slaves were noted as docile, well adapted to the impediments of the institution, and reasonably content with their lot.

Likewise, the slave as a family member resisted the doctrines of slavery, which contended that slaves were things and as such could not constitute a family. Their marriages were not recognized legally or civilly. Children were reared primarily to economically accommodate the master. Slave parents had no more authority over their children, than a cow had over her calf. The hinges upon which the institution's foundation stood negated the existence of the slave constituting a family, other than biologically.

The American Negro slave family which developed stability and solidarity identified in this study resisted the slave regime by surviving. This system of survival entailed more than merely existing. It was a way of life which aided its members in 'living' rather than existing. It rebuked the system which was totally contingent upon the servient state of the majority of Blacks in America prior to 1865.

Survival as a form of resistance has been defined through a number of means combined to portray it. The family who was able to supplement the maintenance supplied by the master utilizing any means or who found the faith to cope with the sexual abuse of its female members were both resisting the system which afforded slaveholders the right
to literally starve their chattel and sexually assault their female property. Slaves also resisted the institution when they made their marriages - lasting unions, when they were not separated by their masters.

The traditional views of the family which cited numerous arguments in refuting any type of family life among slaves have been repudiated in this study. This study does not deny the existence of separation, promiscuousness, matriarchy, inability to provide functions as so deemed by American society and other general features of slavery. This study simply contends that there did exist slave families who transcended many of the 'ordinary' features of slavery and in their own way etched out a life for themselves which encompassed more than existing. In so doing, the study further contends that they were in effect resisting the system of slavery.

The slave family's resistance can be viewed most accurately through those family units who developed in such a manner as to provide for the welfare - mentally and physically - of its members as much as possible, under the yokes of bondage. Apparently, there were limits. Yet, the slave family stretched the limits to the perimeter, often exhausting any means necessary to accommodate its members.

The individual slave also exercised accommodation. This entailed acceptance to some degree of what could not be changed, while simultaneously not falling prey to dehumaniza-
tion, emasculation, and self hatred.

Finally, all slave families in each town or plantation did not by any means identify with any or all of the aspects of this study. Yet, the slave family which did, was not rare. One might suggest that it was more rule, than exception. The family developed solid ties often enough to warrant acknowledgement which has been one of the objects of this study.

Those families who resisted slavery laid down tradition which serves the Black family today. Frazier's contention that only free Blacks were to be credited with early contributions to the Black family and Mays' report which cites the Black family as a disintegrating unit resulting from slavery - needs more examination. Those slave families who endured slavery also deserves credit. These families were the basis of Black pride, culture, identity, and community in America. Contemporary Black Americans can only respond in respect and pride at those families who survived the institution of slavery in America!
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