African-Virginian Extended Kin:
The Prevalence of West African Family Forms among Slaves in Virginia, 1740-1870

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(ABSTRACT)

Scholarship on slave families has focused on the nuclear family unit as the primary socializing institution among slaves. Such a paradigm ignores the extended family, which was the primary form of family organization among peoples in western and central Africa. By exploring slave trade data, I argue that 85% of slave imports to Virginia in the 18th century were from only four regions. Peoples from each region—the Igbo, the Akan, Bantu speakers from Angola and Congo, and the Mande from Senegambia—were marked by the prevalence of the extended family, the centrality of women, and flexible descent systems. I contend that these three cultural characteristics were transferred by slaves to Virginia.

Runaway slave advertisements from the Virginia Gazette show the cultural makeup of slaves in eighteenth-century Virginia. I use these advertisements to illustrate the prevalence of vast inter-plantation webs of kin that pervaded plantation, county, and even state boundaries. Plantation records, on the other hand, are useful for tracking the development of extended families on a single plantation. William Massie's plantation Pharsalia, located in Nelson County, Virginia, is the focus of my study of intra-plantation webs of kin. Finally, I examine the years after the Civil War to illustrate that even under freedom, former slaves resorted to their extended families for support and survival.

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In a recent article celebrating the career of New York's retiring senior senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the author highlighted Senator Moynihan's influence in late-twentieth-century American politics.[1] During his four terms in the Senate, several years as a federal bureaucrat, and tenure at Harvard, Moynihan was instrumental in shaping the modern American welfare state. More important to social historians, however, is Moynihan's place in the historiography of the slave family. The so-called "Moynihan Report"—termed "prescient" by some—originally drew the ire of many blacks, liberals, and academics in the United States, but remained an integral part of War on Poverty ideology. In *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* then-Assistant Secretary of Labor Moynihan concluded that the African-American family was in disarray. While urbanization and the squalor of the inner city perpetuated the "instability" of the African-American family, the origins of the "problem" could be found in slavery. Given the political turmoil of the 1960s, Moynihan's good intentions created a maelstrom of controversy. African-American leaders and liberals reacted vehemently to his alleged unfair claims while Southern conservatives considered black family instability to be less than a problem.[2]

Although the political history of the Moynihan Report is important, historians have focused on its influence on slave family scholarship. Moynihan relied heavily upon the works of Stanley Elkins and E. Franklin Frazier, both of whom set the standard for the field of black family studies beginning in the 1930s. "Matrifocality"—the cultural predisposition to female-headed households—is the major concept that Moynihan drew directly from Elkins and Frazier, and one that all three emphasized in their works. Like his predecessors, Moynihan argued that the twentieth-century African-American family was not a modern creation: its origins could be found in slavery. With evidence from Elkins and Frazier to prove that most slave families were headed by females, Moynihan concluded that the nineteenth-century black family simply evolved into the 1960s version. For Moynihan, consequently, the history of the black family meant that any proposed solution must address its centuries-old "tangle of pathology."[3] In spite of entrenching himself within the predominant vein of slave family scholarship, however,

[1] *US News and World Report*, 16 November 1998, 14.
[2] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Policy Planning Research, United States Department of Labor, 1965).

Moynihan and his discoveries sparked an unyielding reaction from a new generation of slave family scholars.

Herbert Gutman in *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (1976) devastatingly critiqued the matrifocal slave family paradigm. He argued that the majority of slave families were headed by both parents. Even though the sale of slaves broke up many families, Gutman contended that earlier estimates regarding the frequency of those sales were exaggerated. Contrary to Moynihan's conclusions, Gutman argued that the nuclear family—the perceived modern Euro-American norm—was the typical familial form among enslaved African-Americans. Even more significantly, in addition to their nuclear units, Gutman found that slaves and their households were part of larger kinship networks. While some scholars viewed the existence of such relationships as preservations of African culture, Gutman viewed them as adaptations to enslavement.[4] Gutman also challenged Eugene Genovese, arguing that *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*(1974) exaggerated the slave family's internalization of planter-class values and family relationships.[5] Gutman argued that Genovese's conclusions about slave families suffered from a "failure to study the development of an adaptive Afro-American slave culture prior to the spread of paternalist ideology."[6] Driven by his desire to debunk the myths of the Moynihan Report, Herbert Gutman begot his own historiographical tradition.

Slave family scholarship had always centered on the idea of the two-parent household. Before Gutman, most scholars concurred that the two-parent African-American family was not prevalent under slavery. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier defined the field with his best-known work *The Negro Family in the United States*(1939), in which he stressed the prevalence of the "male-absent household" among slave families. According to Frazier, slave kinship was virtually nonexistent outside the immediate slave family, which was torn asunder by the lack of

[3] *Ibid*., 29-45. Moynihan states, "At the center of the tangle of pathology is the weakness of the family structure"(pg. 30); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, 1939).
[4] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 196-201; Herbert J. Foster, "African Patterns in the Afro-American Family," *Journal of Black Studies* 14 (1983) : 201-32.
[5] Gutman, *The Black Family*, 309-319; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974).
[6] Gutman, *The Black Family*, 311.

alternative support institutions such as extended kinship networks.[7] By arguing that slavery had destroyed the black family, Frazier provided Moynihan with the basis for his study.

The Moynihan Report was not the next step in slavery historiography, however. In 1959, Stanley Elkins reiterated Frazier's main points and added the "Sambo" thesis. The image of the enslaved male being ignorant and helpless was essential to the perpetuation of the male-absent construct. Labelling the slave family "not a meaningful unit," Elkins laid out four factors for the destruction of the enslaved African-American family: sexual exploitation by owners; separation of families by sale; cumulative effect of miscegenation; and restrictive legal codes regarding slave marriage. Like Frazier, Elkins denied the existence of any kin group outside the mother-headed unit.[8]

With the publication of John Blassingame's *The Slave Community*(1972), the effort to deconstruct Moynihan's "tangle of pathology" thesis began. The most important contribution of *The Slave Community* to slavery scholarship was the rejection of Elkins' Sambo thesis. Blassingame's critique of the concept reverberated throughout slave family literature. He argued that slaves were active, not passive, members of plantation culture. Blassingame portrayed the slave family as the primary means of survival, whether through protective husbands or cultural support institutions. For Blassingame, the slave family—whether nuclear or extended—was a "refuge from the rigors of slavery."[9]

The Slave Community revived a much earlier tradition of studying persistent "Africanisms" among African-Americans. That tradition, popularized by W.E.B. DuBois in *The Negro American Family*(1908), placed the black family at the center of the contested terrain that lay between African traditions and American challenges. For DuBois, ignorance, poverty, and "moral darkness"—not necessarily slavery itself—had been and continued to be the threats to black family stability.[10] Subsequently, Melville Herskovits offered a better-documented and well-articulated revision of DuBois's arguments in *The Myth of the Negro Past*(1941).

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[7] Frazier, *The Negro Family*, 45.
[8] Elkins, *Slavery*, 109.
[9] Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 191.

Herskovits used an anthropological approach to argue that black family life in the United States was an altered "Africanism." Even though preservations of African culture were more prominent in Latin America and the Caribbean, Herskovits maintained that "slavery did not cause the 'maternal' family; but it tended to continue certain elements in the cultural endowment brought to the New World by the Negroes."[11] Armed with a rich historiographical tradition of how African-American slaves preserved their culture, the revisionist historians of the 1970s had a solid position to undergird their new writings. With Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family*, the revisionist slave family historians achieved their prominence quickly.

Debate strengthened Gutman's position. Perhaps the most famous debates between slavery historians occurred as a result of the emergence of quantitative studies during the 1970s. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman in *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*(1974) formulated a cliometric approach to slavery studies. While Fogel and Engerman did not focus on the slave family, their arguments concerning slave family life were disputed by Gutman throughout the decade. Gutman contended that cliometrical analysis did not allow for a solid treatment of black kinship networks and, worse, produced a model of slave family socialization akin to that advanced by Stanley Elkins.[12]

By the 1980s, Herbert Gutman's position received wide acceptance and was augmented by subsequent studies that illustrated the applicability of his thesis to specific locales. John Inscoe and Cheryll Ann Cody used slave naming practices as the crucible in which Gutman's thesis could be tested. While Cody affirmed Gutman's findings about the prevalence of patrilineal naming practices among slaves, Inscoe maintained that the practices were too varied to draw a definitive conclusion. Both scholars agreed, however, that slave families had more autonomy in naming their children than historians believed before the works of Blassingame, Gutman, and Genovese.[13]

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[10] W.E.B. DuBois, *The Negro American Family* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1908), 11.
[11] Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), 181-183.
[12] Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1974); Herbert Gutman, *Slavery and the Numbers Game: A Critique of Time on the Cross* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975).
[13] John Inscoe, "Generation and Gender as Reflected in Carolina Slave Naming Practices: A Challenge to the Gutman Thesis," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 94 (1993): 252-263; Inscoe, "Carolina Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation," *Journal of Southern History* 49 (1983): 527-54; Cheryll Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship,

Recent scholarship continues to be influenced by Gutman, although strides have been made to update his arguments. Ann Patton Malone, in *Sweet Chariot*(1992), uses a wealth of evidence to illustrate the prevalence of nuclear families among Louisiana slaves. Larry Hudson's study of South Carolina augments Gutman's arguments with a cogent analysis of enslaved African-Americans' plantation economy.[14] Finally, Brenda Stevenson's *Life in Black and White*(1996) describes the inter-plantation networks that Herbert Gutman discussed. Unlike Gutman, however, Stevenson views these extended kinship relationships as adaptations of West African cultural traditions, not just as consequences of slavery. In fact, Stevenson emphasizes that, even in light of Gutman's findings, many slaves did not form permanent nuclear families. Instead, she argues that slaves' "principal kinship organization was a malleable extended family that, when possible, provided its members with nurture, education, socialization, material support, and recreation in the face of the potential social chaos that the slaveholder imposed."[15]

Despite the promise of these and other studies that illustrate the persistence of African familial forms in America, scholars of the American slave family are still using the nuclear family model to evaluate their subject.[16] Like most scholars of American slavery, Gutman accepted the applicability of the nuclear family model to enslaved African and African-American families without question. By so doing, and by arguing effectively that the two-parent slave family was more prevalent than earlier studies suggested, Gutman obscured an equally-important contribution of his magnum opus: his insistence that extended family networks were a central part of enslaved African-American family life.

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and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786-1833" *William and Mary Quarterly* 32 (1975): 192-211; Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720-1865" *American Historical Review* 92 (1987): 563-596.

[14] Ann Patton Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family and Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Larry Hudson, Jr., *To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

[15] Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 160.

[16] Malone, *Sweet Chariot*; For studies of persistent African mores, see Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Sensbach, *The Making of the Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998; Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

That this contribution was dwarfed by Gutman's refutation of Moynihan's thesis is not surprising, for even historians of the family had grappled with the issue of nuclear versus extended families, most notably during the same decade that slave family historians were revising their own field. In 1972 family history scholar Peter Laslett published the definitive work on the modern family, *Household and Family in Past Time*. The linchpin of Laslett's analysis was his narrow definition of the "family," which he described as "a group of persons living together, a household, what we shall call a coresident domestic group." With a nod to the emergence of statistical history and demography during the 1970s, Laslett did not consider extended kinship relationships to comprise a "family." For him, census records illustrated the best evidence for historians to discover traditional familial forms. Exploring the more nebulous extended kin relationships did not unearth the type of evidence that Laslett—ever the demographer and quantifier—wanted.[17] In a final blow to the traditional concept that the extended family once predominated then declined during industrialization, Laslett explained the popularity of the concept as an ideology of social scientists, not of the men and women of the past.

Peter Laslett's insistence on studying "households" rather than "families" sparked severe criticism of his analysis. Since censuses offer the best quantitative evidence with which to produce studies of family structure, Laslett and his fellow demographer-historians relied heavily on census data. The problem with that methodology, as Tamara Haraven and Maris Vinovskis illustrated, is that studies become limited to households: Laslett's studies confirmed "the pervasiveness of nuclear households but in no way prove the isolation of nuclear families, since the family unit is not contained merely within the boundaries of the household." The obvious problem with limiting "family" studies to households, Haraven and Vinovskis argued, was that families appeared to be mere structural units with no connection to their environment.[18]

In many ways, slave family historiography could serve as a case study for this debate among historians of the family. While slave family historians have proven that a "significant minority"

[17]Peter Laslett, ed., *Household and Family in Past Time* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1.
[18] Tamara Haraven and Maris Vinovskis, eds., *Family and Population in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 15.

of slave households had two parents,[19] little work has been done to address Haraven and Vinovskis' concern regarding how these households fit into the larger community of slaves. This dearth of work on larger slave communities is especially problematic, since a veritable explosion of recent scholarship on African cultural survivals prove that some West and West Central African cultural traditions survived enslavement.[20] No historian of slavery, slave families, or families, however, has explored in depth the slave family as a cultural survival; if one had, our picture would be different.

The problem, of course, is that the nuclear family paradigm is not applicable to African and African-American slaves. In a noted essay Herbert Foster criticized the applicability of the nuclear family model to Africans and African-Americans, suggesting that slave family scholars and family scholars "have failed to see or comprehend the functions of the wide networks of kinship that extend beyond the conjugal union or nuclear family."[21] In *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* (1992) Andrew Billingsley emphasizes "African-American family diversity" and argues, "The key to understanding African-American family structure is to see the whole picture with its many variations and to note its flexibility."[22] Likewise, anthropologist Niara Sudarkasa stresses the centrality of the extended family and secondary status of the nuclear family in African cultures. Drawing a distinction between African and Euro-American family forms, Sudarkasa argues that African–American family forms should be assessed in light of their cultural heritage. A massive body of anthropological and historical research has illustrated that West African cultures relied on family units other than the perceived Euro-American model of the nuclear family.[23] Hence, the questions that govern future research should not be about the stability of slave families, or about the percentage of slave households that had two parents. Instead, slave family historians should be asking, were slaves able to maintain their African forms of kinship in America?

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[19] Stevenson, *Black and White*, 160.
[20] Gomez, *Country Marks*; Sensbach, *Separate Canaan*; Frey, *Zion*.
[21] Herbert J. Foster, "African Patterns," 219.
[22] Andrew Billingsley, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Enduring Legacy of African-American Families* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 45.
[23] Niara Sudarkasa, "Interpreting the African Heritage in Afro-American Family Organization," in Harriet McAdoo, ed., *Black Families* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1981), 40; A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and Darrell Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950); Dmitri Shinkin, et al, *The Extended Family in Black Societies* (Cambridge: Mouton Publishers, 1978); T. C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Answering such a question is daunting. Not only must slave family historians explore scholarship on African cultures, but they must also connect specific cultures of Africa to American locales where slaves from those cultures were sold. Examining slave trade data makes this task more manageable, but explaining coherently what traditions of the dozens of distinct West and West Central African cultures were transferred by their enslaved mediators to the New World is difficult. Similarly, if slave family scholars intend to reconstruct extended kinship networks among the enslaved in America, they must find greater utility in plantation records, runaway slave advertisements, and freedmen's marriage registers. By limiting my study to Virginia, I contend that enslaved Africans and African-Americans transferred some form of their West African familial practices to America.

Before I turn to the evidence from Virginia, however, it is necessary to pare the African scope of my study as well. Using data from secondary literature on the Atlantic slave trade, I will first identify what cultures were prevalent in Virginia. First, I must stress that slaveowners, at least in the eighteenth century, not only knew the ethnic backgrounds of the slaves they were importing, but sought those peoples whom best fit their needs. Elizabeth Donnan argued that most colonies had ethnic preferences for the slaves that they imported. South Carolina slaveholders sought Senegambians, Akan from the Gold Coast, and Bantu speakers from Angola, while slaveowners in the lower Mississppi valley strongly preferred slaves from Senegambia. As a result of market preferences elsewhere and a relative indifference of Virginia slaveowners to the ethnic backgrounds of slaves, Virginia slave imports varied from those of the other colonies. South Carolinians' disdain for slaves from the Bight of Biafra—supposedly, they were too short—may explain why more Biafrans were sold to Chesapeake traders.[24]

For the period 1710-1769, Philip Curtin estimates that 38% of Virginia's slave imports were from the Bight of Biafra (see Table 1-1). This is considerably higher than the rate of Biafran imports for North America as a whole, which comprised 23% of the North American imports for the same period. Similarly, Virginians imported a higher proportion of slaves from Senegambia and southeastern Africa (Mozambique and Madagascar) and a lower proportion of slaves from

[24] Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols., Washington: 1930-35, vol. 4; Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*; Gomez, *Country Marks*.

the Windward Coast when compared to the continental totals. Most importantly, 85% of Virginia's slave imports originated from only four African states. For scholars wanting to examine the preservation of West and West Central African culture and the development of African-American culture in Virginia, concentrating on the native cultures of the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, Angola, and Senegambia should provide ample evidence to make a reasonable conclusion.

Critics could, of course, question this methodology on two levels. Philip Curtin's analysis is imperfect, and has been subject to severe criticism since its publication.[25] While a major revision of slave trade data has been completed, it will not be published for several months.[26] In lieu of this new data, Curtin's estimates—which, indeed, may be imperfect, but are not grossly inaccurate—will serve as apt foundations for this study. On another level, anthropologists may raise the question: how can the slave family historian make sense of the fifty linguistic groups and cultures in western and central Africa?

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[25] See Richardson, "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution," *Journal of African History* 30 (1989) : 1-22.

[26] Slave trade analysis should become more accurate and comprehensive with the publication of David Eltis, David Richardson, and Stephen Berendt, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM, Cambridge*, forthcoming, Dec. 1999.

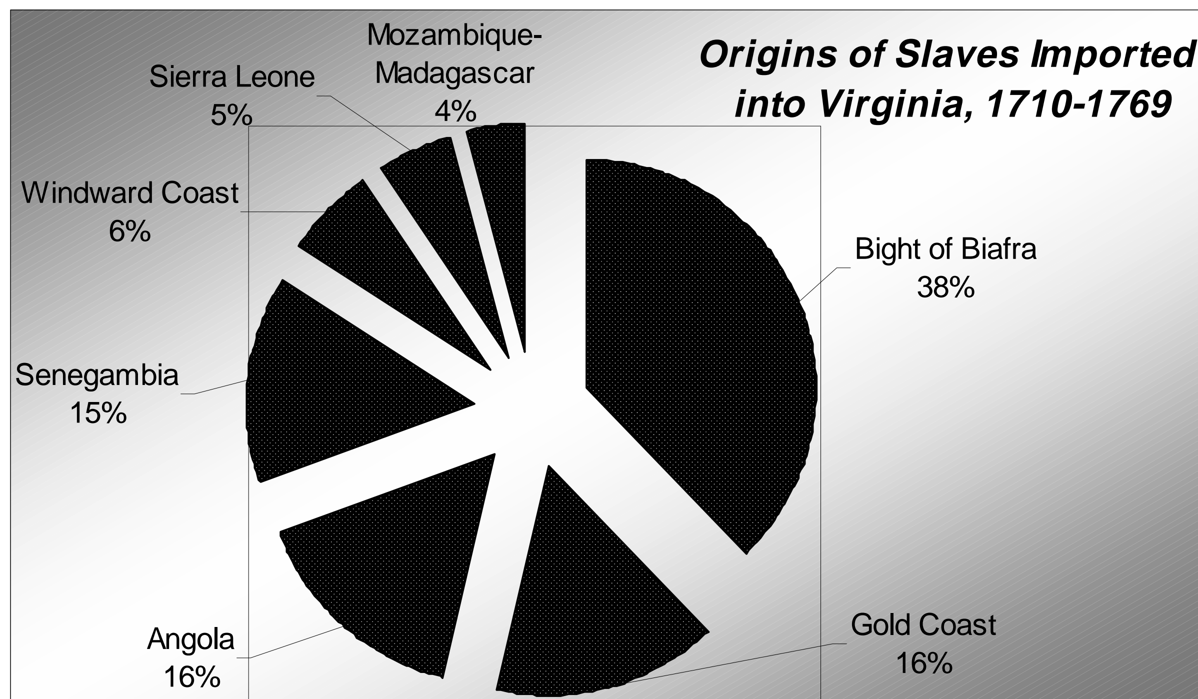

Table 1. Origins of Slaves Imported into Virginia, 1710-1769[27]

This task, too, has become less daunting because of recent scholarship. John Thornton argues that "the degree of diversity in Africa can easily be exaggerated."[28] By arguing that linguistic and economic ties bound the many subgroups of West African culture together, Thornton and Michael Gomez reject any emphasis on diversity. Moreover, because of the internal slave trade, many Africans had experience seeking cultural commonalities with external groups. For example, rather than stressing the differences between the Lower Guinea cultures of the Fon, Yoruba, Edo, Igbo, Minas, Popoos, Fulaos, Ardas, Araras, and Akan, Thornton stresses that each group spoke a version of Kwa. There were, of course, distinctions between each group's version, especially between Akan and Igbo, but Thornton argues that these groups had too much in common to highlight their differences. Likewise, Gomez contends that pockets of ethnically-similar groups in America stressed their similarities, especially because of their common oppression of enslavement.[29]

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[27] Curtin, *Slave Trade*, 157.
[28] John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (New York: Cambridge, 1998), 191.
[29] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 110-111.

In Africa, many of the cultural groups in Biafra, the Gold Coast, Angola, and Senegambia exhibited cultural traditions that resembled the practices of enslaved Africans and African-Virginians. The Akan, who were based in and around the Gold Coast, practiced matrilineal descent and relied on extended family relations. The extended family grouping, or *abusua*, had a male head, but always had a female of nearly-equal authority; members of the clan believed that they were related to a common mother. Each *abusua* was comprised of several households, which were often headed by a *wofa*, or maternal uncle. In Akan familial tradition, the *wofa* was more important than fathers. They had the authority to accept and remove members of the smaller family unit, which were often comprised of three generations. Even many of the Congolese and Angolans, from a "region par excellence" for its ethnic diversity, shared cultural traditions. Most notable was Bantu speakers' corporate ownership of land. While slaves themselves were often private property, land was usually owned by clans or extended families.[30] Thus, even though the Lega and Bembe practiced patriliny and Kilongo speakers practiced matriliny, extended kinship networks pervaded nearly all cultures in Angola. The most numerous of Africans to be imported to Virginia, the Igbo, also practiced corporate land ownership and a variety of descent systems. The Igbo extended family, or *umunna*, was the smallest family unit in their culture. Females were at the center of Igbo beliefs, especially in their religion. The earth mother Ala, one of the central deities in Igbo religion, controlled the most important aspects of Igbo life: fertility, motherhood, and marriage.[31] As Gomez suggests, differences in descent patterns among subgroups of larger cultures were blurred by the western and central African lineage traditions that "compensated for their unilineality."[32] Thus, Herbert Foster's depiction of West Africans as relying on more than one family form and descent practice may be accurate. Pervading all of western and central Africa, however, were two practices especially foreign to modern Euro-American cultures: the centrality of the extended family group and the secondary status of the nuclear family.[33]

Not surprisingly, African family forms were similar to those of the slaves in Virginia and, presumably, America. Slave mothers were more influential than fathers not only because of

[30] *Ibid*.; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 74-97.
[31] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 125-134.
[32] *Ibid*., 144-145.
[33] Foster, "African Patterns," 215-232.

African cultural practices, but because of Virginia law: the only law concerning slave lineage strengthened the centrality of African-Virginian motherhood by basing the status of African-American children on their mother's condition as slave or freewoman.[34] Slaveowners who recorded parents' names in their slave birth registers always listed mothers' names, but listed fathers' names less frequently. In addition to similar practices concerning mothers, Virginia slaves also retained the extended kinship networks that were so important to their native cultures. Often, these extended kin relationships were not consanguinal, or blood-related, but "fictive" relationships were not new to Virginia's slaves.[35] In short, Virginia's African slaves preserved much of their native familial forms.

By examining the family forms of Virginia's enslaved Africans and African-Americans from 1730 to 1870, I contend that slaves preserved many of their family forms, especially the extended family. Incorporating African history into slave family scholarship will finally remove the albatross of the nuclear family paradigm from the enslaved African and African-American family. Likewise, by using a variety of records—namely, plantation records, runaway slave advertisements, and Freedmen's Bureau marriage registers—I will illustrate how extended kinship networks among slaves flourished in Virginia. No longer should the central research question in slave family research focus on nuclear family stability. The recent scholarship on acculturation provides slave family historians with evidence to ask new questions, such as: to what degree were African and African-American slaves successful in preserving extended kinship networks and other West African family forms in America? Which aspects of these traditions did enslavement affect? What was the nature of these adaptive forms?

Exploring the evidence to find the answers to these questions also reveals important insights to those scholars studying African-American culture among the enslaved. The slave family—in this case, the larger extended kinship group—may have been more than just an additional example of transferred African culture. The kinship networks that pervaded plantation boundaries and that defined bondspeople's daily life at individual plantations may, indeed, have been the institutions

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[34] For the 1662 law, see Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 221-222.
[35] Fictive kin are individuals who are not blood relatives, but who established strong bonds that were closer than a friendship. See Gutman, *Black Family*, 216-17.

that helped to preserve other African cultural traditions. Perhaps by finally addressing enslaved Africans and African-Virginians on their own cultural terms can slave family historians not only depict slave family life more accurately but inform the direction of other slavery scholarship as well.

Chapter 1

They Fled to Their "Relations": Slave Runaways and Inter-Plantation Kin

Robin ran. Enslaved for each of his estimated 35 years, Robin resorted to one of the most popular forms of slave resistance in the New World. Like many runaways, Robin fled with company. His wife Charity and her sons Ben and Moses in tow, Robin joined Jack and his wife Hannah. The six slaves had been gone from their Charlotte County, Virginia, quarters for over three months before their owner John Olives advertised their disappearance in the September 4, 1785, *Virginia Gazette*. Such a delay between the actual act and its advertisement was not unusual, for Charles escaped from William Gregory's plantation in October 1767 and was not advertised until the following February. Unlike Robin and his companions, however, Charles ran away alone. He found kinship support not on his own quarters in Charles City County, but with his "relations" in the neighboring counties of Dinwiddie and Henrico. Whether attempting to pass as free as Robin and his relations did, or visiting long-separated kin as Charles did, Virginia's slaves developed and relied heavily upon their extensive kinship networks.[1]

The numerous runaway slave advertisements in Virginia, especially after the *Virginia Gazette* was founded, are valuable tools for examining the webs of kin and friends that enslaved Africans and African Americans developed. *Extended kinship networks*—different from *extended families* in which parents' parents or siblings also lived with the core conjugal unit—were vital components of the slave lifeline in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia. While extended households with grandparents, parents' siblings, or even great-grandparents are prime examples of transferred and adapted African cultural practices, individual family units are most easily examined on a plantation-by-plantation basis. Before addressing the significant African transfers and adaptations within slave families and households, I will examine the broader support mechanisms which connected individual slave families one to another: their cross-plantation networks of kin and friends.

[1] John Olives, *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser* (Hayes), Sept. 24, 1785; William Gregory, *VaG*(Rind), Feb. 18, 1768. For a similar version of the Robin and company story, see Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 538.

In this chapter I will also use runaway slave advertisements as avenues to examine African cultures. From 1736 to 1790 the *Virginia Gazette* printed over 1,600 runaway slave advertisements. I sampled every tenth advertisement in order to find the national origin of the slaves who ran away and, most importantly, to which, if any kin, they may have been fleeing. Relatively few runaway slave advertisements listed the national origins of slaves, so when possible I used advertisements from my sample population to describe aspects of certain African cultures that are important to understanding what family forms among slaves historians should emphasize. Africans were, indeed, a significant minority of the slaves who fled their plantations during eighteenth-century Virginia (see Table 1-1, page 16). Even though eighty-nine of the 160 advertisements that comprise the sample group either did not list the national origin of the runaway or give too little information to determine that information, the seventy-one advertisements for which this information is given or can be determined are important to examine.[2]

[2] If the national origin of the runaway slave was not listed explicitly, comments about the slave's poor and absent English-speaking skills indicate that the slave was foreign-born. Likewise, comments about a slave's "good" English as well as explanations that a slave ran away to the plantation where he or she was raised indicates that such slaves were Virginia- or U.S.-born. Of course, I suspect that the number of African-born slaves is higher than the advertisements allow me to conclude, because African-born slaves could have spoken "good" English as well; in fact, owners may have been more likely to recognize those language skills from a foreign-born slave.

Table 1-1[3]

National Origins of Runaway Slaves in Virginia, 1736 - 1790

N=160 (10% of Advertisements)

Place of Origin	*Number of Slaves*	*% of Sample*
Africa	9	5.7
West Indies	5	3.1
Africa/West Indies	12	7.5
Total Africa and West Indies	**26**	**16.3**
Virginia	24	15.0
Other U. S.	5	3.1
Virginia/Other U. S.	16	10.0
Total Virginia and U.S.	**45**	**28.1**
Not Listed/Cannot Be Determined	**89**	**55.6**

Helpful to the categorization of runaway slaves as either foreign-born or Virginia-born is the scholarship on African "day names." Peter Wood in *Black Majority* used such an analysis to determine the national origins of the slaves he examined, and offers a persuasive case that some

[3] The categories "Africa," "West Indies," "Virginia," and "Other U.S." are comprised of advertisements that list explicitly the origin of the slave runaway. The categories "Africa/West Indies" and "Virginia/Other U.S." are comprised of advertisements in which explicit information about national origin is not given, but in which other information, such as language skills, African day names, and location of plantations where the slave was raised allowed me to determine whether the slave was foreign- or U.S.-born.

slaves were able to compromise with new masters who attempted to strip completely the African names of their newly-arrived. For example, the name *Cudjo*, which indicates that the individual was born on Monday, may have been corrupted to the English name *Joe*. Nonetheless, it is important to consider that even in situations where masters did give a slave an entirely new name, owners had little control over what slaves were called in the slave quarter.[4]

Many names which appear in the runaway slave advertisements of my sample group are undeniably African in origin. *Cuffey*, one of the most common names for slaves during this period, was an African day name for Monday. *Cajah* was probably an English corruption of the aforementioned *Cudjo*, another “Monday” name. *Pheby*, while ostensibly a misspelled version of the Euro-American female name *Phoebe*, was probably a compromise between that English version and the African “Friday” name *Phiba*. Similarly, *Aggy*, a popular bondswoman’s name may have been derived from *Abba*, and the several slaves named *Jemmy* were probably African natives with the original name of *Quame*; these men may been able to avoid being called by the English name James or may have had masters who did not want to give them a popular name for white men.[5]

The Africans who were sold into slavery in Virginia during the early eighteenth century were important mediators of their native culture and the oppressive, foreign culture of white Virginians. The development of kinship systems among enslaved Virginians undoubtedly accelerated as a larger proportion of slaves in Virginia were native-born. Indeed, central to developing inter-plantation extended kinship networks was the development of African-American culture. Until the mid-eighteenth century, the proportion of Africans in the population precluded the development of any reliable web of kinsmen and friends (see Table 1-2, page 19). Native Africans did, indeed, have cultural similarities that allowed them to build relationships with one another, but as a collective entity, Virginia’s slaves were never more cohesive than

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[4] Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 181-186; J. L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Vintage), 129-132.

[5] *Ibid*; Alice Needler, Feb. 27, 1744, *VaG*(Parks); Carter Braxton, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon); Robert Carter, Jan. 19, 1782, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon); H. Ball, Jan. 1, 1790, *VaG*(Nicolson); George Moore, Jul. 9, 1767, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon); Arthur Smith, Jun. 9, 1738, *VaG*(Parks). For popular “pools” of English names, see Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter’s Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 165-66.

when their distinct Afro-American culture emerged. Moreover, from 1710 to 1760, nearly two-thirds of all slaves imported to the Chesapeake were male. That many slaves developed fictive kin relationships with other male slaves on slave-trading vessels is indisputable. In 1736 Caroline County planter Peyton Smith advertised the escape of “Two new Negro Men” who both arrived in Virginia two months prior to their escape. Major John Bolling had the same experience with two new male slaves, Sampson and Bowzar, who waited only three weeks to make their escape. That such friendships or fictive kin relationships were as numerous or as fruitful to the slaves' existence as the later-developed kinship networks, however, is also without question. With fewer women in the slave population, consanguinal relationships did not develop in earnest until well into the eighteenth century.[6]

Allan Kulikoff and Philip Morgan argue that 1740 was the critical juncture of cultural development. By that decade, only one-third of Virginia's slave population was African-born, and the greatly unbalanced sex ratio of the early eighteenth century was beginning to reach an equilibrium. Important, too, was the rate of natural increase among Virginia slaves during the middle decades of the century. From the relatively low rates of .2% during the first decade, and 1% during the 1730s, population growth among Virginia slaves accelerated beginning in 1740. For the subsequent decade, the rate of natural population growth was 3%, and the 4.7% rate of growth during the 1750s represented an eighteenth-century high in Virginia. After 1760 the rate of natural increase slowed, but remained at least twice as rapid as the first three decades of the century. Thus, the data support the contention that slaves were developing a nascent Afro-American culture in mid-eighteenth century Virginia. In short, with more Virginia-born slaves comprising the slave population, the important reconstruction of West and West Central African extended kinship networks began in earnest.[7]

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[6] Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 71, 79-101, 448-9; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 330-34; Peyton Smith, *VaG*(Parks), Oct. 22, 1736; Maj. John Bolling, *ibid.*, Jun. 10, 1737.
[7] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 317-51; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 79-95.

Table 1-2[8]

Percentage of Africans among Slaves in Virginia, 1700-1800

Year	Total Slaves	Africans	*%*
1700	13,000	6,500	*50*
1710	19,500	10,161	*52*
1720	27,000	12,209	*45*
1730	40,000	17,530	*44*
1740	65,000	22,288	*34*
1750	105,000	22,544	*21*
1760	140,500	19,236	*14*
1770	180,500	15,973	*9*
1780	224,000	10,916	*5*
1790	293,000	4,740	*2*
1800	346,000	678	*0.2*

Coalescing the disparate African cultures whose members were forced to converge in Virginia were vast networks if inter-plantation kin. These networks were difficult, if not impossible, for newly- or recently-arrived Africans to reconstruct, but subsequent generations of African-Virginians succeeded in building them.[9] Before the development of that culture, Africans without any apparent family contacts used another West African tradition, adopting fictive kin, to stabilize their relationships on their own plantations and to make more successful their escape from enslavement. Examining slave advertisements from the 1730s especially will illustrate this point. Furthermore, by searching for more utility in runaway slave advertisements than the over-used analysis of slave resistance, these relatively short pieces of evidence will reveal a thriving, albeit often nebulous, network of blood-related and fictive kin in Virginia.

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[8] Adapted from Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 61. To estimate surviving Africans in the population, Morgan uses a .900 survival rate for the first year after importation, .739 for the tenth year, .407 for the twentieth, .204 for the thirtieth, .020 for the thirty-ninth, and no survivors for the fortieth year after importation. For the reliability of Morgan's estimates, see Allan Kulikoff, "A 'Prolifick' People: Black Population Growth in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1700-1790," *Southern Studies* 16 (1977), 391-428.

[9] Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 317-51.

Motives of runaways varied widely, but can be placed into three main categories: visiting kin; to pass as free, obtain employment, or go to a town; and, go out of the colony or state. Gerald Mullin estimated that, from 1736-1801, 20% of all runaways fled in order to visit kin while 23% escaped their plantations to find work. Sixteen percent of runaway slaves were figured to attempt escape from the colony; an overwhelming majority of these slaves were from the West Indies or had previous sailing experience. Disproportionate even to the unbalanced sex ratio among Virginia slaves in the eighteenth century, male slaves were much more likely to run away: pregnancy and the responsibility of motherhood made bondswomen less mobile than male slaves.[10] Given the centrality of mothers in Igbo and Akan cultures (which I discuss later in this chapter) the difference in runaway rates of male and female slaves was caused by the different roles that men and women had in African-Virginian culture.[11]

Unlike Mullin, I attempted to break down the kin relationships that were represented in advertisements that listed specific kin to whom slave runaways may have been fleeing (see Table 1-3, page 21). Spouses were the most frequently-mentioned relatives to whom runaways in Virginia fled. In a random sampling of the 1,600 runaway slave advertisements printed in the *Virginia Gazette* from 1736 to 1790, I found that over half of all owners who specified to whom the runaway may have been fleeing mentioned the slave's spouse. Approximately one-fourth mentioned that their bondsperson may have been fleeing to their "relations," which could have been a spouse, children, parents, siblings, or more distant relatives. Those fleeing to parents and siblings represented a significantly smaller proportion, 12% and 9%, respectively.[12]

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[10] Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 105-112.

[11] For the consequences of gendered roles, see Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 43-45. For the importance of mothers in Igbo and Akan cultures, see Victor Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 54-56; Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Darrell Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 263-270.

[12] I recorded pertinent kin information from every tenth advertisement . Only 20% of advertisements mentioned any kin at all, so the percentage of slaves believed to be fleeing to their spouses represents only 8% of the sample group (160 advertisements comprise the sample group). I have no reason to believe that this number should be higher, for my findings are almost identical to those in Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 105-112. Mullin, too, shows that only 20% of advertisements named kin. Unlike Mullin, however, I am more interested in determining specific kin relations, so I have attempted to show what proportion of those slaves fleeing to kin were fleeing to their spouses. Evidently, marital bonds, even those between slaves living on separate plantations, were salient in many owners' minds.

Given the sizable proportion of advertisements that listed no kin—seventy-nine percent—any conclusions drawn from this evidence should be viewed with caution. Nonetheless, that thirty-three owners knew with certainty not only the relationships that their slaves had but where these kin members lived is significant. Even if the proportion of owners who knew this information was not higher—and I suspect strongly that it was—the existence of cross-plantation relationships did not escape a significant minority of owners. The slaves themselves would have had more knowledge of the breadth and intricacies of these webs of kin and friends, but any evidence of these networks that emanated from white eyes is especially telling that they existed. Finally, these owners may only have been guessing about the destination of their slave runaways. To focus on this valid observation, however, is to miss an important point that this evidence presents: the recognition of such networks by owners proves that they existed and that slaves may have tried several means in addition to running away to maintain them.

Table 1-3[13]

Possible Kin to Whom Slaves Fled

N=33 (21% of sample population)

Kin Relationship	*Number*	*% of Sampled Ads that Listed Kin*
Spouse	18	54
"Relations"	9	27
Parents	4	12
Sibling	3	9

[13] Of the sample population, only 33 of 160 advertisements listed kin. Nonetheless, breaking down the relationships that were listed is significant, for it reveals that owners did have awareness of spousal, parental, sibling, and extended kin relationships.

The problem with Mullin's evidence is that 40% of the advertisements list no motive or destination. Moreover, there are three major problems with Mullin's study: he does not address to whom the runaways were fleeing when their motive was "to visit," which is a significant methodological deficiency when one wants to name precisely what African relationships were transferred to Virginia. Slaves were separated from family members and kinsmen by sales, estate settlements, and westward migration. For the enslaved, there was more at stake than just "visiting": slaves fled to kin to reconstruct relationships that had been torn apart by enslavement. Finally, Mullin defines "assimilated" slaves as those acculturated to white culture. Such an approach was innovative when Mullin published his study, but in the wake of significant scholarship concerning the development of African-American culture, such a categorization is no longer apt.[14] Enslaved Africans and African-Virginians should be examined in light of assimilation into their own culture, not a white Euro-American culture in which they could never, even if "free," be a full member. Studies of runaways must now be more precise in both the kinship relationships that can be determined from runaway advertisements and from what, if any, African cultures formed the basis of such relations. In short, slave family scholars must reach beyond the boundaries of America to the foundation of Afro-American culture, the West and West Central African cultures whence the enslaved came.

The sheer number of African cultures, even within individual states, makes such a task appear to be daunting (see Table 1-4, page 23). Natives of these cultures themselves were often surprised by the cultural continuities in their region. Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo from eastern Nigeria who was sold into slavery at eleven, claimed that Igbo sub-groups near the coast resembled his own. Equiano said that he had travelled "a great many days' journey from my father's house, yet these people [his captors] spoke exactly the same language with us."[15] In addition to linguistic similarities, Equiano also remarked that "all the nations and people I had hitherto passed through, resembled our own in their manners, customs, and language."[16] Enslaved African-Virginians, using the similarities shared by many West and West Central African cultures, produced a

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[14] Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 105-112.
[15] Robert J. Allison, ed., *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African. Written by Himself* (London, 1789; reprint, Boston, 1995), 48.
[16] *Ibid.*, 52.

culture that was neither wholly African nor fully American. By exploring those cultures which were represented prominently in slave imports into Virginia—Igbo, Akan, Bantu, Lega, Mande, and Mende—I will assess the inter-continental transfer of five important continuities pervasive in almost every western African culture: the centrality of extended kin; the importance of women; the prominent role of mothers; structure of households; and, adaptability. Runaway slave advertisements, although not useful for household or family reconstruction, have been under-utilized as sources for the development of Afro-American culture. By tracking the motivations, companions, and destinations of runaways, the most pervasive element of west African family life—large groups of extended kin—will be seen as one of the most important cultural transfers by native Africans and their American-born progeny.

Table 1-4
Major Cultural/Language Groups in African States

Region	Cultures	*% of Virginia Imports, 1710-1769*
Bight of Biafra	Igbo, Igbibio, Aro, Yoruba	*38*
Gold Coast	Akan, Asante	*16*
Angola/Congo	Bantu, Lega	*16*
Senegambia	Mande, Bambara, Mandingo, Wolof	*15*
Sierra Leone and Windward Coast	Mande, Mende, Jallonke, Susu, Senufo	*11*
Mozambique-Madagascar	Malagasy	*4*

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Charles ran, and so did Frank. Both “of the Ibo Country” and both “new Negro men,” Charles and Frank had been enslaved on Joseph Hillyard’s King William county plantation for about twelve months. Like many slaveowners, Hillyard did not mention the destination of these

unassimilated slaves, one of whom, Charles, had "his Country Marks in his Face." Newly arrived Africans had difficulty with their escapes because of the lack of kin and friends who often harbored runaways. Charles and Frank, however, because they fled together, may have enjoyed more success as fugitives than other Africans who ran away alone. For example, Bonna, a "Canoe Man" from Igboland, fled without a companion from his quarters in Chesterfield county. Bonna's master Richard Booker did not mention how long Bonna had been in the country, but with no other fellow fugitives on whom to rely, even Bonna's experience with canoes may not have been enough to secure his permanent freedom since he probably had no family or kin to visit. The difficulty slaves had in finding kin, or even countrymen, in mid-eighteenth century Virginia is illustrated by the dearth of advertisements which mention slaves of the same culture running away together; in fact, the advertisement featuring Charles and Frank is one of only two known Virginia examples of slaves from the same country fleeing together. More often, native Africans would have run away with any slave, African or Virginia-born, who shared their motivations, timing, and destination. For example, Jemmy, an Igbo who ran away in 1755, fled with two non-Igbo, foreign-born slaves from Henry Hill's North Carolina plantation. Like many slaveowners and overseers who placed runaway slave advertisements, Hill did not list the destination of Jemmy, John, and Boston. That he advertised their escape in the *Virginia Gazette*, however, indicates that he may have thought the slaves would return to tidewater Virginia, their probable first experience with Virginia.[17]

Thus, while these three advertisements did not mention explicitly the destinations or possible kin of the slaves, each is an effective example of the possible strategies slaves used when running away: fleeing with a slave or slaves from the same plantation in order to preserve a relationship or friendship (Charles and Frank); fleeing alone, which before the development of Afro-American extended kinship networks was rarely successful (Bonna); and, fleeing to a known destination, where one of the runaways may have had acquaintances or relations (Jemmy, John, and Boston). Moreover, the fact that the slaveowners did not mention kin is at least as powerful a

[17] Joseph Hillyard, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Oct. 7, 1773; Henry Hill, *VaG*(Hunter), Oct. 17, 1755; Richard Booker, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Dec. 24, 1772. For the difficulty that Africans had in fleeing successfully in Virginia, especially compared to South Carolina, see Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 446-7. For the claim that there are only two extant Virginia examples of slaves from the same ethnicity running away together, see Morgan, 447-8. My own research with runaway slave advertisements, especially in Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, supports Morgan's argument.

point as what they did mention. While these slaves may have had kin that their owners did not know, it is more likely, because they were African-born, that they had few, if any, kinsmen to whom they could flee. By examining the nature of family and kinship structure in Igboland itself, the desire for slaves to transplant the practice of extended kinship networks that pervaded plantation boundaries will be more easily understood.

Igbo culture was comprised of nearly fifty sub-cultures. Located in the Niger delta of present-day Nigeria and Cameroon, Igbos—comprised chiefly of Igbo, Ibibio, Aro, and Yoruba—had a decentralized political state. Despite the plethora of individual cultures, the Igbo conglomeration, like many larger cultural groups in western Africa, was a group of culturally similar peoples. Each Igbo culture spoke the main West African language Kwa, versions of which varied only in degree among the cultures in the region. Akan and Igbo Kwa were most different, which is one reason that the otherwise similar cultures are treated separately by scholars. Like many West and Central African cultures, Igbo culture was marked by clannishness. The smallest social unit among the Igbo was the extended kinship group, or *umunna*. Each *umunna* was comprised of nuclear families or simple conjugal units similar to the perceived Euro-American norm.[18]

Women were central to Igbo culture. Motherhood was viewed as a woman's most important responsibility. Michael Gomez argues that Igbo women were "keepers of the soil," akin to the goddess of land Ala. The earth mother, while not the highest deity in Igbo religion, was important to Igbos because of their belief that fertility—whether human or in land—was essential to their clan's survival. The high god in Igbo religion, Chineke, also had an essential female element. In order for Chineke to have full power, the male half, *chi*, and the female half, *eke*, had to be in harmony. Moreover, despite the patrilineal descent practices that most Bight of Biafra cultures practiced, many of them still emphasized the importance of women through complex double unilineal descent or double descent.[19] For example, even though a child's patrilineage determined what land, title, or office he or she inherited, the chief responsibility of a child's matrilineal kin was to protect the jural rights granted by the father's status.[20]

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[18] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 125-34; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 189.
[19] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 125-34.
[20] Uchendu, *Igbo*, 49-56, 64-66.

An Igbo child's mother was the most important parent in his or her life. The practice of polygyny—usually found in families of high status—created "big compounds" within the *umunna*. Each compound was headed by a male and was comprised of his wives and their respective children. Because the male head of compound was not a full-time member of each household, women headed the smaller "eating" or "cooking" units. Even though matrifocal families in the United States drew the attention of Daniel Patrick Moynihan and still elicit claims of abnormality by some Western social scientists, matricentered families in Igbo culture were both common and essential to the socialization of children. Igbo fathers did interact more with their children than many enslaved fathers in Virginia, but mothers in Biafra, like slave mothers in America, were the chief socializing forces in children's lives.[21] Among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria—an important Igbo sub-group—father-child relationships were formal and sometimes cold. The primary responsibility of the father, passing along his economic, social, and political status to his children, was important; mother-child bonds, however, were stronger because of their more personal nature. The Yoruba explained the importance of the warmer mother-child bond with their proverb, "The mother is gold, the father is glass."[22]

Outside the nuclear family or polygynous unit was a vast group of extended kin. Some extended kin resided in the households of the female-headed "eating units," but most were more distant relatives living in their own nuclear families. Keeping track of kin in Igboland was made doubly difficult by the unique method in which Igbo defined relatedness. Affinal, or in-law, relationships encompassed each spouse's respective affinal kin. For instance, when a man married a woman, he inherited affines based not only on marriage to his wife (these would be her consanguinal kin) but inherited all of her own affinal relationships, and vice-versa.[23] Thus, Igbo adults, not just children, frequently experienced a vast expansion of their kin relationships. The most important extended kin were found in five lineage groups: the father's the mother's, the paternal grandmother's, the maternal grandmother's, and affinal relations from spouses. Because Igbos had a place in each kinship group, an individual's relations often resembled concentric

[21] Uchendu, *Igbo*, 54-56.
[22] Emmanuel D. Babatunde, *A Critical Study of Bini and Yoruba Value Systems of Nigeria in Change: Culture, Religion, and the Self* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 9-10.
[23] Uchendu, *Igbo*, 54-56.

circles. This tightly-woven, rigid practice of respecting and honoring kin, whether affinal or consanguinal, is the most salient characteristic of Igbo family practices.[24]

Consequently, for Charles, Frank, Jemmy, and Bonna, not having extended kin upon whom to rely for support was especially trying. Running away with friends, especially with a countryman, replaced the consanguinal relationships that the men were born into in Igboland. In the eighteenth century, before the sex ratio of imported slaves became more balanced, most plantations had large bunkhouses or quarters for their males slaves with no wives.[25] The experience of Jemmy, John, and Boston is an example of how disparate African peoples emphasized their commonalities: each faced with the pressures of enslavement, these three men found shared cultural traditions that they and future generations of Virginia slaves would use to reconstruct some semblance of the Igbo extended kinship system.

Like the Igbo, Akan from the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) practiced familial forms that were different from that of their white slaveowners in the New World. Perhaps more than any other enslaved peoples from West Africa, the Akan were especially homogeneous. A result of both the highly-centralized state that the dominant Asante built in the early eighteenth century and of being targeted for the Atlantic slave trade by the Asante, the cultural homogeneity of Gold Coast slaves may have had a disproportionate effect on Afro-American culture. That the Akan may have had an important impact in the New World is especially convincing when Akan culture is compared to the more heterogeneous peoples of Sierra Leone and Senegambia. Moreover, the Akan were especially influential to the development of African-Virginian culture because of the higher proportion of Akan slaves imported by Chesapeake slaveowners.[26]

Thus, Virginia slaveowners, at least in runaway slave advertisements, were especially cognizant of the features of Akan slaves. When George ran away from his Albemarle county quarters in 1766, his master Robert Nicholas described him as "marked in the face as the Gold Coast slaves generally are." Especially intriguing about George was that, unlike the Igbo slave Bonna, he may

[24] Uchendu, *Igbo*, 64-68.
[25] For a detailed description of slave housing, and sex ratios, as well as a comparison of slave quarters on small and large plantations, see Kulifoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 368-80.
[26] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 88, 105.

have had kin or acquaintances away from his own plantation. Nicholas figured that George was being "harboured at some of the plantations on Cary's creek, in Goochland county." George probably had been enslaved at one of those plantations, even though Nicholas does not mention the Gold Coast native's former quarters. Travelling eastward to a former plantation may have been George's way of coping with the westward expansion into the Virginia backcountry, which destroyed the web of relationshipss that Virginia's early slaves struggled to reconstruct.[27]

The Akan, or Asante, culture in which George was raised was similar to that of the Igbo. Lineage among the Akan was marked by matriliny, "the dominant principle of Asanti kinship."[28] In the early eighteenth century, Akan political structure was comprised of only eight "matriclans," which were large groupings of extended families(*abusua*) that traced their ancestry to a common mother. Within each *abusua* were several households, most often much larger than nuclear families. Typically, a man, his wives, all of his children, his mother, younger brothers, and unmarried sisters comprised a single household. The *wofa*, or maternal uncle, was the head of household, and in Akan culture exercised supreme jural and religious authority within his local kinship group. Unlike the Igbo, who practiced double descent but whose jural rights were inherited from one's father, the Akan based all jural rights on matrilineage.[29]

Akan women, like in most African cultures, were central to the family and the clan. The maternal grandmother was the most important member of the *abusua*, since her children and grandchildren traced their social and economic status through her. The goal of every Akan woman was to have many of her children and grandchildren living with her; especially common were women whose daughters and their children lived with them. The bond between maternal grandmothers and their daughter's children was an important one. This practice was transferred to America and adapted to enslavement. Many slave households were multi-generational, and most often, because of mother-headed families, the maternal grandmother was the grandparent residing in the household. Furthermore, as in Igboland, the mother-child bond was more important than a child's relationship with his or her father. Father-child relationships in the Gold

[27] Robert Nicholas, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Jan. 15, 1767. For an excellent analysis of how westward expansion in Virginia affected slave families and their extended kinship networks, see Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 358-60.
[28] Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Darryll Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 283.

Coast may have been less formal and warmer than those in the Bight of Biafra—a consequence of jural rights being matrilineal—but the practice of polygyny, as in Biafra, may have limited the time one man could spend with all of his children. More importantly, the Akan, like many of their West and Central African counterparts, simply stressed the mother-child bond at the expense of father-child relationships. The Akan proverb "If your mother dies you have no lineage-kin left" signified the centrality that women, and especially mothers, had in Gold Coast family life.[30]

Compelling about the Akan was their corporate nature. Landed property in West Africa was frequently owned by a large group—such as a family, clan, or state[31]—but Akan communitarianism was unique even for that region. The Akan earth mother, Asase Yaa, was central to Akan religion and life. For the Akan, land "was the source of not only sustenance and values but also corporate identity." Land had its own spirit because it was the link between ancestors and their descendants. Thus, in addition to each *abusua* owning land, Akan corporate ownership signified more than belief in community: it defined the very identity of the kinship group. Given this belief, displacement from their ancestral lands, especially to be sold into slavery across the Atlantic Ocean, must have been especially traumatic for the Akan.[32]

In Virginia, Gold Coast slaves maintained adapted forms of their homeland culture. Transferring the Akan tradition of land ownership to America was, of course, impossible on a large scale for slaves in Virginia; community gardens within the slave quarters, however, may have been an Afro-American adaptation of this West African practice. Transplanted and maintained on a large scale, however, was the Akan belief in extended family. Reconstructing the extended kinship networks which were the crux of Akan culture was something that Gold Coast slaves could, and did, do. That Robert Nicholas was still advertising George's escape in 1771, five years after his slave's escape, indicates that George's kin or acquaintances in Goochland County were adept at hiding their kinsmen.[33]

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[29] *Ibid.*, 254-63, 270-273; Gomez, *Country Marks*, 108-113.
[30] Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," 263-270.
[31] For a compelling argument about West African property ownership and its relation to the African and Atlantic slave trades, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 74-79.
[32] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 109-113.
[33] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 535-40; Robert Nicholas, *VaG*(Rind), Feb. 7, 1771.

In adjacent Hanover county, Roger, an Angola native, attempted to rebuild another aspect of kinship—his nuclear family—by running away. Roger escaped with a Virginia-born slave, Moll, who was "very big with child." Moll and Roger lived at the same plantation, and were recognized by their owner John Shelton as being married. Shelton mentioned no extended kin to whom the betrothed runaways were fleeing, but Moll, being a native of Virginia, probably had more kin and acquaintances than Roger.[34]

Bantu and semi-Bantu speakers from West Central Africa, notably those from Angola and Congo, came from perhaps the most ethnically-diverse region of West and Central Africa.[35] In spite of the diversity in their homeland, however, Michael Gomez argues that Angolans and Congolese "saw themselves anew" and began to "forge ties of community" when pressed into their shared state of enslavement. While many of the sub-groups in this region practiced matriliny, the majority of cultures practiced patrilineal descent. The Lega of eastern Congo, for example, practiced a rigid form of patriliny, especially when compared to the Igbo versions. Fathers lived with their fathers in Legaland as frequently as mothers lived with their mothers in the Gold Coast. Similarly, the Ngoni and Nkundo, two important cultural groups in the Atlantic slave trade, practiced patrilineage.[36]

Nonetheless, even these patrilineal cultures share commonalities with other West and Central African cultures. No matter the descent system, every culture placed women at the center of family and social life. In Lega culture, the maternal uncle was as important as the *wofa* was in Akan culture; the Lega paternal grandmother, like her Igbo counterpart, was also the most important member of a person's patrilineage. Thus, even in cultures such as Lega that did not practice double descent, women were still essential elements in the patrilineal descent structure. Moreover, the extended kinship group was as important to the peoples of West Central Africa as

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[34] John Shelton, *VaG*(Parks), Nov. 2, 1739.
[35] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 144. For the opposite view, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 190-1. Thornton contends that because of the lack of difference among versions of Bantu, that this region was almost as homogeneous as that of the Gold Coast. I agree with his arguments that ethnic diversity in West Africa has been exaggerated, but I do not believe that language alone determines the degree of cultural homogeneity. Gomez addresses several examples of cultural differences to prove this statement.
[36] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 141-49; Daniel Biebuyck, *Lega Culture: Art, Initiation, and Moral Philosophy among a Central African People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 37-38.

it was in other cultures. In Lega culture, kinship groups were even larger than in other cultures: kinsmen often augmented their clan of blood-related, patrilineal extended kin with fictive kin from other villages or clans.[37]

While adopting fictive kin was less voluntary for slaves in America, the practice was a primary survival strategy of slaves. In June 1736 Angola-born Planter ran away from his King William county plantation with another male slave. Planter's companion, "an old Negroe fellow," had hair "like a Madagascar's" and was enslaved on another plantation. Planter and his companion likely forged their friendship and fictive-kin relationship either on a slave ship or in service at the other's plantation. For Planter, adopting a fictive kin member was not only an important survival strategy that a slave of any culture may have utilized, but was probably especially easy because of his cultural background. Similarly, London, an Angolan living in New Kent, avoided fleeing alone by "adopting" Virginia-born Sam Drysdale, a slave from another plantation. In short, examining further the fictive-kin traditions of Africans in their native land will allow slave family historians to assess this frequently-used kin-building strategy of Virginia's slaves.[38]

Reinforcing the Angolan-Congolese practice of adopting fictive kin were slaves imported from Senegambia. The tripartite social stratification of most Senegambian groups encouraged the inclusion of slaves, the third and lowest caste, into the extended kinship clans of the free. In America, where their status was equal, Senegambians still adopted fictive kin relationships. In September 1745, two Gambian men, one named Jack and the other distinguished not by name but by his "country marks," ran away together after less than a month on Margaret Arbuthnott's Hanover county plantation. Both men were aboard the vessel *Ranger*, and, if not consanguinal kin, had ample time to develop a fictive kin relationship almost as strong as those in their homeland. In addition to the Igbo runaways Charles and Frank, this is the only Virginia example of slaves from the same ethnicity fleeing together.[39]

[37] Biebuyck, *Lega Culture*, 38-45.
[38] Benjamin Needler, *VaG*(Parks), Nov. 5, 1736; Daniel Parke Custus, *VaG*(Hunter), Dec. 12, 1755; Gutman, *Black Family*, 216-227.
[39] Margaret Arbuthnott, *VaG*(Parks), Oct. 10, 1745; Gomez, *Country Marks*, 47; Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint*, 447-8.

Highly prized by South Carolina and Louisiana slaveowners for their rice-cultivating experience, Senegambians came from a plethora of cultures. In spite of the number of sub-groups in Senegambia, however, most shared significant cultural traditions. That every culture was geographically well-defined helped each group learn to co-exist with the other; this experience would prove essential to enslaved Senegambians in Virginia. Moreover, the growth of Islam was an important factor in the development of shared cultural practices, most notably the near-absolute practice of patriliny in Senegambian cultures. Only the Wolof, a pre-Islamic and non-Mande-speaking coastal culture maintained matrilineal descent.[40]

Overlapping with the cultures of Senegambia were the cultures from the Windward Coast and Sierra Leone. Like most peoples from the Senegambian region, slaves imported from the Windward Coast largely spoke Mande and were patrilineal. The most important group from Sierra Leone, the Mende, balanced patrilineal descent with a bilateral kinship system. Like the Lega, the typical Mende household, or *mawe*, was comprised of a man, his wives, their children, and some of his brothers and sisters. The mother's brother was a central influence in a child's life. In addition to this relatively common influence that a mother's family had on a child's lineage system, Sierra Leonians placed women at the center of their religion. The Senufo, a northern Ivory Coast culture, worshipped a dual-gendered deity named Kolotyolo. Akin to the Igbo deity Chineke, Kolotyolo was only powerful when both its male and female components were in harmony. Clearly, West and West Central Africans sought to soothe the frequent struggles brought on by their double descent systems by elevating that struggle to a higher power.[41]

In America, the chief struggle for slaves was not balancing the demands of patrilineal relatives with matrilineal kin. If there were any kin in close proximity to a slave, those family members comprised one of the most important buffers against enslavement. Thus, despite the number of West African cultures that practiced matriliny, several runaways fled to their fathers. In September 1774, slaveowner Benjamin Hubbard surmised that Solomon, who had been gone since May, had fled to his wife in Hanover County or to his father's in Chesterfield. Similarly,

[40] Gomez, *Country Marks*, 45-52.
[41] *Ibid.*, 96-98.

Sam, who had been away from his King William quarters for two months before Samuel Garlick advertised his escape, was imagined to be "in the neighborhood of York or Hampton, where his father Joe Hill, a free mulatto" lived.[42]

As the proportion of advertisements that list to whom runaways were fleeing suggests, several slaves attempted to be reunited with their spouse. Peter Brown, who escaped from Peterfield Trent's plantation on April 20, 1774, was believed to have fled to Petersburg, where he was born, or to Benjamin Hubbard's plantation in Caroline County. Trent surmised, "As he has a Wife at Benjamin Hubbard's it is likely he may be lurking in that Neighborhood." Peter was not alone in attempting to rebuild or enjoy for the first time a marital relationship in which husband and wife could enjoy living together. In October 1787 Dinah, a Virginia-born slave in Amelia whose tobacco-chewing and smoking habits were scorned by her owner, ran away to her husband, a house servant in Hanover county. Dinah's network of friends and kin was strategically placed for her escape, since many of her relations were in Richmond, halfway between Amelia and Hanover. Such help, of course, was crucial to the success of slaves who wanted to remain free. When Moses and Joan, slaves near Williamsburg, had been gone for over two years, Moses' master Newman Barnes said that he must "necessarily suspect that they are harboured by some ill disposed person in or about Williamsburg." Like Moses and Joan, many slaves ran with, not to, their spouses. In August 1774 Stepney Blue, a York County slave on Nathan Yancey's plantation, escaped with his wife Easter Roberts, a free African-American. Molly and Mack ran away from their respective plantations in Prince George county, evidently headed to kin or friends of "the wench" at her former plantation in Lancaster county.[43]

In addition to these examples of strong monogamous bonds overcoming the rigors of enslavement, two male runaways were successful in transferring or maintaining the West African tradition of polygyny. When his "well-known" personal servant Billy Barber ran away in June 1774, Bennett Browne listed more than one possible destination for Barber: "He has, I am told, a Wife at Norfolk, another at Hampton, and a third at this place; it is probable he may be about the

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[42] Benjamin Hubbard, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Sept. 1, 1774; Samuel Garlick, *VaG and Weekly Advertiser*, Nov. 1, 1783.

first two mentioned Places." In October 1777 Dinwiddie county planter James French remarked that his "very likely Negro fellow named Jack" had been seen "supported and concealed in that County [Prince George] by several Negro Women whom he calls his Wives; his greatest favourite amongst them belongs to Mr. Robert Bates." Of course, Billy Barber and Jack were in select company. Given the difficulty that most slave men had in finding and keeping a single wife, the one West African tradition which enslavement nearly destroyed was polygyny.[44]

One cultural practice that has been overlooked in many studies of runaway slaves is that of the sibling bond. In cultures where polygyny was prevalent, such as the Igbo and the Akan, stark contrasts existed between half-siblings of the same father and half-siblings of the same mother. Because women were central to almost every African culture, and because the mother-child bond was the strongest of any relationship, full siblings and maternal half-siblings forged bonds in their homeland which were secondary only to the relationship with their mother. Ample evidence from runaway slave advertisements in Virginia indicates that this cultural tradition was transferred with some success to the New World. For instance, a week after her brother John Wilson ran away from his quarters near the James River, Sarah followed suit. Plantation owner William Black did not believe that the two ran to the same location. John supposedly went to another of Black's plantations in Bute County, North Carolina, where he had "several relations." Sarah may have drifted toward Petersburg, where Black knew "there are runaways always." Even though William Black could have been wrong in his estimate of where John and Sarah where fleeing, their respective destinations, even if different, are inconsequential. The timing of Sarah's escape indicates that her relationship with John was too supportive to bear the burden of enslavement without him.[45]

Some siblings maintained contact across the boundaries of their plantations. In April 1772 slaveowner Drury Gee guessed that his slave Kit had run away from his Northampton County, North Carolina plantation to be "on or near the Rappahannock River, in Company with a Brother of his, named Tom." Kit and Tom were successful in their escape, for in the year before the

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[43] Peterfield Trent, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Jun. 16, 1774; Henry Boggess, *VaG*(Nicolson), Apr. 17, 1788; Newman Barnes, *VaG*(Rind), May 23, 1771; Nathan Yancey, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Sep. 29, 1774; Josiah Gary and Lucy Clark, *VaG or WkAdv*(Nicolson & Prentis), Oct. 30, 1784.

[44] Bennett Browne, *VaG*(Dixon & Hunter), Jul. 15, 1775; James French, *VaG*(Dixon & Hunter), Oct. 31, 1777.

advertisement was published Gee called them "both great Villains" because they had "committed many Outrages." Ironically, Tom lived on a plantation owned by Drury Gee's relative, John Gee. Escaping together was probably the only way for Kit and Tom to rebuild their sibling bond that had been destroyed by a slave sale. In Accomack County, Virginia, another pair of brothers wreaked havoc on their owners when they devised an escape for six slaves. On May 14, 1751, Dollar and Greenock escaped with James and Tabitha, who were evidently married, and Pleasant and Hamlet, possibly mother and son. The group of slaves had "broke open several Houses," aided their escape by stealing a canoe, and were figured to be crossing the Chesapeake Bay. While all of the slaves ran away from the same plantation, each pair lived at a separate estate. Undoubtedly, some sort of kinship bond—either consanguinal or fictive—existed between Dollar and Greenock and their companions.[46]

That prevalent inter-plantation kinship networks had developed by the late eighteenth century is illustrated by the number of runaways who fled to their "relations" in counties different from their own. In 1774 Virginia-born Betty escaped from her Hanover County quarters, where she lived separated from many of her kin. Betty's owner Hardin Burnley guessed that she may have been at her former plantation in York or near the James River, but was probably in Charles City, where she had "several Relations." Similarly, when Romeo ran away from his Westmoreland plantation in 1789, Austin Brockenbrough surmised that his slave was headed to Amelia, where he had "several very near relations." The best example, though, of a geographically expansive kinship network was that of Peter Deadfoot, a Stafford County slave. Deadfoot was believed to be in Winchester or Prince William, Virginia, and possibly Charles County, Maryland, which was seventy-five miles from Winchester.[47]

Thus, whether fleeing to their fathers, mothers, siblings, or distant relations, Virginia's runaway slaves relied on a vast web of kin that pervaded plantation, county, and even state boundaries. By the late eighteenth century, enslaved African-Virginians, with the cultural memory passed along to them by their enslaved African forebears, had reconstructed their version of the extended

[45] William Black, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Dec. 13, 1770.
[46] Drury Gee, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), Apr. 2, 1772; Robert King, James Pettigrew, and William Andrews, *VaG*(Hunter), May 24, 1751.

kinship networks that were the essence of kinship systems in every western and central African culture. Moreover, the familial practices of the Igbo and Akan, the most numerous of slave imports into Virginia, had a substantial influence on how slave families—whether individual or extended—used their kinsmen to strategize the survival of the entire slave community. By turning to individual families, and following them over time, I will show how the connection between inter- and intra-plantation kin leaves little doubt that enslaved African-Virginians transferred and adapted many of their African cultural traditions to the New World.

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[47] Hardin Burnley, *VaG*(Purdie & Dixon), May 12, 1774; Austin Brockenbrough, *VaG*(Davis), Mar. 4, 1789; Thomson Mason, *VaG*(Rind), Sep. 22, 1768.

Chapter 2

African Kinship in Microcosm: The Pharsalia Slave Community

While illustrative of the prevalence of extended kin among African-Virginians, inter-plantation kinship networks are difficult to track for twentieth-century scholars. The nebulous nature of such relationships is made even more difficult to trace because of the dearth of plantation owners who were aware of and recorded such relationships. Thus, in order to understand more clearly the exact structure of kinship among enslaved African-Virginians, slave family scholars have focused on slave birth registers, estate inventories, and account books of individual plantations. Ostensibly, slave birth registers appear to offer little to scholars who are interested in more than just simple family units, the perceived Euro-American norm. Even though the mother of slave children was frequently listed in birth registers, fathers of children were rarely named. Any relationships beyond those encompassed by a simple family—parent-child, husband-wife, and sibling—were rarely recorded by plantation owners and overseers. Even relationships as easy to determine as grandparent-grandchild were typically beyond the realm of familial connections that slaveowners recorded.

This problem for slavery historians has its origin in the institution of slavery itself. For owners of slaves, recording only two family relationships for each slave—mother and child—was all that was required to manage a plantation efficiently. From these records slaveowners could track which slave mothers were barren and thus, more eligible for sale, and which slave mothers were fecund and hence, should be kept. The failure of most masters to record the names of children's fathers was not from a lack of knowledge concerning slave unions and parentage of children. Rather, owners were influenced by the 1662 state statute that tracked a slave child's legal status through his or her mother. Fathers, while more integral parts of the simple family among the enslaved, were of secondary importance to the profit-minded plantation owner.[1]

The corollary to the practice of listing only the mothers of children is that any relationship

[1] For a discussion of the 1662 law, see Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 221-222.

beyond those of parents and children and between siblings is difficult to identify. Nonetheless, the completeness of some records of Virginia plantations does allow scholars to reconstruct not only nuclear households but extended kinship groups. The owners of these plantations recorded slave lists several times over a number of years. Using models akin to a genealogist's family trees, I will illustrate that slave family scholars can follow the precedent set by Herbert Gutman and reconstruct the extended families of slaves. By so doing, I contend that slave family scholars must move beyond the question of how stable simple families of slaves were—an issue that has constrained the field for nearly a century—and reconstruct the kinship relations that were the primary familial connections among slaves.[2]

Western scholars have had difficulty viewing the extended family as the primary unit of socialization among enslaved African-Americans. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that among bondspeople of African descent, the conjugal unit was secondary to the extended family.[3] Thus, unlike most previous studies of slave family structure, I reject the Euro-American model (Figure 2-1, page 39) that is too frequently applied to peoples whose cultural practices were distinctly non-Euro-American in character. Instead of using plantation records to track the stability of simple families among slaves—a less arduous task than searching for extended family relations—I will adopt kinship terminology that is more suitable for enslaved African-Virginians.

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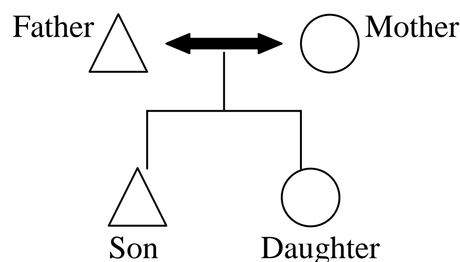
[2] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 101-184.
[3] Herbert Foster, "African Patterns in the Afro-American Family," *Journal of Black Studies* 14 (December 1983) : 214.

Figure 2-1[4]

The Western Nuclear Family



As historian Herbert Foster argued, two types of family existed for Afro-American slaves: simple and extended. The smaller of the two, most easily named "the" family, was either a simple unit akin to the perceived Western norm or an extended household with more than two generations (siblings of parents, or non-blood-related members called fictive kin). The larger of the family types was an extended kinship group or what Herbert Foster described as a "consanguine kinship group."[5] This larger group of kin consisted not just of blood relatives as Foster's use of "consanguine" suggests, but of affinal, or in-law relationships. Including relationships by marriage into kinship systems was not only a well-established practice in Igbo culture, but one of the most important preservations of African culture by African-Virginian bondspeople. Under enslavement, which exerted a constant pressure on even the most well-developed kinship groups, maximizing the number of one's kin was an important strategy of survival. Consequently, given the failure of most slave family studies to address the functionality of extended kin, I will show that extended kinship groups among enslaved African-Virginians were even larger and more central to slave family life than has been illustrated previously.[6]

By focusing on extended kinship groups instead of simple families, I will show the numerous manifestations of African culture within the family structures of enslaved African-Virginians. In

[4] Foster, "African Patterns," 209.
[5] *Ibid*., 214.
[6] Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 54-56.

West and West Central African consanguine kinship groups, members emphasized certain relationships that Western slavery scholars have failed to address. For instance, a child's paternal uncle and maternal aunt were revered almost as much as his or her parents. Perpetuating these relationships was the African practice of "parallel cousins." These cousin relationships, identified as children of same-sex siblings, were closer than the relationships of "cross cousins," who were still important kin but were more akin to cousin relationships in Western families. Parallel cousins, on the other hand, treated one another like siblings (see Figure 2-2, page 41). For enslaved African-Virginians, adapting this practice to fit under enslavement would not only have been possible but important in the wake of so many siblings losing their "real" siblings to sales.[7]

Sales, indeed, often wrecked even the strongest family units. Losing a sibling, parent, child, or cousin to sale was a tragic event in a slave's life. With no intention to dismiss the brutality of enslavement, I argue that Afro-American slaves, because of their inclusive kinship systems, were not unfamiliar with how to cope with such events. The prevalence of polygyny in western and central Africa created simple families in which fathers were temporary members. While the cause of similar household structure in Virginia was different and involuntary, the slaves who experienced flux in their family structure had the cultural background that made their situation not wholly foreign. Moreover, with the presence of the primary family system—the extended family group—slaves who suffered through the loss of important members of their simple family often had numerous kin in their quarter to ameliorate their pain.

[7] *Ibid*., 210-215.

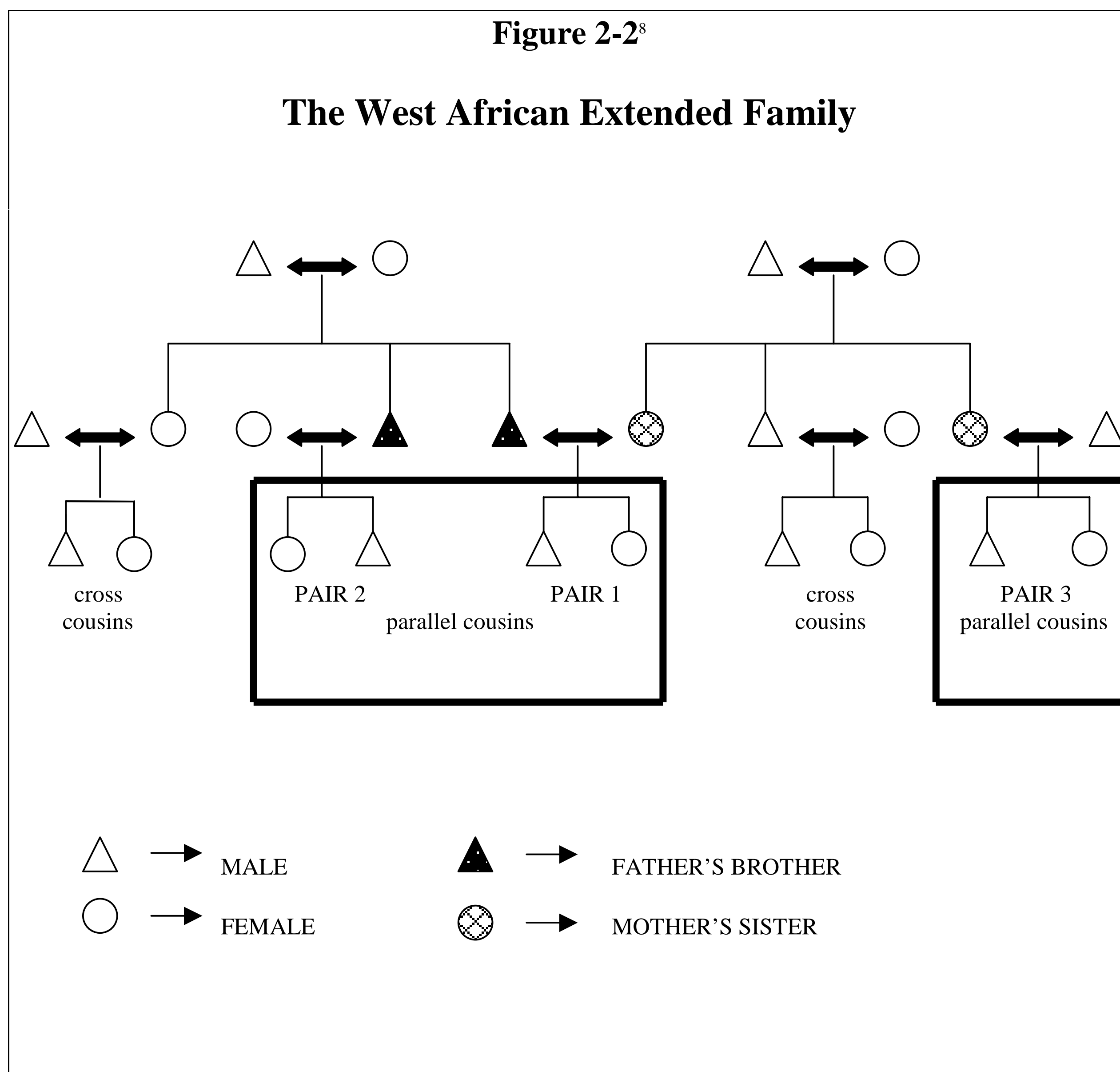


Figure 2-2 *Parallel cousins were children of same-sex siblings (father's brother and mother's sister. In this diagram, each of the three pairs of parallel cousins held a parallel relationship to only one other pair, however: Pair 1 was parallel to Pair 2 and to Pair 3, but Pairs 2 and 3 were not parallel cousins to each other.*

Stressing the importance of the extended kinship group begs two essential questions: to what extent can we attribute the extended kinship networks to the agency and cultural background of slaves, not the whims of the owners? How prevalent were extended kinship networks among

[8] Foster, "African Patterns," 213.

African-Virginians? First, owners had an important financial interest to keep their slaves as happy as enslaved people could be. One of the most effective methods used by owners to accomplish that goal was to limit the separations of family members through sales. Granted, owners and overseers frequently forced slaves to live with other slaves and, of course, often robbed female slaves of their physical liberty through rape.[9] For slaves who protected their cultural background in which extended kin, maternal uncles, and parallel cousins were equally important to simple family units, however, owners had no power to disrupt the preservation of such kinship practices beyond the problematic practice of selling slaves.

Moreover, slavery scholar Eugene Genovese altered permanently the way in which historians view the master-slave relationship. Genovese stressed the "doctrine of reciprocity," under which relationships between slaves and their owners were not the uni-directional sort advanced by scholars before the 1970s. While I stop short of describing such a two-way relationship as being governed by a "doctrine," Genovese's contribution is an important element in answering questions about how, and if, slaves were able to preserve both family connections and the cultural background that made their kinship systems different from that of their owners.[10]

Just as owners could threaten slaves with sale and beating, slaves could threaten owners with running away, infanticide, and sabotage. Nelson County planter William Massie dealt often with the latter two forms of slave agency. In 1839 one of Massie's slaves, Saint Peter, burned down Massie's mill and hemp machine, causing "no less than $5600" in damage. Twelve years later Massie suspected infanticide by one of his slave mothers. Turk, just five months old, supposedly "was mashed to death" by his mother Nancy. In both cases, the slaves remained at Pharsalia, which suggests that their actions were not extraordinary enough to warrant William Massie removing them from the slave quarter.[11]

The threat of extreme resistance, exhibited well by Peter and Nancy, was an important element in the master-slave relationship. The relationship between owners and their bondspeople was not

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[9] Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 29-31.
[10] Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976 [1972]), 89-91.

one governed necessarily by animosity. Slaves mediated their needs and desires—more time off, stable family life, improvements to their quarters—just as masters mediated their own—worker productivity, responsible behavior, and ample natural increase. A few examples of correspondence from slaves to their owners hint at a relationship that was based not on contested, but on mediated, terrain. Sue Asa Washington, a former slave of Buckingham County planter James Twyman and who was sold to an estate near Richmond, wrote to Twyman's wife in January 1819. Sue Asa was anxious to hear back from Martha Twyman, and even named her first child Martha after her. That Sue Asa remarked that she would "come up nix summer" to visit her brother and sister indicates that her former mistress would have had no problem with such an arrangement. Ironically, some slaves may have felt an important connection with their owners through the land on which they toiled. In August 1864 Ben, a Twyman slave hired out to work for someone in Richmond, not only asked about the welfare of his own family but inquired about "how the crops are turning out."[12]

Some correspondence suggests that slaves were not powerless in many aspects of their lives. In 1859 Absalom wrote to his owner James Twyman requesting an "alteration" in his present hiring-out agreement. Absalom complained about the cruelty of the man for whom he was working, complaining that the man had taken his shirt. Absalom must have believed that his plea would be understood, for he left the man's house or plantation until Twyman replied. Likewise, family issues were most likely to elicit strong emotions from slaves when they approached their masters about them. In 1848 James Twyman wrote to a fellow plantation owner about a problem slave, Aggy. The two slaveowners were trying to determine a fair market value for Aggy, who was "of such disposition as to make probable that she will never raise any child or children." For slaveowners, who valued young female slaves highly because of their potential to increase their wealth through slave offspring, resistance such as Aggy's was notable because of the financial pinch it represented for owners.[13]

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[11] William Massie, Memoranda Concerning Misbehavior and Punishment of Slaves, 1839. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library); William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1850. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).

[12] Sue Asa Washington to Martha Twyman, Jan. 10, 1819, Austin-Twyman Papers. (microfilm, University of Virginia Library); Ben to Martha Twyman, Aug. 14, 1864, Austin-Twyman Papers. (microfilm, University of Virginia Library.)

Equally compelling are the slaves who were granted permission to marry the spouse of their choice, since they dispel the popular image of a slaveowner assigning slaves a spouse and solemnizing their marriage by having them jump over a broomstick. In 1850 M.C. Jordan wrote to Twyman, “George applied to me this evening for permission to take a wife at your house and if agreeable to you he may do so provided he does not neglect any time from his work.” Buckingham County planter R. Eldridge wrote to another slaveowner in the Austin-Twyman family, Frances Austin, “Ampy informs me that he desires to marry a servant girl of yours—if it meets your approbation I have no objection. You will find the bearer a respectable, worthy man.” Some slaves, too, undoubtedly tried to alter family arrangements even after their marriage was approved. In 1854 an older Twyman bondsman, London, wrote to James Twyman requesting that his wife Sally be allowed to live with him. London described his situation as being “unable to do anything for myself” so “I expect to die pretty soon.” There is no record of whether James Twyman granted London’s wish, but the existence of such a request indicates that some slaves felt comfortable approaching their owners about changing some arranged aspect of their family life.[14]

I do not contend that slaves had the final decision in the realm of family construction. Ultimately, the power of slaveowners—used mercilessly by some—to break up conjugal units was more powerful than any mode of resistance that a slave could use. Nonetheless, slaves were not powerless in this relationship. For bondspeople, the existence of stable conjugal units within broader groups of extended kin would have been the ideal family form. While nuclear families could be dismantled by a single sale, the vast webs of inter-connected kin could withstand the sale of several of their members. I am not suggesting that even in such cases the members who were sold or were being sold did not view their situation as a tragedy. The centrality of the extended kinship group among their African forebears, however, made enslaved African-Virginians as equipped to handle such a tragedy as any peoples could have been. With the threat of sale looming large, slaves maintained as many kinship relationships as possible, which

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[13] Absalom to J. L. Twyman, March 1859, Austin-Twyman Papers (microfilm, Unievrsity of Virginia Library.); J. L. Twyman to John, Oct. 4, 1848, Austin-Twyman Papers (microfilm, University of Virginia Library.)

[14] M. C. Jordan to J. L. Twyman, March 2, 1850, Austin-Twyman Papers (microfilm, University of Virginia Library); R. Eldridge to Miss Frances Austin, May 7, 1859, Austin-Twyman Papers (microfilm, University of Virginia Library); London to James Twyman, Jul. 15, 1854, Austin-Twyman Papers (microfilm, University of

strengthened broad kinship networks and gave such family forms the role in African-Virginian family life that they had in Africa.

Physical space was also an important aspect of the master-slave relationship and of the forms of slave families. Recent scholarship has shown that the architecture of slave cabins may have been one of the most prevalent transfers of African culture to the New World. Earthfast construction, lighter frames, and post-hole foundations were all design elements to slave cabins that scholars have used to draw comparisons to African forms.[15]

When applying this general concept about physical space to the question of the family structure, however, the crucial point is that the slave cabins at William Massie's plantation Pharsalia were well-suited for the communitarian ideal and large family systems that governed western and central African cultures. In the late 1830s Massie sketched the design of a slave cabin (see Figure 2-3, page 46). The cabin, which measured twenty-eight feet long and twenty-two feet wide, had 528 square feet of living space. The three-room structure, while appearing to be larger than most slave housing, was only adequate in size: each room was occupied by one family. Massie explained his thoughts about which families would fit into each room. He remarked, "Those two small rooms will do for small families" and "the Bison and the Wedge [Massie's nicknames for two slave mothers] may have the large one if they produce fast."[16]

The structure of the cabin indicates that the slaves at Pharsalia had the physical environment in which to perpetuate the communality that pervaded African culture. Most scholarship focuses on gardens and courtyards and sources of this cooperative ideal, but the Pharsalia slave cabin design illustrates the possibility that slave cabins themselves were physical preservers of African culture. Moreover, given the high proportion of inter-related conjugal units at Pharsalia (which I will address in more detail later in this chapter), it is likely that the cabin dominated by "the

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Virginia Library). For examples of female slaves refusing to bear children, see Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 46-49.

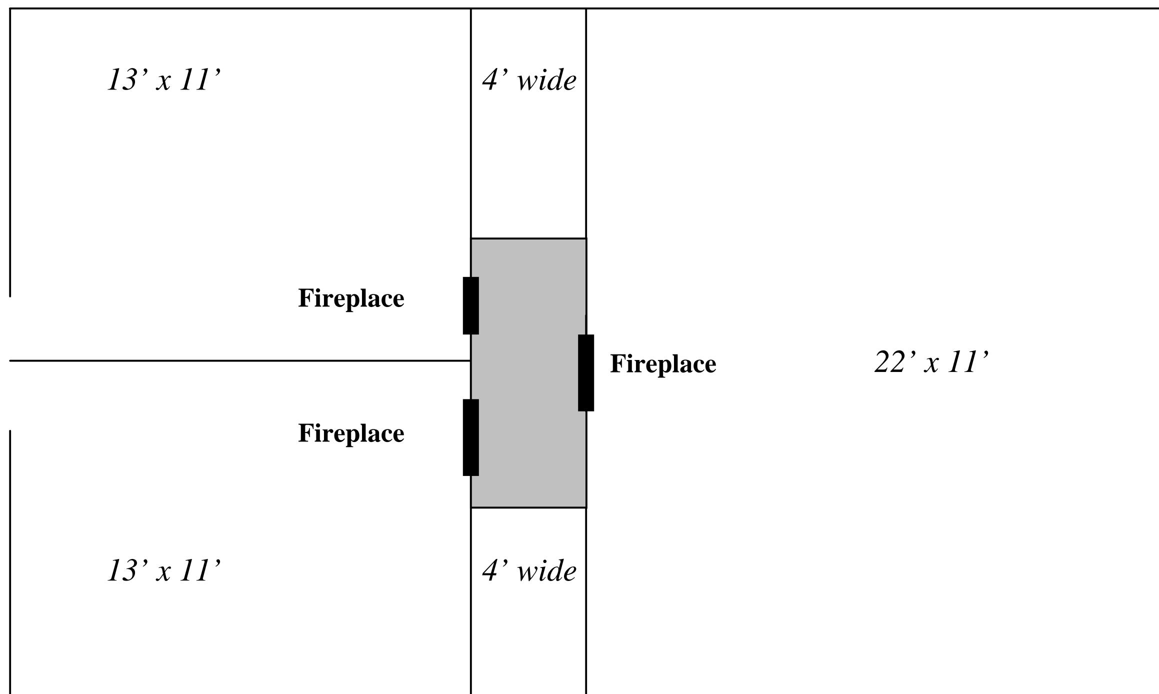
[15] Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 118-126; John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 165-66;

[16] *John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74-97; William Massie, Memorandum Book of Work to be Done, Timbers to be Gotten, and Architecture of Tobacco Houses and Slave Cabins, etc., 1834-1841 (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).

Bison" and "the Wedge" may have been the only cabin in which the occupants were not related. It is certainly reasonable, although entirely speculative, to imagine that Massie's slaves were able to compromise with him over their living arrangements. If that was the case, that may have been the most important agency slaves had in exercising influence on their kinship forms.

Figure 2-3[17]

Slave Cabin Plans by William Massie, 1830s



[17] For Massie's drawing, see Massie, Memorandum Book of Work to de Done, 1834-1841.

Focusing on one plantation is especially helpful to understanding the phases of development of extended kinship groups. Because of the richness of his records, I will focus on William Massie's plantation Pharsalia. Upon marrying Sarah Steptoe in 1814 Massie inherited his first slaves from his father in 1815, and recorded six slave registers from that year until 1862. Illustrating the prevalence and nature of extended kinship networks is made easier by the regularity of Massie's slave lists. Rather than obtaining only a static snapshot of the slave community, I will show how the development of the Pharsalia slave community is a powerful example of how kinship among slaves developed.

Early in the existence of the slave community few clans had developed beyond two generations. As a decade or more passed, however, the first-generation slave mothers not only had more children but had grandchildren through their older offspring. Finally, by the third decade of the slave community—barring any upheaval such as an estate division or migration of the owner—kinship groups became especially broad as more children of the first-generation slave mothers had their own children. Moreover, with several extended kinship groups stretching to three generations, the third decade of the slave community was marked by a growing inter-relatedness among the separate clans. This phenomenon, which resembled the super matri-clans[18] of western Africa, tightened the unity of the slave community. In short, by exploring the development of extended kinship groups at one plantation, I will show how slaves preserved African forms of family and how those forms were affected by events in William Massie's personal and business life.

William Massie kept updated slave registers for nearly forty years. From 1815, when Massie obtained his first slaves from his father Thomas Massie, to 1862, when William died, there are six extant slave registers and an estate. After his death, Massie's heirs recorded a slave register that began in 1863 and was updated until emancipation. By examining the records from Pharsalia, I contend that the enslaved African-Virginians owned by William Massie established and maintained extended kinship systems that performed the important family functions of socializing children, ameliorating the effects of tragic events for adults, and forming influential

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[18] See Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 259-260.

buffers against which their owner's power was significantly reduced.

In looking at William Massie's records, each slave register covers a period longer than just a single year. The 1815 slave register was updated until 1828. Although there is a partial slave register for 1833, the next full record of slaves on Massie's plantations was 1836. Covering until 1844, the 1836 slave register is especially useful because the next list in 1840 provides clues to the life cycle of slave families and to the constant flux on Massie's estate.[19]

William Massie's first slave register, dated March 3, 1815, but covering the period until 1828, lists sixty-five slaves. Nearly one-fourth of the slaves at Massie's Pharsalia plantation during this time were given to him by his father. Several slaves, despite being collected together for the first time, had family relationships or friendships that they had developed on Thomas Massie's plantation. Strengthening this cohesiveness, another thirteen of William Massie's slaves were part of a dowry from Mr. G. Steptoe, Massie's father-in-law. The remaining slaves were bought from one of only four owners, so the seemingly disparate nature of the young owner's first slave holding is less diverse than it appears.[20]

The sixty-five bondspeople who comprised William Massie's Pharsalia slave quarters brought with them more than just acquaintances with their fellow bondsmen. During the period 1815-1828, eight of Massie's slaves were mothers. Reinforcing the tightness of the slave community, six of the slave mothers came from only two different owners. Rachel, Milly, and Mirah had lived at Thomas Massie's estate and were given to his son William in 1815. Milly, Mirah, and Mirah's son Primus comprised the first of many subsequent three-generation kinship groups among the Massie slaves. Primus was fortunate enough to have not only his mother and grandmother living with him, but three maternal uncles as well. Rachel, whose maternal productivity made her the first great matriarch among Massie's slaves, was the daughter of one of the central slave mothers on Thomas Massie's plantation. In addition to her eight children,

[19] William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1815, Bound Volumes. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library); William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1826, Bound Volumes. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library); William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1836, Bound Volumes. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library); William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1840, Bound Volumes. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library). Most of William Massie's plantation records are held by Barker Library at the University of Texas at Austin. Many of the records were microfilmed by University Publications in 1985.

Rachel enjoyed the advantage of maintaining a stable marriage with her husband Delph, who, residing at Thomas Massie's plantation after his wife and children were given to William Massie, was bought by the younger Massie in 1815. Delph and Rachel's children, perhaps the most stable family group on the plantation, preserved the West African tradition of revering maternal uncles by living on the same estate, and perhaps in the same household, as Rachel's older brother Peter.[21]

Sally, Sukey, and Libby had lived at Mr. Steptoe's plantation and were given to William Massie at the same time William's father gave him his first holding. Even though Sally died in 1822 and her daughters Melinda and Hannah were sold shortly thereafter, her two sons became important male members of large kinship groups during the 1840s and 1850s. Sukey and Libby, with nine children between them, also became important matriarchs among William Massie's first generation of slaves.[22]

The two mothers who came from different plantations were not hampered by their relative lack of consanguinal kin at Pharsalia. Beck, with two children by age 22, was important to the acceleration of natural increase among the Massie slaves. Similarly, in spite of coming from another plantation, Amy's lineage became an integral part of the larger community of slaves on Massie's estate. It did not hurt that Amy arrived at Pharsalia with five children in tow.[23]

In short, the eight slave mothers at Pharsalia during this period had thirty-six children between them, which was over half the slave population. While plenty of unattached slaves were part of Massie's first slave holding, forty-nine of his sixty-five slaves had at least one kinsman living in their quarter. This proportion would stay constant through emancipation, and thus suggests that extended kinship groupings were stable (see Figure 2-3, page 50).[24]

From 1815 to 1836, however, enslaved African-Virginians at Pharsalia did not escape the tragedy of families being broken up by sales. Amy, who had given birth to three more children

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[20] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1815.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.; Massie, Register of Slaves, 1836; Massie, Register of Slaves, 1840; Massie, Register of Slaves, 1850.
[23] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1815.

after she was purchased by Massie in 1817, suffered the forced departure of four children. The death of her toddler Mary in 1824 must have been exceedingly painful for Amy, who had no blood relatives on the plantation other than her children. In such cases, the slave community's network of fictive kin was crucial to helping a fellow slave through trying events. The two great matriarchs of this period—Sukey and Rachel—were not spared the horrors of losing their children to sale, either. In 1828 Sukey's pain from her son Jack's sale was accentuated by the death of her young daughter Kitty, who, according to William Massie, died by getting "lost in the woods." Similarly, Rachel experienced her daughter Betsy's death in 1826 after suffering through the sale of two children by Massie's overseer.[25]

Table 2-3

Proportion of Pharsalia Slaves with at least One Kinsman on Plantation

Year	*Total Slaves*	*% with 1+ kin member*
1815	65	75%
1826	71	73%
1836	132	52%
1840	160	74%
1850	189	81%
1860	174	90%

The next register of slaves living on Massie's estates was begun in 1826, and covers the period through 1833. From 1815 to 1833, William Massie's slave community was stable: fifty of the seventy-two Massie slaves listed on the 1826 register were at Pharsalia in 1815. Of the thirteen

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

slaves who were no longer Massie's property in the 1830s, four died and eleven were sold. The small increase in the number of slaves occurred because of nineteen births and three purchases. Even with the relatively large number of departures because of sales, the births of new slave children kept the proportion of Massie's slaves who had kin on his estate at the same level as the ratio in 1815. By 1833 ten mothers lived among the Pharsalia slaves. The central heads of maternal clans continued to increase inter-relatedness on the Massie estates. Rachel had an additional child, Sukey had three, and Beck had two. Matilda, who had been on Massie's plantation since 1815, had her first four children during this period. She became the most prolific of the slave mothers by 1840.[26]

Significant evidence indicating the existence of extended households exists in the 1826 register. Cynthia, a newly-purchased slave, had three children in the late 1820s but was sold with her youngest son in the early 1830s. Cynthia's two remaining sons, Aaron and George, were no older than eight and six when their mother was sold, so they must have been placed under the care of older slaves. William Massie left no record of which bondswoman cared for Aaron and George, but he may have placed them in the same household as Jackey and Henry, both unattached slaves of twelve and ten years of age, respectively. Although Henry and George were eventually sold, Aaron and Jackey remained on the Massie estate through the Civil War. Each augmented his fictive kin with affinal and consanguinal relationships from their marriages.[27]

Examining causes of extended kinship network disruption is made easier by the slave register of 1836, which was updated by Massie until 1840. During the late 1830s the Pharsalia slave community endured an increase of in- and out-migration that was not typical of the rest of Massie's years as a slaveowner. A major event in the Massie family—the death of William's father Major Thomas Massie in 1834—sparked the most important demographic changes among the Massie slaves from 1834 to 1844.[28]

On the surface, the data suggest that family units and extended kinship groups were disrupted significantly during the 1830s. Following two decades in which seventy-five percent of Massie

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[26] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1826.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1836.

slaves had at least one kin member on their plantation, by the late 1830s barely fifty percent of William Massie's slaves had identifiable kinsmen in their quarter (see Table 2-3, page 50). Of the seventy-eight slaves who show up for the first time on Massie's estate list of 1836, twenty were born on Massie's estates, twenty-three were purchased from twelve different owners, and thirty-five were inherited from William's father.[29] Moreover, of the eighteen slaves who were on Massie's 1826 register but who did not appear on the 1836 list, eleven were part of Massie's original holding. Most importantly, three families lost members who were central to their respective clans. Losing these "original" members of their community was a monumental loss to the enslaved at Massie's plantation.[30]

Upon closer inspection, however, the kinship networks and family units among William Massie's slaves remained more intact following the settlement of Major Thomas Massie's estate than a cursory examination suggests. First, the bulk of the slaves who did not have kin were those who were new to the plantation. Of the fifty-eight slaves bought or inherited by William Massie during this period, only twelve of them had kin who can be identified by extant records and genealogical analysis. Therefore, the data are skewed by slaves who, because they came from plantations other than Massie's, did not have their kin recorded by their new owner. Moreover, seventeen of the slaves who were bought by Massie during the 1830s came to the their new quarter with at least one other slave from their former plantation. Massie's records indicate that only two groups of these slaves were actually blood relatives, but it is likely that the other newly-purchased slaves were at least able to build upon their prior friendships or fictive kin. That these new slaves began producing nascent webs of kin themselves is clear: Harriet, after being bought from John Broaddus on January 1, 1838, gave birth on September 26 of the same year. Thus, while the 1830s was a decade marked by the infusion of slaves who were not members of existing webs of kin, the existing kinship groups not only weathered, but eventually

[29] FN Table 1:

Origin of Slaves who Appeared for First Time on 1836 Register	(N=78)
Inherited from Father	35
Purchased from 12 owners	23
Born at Pharsalia	20

[30] Ibid.

benefited from, this frenetic demographic blip.[31]

Reconstructing kinship networks among William Massie's slaves is made easier by the existence of his 1840 slave register, which overlaps both the 1836 and 1850 lists. By January 19, 1850, the last update written by Massie in his 1840 register, the Nelson County planter had increased his holding to 160 slaves. Spurring the quick growth during the 1840s was not the purchasing or inheriting of the late 1830s, but the prolific rate at which the enslaved women had children. Of the fifty-five slaves who were new to the plantation during this period, forty-nine were newly-born. The sum of slave children and six purchased slaves offset easily the loss of twenty-four slaves, nine of whom died.[32]

Moreover, the turbulence wrought by the settlement of Major Thomas Massie's estate, which was completed in 1839 when William Massie gave nine of his slaves to his own son, was stabilized by the resilient kinship networks of the slaves. During this period 118 enslaved people at Massie's growing estate had at least one kin relation in their quarter. Having nineteen mothers among them, the slaves on Massie's plantation strengthened ties and built multi-generational clans that were buffers to the last two decades of enslavement. The 1840 slave register is also the first piece of the Massie evidence that records the names of fathers. By the late 1840s nine of the nineteen slave mothers were identified as having children with specific males. In addition to illustrating the development of more stable nuclear families, Massie's recording of slave fathers in the 1840 register shows the inter-relatedness that had begun to form among his slaves. When Amy's son Charles married Sukey's daughter Nancy, two large kinship clans became connected. Charles and Nancy's five children had one paternal uncle, seven maternal aunts and uncles, and two grandmothers living on their own plantation. In short, with eighty-two of Massie's 160 slaves having their mother on the same plantation, the 1840s was an important decade for extended kin development.[33]

Moreover, five families expanded to three generations during the 1840s, which became the formative decade for the extensive webs of kin that marked future generations of the enslaved at

[31] Ibid.
[32] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1840.
[33] Ibid.

Massie's plantation. The development of multi-generational clans only thirty-five years after William Massie's first holding of slaves signifies that Massie perpetuated certain lineages among his slaves. The common element among four of these five clans was that the grandmother was one of William Massie's original slaves. The fifth, Betty, who was nicknamed "Hellcat" by Massie, was an exception to the Pharsalia phenomenone that slaves who had resided in the quarter longer developed more stable and reliable kin relationships.[34]

In 1847, however, Betty's exceptional experience became part of the rule when she was sold with two of her six children. Aside from illustrating the phenomenon that those slaves sold by Massie were typically not part of his original sixty-five bondspeople, Betty's case is a powerful example that fictive kin relationships were established by slaves. Not only did her daughter Bush and son Robertson become two central slave parents during the 1850s and 1860s, but her other three sons who stayed at Pharsalia remained there until emancipation. Given the age of the boys when their mother was sold—four, nine, and eleven—they must have been adopted by another slave family in the quarter. Moreover, one of Betty's daughters, Louisa, was not sold to the same plantation to which Betty and her youngest son Wiatt were sent. Louisa, who was eight, was probably adopted by a slave family at the estate she was sold to. Clearly, Betty and her family were ravaged by William Massie's practice of selling slaves who were not part of his original holding. In the absence of consanguinal kin and a stable environment in which to raise a family, Betty and her children survived their ordeal because enslavement had preserved the African practice of keeping fictive kin.[35]

In addition to adopting fellow slaves who were not blood relatives, enslaved African-Virginians, as illustrated by runaway slave advertisements, also maintained inter-plantation kin networks. In spite of the richness of the Massie evidence, there is little direct evidence for the existence of kinship webs that stretched beyond plantation boundaries. Tracking slave sales, however, provides a glimpse of the multi-plantation slave community about which William Massie may have been fully cognizant. In 1837, when Massie inherited the thirty-five slaves from his father's estate, he recorded the parentage of several of the slaves. Most notable are Lucinda, Pollard,

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

Maria, Richard, Mosely, and Phillis, all the children of Beck, who was owned by the younger Massie. Although the exact nature of Beck's household cannot be determined with certainty, it appears that her children lived at Thomas Massie's plantation Level Green while their mother lived at Pharsalia. Given the proximity of Level Green to Pharsalia and the age of Beck's children—seven months to eleven years—Beck may have been able to live with her children at Level Green but work at William Massie's estate. Nonetheless, whether Beck lived with her children or was only able to visit them regularly, after childbirth she was almost certainly allowed to stay at Level Green. That Beck had so many children in a short span—fifteen in twenty-four years and two only eleven months apart in 1831—suggests that she lived away from her children and had a powerful impetus—post-natal care—to spend as much time with them as possible. Such an arrangement was fairly common in American slavery.[36]

By the end of the next decade the Pharsalia slave community was replete with multi-generational and inter-related clans. Massie's burgeoning slave holding had increased to 189 bondspeople, 153 of whom had indentifiable kin on the plantation. While thirty slaves who were on the 1840 register did not appear on the 1850 list, fifty-nine slaves appeared for the first time. Unlike the 1830s, when Massie increased his holding through several purchases, only two of the new slaves in 1850 were bought. Indeed, natural increase at Pharsalia had reached its pinnacle by the end of the 1850s.

The stability of nuclear families and larger kinship groups was the major influence in the rapid increase of Massie's slave holding during the 1850s. Twenty-five slave mothers and seventeen fathers can be identified in Massie's 1850 register, which he updated until 1860. Eight mothers had seven or more children living at Pharsalia by 1860, and one had fourteen. The latter bondswoman, Matilda, became central to Pharsalia slave community inter-relatedness because four of her daughters began having children during the 1850s. By the close of the decade, Matilda had fourteen children and seventeen grandchildren. Matilda and her husband Julius Buff, both part of Massie's original holding of slaves, became connected through their son-in-law

[36] William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1850. (microfilm, Frederick, Md.: University Publications, 1987); For persuasive arguments that slave mothers exploited childbirth and motherhood, see John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 179-180; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 497; *Within the Plantation Household*.

Marshall to the next-largest Pharsalia kinship group, Sukey's, during this period. Sukey had seven children, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild in 1860. The marriage between her son Marshall and Matilda's daughter Hannah gave the five children of Hannah and Marshall one grandfather, two grandmothers, nineteen aunts and uncles, and eighteen cousins living at the same plantation.[37]

The extended kin group headed by Beck, who had nine children living at Pharsalia during this period, also became connected to the kinship clan of Betty through the marriage of Betty's son Robertson to Beck's daughter Philis. Clifford, the only child of Philis and Robertson, had a grandmother and grandfather, thirteen aunts and uncles, and eleven cousins at Pharsalia by 1859. Beck's older daughter Maria, through her marriage to Jacob, formed a kinship connection with one of the oldest slaves on the plantation, Jacob's mother Milly. Three of Milly's four children had been sold, including the mother of her grandchild Primus, so her family consisted only of Jacob and Primus. Nonetheless, the union between Maria and Jacob may have strengthened the cross-plantation networks of kin in and around Nelson County since Jacob's sister and two brothers were sold to nearby plantations. The most impressive example of inter-relatedness, however, was exhibited by the children of Kitty and Jim. Sam and Rosa, Kitty and Jim's children, had all four grandparents, two great-uncles, twelve aunts and uncles, and nine cousins. In addition to these twenty-seven consanguinal kin, Sam and Rosa were the youngest members of an extended kinship network that encompassed eighty-one of the 189 slaves and seven of the ten clans that can be traced to three generations. In short, if the West African familial practices of revering affinal kin had any residue in African-Virginian culture, then tracking inter-relatedness on a single plantation such as Pharsalia becomes more daunting than a cursory look at estate lists of slaves first suggests.[38]

That the decade prior to the beginning of the Civil War was crucial to the development of inter-relatedness among William Massie's slaves is indisputable. Over half the slaves Massie owned during this period comprised only nine extended kinship groups. The miniscule number of slaves sold by Massie during the 1850s allowed the Pharsalia slave community to strengthen its kinship

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[37] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1850.
[38] Ibid.

ties. Furthermore, the small number of slaves that Massie purchased from 1850 to 1859 illustrates that the slaves at his estate were filling the needs of his bustling wheat agriculture and mill business. Of Massie's wheelwright, blacksmith, cooper, and two millers, each had been at Pharsalia for at least two decades. Female slaves with duties inside the home were also well-established members of the Pharsalia slave community. Beck, the chief cook, had been at Pharsalia since 1838 and before that was the primary cook at Major Thomas Massie's estate Level Green. Lizzie, a younger female slave but a well-established bondswoman because of her kinship identification, was the only female slave sent by Massie to learn more about the medicinal advantages of New London Springs.[39]

Examining the names of those enslaved at Pharsalia also reveals a strong desire by slaves to preserve kinship lineages through naming practices. In addition to the Akan practice of day-naming, which I discussed in reference to runaway slaves, enslaved African-Americans used naming patterns that resembled those in Africa. The most prominent practice was, as John Thornton explains, "namesaking" for grandparents. Often this was done to preserve a certain lineage in a culture that was either patrilineal or matrilineal; the same motivation would have been shared by enslaved African-Virginians, perhaps even more strongly because of their enslaved status. Among historians, the most controversial aspect of slave naming has been over the amount of control that slaves had in naming their children. There is certainly evidence at Pharsalia that Massie changed the names of a handful of his slaves: most of these slaves had been bought recently and shared the name of an existing slave. While Massie may have wielded some power in the naming of slave children, however, I argue that the slaves at this particular plantation named their children. In addition to the valid point raised by Allan Kulikoff that slaves could have used a naming practice not recognized by owners and overseers, the evidence of "namesaking" at Pharsalia is strong. Slaves, not slaveowners, were certainly the sources for this pattern.[40]

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[39] Letters from P. Echols to William Massie, Aug. 6, 1855, Aug. 11, 1855, Aug. 30, 1855, Sep. 13, 1855, Sep. 21, 1855. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).

[40] Peter Wood, *Black Majority*, 181-186; John Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," *William and Mary Quarterly* 50 (Oct. 1993), 727-742. Also see Jerome Handler and JoAnn Jacoby, "Slave Names and Naming in Barbados, 1650-1830," *William and Mary Quarterly* 53 (Oct. 1996), 685-728; Allan

Most of the duplicate naming practices linked first- and third-generation slaves. The most common of these was for a daughter to name one of her own daughters after her mother. For example, Matilda's daughter Sally had named her first daughter Matilda, but when Sally and the younger Matilda were bought back by Massie, he changed the child's name to Elvira. Likewise, Susan named her first and only daughter after her mother Harriet, which was the name of her mother. Lucy named her eleventh child after her mother Libby, who had died twenty-four years earlier. Grandfathers were not forgotten, either. Beck and Frederick's daughter Ursula named her second son Fred, undoubtedly a shorter version of his grandfather's name.[41]

Two more interesting patterns can be discerned among the Pharsalia slaves. Only two slaves were named after their fathers. No slave at Pharsalia was named after its mother, while two were named after their fathers. This practice supports the findings of Herbert Gutman, who guessed that a "slave taboo of unknown origins" accounted for this practice. More likely, slaves had the same motivation for this naming practice as they did for namesaking grandparents: the preservation of family ties. In the cases of naming children after fathers, slaves may have felt the need to preserve the father-child relationship since a significant proportion of fathers lived separated from their children. Finally, no slave at Pharsalia appears to have been named for William or any of the other Massies. This, too, was a common practice among slaves, who Lorena Walsh argues "almost uniformly avoided naming a child after their current owner." Thus, despite the growing inter-relatedness of the Pharsalia slaves during this period, several still preserved kinship ties through the practice of naming.[42]

The inter-connectedness among Pharsalia slaves that was developing throughout the 1840s and 1850s reached its zenith during the 1860s. First, fifteen of Massie's original sixty-five slaves were still listed on his 1860 slave register. Second, an ironic demographic phenomenon among the Massie slaves—the death of thirty-six bondspeople—actually increased the proportion of slaves who had at least one kinsman on the plantation. Because William Massie never recorded the parentage of twenty of the thirty-six slaves who died during the period covered by the 1860

Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 326.

[41] W. Massie, Register of Slaves, 1840; Register of Slaves, 1850; Register of Slaves, 1860.

[42] Herbert Gutman, *Black Family*, 189-191; Walsh, *Calabar to Carter's Grove*, 166-167.

register, the absence of these names on the 1860 register resulted in 157 of the 174 slaves who were listed to have at least one kin member at Pharsalia.[43]

The increase in the proportion of slaves with identifiable kin from seventy-five to ninety percent was also the result of another period of significant natural increase among the slave mothers on Massie's estate. By 1860, twenty-six slave mothers resided in the Pharsalia quarters, and 132 slaves had the fortune of living at the same estate as their mothers. Seven sets of three-generation kinship groups had developed during this time; one clan, Matilda's, actually had achieved this feat through five different daughters. Sukey's clan, too, rivaled Matilda's in breadth and had actually extended to four generations. By 1862 two of Sukey's grandchildren, Dinah and Lydia, had five children between them. Sukey was the only slave during this period to have great-grandchildren, and would have been revered by her own kin and other slaves for her maternal prowess.[44]

Five major extended kinship groups dominated the Pharsalia slave quarters. In addition to Matilda's and Sukey's, the two largest, Beck's, Lucy's, and Betsy's had grown both vertically and horizontally. In 1862, Beck had ten children and twenty grandchildren. Lucy, the daughter of one of the original matriarchs, Libby, not only gave birth to six of Beck's grandchildren but had her two brothers Buck and Nelson available to help her raise her eleven offspring. Betsy's kinship group, meanwhile, was not only connected to Beck's through the marriage of her daughter Kitty and Beck's son Jim, but consisted of five children and four grandchildren.[45]

The slaves at Pharsalia tightened their inter-relatedness because Massie sold few slaves during this time. Beck's family is the best example. By 1862 Beck and her husband Frederick became related to five other clans. In addition to their ten children and five grandchildren Beck and Frederick became connected to Betty's twelve kinspeople, Judy's seven, Betsy's seven, Lucy's twelve, and Milly's two. Braxton, Lucy's oldest child with Beck's son John, had in 1862 ten siblings, eleven aunts and uncles, two grandparents, and eight cousins. Indeed, the African-Virginians at Pharsalia socialized Massie in the cultural significance of the West African

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[43] Massie, Register of Slaves, 1860.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

extended family.

The most significant event for William Massie's slaves was the death of their master in 1862. The settlement of Massie's estate disrupted nuclear families and extended kinship networks alike. Before exploring the result of the settlement, however, I will contrast the slave registers to the 1862 estate inventory, for it is the only piece of Massie evidence which affords the opportunity to reconstruct households with near certainty.[46]

Although Maria Massie did not separate her husband's slaves explicitly into households in the 1862 inventory, careful examination of the Massie evidence allows for household reconstruction. First, the slaves are listed in no apparent order on the inventory. Unlike most inventories, the Massie record orders the slaves neither by age nor by monetary value. Second, using the kinship and family models that I developed from the six slave registers prior to the inventory, I found that Maria Massie listed her slaves by household; without the models from earlier records, which allowed me to identify conjugal units, identifying households from this estate inventory would have been less exact. By 1862, then, twenty separate nuclear family units can be indentified and 101 of the 155 slaves can be placed into these households with certainty. The balance of the slaves, certainly a significant number, are impossible to place with exactitude because most were males who were grouped together with several other men. In the eighteenth century, when the sex ratio among enslaved African-Virginians was heavily unbalanced, owners often placed unattached men together in large bunkhouses. Discovering a similar arrangement during the 1860s would be unexpected but appears to be the most likely explanation for most of the slaves who do not appear to have had a household. First, although children ages sixteen and under were evenly balanced between thirty-nine boys and thirty-seven girls, slaves over sixteen were overwhelmingly male. Of the seventy-nine adult slaves at Pharsalia in 1862, fifty-one were men.[47]

The sex imbalance may explain the existence of large groups of seemingly unattached men in the

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[46] Maria Massie, Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of William Massie, September 1862. (microfilm, Frederick, Md.: University Publications).

1862 slave register. While the Massie records do not allow the placement into households of eight boys, eight girls, and eight women, men also formed the majority of the group of unattached slaves. These thirty men are listed in three large groups, which may indicate that they were living in large bunkhouses akin to those of the eighteenth century. All but two of the women are listed successively in a group of twenty-two slaves whose households are impossible to determine. Within the group is one conjugal unit—Foster and Judy, both in their late forties—but even they are difficult to pair because Massie listed Foster as living at Pharsalia and Judy as living at the mountain farm Montebello.

The remainder of this large group of slaves whose household structure is more difficult to determine can themselves be separated into three groups. First, there were two mothers new to the Massie estate who were listed together with their respective children. Because Belinda and Jane and their respective children were approximately the same age, they may have comprised a household. The problem with placing Belinda and Jane in their own household, however, is that none of the twelve slaves in this "mystery" section of the estate inventory was over sixteen. Thus, if Belinda and her children were in a household with Jane and her children, the other young slaves would have been in a household with no adult. Because Judy was at Montebello, however, there is a possibility that her husband Foster was the adult who lived with these young slaves. The last slave of the group, Robertson, was married to Beck's daughter Philis but lived away from his wife and son: evidently, Robertson was kept by Massie at Tyro, the site of one of his mills.

The absence of Robertson from his wife and young child strengthened a practice that had been central to West African families: revering maternal uncles. In 1862, there were three households in which at least one maternal uncle resided with his sister and her children. Mosely, who lived with his sister Phillis and nephew Clifford, was instrumental in the socialization of Clifford given that his brother-in-law Robertson was assigned to quarters two miles from Pharsalia. The African-Virginian version of the Igbo *wofi* is also well-illustrated by the household of Rhoda and her children. Rhoda, whose husband William Massie never listed, lived with her two sons and

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[47] Ibid.; For typical housing arrangements of slaves during the first half of the eighteenth century, see Phillip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 104-108.

two brothers. Rhoda's household in particular was evidence that even slaveowners appreciated the role that maternal uncles had in the lives of slave children. Using Massie's records, Rhoda appears to have been less capable at motherhood than her own mother Matilda. After remarking snidely in the margin of his slave register that the parents of Hunter were Rhoda and "the Universe," Massie commented three years later that Rhoda's child Mantiply, who died in 1862, had been "neglected like a disowned lamb by his mother and died like a dog." While the one-sidedness of the records must be considered, William Massie rarely made such comments about his slaves. Rhoda's "neglect" of her children likely was not a real problem, but an unfair perception of Massie: the bondswoman, like many others, probably did not want to become too attached to a child who could be sold at any time. Whatever the reality, the inclusion of not one, but two, of Rhoda's brothers in her household suggests that Massie himself understood the power wielded by maternal uncles. Massie, as well as other slaveowners, acquiesced to bondspeople in this regard, further illustrating the influence slaves held in the realm of resistance to Euro-American cultural practices and family structures.[48]

Records from the final settlement of William Massie's estate in 1863 reveal both the frailty and resilience of slave families and kinship networks. On the surface, the slave registers of Massie's four heirs indicate that the Pharsalia slave community, while torn asunder as a whole, was split according to family and kin relationships. That Massie's heirs attempted to protect family groups—perhaps at the behest of their slaves—is clear. The proportion of slaves who had at least one kin member on their plantation ranged from seventy-one to ninety-two percent on the four Massie estates. Those slaves who were separated from their kin were not far from their kinsmen: no partition of William Massie's land was more than two miles from another. Moreover, only one slave marriage—that of Beck and Frederick—was broken. Frederick stayed with Maria Massie at Pharsalia, where his daughter Phillis and two of his grandchildren lived. Beck, on the other hand, was sent to the Massies' daughter Florence's plantation, where none of her children or grandchildren lived. Frederick and Beck's remaining children were sent to William and Maria's son Bland Massie. In spite of this lone example, the executors of the Massie estate appear to have protected slave families and extended kin relationships.

[48] M. Massie, Inventory, 1862; M. Massie, Register of Slaves, 1863.

To look no further than the protection of conjugal units, however, would be serious folly. First, several children were separated from their parents. For older children like Frederick and Beck's such a separation would have been difficult but probably expected at a certain age. For the children of Lizza, however, the Massie estate settlement ripped them from their parents at ages seventeen and twelve. Even with a short distance to travel in order to visit their mother and father, Elias and Manuel had no kin other than themselves at Bland Massie's estate. Second, and less obviously, the execution of Massie's will turned the vibrant Pharsalia community of extended kin into a less potent cross-plantation network. Such networks were, indeed, important facets of slave kinship, but pale in their ability to perform family functions when compared to a group of kin living on the same plantation. Socializing children, comforting adults, and providing strength for each member were goals more easily achieved by the clans whose members all lived at Pharsalia. Not one of the ten multi-generational kinship groups at Pharsalia in 1862 was spared separation. While some, like Matilda's, were left more intact than Beck and Frederick's, the functionality of a group that included both grandparents, several maternal uncles, and dozens of cousins could not be rivaled by the same group once it was split in four ways. While Solomon and Paulina's seven children were fortunate to have both parents living with them on Hope Massie's estate, five of them were old enough to have experienced family life with their two grandparents, fifteen aunts and uncles, and thirteen cousins. At Hope Massie's none of those kinspeople were around to fill the roles that they had at Pharsalia.

Ironically, events such as estate settlements offer slave family historians a clear opportunity to identify African family patterns in Virginia. Whatever method Maria Massie used to distribute the Massie slaves among four heirs affirmed the West African tradition of honoring elder kinsmen. Lydia, Abe, and their daughter Ellen were sent to Florence Massie's plantation, where the only kin who resided there was Lydia's mother Sukey. Even though there were no records of specific household arrangements left, there is little doubt that Sukey lived with anyone but the only kin she had in her new quarters. Similarly, Judy and Foster, both in their sixties when William Massie died, were sent to Hope Massie's, where their daughter Virgin, her husband Richard, and granddaughter Beverly resided. At the same estate, Matilda's sons Albert and Joe, who at Pharsalia had served as African-Virginian *wofi* for their sister Rhoda's children, filled the same role with their sister Elvira's two daughters. Albert and Joe would have been especially

revered, for they also had three grand-nieces and nephews.

Perhaps the most important preserved West African pattern during this time was the extended household. Each of the three previous examples comprised an extended household unit, which were prominent under events of family duress. At Bland Massie's estate, where four children without mothers lived, the extended household and practice of adopting fictive kin was essential to the survival of those children.

In short, the adaptability of William Massie's enslaved African-Virginians formed a buffer to the harshest event of a harsh institution. In spite of their extended kinship networks being disrupted at their zenith, the Pharsalia slaves responded by maintaining those relationships through inter-plantation webs of kin and friends. The practice of adopting fictive kin may never have been more important to William Massie's slaves, many of whom for the first time in their lives were separated from their kinsmen. Furthermore, the reverence for elder kinspeople and maternal uncles formed the basis for extended households. Even with fathers of their children present, slave women and their offspring cemented relationships with their extended kin because of the quickness with which four decades of kin group development had been dismantled. By examining an even more turbulent period for enslaved African-Virginians—emancipation—I will illustrate how the African family practices of William Massie's former slaves and many of their fellow African-Virginians remained critical buttresses to the adversity wrought by the end of the Civil War.

Chapter 3

'God Sent Abe Lincoln to Deliver Us'[1]: African-Virginian Kin and the Challenge of Freedom

Lorenzo Ivy knew well the rigors of slavery and freedom. His experience illustrates the importance of extended kin even after emancipation as well as the challenges that freed slaves faced after the Civil War. Even though he was enslaved, Lorenzo lived close to his simple and extended families. Like many slave children, Lorenzo lived at a plantation separate from but near his father's and, with his siblings and mother, lived with the constant fear that "we knew not how soon we would be carried off from him." Lorenzo's extended kinship group consisted of two aunts and ten cousins, all of whom lived at his estate. Like his own father, Lorenzo's uncles were owned by another plantation owner. Ironically, the most tragic event in Lorenzo's life under enslavement was when his father finally convinced his owner to purchase his family. Even though Lorenzo's nuclear family was united, leaving his extended family of aunts and cousins, described by him as "those bound together with the bands of love," was especially trying.[2]

When the Civil War ended, Lorenzo and his family stayed at their owner's plantation. His father made an agreement with the estate owner that if the Ivy family helped with the harvest they would get some of the crops in return. Working "just as if Lee hadn't surrendered," the Ivy family raised corn, wheat, and tobacco, shucked the corn, and stripped the tobacco from April through November 1865. Upon asking their former owner for payment, the man, who had stopped giving the Ivies food, refused to pay and told Lorenzo's father to remove his family from the old slave quarters. Even a visit to the Freedmen's Bureau was fruitless. Lorenzo remembered the Bureau agent as wearing "Uncle Sam's clothes" but having "Uncle Jeff's heart." The next year, Lorenzo's father moved to eastern Tennessee to find work and sent Lorenzo and his three older siblings to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural School in eastern Virginia.[3]

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[1] Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 137. This remark was made by Mr. Mingo White, a former slave.
[2] John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 738-40.

Lorenzo Ivy's experience was not unusual. Emancipation, while releasing the reins of enslavement, presented new challenges to former slaves. For those who had been separated from kin through sales and estate settlements, searching for distanced family members became a defining part of their post-emancipation life. Migration from former plantation quarters disrupted the kinship relations and friendships that bondspeople had in the area in which they were enslaved. The promise of finding long-separated kin or the prospects for gainful employment were motivations that sometimes even attachments to home could not halt. On the other hand, some former slaves were fortunate enough to be living with their family or to have extended kin nearby. For these African-Virginians, the challenge of making a living became a permanent one. Moreover, many couples grappled with the seemingly fair but practically troubled state and federal laws legalizing marriage between former slaves: in Virginia, only 117 marriages were made official by the Freedmen's Bureau sub-assistant commissioner assigned to the state. For many former slaves, the shortcomings of the Freedmen's Bureau in protecting their children from unfair and illegal apprenticeship were the first tastes of "freedom's" reality.[4]

In spite of these challenges, however, newly-freed slaves were successful in resurrecting and maintaining family life and kinship connections that they had developed prior to emancipation. In many cases these relationships were never stronger than they were after the war. Herbert Gutman, in analyzing post-emancipation families in Princess Anne County, Virginia, found that emancipation allowed slaves to reconstruct nuclear and extended family relationships that had been damaged by enslavement. Most African-American families in the county were headed by both parents; of these families, two-thirds were couples who had been enslaved at different plantations yet were successful in reestablishing (or establishing for the first time) a true coresident simple family. Gutman's survey of Freedmen's Bureau population records in Princess Anne led him to conclude that emancipation "freed" family and kinship relations "from external restraints." Extended kin relationships, too, were preserved in spite of emancipation's challenges. Kinfolk outside a child's immediate family may have played the most important role of any family members in the postwar clamor against unfair child apprenticeship. The plantation records surveyed by Gutman are replete with letters from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and

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[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 402-12.

cousins lobbying the Freedmen's Bureau on behalf of a child and his or her parents.[5]

Thus, the extended family group continued to function as an important mediator between oppressed African-Virginians and white society. Similar to the functions extended kin networks served for runaway slaves, and akin to the functions the extended family group at Pharsalia served for all member children, the extensive kin of former slaves became instrumental in charting the transition from slavery to freedom. Questions about the persistence of African family forms after emancipation can no doubt be raised: How African were these extended kin groups after the Civil War? To what extent were these extended family groups a result of freedpeople's desire to keep them intact instead of a reaction to oppressive circumstances?

Postbellum extended kin, over a century after African-born slaves became a minority in the slave population, were distinctly African-Virginian. Nonetheless, if some version of African family forms persisted through enslavement—and the Massie evidence proves such through the Civil War—then I contend that freedpeople would have relied on the same kinship institutions after the war that they had prior to it. Moreover, while the desire of former slaves to legalize their marriages is illustrated by the several thousand marriage registers recorded by the Freedmen's Bureau, the quest by former slaves to live in coresident simple families was not un-African. Rather, as I have shown existed in most western African cultures, individuals relied on the combination of conjugal units and extended kin for family functions. Therefore, by examining the Massie African-Virginians after the Civil War, I argue that their extended kin units not only survived the rigors of emancipation but remained central elements in postbellum African-Virginian life.

Each of the seven three-generation kinship groups that had developed at Pharsalia before William Massie's death in 1862 were still represented on three Massie estates in 1873. Gone were several members of Sukey's large clan, the only four-generation kinship group on William Massie's estate in 1862. Thriving, however, were the kinship groups of Betsy, Matilda, Beck, and Faggy, each of which had at least two members of the second generation still living on a Massie estate. The great matriarchs Sukey, Matilda, Betsy, and Beck had died by 1873, but

[5] *Ibid.*, 204-211, 402-412.

Frederick, Beck's husband, and Moses, Betsy's husband, still lived in the quarters near their progeny.[6]

The Massie account books between former owners and former slaves indicate a consistent pattern of worker turnover at the Massie estates. Using Maria Massie's account book to track the arrivals, departures, and permanence of her former slaves, I found that the period following the Civil War was especially challenging for unattached slaves and for members of large clans who did not remain with the bulk of their kin. Similar to the challenges of sales and estate divisions under enslavement, however, the kinship networks of the Pharsalia ex-slaves, while diminished in number, still had an important attraction for those African-Virginians who were not forced to leave the estate. With the preponderance of kin living nearby, many related members remained in the same location following the war. Moreover, on the Massie estates simple families can be identified easily, which indicates that slaves, some of whom on slave registers never appear to have had spouses, maintained relationships under slavery that their owners either were not aware of or did not record.[7]

In the first full year of freedom, 1866, Maria Massie listed thirty-one workers in her account book. All but one of these former slaves lived at Pharsalia or one of the other Massie estates through the Civil War. Interestingly, it was William Massie's wife Maria who kept the accounts with the workers even if they lived at the estates of her daughter Florence or son Bland. This practice helps to explain that after William Massie's death, upon which many of the extended kinship groups were separated, the proximity of the Massie estates allowed kin to visit one another on a regular basis.[8]

In 1867 thirty-seven servants were listed in Maria Massie's account book. Of these, twenty-two were listed in the previous year, which illustrates the annually-fluctuating demands of labor that existed after emancipation. Nine workers from the previous year did not have an account with Massie in 1867, and fifteen names appear for the first time. In 1868, twenty-eight of the forty-six workers who were listed appeared in the previous year's accounting. Most of the slaves who

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[6] Maria Massie, Inventories of Crops, Stock, and Servants in 1873. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).
[7] Maria Massie, Book of Accounts with Servants, 1866-1883. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).
[8] Ibid.

appeared in one year but not in the next appeared again in subsequent years. The potential for work elsewhere, or in the case of the Massie workers, the availability of family members to work, increased the number of names in the Massie account book and therefore creates an exaggerated sense of worker turnover during the period.[9]

For example, Ransum Madison did not have an account with Maria Massie for three of the eight years from 1866 to 1873. In 1868, one year prior to his first absence from the account book, Ransum not only earned the most money in one year that he would in any other year—$120.00 (compared to $32.87 in 1866 and $7.74 in 1867)—but his wife appeared for the first and only time. Milly Madison did not earn a large sum, $7.18, but the fact that she worked the year prior to Ransum's absence may indicate that Ransum had found work for the next year elsewhere and that the couple was trying to prepare for Milly's increased financial and family burden. While any analysis beyond keeping track of names and their accounts is conjecture, Ransum did have numerous kin near Pharsalia who may have told him about other work opportunities. In addition to his sister Kitty, who lived at Florence Massie Tunstall's plantation, Ransum had three other siblings who were at Massie estates until the end of the war. Moreover, in the year that Ransum was absent from the account book, 1869, his father Moses Madison, who worked every year in this period except 1873, was present and would have been an important figure in the lives of his daughter-in-law and grandchild. That Ransum and Milly's second child was named Moses indicates at least that Ransum's father was an important family member; that the child was born the year after Ransum's absence may support the notion that the younger Madisons needed the elder's financial assistance during Ransum's year of working elsewhere. Finally, after returning to the Massie workforce in 1871 and 1872, Ransum was absent again in 1873. He may have gone to work elsewhere with his father Moses in that year, for not only was Moses not in the account book but his wife Elvy appeared for the first time. That year, too, Ransum's brother-in-law James Jackson did not have an account with Maria Massie. If the circumstances surrounding this example were as I argue they were likely to be, the situation of the Madisons may illustrate a pattern of former slaves working at different estates in different years but continuing to live with their families: Moses, Ransum, and James were living at Pharsalia in 1873.[10]

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.; M. Massie, 1873 Inventory.

From 1866 to 1873, twenty-seven of the ninety-eight workers listed appear in only one year. Of these twenty-seven, ten reasonably can be assumed to have had no kinship connections at the Massie estate; they may simply have done work for Maria Massie only in one year. The other seventeen were members of well-established households at one of the Massie estates, and were either women or children who normally were supported by their husbands or fathers. Therefore, while the post-emancipation work system in Nelson County was marked by flux, examining only the account records may overstate the challenges placed on freedpeople's kinship groups.[11]

Perhaps the most telling element in the change after the Civil War comes from an exploration into the sex ratios among Massie slaves at various times during the nineteenth century (see Figure 3-1, page 71). When Massie received his first bondspeople from his father in 1815, thirty-eight of his sixty-five slaves were male. Fueled by the purchase of several male slaves in the 1830s, the sex ratio at Pharsalia among adult slaves increased from 1.444 in 1815 to 1.760 in 1840. By 1850, the number of adult males and females was more balanced, which was the result of the number of slave mothers and the stability of the Pharsalia slave community. By 1860, however, the overall sex ratio had reached its highest level, 1.557. The disproportionate number of female slaves who died during the 1850s inflated the relatively consistent level of imbalance between the number of males and females; if slaves fifty and older are taken out of the formula, the sex ratio in 1860 was 1.277. Nonetheless, at a time most slave populations were steadily coming into balance between males and females, the Pharsalia community—with two groups clustered at forty and over and at twenty and under—exhibited a demographic blip uncharacteristic of a plantation in its fifth decade of existence.[12]

[11] M. Massie, Accounts with Servants, 1866-1883.
[12] Darrett Rutman and Anita Rutman, *A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750* (New York: Norton, 1984), 181-89.

Figure 3-1[13]

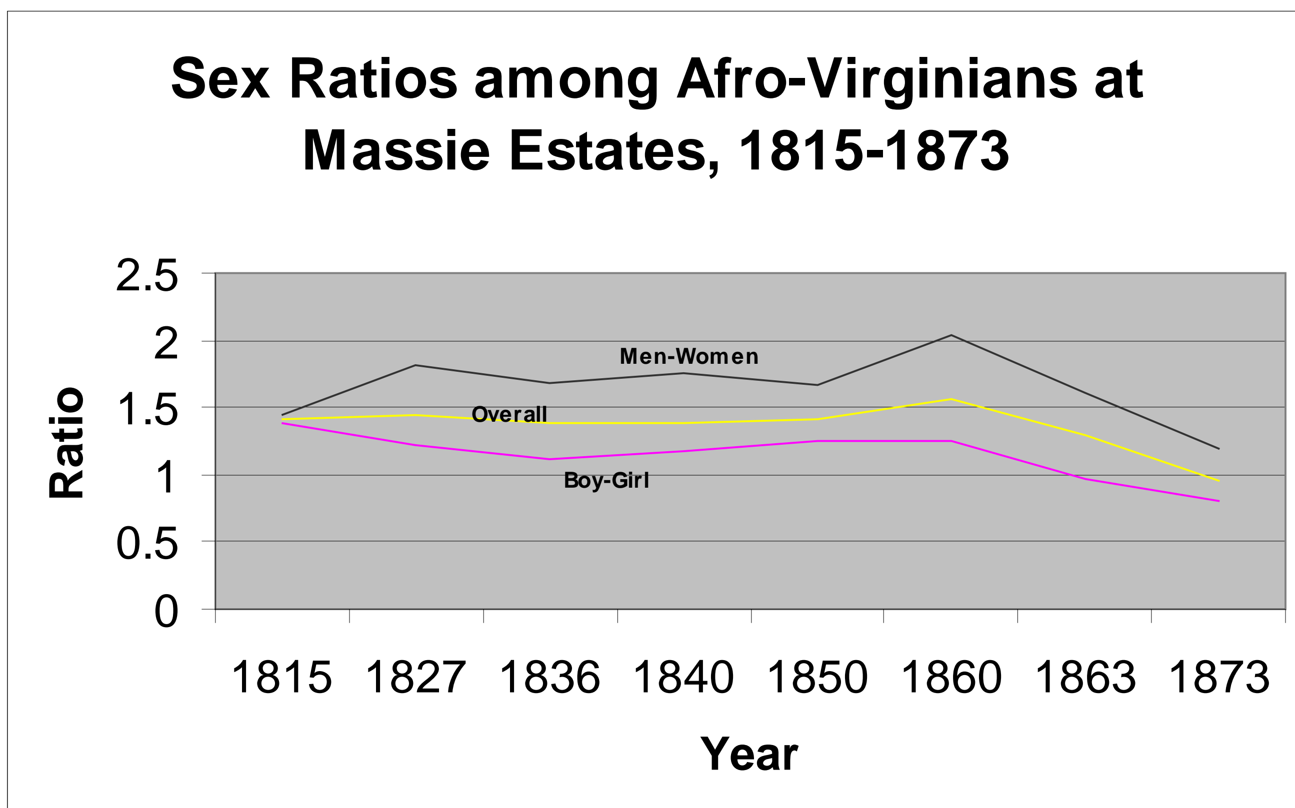

Figure 3-1. The impact of the Massie estate settlement(1862) and emancipation can be seen by the dramatic decrease in the sex ratio of the African-Virginians living at the Massie estates.

This demographic blip, however, allows for an even more effective examination of the effects of emancipation on the ex-slaves of William Massie. First, the estate settlement in 1862—an event in which more slaves were sold from the Massie slave community than at any other time—triggered a decrease in the sex ratio of the Massie bondspeople. For the first time, slave females under fifteen outnumbered slave males on the four Massie estates. The sheer number of slaves fifteen and under offset the adult sex ratio, 1.613, to 1.295, the lowest overall level to that point. Second, the desire of the large number of unattached males to find lost kin, separated wives, and

[13] Sex ratio is determined by dividing the number of men by the number of women. For source of data, see William Massie, Register of Slaves, 1827; Register of Slaves, 1836; Register of Slaves, 1840; Register of Slaves, 1850; Register of Slaves, 1860. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library); Maria Massie, Inventory and Appraisement of the Estate of William Massie, September 1862; Inventories of Crop, Stock, and Servants in 1873. (microfilm, Virginia Tech Library).

employment drove down the sex ratio even farther by 1873. Slave men who had kin at the Massie estates but evidently kept wives on other plantations left their Pharsalia quarters upon emancipation. Moreover, many men, such as Sally Thompson's husband Charles, worked elsewhere and lived separated from his family. The major demographic change among the Pharsalia community was the significantly lower number of unattached men living among the freedpeople after the Civil War: only 2 out of 129 workers appear to fit into this category. Reflecting on the 1862 estate inventory in which 19 of the 22 unconnected slaves were male, the restraints of enslavement opened new opportunities for these slaves who did not share the extensive kin relationships that ninety percent of the Pharsalia slaves had in 1860. The sex ratios in 1873, the last year in which the figure can be made, were the lowest level for each of the three categories: 1.192 for adults, .800 for children fifteen and under, and .955 for the entire population of workers and their families.[14]

The evidence from the Massie family's former slaves supports this argument. In 1873, there were 129 servants living on three Massie estates: forty-nine at Maria Massie's plantation; forty-two at Bland Massie's plantation; and thirty-eight at Florence Massie Tunstall's estate. The former slaves who worked for Bland Massie had the least number of kin in their quarters. While each of the forty-two had one kin member present in their quarter, none had any more than one. Hence, even without viewing the family groupings of slaves, one would know that nuclear family units dominated the estate of Bland Massie. Indeed, six large simple families—each with mother and father present—comprised the extent of family relationships among the freedpersons at Tyro Farm, Bland's plantation. Not even a single extended household—that is, a household with members who were not part of the core unit of parents and children—existed.[15]

The situation at Florence Massie Tunstall's estate was similar. Of the thirty-eight former bondspeople who lived at her plantation, each had one kin member present and eleven had kin relationships outside their simple family. Like the freedmen at Bland Massie's, the newly-freed African-Virginians at Tunstall's were comprised of seven nuclear families. Even though nuclear families dominated the Pharsalia quarters during this time, the former slaves working for Maria

[14] M. Massie, Inventory of Estate, 1862; Inventories of Servants, 1873.
[15] M. Massie, Inventories of Servants, 1873.

Massie exhibited kinship structures more akin to their African cultural background than we can see in the other two examples. Of the forty-nine people in the Pharsalia “servant” quarter, forty-six had at least one kin member living at their quarter. Amazingly, especially when compared to the people working for her children, forty-six of Maria Massie’s former slaves also had at least one kin member outside their simple family living at Pharsalia. Some, like the children of Joseph and Henrietta Minde, had twenty-one cousins and six aunts and uncles living at their own estate. In spite of emancipation’s challenges at least thirty-two of the forty-nine African-Virginians at Maria Massie’s were related.[16]

The kinship inter-relatedness at Pharsalia is not an isolated example of extended kinship groups persisting through emancipation. Approximately half of the servants at each Massie estate had at least one kin member living at another Massie quarter. Even the slaves at Bland Massie’s estate, an example of the destruction of kinship inter-relatedness, had additional kin outside those in their nuclear family: twenty of the forty-two had at least one kin member at one of the other two Massie estates. Similarly, twenty of Florence Massie Tunstall’s thirty-eight workers enjoyed the advantage of having kin who lived near them. Twenty-five of the forty-nine former slaves at Maria Massie’s also had kin at another estate.[17] Thus, while the proportion of slaves who had kin at the three Massie estates was lower after than before the war, the former Pharsalia slave community exhibited obvious persistence in spite of William Massie’s death in 1862 and emancipation three years later.

The addition of surnames to ex-slaves’ first names illustrates a change in the practice of naming either by the slaves themselves or by Maria Massie and other owners. Herbert Gutman argues persuasively that more slaves had surnames than plantation records indicate. The lack of need by owners to record or even keep track of slaves’ surnames resulted in few slaves having their full names listed in plantation slave registers. Those slaves who did have surnames usually had a different name than their owner, although sharing the last name of a previous owner was not uncommon. For example, no slave in William Massie’s six slave registers from 1815 to 1860 had the last name of Massie; several, however, had the same name as their previous owner, such as

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

Elias Steptoe, Patrick Strange, Aaron Whitlock, and William Cobbs. Although the surnames of few Massie slaves were ever recorded, after emancipation the full name of every freedperson living on a Massie estate was listed.[18]

The surname pattern among Massie freedpeople indicates that the slaves at Pharsalia had surnames that were not recorded by William Massie or that after emancipation family members chose the same surname as their family members. For example, the last name of both Beck's husband Frederick and their son Mosely was Gaines. James, Beck's oldest son, may have had a father different than Frederick because his surname was Jackson. Three other matriarchs' children shared the same surname. Betsy's child Ransum shared the same name as his father, Madison, and Sukey's sons both were Johnsons. Likewise, Matilda's two sons Joseph and Solomon were listed as Meades, the surname of Matilda herself took after the war. The only two workers who shared the surname of their former owners the Massies were Arthur and William Massie. Interestingly, both Arthur and William appear to have had no kin at any of the Massie estates, although each had been a part of the Pharsalia slave community since the 1830s. Perhaps their absence of kin caused them to solidify the relationship that was closest, that of master and slave. Moreover, Arthur and William appear to have shared a cabin, even though there is no indication that they were brothers. As possible fictive kin with no consanguinal kin, Arthur and William are good examples of the nature of naming following the Civil War: for those with kin, there appears to have been familial reasons for choosing or maintaining a certain surname, while former slaves who did not have kin in their quarter may have taken the last name of a former master.[19]

The most obvious change from William Massie's earlier slave registers to the 1873 "servant" inventory was the number of simple households recognized by the white recordkeeper. This phenomenon was not unique to Nelson County, or even Virginia, because of federal support for legalizing former slaves' marriages. A glance at Freedmen's Bureau marriage registers from Virginia reveals the desire of many slaves to legalize their marriages. In February 1866 the Virginia General Assembly legalized marriage between freedpersons. The law allowed former

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[18] Ibid; Gutman, *Black Family*, 230-240; W. Massie, Register of Slaves, 1815; Register of Slaves, 1827; Register of Slaves, 1836; Register of Slaves, 1840; Register of Slaves, 1850; Register of Slaves, 1860.
[19] M. Massie, Accounts with Servants, 1866-1883; Inventories of Servants, 1873.

slaves who had been "cohabiting" before the passage of the act to be "deemed husband and wife." Moreover, any children of the union, even if born before the legislation was passed, were to be considered legitimate.[20]

Of the 117 marriages recorded by the Freedmen's Bureau in Virginia, eighty-five records list detailed information about each spouse's parents, residence, and number of children. The dearth of marriage registers from Virginia is compounded by the small geographic scope covered by the bureau agent: only four counties are represented in the registers, and each county was in the Tidewater region. Nonetheless, the registers that do exist should not be ignored, for while they do not allow for an absolute conclusion about marriages between former slaves they are important examples of trends in at least one part of the state.[21]

Sixty-three couples listed the same county of residence for each spouse. This suggests not only that the couples lived near one another but that they may have been the "cohabiting" couples targeted by the 1866 Virginia law. Similarly, the twenty-two couples who lived in different counties are postwar examples of the pervasiveness of inter-plantation kin and friendship networks. Also compelling is the issue of children. Seventy-four of the eighty-five detailed records list that the respective couple had children. Of those seventy-four couples with children, however, twenty-six had extenuating circumstances concerning their offspring. This point is illustrated in several records by comments such as "he acknowledges 4 of his 6 children" or through shorter descriptions that count only the man's children. Ten registers list children only for the male, which may, indeed, have been because only the male had children from a previous marriage. Interesting, though, is that sixteen couples "acknowledged" the children of only one spouse, most often those of the male. Thirteen of these couples "acknowledged" the children of the male, two "acknowledged" only some of their own children, and only one couple "acknowledged" the female's children. This practice is a marked reversal of the slaveowners' practice of tracking children through mothers, and suggests a crucial point about slave family

[20] An Act to legalize the Marriages of Colored Persons now cohabiting as Husband and Wife, February 27, 1866, Virginia. *State Slavery Statutes*, microfilm, University of Virginia Library.

[21] Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, National Archives. Record Group 105, Entry 44, Marriage Registers of the sub-Assistant Commissioner of Virginia. Other states, such as Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, and Tennessee have several hundred marriage registers that cover a much larger area in each

practices that would not be found in plantation slave registers: while slaveowners may not have recorded the children of their slave men, the slaves themselves knew their lineage. [22]

Equally compelling is that even with the nature of the records—specific to one point in time and useless for genealogical analysis because only the number, not names, of children are listed—some kinship connections can be made. The inclusion of spouse's parents' names is essential to this kin group reconstruction, and suggests that the extended kinship groups both on a single plantation and beyond were, indeed, prevalent through emancipation. Susan Lemon of Gloucester County, who married fellow former slave George Ashby of eastern Maryland, not only had a husband living in a separate state but had a brother, Thomas Lemon, living in Gloucester as well. Whether Susan and Thomas were living on the same plantation cannot be determined by the marriage registers.[23]

Eight additional couples can be connected to one another because of the inclusion of parents' names. While the proportion of couples who can be connected to one of the spouse's siblings is small—only fifteen percent—the examples are significant. First, given that these records do not even lend themselves to such analysis, one may infer that there were more kinship connections among the very small number of Virginia freedmen who did have their marriages recorded by the Freedmen's Bureau. Moreover, any record that allows historians to reconstruct kinship relations in addition to those comprised by nuclear families is valuable. For the six children of Jane Burrel and Nelson Scott, emancipation brought into one county (and, perhaps, in one neighborhood) Jane's parents Jim and Peggy Burrel and Jane's brother James Fox and his family. The records do not indicate if Nelson's parents and Peggy's parents lived in the county, if they were still living at all.[24]

Therefore, while Freedmen's Bureau marriage registers are less helpful to kinship network reconstruction than detailed plantation records, they do provide a picture of the perpetuation of tightly-knit communities among African-Virginians. Most important, though, is that these

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state. See also Barry Crouch, *The Freedmen's Bureau and Black Texans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992)177-181.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

records illustrate the desire of former slaves to solemnize their union with the government. That many had productive relationships before the adoption of the Freedmen's Bureau law suggests that slaves, indeed, had some control over their family and kinship structures.

Ironically, freedmen's entry into the world of their former slaveowners presented many new challenges. The desire to find separated kin and spouses, as well as the need to find employment, depleted the breadth of the Pharsalia slave community. Ironically, emancipation may have caused more in- and out-migration of family members—albeit temporary—than enslavement itself. Nonetheless, as perhaps the most central institution for cultural preservation among slaves, extended family groups persisted through "freedom" and beyond. By revisiting briefly the eighteenth century and highlighting the important cultural similarities between native Africans and enslaved African-Virginians, the extended family will again be seen as the nexus of slave survival and cultural preservation.

[24] Ibid.

Conclusion

Few topics in the field of history have as much promise for innovative research as slave family studies. The difficulty in finding evidence has spurred scholars to adopt a true interdisciplinary approach. Archaeology, anthropology, and even architecture have been used by historians to depict more comprehensively the daily life and family forms of America's slaves. Continuing to balance what we do know—slaves' names and ages from plantation birth registers—with what can be determined if the records are comprehensive enough—family relationships and extended kin groupings—will reveal even more information about the structure and function of slave families and kinship systems.

While plenty of research remains to be conducted, the concept that the extended family group was perhaps the most important institution of cultural transfer and preservation is a promising one. The essential first step to examining African-Virginians' extended kinship groups transfers of African culture is to examine African cultures themselves and to explore where these cultures figured prominently in the New World. By examining slave trade data from Philip Curtin and Elizabeth Donnan, I found that 85% of Virginia's slave imports were from four western and central African areas: the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, Angola, and Senegambia. Within each region were prominent cultures which, although separate from one another, shared cultural practices and traditions that were emphasized by newly-arrived Africans in Virginia. Even though some cultures practiced patrilineal descent and others based their descent practices on matriliny, each culture had a dualistic descent practice that featured each parent's lineage in different aspects of life. Most importantly, for the patrilineal Igbo, matrilineal Akan, and double-descent Bantu, one important feature was central: the extended kinship group.

This methodology will be strengthened by subsequent research. The publication of the *Atlantic Slave Trade Database* CD-ROM will allow historians to link Africa and the New World in ways that before were not possible. This new database contains over 27,000 names and covers the period 1595-1866, so examining trends and change over time will be possible as well. By being able to pinpoint from what port ships left and to determine the origin of the slaves on these ships,

slavery scholars will be able to study with more precision what African cultures were represented in specific locales in America.[1]

Moreover, further studies that examine the internal slave trade in the United States will contribute to the scholarship on cultural transfer. Intense local studies of either a large plantation such as Pharsalia or of an entire county can illustrate which slaves were most likely to be sold, and how this in- and out-migration affected the development of kinship networks. In my research of William Massie's estates, I found that those slaves who were bought and sold were usually males with few or no kin attachments in the Pharsalia slave community. Tracking where these slaves were sold, if enough plantation records in a particular county exist, might be helpful in obtaining a clearer picture of how kinship networks were maintained across plantation boundaries.

The issue of westward migration, or the idea that slave communities underwent cycles that were replicated depending upon time and space, is also promising. For example, the cycles that the Bacon-Burwell slaves experienced during the eighteenth century, as Lorena Walsh illustrates, may be viewed as earlier examples of the development of the Pharsalia slave community. Influencing this development was the age of the community, or length of time that the owner owned slaves. In Massie's case, 1815 would have been as important as 1667, the latest possible year that Lewis Burwell II assembled his first group of slaves. The diminishing numbers of native Africans during the eighteenth century altered the cycle; this absence, though, coincided with a strengthening of kinship networks as a larger proportion of slaves were born into well-established kinship groups. Any study of slaves living in the Virginia Piedmont and westward that considers the issue of westward migration might help slavery historians identify explicitly what factors affected the development and destruction of extended kinship networks.[2]

By 1740 the majority of slaves in Virginia were Virginia-born, which marked the beginning of a new and distinct African-Virginian culture. While this culture was far from being wholly

[1] David Eltis, David Richardson, and Stephen Berendt, eds., *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) forthcoming, Dec. 1999.
[2] Lorena Walsh, *From Calabar to Carter's Grove: The History of a Virginia Slave Community* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 26, 204-219.

African, the values that slaves continued to place on older slaves and on any kinship relationship show the influence of African culture on it. In many ways, enslavement reinforced these two African social values: with the threat of slave sales and the fear of losing the culture of their homeland, who would be more important in an individual slave's life than an elder aunt or uncle and any kin member in their quarter?

The evidence from William Massie's plantation Pharsalia proves the existence of these large kinship networks. While these kinship groups were ultimately at the mercy of the slaveowner, the Pharsalia slaves and many of their fellow bondspeople elsewhere did mediate many aspects of their daily life. Moreover, the pervasiveness of inter-plantation kinship networks, as illustrated by runaway slave advertisements, shows that slaves were not powerless in the realm of preserving family relationships. In short, while the Pharsalia slaves may not have been directly responsible for the number of slaves in their quarter who had kin, their cultural background would have ordered and valued those kin very highly. The very existence of such networks indicates that slaves had the opportunity—whether created by their owner, themselves, or both—to re-establish kinship relationships in America that had distinct African flavor.

The irony about enslaved African and African-Virginian kinship networks is that they were structures that could be strengthened as enslavement continued. With the threat of sale and nuclear family separation always present, slaves undoubtedly maintained whatever kinship relationships that they had in their own quarter. Such a practice was based not only on slaves' cultural background, but was a survival strategy that any enslaved people may have adopted. The practice of revering extended kin relations in Africa equipped slaves in Virginia with a familiarity of a kinship form other than the perceived nuclear family norm in Europe and America. Perhaps the greatest tragedy after enslavement has been the failure of most slave family scholars to recognize the importance of extended kin to enslaved African-Americans.

Given the well-honed skills of many scholars at applying the nuclear family paradigm to slaves of African descent, I have examined an alternative that, based on African culture, is more suitable for the subjects of the study. To press future scholarship to adopt this approach, I have attempted to show that these extended kinship networks existed, and that a blend of evidence

offers the most insight to inter- and intra-plantation kinship networks. At Pharsalia, extended kinship networks not only existed, they flourished. Therefore, I contend that because these types of family arrangements in Africa were central to the socialization of children and protection of members, they would have served the same purposes in the New World. Inside the slave cabin, in the community gardens, and within the slave quarter were all physical spaces where more intricate kinship arrangements such as revering parallel cousins and older kin could have been done by slaves. With so many aspects of enslavement reinforcing the communitarianism that went hand-in-hand with extended kinship systems in Africa, enslaved African-Virginians had some inherent structures upon which to base their survival strategies.[3]

In many ways, this study opens as many questions as it answers. How responsible were the slaves for kinship practices that resembled those of African cultures? How did the kinship networks change as fewer native Africans were imported to Virginia? Were extended kinship networks among slaves similar in other parts of the United States, or even Latin America and the Caribbean?

One question that can be dispatched is that future research emphasize the role of the extended family not only as the central kinship system of slaves but as one of the most important institutions with which slaves were able to preserve some aspects of African culture. With evidence that historians can, indeed, move beyond just reconstructing nuclear family units, perhaps the debate can be grounded on the exact role that extended kinship networks had in defining slave quarter life. By examining enslaved extended kinship groups slave family historians can explore slaves' lives on their own cultural terms.

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[3] John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74-97.

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