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We start with Alexander Hamilton. He was neither a historian nor a sociologist. Surely he would not be classified as an expert on the history of the Afro-American family. But a single sentence of his remains relevant to the theme of this paper. "The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks," Hamilton observed nearly two centuries ago, "makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor in experience."¹ Just now, such "things" and much else in the Afro-American past are being subjected to fresh examination by persons dissatisfied with inadequate but widely approved "explanations." Controversy and polemic range over many subjects. There is dispute about the "docility" of the slaves, the origins of segregation, the personality of Nat Turner, the content of Radical Reconstruction, the objectives of Booker T. Washington, and much else. One subject essential to an enriched and deepened understanding of historic Afro-American subculture has remained thus far immune from serious discussion and controversy. That is the history of the Afro-American family. This paper reopens that subject on two separate but also connected levels: first, by a reexamination of certain major themes in E. Franklin Frazier's classic study, *The Negro Family in the United States*, and second, by the presentation of a sample of much new evidence concerning Afro-American family and household composition at a given moment in several parts of the United States but especially in the South between 1860 and 1880 and in one northern city, Buffalo, New York, between 1855 and 1925.

Although the data have not yet been entirely analyzed, preliminary study casts serious doubt on several central theoretical conceptions that guided Frazier's approach to the Afro-American family's past. Much is at issue that cannot adequately be discussed in these few pages: the anthropological distinctions between "folk culture" and "urban culture" common in the 1920s and 1930s; the relationship between economic structure and social and cultural change; and, especially, the sociological "models" shaped by Park and other University of Chicago social scientists, which profoundly affected Frazier's work.² Here we shall focus on Frazier's central arguments that two streams of Afro-American family life developed out of the slave experience, that one of them—the "matriarchy"—was the more important in the nineteenth century, and that "class" affected family structure in a simple and direct way. This new evidence suggests, furthermore, the pressing need for a full reexamination of the Afro-American's family history, slave as well as free, and, perhaps even more importantly,

a reconsideration of the social and class structure of varied nineteenth- and early twentieth-century black urban and rural communities.

Much has been written about the history of the Afro-American family, but little, in fact, is really known about its composition and household at given historical moments, and even less is known about how and why it changed over time. Without such knowledge, it is difficult to assess historic family roles or the changing relationship between family life and the larger culture that shaped it. Despite such deficiencies, most historians and sociologists consider these questions closed and settled. Moynihan and his critics, for example, quarreled bitterly over the contemporary structure of the "Negro family," but all shared a common view of its recent and distant history.³ They did not dispute about Afro-American family life 100 or even 50 years ago but shed angry words over the relationship between past patterns of black family life and present conditions in the black ghetto. The past remained fixed in their bitter arguments. For instance, Hauser, a sociologist, summed up the conventional wisdom that informed this dispute and much else written about the history of the Negro family:

Family disorganization and unstable family life among Negro Americans is a product of their history and caste status in the United States. During slavery and for at least the first half century after emancipation, the Negro never had the opportunity to acquire the patterns of sexual behavior and family living which characterize middle-class white society. African family patterns were, of course, destroyed during slavery, when it was virtually impossible to establish any durable form of family organization. This historical tendency toward a matrifocal family structure has been reinforced by the continued inability of the Negro male, because of lack of opportunity and discriminatory practices, to assume the role of provider and protector of his family in accordance with prevailing definitions of the role of husband and father. The Negro male has, in a sense, been the victim of social and economic emasculation which has perpetuated and reinforced the matriarchal Negro family structure created by slavery.⁴

Such views draw in a somewhat distorted fashion upon Frazier's major arguments. They are not serious historical and sociological analyses; instead, they serve as mere diachronic speculation about the relationship between slavery and twentieth-century Afro-American life.

Despite my quarrel with Frazier's work as a *historian* of the black family, his reputation as a distinguished sociologist and pioneer student of Afro-American family life remains secure—for good reason. His scholarship and that of W. E. B. DuBois were the most significant in refuting widely approved racial "explanations" of Afro-American marital and family institutions. "In a long and intimate connection with this folk," Shaler, who rose to head Harvard's Lawrence Scientific School, said, "I have never heard a [Negro] refer to his grandfather and any reference to their parents is rare. The Negro must be provided with these motives of the household; he must be made faithful to the marriage bond, and taught his sense of ancestry."⁵ Such views were regularly repeated by "social scientists" and popular writers on the black family before Frazier tackled the

subject. A single illustration suffices to explain why much of this literature, quite properly, now is read by students of racial prejudice, not students of the black family. Odum's highly-praised study of the *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro* insisted that "in his home life, the Negro is filthy, careless, and indecent, . . . as destitute of morals as many of the lower animals, . . . [and with] little knowledge of the sanctity of home or marital relations."⁶ Frazier was the first to challenge seriously the work of Odum, Hoffman, Tillinghurst, Elwang, Weatherford, Thomas, and others of similar persuasion.⁷

Burgess did not exaggerate when he called Frazier's 1939 study "indispensable" because it "explodes completely, and it may be hoped once and for all, the popular misconception of the uniformity of behavior among Negroes. It shows dramatically the wide variation in conduct and in family life by social classes."⁸ More than this, when we search for comparative material on the history of white lower-class families, we cannot find a single study that compares in scope or detail with Frazier's work on the black family. It remains the best single historical study of the American family, black or white, published to date.

To say this, however, is not to insist that Frazier's history was without serious fault. Quite the contrary. Frazier did not use careful methods in developing a historical explanation for the condition of the black family in the 1920s and the 1930s. Instead, he read that "condition" back into the past and linked it directly to the nineteenth-century slave experience. His most significant contributions included an analysis of the development of a "matriarchal" family structure as an adaptation to the conditions of slavery and those of post-emancipation rural and urban southern life together with a detailed examination of the interplay between that "way of life" and the urban experience of migrating blacks between 1910 and 1940. Frazier respected the historical record, so he also described the presence of a two-parent, male-centered household among certain nineteenth-century free blacks, North and South. But his evidence concerning these two strands was quite limited. He depended largely upon the testimony of white travelers and missionaries, the writings of ex-slaves, the oral recollections of blacks many decades after that time, and a printed historical record heavily colored by racial and class preconceptions and biases.

In essence, Frazier found two streams of historic Afro-American family life—one more important than the other. The more dominant stream was nurtured by slavery and the conditions of rural southern life; a "matriarchal family" was its most characteristic form. A subordinate "stream" was the two-parent, male-headed household that existed among a small minority of Afro-Americans who owned property, enjoyed middle-class occupations, or had independent artisan and craft skills. Thus, Frazier directly linked the two-parent, Afro-American household to property ownership, and skill to "class." Since so few Afro-Americans owned property or retained traditional skills, Frazier found the first stream to be the more important of the two trends and drew large conclusions from his two-stream theory. He rooted much of Afro-American difficulty in family life in the dominance of the one pattern:

The widespread disorganization of family life among Negroes has affected practically every phase of their community life and adjustments to the larger white world. Because of the absence of stability in family life, there is a lack of traditions. Life among a large portion of the urban Negro population is casual, precarious, and fragmentary.

"It lacks," Frazier concluded, "continuity, and its roots do not go deeper than the contingencies of daily living."⁹

Since the appearance of Frazier's work, little else of value has been written about the history of the Afro-American family. Impressed by it, Myrdal and his coworkers gave little space to the black family in *An American Dilemma*; instead, they advised readers to study Frazier's book.¹⁰ Historians of slavery in recent decades have added little to the traditional picture of the slave family because they have not yet studied slave culture fully.¹¹ Superior studies of the antebellum southern and northern free blacks such as those by Franklin and Litwack say little about family relations. The same is true of such penetrating monographs about postbellum southern blacks as the works of Taylor, Wharton, and Tindall. In their recent books on South Carolina during Reconstruction, Rose and Williamson have broken the silence about the Afro-American family and added significant new data, but these are exceptions to the rule.¹² More common is the general view put forth in the late Gilbert Osofsky's *Harlem*. What happened to the black migrant family is summed up in a single sentence: "Slavery initially destroyed the entire concept of family for American Negroes and the slave heritage, bulwarked by economic conditions, continued into the twentieth century to make family instability a common factor in Negro life." A similar argument threads two recent general studies of the Afro-American family by Billingsley and by Bernard. The former deals with the Afro-American family between 1865 and the great migration in fewer than three pages; Bernard's volume is a tangle of sociological jargon and misused historical evidence. In truth, historians and sociologists have said little new about the history of the Negro family since Frazier published his work thirty-five years ago. Glazer was correct to write: "We have the great study of E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*—aside from that precious little."¹³

If, as Frazier and others insisted, the slave household developed a "fatherless," matrifocal pattern sufficiently strong to become self-sustaining over time and to be transmitted from generation to generation among large numbers of blacks, such a condition necessarily must have been common among those Afro-Americans closest in time and in experience to actual chattel slavery. Subnuclear and, generally, matrifocal family ties rather than conjugal and nuclear bonds should regularly appear in the quantitative data that describe family and household composition among antebellum northern and southern free blacks and among rural and urban freedmen during and just after Reconstruction. For this reason, my larger study focuses intensely on the years between 1850 and 1880. It is there that the effects of chattel slavery on personality and family structure should have been most severe. By starting with these decades, my study tells nothing *directly* about either slave family life or the family arrangements among

post-Reconstruction blacks. But the findings *indirectly* call into question many views on both of these subjects.

We turn first to the dominant historical view of the Afro-American family between 1850 and 1880 and especially the way in which most historians and sociologists saw it in the aftermath of emancipation. Frazier's argument deserves attention at the start. Afro-American family patterns following freedom offered a critical test for his "two-stream" theory. Frazier insisted that "normal" family patterns had developed among small groups of antebellum free blacks, especially those of "mixed color" who had some economic opportunity in northern and southern cities or who lived in isolated "racial islands." Although Frazier admitted that emancipation increased their numbers, especially with those among ex-slaves who had been house servants or artisans and found in freedom the occasion to build stable, two-parent households, his major argument took exactly the opposite direction: the slave experience blocked "normal" family life for most freedmen. In the 1930s, readers of *The Negro Family in Chicago* learned from Frazier that "the Negro family, which was at best an accommodation to the slave order, went to pieces in the general break-up of the plantation."¹⁴ Frazier later expanded this point:

What authority was there to take the place of the master's in regulating sex relations and maintaining the permanency of marital ties? Where could the Negro father look for sanction of his authority in family relations which had scarcely existed in the past? . . . Emancipation was a crisis in the life of the Negro that tended to destroy all his traditional ways of thinking and acting. . . . The mobility of the Negro population after emancipation was bound to create disorder and produce widespread demoralization. . . . When the yoke of slavery was lifted, the drifting masses were left without any restraint upon their vagrant impulses and wild desires. The old intimacy between master and slave, upon which the moral order under the slave regime had rested was destroyed forever. . . . Promiscuous sexual relations and constant changing of spouses became the rule with the demoralized elements in the freed Negro population. . . . Marriage as formal and legal relation was not a part of the mores of the freedmen.¹⁵

Similar but briefer arguments appeared a decade later in *The Negro in the United States*. "The Civil War and Emancipation," Frazier concluded, "destroyed the discipline and the authority of the masters and uprooted the stable families from their customary mode of living."¹⁶

Frazier was neither the first nor the last to put forth such views. Contemporary enemies and even many friends of the freedman saw nothing but chaos and breakdown in his postbellum family life. Historians at the turn of the century joined to stamp final approval on this "truth." Unlike Frazier, however, their explanations turned on "race." "Negro he is, negro he always has been, and negro he always will be," said George Fitzhugh in 1866. Fitzhugh believed that racial inferiority and the withdrawal of paternal protection together doomed blacks.

They [Negro orphans] lost nothing in losing their parents, but lost everything in losing their masters. Negroes possess much amiableness of feeling, but not the least steady, permanent affection. "Out of sight, out of mind" is true for them all. They never grieve twenty-four hours for the death of parents, wives, husbands, or children. . . .¹⁷

Others echoed Fitzhugh. A rural Georgia newspaper (1865) mockingly approved a reader's suggestion that Negro marriages be legalized: "If he can, let him confer upon them the sanctity of the marriage relation; let him make them all virtuous and chaste and continent; let him teach them to read the Bible and Shakespeare and then let him confer upon them liberty and white skin." Robert Toombs was no less direct. "Now," he asked *Atlanta Constitution* readers in 1871, "what does the negro know about the obligations of the marriage relation? No more, sir, than the parish bull or village heifer."¹⁸ Toombs' animal analogy found a resonant friend in Bruce whose *Plantation Negro as Freeman* Frazier quoted as an authoritative source on Negro social life. Planters, Bruce insisted, could no longer "compel" black "parents to prevent their offspring from running wild like so many young animals." Whatever its deficiencies, moreover, slavery had offered more protection against "promiscuous intercourse" than freedom. "Marriage under the old regime," said Bruce, "was very like unlawful cohabitation under the new, only that the master, by the power he had, compelled the nominal husband and wife to live together permanently."¹⁹ Fleming shared this belief and helped to legitimize it as historical "fact". The absence of a single shred of evidence did not prevent Fleming from insisting that in 1865 and 1886 "the fickle negroes, male and female, made various experiments with new partners" so that soon thousands "had forsaken the husband and wife of slavery times and 'taken up' with others." Again, without evidence of any sort, Fleming told that black "foeticide and child murder were common crimes." Not surprisingly, he concluded that "the marriage relations of the negroes were hardly satisfactory, judged by white standards."²⁰

We cite these *opinions* not to say that Frazier shared them but to show instead that persons of quite different perspectives accepted as "fact" that chaos and disorder typified family life and marital relations among "freedmen" of both sexes. And this view continues to saturate historical and sociological writing and therefore smothers the past. Richardson wrote of Florida blacks during Reconstruction: "Through no fault of their own some of the freedmen had little conception of marital and family obligations. . . . The ex-slaves saw no particular reason for changing the practices by which they had always lived." Billingsley admits that "Emancipation had some advantages for the Negro family" but calls it "a catastrophic social crisis for the ex-slave" and finds "Reconstruction . . . a colossal failure." Mostly racist sources convinced Donald that freedmen and women had "no traditions or experience of marriage and family mores" and "had not yet developed that feeling of concern and sympathy which kinsmen ordinarily have for one another." Sociologists Broom and Green put it differently when they asserted that "many Negro males used their new freedom of movement to desert their wives and children, and some demoralized mothers abandoned their children." Bernard wants us to believe that "so far as *anomie* is concerned, there does seem to be one period in American history when this term could adequately serve: the tragic Reconstruction Era." Then, "the Negro male was put in a situation which forbade his becoming a mature human being, and then was both rewarded and punished for not becoming one. The result was a classic case of the

self-fulfilling prophecy. . . . For over a generation after emancipation, the Negro obliged his detractors by acting out the prophecy." Lincoln says the same: "Freedom did not improve the image of the Negro male or give him a sense of security as the head of the family. He remained a semi-slave. . . ." What matters is not the truth of these observations but the fact that they reinforce and strengthen Frazier's conception of two streams of historic Afro-American family life.²¹

New evidence lets us test in significant ways the conventional picture of the Afro-American family composition between 1850 and 1880. But, first, a few words about the data. The discrete pieces of information gathered about individual blacks and their families from manuscript state, federal, and Freedmen's Bureau censuses number in the tens of thousands because nearly every Afro-American household has been reconstructed in twenty-one distinct urban and rural communities.²² In each city and rural area, percentage distributions have been calculated for thirty types of Afro-American families, ranging from an augmented-extended family headed by a black father, to a subnuclear family headed by a black mother living in a white household. Five major types have been studied: nuclear, extended, augmented, households, and subfamilies living with either other black or white families. Each of these larger types has been broken down into subsets to tell just how many nuclear families, for example, were composed of a husband and wife, a husband, wife and their children, a father and his children, or a mother and her children. In addition, the age, sex, occupation, and, where available, real and personal property have been recorded for each individual black.

The scope of the study has widened over time. In a preliminary but unpublished study, Glasco and I reconstructed the household structure for the entire black population in Buffalo in 1855 and 1875, and sampled households in 1905 and 1925 (in all 684 households).²³ A comparison of all items of significance between the 1855 black population and more than 15,000 natives and Irish and German immigrants followed. In addition, comparative materials were collected for portions of the 1860 New York City (128 households) and Brooklyn (191 households) black community, and for the entire 1860 free black community in Mobile, Alabama (212 households). Critics of this early study worried because the 1860 manuscript census failed to delineate exact family relationships. They also correctly argued that its selection was biased because free blacks, North and South, however close in time to slavery, nevertheless may have been distinct from the slaves and later freedmen in their aspirations. Thus, the study was expanded to confront the ex-slave and much else more directly. From his own unpublished work, Daniel Walkowitz supplied full demographic data on the Troy, New York, black community in 1860 and 1880 (253 households). Despite its limitations, full census data were gathered for the 1860 free black community in Richmond, Virginia (633 households), and Charleston, South Carolina (623 households). And, more important, the 1880 federal manuscript census permitted the reconstruction of thousands of rural and urban southern households inhabited by mostly ex-slaves: St. Helena's Island (904 households), St. Helena's Township

(491 households), and the town of Beaufort, South Carolina (491 households); Natchez, Mississippi (769 households); all of rural Adams County, Mississippi (3,093 households); Mobile, Alabama (3,235 households); and finally, Richmond, Virginia (5,670 households).²⁴

Additional material of unusual significance gathered from the Freedman's Bureau records in the National Archives added independent evidence. These data fell into two categories. First, exceedingly detailed manuscript censuses of the freedmen were gathered by Virginia Bureau officials in 1865 and 1866. Those for York (994 households), Montgomery (500 households), and Princess Anne (375 households) counties permitted careful examination of the household composition among Virginia blacks just after emancipation. In addition, marriage registers kept by Bureau officials revealed otherwise inaccessible information about prior family arrangements among more than 800 couples in Rockbridge and Nelson counties, Virginia; a similar number in Washington, D.C.; and more than 2,000 black men and women in and near Vicksburg, Mississippi.

In all, but not including the marriage registers or the 1905 and 1925 Buffalo census data, information has been gathered about the composition of nearly 19,000 Afro-American households between 1855 and 1880. It is a more than adequate sample. Only the time factor is held constant. The range is far-reaching and covers distinct social and economic environments that affected Afro-American life differently. Virginia counties that sold off "surplus" slaves before the Civil War are included. So are northern industrial (Troy) and port (Buffalo) cities. Charleston was a decaying southern city in 1860. That year and twenty years later, Mobile was a booming Gulf port. Richmond in the same years allowed an examination of the family life of black factory workers. Beaufort and Natchez told about the small town: one a river port and the other, a predominantly black village. The South Carolina Sea Island townships were densely black in population and a repository of African "survivals." Only 59 whites, for example, lived among St. Helena Island's 4,267 Negroes. And rural Adams County was Deep South and had its own particular social structure. So diverse a setting allows us to ask and answer many questions. We can compare the household composition of antebellum free blacks in northern and southern cities and contrast particular southern cities. Rural and urban patterns among the freedmen and women can be distinguished. So can differences within a city: for example, the densely black wards in Richmond (Marshall and Jackson wards) and in Mobile (the seventh ward) show a more regular two-parent household than the "integrated" wards in these cities. Most important for this article are the answers to the questions posed earlier. Were there two streams of Afro-American family life? How widespread was the matriarchal household? What were the relationships between class and household composition?

The findings in this study dispute vigorously the general view of the black family and household composition between 1850 and 1880 because most antebellum free blacks, North and South, lived in double-headed households, and so did most poor rural and urban freedmen and women. Female-headed households were common but not typical. Some of the evidence for these conclusions may be summarized briefly.

The communities studied consisted overwhelmingly of urban and rural lower-class families; an occupational analysis of male and female income earners makes this fact clear. In rural Adams County, only 141 of 2,971 Mississippi black males had occupations other than farmer, farm laborer, farm worker, or laborer. Of these, only twenty-two were nonworkers, including the coroner and the sheriff. The same was true for the Sea Island rural blacks. Only 26 of St. Helena's 850 adult males were neither farmers nor farm laborers. In the cities, except for the antebellum southern towns, black males worked mostly as unskilled laborers or domestic servants. The free black males of Charleston, Mobile, and Richmond counted many artisans and craftsmen among them: 32 percent in Richmond, 43 percent in Mobile, and 70 percent in Charleston. A quite tiny percentage held "middle-class" occupations (1 per cent in Mobile and Richmond and 4 percent in Charleston).

Northern cities showed the opposite picture. There, the typical black male was an unskilled laborer or a service worker: The percentages in these occupational categories in Buffalo (1855 and 1875), Troy (1860 and 1880), and New York and Brooklyn (1860) ranged from 68 percent to 81 percent. Mostly unskilled male laborers also worked in the reconstructed southern cities. Only Beaufort had a substantial nonworking class, 12 percent of adult males. Half of one percent of Natchez's black males fell into this category; the percentage was a bit higher in Richmond and Mobile. Three of five Beaufort males worked as unskilled laborers or as domestics; in Natchez, four of five; in Mobile, nearly nine of ten. Richmond's factories made its black labor force more complex. One of every five adult males was a factory worker, and, including them, at least 80 percent of Richmond's male workers were dependent wage earners.

Such occupational information together-with scattered but still useful data on income and property ownership casts serious doubts on the simple proposition that "class" factors *alone*—income, skill, property, and middle-class occupations—*determined* the presence of a two-parent household. To say this is not to minimize the importance of such factors but rather to assess their significance and to reject Frazier's crude economic determinism. To cite an example: the typical male head of an antebellum northern black family was an unskilled laborer or a domestic servant; his southern counterpart more probably was a skilled artisan. But a much higher percentage of Negro children younger than eighteen in 1860 lived in male-present households in Buffalo, Troy, and Brooklyn than in Charleston and Richmond. Not just "economic" factors affected the shape of these households. For the entire period studied, a large proportion of the families and households analyzed had at their head poor, unskilled rural and urban laborers and domestic servants. Black males with artisan skills or real and personal property obviously had a better chance to build stable, two-parent households than others less fortunate. But it does not follow that unskilled black males, despite numerous obstacles, found it impossible to build and sustain such households. Actually, since most black households were headed by just such persons, it seems clear that the composition of the black household was affected by, but independent of, income, skill, and property. If most black families studied were male-present households, then it follows that that kind of household belonged

to other nineteenth-century blacks than just a small black "elite"—those whom Frazier called the "favored few" who had "escaped from the isolation of the black folk."²⁵ As a result, the concept of two separate "streams" of Afro-American family life developing quite separately over time is, at best, misleading.

We therefore disregard the two-stream theory and instead ask a simple question: how *common* was the two-parent household among the thousands of Afro-American households examined between 1855 and 1880? Percentages vary for fourteen different northern and southern black communities but reveal a consistent pattern everywhere. Depending upon the particular setting, no fewer than 70 percent and as many as 90 percent of the households contained a husband and wife or just a father (Table 1). In the Virginia counties surveyed by the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 and 1866, male-present households ranged from 78 percent to 85 percent. Northern cities did not fall below 85 percent (and in Buffalo, significantly, the percentage remained that high in 1905 and 1925). The southern towns and cities revealed the lowest percentage of male-present households, but Beaufort, Natchez, Mobile, and Richmond all ranged between 70 percent and 74 percent. Southern rural two-parent households were more common, ranging from 81 percent to 87 percent in Mississippi and in South Carolina. Not surprisingly, most black children lived in two-parent households. In 1880, for example, 69 percent of black Natchez children younger than six lived with a father; the percentage was even higher, 77 percent each, in Richmond and Mobile.

To turn from the male-present household to the types of households that blacks lived in (whether or not an adult male was present), means again to unearth new findings that upset conventional views. Black households and family systems were exceedingly complex in the aftermath of

Table 1. PERCENTAGE OF MALE-PRESENT NEGRO HOUSEHOLDS, 1855-1880

Place and Date	Number of Households	Male-Present Households (%)	Male-Absent Households (%)
Buffalo, N.Y., 1855	145	90	10
Buffalo, N.Y., 1875	159	85	15
Troy, N.Y., 1880	128	85	15
York County, Va., 1865	994	85	15
Montgomery County, Va., 1866	500	78	22
Princess Anne County, Va., 1865	375	84	16
Natchez, Miss., 1880	769	70	30
Beaufort, S.C., 1880	461	70	30
Richmond, Va., 1880	5670	73	27
Mobile, Ala., 1880	3235	74	26
Rural Adams County, Miss., 1880	3093	81	19
St. Helena's Township, S.C., 1880	491	87	13
St. Helena's Island, S.C., 1880	904	86	14

emancipation. Arrangements within them varied greatly, but "chaos" and "disorder" are not useful concepts in understanding them. Only the 1880 manuscript census, however, is precise enough in defining family relationships to allow us to reconstruct some of this complexity. And even that source is deficient because it tells nothing about kinship ties between separate households. Yet, it reveals a great deal when sorted according to nuclear, extended, and augmented households as well as subfamilies living either with other black or white families (Table 2). The patterns are clear. Except for Richmond, very few black families lived in white households. One of every nine or ten urban black families lived with another black family. Together, extended and augmented families never accounted for more than 30 percent of the households in any area. Most black households were *nuclear* in composition: the range spreads from 50 percent in Natchez to 80 percent in St. Helena's Township; Richmond, Mobile, Beaufort, rural Adams County, and St. Helena's Island fall in between.

That so large a percentage of southern black households had two parents and were nuclear in composition tells more than that the double stream is a fiction. Most adults in these families were illiterate, and unless we give unwarranted credit to northern evangelists, their behavior had to be profoundly shaped by tradition and custom. So it becomes clear that the new data pose significant questions about the consciousness, the culture, and the family life of enslaved Afro-Americans. Unless we are prepared to believe that most slave owners taught their chattel the value of a two-parent nuclear household and sustained it in practice, then we must reject Elkins' conception of American slavery as a "closed system" that let masters remake slaves in their image. Elkins' "significant other" may have been a husband or a father, not just a master. That so many rural South Carolina and Mississippi blacks lived in two-parent nuclear families is hard to reconcile with Stamp's conclusion that slave family life was "a kind of cultural chaos," was "highly unstable," and often revealed "the failure of any deep and enduring affection to develop between some husbands and wives." Similarly, there is difficulty in agreeing with Wade that urban slave marriage involved "a great deal of fiction" and that "family ties were weak at best." "Male and female slaves found their pleasure and love," Wade argues, "wherever they could. . . . Generally, relations were neither prolonged nor monogamous. . . . The very looseness of their mating . . . made a meaningful family unit even more difficult. . . . For the children of such a marriage, there could be no ordinary family life."²⁶ Such

Table 2. TYPES OF AFRO-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS BY PERCENTAGES, 1880

Place	Nuclear	Extended	Augmented	Sub-Black	Sub-White
Richmond, Va.	52	10	19	9	10
Mobile, Ala.	60	14	11	10	5
Natchez, Miss.	50	17	20	10	3
Beaufort, S.C.	63	17	10	9	1
Rural Adams County, Miss.	58	15	15	10	2
St. Helena's Island, S.C.	76	14	2	8	0
St. Helena's Township, S.C.	80	12	4	4	0

arguments do not square easily with the fact that fifteen years after slavery's end three of every four Richmond and Mobile black families, nearly all headed by adult ex-slaves, were two-parent households.

It is hazardous to read history backward, but such data indicate that the final word has yet to be written about slave family life and culture in the cities and on the farms and plantations. Important new evidence about the attitudes of freedmen and women toward marriage and family life as well as their marital condition as slaves is found in the Freedmen's Bureau manuscripts. Registers that listed the marriages of former slaves in Washington, D.C., and Rockbridge and Nelson counties, Virginia, between 1865 and 1867 show that models of stable marriages existed among the slaves themselves, not just among their masters, other whites, or free blacks. Some had lived together as husband and wife for more than forty years in slavery. In all, registers recorded the dates of 1,721 marriages: 46 percent in the Nelson county, 43 percent in Rockbridge county, and 36 percent in Washington, D.C., had resided together at least ten years. The Washington register tells even more. It listed 848 marriages, and of them only 34 were between men and women who had lived in the District before emancipation. The rest had moved there, probably as families, mostly from nearby rural counties in Maryland and Virginia. Asked by the registrar who had married them, some did not know or could not remember. Others named a minister, a priest, or, more regularly, a master. Most important, 421, nearly half, responded, "no marriage ceremony," suggesting clearly that slaves could live together as husband and wife in a stable (though hardly secure and ideal) relationship without formal religious or secular rituals. The Vicksburg, Mississippi, marriage registers for 1864 and 1865 give even more significant information. Freedmen and women whose slave marriages had been disrupted told how long they had lived together in an earlier marriage, the cause for its termination, and the number of children resulting from a prior marriage. Although these registers have not yet been fully analyzed, they have already yielded valuable information. Answers given by more than 2,100 ex-slaves who were taking new spouses show that 40 percent of the men and 35 percent of the women had been married for at least five years, and some for more than twenty years. "Death" (40 percent for the men and 57 percent for the women) and "force" (i.e., physical separation) (48.5 percent for the men and 31 percent for the women), explained the rupture of most of these marriages, but one of every twenty men and women gave as the reason "mutual consent."

Death and force broke up many slave marriages, but it does not follow that such severe disruption shattered slave *consciousness* of normal slave marriage relations and of the value of a two-parent household. The 1866 Freedmen's Bureau census in Princess Anne County, Virginia, sheds clear light on the consciousness. Bureau officials gathered detailed demographic data on 1,796 black men, women, and children. Only the occupational data were limited in use (all of the employed adult males were listed simply as "laborers"). Of these blacks, 1,073 were fifteen years and older, and of them 2 percent were of "mixed color," 6.3 percent had been free before 1863, and 3.5 percent could read. In other words, the adult population consisted almost entirely of black, illiterate ex-slaves. The census also

recorded the names of former owners and where each person had lived before emancipation. Sixty-three percent, nearly two-thirds, of the entire population had not resided in Princess Anne County before emancipation. Most migrants had lived nearby in Virginia and North Carolina counties; a few came from Maryland and three from as far as Kentucky, Georgia, and Texas. Despite such extraordinary mobility, no more than one in ten lived apart from a larger black household. Ninety percent of the migrants and local residents lived in 375 families, 84 percent of which housed a husband and his wife. Part of the reason for so much physical movement was the reconstitution of former slave families. Not one of the female-headed households was composed of persons who had belonged to different owners. The two-parent households tell a different story. Of 291 households headed by a former male slave, 193, two-thirds in all, came from separate owners. Some came together from more than two owners, but in most instances the wife and children were from a single master and the husband from another master. Just how many of these families were reconstituted and how many were new marriages cannot be known without additional information, but even by itself these data help to explain the geographical mobility of so many freedmen in 1865 and 1866, movement widely misinterpreted by white contemporaries and, until quite recently, by historians. What many white contemporaries thought of such behavior often drew upon sources other than the behavior itself. So we are not surprised to read in the *New York Times* in 1865: "The Negro misunderstands the motives which made the most laborious, hard-working people on the face of the globe clamour for his emancipation. You are free, Sambo, but you must work. Be virtuous, too, oh, Dinah! 'Whew! Gor Almighty! bress my soul!'"²⁷ It may be in reexamining the consciousness, culture, and family life of slaves and freedmen, marriage registers and census tracts will prove more valuable than the *New York Times* and other traditional sources.

Let us turn finally to a portion of another world which figured so prominently in Frazier's sociohistorical model: the female-headed black household in the rural and urban South between 1855 and 1880. In this period and for still another generation, Frazier argued, the "Matriarchate" ("the House of the Mother") flourished. Property-owning Negro farmers became black Puritan fathers, and small numbers of Negro males headed households in the South's urban bourgeois enclaves, but these did not count as much as the "matriarchal" households that surrounded them. Five chapters argued that matriarchy became a *legitimized counter-norm*. "Motherhood outside of institutional control was accepted by a large group of Negro women with an attitude of resignation as if it were nature's decree." Such were "the simple folkways of . . . peasant folk." "In the rural areas of the South," Frazier said again, "we find the maternal family functioning in its most primitive form as a natural organization." The three-generation female household—grandmother-daughter-and grandchildren—counted for much in this construct and Frazier insisted that the older Negro woman headed "the maternal family among a primitive peasant people."²⁸

It is difficult to dispute when Frazier writes that "the maternal-family or-

ganization, a heritage from slavery, . . . continued on a fairly large scale" because this critical assertion rested on almost no historical evidence. Seventy pages of text on the post-slavery "matriarchy" include just six pieces of historical data on the critical decades between 1870 and 1900: a letter, from Elizabeth Botume; an extract from A. T. Morgan's *Yazoo* (Washington, D.C., 1884); and two quotations each from Philip Bruce and J. Bradford Laws, a Department of Labor investigator who studied two small Louisiana plantations at the turn of the century. (Frazier neglected Laws' comments that the plantation Negroes were "grossly animal in their sexual relations" and that "very few . . . appear capable of deep emotion; sorrow over the dead dies with the sun. . . .") Despite the lack of evidence, Frazier's arguments about matriarchy have gained widespread approval. Glazer for example, writes in 1966 that Frazier's main proposition "remains solid and structures all our thinking on the Negro family." Glazer even wants readers to believe that an "extension of the matriarchy" took place after emancipation.²⁹ Although these and similar propositions remain unproven, they nevertheless need to be seriously tested.

Three objective measures of matriarchy as a form of household and family organization are available: male presence, the presence of older female relatives in the household, and the earning power of women as contrasted with men. Males, as seen, most usually husbands, were found in at least 70 percent of the households examined. That so few were extended households suggests the infrequency of older female relatives as household members. Income is another matter. Unskilled black laborers earned two or three times more a week than female servants or washerwomen, but little is yet known of the regularity of male employment, so that this question remains open.

There are other ways to examine these female-headed households in order to see them in historical perspective. We do not regularly find large numbers of children in female-headed households (Table 3). In 1880, for example, female-headed households among women aged thirty to forty-nine usually had one or two children younger than eighteen. Furthermore, the overall age distribution of all female household heads studied in 1880 suggests that a good portion of them were heads because their husbands had died and for no other reason. Between 23 percent and 30 percent of the households studied in each rural and urban area had as its head a woman of at least age fifty. An even more significant test of the matriarchal ethos and of the conceptions of family and marriage held by black men and women can be constructed by asking how many women aged twenty to

Table 3. SIZE OF FEMALE-HEADED BLACK HOUSEHOLDS, INCLUDING ALL CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 FOR MOTHERS AGED 30-49, 1880

Place	Total	One or Two Children (%)	Three or More Children (%)
Beaufort, S.C.	50	72	28
St. Helena Island and St. Helena Township, S.C.	85	65	35
Richmond, Va.	658	72	28
Natchez, Miss., Wards I-III	92	61	39

twenty-nine in 1880 headed households in relationship to all black women of that age. They are a good group to examine. Born between 1851 and 1860, they grew up as slave children and matured as young women in the "chaos" and "disorder" of the Reconstruction era. They fall into three categories: those married, with or without children; those with children and heading households; and single women boarding with white or black families or living with their parents (Table 4). Except in rural Adams County, single women far outnumbered those who headed households with children. More than this, four times as many Richmond and Mobile women were married, with or without children, than headed households with children. The proportions were higher in the rural Sea Islands and somewhat lower in Natchez, Beaufort, and rural Adams County. These relationships take on even greater significance when the extremely unfavorable female sex ratio is considered. For reasons as yet not entirely clear, black women between the ages of fifteen and forty far outnumbered males in the same age group. This imbalance was not nearly as marked in the southern rural areas as in the southern cities where it was astonishing. For every 100 Negro women aged twenty to twenty-nine in Beaufort, Natchez, Mobile, and Richmond, there were only 57 black males! In any modern social system, such a ratio weakens the position of the woman and, by itself, spawns prostitution and illegitimacy. When we realize that this unfavorable sex ratio existed in the "redeemed" and "Bourbon" southern cities, then the matriarchy ethos loses more of its "potency" and we ask ourselves, instead, why were there so few female-headed Negro households?

Similar computations about the household status of all black women older than fifty test Frazier's notion of the three-generation matriarchal household, the "classic" grandmother-daughter-grandchildren arrangement. If we ask in 1880 what percentage of black women aged fifty and older headed such households or cared alone for their grandchildren, we find a relatively significant number only in Beaufort where 16 percent (21 of 134 women) headed such households. The percentage dwindles in all

Table 4. HOUSEHOLD STATUS OF ALL BLACK WOMEN, AGED 20-29, IN 1880

Area	Number	Married With/Without Children (%)	Head of Household With Children (%)	Single, Boarder, or Daughter (%)
Beaufort, S.C.	243	54	18	28
Natchez, Miss.	227	31	14	55
Mobile, Ala.	1570	52	13	35
Richmond, Va.	3400	39	9	52
St. Helena's Island, S.C.	393	70	9	21
St. Helena's Township, S.C.	172	80	8	12
Kingston and Washington Township, Adams Co., Miss.	478	68	21	11

other places: 9 percent each in St. Helena's Island and Natchez, 6 percent each in St. Helena's Township and rural Adams County, and 5 percent in Richmond. Everywhere, the number of black widows aged fifty and more living just with their children was greater, but an even larger proportion lived alone with a husband or still shared full family life with a husband and their children. The total picture in rural Adams County is revealing for other places, too. Of 843 women aged fifty and older who resided there, half lived with husbands, with or without children and other relatives; another 15 percent, widowed, lived with married children; 19 percent boarded with relatives and nonrelatives or lived alone; 10 percent headed households that contained just their children or their children and distant kin; just 6 percent fit the "classic" model sketched by Frazier and so many others. None of this is surprising in light of the larger pattern uncovered.

Because so many black women worked, the relationship between their occupation and family position tells something important about the question of "matriarchy." We concentrate only on the cities and, in particular, on Richmond washerwomen and domestic servants. The data are still raw, but certain tentative observations can be reported. Not all women worked; mostly married women with children did not work. But still, slightly more than 6,000 Richmond women labored. Fewer than expected worked in the tobacco factories; one of every five was a washerwoman; two of every three were domestic servants. Married women, with or without children, and female heads of households worked more as washerwomen; 37 percent of Richmond's washerwomen were married and most often mothers; 28 percent headed households. Only 12 percent of the nearly 4,000 servants were married women. Fifty-three percent of all servants lived as individuals with white families. When we study their ages, patterns emerge. Washerwomen tended to be older as a group than servants. They may have preferred to toil over the tub and the dignity of their own poor homes to daily demeaning servant relationships outside the home. The typical black servant was an unmarried young woman. Just as many girls younger than age fifteen worked as house servants as women aged sixty and older. Only 13 percent of Richmond's servants were aged fifty and older; 57 percent were less than thirty. As "single" women, most servants either supported themselves or contributed to family incomes. Few black female servants fit the classic "Mammy" stereotype. Either whites preferred younger black women, or older black women stayed away from such work.

So much for an obsolete sociohistorical model that has told much about the history of the Afro-American family but nevertheless confused or blinded scholars as well as citizens. To dispute this model, however, is not the same as to offer another. Before that is done, new questions have to be answered and much material examined in fresh, systematic ways. The slave family is just one example. *Historical* comparisons with white lower-class families, immigrant and native-born, as well as with black families in other cultures are needed. Glasco and I compared the 1855 Buffalo Negro family with that of Irish and German immigrants and native whites and

found significant similarities and differences, and strengths as well as weaknesses. But this is just a start.³⁰ More importantly, the quality of culture and family life cannot be constructed by a desk calculator. Whole ranges of nonquantitative data must be examined. But there are difficulties. Few nineteenth-century white Americans reported findings consistent with the data in these pages. When they did, they expressed "surprise," even shock. Why so few whites saw the Afro-American family as, in fact, it existed is a significant and complex question. Part of the reason reflects a curious coincidence between antislavery and proslavery arguments. White abolitionists denied slaves a family life or *even* a family consciousness because for them marriage depended only on civil law, not on culture. Proslavery apologists said free blacks could not build wholesome marriages for racial reasons. Together, these arguments blurred white perception of black families. Race and slavery were involved, but so was class.

Plumb has reminded us that racial stereotypes of Negroes had their counterpart in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. "Even the Sambo mentality," Plumb notes, "can be found in the deliberately stupid country yokel or in the cockney clown of later centuries. So, too, the belief, as with Negroes, that they were abandoned sexually, given to both promiscuity and over-indulgence." Slaves and free workers "were the objects of exploitation. . . . Hence we should not be surprised to find similar attitudes."³¹ Race and class, however, mixed together so meanly for many whites that what they believed had little connection to what they saw. A single example from many serves this point. During Reconstruction, a British traveler heard a Macon, Georgia, black condemn a former master whom others praised:

I was dat man's slave; and he sold my wife, and he sold my two chill'un; yes, brudders, if dere's a God in heaven, he did. Kind! yes, he gib me corn enough, and he gib me pork enough, and he neber gib me one lick wid de whip, but whar's my wife?—whar's my chill'un? Take away de pork, I say; take away de corn, I can work and raise dese for myself, but gib me back de wife of my bosom, and gib me back my poor chill'un as was sold away.

The same writer who reported these words said most freedmen and women "have no conception of the sacredness of marriage" and lived "in habitual immorality." He and others like him further validate Gramsci's dictum that "for a social elite the features of subordinate groups always display something barbaric and pathological."³²

So we must use traditional historical sources with great care. In addition, we must not isolate the Afro-American family from both the black and the larger white social and class structure that profoundly affected it. Even though his application of it was faulted, Frazier's insistence upon such approaches must be retained. Take the question of occupational mobility. Glasco and I have completed an occupational analysis of the Buffalo black community in 1855, 1875, 1892, 1905, and 1925. The trend between 1855 and 1905 was not encouraging. Occupational opportunities narrowed relatively and absolutely for Buffalo blacks over time (Table 5). They could not penetrate the city's dynamic industrial and construction sectors. Although the number of black males older than fifteen increased

Table 5. SELECTED OCCUPATIONS OF BLACKS IN BUFFALO, N. Y., 1855-1925

Occupation	1855, N:133		1875, N:188		1892, N:346		1905, N:425		1925, N:211 ^c	
	N	% Negro	N	% Negro	N	% Negro	N	% Negro	N	% Negro
Barbers	21	16.0	16	8.5	9	2.6	6	1.4	3	1.4
Sailors	11	8.0	7	3.7	3	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Musicians	1	0.8	3	1.5	10	3.0	18	4.2	0	0.0
Building Trades	8	6.0	8	4.3	7	2.0	7	1.6	10	4.7
Masons	1	0.8	0	0.0	2	0.6	14	3.3	2	1.0
"Crafts" ^a	6	4.5	5	2.7	6	1.7	10	2.4	25 ^b	11.8
Factory Labor	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.5	47	22.0
Clerk, Messenger	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	3.7	7	1.6	1	0.5
Storekeeper	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5
Professional	6	4.5	3	1.5	5	1.4	4	0.9	3	1.4

a. Some of those listed under particular crafts must have labored in factories or workshops, but the census did not make such distinctions.

b. Does not include railroad firemen and brakemen.

c. The 1925 data are a sample that drew all Negro males older than 15 residing in every twentieth Negro-headed household in wards 6, 7, and 8.

by more than 300 percent, the number of barbers fell from twenty-two to six, sailors from eleven to none, building-trades craftsmen from eight to seven, and so forth. In 1855, barbers were 16 percent of all employed black males; in 1905, 1.4 percent. Skilled building-trades workers fell from 6 percent to 1.6 percent in the same years. Factory labor was not available to black males: in 1855, 1875, and 1892, census takers did not record a single black factory worker; in 1905, only 2 of 425 males were listed as factory workers. Just as black males were closed off from the building trades and factory labor between 1855 and 1905, so, too, were they blocked from occupations with a higher status. Black professionals, usually ministers and doctors, fell from six (4.5 percent) to four (0.9 percent) between 1855 and 1905, and the retail trades found no blacks at all in these years.

Such occupational depression and disadvantage were not isolated trends that happened only in Buffalo. In Troy, of 162 black males employed in 1880, 123 were menial workers or laborers; only two were iron workers. And this in a city that gave employment to several thousand immigrant and native white iron workers. Occupational exclusion of blacks actually began *before the Civil War*. In an unpublished study, Weinbaum has demonstrated conclusively such exclusion and decline for Rochester, New York, blacks between 1840 and 1860.³³ My own work shows a similar decline in Charleston, South Carolina, between 1850 and 1860. And these trends continued in the southern cities during Reconstruction: a crucial story that has yet to be told. The 1870 New Orleans city directory, Woodward pointed out, listed 3,460 black carpenters, cigarmakers, painters, shoemakers, coopers, tailors, bakers, blacksmiths, and foundry hands. By 1904, less than 10 percent of that number appeared even though the New Orleans population had increased by more than 50 percent.³⁴ The process of enclosing ex-slaves began during Reconstruction and is part of any larger study of the Afro-American family. Mobile, Alabama, for example, had among its 1,880 residents 139 black carpenters. Only 29 percent were younger than forty years of age. What matters is that 56 percent of Mobile's native white carpenters and 76 percent of its carpenters who were sons of European immigrants were younger than forty. Thirteen percent of Mobile's black carpenters were younger than thirty; 58 percent of the same city's black male servants were younger than 30. Because similar patterns emerge in other crafts and in other 1880 southern cities, it is clear that Afro-American fathers were not able to pass accumulated skills to their sons at this early date. The Buffalo study also shows the absence of a local entrepreneurial and professional class among the blacks. Although the occupational structure was more diverse in southern cities, few blacks were nonworkers. More than 6,500 black males earned income in Richmond in 1880: among them, a single physician, a single lawyer, twelve teachers, thirteen clergymen, and sixteen store clerks. Artisans made up the "elite" among blacks in the northern and southern postbellum cities. But institutional racism shattered that "elite" in these years.

The implications of these findings are significant for the reconstruction of the history of the Afro-American family. Such occupational patterns may be a clue to an American variant of what Smith found in his outstanding study of Negro family life in British Guiana:

In rigidly stratified societies such as that of British Guiana, where social roles are largely allocated according to ascriptive criteria of ethnic characteristics, the lower-class male has nothing to buttress his authority as husband-father except the dependence upon his economic support. The uncertainty of his being able to carry out even this function adequately, because of general economic insecurity, undermines his position even further.³⁵

But occupational segregation undermined more than the male's position in the household. The absence of a complex occupational hierarchy may have so weakened the Afro-American community as to prevent it from successfully organizing to compete with native whites and immigrant groups. At best, the Afro-American structure was "two-dimensional." Its width was a function of the numbers of blacks in the entire community; its depth a function of a complex family system. But it was denied the "height" derived from a complex class structure based on occupational diversity. As a result, the family system *may* have been more important in giving cohesion to the black than to the white lower-class community. Significantly, the occupational disability that victimized Buffalo blacks did *not* shatter their family system. In 1905, for example, 187 of Buffalo's 222 black households, 85 percent, were headed by males. Nevertheless, the decline of the black artisan and the absence of a significant middle class in all cities studied had significant implications that distinguish the black lower class from the white lower class, immigrant and native-born alike. Among the lower classes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the artisans were the dynamic and organizing element. Some became manufacturers, others became factory workers. Voluntary associations found leaders among them. Local politicians came from the artisans and skilled workers, so did leaders of trade unions and reform and radical movements. But the black skilled worker was blocked from playing these roles. Before that enclosure occurred, he had held a significant place in such movements. Unpublished studies demonstrate this fact in important ways. White has shown that black artisans led a protest movement against Buffalo's segregated school system between 1839 and 1868. Even more important Magdol has recently uncovered a pattern of artisan and craft leadership among the rural, town, and village blacks of the South between 1865 and 1870.³⁶ The destruction of artisan traditions wiped out such leadership and distorted the black community structure *above* the level of its family organization. Much that flows from this fact may help us in understanding black political and social behavior between 1870 and 1910.

We return to the beginning. Let us follow Alexander Hamilton's advice and set aside views about blacks "founded neither in reason nor in experience." Evidence from Buffalo, other northern cities, and, more important, southern rural regions, towns, and cities refutes the argument that makes of black family life little more than a crude speculation about the relationship between slavery and twentieth-century black experience. Such theorizing rests on faulty historical knowledge. Silberman, for example, said:

Slavery had emasculated the Negro males, had made them shiftless and irresponsible and promiscuous by preventing them from asserting responsibility, negating their role as husband and father, and making them totally dependent

on the will of another. There was [after emancipation] no stable family structure to offer support to men or women or children in this strange new world. With no history of stable families, no knowledge of even what stability might mean, huge numbers of Negro men took to the roads as soon as freedom was proclaimed. . . . Thus there developed a pattern of drifting from place to place and woman to woman that has persisted (in lesser degrees, of course) to the present day.³⁷

There is no reason to repeat such nonsense any longer. Ellison has answered the assumptions on which it rests in an eloquent and authoritative fashion: "Can a people . . . live and develop over 300 years by simply reacting?" he asks. "Are American Negroes simply the creation of white men, or have they at least helped create themselves out of what they found around them? Men have made a way of life in caves and upon cliffs, why can not Negroes have made a life upon the horn of the white man's dilemma?"³⁸

Slavery and quasifreedom imposed countless burdens upon American blacks, but the high proportion of two-parent households found among them between 1855 and 1880 tells how little is yet known about the slave family, its relationship to the dominant white family structure, and the ways in which freedmen and freedwomen adapted, transformed, retained, or rejected older forms of family life. Finally, if the family transmits culture from generation to generation, then black subculture itself needs to be reexamined. It is too simple to say with Frazier: "Because of the absence of stability in [Negro] family life, there is a lack of traditions."³⁹ The composition of the Afro-American family and household between 1855 and 1880 suggests compelling reasons to reexamine historic Afro-American community life and the very meaning of American black culture.

NOTES

1. Quoted in W. E. B. DuBois, *Negro-American Family* (Atlanta, 1909), opposite title page.
2. See, for example, Robert E. Park, "The Conflict and Fusion of Cultures with Special Reference to the Negro," *Journal of Negro History*, IV (1919), 111-133.
3. The most convenient collection of materials on this report—a volume which includes the full text of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C., 1965), and the responses of diverse critics—is Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).
4. Philip M. Hauser, "Demographic Factors in the Integration of the Negro," *Daedalus* XCIV (1965), 854.
5. Nathaniel Shaler, "The Nature of the Negro" and "The African Element in America," *Arena*, II, III (1890), 664-665, 23-35.
6. Howard Odum, *Social and Mental Traits of the Negro: Research into the Basic Condition of the Negro Race in Southern Towns* (New York, 1910), *passim*, but esp. 36-42, 150-176, 213-237.
7. See, for example, Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (New York, 1896); Joseph A. Tillinghurst, *The Negro in Africa and America* (New York, 1902); William W. Elwang, *The Negroes of Columbia, Missouri: A Concrete Study of the Race Problem* (Columbia, 1904); William H. Thomas, *The American Negro, What He*

Was, What He Is, and What He May Become (New York, 1904); W. D. Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America* (New York, 1924).

8. Ernest Burgess, "Introduction," in E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, 1939).

9. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States* (New York, 1949), 636.

10. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944), 930-935.

11. Since this article was written, the following works dealing with various aspects of the slave family have appeared: John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum Community* (New York, 1972); Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974), 2v.; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974). These works differ significantly in their treatment of the slave family, but all are "positive" in their emphasis. These works, however, contain inadequate explanatory "models" in describing slave familial life and behavior. All revise the "traditional picture of the slave family," but the evidence offered is largely descriptive and not analytic.

12. See, for examples, John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill, 1943); Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961); Alrutheus A. Taylor, *The Negro in South Carolina during the Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C., 1924), *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, D.C., 1926), *The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880* (Washington, D.C., 1941); Vernon Lane Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill, 1947); George Tindall, *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900* (Columbia, 1952); Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (Indianapolis, 1964); Joel Williamson, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1867* (Chapel Hill, 1965). The following important more recent studies have shed additional light on the Afro-American family in the aftermath of the general emancipation: Robert H. Abzug, "The Black Family during Reconstruction," in Daniel Fox, Nathan Huggins, and Martin Kilson (eds.), *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (New York, 1971), II, 26-41; Peter Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn., 1972), 56-79; John Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1800-1880* (Chicago, 1973), 79-106.

13. Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto (Negro New York, 1890-1930)* (New York, 1963), 133-134. Andrew Billingsley, *Black Families in White America* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), 69-71; Jessie Bernard, *Marriage and Family among Negroes* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966), *passim*; Nathan Glazer, "Introduction," in Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (New York, 1963), xv.

14. Frazier, *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Chicago, 1932), 33-34.

15. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*, 89.

16. Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, 627.

17. George Fitzhugh, "Camp Lee and the Freedmen's Bureau," *DeBow's Review*, II (1866), 346-355.

18. Quoted in Allan Conway, *Reconstruction of Georgia* (Minneapolis, 1966), 65-66.

19. Philip A. Bruce, *The Plantation Negro as Freeman* (New York, 1889), 4, *passim*.

20. Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York, 1905), 763-764.

21. Joe M. Richardson, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1867* (Tallahassee, 1965); Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, 69-71; Henderson H. Donald, *The Negro Freedman* (New York, 1952), 56-75; Leonard Broom and Norval Glenn, *The Transformation of the Negro American* (New York, 1967), 15-21; Jesse Bernard, *Marriage and Family Among Negroes*, 70-75; C. Eric Lincoln, "The Absent Father Haunts the Negro Family," *New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 28, 1965), 60, 172-176.

22. Data also have been gathered on all single blacks who lived alone or in white households.

23. Herbert G. Gutman and Laurence A. Glasco, "The Buffalo, New York, Negro, 1855-1875: A Study of the Family Structure of the Free Negroes and Some of Its Implications," un-

pub. paper prepared for the Wisconsin Conference on the History of American Political and Social Behavior (May, 1968); *idem*, "The Negro Family, Household, and Occupational Structure, 1855-1925, with Special Emphasis on Buffalo, New York, but Including Comparative Data from New York City, Brooklyn, Mobile, and Adams County, Mississippi," unpub. paper prepared for the Yale Conference on Nineteenth-Century Cities (Nov., 1968).

24. In gathering data from the 1880 federal census, the author was greatly assisted by Elizabeth Ewen, Ursula Lingies, and Mark Sosower.

25. Frazier, *Negro Family in the United States*, 479.

26. Elkins, *Slavery* (Chicago, 1959), 81-88, 115-139; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1956), 340-349; Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York, 1964), 117-120.

27. *New York Times* (May 17, 1865), quoted in Myrta L. Avery, *Dixie After the War* (New York, 1906), 210.

28. Frazier, *Negro Family in the United States*, 106-107, 121, 127; see, esp., chs. 5-8.

29. J. Bradford Laws, *The Negroes of Cinclaire Central Factory and Calumet Plantation, Louisiana* (Washington, D.C., 1903), 120-121. Nathan Glazer, "Foreword" to revised and abridged edition, Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, 1966), viii.

30. See note 23.

31. J. H. Plumb, "Slavery, Race, and the Poor," *New York Review of Books*, XII (March 13, 1969), 3-5.

32. William Macrae, *Americans at Work*, 316-320. Antonio Gramsci quoted in Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Hugh Graham and Ted R. Gurr (eds.), *Violence in America* (New York, 1969), 12.

33. Unpublished paper, by Paul Weinbaum, "Rochester, New York, Blacks Before the Civil War," 1968, in the author's possession.

34. C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 361.

35. Raymond T. Smith, *Negro Family in British Guiana* (New York, 1956), 73.

36. Arthur White, "Antebellum School Reform in Boston: Integrationists and Separatists," *Phylon*, XXXIV (1973), 203-219; Edward Magdol, "Local Black Leaders in the South, 1867-75: An Essay Toward the Reconstruction of Reconstruction History," *Societas*, IV (1974), 81-110.

37. Charles E. Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York, 1964), 94-95.

38. Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York, 1964), 315.

39. Frazier, *Negro in the United States*, 636.