

Chapter II

Slaves in the Antebellum South

The United States government's support of slavery was based on an overwhelming practicality. In 1790, a thousand tons of cotton were being produced every year in the South. By 1860, it was a million tons. In the same period, 500,000 slaves grew to 4 million...But slave importation became illegal in 1808. Therefore, "from the beginning the law went unenforced," says John Hope Franklin (From Slavery to Freedom). "The long, unprotected coast, the certain markets, and the prospects of huge profits were too much for the American merchants and they yielded to the temptation." (Zinn, 1980)

The Marxist Howard Zinn claimed that Franklin estimated "perhaps 250,000 slaves were imported illegally before the Civil War" in the latter's popular and often reprinted *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947), but that estimate of 250,000 did not actually appear in that book. It derived from a much earlier source. W.E.B. Dubois came to that conclusion about the traffic in 1891, before anyone else had attempted to do so scientifically. Writing only a generation after the slave trade had ended, Dubois was hot on the trail while it was still relatively fresh:

[F]rom 1807-1862 there were annually introduced into the United States from 1,000 to 15,000 Africans, and that the total number thus brought in contravention alike of humanity and law was not less than 250,000. (Dubois, 1892)

Almost a century later in 1980, Zinn preferred 250,000 illegal imports to the consensus at that time of 54,000 estimated by Philip Curtin in *The African Slave Trade: A Census* (1969), which had established a new paradigm enabling American Exceptionalists to whitewash one of the most unsavory truths from our history. Curtin, that bean-counter from Johns Hopkins University, famously chopped in half the previous total estimate of all the slaves brought to the Americas from 20 million to 9.5 million. Extrapolating from documents, he calculated that only 54,000 slaves were imported illegally to the U.S. before the Civil War, though he later admitted that the number was nothing more than a "shot in the dark." In an effort to justify his squirrel-scholar methodology, Curtin explained that in writing his magnum opus he had approached the task "as

that of building with the bricks that exist, not in making new ones.” He averred that only 400,000 slaves were ever landed in British North America and from that number, excluding the illegals, were reproduced the more than four million totaled in the 1860 Census. To his credit, he frequently reminded his readers that any of his calculations could be as much as 20% off in either direction. Regardless of his underestimate, this caveat illustrates more grace and intelligence than his successors have shown, as we shall reveal. Curtin’s estimate of 54,000 seemingly lowered the speculative bar to its nadir. However, his most tenacious acolyte, David Eltis of Emory University, has recently gone even lower.

The tradition of denial began with Georgian slavery apologist Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, who in his *American Negro Slavery* (1918), deplored Dubois’s earlier estimate. Phillips opined that slave breeding in Virginia and Maryland explained the population explosion of over 4.4 million blacks recorded in 1860. Today, most antebellum historians still subscribe to his view, although with modifications. The notion that stud farms existed specifically for breeding slaves has been fairly debunked (Tadman, 1996), yet the insistence that Virginia’s surplus of slaves provided the Cotton Kingdom with the majority of its slaves remains relentless. Phillips admitted that “smuggling never ceased” after 1808, but was convinced that the “importations were never great enough to affect the labor supply to any appreciable degree.” (Phillips, 1918)

In Dubois’s landmark dissertation, published as *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America: 1638–1870* (1896), he did not repeat his estimate of 250,000, but rather equivocated. He emphasized that after 1825 the imports increased “enormously”, and most of the carriers gradually assumed the U.S. flag because almost all the major players prohibited the trade by 1850. Spain prevaricated about stopping the trade to her prized jewel Cuba for the same reason that the U.S. was disingenuous about trafficking. Hugely profitable sugar and cotton profits were being made, as well the filthy lucre in the slave trade

itself. Immune to search and seizure from British cruisers, nearly all slavers flew the Stars and Stripes from 1850 to 1860.

Professor of history at Claremont College, one of North Carolina's first schools for women, Winfield Collins, in his *The Domestic Slave Trade to the Southern States* (1904), claimed to have conducted his research independently of Dubois's work. With considerable accuracy, he realized that the estimates for the later decades were too low:

[A]t least 270,000 slaves were introduced into the United States from 1808 to 1860 inclusive. These we would distribute as follows: Between 1808 and 1820, sixty thousand; 1820 to 1830, fifty thousand; 1830 to 1840, forty thousand; 1840 to 1850, fifty thousand and from 1850 to 1860 seventy thousand. We consider these very moderate and even low estimates (Collins, 1904).

Hardly an abolitionist, Collins, was an ardent proponent of segregation and later defended lynching. Obviously, he did not intend to vilify the planters who purchased and employed the illegal slaves. Even so, his book about the trade inflamed some Southerners. Revisionism that glorified white supremacy had become normalized by 1904. Spearheaded by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Dunning School emanating from Columbia, racism had already been legislated by Jim Crow. In 1916, in the White House, Woodrow Wilson privately viewed D.W. Griffiths' epic film, *The Birth of a Nation*, which exaggerated paternalism and submission of the slaves as well as the vindictive retribution of Reconstruction. The era of nostalgia for the Old South continued through its most popular novel, Margaret Mithchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936), made into an even more successful film (1939) starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable. Gable famously threatened to boycott the Atlanta premiere because his black co-stars were forbidden entry to the whites-only theater. Appearing shortly thereafter, William Alexander Percy's best-selling *Lanterns On the Levee* (1941) exonerated sharecropping and the virtues of the Old South, while blaming some of the same Yankee families for selling Southerners

the very slaves that they liberated, and deliberately destroying Southern culture that they should have admired in some respects.

Uncle Will served as sort of a godfather to the movement called the Agrarians who published *The Fugitive* (1922-1925), a literary magazine at Vanderbilt. Believing in formal techniques in poetry, its contributors were preoccupied with defending the traditional values of the agrarian South against the effects of urban industrialization. Published by the “new critics” at LSU, *The Southern Review* (1936 to 1942), also continued to extoll Southern culture.

This “nadir of race relations” spanned from 1890 through the 1940s, a period that saw public and critical acclaim for U.B. Phillips’s dismissal of the extent of the illegal slave trade. Southerners only deigned to indicate it when they could blame Northerners for perpetuating it. In a 1918 issue of the *Confederate Veteran*, Arthur H. Jennings collected sentiments to that effect:

Indeed, it has been widely claimed, although disputed, that no “Southern man or Southern ship ever brought a slave to the United States...while the New England States, as well as New York, were openly and boldly engaged in the traffic, employing hundreds of ships in the nefarious business. Slavery was thrust on the South an uninvited—aye, a forbidden guest...”(Jennings, 1918)

A pioneering agricultural historian and a rival of Phillips, Lewis Cecil Gray’s *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, (1933, two vols.) appeared four years after Phillips’s follow-up classic plantation study, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). Phillips’s literary genius eclipsed Gray’s scholarly tome, which, remaining mostly in the dark until the late 1950’s, had estimated that 320,000 were smuggled in, 50,000 more than Collins’ had calculated.

Ever since, the debate over illegal imports has continued to seesaw wildly. In 1949, Noel Deerr, specializing in the history of Caribbean sugar, reported that easily more than a million (!) Africans were smuggled into the U.S., mostly from Cuba and elsewhere throughout the Antilles. In marked contrast, a year later in *The Emergence of Lincoln* (1950), mainstream historian Allan

Nevins posited that only 500 Africans were ever brought in illegally! No one has yet applied to demography the crucial bombshell that depicted the true horrors of slavery on plantations, Kenneth Stamp's truly revolutionary *The Peculiar Institution* (1956). Thoroughly condemning Southern slavery, Stamp's analysis of the brutality of the Peculiar Institution with its minimal maintenance, low natality, high morbidity and mortality undermined the lyric romanticism of the revisionists. But sadly, he failed to explain how the population remained so great:

[I]n spite of the high mortality, the Southern slave population between 1830 and 1860, grew by *natural increase* at a rate of about 23% each decade. The director of the 7th Census gave *the only possible explanation*: "the marriages of slaves...take place upon the average much earlier than those of the white or free colored and are probably more productive than either. [T]hough antebellum white families were also large, *slave women had to bear many more children than white women* to make this *natural increase* possible. For a slave mother gave birth to two or three babies in order that one might grow to be a "prime hand" for her master [our italics]. (Stamp, 1956)

Astonishingly, Stamp failed to account for illegal imports, and oddly, he seemed not to have realized that it would have taken a lot more than "two or three" extra babies to account for the black population growth recorded in 1860. He also mistakenly assigned too high a number for the early illegal trade, noting that various estimates of "slave importations between 1810 and 1820 run as high as 60,000." As we point out in Chapter IV, it's true that not until 1819 did Congress even authorize the use of armed cruisers to patrol the coast of the U.S. and West Africa. A year later, another statute made participation in the African slave trade piracy and threatened the death penalty, but both of these were paper tigers. No one was ever hanged until Lincoln. What diminished the trade during that decade were the facts that dealers and planters had stocked up anticipating the ban as well as that the Napoleonic Wars were raging while the Continental System and Orders in Council effectively disrupted trade. Lest we forget the U.S. embargoes and the War of 1812 in which Jackson successfully (though technically unnecessary)

stopped Britain's attempt to seize New Orleans and the U.S. cotton and sugar trade. Stamppp cared nothing about international trade while Curtin attempted to count the imports without understanding the internal demographics. Stamppp and Curtin were like two battleships passing through the fog at night.

In a futile attempt to reconcile the numbers from the census figures, Stamppp imagined an enormous number smuggled in from 1808 to 1820. In fact, many more slaves were smuggled in after 1820. Precluding that possibility, Stamppp proclaimed that slave mothers out-birthed whites, while failing to realize that high morbidity and mortality rates caused by extreme deprivation and diseases gave them a far lower life expectancy than the whites. Unlike the revisionists, Stamppp should have marveled at how high the reproduction rates must have been, because their life expectancy rates were compromised by cholera, malaria, yellow fever, typhoid, and hookworm that regularly occurred due to excessive heat, poor shelter, bad sanitation, faulty food preservation, and widespread lack of proper clothing and shoes.

Demographer Jack Eblen typified the general failure of historians to make the logical connection. Amazingly, he opined in *The Black Population In Antebellum America: 1820-1860* (1972), that "the amount of illegal importation cannot have exceeded by much the amount of population loss attributable to escape and emigration." That "authority" deduced that "the average black woman in the antebellum U.S. bore seven [surviving] children", even while conceding "very high, perhaps unreasonably extreme, infant mortality levels", and that the crude death rate of the American slave population was "approximately treble the rate general to present day Africa." (Eblen, 1972)

Life tables for antebellum slaves have not incorporated any form of differential for the illegals. Furthermore, the overly-utilized Coale and Demeny Model West table (Coale & Demeny, 1966) as well as more recent tables such as those by Fogel and Engerman (Engerman & Fogel,

1974) are derived from highly unreliable data from the Census of 1850. From 1848 until 1852, the Third Cholera Pandemic killed tens of thousands in the United States, the slave population suffering proportionately more than others in the rural South, especially along the banks of the Mississippi where the disease made inroads (Hays, 2005). Even as census enumerators were for the first time inquiring about slave mortalities throughout the worst of the pandemic's death sprawl in the summer and fall of 1849, the objects of question were expiring en masse in the slave quarters behind the planters' homes. Also, slaveholders who did report death information were often ignorant of the true causes, offering their own lay interpretations (Savitt, 2002). All life tables derived from the 1850 census should be considered with skepticism, yet virtually all of the popular works in the annals of history, social science and demography use them to support their theses in which the United States hardly ever smuggled a slave.

Two years after Stamp's *The Peculiar Institution* and eleven years before Curtin's *The Transatlantic Slave Trade* appeared, the cliometrical approach had its debut. Two Harvard professors, Alfred Conrad and John Meyers' broke the ground with *The Economics of Slavery in the Antebellum South* (1958). Their innovative work with its complex statistical modeling supported *The Peculiar Institution* with evidence derived from sophisticated econometrics. Like Stamp, they rejected the view that paternalistic slaveholders were benevolent caretakers of their property. More importantly perhaps, and also at variance with the dominant paradigm, came not only resounding proclamations that slavery was often cruel and lethal, but that it was also extremely profitable for many planters, despite the best attempts of historians since the 1890s to paint a different picture. Stamp baldly stated, but Conrad and Meyers scientifically supported the claim that our Civil War was fought mainly over slavery rather than tariffs and subsidies, free soil, popular sovereignty, industrial hegemony or the defense of state's rights. Both books recognized high mortality rates and low natality rates for slaves. However, neither

made the connection that the huge black population of 1860 could best be explained by the illegal trade.

Cliometricians emerged into the mainstream when number crunchers Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman published their controversial *Time on the Cross* (1974). Like Curtin, they completely disregarded the notion of an illegal trade even while they appeared genuinely flummoxed by the lack of evidence for domestic slave trading:

How were slaves moved from east to west? Were most blacks in the interregional movement sold by owners in the east to slave traders who transported them to western markets where they were resold? Or did most slaves take the interregional journey together with their owners as part of a movement in which whole plantations migrated to the west? ...Only 127,000 slaves were sold from the east to the west over the fifty years from 1810 to 1860, or an average of little over 2,500 slaves per year...If the planters of the Old South engaged in deliberate breeding for export, it was a minor crop (Engerman & Fogel, 1974)

Though they admitted a definite lack of evidence about the legal trade, they still felt confident enough to assert that “between 1790 and 1860 a total of 835,000 slaves were moved from the exporting to the importing states.” They estimated that only 16% of all slaves in the Cotton South were sold in the interstate and intra-regional trade, yet their implication that the other 84% merely migrated with their owners is ridiculous. The increment is in truth primarily attributable to illegal imports from Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Within the depths of their speculation about the interregional trade, Fogel and Engerman, followed by Eltis, Deyle, Tadman, and others have argued that such a massive migration did not necessarily break up slave families or negatively affect the black birth rate! Despite contentions to the contrary, it was rarely in planters’ best interest to expend capital on raising slaves. Slave births naturally occurred on plantations but their owners did not always encourage the practice. If we are to believe the spurious claims by Eltis that sugar was “the main driver” of the slave trade to the U.S., then how does it follow that slaveholders would waste time and money on rearing slaves when they were dying off so quickly in the cane fields? Planters in the Old South as

well as those in the Deep South, intent on cotton or sugar profits were running plantations, not maternity wards. Witnessing this fact, Ethan Allen Andrews, in *Slavery and the Domestic Slave Trade* (1835), stated, “the southwestern trader wants only those slaves who are immediately serviceable upon the cotton and sugar plantations. Young children, therefore, are for his purposes of no value [and] an encumbrance.”

Factoring all the cotton growing states together, the mean average for maintaining prime adult male slaves annually from 1840 to 1860 was about 20\$ and considerably less for women and children (Conrad & Meyer, 1958). About 90,000 planters held between 5 and 10 slaves in 1860. If females reproduced at the tremendous rates postulated by the American Exceptionalists and they survived through infancy, the planters with fewer slaves would have expended much of their precious capital on supporting the infants and neonates. Given that prime slaves were not cheap to begin with, nearly always bought on credit as long as cash procured at least one prime hand, it seems the average slaveholder would have been hard-pressed to provide for such prolific slave families. For each bale of cotton the charges for freight, drayage, weighing, storage, insurance, and a factor’s commission on top amounted to about \$ 3.00. Therefore, each bale of cotton cost about 15% of the annual maintenance cost for the slave who produced it. If a slave produced seven bales of cotton per year, which was about the mean average for yield per slave, then the costs for bringing the bales to port were roughly equal to the total cost of annual maintenance for a single prime slave. A 500 pound bale then, sold at 13¢ per pound (the mean New Orleans price from 1802-1862) would net the planter \$414, minus the maintenance cost and the cost of getting the bale to port. Seemingly, a planter could recoup his investment after a single good crop year, even if he had paid over \$1,000 for the slave and even if that slave had been purchased on credit with interest. The large planters with fifty or more slaves weren’t as concerned with cost of living expenses for them, but those that held less than ten slaves were on

much stricter budgets than those who could afford more. In the interest of profit, slave children were burdensome to most planters, it took slave mothers out of the cotton fields and added maintenance costs. Therefore, most planters did not encourage reproduction.

The sugar and coffee plantations of Brazil and elsewhere in the Caribbean illustrate this point, though the conditions were more lethal in those fields than in Dixie. Henry Marie Brackenridge, later one of the first U.S. judges to serve the Florida Territories, reported from a diplomatic mission to Brazil in 1817 and found “once again that the natural increase of blacks was discouraged from the calculation that it was cheaper to import full-grown slaves than to bring up young ones.” (Brackenridge, 1820)

In his important but erratic work, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440–1870* (1997), Hugh Thomas noted:

[B]reeding slaves was unprofitable and planters generally did not engage in it— even cotton planters in the antebellum South. The evidence from Brazil is telling. It was easier to work slaves to death and import replacements. Planters did not often concern themselves with administering slave nurseries. In the 1830’s the chairman of the Brazilian Association of Liverpool, said that he was not ‘*aware of any distinct establishment [in Brazil] for the breeding and sale of home-grown slaves.*’

The prevailing opinion concerning the number of slaves shipped coast-wise and those marched down the Natchez Trace after having been bred in Maryland and Virginia for profit needs to be overturned. With the help of long unexamined archival records that are daily becoming more accessible and profuse in digital form, historians are even now beginning to do so.

Another cliometrician, Herbert Gutman from the University of Rochester, was hot on the heels of the authors of *Time on the Cross* (1974). In *Slavery and the Numbers Game* (1975), he demolished nearly every one of Fogel and Engerman’s points, excoriating them for their “lousy”, “careless” and “lame” claims and calculations. Gutman also brilliantly illuminated how the old defective theories of the Southern apologetics had crept into their work, disguised as neutral

economic history. Gutman all but destroyed *Time on the Cross*, but for our purposes one of his most important findings is that Fogel and Engerman claimed that only 2% of slave marriages were broken up by the interregional trade. Gutman exposed their faulty methodology and concluded that the number could easily be closer to 70% (Gutman, 1975). This indicates that the argument for the black population explosion by natural increase is difficult to sustain. F & E's contention that the slaves developed a Protestant work ethic is hard to swallow as well, considering that such a frame of mind was developed on the premise of wages and civic activity, both of which were unattainable for plantation slaves.

In *Slavery and the Numbers Game*, Gutman missed an opportunity by mistakenly presuming that the sampling method used by Fogel and Engerman was indeed representative of the number of slave sale transactions in New Orleans from 1804 to 1862. He thought their sample was sound, either 5% or 2.5% of all extant records in that period, depending on the year. Since *Time on the Cross* appeared, it has been assumed that 135,000 slaves comprised the total sold in New Orleans in that time frame. This is a chronic mistake that has once again obscured the true scale of the trade. Investigating the single year of 1830 in the New Orleans Notarial Archives, Tulane professor Jonathan Pritchett discovered in 2011 that over 50% of slave sales are likely unaccounted for in Fogel and Engerman's sample for the entire period. Even with the knowledge that many notarial records were lost in office fires or simply misplaced, there are a significant number of transactions, perhaps 200,000 or more that may have not yet been examined. These records need to be digitized to set the record straight (Pritchett & Smith, 2011).

We are not claiming that the New Orleans records are direct evidence for the illegal trade. Fogel and Engerman counted only 0.3% of slaves as being imported illegally from Africa. Why any seller or buyer would document his contraband slaves as such is anyone's guess. Nearly 21% of the sellers in the slim sample are listed as being from "out of state" rather than from anywhere

inside Louisiana. Where the slaves came from was similarly vague; about 66%, or over 3,000 slaves had nebulous origins, although Fogel and Engerman assumed that they were local. If indeed there were only 135,000 slaves sold in New Orleans from 1804 to 1862, why do cliometricians continue to analyze only portions of these records? Is that number so astronomically high that the total number can't be dealt with?

Publishing shortly after the cliometricians peaked in influence, Howard Zinn brilliantly summarized their efforts:

Economists and cliometricians (statistical historians) have tried to assess slavery by estimating how much money was spent on slaves for food and medical care. But can this describe the reality of slavery as it was to a human being who lived inside it? A record of deaths kept in a plantation journal...list the ages and cause of death of all those who died on the plantation between 1850 and 1855. Of the thirty-two who died in that period, only four reached the age of sixty, four reached the age of fifty, seven died in their forties, seven died in their twenties or thirties, and nine died before they were five years old...*Time on the Cross* looks at whippings in 1840-1842 on the Barrow plantation in Louisiana with two hundred slaves: "The records show that over the course of two years a total of 160 whippings were administered, an average of 0.7 whippings per hand per year. About half the hands were not whipped at all during the period." One could also say: "Half of all slaves were whipped." That has a different ring. That figure (0.7 per hand per year) shows whipping was infrequent for any individual. But looked at another way, once every four or five days, *some* slave was whipped. Barrow as a plantation owner, according to his biographer, was no worse than the average. He spent money on clothing for his slaves, gave them holiday celebrations, built a dance hall for them. He also built a jail and "was constantly devising ingenious punishments, for he realized that uncertainty was an important aid in keeping his gangs well in hand. The whippings, the punishments, were work disciplines...Genovese, in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, sees a record of "simultaneous accommodation and resistance to slavery." The resistance included stealing property, sabotage and slowness, killing overseers and masters, burning down plantation buildings, running away. Even the accommodation "breathed a critical spirit and disguised subversive actions." Most of this resistance, Genovese stresses, fell short of organized insurrection, but its significance for masters and slaves was enormous. (Zinn, 1980)

Lamentably, even African-American scholars have succumbed to the ubiquitous tradition of virtually denying the illegal trade. Despite the popularity of African-American studies programs across the nation, most of those enrolled fail to see the forest for the trees when focusing on the antebellum slave trade. The notion that their slave forebears could so healthily

reproduce under slavery may even seem valorizing to them. Very few black historians have gone against the grain in seeking answers to the demographic mystery posed by the censuses. Few even doubt the supposed effectiveness of prohibiting importations after 1808. The assertion that almost every fertile slave woman birthed twelve to sixteen children on average as some have speculated is absurd (Morgan, 2007). Miscarriages, and abortions were common, and survival rates for neonates and other infants was less than 50%.

In 1959, Joe G. Taylor, black historian and professor at Nicholls State College in Louisiana, wrote:

[Dubois's estimate of 250,000 smuggled in] is almost certainly too high...It is difficult to say whether illegal smugglers became more circumspect, but it is most unlikely that smuggling persisted on a scale comparable to that in the period from 1804 to 1820. Few, if any of these negroes introduced in Louisiana illegally before 1820 were taken from Africa for the purpose of sale into the United States...At the same time, the increasing volume of the domestic slave trade largely satisfied the demand for slaves in Louisiana. (Taylor, 1960)

Consideration must be given to the trend that historians of all races have followed in elucidating the outcomes of the 1860 census. Taken for granted by many is the assertion that nearly a million slaves migrated southward with their owners after 1820. That many of them did so is indisputable but the actual number of those who emigrated is almost as undocumented as for those who were smuggled in illegally. In *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (2005), Steven Deyle of Houston University proclaimed with aplomb, "I believe it is safe to conclude that between 1820 and 1860 at least 875,000 American slaves were forcibly removed from the Upper South to the Lower South and that between 60 and 70 percent of these individuals were transported via the interregional slave trade."

Deyle based his calculations on those of British economic historian Michael Tadman (University of Liverpool), who considered the illegal slave trade "of minor importance". The latter analyzed coastal slave manifests for New Orleans in the 1840's, extant planter migration

data from the 1820's and 1850's, and available information on South Carolina slave traders in the 1850's. Do these disparate sources justify estimates for more than fifty years of slave trading? Tadman's *Speculators and Slaves : Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (1996) is an important book. Despite its appeal to the usual suspects in academia for polishing old gems, it is important for what it fails to discuss, the illegal slave trade. It seems that every major work about the domestic slave trade since the 1950's wields an ever more complicated array of statistics and mathematical theorems. The search for the Golden Ratio in antebellum slave demographics will yield increasingly more abstruse results because the X-Factor of illegal slavery is never used. Like every other mainstream historian, Tadman completely sidesteps the issue. Instead, he insists that 200,000 slaves per decade traveled from the Upper South to the Lower South from 1820 until the Civil War. This article of faith seems to be unquestionable today among the historical community, but why? Indisputably, many slaves did move overland from the Upper South to the Lower South, but Tadman and seemingly everyone else shape-to-fit their estimates of those migrated to concur with the total of slaves in the 1860 U.S. census.

Slave mothers simply could not and did not bear a score of children that survived to adulthood. Slave trading and planter migrations are legitimate variables for explaining the numbers, yet the illegal slave trade has rarely been seriously utilized as a major factor to explain the preposterous assertions that have Tadman and others doggedly chasing the antebellum slave population as if its matrons were superhuman baby-factories. For whatever reason, endemic obstinacy afflicts the historian's commonsense in that the four million slaves of 1860 remain a constant even as the coefficients likewise remain the same. Such repetition of the same calculations suggests a certain degree of insanity—crazy because academia expects us to believe their incomprehensible cliometrics and crazier still because the reading public accepts these histories without question. Tadman's scholarship is commendable if not admirable, but from our

vantage point we observe that his findings further support the existence of the illegal slave trade rather than a vigorous interregional trade made possible by a veritable army of peregrinating slave traders.

Certain key assertions central to his thesis, namely that an above average number of male prime age slaves were sold from the Chesapeake to New Orleans to labor in Louisiana's sugar plantations is highly suspect. Sugar slavery was horrid and exacted a higher death toll than other plantation work, but *the amount of sugar produced* in the antebellum U.S. was minor compared to that of cotton and wasn't as significant as the imports of Cuban sugar. This simple fact repudiates Tadman's idea that a demand for male slaves to work sugar resulted in a surge of speculation to that effect. He also supposes that only slaves in sugar had a low rate of natural increase. Of course there were fewer children born in the cane fields because the slaves were mostly males. This explains a disproportionate number of males in the cultivation of a relatively minor commodity, but does not preclude the fact that infant mortality rates across the board generally negated natural increase. As we explained previously, this fact stymied Stamp who likewise overlooked the illegal slave trade as a factor.

Furthermore, many of the slaves in our cane fields were brought from Africa via Cuba. Slaves seasoned for a time in Cuba were likely far more productive than those brought in from the Chesapeake because the Bozales were acclimated to both the climate and the specific labor. From 1833 to 1861 the U.S. produced about 109, 552 tons of sugar annually on average. Roughly about a third of the sugar was exported and the rest consumed domestically. In the same range, Cuba's sugar harvest yielded 245, 172 tons annually on average. (Deerr, 1949) See Chapter I: Commodities for more about U.S. sugar.

Tadman's work echoes Stamp's in that his excoriation of the slave traders parallels the latter's pointed scorn for the slaveholders. Genovese's theme of paternalism is also utterly

rejected by Tadman. He, like Staamp, has not a single positive thing to say about any planter or trader. This post-revisionism, conscious or not, threatens any vestige of humanity, for good or ill, on the part of Southerners in the antebellum period. American slavery should not be discussed with such moral correctness at the forefront of the narrative. The paradox in the historiography is that the slave trade is castigated in ethical terms more often than it is explained or described in a neutral manner. Thus, political correctness on top of a rigid reliance on supposedly empirical data has deeply skewed our understanding. The illegal slave trade has always been America's dirtiest secret and failure to study its effect is to circumvent our understanding of ourselves as Americans in a multi-cultural society today.

We agree that the Chesapeake was a major outlet for slave trading and migration further South, but that it was not the only outlet as so many seem to maintain. In fact, by 1860 Virginia supported 93,000 farms on about 31,000 acres at 336 acres each on average. Shipping by canal brought Virginia's wheat, corn and tobacco to port: 795,000 bushels of wheat, 78,711 barrels of flour and 15,000 pounds of tobacco in 1860. Virginia and Maryland were not idle, nor were their slaves. By 1837, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad carried commodities from western Maryland, upper Virginia and the Virginia Valley. Richmond and Baltimore became milling centers and their flour dominated the trade to South America, particularly Brazil as well as the West Indies (Craven, 1926). Iron, coal and salt mines boomed in the northwest of the Old Dominion and as industry grew so did the practice of slave hiring. The stereotypical view of antebellum Virginia as fallow land with a superabundance of jobless slaves needs detailed debunking (Crofts, 1999). We suggest that the slave migrations from Kentucky to the Cotton Kingdom are much more credible than the huge number of those supposed to have come from the Chesapeake.

It stands to reason that not as many slaves were sold from the exporting states as has been previously declared. Exaggerated estimates of those who were sold south from the

Chesapeake have been extrapolated from extant records of transactions to conform to the demographic picture of the slaves in 1860. The missing pieces of the puzzle are those who were brought in to the U.S. from Cuba and even directly from Africa or other Caribbean islands. Yet, illegals never comprise any part of Tadman's equation. The few that he concedes that were smuggled in "during the 1810's" are deliberately not added to his tables for *Speculators and Slaves* to underscore this minimization. Yet, smuggling from 1808 to 1820 is more thoroughly documented in this period than in any other as the logistics of later enterprises became more complicated and covert. Therefore, he completely ignores even the smuggling that is more or less agreed upon.

Another glaring error that he and others still make is their assumption that the majority of slaves sold south traveled overland, either by migrating with their owners or shackled in coffles with slave traders. Many of course did travel overland, but what of the coastal trade for which few records remain? Water travel was faster and cheaper yet planters and traders opted for the exhausting two-month, thousand-mile walk with a train of slaves to feed? We suspect that this standard image has been overly romanticized. Customs officials in Atlantic ports did not diligently keep manifests for the coastal trade, as we discuss in Chapter IV. The magnitude of the coastal trade and by proxy its camouflage for the illegal trade has not yet properly been investigated. Slave trading companies like Franklin and Armfield operated their own once-a-month packet line for shipping slaves from Alexandria to New Orleans, but there were surely many more tramps and regular traders that plied slave cargoes than the few that are recorded. Tadman mostly disregards the coastal trade and mentions it only to punctuate the finer point of his thesis, that slave trading rather than planter migration was responsible for at least 60% of slave movements to the Deep South. He estimates that slave trading transactions made up 75% of the coastal trade as far as can be read in the surviving manifests. Regarding overland

migration, it should be remembered that at least a half-million whites migrated out of Virginia and Maryland from 1820 through 1840 and many logically took their slaves with them. Simple math does not appear to concur with Tadman's ideas of ubiquitous slave traders in the Upper South. They existed to be sure and more so as the decades rolled on, but his thesis is rooted in the belief that these unscrupulous traders were the norm.

Breaking up about half of all families of the slaves they sold, the traders are portrayed as heartless as their business demanded. Just as Staamp indicted the planters for their treatment of the slaves, Tadman takes that denunciation even further by suggesting that 2/3rds of the slave migrations from the Upper to Lower South came at the greedy hands of slave traders, many of whom operated within the upper echelons of wealthy society.

The correlation between wealthy slave traders and the illegal slave trade is key. Tadman finds these traders reprehensible, perhaps more so since they should have been upstanding moral models for their communities. Yet, he touches upon a complex dynamic in the supply and demand cycle of slavery. It was precisely these slave traders in the top 3 or 4% of the wealthiest in their respective cities who protested the re-opening of the African slave trade in the late 1850's. While many of these traders likely had a hand in the smuggling from Cuba to augment their domestic business, they knew that opening the floodgates of the Bozales trade would put them out of business while the hoi polloi would be able to buy freshly imported slaves at clearance prices. The socio-economic situation was delicate and smuggling remained highly lucrative not only for the traders who dipped into it but for the syndicates in New York and Cuba who arranged the voyages.

Tadman's samples are hardly adequate for the entirety of the antebellum slave trade. Demand for slaves was a given, but prices for them increased throughout the period. He contends that interregional movements of slaves were at their greatest volumes in the 1830's

and 1850's, precisely when smuggling was also peaking, as corroborated by British and American commanders of the anti-slavery squadrons. Tadman fails to account for contemporaneous history such as Indian Removal or the progress of the transportation industry in his statistical barrage against the slave traders. The 1830's and 1850's were decades of unparalleled expansion in the Cotton Kingdom, naturally his figures would reflect greater movements of slaves in those years, skewed as his numbers are to support his thesis. However, the real Achilles Heel of his method is the employment of the "survival rate" technique to slave ages in the censuses of 1850 and 1860 in that those of the same age and sex experienced the same rate of mortality. This is quite an assumption.

Indeed, his research clearly illustrates that the situation for many speculators was highly conducive for smuggling. Traders dealing in illegals used the same devices as other traders in the domestic trade. Where for economic reasons slave trading was officially banned in Georgia (1817-1855), Tennessee (1827- 1853), Mississippi (1837-1846), Kentucky (1833-1849), Alabama (1827-1829), and Louisiana (1826-1828, 1831-1834), Tadman shows how the traders of South Carolina flaunted their disregard for the non-importation laws in those states. Titles and bills of sale were easily doctored. Non-slaveholders (who were paid off) vouchsafed certificates for good character required by law for any given slave, and entire lots of slaves could often be put on a single certificate. The majority of transactions were conducted privately with individual clients. If domestic smuggling was as open as Tadman asserts than why is it so inconceivable that slaves from Cuba were also smuggled in?

Recently, popularizers have come even to disregard the illegal slave trade altogether. Pontificating, as he often does, the Pulitzer Prize winner James McPherson, who ascended from North Dakota to Princeton, even reduced the number to zero! Echoing a growing trend to pretend that nothing so disreputable to the American character ever existed as the illegal slave

trade, that “Lincolnista”, who still stoutly denies that Honest Abe ever lusted after another male, thought that his unctuous accolade of a good friend would ingratiate him farther with the establishment. (For Abraham Lincoln’s homosexuality see C.A. Tripp’s *Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, Free Press, 2005)

In *The New York Review of Books* (December, 2008), McPherson praised unstintingly the two volumes published by his late colleague George Fredrickson, widely perceived as the expert on the history of racism in America:

It was in the slaveowner’s interest to encourage good health and a high birth rate among slaves...To some degree all of these explanations for the radical difference in New World Slave demographics seem valid. (McPherson, 2008)

Macpherson’s ignorance of slave demography may have been feigned. Surely he had encountered mention of the illegal slave trade. Are we now to understand that not a single slave was smuggled into Dixie during fifty-three years? As a Lincoln expert, he should have been well aware of his subject’s firm stance throughout 1861 and early 1862, in refusing to commute the death penalty sentence of Nathaniel Gordon, the *only* American ever convicted of slave trading under the Piracy Act of 1820. Lincoln wrote:

I think I would personally prefer to let this man live in confinement and let him meditate on his deeds, yet in the name of justice and the majesty of law, there ought to be one case, at least one specific instance, of a professional slavetrader, a Northern white man, given the exact penalty of death because of the incalculable number of deaths he and his kind inflicted upon black men amid the horror of the sea-voyage from Africa. (Soodalter, 2006)

The execution of Gordon, Lincoln’s scapegoat, symbolized the new president’s resoluteness about smuggling. The unfortunate captain became the sole exception because the slavocracy that profited from the illegal trade had long made a mockery of the legal machinery constructed to punish violaters. Backed by politically powerful Southern and Northern elites, these duplicitous merchants, bankers, brokers, marshals, attorneys, politicians and seamen as

well as officials at every level of government had escaped the rigor of the law for over half a century. They secured immunity for those prosecuted and many smugglers were brought before sympathetic judges and juries in the forty-two years before Captain Gordon was hanged. In almost every case, participants in the trade were slapped on the wrist and freed for a crime technically punishable by death. In writing the unequivocally laudatory review quoted above, Macpherson was obviously hasty but he should be even more ashamed of his take on Lincoln, about whom he is supposed to know a great deal. The slavocracy and profiteering from the illegal slave trade is discussed in detail in Chapter V.

Refusing to accept the present consensus on illegal imports, out of the blue came Ernest Obadele Starks' *Freebooters and Smugglers: The Foreign Slave Trade After 1808* (University of Arkansas Press, 2007), a labored and exaggerated but highly commendable attempt to revive the research of W.E.B. Dubois. This African-American professor at Texas A&M shocked the establishment by estimating 786,500 slaves were brought in illegally:

According to the [slave manifests], around ten slaves ships per week entered the Port of New Orleans between 1808 and 1863. Each vessel carried on average 15 slaves. In at least half of these cases discrepancies arose regarding either the legality of the ship, the integrity of the crews as many were prosecuted for participating in the post-1808 foreign slave trade, or the legal status of the Africans on board. Thus, around 75 slaves a week entered New Orleans under these questionable legal circumstances. Over a fifty-two week period the number increases to approximately 3,900. When slave imports from other major slave-trading ports (Mobile, Pensacola, Savannah, Charleston, Norfolk, Baltimore, New York and Boston) where slave manifests recorded about one third of the number of slaves entering New Orleans during the same time period (1808-1863) are included, it is reasonable to argue that of the approximate 4.5 million blacks (slave and free) in the United States by 1860 as many as 786,500 were introduced into the country from foreign ports following passage of the Abolition Act in 1808 until slavery ended in 1863. (Obadele-Starks, 2007)

Ironically, Stark's estimate is in the same ballpark as the figures assumed for the domestic slave trade. His brave but indefensible statement about illegal imports proved to be extremely

irksome to the Exceptionalists (especially Eltis) who roundly denounced the book, though Starks had prefaced it by explaining that quantifying his estimate with hard evidence was not his intention. The establishment has mostly ignored or dismissed Starks's book, including negative reviews in Louisiana State University's *Civil War Book Review* (Fall, 2008) and the *Journal Of Southern History* (January, 2011).

Inspired like Starks by Dubois, the greatest student of the subject, we are attempting to make a more refined and persuasive estimate. The specialists of course, can't completely deny that the shameful trade existed. David Eltis, considered by many to be the foremost expert today, dedicated his *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (2010) to Philip Curtin who died in 2009. Reducing Curtin's already unbelievably low estimates, Eltis, who also heads the influential [Transatlantic Slave Trade Database \(TSTD\)](#) tried to sum up the present dilemma:

Of the approximately 390,000 arrivals, the estimates [web]page of slavevoyages.org has only 6,100 disembarking directly from Africa after 1808. This is dramatically lower than the 54,000 estimated by Curtin, and the "as many as 786,500" projected recently by Ernest Obadele Starks. While the first two of these three estimates purport to measure slave arrivals in the United States directly from Africa, the third seems to be for slave arrivals from all sources. Indeed, at times the term "foreign slave trade" in the subtitle of the Starks book appears to include slaves carried under the third definition of the United States traffic--that carried on under the U.S. flag to Cuba and Brazil after 1808. Starks devotes only a half page to explaining how this estimate is derived, provides no references for the sources he mentions in his explanation, and makes no attempt to break down the 786,500 arrivals into the three categories of U.S. slave trading activity discussed here. (Eltis. *The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644-1867: A Reassessment*, 2008)

Obviously upset, Eltis expressed disbelief that Starks could dare such an estimate.

However, his complaint about what he calls the "third definition" is hypercritical. His attack aims to obfuscate more than one fact about slave ships flying American colors. Omitting the obvious, he seems to think that all of his readers naturally assume that only foreigners would dare use our flag to ship slaves, and that its convenience for our own traffickers was never availed. Many of those ships were indeed built and manned by Americans, the owners of which prepared against

the anti-slaver patrols with forged double registrations of the vessel and bogus foreign captains taking the helm during the voyage. Also, many slavers used Cuba as a waystation to parcel the slaves across the Gulf into Dixie. Eltis went on to “prove” that hardly any slaves were smuggled in:

There are two reasons for believing that the true total of arrivals direct from Africa was closer to 6,100 than to either the Curtin or the Starks estimates. First, is that between 1808 and 1863 the British maintained a significant naval force off the African coast and to a lesser extent the Caribbean charged with suppressing the slave trade. (Eltis, 2008)

True enough, the British Royal Navy was a presence but not necessarily a wide-ranging threat to slavers initially. For the first ten years (1808 to 1818) of the West Africa Squadron’s patrol of the more than 3,000 miles of coastline, the fleet never exceeded five ships. Even the crow’s nest availed only about 15 miles of visibility at sea under the best conditions. Not until 1844 were there more than 20 deployed there. Before the U.S. Navy blockaded the Confederacy, the largest of the British fleets stationed off Africa consisted of 27 in 1848 and 1849. Yet even with that many ships, slave ships were rarely detected once safely away from the African coast. Cruising from Labrador to Trinidad, other British fleets off the Americas South and in the Caribbean totaled about 25 ships by 1848 (Beeler, 2006). For a more in-depth discussion of enforcement see Chapter IV.

Retaliating against the affront to his historical acumen and reputation as an authority, Eltis went on to unprecedented depths of mendacity:

[All British] court and naval personnel collected intelligence on the trade. Almost all the resulting correspondence survives today in thousands of bound volumes in the Admiralty 1 and FO 84 series of the British National Archives. *None of the officials in London, the Caribbean, or Africa whose opinions are recorded in this documentation believed that any of the captives on which they reported were destined for the United States. The British government was concerned about slave arrivals in Texas before it entered the Union but never about slaves entering the United States [Italics ours].* (Eltis, 2008)

Picturing Professor Eltis poring over millions of pages of Foreign Office documents could be amusing. He must have a lot of time on his hands or a literal army of researchers in his employ. Very few of these documents are yet digitized in the archives but doubtless they will be so. Asserting that no official correspondence from British consuls and ministers ever once indicated that any slaves they intercepted were headed to the mainland of the United States is certainly preposterous. Sian Rees' book about the British Navy's African Squadron, *The Ships That Stopped the Slave Trade* (2009), clearly dispels such nonsense. Texas before 1845 was not the Brits' only concern. Remarks by British officials were recorded concerning slaver activities pertaining to every Gulf coast and South-Eastern Atlantic state. Hubristically, Eltis seems to suggest that his personal research into *some*, (surely not all!) of these documents warrant no further inquiry. In the near future perhaps, digitization of these records and public access to them will surely break the levee of exceptionalism that holds pretended omniscience over them.

Eltis continued in this maddening vein, once again grossly generalizing:

It is *inconceivable* that planters in the booming Cuban and Puerto Rican sugar economies would have sold off their slaves, native- or African-born, to the United States after 1808, and a large movement of Brazilian born slaves is also unlikely. We will likely never know the precise size of the traffic into the United States from the rest of the Americas after 1808, but Fogel and Engerman's estimate of 1,000 a year from 1810 to 1860 based on census data is much more likely to reflect reality than is the Starks figure that is eight times larger. Fogel and Engerman did not attempt to separate out arrivals that were African from those that were Americas-born, but if the slave-voyages estimate of 6,100 is accepted then we can hypothesize that no more than 45,900 Americas-born slaves were smuggled into the U.S. [Italics ours]

What is inconceivable, to our minds, is that Eltis failed to think of the American presence in Cuba. American planters, bankers, and merchants lived and luxuriated in Havana during the antebellum period. It is inescapably conceivable that Spanish and American slave dealers alike colluded in the smuggling enterprise. U.S. consuls, Spanish customs officers and corrupt Spanish

Captain Generals profited from the traffic. Indeed, it is very unlikely that slaves came from Brazil, but Cuba was undoubtedly a huge depot for re-export to the U.S. Either incredibly ignorant or unbelievably disingenuous, Eltis refuses to understand that most of the smuggled ones that he thinks were born in the Americas were in fact born in Africa, seasoned and broken in in Cuba or lesser way-stations, and then smuggled in.

His obstinacy also reveals ignorance about Caribbean sugar. Puerto Rico's "booming" sugar economy never competed with Cuba's. In fact, Cuba's output was consistently about 70% more robust through the entire 19th century. This is more subterfuge on the part of Eltis, to give readers the impression that slaves imported from *anywhere* rather than within U.S. borders is thoroughly impossible. Some were likely smuggled in from Puerto Rico, but certainly not in the great numbers that left Cuba. In Chapter III we thoroughly analyze the Cuban connection. From the quotes by Eltis above, it should be noted that he, like Curtin before him, refused to notice the elephant in the room: British demand for cotton from Dixie.

Playing one last trump card to rest his case, Eltis peremptorily stated that the U.S. Census of 1870 shows that "less than one tenth of 1% of the black population of the United States was African born." He must have been unaware that the 1870 Census is the most controversial ever conducted. That 9th Census records 1,984 blacks of African origin. Eltis failed to concede that the status of Africans was completely different in the 9th Census, after they had become free and ostensibly protected by the Constitution, than in the 8th, when they had virtually no legal rights and counted as 3/5ths of a person. African-born former slaves had a compelling reason to describe themselves as native-born in 1870 and so did the census takers who were often Southern blacks [verify]. The 14th Amendment guaranteed citizenship rights to "all persons born or naturalized within the United States" but as Tenzer noted, "not to those who had been smuggled in by stealth. Inasmuch as ex-slaves who were born in Africa and smuggled into the

United States could not be counted in a state's population of citizens on which congressional representation for the state was based, the Southern states had motivation to show as few African-born blacks as possible in the 1870 census." (*The Forgotten Cause of the Civil War*, 1997)

Of course all the early censuses are fraught with inaccuracies and undercounting. Frederick Law Olmsted disparaged the Southern census marshals in 1850 as "generally excessively lazy and neglectful of their duty, among that class which was most ignorant or indifferent on the subject. I have seen an advertisement of a deputy census marshal, in Alabama... announcing that he would be at a certain tavern in his district, on a certain day, for the purposes of receiving from the people of the vicinity – who were requested to call upon him – the information it was his duty to obtain from them." (McClelland, Zeckhauser. *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic*, 1982)

A suspicious precursor to the questionable information reported in the 8th and 9th censuses was an 1859 report prepared by Benjamin Slocumb for the Buchanan Administration, which prompted the president to state that "not a single slave has been imported into the United States in violation of the laws prohibiting the African slave trade."

The notoriety of the slave ship *Wanderer*, seized by Savannah federal marshals in late 1858, prompted the Buchanan Administration's appointment of Slocumb, whose investigation reported the *Wanderer* incident as an anomaly in an otherwise solidly enforced prohibition of the slave trade:

Slocumb was sent [to the South] by Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior—the same Jacob Thompson who was a slaveholder and a personal friend of Jefferson Davis, and who later resigned from the administration to organize Confederate army troops in Mississippi and become a secret agent for the Confederacy." (Tenzer, *The Forgotten Cause of the Civil War*, 1997)

Detractors of the illegal trade to the U.S. often cite the *Wanderer* as prima facie evidence that the traffic was practically non-existent since the fervor caused by the *Wanderer* was such a unique event. However, the *Wanderer* was one of the few slave ships that came directly from Africa to the U.S., and conspicuously, it was owned by especially brazen if not truly arrogant anti-abolitionists, particularly Charles Lamar from Georgia who actively lobbied the U.S. Congress to re-open the slave trade. It can be assumed that experienced slave traffickers would not have made the mistake of landing an entire schooner with a cargo of almost 500 slaves directly onto the American mainland in 1858. Also, it should not surprise anyone that Slocumb, whose efficacy as a secret agent should have been highly suspect, claimed there was virtually no evidence of slave trading activity. Thus, the traffic continued unabated up until The War and even during it. Black casualties in Union Army amounted to at least 36,000 while an untold number of blacks fighting for the Confederacy also lost their lives. In 1870, with expectations of "forty acres and a mule", emancipated blacks in the Deep South wished to be counted as citizens. Perhaps many also dreaded re-exportation back to Africa as would have by law occurred if they weren't born or naturalized in America. Their disinclination to return to Africa is reflected in the numbers repatriated there; only 10,267 blacks went back to Africa from 1820 to 1860. More emigrated to Canada, about 40,000, than those who were recolonized. They thought they had better prospects in the U.S. than they could look forward to in Brazil or Cuba when they were emancipated there. British President of the Board of Trade commented on recently manumitted slaves, "Then began the new life for the slaves, and it is fair to say that there is not much evidence that slaves wanted thereafter, in Brazil or in Cuba, to return to Africa *and again to be made slaves and sold to someone else from fear of another middle passage.*" (Thomas. *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870*, 1997)

It stands to reason that many Africans were disingenuous about their origins to ensure their status as landholders, citizens, and potential landowners of the United States. We have yet to determine whether Southern blacks were informed by the census takers, or whether they learned about it through the grapevine that the 14th Amendment, literally interpreted would require that they be sent back to Africa. Contesting for congressional representation, Radical Republicans, like antebellum Southern slaveowners with their slaves, probably encouraged former slaves to say they weren't smuggled in. In any case, the 1870 census shows the majority of the emancipated took on either the surnames of their former plantation masters or adopted one indicating what labor they performed, both conventions eradicating a vestige of African heritage.

The 1870 Census occurred during Reconstruction in almost unbelievable chaos and confusion:

Congressman James A. Garfield helped to nominate Francis Amasa Walker as superintendent for the U.S. Census of 1870. Walker was confirmed, but he had to work within the confines of the census act of 1850, which had been modified only slightly to reflect the abolition of slavery and to eliminate some of the ambiguities in the 1850 and 1860 enumerations. In spite of Walker's preparations, the Census of 1870 suffered from an undercount of unprecedented proportions in the South. Given the limits imposed by the act of 1850, very little could be done from Washington to prevent the fiasco. The politics of Reconstruction dictated that marshals in the South, often non-residents of their districts, had to appoint loyal Republicans. The liberal use of census patronage to attract freedmen to the Party led to the appointment of illiterates as enumerators. Even when the enumerators were capable people, they had to contend with white hostility and black fear. Sometimes the work was illegally subcontracted, and sometimes, as Henry Gannett reported, census data were gathered at "court sessions, musters, public meetings, etc." Walker initially estimated the undercount of Southern blacks to be about 350 to 400 thousand but he later conceded that it probably ran as high as 510,000." (Davis, Robert C. *Confidentiality and the Census: 1790-1929*, 1973.)

Exasperated at the ineptitude he observed, Walker commented in 1870:

I cannot but believe, upon full consideration of all the information which it has been possible to gather on the subject, that the two practices of "farming out" subdivisions, and of "taking the census" at elections and on court days, instead of through the visitation by the assistant marshal of each dwelling-house in his subdivision, in turn, were general throughout the Southern States in 1850 and 1860, and infrequent elsewhere. Both are in

the last degree destructive of all accuracy of enumeration. (McLelland, Zeckhauser. *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic*, 1982)

A cursory read of just 2% of the over 2,000 interviews of ex-slaves conducted by F.D.R.'s Work Projects Administration from 1936 to 1938 reveals evidence of illicit introduction of their parents and grandparents after 1808. Slave mothers are estimated to have given birth to their first surviving child between the ages of 17 and 22. If true, then the ages of the interviewees, many of them in his or her 90's, some even centenarians, indicate that even their grandparents were brought in from Africa. Some of their testimonies:

Some niggers jus' come from Africa [1850] and old Marse has to watch 'em close, 'cause they is de ones what mostly runs away to de woods.

When the boats first came in from Africa with the slaves, a big pot of peas was cooked and the people ate it with their hands right from the pot.

None of us know what a "deep" slave was. It may have the same meaning as outlandish Negro. The "outlandish Negroes" were those newly arrived Negroes who had just come in from any country outside of the United States of America, and were untrained. They were usually just from Africa.

I was raised on the Esque place. "I was fraid of my grandma. I wouldn't live with her. I know'd her. She was a big woman, big white eyes, big thick lips, and had 'Molly Gaspy hair,' long straight soft hair. She was a African woman. She made my clothes. I was fraid of her. I never lived with her. My folks was all free folks.

My pappy was name Jacob. My mammy went by de name of Jemima. They both come from Africa where they was born. They was 'ticed on a ship, fetch 'cross de ocean, fetch to Winnsboro by a slave drover, and sold to my marster's father. Dat what they tell me. When they was sailin' over, dere was five or six hundred others all together down under de first deck of de ship, where they was locked in. They never did talk lak de other slaves, could just' say a few words, use deir hands, and make signs. They want deir collards, turnips, and deir 'tators, raw. They lak sweet milk so much they steal it.

My grandfather and grandmother were grown when they came from Africa, and were man and wife in Africa. I was born just about two years before the war so I don't remember anything about slavery days.

All my people is long-lived. My grand pa an' grand ma on pa side come right from Africa. They was stolen an' brought here. They use to tell us of how white men had pretty cloth on boats which they was to exchange for some of their o'nement'. W'en they take the o'nement' to the boat they was carry way down to the bottom an' was lock' in. They was

anchored on or near Sullivan's Islan' w'ere they been feed like dogs. A big pot was use' for cookin'. In that pot peas was cook' an' lef' to cool. Everybody went to the pot with the han's an' all eat from the pot.

I belong to a class of Negroes called Geechees. My grandfather was brought directly from Africa to Port Royal, South Carolina. My grandmother used to hold up her hand and look at it and sing out of her hand. She'd make them up as she would look at her hand. She sang in Geechee and also made rhymes and songs in English.

My pappy was bought from de Adamson peoples; they say they got him off de ship from Africa.

(Interviewer): The centennarian remembers his parents clearly; his mother was one Nancy and his father's name was Adam. His father, he says, used to spend hours after the candles were out telling him and his brothers about his capture and subsequent slavery. Adam was a native of the West Coast of Africa, and when quite a young man was attracted one day to a large ship that had just come near his home. With many others he was attracted aboard by bright red handkerchiefs, shawls and other articles in the hands of the seamen. Shortly afterwards he was securely bound in the hold of the ship, to be later sold somewhere in America. Thomas does not know exactly where Adam landed, but knows that his father had been in Florida many years before his birth. (United States. WPA Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Narratives; Uncle Cinto Lewis, Mary Colbert, Emma Oats, Henry Brown, Augustus Ladson Charleston, Reverend Eli Boyd)

Those patriotic establishment historians who deny that any president ever had a homosexual experience likewise reduce or ignore the illegal slave trade. They rely on the Censuses because these are easy to assess and *because they cover up what they regard as an evil and therefore an un-American activity*. About the accuracy of the first eight U.S. censuses, professors can quibble as much as they want. Indeed, they quibble most about the 9th in 1870, which was in truth the least accurate of all.

REGIONS	1800-1810	1810-1820	1820-1830	1830-1840	1840-1850	1850-1860
New England	7%	5%	2%	6%	2%	7%
Mid-Atlantic	25%	7%	13%	13%	3%	4%
Northwest	107%	65%	43%	31%	28%	16%
Old South	21%	15%	15%	-1%	12%	7%
New South	131%	86%	74%	67%	40%	31%
United States	36%	29%	31%	25%	25%	22%
United States Slave Population: Percentage Increase By Regions, 1800-1860						
REGIONS	1800-1810	1810-1820	1820-1830	1830-1840	1840-1850	1850-1860
New England	—69%	—65%	—67%	—52%	—	—
Mid-Atlantic	—25%	—33%	—85%	—71%	—68%	—92%
Northwest	101%	63%	38%	25%	24%	13%
Old South	18%	14%	13%	—2%	11%	6%
New South	129%	64%	75%	68%	40%	30%
United States	32%	30%	30%	25%	28%	23%

The regions denoted above are divided into the following partitions:

New England is self-explanatory. The Mid-Atlantic region includes the eastern halves of New York and Pennsylvania. The Northwest region contains the western halves of the latter states, Kentucky (admitted to the Union in 1792), Ohio (1803), Indiana (1816), Illinois (1818), Missouri (1821), Iowa (1829), Michigan (1837), Wisconsin (1848), Minnesota (1858), plus the territory that became West Virginia (1863). The Old South is made up of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, while the New South has Georgia, Tennessee (1796), Louisiana (1812), Mississippi (1817), Alabama (1819), Arkansas (1836), and Florida (1845). Enumerations of slaves from the

Far West, primarily Texas (1845), account for little more than 7,000 slaves for the two decades before the War, though the numbers for the entire antebellum period are assuredly much higher than those reported. Mexico won their independence from Spain just as cotton plantations were spreading across the New South. After 1821, encouraged by the new Mexican government, Southern planters and their slaves began to pour into the area of Northeast Texas known as Coahuila y Tejas, settling on the Brazos, Trinity, Colorado and Red Rivers. By the late 1830's, tens of thousands of U.S. families emigrated west to Stephen Austin's colony in Central Texas. Austin's agreement with Mexico gave 640 acres of land per family, 80 of which were allotted for their slaves. (McLelland, Zeckhauser. *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic*, 1982)

Nay-sayers decry the lack of evidence, aside from the anecdotal, for smuggling slaves. Slave traders' understandable disregard for recordkeeping notwithstanding, we can show how the existence of the illegal traffic need not conjure images of an ocean crammed with slave ships somehow eluding the British patrols. In fact, simple arithmetic might dispel that notion considering the estimates for the illicit trade. If 250,000 slaves were smuggled in from 1808 to 1861, then a mean average of 4,717 slaves came in yearly. Though we agree with Curtin that the "slave trade was always subject to great annual variation", we will nevertheless assume, for simplicity's sake, a very conservative estimate of 200 slaves per ship, which meant few more than 23 slavers crossing the Atlantic every year from American ports to Africa and back to Cuba. Thereby the dissemination of slaves occurred piecemeal in smaller vessels out of Cuban and other Caribbean ports, transported across the Gulf of Mexico toward barracoons on the coast of Mexico, Texas, Florida, and the rest of the cotton and sugar growing Gulf states. Twenty-three is not an appreciable number of ships given the volume of maritime activity; packet liners, whalers, European navy ships, fishing vessels, and all manner of passenger ships shared the ocean with

those few ships that plied their smuggling operations without much intrusion, especially from the unmotivated and sparse American navy patrols. Indulging this convenient statistic is difficult however, when it is roundly known that the British Royal Navy's West Africa Squadron apprehended more than 1,500 slave ships and freed at least 160,000 Africans in the period under discussion. It follows then, in this rough hypothesis, that our meager estimate of 1,250 voyages to illegally procure slaves is significantly too low. The *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* displays evidence of little more than 7,000 slaves disembarked onto the mainland of the United States in all those fifty-three years. However, if one runs a search on the individual voyages that carried those 7,000 slaves we find that "there is no result" for the query. Using our low estimate of 200 slaves per ship, the database thus records about 35 slaver voyages from 1808 to 1861, which implies more than a thousand slave ships are missing from Eltis's database.

Financiers, smugglers, mongers, and purchasers of illegally imported slaves surely wanted to hide their transactions from prying eyes. But, because all slaves counted as 3/5ths of a person, Southern politicians before 1860, would want the largest count possible to increase their seats in the House of Representatives. We can also assume that under-counts of most disadvantaged groups prevailed then as now, but hardly that the percentage of under-counts varied much from census to census before 1870. Thus, we can start with the figures in 1790 to calculate changes from decade to decade, whether the numbers are precise doesn't particularly matter.

As the inimitable and irascible Donald Rumsfeld, who, though an undergraduate with me at Princeton (fortunately I don't remember having ever met him), quipped, "there are known knowns...there are known unknowns...there are also unknown unknowns." What we cannot know is the exact percentage of the extraordinary growth in the overall Census count of slaves that must be assigned to imports and what to natural increase:

All reasonable estimates of international slave smuggling into the United States imply a decline in the rate of natural increase of the American negro population in the antebellum period, particularly after 1840. This decline appears to be more of a function of a falling birth rate than a rising death rate. To the would-be slaver the seacoast of America must have appeared more analogous to a sieve than a fortress. What appears above dispute is that some slaves were smuggled into Southern states during this period. Most frequently cited by those who would minimize slave importations is the fact that males constituted roughly 50% of the total American Negro population throughout the antebellum period., a ratio that would seem to be inconsistent with widespread smuggling in ships that typically carried two males for every female. The hypothesis that slave vessels carried males to females in the ratio 2:1 is one of the most widely quoted and least well documented assertions about the atlantic slave trade. (McLelland, Zeckhauser. *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic*, 1982)

Generally speaking, the numbers that experts assigned to smuggling has decreased with passing decades. The fertility, natality, longevity and mortality of the slaves varied but not decisively. The closer in time the apologists wrote relative to the smuggling period, the higher numbers and percentages that they have assigned to the illegal trade.

U.S. Census 1790-1910					
Census Year	Total Population	White Population	% of Change (White)	Black Population	% of Change (Black)
1790	3,292,214	3,171,006		757,208	
1800	5,308,483	4,306,466	35.76%	1,002,037	32.33%
1810	7,239,881	5,862,073	36.12%	1,377,808	37.50%
1820	9,638,453	7,866,797	34.20%	1,771,656	28.59%
1830	12,860,702	10,532,060	33.88%	2,328,642	31.44%
1840	17,063,353	14,189,705	34.73%	2,873,648	23.40%

1850	23,191,876	19,553,068	37.80%	3,638,808	26.63%
1860	31,443,321	26,922,537	37.69%	4,441,830	22.07%
1870	38,558,371	33,589,377	24.76%	4,880,009	9.86%
1880	50,155,783	43,402,970	29.22%	6,580,793	34.85%
1890	62,622,250	54,983,890	26.68%	7,470,040	13.51%
1900	75,994,575	66,809,196	21.51%	8,833,994	18.26%
1910	91,972,266	81,731,957	22.34%	9,827,763	11.25%

* For our purposes we disregard the census figures of others: Native Americans, etc.

A quick glance at the table above shows that from 1790 until 1810, blacks were increasing as fast as whites, each at about 35% per annum, because there was a rush to import slaves before 1808 primarily to grow cotton before prohibition took effect in 1808. From 1810 until 1860, the white population still increased at roughly 35%, the same rate as before, but thereafter far faster than the black, which increased at about 26%. From the Census of 1870 (with the abnormalities of those of 1870 and 1880 as explained above averaging out) until that of 1910, the whites, still fed by roaring immigration, increased on average about 26% but the blacks only about 15% per annum.

Because after 1860 no more blacks immigrated, their increase was for the first time solely due to reproduction and also a slight decrease in mortalities. The most reasonable explanation, in fact the only one in our mind, to explain the drastic decline in the percentage of black increase per annum is that there were no more imports. The freed and free blacks certainly had a higher chance of procreation and survival. Therefore, if we subtract 15 from 26 we get 11%, which we can estimate was roughly the black population increase from 1810 to 1860 due to importations.

In the census of 1810, the black population was 1,377,808, and in 1860 the total was 4,441,830. The total increase was about 3,064,000. Taking 11% of that gives about 337,000 due to illegal imports. However, because some of those imported illegally over those five decades produced children of their own, we have to allow for that so that we may come out to about 250,000 illegally imported, equaling Dubois' original estimate. Therefore, we must concur with the Old Master. One more thing to note is that most of the white immigrants went to the North where few blacks lived before the 20th century.

Historians, especially white ones, both northern and southern, consciously, unconsciously, or subconsciously, have tried to whittle down the guilt of all white Americans by minimizing the monstrosity of this tragic illegality. In doing so they have created an exceptionalism so incredible that Morgan [book] has introduced the notion of a stupendous pan-African fertility carried over by Africans-Americans into the U.S. that should more than justify the worst fears of the Ku Klux Klanners about black folks' sexuality. That theory would also justify the greatest of all exaggerations by Fitzugh, and other ante-bellum and post-bellum defenders of our "Peculiar Institution": the happy, well-fed, housed, clothed, and cared for darkie. Never in all human history have slaves had it so good as they must have had in the antebellum South to multiply so rapidly without imports. They must have reproduced as fast as the whites that they lived amongst and served who even with considerable immigration from Europe and enriched by seizing new lands from the Indians, hardly kept pace with the growth of their slave population.

Black and White Birth Rates per 1,000 from 1790-1910						
YEAR	Black Birth Rate	Black Birthrate Change from previous decade	% OF CHANGE	White Birth Rate	White Birthrate Change from previous decade	% OF CHANGE
1790	X	X	X	X	X	X
1800	X	X	X	55.00		
1810	X	X	X	54.30	- 0.70	-1.27%
1820	X	X	X	52.80	-1.50	-2.76%
1830	X	X	X	51.40	-1.40	-2.65%
1840	X	X	X	48.30	-3.10	-6.03%
1850	58.60	X	X	43.30	-5.00	-10.35%
1860	55.00	-3.60	-6.14%	41.40	-1.90	-4.39%
1870	55.40	0.40	0.73%	38.30	-3.10	-7.49%
1880	51.90	-3.50	-6.32%	35.20	-3.10	-8.09%
1890	48.10	-3.80	-7.32%	31.50	-3.70	-10.51%
1900	44.40	-3.70	-7.69%	30.10	-1.40	-4.44%
1910	38.50	-5.90	-13.29%	29.20	-0.90	-2.99%

Separate these tables, find more ranges.

BLACK BIRTH RATE	RANGE	CHANGE	% CHANGE
	1850-1860	-4	-6.14%
	1860-1910	-17	-30.00
WHITE BIRTH RATE	1810-1860	-12.90	-23.76%
	1840-1860	-6.90	-14.29%

	1860-1910	-12.20	-29.47%
--	-----------	--------	---------

The white birthrate began to be censured first in 1800 when it was 55. It steadily diminished each decade thereafter until it reached 29 in 1910. The black birthrate first began in 1850 when it was 58.6 and diminished to 38.5 in 1910. So, that both blacks and whites steadily diminished if one overlooks the extraordinary rate of the unreliable census of 1870, which is compensated for in the black birthrate of 1880, supposedly higher than that in 1860, a unique occurrence and therefore obviously incorrect.

The charts above only have data for the changes in black birth rates between 1850 and 1860, which dropped 3.6, and for the unreliable census of 1870 went up by 0.4, then continued to decrease from -3.5 to -5.9 until 1910. So we can conclude that once they were free, they had lower birth rates, as one would expect from a less marginalized population, but their neonate and infant death rate was still so much higher for blacks than for whites, as it remains so today.

BLACK and WHITE FERTILITY RATES per 1,000 from 1790 to 1910						
YEAR	BLACK FERTILITY RATE	CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS DECADE	% CHANGE	WHITE FERTILITY RATE	CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS DECADE	% CHANGE
1790	X	X	X	X	X	X
1800	X	X	X	7.04	X	X
1810	X	X	X	6.92	-0.12	-1.70%
1820	X	X	X	6.73	-0.19	-2.75%
1830	X	X	X	6.55	-0.18	-2.67%
1840	X	X	X	6.14	-0.41	-6.26%
1850	7.90	X	X	5.42	-0.72	-11.73%
1860	7.58	-0.32	-4.05%	5.21	-0.21	-3.87%
1870	7.69	0.11	1.45%	4.55	-0.66	-12.67%
1880	7.26	-0.43	-5.59%	4.24	-0.31	-6.81%

1890	6.56	-0.70	-9.64%	3.87	-0.37	-8.73%
1900	5.61	-0.95	-14.48%	3.56	-0.31	-8.01%
1910	4.61	-1.00	-17.83%	3.42	-0.14	-3.93%

change/summaries/fertility

RANGE	BLACK BIRTHRATE CHANGE	% CHANGE
1850-1860	-0.32	-4.05%
1860-1910	-2.97	-39.18%

RANGE	WHITE BIRTHRATE CHANGE	% CHANGE
1810-1860	-1.71	-24.71%
1840-1860	-0.93	-15.15%
1860-1910	-1.79	-34.36%

Like the birth rate, the white fertility rate only began to be recorded in 1800. It steadily descends from 7.04 to 3.42 in 1910 with no exceptions. The black fertility rate only begins with the Census of 1850 at 7.90 and descends every year until 1910, again with the sole exception of the Census of 1870.

BLACK and WHITE CHILD/WOMAN RATIO per 1,000 from 1790 to 1910						
YEAR	BLACK CHILD/WOMAN RATIO	RATIO CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS DECADE	% CHANGE	WHITE CHILD/WOMAN RATIO	RATIO CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS DECADE	% CHANGE
1790	X	X	X	X	X	X
1800	X	X	X	1,342	X	X

1810	X	X	X	1,358	16.00	1.19%
1820	1,191	X	X	1,295	-63.00	-4.64%
1830	1,220	29	2.43%	1,145	-150.00	-11.58%
1840	1,154	-66	-5.41%	1,085	-60.00	-5.24%
1850	1,087	-67	-5.81%	892	-193.00	-17.79%
1860	1,072	-15	-1.38%	905	13.00	1.46%
1870	997	-75	-7.00%	814	-91.00	-10.06%
1880	1,090	93	9.33%	780	-34.00	-4.18%
1890	930	-160	-14.68%	685	-95.00	-12.18%
1900	845	-85	-9.41%	666	-19.00	-2.77%
1910	736	-109	-12.90%	631	-35.00	-5.26%

RANGE	BLACK BIRTHRATE CHANGE	% CHANGE	WHITE BIRTHRATE CHANGE	% CHANGE		
1810-1860	-119	-9.99%	-453.00	-33.36%		
1840-1860	-82	-7.54%	-180.00	-16.59%		
1860-1910	-336	-31.34%	-274.00	-30.28%		

The black child/woman ratio first appears in 1820, and rises only twice, once in 1830 by 2.43%, and astoundingly in 1880 by 9.33%. The Black Child/Women ratio basically takes into account the infant survival rates. The ratio drops the more backwards, impoverished and oppressed the society is. The white child/women ratio begins in 1800 at 1,342 and rises slightly in 1810 by 1.19%, but then steadily falls to 892 in 1850, but rises to 905 a 1.46% increase. It resumes falling to 631 in 1910 as the table below shows. There were very sharp decreases on either side of the rise in 1860, by -17.79% in 1850 and by -10.06% in 1870, those being two of the four highest decreases in 12 censuses that we studied.

BLACK and WHITE MORTALITY RATES per 1,000 from 1790-1910
--

YEAR	Black Infant Mortality	Black Infant Mortality Change From Previous Decade	% Change	White Infant Mortality	White Infant Mortality Change From Previous Decade	% Change
1790	X	X	X	X	X	X
1800	X	X	X	X	X	X
1810	X	X	X	X	X	X
1820	X	X	X	X	X	X
1830	X	X	X	X	X	X
1840	X	X	X	X	X	X
1850	340.00	X	X	216.80	X	X
1860	X	X	X	181.30	-35.50	-16.37%
1870	X	X	X	175.50	-5.80	-3.20%
1880	X	X	X	214.80	39.30	22.39%
1890	X	X	X	150.70	-64.10	-29.84%
1900	170.30	X	X	110.80	-39.90	-26.48%
1910	142.60	-28	-16.27%	96.50	-14.30	-12.91%

The censuses show no record of black infant mortality rates, except amazingly for 1850 when it was 340, that is a third of the infants died during that decade. And the rate was further cut in half by 1900, and decreasing to 142 by 1910. The white infant mortality rate only began to be recorded in that wonderful census of 1850, when the black rate was also recorded. The white rate recorded for the first time was 216 and descended every year after that except in the Census of 1880 when it soared from 175 to 214, an amazing 22.39% increase, due in large part to the influx of east and southern European immigrants many of whom carried disease before Ellis Island took screening precautions. The 1870 census shows a small decrease which can partly be explained by the notorious census inaccuracies and partly by the fact that southern whites were so devastated by poverty due to war and the harshness of Reconstruction. That inaccuracy helped explain the unique increase in the 1880 census as well as the subsequent enormous decrease in 1890 which is partially also explained by the internments and health measures of more rigorous immigration screening.

Like Dubois before us, we estimate that about 250,000 were imported or annexed in the fifty-two year span between January 1st, 1808 and the Union blockade of Southern ports in 1861 (some runners even managed to smuggle a few more in during 1862). Most were re-exported from Cuba and other lesser havens in the West Indies as we document in the following chapter. During those decades, nearly 800,000 slaves are *documented* as being shipped from Africa to Cuba, and many if not most of them were re-exported to Dixie. Over 2.1 million went to Brazil from 1808 through 1856. However, many more survived in Brazil than in Cuba. Conditions for the slaves in both those tropical Latino countries were similar. Cuba couldn't possibly have digested as many slaves as Brazil, consequently a very large number of those after 1808 must have been re-exported to the U.S. .

