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by

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The Politics of Race and Mental Illness in the Post-Emancipation US South:

Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane in

Historical Perspective

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The Politics of Race and Mental Illness in the Post-Emancipation US South: Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane in Historical Perspective

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

The Politics of Race and Mental Illness in the Post-Emancipation US South:

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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In "The Politics of Race and Mental Illness" I explore the relationship between conceptualizations of black mental health and white social control from 1865 to 1881. Chapter one historically contextualizes black mental health, highlighting psychiatrists', slaveholders', and black slaves' perspectives of black mental illness. In this chapter, I argue that the current racial disparities in psychiatric treatment and diagnosis stem from a legacy of cultural incompetence, that is, a failure to fit diagnoses and treatment methods to the needs of culturally diverse populations. The second chapter analyzes the nature of racial power relations in the US South during the Reconstruction period. It asserts that not only did racism thrive, but the white population also sought methods of re-subjugating the black population during this period. Using primary sources, I argue in chapter three that whites institutionalized blacks in Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane for non-mental health reasons—as both a punishment for attempts at economic independence and in order to culturally censure them. While most modern mental health literature avoids discussing social control, my research examines the

reasons for the commitment of blacks to CLA within the context of white re-subjugation of the black population. This work emphasizes the centrality of social control to black mental health care in the post-emancipation era.

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Chapter 1: Racism in Society and Black Spiritual Resistance: Historical Perspectives of Black Mental Illness

The field of mental health consistently produces racial disparities in diagnosis and treatment.[1] Although recent studies indicate that blacks may exhibit a lower incidence of specific kinds of mental illness than other ethnic groups, research findings reveal that blacks are three times more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than non-Hispanic white Americans and that black children and adults are overrepresented in state psychiatric hospitalizations.[2] In 2005 blacks were only 12 percent of the national population but made up 27.17 percent of those admitted to state mental hospitals.[3] In some states the rate of black confinement to public mental institutions reaches three times the national black population.[4] Approximately 83 percent of these admissions result from

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[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity—A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. (Rockville: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services, 2001), 66-67; David Rollock & Edmund W. Gordon. "Racism and Mental Health into the 21st Century: Perspectives and Parameters." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 70, no.1 (2000): 5; King E. Davis, Allen N. Lewis, Jr., & Ning Jackie Zhang. "Admissions of African Americans to State Psychiatric Hospitals." *International Journal of Public Policy* 6, no.3 (2010): 224; George J., Warheit, Charles E. Holzer III, & Sandra A. Arey. "Race and Mental Illness: An Epidemiologic Update." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 16, no.3 (1975): 243; David R. Williams, "African American Mental Health: Persisting Questions and Paradoxical Findings." (2004).
www.rcgd.isr.umich.edu/prba/perspectives/spring1995/dwilliams.pdf; Joel Fischer, "Negroes and Whites and Rates of Mental Illness: Reconsideration of a Myth." *Psychiatry* 32, no.4 (1969): 428.
[2] King E. Davis, et al., 224. Caroline Helwick. "Schizophrenia May Be Overdiagnosed in Black Patients." *Medscape Today News*, July 13, 2012. http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/768391; King E. Davis, Allen N. Lewis, Jr., & Ning Jackie Zhang. "Admissions of African Americans to State Psychiatric Hospitals." *International Journal of Public Policy* 6, no.3 (2010): 224; Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Beacon Press: Boston, 2004), xi.
[3] Davis, King E. et al., "Involuntary Commitment Policy: Disparities in Admissions of African American Men to State Mental Hospitals," in *Social Welfare Policy: Regulation and Resistance Among People of Color*, ed. Schiele, Jerome H. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011).
[4] Schacht, L.M. and Higgins, K.M., *Race / Ethnicity of Clients Served in State Hospitals* (Alexandria: NASHMPD Research Institute, 2002).

involuntary commitment proceedings.[5] These disparities gesture toward a legacy of cultural incompetence that undergirds the field of psychiatry. Understanding this history is crucial to resolving the inequalities psychiatry continues to perpetuate.

In pursuit of such understanding, this research explores U.S. characterizations of black mental health, focusing on the perspectives of nineteenth century psychiatrists, slaveholders, and enslaved blacks themselves. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century psychiatrists portrayed blacks as savages who were susceptible to mental illness when living in civilized cultures.[6] Slaveholders considered the mentally disabled as flawed commodities and often abused, manumitted, or murdered them.[7] Blacks conceptualized mental illness as an indication of conflict in their physical and spiritual community and used syncretistic spiritual belief systems to reinstate social balance.[8]

Racism in Psychiatry

Nineteenth century psychiatrists' perspectives about black mental health relied upon centuries of European mythology. Greek ideas associating blackness with melancholy were amplified in Medieval Europe.[9] Germanic peoples cemented the

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[5] Davis, King E. et al., "Involuntary Commitment Policy: Disparities in Admissions of African American Men to State Mental Hospitals."

[6] James Cowles Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (E. L. Carey & A. Hart, 1837).

[7] Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885" (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

[8] Fett, Sharla, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[9] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

correlations between blackness and insanity.[10] When Englishmen encountered blacks in the seventeenth century, they connected blacks with savagery, bestiality, and lasciviousness. Nineteenth century psychiatrists from the US, convinced that civilization alone causes insanity, argued that barbarian societies lack the complexity required to produce mental illness. Characterizing non-whites as childlike, US psychiatrists concluded that without protective guidance, savages would deteriorate into mental illness when exposed to civilized societies.[11] Thus, US psychiatrists concluded that slavery protected blacks from their base instincts, while emancipation damned them to mental decay.[12]

Associations between blackness and insanity emerged prior to ancient Greek domination. Medical scholars held that varying colors of bile in the circulatory system produced persons' temperaments. Those with "pure blood" maintained a rosy complexion and good humor; those whom yellow bile dominated exhibited irritability and boldness; people whom phlegm governed developed a pale color and sad countenance; while those with black bile possessed swarthy skin, dark hair, and exhibited both shyness and melancholy. This may have been the point at which blackness became associated with mental illness. However, since the Greeks maintained regular contact with Egyptians, Ethiopians, and other Africans, and viewed them as virtually superior to themselves, they may not have made the direct association between blackness and mental illness.[13]

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[10] Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*.
[11] Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind*; Alan P. Smith, "Mental Hygiene and the American Negro," 1931.
[12] Alan P. Smith, "Mental Hygiene and the American Negro."
[13] Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*.

Without a doubt, their assertions at least formed part of the foundation upon which later ideas about blacks and insanity were built.[14] During the Middle Ages, racial features became unquestionably associated with the concept of temperaments. Medieval Europeans' contact with Africans was limited, as blacks existed to them largely through Portuguese travel narratives and legends, which provided fodder for anti-black stereotypes. In 1200, the first legend associating black skin with melancholy, and therefore with black bile, appears, when a man named Iwein turns black after breaking a promise to his wife, and loses his mind, presumably due to his grief at having betrayed her. A decade later, Wirnt von Grafenberg writes of an insane, monstrous, black woman who lives in the wild. In the same manner, in 1260 the anonymous author of Wolfdietrich revisits this theme, describing a shaggy, gigantic woman who was born in the wild and is "blacker than coal." These stories use both blackness and mental illness to mark non-European "others" as different and violent.[15]

When the English encountered blacks in the 16th century, blackness was not only associated with difference and violence, but also baseness. The *Oxford English Dictionary* from the period defined black as sinister, dirty, disgraceful, and baneful.[16] Indeed, it was viewed as the opposite of whiteness, which was characterized as pure, innocent, and beautiful. Formal speculations as to the reason for blacks' skin color

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[14] Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985), 146-147. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2000), 71.
[15] Gilman, 142-144.
[16] Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1977), 7.

became a salient theme in contemporary literature. The Christian background which most English people shared, influenced the way the English viewed blacks. While many considered black skin the result of God's curse upon Ham (the rebellious son of the Bible's Noah), others felt that blacks were similar to themselves and found that portions of their culture and oral history aligned with biblical accounts. Yet others, whose conclusions came to dominate English perceptions of blacks, considered Africans heathens and savages. But heathenism was not the only characteristic the English came to attribute to these supposedly savage people. According to Winthrop Jordan, "Heathenism was treated not so much as a specifically religious defect but as one manifestation of a general refusal to measure up to proper standards, as a failure to be English or even civilized."[17] All of the diverse peoples of Africa differed from the English in apparel, language, law, manners, housing, and farming methods. To the English, these differences were irreconcilable. Since blacks appeared to lack "a God, lawe, religion, or common wealth", heathenism, blackness, and barbarity became inextricably linked. The English thus viewed Africans as a separate kind of human. [18]

While the English knew blacks were human, they often described blacks as beastly and cited their diet, warfare practices, and alleged cannibalism as justification. In fact, the English associated blacks with apes and tied them both to concepts of evil, sin, and libidinous sexuality.[19] The English association of blacks with sin, evil, beastliness,

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[17] Jordan, 24.
[18] Ibid., 24.
[19] Ibid., 30.

and God's punishment qualified blacks as targets for slavery.[20] Beginning in the 1600s,

English settlers adopted the perception of blacks as heathens and savages, and the view

dominated in America through the twentieth century.[21]

This discussion of blacks as barbarians overlaps with nineteenth century western

conceptualizations of black mental health. In *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders*

Affecting the Mind (1837), Englishman James Prichard argues that mental illness does not

exist in Africa because of the primitiveness of the cultures housed there. He cites authors

who claim not to have seen mental illness among the tribes of Africa or among other so-

called "barbarian" peoples of the world. Prichard includes the Native Americans of the

United States and the Aborigines of Australia among the non-civilized. Outside of

civilized cultures, he argues, mental illness does not exist. On the contrary, civilization

causes mental illness because its complexity invokes stress. One main stressor is

capitalistic striving: laboring in urban centers to acquire one's physical needs, providing

for a family, and experiencing poverty and health risks produces a level of stress that

incubates mental illness.[22] In contrast, barbarian people who live in barbarian societies

did not experience stress. Their level of function resembled that of animals; they did not

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[20] Jordan, 56.

[21] Ibid., 96; Colin Feltham and Ian Horton eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, Second Edition (Sage Publications: London, 2006), 54.

[22] Prichard does not mention women in his account, but the contemporary argument noted that women and children share the vulnerabilities possessed by savages. Adult white men were the only ones psychologically equipped to navigate the civilized world. See Thomas Cooley, *The Ivory Leg in the Ebony Cabinet: Madness, Race, and Gender in Victorian America* (Amherst: University of Massachussets Press, 2001), 9.

worry about life.[23] Whereas European social scientists usually disagreed with this view, American medical superintendents accepted it without question. This view subsequently became accepted as an unchallenged truth in US psychiatry.[24]

Only in a primitive environment, however, do barbarians experience low frequency of mental illness. Once they arrive in a civilized society, they require cultural training in the ways of civilization and a degree of care to which one would give a child. Without this protection, barbarians would have no defense against mental illness, as they lacked the evolutionary status necessary to competently navigate the stresses of civilization.[25] In other words, the paternal guidance provided by masters buffered blacks from the stresses of civilization, making slavery the ideal condition for blacks in the US.[26] In fact, Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane, the world's first black mental asylum, was designed with this concept in mind. Francis Stribling argued in 1875 that the permanent location of the asylum should be situate upon several hundred acres of land, since work is the most curative agent available for blacks with mental illness.[27] US-born

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[23] James Cowley Prichard, *A treatise on Insanity and other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (Philadelphia: E.L. Carey & Hart, 1837), 250-252.

[24] David J. Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Aldine Transactions: New Brunswick, 2008), 113.

[25] J.F. Miller, "The Effects of Emancipation upon the Mental and Physical Qualifications of the Negro in the South," *North Carolina Medical Journal* 38 (1896); William F. Drewry, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane," in Henry M. Hurd, ed., *The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1916); Benjamin Pasamanick, "Myths Regarding Prevalence of Mental Disease in the American Negro: A Century of Misuse of Mental Hospital Data and Some New Findings," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 56 (1964).

[26] J. W. Babcock, The Colored Insane, *The Alienist and Neurologist* 16 (1895); John M. Galt, "Asylums for Colored Persons," *American Psychological Journal* 1844.

[27] Randolph, 104.

whites, on the other hand, required rest, relaxation, and moderate work therapy in occupations of their choosing.[28]

Even under slavery blacks were capable of experiencing mental illness if they strayed from their masters' guidance. Thus, if blacks ran away or performed sabotage on the plantation, it was said that they were mentally ill, since they eschewed that which was good for their health: obeying their master. In his "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race" (1851), Samuel Cartwright theorizes that physical differences between blacks and whites predispose them to certain mental illnesses. According to this paradigm, Blacks' blood is poorly oxygenated, similarly to that of white infants, and this lack of oxygenation causes weak intelligence and poor morality. The only solution, Cartwright suggests, is for whites to force blacks to work, supposedly just like one disciplines a child, thereby oxygenating blacks' blood, simultaneously improving blacks' morals and intellect.

According to Cartwright, mental illness occurs in blacks under three circumstances: when whites are randomly cruel toward their slaves, when masters treat their slaves as if they are free and allow them to exercise free will, and when blacks are not bound under slavery. It is then that they develop either of the two mental illnesses which he ascribes to blacks: first, Drapeatomania, in which slaves run away from their masters and second, Dysaesthesia Aethiopis, where enslaved blacks became discontent with their lives and free blacks wallow in filth and poverty, due to an inclination toward

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[28] Randolph, 157; Bill Weaver, "Survival at the Alabama Insane Hospital, 1861-1892" *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 51 (1996): 5-28.

dozing their lives away. In this way, whites who are neither too cruel nor too lax with

slaves play a crucial role in maintaining blacks' mental health.[29] These, however, were

not the illness for which blacks were institutionalized during the slavery era. Cartwright

vowed that whipping and hard work could cure both Drapeatomania and Dysaesthesia.

Rather, slaves were sent, though infrequently, to mental hospitals following fits of

insanity, delirium, pellagra, and derangement that resulted from physical trauma.[30]

But without the protective institution of slavery, physicians conjectured that the

presence of mental illness among blacks would wildly increase. Their logic was fortified

in 1844 with Edward Jarvis's analysis of the 1840 census records. Jarvis found that free

blacks contract mental illness eleven times more often than enslaved blacks and that free

blacks demonstrate six times the levels of insanity found among whites. He concludes

that freedom detrimentally affects blacks, as without slavery they lack crucial structure.[31]

As early as 1846 Jarvis discovered gross errors in the census data from which he derived

his analysis and withdrew his claims.[32] However, physicians such as A.H. Witmer, Mary

O'Malley, A.P. Smith, W. M. Bevis, and Samuel Cartwright continued summoning these

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[29] Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race." *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 1 (1851): 691-715; William C. Davis, Look Away!: A History of the Confederate States of America (New York: Free Press, 2002), 130-136; Harold Jackson, "Race and the Politics of Medicine in Nineteenth Century Georgia," in *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training*, eds. Robert L. Blakely and Judith M. Harrington (Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington, 1997), 189-190.

[30] Savitt, 250-254.

[31] Jarvis, 71-83; Gilman, 137-140. Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America: Cultural and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness before 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 101-104; William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America*, 1815-1859 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 58-59. Physicians also thought that the black mortality rate would rise. See Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, Publications of the American Economic Association, vol. XI, no. 1-3 (New York: Pub. for the American Economic Association by the Macmillan Company; [etc., etc.], 1896).

[32] Gilman, 137.

conclusions into the 20th century, using them to support similar arguments.[33] In spite of his recantation, Jarvis's early conclusions dominated the Southern psychiatric landscape by 1851.

Nineteenth century psychiatrists relied upon centuries of mythology to conjecture about black mental health. Basing their findings upon societal perceptions of blacks as savages, these physicians concluded that while blacks lacked the capacity to develop complex societies and produce stressful circumstances in their primitive cultures, that blacks were still highly susceptible to mental illness when they lived in civilized societies. As a result they concluded that slavery was a favorable setting for the maintenance of black mental health, and that absence from a white master would result in blacks' deterioration into mental illness. Nineteenth century slaveholders benefitted from this view and undertook a number of methods to treat or otherwise deal with mentally ill slaves.

Slaveholders' Perceptions of Black Mental Health and Blacks' Spiritual Resistance

Slaveholders in the nineteenth century US South considered mentally disabled slaves unsound pieces of property. The concept of soundness, which dominates slaveholders' discussions of health among enslaved blacks, correlates directly with a

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[33] W.M. Bevis, "Psychological Traits of the Southern Negro with Observations as to some of His Psychosis." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 1(1921): 69-78; Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race." *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 1 (1851): 691-715; Mary O'Malley, "Psychoses in the Colored Race." *American Journal of Insanity* 71, no.1 (1914): 309-337; A.H. Witmer, "Insanity in the Colored Race in the United States." *Alienist and Neurologist* 12 (1891): 19-25; Smith, 19-20.

slave's value in the market place.[34] A slave's soundness depends upon a subtle mixture of factors including age, mental stability, physical strength, skill, gender, past illness, likelihood of future health, and their current ability to perform labor. The slave's capacity for obedience, reproduction, and submission is also included in this measure. Their market value among their master's holdings proved to be a slave's most reliable safeguard against physical abuse.[35] Masters strategically disregarded black mental health in favor of promoting the highest possible slave price at the market. Slave owners concealed mental illness among blacks at the slave market and abused, tortured, manumitted, or killed mentally disabled slaves who were unable to work.[36]

Depending on their disability, mentally ill slaves demonstrated varying levels of productivity. Those able to complete a day's work in spite of mental disorders were left unbothered, their disabilities simply labeled behavioral idiosyncrasies. Rosters of slaves often listed a person's name followed by a personality quirk. While these notations actually indicated mental illness, individuals were rarely noted as "insane" unless the individuals were incapable of performing labor. For example, slaves were described as suffering from brain fever, mentally unsound, laboring under an aberration of mind sullen, and demented.[37] However, slaves who were either unable to follow directions or incapable of completing their work were ascribed a lower market value. Masters

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[34] Kiple, Kenneth F. and King, Virginia Hemmelsteib, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981).

[35] Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 25-26.

[36] Randolph, 25.

[37] Randolph, 22.

considered them expendable individuals who cost money to support but lacked value. One girl, described as "idiotic," was appraised near the value of $0 along with an elderly woman named Phyllis.[38] Caring for these slaves would require assigning a caretaker to watch after them every day, which removed hands from the fields or other areas of the plantation. Hence, masters did not often choose this option.

Slaveholders frequently accused infirm enslaved blacks of malingering or feigning illness to avoid work.[39] The master would order that "hickory oil," a term for the lash, be applied to the backs of slaves who remained ill for extended periods of time. Slave owners also used a similar phrase, "nine drops of the essence of cowhide." One slaveholder reported, "Mary left the sickhouse today or rather was whipped out."[40] Even death may not have absolved a slave of the malingering label. An enslaved woman named Patty died of an illness she had complained of for a year, but her master continued to claim after her death that she "was always pretend[ing] to be sick."[41] Mentally disabled persons in particular were likely to be accused of malingering. Their disabilities usually did not improve over time and overseers responded to their illness as if it were rebellion, subjecting disabled slaves to abuse and torture. Kirby Randolph writes, "Planters punished slaves who resisted work or would not follow orders… [and] 'branded, stabbed,

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[38] Fett, 25-26.

[39] Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Anchor, 2008), 30; Randolph, 25.

[40] Washington, 31; Fett, 150.

[41] Washington, 31; Fett, 181.

tarred and feathered, burned, shackled, tortured, maimed, crippled, mutilated, and castrated their slaves.'"[42]

Walter Johnson provides a similar account of slave abuse in his text, *Soul by Soul*.[43]

> Whether their slaves were sick, resistant, or simply unskilled, slaveholders often beat them for not living up to the expectations that had been attached to them in the slave market. When it became apparent within a few months of their purchase that they could not keep up with the other slaves in the field, Charles Kock's overseer apparently broke Michael Perry's ribs and beat William Diggs so mercilessly that Diggs, in a futile attempt to escape, jumped in the bayou and drowned. Likewise, soon after his sale, Madison, who was sold as a cooper though he could not make a barrel and sold as healthy though he was consumptive, was struck seventy or eighty times by his buyer's grown son. He could not be sure, but from the sound of it, a witness thought the weapon had been an ox whip.

Masters subjected slaves to this nature of violence without considering slaves' natural abilities and mental condition. Evidently, these practices were intended to jar slaves out of purportedly feigned illness or to punish them for failing to meet slaveholders' expectations.

When slaves' behavior did not change after violence and harassment, sale often became the next course of action.[44] However, a severely disabled individual, as mentioned earlier, would be appraised with a low price and possibly could not be sold at

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[42] Randolph, 25.

[43] Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1999), 205.

[44] Randolph, 40.

all. Slaveholders' alternative to selling a low-price slave was simply manumitting them to avoid the cost of providing their lodging, food, and clothing. Such formerly enslaved persons would be sent into the wilderness to die or would meander into urban areas where they were forced to beg for food. As a result of this practice, the state of Virginia passed a series of laws, beginning in 1792, mandating that masters continue to provide for "unsound" slaves whom they had manumitted.[45] The first law applied to enslaved blacks between the ages of eighteen and forty-five if female and between twenty-one and forty-five if male, therefore excluding children and the elderly from its clause. In 1824 when Sam, "a Negro man" was condemned to death for stealing, the legislature amended the law to exclude age limitations. The updated law also specified that if the manumitted slave had to "depend on charity, trespass, or theft," that the owner would be charged $50.00 for every offense, rather than a one-time flat fee as had been mandated in 1792.[46] The legislature reaffirmed this law once again in 1768, and demonstrates that slave owners considered mentally disabled slaves as commodities that could not be used, and hence their wellbeing was not a priority. [47]

After the passage of these statutes, slaveholders sought help providing for disabled slaves whom they could not officially manumit. South Carolina passed similar laws in the early 1700s and amended its Poor Relief Act in 1745 to set aside public funds

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[45] June Purcell Guild, *Black Laws of Virginia; a Summary of the Legislative Actsof Virginia Concerning Negroes from Earliest Time to the Present* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).
[46] Guild, 62, 85; Randolph, 103-104.
[47] Savitt, 203.

to provide for insane slaves of impoverished slaveholders. [48] Additionally, slave owners in Virginia petitioned their legislature to allow enslaved blacks admission into the state's mental institutions. Their request was granted in 1845.[49] Nonetheless, Deborah Gray White and Kirby Randolph suggest that slave owners continued to emancipate elderly and disabled slaves in spite of legislative mandates. White notes that black elderly populations in Southern urban centers continued to rise disproportionately after the passing and updating of this legislation.[50] Randolph writes, "Although some state laws prohibited emancipating unsound slaves, many slave owners did so rather than provide housing and rations to slaves who were not profitable."[51] It is also likely that masters and overseers may have murdered disabled slaves in order to avoid accruing extra costs. The underreporting of slave deaths makes it difficult to decipher how many disabled blacks were murdered because of their condition.[52]

Nineteenth century slaveholders viewed mentally ill enslaved blacks as damaged property. When selling an ill slave, they often attempted to conceal the condition in order to acquire a good sale price. Of course, this subjected the slave to the likely chance of abuse or worse at the hands of their new master. Masters often committed violence, abuse, murder, and neglect against black slaves in order to free themselves from the extra financial burden of supporting slaves who could not perform labor. Although laws

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[48] Randolph, 23.
[49] Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885."
[50] White, 117-118.
[51] Ibid., 23.
[52] Savitt, 207.

eventually aimed to protect mentally ill slaves, the absence of records renders the effects of the policy indeterminable. Trauma characterized enslaved blacks' lives, and they utilized hoodoo to form a healing community.

Trauma, which modern psychologists recognize as a common initiator of mental illness, dominated the slave's life. Sexual violence, torture, murder, abuse, separation of families, and the selling of persons occurred daily among slaves in the western world.[53] While enslaved persons are often not thought of as possessing the emotional capacities of human beings, it is far from likely that they were not impacted significantly by these events, similarly to the impact people in modern times endure in the face of such challenges. Slave narratives offer examples that demonstrate the emotional weight of slavery's tyranny and also undermine the pseudo-scientific literature on black mental health. At the same time, slave narratives provide blacks' perspectives on mental health and spiritual beliefs.[54]

In his *Narrative of the Life of a Slave,* Frederick Douglass recounts an event that had a lasting impact on his life. When he was five years old he witnessed his master whipping his Aunt Hester. She received forty lashes for expressing romantic interest in a slave from another plantation. Douglass recalls hearing his aunt scream throughout the beating and describes that moment as one that initiated him into slavery. All of a sudden

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[53] George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in Sao Paulo Brazil 1888-1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1991), 1-5; Robert Edgar Conrad, *World of Sorrow: The African Slave Trade to Brazil* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 1-11; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 11.
[54] Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery," Charles Edmondson Historical Lectures Series, 15, Baylor University, 1993, 1-23.

he was aware that his life hung in the balance; that he lacked safety and control over his circumstances.[55]

Harriet Jacobs discusses the incidence of sexual assault and harassment in her narrative. Her master gave her unwanted sexual attention, followed her around, threatened her, and demeaned her throughout her childhood until her escape from slavery. Although she never explicitly claims that her master assaulted her, the manner in which her descriptions fade into vagueness suggest that she may have been trying to conceal the degree of violation she experienced, perhaps in an effort to protect herself from the vindication she may have otherwise faced.[56] Her work highlights the prevalence of sexual victimization not only of women but also of enslaved men. She recounts the story of a male slave whose master forced him to remain dressed in only a shirt so that he would always be ready to be punished. This account drifts into a similar vagueness that shrouds her personal descriptions, suggesting that this man's master also victimized him.[57] A court case also describes a man whose overseer nailed his penis to a bedpost because he objected to the overseer's sexual interest in his wife[58]. As these accounts suggest, sexual violations were widespread and affected all genders.

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[55] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993), 2-7.

[56] Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (Lexington: Simon & Brown, 2012), 1-53. Black women were continually stereotyped as sexually loose. In her account she indicates that she always resisted her master's advances but the reality is that if she had resisted his sexual advances, he probably would have killed her. So while black women had very little choice in the matter, nonetheless, black women were portrayed as sexually insatiable. They were considered lascivious even though their masters preyed upon them.

[57] Jacobs, 113.

[58] Hartman, 75.

If we discuss the impact of abuse on enslaved blacks, we also have to discuss the fact that even though they were subjected to abuse, they found ways to preserve themselves in spite of it. Slavery and the abuse it generated did not damage black people irreparably. Rather, they employed family and fictive kin networks as well as religion to cope with extensive loss and maintain hope for a better future, though that future may have been in the hereafter.[59]

Enslaved blacks conceptualized their mental illnesses in ways that varied greatly from nineteenth century Western perceptions of insanity. Instead of ascribing social stigma to insanity and removing or institutionalizing them, blacks perceived mental illness as a result of conflict in community relationships, and afflicted individuals continued their membership in the community. While enslaved blacks in the 19th century held a variety of spiritual beliefs ranging from Christianity to Islam to traditional African religions, many blacks followed hoodoo, the syncretic product of Christianity and African beliefs.[60]

Hoodoo, or conjuration, represents "an African American practice of healing, harming, and protection performed through the ritual harnessing of spiritual forces," and functioned as a relational and spiritual mechanism which enslaved blacks used, and some

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[59] John Hope Franklin, "Slavery and Personality: A Fresh Look," Massachusetts Review 2 (Autumn 1960); Earl E. Thorpe, "Chattel Slavery and Concentration Camps," *Negro History Bulletin* 25 (May 1962); Ann J. Lane, *The Debate over Slavery: Stanley Elkins and His Critics*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971:7,19, quoted in Nell Irvin Painter, Soul Murder and Slavery.

[60] Charles E. Orser, "The Archaeology of African-American Slave Religion in the Antebellum South." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 4, no. 1 (1994): 35; Fett, 85; White, 135.

blacks still use, to quell or provoke conflict in their community or against oppressors. [61]

This power is used to help or harm any member of the community, which hoodoo defines

as comprising people, ancestors, spirits, and God. Turning a "trick," or casting a spell, did

not necessarily require the assistance of a conjurer. Many followers of hoodoo had their

own knowledge of potions and tricks, and could produce them on their own.[62]

Conjure was known to be capable of producing a wide variety of maladies,

including insanity, fits, paralysis, paranoia, loss of willpower, and the infestation of

rodents, insects, and reptiles inside the human body.[63] But enslaved blacks in the

nineteenth century U.S. South considered any illness that did not improve with a doctor's

treatment the likely product of conjuring.[64] Mental illness in particular seemed to be

attributed to conjuration. Mental confusion, foggy judgment, and insanity were

considered symptoms that a conjurer could address most adeptly.[65] While some instances

of mental deterioration probably resulted from conjuration, it is not possible that it

derived all mental illness. However, when an individual exhibited symptoms of mental

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[61] Fett, 85; Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993).(page number?)

[62] Katrina Hazzard-Donald, *Mojo-Workin': The Old African American Hoodoo System* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2013), 99.

[63] Ibid., 136; Julien A. Hall, "Negro Conjuring and Tricking," *The Journal of American Folklore* 10, no. 38 (July 1, 1897): 241–43, doi:10.2307/533870; Wayland Debs Hand, "Physical Harm, Sickness, and Death by Conjury: A Survey of the Sorcerer's Evil Art in America," in *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America : Selected Essays of Wayland D. Hand* (University of California Press, 1980), 215–25; Bacon, A.M., "Conjuring and Conjure-Doctors in the Southern United States (Continued)," *The Journal of American Folklore* 9, no. 34 (July 1, 1896): 224–26, doi:10.2307/533412; Chesnutt, Charles, "Superstitions & Folklore of the South," April 5, 2014, http://www.mamiwata.com/hoodoo5.html.

[64] Fett, 93.

[65] Ibid., 95.

debilitation, a conjurer's assistance was sought to help discern who set the trick and why. Common motivations for harming were concerns over love, sex, power, and economics.[66]

When conjuration was the cause of an illness, the root doctor would discern who set trick and locate and break the object that contained its power. Sometimes it was a bottle full of potion buried in the ground underneath the victim's doorstep, or a bag containing graveyard dust, the victim's hair, and herbal roots.[67] Upon finding the item, the conjurer would destroy it and either end the hex or reverse it onto the person who originated it. When a cure could not be found, the conjurer developed an explanation as to why not. It was said that "the longer one languished under a conjure spell, the more difficult full recovery became."[68] Hence, if the individual failed to seek help early enough, the chance of recovery could disappear. If the individual's condition could not be ameliorated, root doctors alternatively conjectured that the item mediating the trick could not be found, the trick possessed too much power, or that it worked too swiftly, ending in the unfortunate person's death.

Unlike the common practice in Euro-descended medical tradition, the black community neither removed individuals with mental illness from the community nor

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[66] Ibid., 87; White, 135.

[67] Fett, 104; Wayland Debs Hand, "Physical Harm, Sickness, and Death by Conjury: A Survey of the Sorcerer's Evil Art in America," in *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America : Selected Essays of Wayland D. Hand* (University of California Press, 1980), 215–25; Roland Steiner, "Braziel Robinson Possessed of Two Spirits," *The Journal of American Folklore* 13, no. 50 (July 1, 1900): 226–28, doi:10.2307/533891.

[68] Fett, 96; Hand, "Physical Harm, Sickness, and Death by Conjury: A Survey of the Sorcerer's Evil Art in America"; Puckett, Newbell Niles, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

shunned them. However, enslaved blacks held conjurers at a distance and feared them because of their grave power. When one conjurer woman called "Darkey" threatened her co-laborers with death, they avoided encountering her or even crossing over her land at all costs, realizing that an object could be buried under the ground that would subject them to a trick.[69] The fearful reverence enslaved blacks showed "Darkey" was not rare. In fact, according to a Maryland doctor, by 1861 almost every black neighborhood housed "an old negro woman who is regarded by the other negroes with profound awe and fear, on account of her supposed possession of occult powers, by which she can, at will, bring pain and death upon her enemies."[70] The enslaved black community often held conjurers at a distance and respected them fearfully.

Contrarily, blacks gathered around the ill in order to comfort them. When a severe beating debilitated a slave, blacks would enter the sufferer's house after the workday, sing songs, and tell stories about the day's happenings.[71] Similarly, when masters sent mentally disabled blacks into the wilderness, "emancipating" them to die of starvation, relatives would visit them after nightfall, bringing a portion of the family's meager food ration as well as to cut fire wood and gather water for them.[72] This alone kept the disabled individual alive. Hence, one can derive that the incidence of mental illness was not polarized as an undesirable characteristic in the community.

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[69] Ibid., 90.
[70] Ibid., 97.
[71] Randolph, 22.
[72] Ibid., 22.

One of the root beliefs in Hoodoo is that good and evil are not opposites, but rather constitute points on a continuum.[73] Harm was inflicted or healing was given, but all was in the context of community. Contracting a mental illness did not cost an individual their spot in the community. The understanding was that some conflict, either among people or involving ancestors, spirits, or God, had not been resolved, and that little could be done. But the idea of staying together was an important one in Hoodoo.

Nineteenth century US physicians' perceptions of black mental health were built upon centuries of European mythology that assumed a correlation between blackness and insanity. Psychiatrists argued that slavery was the ideal condition for blacks in the US, as the paternal protection of their masters buffered them from the stresses that produce mental illness. But contemporary slaveholders viewed mental illness as an obstacle to production and abused, tortured, manumitted, and killed disabled slaves who were incapable of fulfilling their labor assignments. Enslaved blacks possessed a unique view of mental health that stemmed from the practice of hoodoo. Mental illness was seen as the result of conjuration in the community due to conflicts surrounding sex, love, interpersonal power, and other issues. Hoodoo's system in which good and evil were related allowed the mentally ill to retain an honored place within the enslaved black community. The mentally ill were not removed from society, unlike the practice in Western cultures. Nineteenth century discussions of black mental health reveal that racism in psychology is not new, but rather played a central role in its early practice and study.

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[73] Fett, 90.

Policy Implications Concerning the Racist Roots of Psychiatry

The fact that racial disparities are relevant in the practice of modern mental health care indicates that interpersonal and institutional racism continues to guide mental health care practices. Racial disparities persist in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness as well as involuntary institutionalization. In order to eliminate these disparities, cultural competence must be emphasized in the practice of mental health care, mental health service guidelines must be followed equally and consistently with all ethnic groups, and the presence of advocates in the commitment process must be amplified.[74]

> King Davis defines cultural competence as
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> …the integration and transformation of knowledge, information, and data about individuals and groups of people into specific clinical standards, skills, service approaches, techniques, and marketing programs that match the individual's culture and increase the quality and appropriateness of health care and outcomes.[75]

Cultural competence must be made a central priority among mental health practitioners in the United States. Blacks, like all other ethnic groups, must be evaluated within the context of the validity of their culture. Evidence shows that blacks face struggles in their lives that call for survival and coping mechanisms. Poverty, unemployment, and racism from police and other societal authorities create stress-inducing environments and require

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[74] Davis, King E. et al., "Involuntary Commitment Policy: Disparities in Admissions of African American Men to State Mental Hospitals."

[75] Davis, King E., "Primary Health Care and Severe Mental Illness: The Need for National and State Policy," in *Social Policy Reform, Research, & Practice*, ed. Ewalt, P. et al. (Washington, D.C: NASW Press, 1997).

such tactical responses. Many mental health practitioners misinterpret these coping mechanisms as deviance and as a result label these individuals as mentally ill when in fact their behavior is a reflection of their circumstances rather than their mental health status. The stress associated with these circumstances must be acknowledged in order for black mental health to be accurately diagnosed and treated. [76]

Next, eliminating racial discrepancies in mental health treatment relies upon the consistent and equal application of practitioner guidelines with all populations. Research shows that persistent racist attitudes concerning blacks' level of maturity and intelligence cause blacks to be given out-patient therapy less often than Latinos, Asians, and whites.[77] Blacks are also given higher dosages of antipsychotic medications than whites in psychiatric emergency room settings.[78] Practitioners will have to ensure that all populations are receiving the same treatment options and that prescriptions and treatment recommendations are not driven by cultural or economic biases.

And finally, in order to stop the overrepresentation of blacks among those committed to mental institutions, the presence of advocates throughout the commitment process must be increased. The current system, which relies heavily on police and

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[76] Zwerling, Israel and et. al., "Individual and Institutional Racism," in *Racism, Elitism, Professionalism: Barriers to Community Mental Health* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1976), 41–79; Arthur L. Whaley and King E. Davis, "Cultural Competence and Evidence-Based Practice in Mental Health Services: A Complementary Perspective," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 6 (September 2007): 563–74, doi:10.1037/0003-066X.62.6.563; Davis, King E., "Pathways to Integrated Health Care: Strategies for African American Communities and Organizations" (United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2011).
[77] Lonnie R. Snowden, "Barriers to Effective Mental Health Services for African Americans," *Mental Health Services Research* 3, no. 4 (2001): 181–87; Hu, T.W. et al., "Ethnic Populations in Public Mental Health: Service Choice and Level of Use," *American Journal of Public Health* 81 (1991): 1429–34.
[78] Segal, S.P., Bola, J.R., and Watson, M.A., "Race, Quality of Care, and Prescribing Practices in the Psychiatric Emergency Room," *Psychiatric Services* 47 (1996): 282–86.

psychiatrists' directives for would-be involuntary patients, is unbalanced and favors the confinement of people of color.[79] Advocacy groups must participate in the commitment process in order to give a voice to people of color who are suspected of mental illness and lack economic resources, individuals who comprise some of the most vulnerable people in the nation. Even though the overrepresentation of blacks among the institutionalized has persisted ever since the early nineteenth century, there is hope that as mental health practitioners become aware of the racism in their field, racial disparities can indeed be reduced significantly. This will take time, of course; however, change is within our reach.

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[79] Davis, King E. et al., "Involuntary Commitment Policy: Disparities in Admissions of African American Men to State Mental Hospitals."

Chapter 2: Revisiting Woodward's Thesis from a Black Studies Perspective

In October 1954, C. Vann Woodward delivered the James W. Richard Lectures in History at the University of Virginia. His purpose was to provide Southerners with a framework for facing the idea of integration which the Supreme Court had handed down earlier that year with the monumental *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling on public school desegregation. While his lectures focused very little on segregation in schools, they suggested that segregation was not an immutable tradition in the South— that other patterns of power relations had prevailed before, and that southern people would succeed in facing this challenge. [80]

In these lectures, which were later published as *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955), he asserted that segregation only appeared near the end of the nineteenth century, several decades after the emancipation of blacks.[81] Whereas this social pattern had been portrayed as an uninterrupted and irremovable Southern tradition, a period of experimentation occurred during Reconstruction. During this span, "segregation was not the invariable rule" and racial interaction took on a variety of forms, as evidenced by personal accounts from contemporaries and the nature of politics during this period. [82]

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[80] Rabinowitz, Howard N., "More Than the Woodward Thesis: Assessing The Strange Career of Jim Crow," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 842–56.
[81] Woodward, C. Vann, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).
[82] Woodward, C. Vann, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1986). 71.

Historicizing Woodward's Thesis

Historians began describing the Reconstruction period in the 1920s and overwhelmingly characterized it as a diabolical era in which blacks and white southern race traitors ruled over white society, destroying traditional southern culture. Dunning School historians as well as social scientists and scholars from a variety of disciplines held this view.[83] In 1935 W.E. B. Du Bois acted as the sole objector to this monologue and released *Black Reconstruction*, saying that, "One fact and one fact alone explains the attitude of most recent writers toward Reconstruction: they cannot conceive of Negroes as men."[84] He was eventually joined by Howard K. Beale in 1940 in issuing a call for the revision of Reconstruction history.[85]

However, the act of revision required a change in national racial attitudes to motivate a widespread response to that call. For the first time since Reconstruction, the issue of black civil rights was under the gaze of the federal government once more, inviting historians to give a fresh look at the only similar period in history, the Reconstruction period of the late nineteenth century, in which blacks were first made citizens and then given the vote. While the first Reconstruction failed to permanently establish blacks as first class citizens, the "second" one, as it would soon be called, seemed to hold much more promise.

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[83] Dunning, William A., *Reconstruction, Political and Economic 1865-1877* (New York, 1907); Coulter, E. Merton, *The South During Reconstruction 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947).
[84] Du Bois, W.E.B., *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York, 1935).
[85] Beale, Howard K., "On Rewriting Reconstruction History," *American Historical Review* 45 (1940): 807–27.

As a result, more authors came to answer Du Bois's call for revision. Two authors who inspired Woodward's work included Vernon Lane Wharton (1947) and George Brown Tindall (1952), who both released works supporting the idea that Jim Crow was a decidedly inevitable development. In 1955, Woodward wrote in contradistinction to them, asserting "first, that racial segregation in the South in the rigid and universal form it had taken by 1954 did not appear with the end of slavery, but toward the end of the century and later; and second, that before it appeared in this form there occurred an era of experiment and variety in race relations of the South in which segregation was not the invariable rule."[86]

That same year, James Baldwin also offered commentary on the topic, saying in *Notes of a Native Son* that throughout history, the "negro problem" emerged again and again, and that each time, white society met the affront using various means, ranging from lynching, segregation, to other forms of violence, sometimes using them all at the same time.[87] In contrast to Woodward, Baldwin argued that blacks exercised agency and that heightened white oppression was a response to black resistance and pursuit of equality. The question of white societal responses to black action, federal concern with black rights, and the revision of the Reconstruction narrative were all popular topics of analytical inquiry at this time.

While asserting his thesis, Woodward invited and summoned other scholars to participate with him in exploring this under-researched period. Between 1961 and 2010,

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[86] Woodward, C. Vann, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History*; Wharton, Vernon Lane, *The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill, 1947); Tindall, George Brown, *South Carolina Negroes 1877-1900* (Columbia, 1952).
[87] Baldwin, James, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

many authors accepted Woodward's invitation and have engaged in research to build a history of Reconstruction. While generally correct for the public sphere, Woodward's thesis is only one dimensional. Other authors shed light on the Reconstruction period's significance as a watershed era in the South and the US, demonstrate the active role blacks played in reconstructing the South, and highlight white and black women's centrality to the development of segregation in the public sphere.

Woodward's first claim is that "racial segregation in the South in the rigid and universal form it had taken by 1954 did not appear with the end of slavery, but toward the end of the century and later…." [88] He supports this assertion by using first-hand accounts from black and white North American and British travelers who visited Atlantic southern states between 1878 and1890 with the purpose of evaluating the South's power relations and racial mythologies. These accounts identified integration in public venues such as saloons, restaurants, cemeteries, and parades in Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana. He does qualify this idea, however, to say that certain areas of segregation had already been established and remained throughout this period, including in public schools, churches, military participation, and private social gatherings. Hence, he argues that segregation did not become more widespread until the late 1890s and early 1900s.

Segregation in the US South and the US in general constituted a division of black and white citizens, often grouping other nonwhite citizens with black individuals. This

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[88] Woodward, C. Vann, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History*. 71.

separation has several dimensions, one of which, as Woodward highlights in his text, is *de facto* versus *de jure* segregation. The former occurs as a result of tradition; it is not mandated by law, as opposed to the latter. As some authors will point out, segregation also carries other delineations, since it was practiced differently in public and private realms. Public areas were usually segregated rigidly except in the case of black maids attending white families on segregated rail cars, restaurants, and other locations that would usually be off-limits to blacks. Private realms, on the other hand, were often integrated and maintained the racial hierarchy, as whites often relied upon the services of black domestics and maids. Similarly, racial and ethnic divisions often manifested differently in urban and rural areas, depending on the time period and the social rigidity of particular areas of the South.

Woodward also argues that a period of experimentation lapsed before segregation solidified in the South and contends that politicians presented three alternatives. The first option comprised a liberal approach articulated by George Washington Cable in his 1885 book *The Silent South*, which advocated equal rights for blacks and whites, an end to segregation and employment discrimination, and the equal issuance of justice. This option, emerging ahead of its time, failed to gather support and subsequently was rejected until the 1950s. The second approach, pursued by the conservative Southern Democrats, was both based on white supremacy and opposed to black degradation. It claimed that if whites do not lift blacks up, blacks would drag Southern society down, and thence proponents of this view pushed for black suffrage and in some cases black education and

integrated transportation services. Redeemers courted and acquired the black vote. The third alternative was that pursued by the Populists, who sought the black vote by building political alliances with the Republicans. Emphasizing identification between lower class whites and blacks based on poverty and want, the Populists supported black suffrage and social equality. One struggle they faced, however, lay in Woodward's view, that poor whites harbored the most hostility toward blacks, whereas some upper class whites did not.

The South fell into extreme racism, Woodward argues, because the opposition to institutionalized racism weakened. The North withdrew its protection from blacks starting with the Compromise of 1877, continuing with Supreme Court decisions limiting the privileges and immunities protected under the 14th Amendment and in 1883, removing the restrictive power that the Civil Rights Act (53) had granted the federal government. The legitimization of separate but equal in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and Supreme Court approval of black disenfranchisement in Mississippi (*Williams v. Mississippi*, 1898) paved the way toward legal proscription, segregation, and disenfranchisement.

Blacks' role in these events, he avers, was one of submission and not resistance. "The resistance of the Negro himself had long ceased to be an important deterrent to white aggression. But a new and popular spokesman of the race came forward with a submissive philosophy for the Negro that to some whites must have appeared an invitation to further aggression. … Booker T. Washington… would seem unwittingly to

have smoothed the path to proscription." [89] He also labels blacks as becoming "confused and politically apathetic" feeling incapable of trusting any party as the century wore on.[90]

Woodward's thesis is a straightforward attempt to summarize the state of power relations in Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction. His analysis is limited by his insistence that this entire struggle is predicated upon racial relations. Not only are these power struggles not racially defined, but they also cloak the actual state of affairs. Blacks were generally subjugated economically, socially, and often politically in spite of new found power; meanwhile, whites exerted terroristic force upon them in order to maintain white supremacy. Hence, the term "race relations" is coyly euphemistic and misrepresentative.

Further, it would appear that Woodward's goal was to say that racism was mild during this period. Nevertheless, throughout the book he reminds the reader that he does not consider this era as one of racial harmony. He acknowledges that lynching reached the highest levels seen in the nation during this period and that racial hostility was present.[91] Therefore, he attempts to bring complexity to his conceptualization of the era. However, the fact that he uses only seven sources to show that integration was prevalent before de jure segregation was, detracts from his argument. Also, he depicts blacks as mere objects rather than actors in the drama of Reconstruction. His portrayal of blacks as not resisting discrimination is also inaccurate. Later authors would bring this critique to

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[89] Woodward, C. Vann, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 64-65.
[90] Ibid. 41.
[91] Ibid. 26, 47.

the forefront, arguing that black activism and demands for equal rights motivated some southern whites to push for legal segregation and discrimination in order to keep blacks in the position of subjugation that they perpetually resisted.[92]

Contemporary Discussions Surrounding Woodward's Thesis

The first authors to respond to Woodward's invitation, Charles Wynes and Frenise Logan, measured the thesis according to archival sources from Virginia and North Carolina, and supported Woodward's claims. In 1961 Charles Wynes published *Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902*, which illustrates the decline of black political power in Virginia.[93] Claiming that blacks exercised political power for a period of time in Virginia before being disregarded by Conservatives and Republicans, he supports the Woodward thesis. This view offers a counter-narrative to the idea that blacks were immediately thrown into the complete subjugation of Jim Crow. Also, although segregation constituted the majority of blacks' social experiences, from 1870to 1880 a variety of public spaces were occasionally available to blacks. Wynes speaks explicitly to Woodward's thesis in his preface and conclusion, noting that the limitation to the thesis is the fact that segregation dominated blacks' experiences rather than integration. Unfortunately, Wynes's work shares some of *Strange Career*'s weaknesses. While Wynes discusses black resistance to a brief extent, describing blacks' fighting for

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[92] Rabinowitz, Howard N., *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); Jeffries, Hasan Kwame, "Conditions Unfavorable to the Rise of the Negro: The Pursuit of Freedom Rights before the Civil Rights Era," in *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
[93] Wynes, Charles E., *Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1961).

integrated public transportation in the federal court in 1880, he also fails to treat blacks as actors in his dialogue.[94]

Frenise A. Logan released *The Negro in North Carolina, 1876-1894* in 1964, explicitly supporting the Woodward thesis.[95] The end of Reconstruction did not bring blacks' immediate relegation to the second-class citizenship associated with Jim Crow, he argues. Rather, blacks voted in large numbers, ignored whites' preferences for segregation, and rarely faced castigation for these perceived violations. While Woodward suggests that integration was common and sometimes embraced, Logan's work gives a slightly different impression. Whites insisted that blacks not violate whites' wishes for segregation, especially in public transportation, waiting rooms, hotels, and restaurants. *Negroes in North Carolina* is replete with quotes in which whites argue that the separation of the races is a God-given mandate. Likewise, he notes that whites often protested black attempts at integration. Yet, Logan voices his agreement with Woodward, claiming that white supremacy originated in the twentieth century since the state did not initiate legal segregation between 1865 and 1898. Thus, he conflates the existence of white supremacist logic with the existence of codified segregation and disenfranchisement. Because the laws did not exist, he assumes that white supremacy was not prevalent. His evidence, however, points to the contrary.

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[94] Ibid. 10.
[95] Logan, Frenise A., *The Negro in North Carolina 1876-1894* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

In 1964 authors broadened the discussion to challenge Woodward's claim that white supremacy was a twentieth-century phenomenon, and also his description of the origins of US segregation. That year Richard C. Wade released a study of slavery in the cities, arguing that white supremacy had indeed developed earlier than the Jim Crow period and that urban dwellers used segregation to control free blacks and slaves in southern cities.[96] Cities throughout the South developed systems for "sustain[ing] their traditional superiority over Negroes," legally barring free blacks and slaves from sharing railroad cars and from using the same hotels and restaurants.[97] This separation was extensive and often excluded blacks, despite their status, without providing alternatives for them in schools, libraries, social activities, and travel by carriage, among other categories. Hospitals, burial sites, churches, and to an extent, housing were also segregated. These practices began as early as 1816 and persisted through the early 1860s. While cities showed different social practices and varied widely as to what type of segregation was required where, each city developed countless ways of maintaining the separation of the races.

Along similar lines, Joel Williamson suggests that the idea of immutable white supremacy developed in the 1830s and 40s.[98] During this period, Southern white thinkers argued that blacks were inherently and permanently inferior, and that due to their childlikeness and slovenliness, they needed to be enslaved to survive. Both natural law

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[96] Wade, Richard C., *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[97] Ibid. 278.

[98] Williamson, Joel, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

and God's law incriminated them for servitude. He also claims that segregation developed during slavery and remained unbroken until the mid-nineteenth century. Williamson also describes blacks as demanding equal access to restaurants, railway cars, and other recreational spaces. The black legislators in South Carolina succeeded in pushing for the end to legal segregation of public facilities and the exclusion of blacks from civil privileges in 1868 in South Carolina. Also contrary to Woodward's claims that blacks did not push for anything besides equal access on the railways, he argues that blacks pushed for integration in places of amusement, restaurants, hotels, and cemeteries in 1868-1870, and against segregation in bars and saloons in 1870. However, the vast majority of these changes were achieved in urban South Carolina, while rural blacks were largely bound to white landowners and risked physical harm or lynching if they challenged the economic hierarchy.

Woodward responded to these authors in his 1966 reissue of *Strange Career*, adjusting his thesis to hold that white supremacy did originate before Reconstruction.[99] He also embraced the idea that segregation was initiated before emancipation in cities, but qualifies this by saying that only a small fraction of the black population and the slave population resided in urban centers. Most blacks did not experience the segregation that occurred there, he argued.

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[99] Woodward, C. Vann, "Of Old Regimes and Reconstructions," in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Dethloff and Jones initiated the study of Louisiana, and sided with Woodward in this discussion.[100] Their 1968 work claimed that the transition from Republican to a Redeemer government was smooth, and that few distinctions existed between the two groups. This functioned as an explicit confirmation of Woodward's claim that experimentation rather than decided racism dominated Southern politics during Reconstruction. Blassingame followed five years later with a book length account of power relations in Louisiana.[101] He also supported Woodward, though implicitly, by saying that segregation and integration existed randomly alongside each other in New Orleans. However, he distinguished himself from Woodward by arguing that racial animosity dominated white people's attitudes in the city.

Roger A. Fischer, on the other hand, critiqued this set of authors.[102] He agreed with Woodward, Dethloff and Jones, and Blassingame that both segregation and integration coexisted in New Orleans, but disagreed with Dethloff, Jones, and Woodwards' idea that white supremacy was not a dominant attitude in New Orleans. Yes, integration and segregation could be seen side by side in New Orleans, but this advancement was largely due to black protest, not white support for integration. After emancipation, blacks petitioned for integrated schools, restaurants, hotels, and the like, achieving great degrees of integration and acquiring an impressive measure of human rights in the city. However, once the Democrats gained the majority in the government in

[100] Dethloff, Henry C. and Jones, Robert P., "Race Relations in Louisiana, 1877-1898," *Louisiana History*, 1968, 301–23.
[101] Blassingame, John, W., *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
[102] Fischer, Roger A., *The Segregation Struggle in Louisiana 1862-1877* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

1890, they intentionally brought an end to the integration blacks had achieved. Democrats had seen the force that powerful blacks could exert and they wanted to destroy that power in order to make sure it never emerged again. Hence, Fischer overwhelmingly refuted Woodward and Dethloff and Jones's claim that a spirit of experimentation overrode white supremacy in New Orleans. Dale A. Somers, who contributed to this conversation in 1974, recognized Fischer's findings but sided with Woodward.[103] He superficially declared that the rigid color line that divided the cities prior to 1865 did not survive the Civil War.

Howard Rabinowitz took the Woodward thesis head-on in his 1978 book *Race Relations in the Urban South*, which evaluated segregation and white supremacy in five southern cities.[104] After establishing that blacks in southern cities were excluded from social services such as hospitals and schools, and that segregation allowed their only opportunity to access these services, Rabinowitz reconfigures Woodward's question, "why after a period of racial flexibility did white southerners decide to segregate the races rigidly?"[105] In its stead he asks, since de facto segregation was prevalent before 1890, why did whites upgrade to de jure segregation?

While Woodward suggests that weakening northern resolve led to this development, Rabinowitz observes that such a stance renders blacks as objects rather than actors in Southern Reconstruction history. The more likely possibility is that blacks'

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[103] Somers, Dale A., "Black and White in New Orleans: A Study of Urban Race Relations, 1865-1900," *Journal of Southern History* XL (1974): 19–42.
[104] Rabinowitz, Howard N., *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890*.
[105] Ibid. 301.

protests against de facto segregation made whites question the degree to which tradition could successfully subjugate blacks for the long term. Blacks' demands for rights would have to be confronted repeatedly and blacks could possibly acquire more wealth and rights in the process. Hence, Rabinowitz suggests that the introduction of de jure segregation around 1890 was their solution. This would keep blacks "in their place." In his words, "black resistance might have prompted the final step in the longstanding effort of whites to control the region's black population."

Eric Foner synthesizes the work of Rabinowitz and countless others in his massive volume *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (1988).[106] Here, he contextualizes revisionist and post revisionist scholarship within one hundred years of literature on the topic, providing a synthesis of the revisionist literature on Reconstruction. While he agrees with Woodward that Jim Crow was not necessarily destined to occur, he builds upon Wade, Williamson, and Rabinowitz in identifying blacks as having a defining role in the Reconstruction process. He describes the ups and downs associated with black hopes and endeavors. Emancipation was a time filled with great hope and high expectations, many of which were shattered within a few decades. Blacks seemed to lay eyes on the independence they had sought for centuries, only to be bound again to contracts and forced to work their former masters' land.

Although Foner portrays Jim Crow as not being inevitable, in many ways it was enacted long before it was legally established. Blacks seized every possible opportunity

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[106] Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988).

to use their rights to citizenship, first by expanding the organizations which supported the black community and later by protesting for suffrage and an end to a variety of discriminations. Blacks shaped Reconstruction, and it is largely due to their resilience and their resistance to subjugation that whites increasingly demanded formal restrictions on black rights, culminating with the establishment of Jim Crow at the end of the century.

John Graves expands upon Wade's and Rabinowitz's focus on the cities and evaluates new evidence from the border state of Arkansas.[107] While Woodward had dismissed Wade's assertions about the long life of segregation in the urban areas because of the small percentage of Southerners who actually lived in cities, John Graves finds that urban racial dynamics are undeniably important. Urban culture had spread to villages which had become towns because of the construction of new railways. Graves directly builds upon and also contests Rabinowitz's earlier findings. While Rabinowitz asserts that urban blacks often had to choose between exclusion from social services and segregated access to these institutions, Graves contends that in Arkansas, events did not unfold along such smooth lines. While exclusion and segregation were the only options for black public schooling, prisons and jails were integrated until 1903. But more importantly, blacks in the General Assembly of 1868 succeeded in passing civil rights laws, realizing that accepting segregation in public accommodations and employment would limit their ability to improve their economic situation. As a result, blacks won

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[107] Graves, John William, "Jim Crow in Arkansas: A Reconsideration of Urban Race Relations in the Post-Reconstruction South," *The Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 3 (1989): 421–48.

access to railcars, saloons, restaurants, places of public amusement, parks, and cemeteries on integrated terms.

Graves defines Arkansas's racial climate as lacking consensus concerning the rights that blacks should possess. Prejudice against blacks was declining among urban whites, as they sometimes developed respect for blacks as more black artisans and members of the middle class emerged. However, rural whites grew increasingly hostile toward blacks. These whites had become the new victims of subjugation practices that had once been aimed only at blacks and had descended into sharecropping and landlessness. As they saw their own economic stability fleeting, they also saw blacks on the rise. As a result they began to demand rigid segregation in the cities in order to renew the racial caste system that had traditionally protected rural whites' economic privilege. Graves agrees with Woodward's claim that a rigid form of segregation had not yet replaced other areas of experimentation in racial interaction by 1890. In doing so he mistakes Readjusters' pursuit of black votes as racial liberalism instead of a convenient tool for acquiring political power. However, he acknowledges that Joel Williamson's argument from his 1987 book rings true here.[108] Williamson contests that southern white men's economic vulnerability goaded them to reaffirm their roles as family guardians through the overemphasis on their role as "the protector," particularly from supposed black criminals and sexual offenders.

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[108] Williamson, Joel, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

While John Graves portrays the Readjusters' pandering for black votes as evidence of southern whites' racial progressivism, Lawrence Hartzell revealed in his study of Petersburg, Virginia, that Readjusters craved the black vote but did not give black voters what the black constituents wanted.[109] Blacks were a powerful voter block, out-balloting whites in every election between 1870 and 1874. After Redemption came in 1874, it was not until the 1880s that the Readjusters emerged, pursuing the black vote and promising to fight for the black community's interests.

Initially the Readjusters held true to their promises, abolishing the whipping post and the poll tax and establishing equal pay for black teachers between 1881 and 1883. Indeed, blacks assisted the party, making up two thirds of Readjusterism's supporters. Before the statewide election that reclaimed Virginia for the conservatives, a black newspaper conveyed the role of blacks in the Readjuster party: "We are regarded as a mere cipher, a pygmy among elephants…. It is the only [party] in which we feel that we have the right to humiliate ourselves and receive whatever is doled out to us as a reward."[110] Thus, blacks did not feel as though the Readjusters stood for their interests or respected them as constituents. The Readjusters' desire for power cannot be confused with racial equality.

Until this point, literature on Reconstruction neglected the role of women as historical actors. In her 1994 article, Elsa Barkley Brown introduces the complexity of

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[109] Hartzell, Lawrence L., "The Exploration of Freedom in Black Petersburg, Virginia, 1865-1902," in *The Edge of the South: Life in Nineteenth-Century Virginia*, ed. Ayers, Edward L. and Willis, John C. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991).
[110] Ibid. 142-143.

black women's political involvement during the period following emancipation.[111] Brown explains that blacks did not adhere to male-female delineations of appropriate private and public sphere involvement in 1865, and that black women were politically active during this period. Black women and children accompanied black men to the polls, sometimes camping there before the polls opened, with the black women armed with rifles protecting the male voters. She argues that even though only males could vote, the ballot was seen as a communal possession, not simply one that would reflect only men's desires or intentions. Only gradually did blacks begin to appropriate dominant cultural perceptions of gendered sphere interaction, but this was not during Reconstruction. During this period black men and women worked together to maintain black access to the vote. [112]

She also highlights the manner in which white supremacists policed the black population. Sexual violence was commonly used against black women, often against those who were attractive and wealthy. Black women were also lynched alongside and as often as black men. This terrorism was an expression of white resentment at sharing resources with blacks as well as an affront to black women's status as ladies. Sexual assault became so common and the challenge against black women's femininity so pronounced that even the discussion of the sexual violence was silenced from within the

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[111] Brown, Elsa Barkley, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 107–46.

[112] She stresses the lack of a public-private realm gender differentiation in the black community in contrast to Jacqueline Jones and Eric Foner who claimed that blacks had appropriated this element of white culture by early Reconstruction. See the following texts for these authors' arguments and claims: Jones, Jacqueline, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877.*

black population, since whites consistently used it to try to prove that black women were not ladies. As a result, knowledge of this sexual victimization has largely disappeared from public memory, partially explaining the existence of this gap in the literature.

Barbara Welke continues the focus on women, insisting upon women's centrality to the hardening of racial segregation.[113] Focusing on Tennessee, she questions Woodward's and Rabinowitz's exclusion of women from their description of why the South resorted to Jim Crow, arguing that the development of railcar segregation pivoted around the protection of white female purity. Previous to 1867, cars were segregated by gender; however, black women were excluded from the ladies' car because they were not seen as respectable. Similarly, black men were excluded because of the sexual threat they supposedly posed to white women, although elite white men were sometimes allowed in the ladies' car. In order to legally limit black women and men's access to the ladies' car, states initiated racial segregation, placing whites on separate cars from blacks beginning in 1893. This pattern of segregation soon spread to virtually every aspect of Southern life. Women were central to the development of Jim Crow and eliding this fact presents a significant omission. Although Welke does not acknowledge it, a loophole in this schema allowed black nursemaids and domestics to ride in the ladies' car or the white car when attending to their employers' needs.

Also drawing upon sources from Tennessee, Mack complements Welke's findings and hones in on the challenge black plaintiffs faced as they opposed gender and race

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[113] Welke, Barbara Y., "When All the Women Were Whites, and All the Blacks Were Men: Gender, Class, Race, and the Road to Plessy, 1855-1914," *Law and History Review* 13 (Fall 1995): 295–313.

segregation measures.[114] Black plaintiffs found that while the argument for racial equality

assisted their efforts at times, eventually gender and race were granted congruous status

as categories that could legally be segregated. While Woodward claimed that law had the

power to initiate great change in society or that it was at least a measure of societal

progress, and his critics often argued that the law failed to adequately reflect societal

change, Kenneth W. Mack suggests that neither of these extremes is accurate. Rather,

"[s]ociolegal change in the New South occurred through a dialectical process" involving

law, social change, and identity formation."[115] Mack's contribution is rich and unique

among the works explored here.

Focusing her argument on the fluidity of racial lines, Jane Dailey's *Before Jim*

Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia (2000) explores gender

dynamics and white political dominance in the US South.[116] Supporting Woodward's idea

that Reconstruction was not inevitable, she confronts Leon Litwack, George

Frederickson, and Carl Degler's dismissal of the sense of possibility that hung in the air

during this unsettled period.[117] Once slavery was abolished, whiteness was no longer

clearly defined and the equality which blacks laid hold upon and the economic and

political success they achieved caused great anxiety among whites, since these were, in

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[114] Mack, Kenneth W., "Law, Society, Identity, and the Making of the Jim Crow South: Travel and Segregation on Tennessee Railroads, 1875-1905," *Law and Social Inquiry* 24, no. Spring (1999): 377–409.
[115] Ibid. 380-381.
[116] Dailey, Jane, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
[117] Litwack, Leon F., *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Frederickson, George M., *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Degler, Carl N., *The Other South: Southern Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

their minds, tokens of whiteness. She suggests that if the Readjusters had confronted the construct of race, they could have defeated the Democrats in a political war on white supremacy.

Nonetheless, she diverges from Woodward to build upon Rabinowitz and Foner's assertions that blacks were major actors in the drama of Reconstruction and the period that followed. Blacks' political power allowed them to seize such rights as public schooling, suffrage, freedom from obsequiousness on the sidewalk, and the ability to amass wealth, and to hold well-paying jobs. She also answers Rabinowitz's call to explore the role of black resistance in the development of Jim Crow. She claims that it was the economic success blacks had attained as well as their asserting their equality, which whites considered an insolent act, that prompted Democrats to pursue legislation purging blacks from the electorate and defining a legal social status for blacks to fill— one whose boundaries was Jim Crow.

Although Dailey argues that Jim Crow was not inevitable, her evidence seems to point toward its likelihood. She describes whites and blacks uniting politically over issues such as access to public schooling, and the right to vote without a poll tax obligation. However, she does not address the fact that in certain central issues, black and white desires were incompatible. Blacks wanted equality and most whites did not want blacks to have it, neither economically nor socially. While the Readjusters supported black suffrage, they refused to give blacks marriage equality, which symbolized the relegation of blacks to second-class citizenry. To their credit, Readjusters did integrate employment

opportunities, hiring blacks as teachers, appointing them as school board members, and granting them coveted patronage positions, which often created integrated environments. However, Dailey distinguishes between the establishment of public integration and actual social equality for blacks. The latter was avoided by Readjuster refusal to legalize interracial marriage. As a result of this, blacks remained aware of their second-class status, as did the rest of Virginia. Since blacks' desires for full social equality and whites desires for supremacy were fundamentally incompatible and blacks continued to demand equality, it seems likely that whites would instigate a formalized racial boundary in order to reduce the risk of blacks achieving more of their goals.

Jennifer Ritterhouse brings a fresh perspective on the terrorism that characterizes the Reconstruction era.[118] While Woodward argued that experimentation dominated southern culture before the inception of Jim Crow, Ritterhouse highlights the racial etiquette that motivated hundreds of lynchings and acts of violence against blacks. While blacks gained political power during this period, whites came to expect blacks to follow a rigid set of mores that acknowledged whites' supposed superiority. This required blacks to remove their hats, defer to whites on sidewalks, stay out of whites' paths, and circumvent referring to blacks using titles of respect. These standards were supposed to function as a means of avoiding spectacles of violence. If blacks could honor the rules, no further violence would be necessary. These unofficial laws were meant to maintain a racial hierarchy in spite of changing times. However, blacks' adherence to the racial

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[118] Ritterhouse, Jennifer, "The Etiquette of Race Relations in the Jim Crow South," in *Manners and Southern History*, ed. Ownby, Ted (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 20–44.

etiquette did not keep them from gaining political, economic, and social stature. As a result, violence against blacks escalated and whites initiated Jim Crow in order to fully subjugate blacks according to white desires.

Ritterhouse also continues Brown's and Welke's focus on women and makes a striking contribution to the discussion that clarifies the private and public divide which Woodward and most of the previous authors ignored. While the South initiated legal segregation to reinstate white dominance, this racial separation only persisted in the public sphere. White homes are one locale that saw a degree of integration in the sense that blacks and whites were present in the same space. However, this integration should not be confused with racial liberalism, but rather identified as evidence of a racial hierarchy at work. Ritterhouse argues that employing blacks reassured whites of their own moral goodness and kindness and helped to justify their reliance upon white supremacist ideals. Ritterhouse's work supports the conclusion that Jim Crow was inevitable. Southern whites were persistently trying to reassert their superiority in social, political, and economic realms. Meanwhile, southern blacks were gaining stature in all three areas and were not willing to be disrespected. As a result, whites established Jim Crow to force blacks into second class citizenship.

Hasan Jeffries critiques Woodward's account of black protest during the Post-Civil War era.[119] He begins by providing an account of lynching and its relevance in

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[119] Jeffries, Hasan Kwame, "Conditions Unfavorable to the Rise of the Negro: The Pursuit of Freedom Rights before the Civil Rights Era."
[119] Woodward, C. Vann, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History*.

Lowndes County from 1865-1965. Early on, blacks were lynched or beaten for trying to leave the plantations they had labored upon as slaves and on which they sharecropped. Later, blacks were murdered for possessing wealth and for demanding respect through protest. While Woodward claims that blacks did not protest the establishment of Jim Crow, Jeffries explains that blacks in Lowndes County did not publicly protest Jim Crow because of the prevalence of lynching. Since pursuing their highest goals, namely the franchise, would surely cost them their lives, they calculated methods of resistance that might increase their autonomy while maintaining their personal safety. While Woodward depicts blacks as politically passive, Jeffries' account depicts the level of strategy blacks undertook due to the overwhelming danger they confronted in Lowndes County. However, terrorism was whites' chosen method of maintaining white supremacy not only in Alabama but also throughout the South. Any seeming absence of apparent black protest can likely be explained by Jeffries' findings.

Evaluating Woodward's Thesis from a Black Studies Perspective

Woodward's thesis has a few strong points. It indicates that Woodward was engaged with understanding contemporary issues and interested in helping everyday people cope with these developments. So his response was appropriate and one of social activism. His response was also timely. This contemporary issue not only wrought concerns within the Southern white public but also fascinated historians. Woodward is

not alone in referring to the civil Rights movement as the second Reconstruction. He successfully encapsulated the interesting factors that historians wanted to grapple with, and as a result inspired ample scholarly literature. He stated his thesis as a shot in the dark. Few people had made similar assertions. Perhaps that explains why he drew such voluminous response. And finally, his conceptualization of the Reconstruction period as a watershed era has held true. This period housed the formation of modern US society and the black working, middle classes, and elite.

However, the thesis falls short in a number of areas. Woodward's apparent insistence upon equating the nature of US South power relations with the degree of racial segregation that exists clouds the actual social conditions of the era. Rather than using an analysis of segregation to define the state of power relations, one must look at the lynching, sexual violence, and terrorism that were used to keep blacks from utilizing their newfound citizenship rights. It is pertinent to recognize southern whites' limiting of blacks' employment opportunities to predominantly agrarian and menial work also preserved both black economic subjugation and capitalistic power for elite members of the white population. As Ritterhouse and Welke point out, Southern whites were perpetually looking for ways to consolidate their power over blacks and reinitiate their permanent subjugation. When racial etiquette and lynching failed to keep increasingly affluent blacks in their places, the extreme measures of legalizing a black second-class status and enforcing it through terrorism became required. Woodward not only mischaracterizes the era but also fails to acknowledge the persistent dominance of white

supremacist ideals from 1865 to the end of Reconstruction. Rather than proving that segregation is not a folkway, the discussion has led to the conclusion that white supremacy was indeed an important component of contemporary southern white culture before 1960 and that these whites were willing to go to great lengths to maintain a society that reflected those beliefs.

Recent research also reveals that the segregation which Woodward argued subsumed Southern society prevailed only in the public realm and not in the private. Black women worked in white homes as their main source of employment from 1865 through the 1960s, therefore making white homes and other private "white" spaces such as railcars and restaurants integrated spaces in reality. This state of integration, however, is not to be confused as a sign of the absence of racism. Employing blacks in subservient roles helped white southerners to justify their subjugating blacks in their society. Whites believed they were actually good people who were helping blacks and did not have evil attitudes toward blacks. It helped whites convince themselves that they were not treating black inappropriately in their society.

Woodward inaccurately portrays blacks during Reconstruction as fighting only for the right to access railcars on an equal, non-segregated basis, that they did not fight for other rights, and that they did not even protest Jim Crow when it arrived. Fisher illustrates how blacks fought for many rights beyond access to railcars, including but not limited to integrated schools, restaurants, hotels, and saloons in Louisiana. Graves also asserts that blacks pursued and acquired similar rights in Arkansas. But Woodward's

greatest omission here seems to be the fact that blacks had to strategically decide what rights to petition for based on the degree of terrorism to which they could possibly be subjected. In most of the Deep South, blacks could not petition for equal rights without risking lynching or assault. Also, as Jim Crow emerged and US southern whites found a way to consolidate their power over blacks and subjugate them completely, the victimization they feared was practically legalized. Blacks could not safely petition for the vote, so instead they pursued access to education and vocational training. To depict blacks as politically and socially passive is to ignore whites' determined efforts to reassert oppressive power over blacks. Likewise, Woodward's exclusion of women from his account exposes a significant oversight on his part. He omitted not only the presence of black women and white women, but also their contributions to either fighting or supporting systemic oppression. This area was not looked at until the 1990s when Brown explored black women's political activism in the Reconstruction period and Welke revealed the centrality of white women's purity to the development and subsequent spread of systematic segregation in the South.

While this exchange has been energy-filled, it has been cordial. Most of the authors acknowledge and engage with the rich genealogy of Woodward's supporters and critics as found in the scholarly literature. In regards to the decades-long discussion of this thesis, Williamson writes that 'this is how the pursuit of truth in history works when it works well."[120] The first critics of the thesis targeted its basic anatomy—the origin of segregation, rural versus urban dynamics of white supremacy, and the question of

whether contemporary politicians were experimenting with racial equality or not.

Subsequent authors, however, challenge Woodward's objectification of blacks, his

exclusion of women, and his conflation of public and private dynamics. As a result, the

thesis's identification of Reconstruction as a watershed era remains, while the rest of the

thesis stands reconfigured if not refuted. Woodward's thesis remains a contribution to the

literature, however, because it initiated a timely inquiry into the birth of black citizenship

and blacks' incipient experience as US citizens.

Chapter 3: Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane, 1874-1881: Social Control and the Medical Abuse of African Americans in Post-Emancipation Virginia

On January 27, 1874, the Mayor of Petersburg, VA, Franklin Wood, ordered that a thirty-seven year old black woman named Mabel Harris be apprehended and brought to the court house that very day.[121] He had recently received a complaint from a citizen named Dandrige Gill that Mabel was speaking wildly and foolishly. Mabel seemed convinced that she had rights to some property that had been officially recognized as belonging to someone else. Her sentiment was not uncommon during the Reconstruction period. After emancipation, many blacks believed that the US government would correct the centuries of economic deprivation under slavery by giving blacks the land for which they had worked all of their lives. Blacks were convinced that this was the only way to compensate them for their and their ancestors' lengthy bondage. They also considered it logical that the government give the former slaves all of the property and wealth their former owners had accrued through the profits slave labor rendered to them. So Mabel was not alone in her convictions. Nevertheless, the mayor moved swiftly to summon the justices of the peace to evaluate her mental stability. The justices concluded that Mabel was of unsound mind because of her claims and committed her to Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane (CLA) on March 24, 1874.[122]

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[121] All patient names have been changed to protect their anonymity.
[122] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Eighty-nine percent of the blacks committed to CLA between 1874 and 1881 were placed there involuntarily. Although fifty-three percent of the patients appeared to be mentally ill, another forty-seven percent may have been committed for violating white expectations for black behavior. Twelve percent were sent to the asylum for resisting work, seventy-one percent were committed for violent behavior that could have either been provoked or related to mental illness, and sixty-seven percent were institutionalized for their religious practices, their experience of cultural trauma and interpersonal conflict, and their speech patterns.[123]

Current national involuntary commitment rates have barely improved. Today, 83 percent of all individuals committed to mental hospitals in the US are involuntarily institutionalized. The racialized trends that were just beginning to take shape in the post-emancipation era have by now solidified. Blacks are still more likely—five times more likely in some states—to be committed to a mental institution rather than granted out-patient care. Blacks are disproportionately diagnosed as having schizophrenia in contrast to other ethnic groups. In some cases blacks are ten times more likely than others to carry this diagnosis. The racist history of both psychiatry and the medical practice must be acknowledged in order to begin to address these problems.[124]

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[123] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

[124] Davis, King E. et al., "Involuntary Commitment Policy: Disparities in Admissions of African American Men to State Mental Hospitals," in *Social Welfare Policy: Regulation and Resistance Among People of Color*, ed. Schiele, Jerome H. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011); Snowden, L.R., "Barriers to Effective Mental Health Services for African Americans," *Mental Health Services Research* Vol. 3, no. 4 (December 2001): 181–87.

This paper explores the social control mechanisms that were used to subjugate the US black population after emancipation. Besides being incarcerated and leased as convicts, individuals were also held in CLA. The mental institution appears to have functioned as a holding pen where troublesome individuals harvested cotton, cooked the asylum's meals, and knitted patients' stockings as a "treatment" for their supposed mental illness. While most of the literature on blacks and asylums focuses on the internal workings of the asylum and methods of diagnosis, this research analyzes the reasons why blacks were brought before the justices of the peace in the counties of Virginia for mental evaluations. The reasons for their subsequent commitment can lend insight into the question of whether these individuals were really mentally ill or not. First, I place the literature on blacks and asylums into the context of the medical abuse of blacks in the US. Next, I explore mechanisms of the social control of blacks in Virginia from 1800 to 1888. And finally, I describe and analyze the reasons why blacks were committed to the asylum between 1874 and 1881.

The Asylum's Place in the History of the Medical Abuse of African Americans in the United States

There is a long history of medical abuse against blacks in the US. From 1620 through 1863, slave masters volunteered their black slaves for medical experiments. J. Marion Simms, for example, tested and developed gynecological procedures on captive black women sans anesthesia between 1845 and 1849. After emancipation, white doctors sterilized blacks at alarming rates without their knowledge or consent. Black bodies were also widely used in clinical displays including dissection at medical schools. Although

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white physicians viewed blacks as a distinct species from whites, black bodies were yet stolen from black graveyards and hidden in hospital basements. Somehow these bodies were still considered suitable and preferred instruments for learning about white anatomy and health.[125]

Yet, the medical abuse of blacks does not linger only in the nation's past. The Tuskegee Syphilis study in which over 100 African American men with syphilis were denied treatment for the sake of learning more about how the disease progresses and decimates its host, ended only in 1973. In the last century, white doctors and researchers have stolen blacks' genes for cancer research and countless black prisoners, children, soldiers, and hospital patients have been intentionally exposed to dangerous substances and procedures without their consent. Health disparities between the races, in such areas as mortality, diabetes, heart disease, and AIDS, highlight the poor quality of care routinely given to black patients and communities, as well as the absence of care.[126]

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[125] Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*, 1st Anchor Books (Broadway Books) ed (New York: Anchor Books, 2008); Robert L. Blakely, Judith M. Harrington, and Mark R. Barnes, eds., *Bones in the Basement: Postmortem Racism in Nineteenth-Century Medical Training* (Washington [D.C.]: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[126] Washington, *Medical Apartheid*; Eileen Welsome, *The Plutonium Files: America's Secret Medical Experiments in the Cold War* (New York: Dial Press, 1999); Allen M. Hornblum, *Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison: A True Story of Abuse and Exploitation in the Name of Medical Science* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Keith Wailoo, Alondra Nelson, and Catherine Lee, eds., *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race, and History*, Rutgers Studies in Race and Ethnicity (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Vanessa Northington Gamble, *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, 1st pbk. ed (New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2011); James H. Jones and Tuskegee Institute, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*, New and expanded ed (New York : Toronto : New York: Free

Nearly all mental health scholars recognize the asylum movement of the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a failed experiment. Work therapy was used

for people of all races and often abused for white immigrants and African American

patients. Yet this does not preclude us from including blacks victimized in asylums from

a place in the history of medical abuses against African Americans. Black patients in

nineteenth and early twentieth-century mental institutions throughout the Southern US

worked in cotton fields as a supposed treatment for their illnesses. Black patients also

grew the crops and produced the materials necessary for the function of the asylum,

knitting the stockings, growing the vegetables, peeling the potatoes, and cooking all of

the meals consumed at the institution. They even helped care for other patients.[127]

Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell McMillan International, 1993); W. Michael Byrd, *An American Health Dilemma*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[127] John S. Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910," *The Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 3 (August 1, 1992): 435–60, doi:10.2307/2210163; Grob, Gerald N., "Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Mental Hospitals," in *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), http://books.google.com/books?id=zZYMMtbomYMC&pg=PA459&lpg=PA459&dq=grob+mental+institutions+in+america&source=bl&ots=9jQyaRAlyP&sig=EluowWFfwdIPZr32DflwG6DVOTQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=QiKOUuXLBqP52QXxzoDACg&ved=0CE8Q6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=grob%20mental%20institutions%20in%20america&f=false; David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Rev. ed, New Lines in Criminology (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002); David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America*, Rev. ed, New Lines in Criminology (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002); Gamwell, Lynn and Tomes, Nancy, *Madness in America: Cultral and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness before 1914* (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1995); Constance M. McGovern, *Masters of Madness: Social Origins of the American Psychiatric Profession* (Hanover [N.H.]: Published for University of Vermont by University Press of New England, 1985); Noll, Steven, "Southern Strategies for Handling Black Feeble-Minded: From Social Control to Profound Indifference," *Journal of Policy History* 3, no. 2 (1991): 130–51; Thomas Szasz, *Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry; an Inquiry into the Social Uses of Mental Health Practices* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Norman Dain, *Disordered Minds; the First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Va., 1766-1866*, Williamsburg in America Series 8 (Williamsburg, Va: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; distributed by the University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1971); Gamwell, Lynn and Tomes, Nancy, *Madness in America: Cultral and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness before 1914*.

Peter McCandless's in-depth review of mental health care in South Carolina demonstrates that black patients were often forced to work, whereas labor was optional for native-born whites at places like the South Carolina Lunatic Hospital. Kirby A. Randolph suggests that black patients at Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane (CLA) may have been forced to work as a precondition for receiving adequate amounts of food.[128] The housing conditions black patients endured were often vermin infested and filthy. Gerald Grob argues that blacks' segregated accommodations were consistently worse than those provided for other ethnic groups in both the Northern and Southern US.[129] Blacks also received inferior care, as those practically inexperienced physicians were the ones entrusted with their treatment at most mental hospitals.[130]

Modern discussions of blacks housed in asylums between 1840 and 1920 usually analyze the housing conditions and treatment methods of patients in black asylums. They often focus on analyzing racism in psychiatry and also look at diagnoses and admission patterns among blacks at black-only institutions as well as those hospitals that housed both races in segregated wards. Authors of these studies predominantly use descriptive historical methods, saying little about the degree of social control being exerted upon black populations.[131] Part of this is due to the caution against placing twenty-first century

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[128] Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910"; Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885" (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

[129] Grob, Gerald N., "Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Mental Hospitals"; Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910."

[130] Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910."

[131] In this context, social control refers to attempts to censor or remove populations from society for violating racial or cultural boundaries. The asylum is one of several institutions used to castigate subversive populations. The following authors do not discuss mental institutions as mechanisms of social control.

diagnoses on nineteenth century populations. Mental illness could have presented itself differently then, as people are not the same now as they once were.[132] But if the historian looks at the reasons why everyday people committed their acquaintances to mental asylums and finds that economic justifications and differing cultural practices instigated a number of the commitments, then we have reason to question whether the individuals who were committed were mentally ill by anyone's standards.

Few studies have focused on the commitment records that sent patients to the asylums. Lack of attention to these sources is likely due to the dearth of records that have survived the years. Many asylums discarded historical records of black patients, seeing little value in them. Yet, Central Lunatic Asylum's voluminous records, some of which are housed at the asylum (now called Central State Hospital) and others of which are located at the Library of Virginia, contain rich material for analysis.[133] This perspective allows us to consider the degree to which the white public in Virginia viewed the black asylum as a receptacle for resistant blacks.

Grob, Gerald N., "Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Mental Hospitals"; Peter McCandless, *Moonlight, Magnolias & Madness: Insanity in South Carolina from the Colonial Period to the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910"; Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885"; McGovern, *Masters of Madness*; Noll, Steven, "Southern Strategies for Handling Black Feeble-Minded: From Social Control to Profound Indifference"; Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*; Gamwell, Lynn and Tomes, Nancy, *Madness in America: Cultral and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness before 1914*.
[132] Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); Nell Irvin Painter and NetLibrary, Inc, *Soul Murder and Slavery*, Charles Edmondson Historical Lectures 15th (Waco, Tex: Markham Press Fund, Baylor University Press, 1995), http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=10511.
[133] Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885."

People of any occupation, including farmers, shoemakers, physicians, jailers, along with family members, could fill out or dictate their responses to the commitment surveys regarding black individuals they either knew personally or knew of. The proposal to commit an individual to the black asylum was then either supported or rejected by three justices of the peace, ninety-nine percent of whom were white in the state of Virginia. While we do not have the evidence to determine how many proposals were rejected, we have some idea of how many were accepted. The records indicate that over 1,000 individuals were committed to CLA, overwhelmingly without family or personal consent, between 1874 and 1881. While twenty-three percent of committed individuals seem legitimately mentally ill, another thirty-six percent may have been institutionalized for refusing to work for white employers, believing in conjure, practicing charismatic Christianity, and for resisting whites generally. This institution clearly functioned to some degree to assist mentally ill blacks but also served to culturally censure many other blacks.

Social Control and the Segregated Asylum

Segregation of access to public resources is a method of controlling populations. Before 1869, blacks were simply excluded from care at hospitals, education in public schools, and for the most part, treatment at mental hospitals.[134] During Reconstruction this trend began to change. Blacks gained segregated access to public services. However,

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[134] The one exception to this is Eastern Lunatic Asylum in Williamsburg, Va. Free and enslaved blacks were admitted to the hospital as early as 1840. However, their placement in the asylum was contingent upon the placement of whites who needed mental health care. See Dain for more details on this. Dain, *Disordered Minds; the First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Va., 1766-1866*.

giving blacks different access creates a space in which blacks could receive decidedly inferior care, education, and treatment. Indeed, teachers at black schools were less qualified in the profession than the cohort who taught in white schools. Also, the doctors who served blacks in hospitals were often the least experienced.[135]

Further, segregated mental institutions allowed physicians to put black patients to hard and consistent labor with possibly limited access to food, while white patients at Eastern Lunatic Asylum and Western Lunatic Asylum, both also in Virginia, followed treatment regimes that included only light work.[136] Not only were public health services segregated, but blacks were also limited to specific occupations. Vagrancy laws, which comprised a pass system, subjected them to arrest if they went into business for themselves; and low economic status relegated most blacks to reliance upon laboring in fields to support their families.[137] Such segregation amounted to the exertion of social control upon blacks. Limited access to health and wellness constrains a group's ability to live longer lives while curtailed access to education circumscribes their future capabilities. Additionally, restricted employment kept blacks economically bound and allowed whites to have greater health, education, and wellness. In this way, whites were able to secure for themselves a competitive edge over blacks and retain a large portion of economic resources for the white population throughout the US. The function of all of

[135] Rabinowitz, Howard N., *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

[136] Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885"; Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910."

[137] Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Brown, Elsa Barkley, "Uncle Ned's Children: Negotiating Community and Freedom in Postemancipation Richmond" (Kent State University, 1994).

this monopolization of resources was to assist whites in maintaining the upper hand of power in the South during the post-emancipation period. The reasons why blacks were admitted to mental hospitals also suggest that blacks were being served at times and socially controlled at others. The latter has a lengthy history in the United States.

This issue became more complex when the concept of mental illness was taken into consideration. In the 1830s, discussions began to emerge regarding certain people's biological propensity for deviant behavior, including mental illness. Policy makers and social researchers viewed the removal of these populations from society as essential both for rehabilitating deviants and for protecting the rest of society from deviance's impact.[138] Definitions of mental illness have changed historically and treatment methods were often designed to control undesired and deviant populations.[139] Mental illness was arguably culturally defined. [140] For instance, during the late nineteenth century, black cultural expressions were characterized as mental illness. The heightened expectation that blacks would lose their minds after emancipation, as the 1840 census suggested, is largely responsible for this development. But the other aspect is the white lack of familiarity with black culture. The records from CLA demonstrate that contemporary whites were disturbed by black audibility. In many contemporary whites' perspectives, blacks were violating their auditory space.

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[138] Nicole Hahn Rafter, ed., *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988); David E. Ruth, *Inventing the Public Enemy: The Gangster in American Culture, 1918-1934* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[139] Grob, Gerald N., "Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Mental Hospitals"; Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*.

[140] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization; a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); Szasz, *Law, Liberty, and Psychiatry; an Inquiry into the Social Uses of Mental Health Practices*.

Further, whites were unfamiliar with black cultural expressions and could have viewed these expressions as mentally illness simply because blacks reacted differently to life events than whites did. Whites had only been exposed to blacks who felt free to be themselves and express themselves without inhibition since 1865. Seeing black culture up close may have been confusing or, more likely, disturbing, since blacks were making themselves seen and heard rather than maintaining the inaudibility and invisibility of the slave period. Thus, in post-emancipation Virginia, the definition of black mental illness was in the eye of the beholder. Those in power, mostly whites, had the authority to commit black individuals to the insane asylum for practicing a culture distinct from that of whites.

Re-subjugating Freed People in Post-Emancipation Virginia

From the beginning of the African presence in the New World, whites exercised social control over blacks. Although most commonly explored as a system of forced labor, enslavement comprised explicit practices of social control.[141] Black slaves and free persons in Richmond worked both skilled and non-skilled labor which occasionally afforded them a strong degree of independence. The diversified economy in urban Virginia required the enslaved workforce to perform a wide range of industrial labor, including tobacco production, iron working, and to fill positions as boatmen, carpenters, shoemakers, plasterers, and barbers.

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[141] Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Rev. ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Norton Library N841 (New York: Norton, 1977).

Due to the arguably extensive mobility that their occupations allowed them, urban black slaves had some control over their work and also over their social status. As industrial laborers they often brought home money for their master and for their families as well, which they invested in black storefronts, including grocers, tailors, and boardinghouses, many of which were owned by free blacks. They also invested in secret societies, led by free blacks, which provided assistance to community members in times of illness, want, or when a funeral was need. As a result, black Richmond was indeed a vibrant community even in the antebellum period. The free black community, a few of whom were considered elite or middle class, were often also socially respected by whites.[142]

After emancipation and the dissolution of slavery, blacks jubilantly stepped into the role of free people. In 1870, blacks made up forty-two percent of Virginia's population—512,841 blacks versus 712,089 whites.[143] Many rural blacks relocated to nearby towns where their presence had previously been restricted. Others moved to urban centers where they expected to find opportunities for employment. They looked forward to being able to work for themselves and their families. Rural blacks preferred to rent land rather than sharecrop and anticipated having female family members work in the home, while men worked outside of the home. Blacks hoped to protect black women

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[142] Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890*, Class and Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

[143] Blacks and whites comprised the vast majority of the population. The census reports that only 229 indigenous people, four Asian Americans, and zero Latinos lived in the state. See Campbell Gibson, and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States*, Working Paper Series (Washington, D.C: U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/twps0056.html.

from the sexual predation that had characterized their experience serving their white owners.[144] Yet, the Civil War devastated Virginia's economy, leaving few jobs for blacks. Additionally, employment restrictions, due to vagrancy laws, and low wages proved consistent factors. As a result, most blacks concluded that two or more incomes were required to sustain their families. After the war, black men filled a number of positions in postwar Virginia's diversifying economy, including blacksmith, laborer, bricklayer, politician, post office employee, and also patronage positions during the Readjuster period. Most black men worked as laborers, however. Black women performed domestic work and were also laborers.[145]

Virginia was politically unstable after emancipation. The definition of what role blacks would be allowed to play in society was changing. The Republicans and Democrats supported fewer liberties for blacks in contrast to the Readjusters. The Republicans ruled until 1879, at which point the Readjusters took over until 1883, when the Democrats reasserted their historical dominance in the South. Not just during this period, but throughout the post-emancipation and the Jim Crow eras, whites sought new ways of subjugating the black population under white control. Whites largely retained the same desires and goals as they had had during slavery; they needed a steady, reliable workforce in order to continue producing crops consistently and at a great profit. As a result, they sought ways to force blacks into such a workforce. When blacks refused to

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[144] Litwack, Leon F., *Been In the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1980); Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988); Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*.

[145] Brown, Elsa Barkley, "Uncle Ned's Children: Negotiating Community and Freedom in Postemancipation Richmond"; Dailey, Jane, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*.

cooperate, whites had ways of confronting their resistance.[146] Blacks who exercised their freedom in ways that violated white comfort and expectations were also censured and punished. The prison, convict leasing, and the mental asylum all appear to have played a role in controlling the black population.[147]

Social control methods were used to regulate blacks in Virginia from emancipation through post-Reconstruction. In 1865 the General Assembly approved vagrancy laws that mimicked the slave codes of the antebellum period. Without a pass indicating that a white person employed the individual in question, blacks could be arrested for vagrancy and leased out to local white farmers and business owners. Blacks who were self-employed or worked for other blacks were also subject to arrest and leasing. Although Major General Alfred H. Terry abolished Virginia's vagrancy laws

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[146] Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*; Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*; Alexander C. Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*, Haymarket Series (London ; New York: Verso, 1996); Alrutheus Ambush Taylor and Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, inc, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, D.C: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926).

[147] Although historians debated for years over the nature of "race relations" during Reconstruction, the literature demonstrates that after emancipation, a search ensued for a method to keep blacks subjugated under white control. See the following authors for an elaborate discussion surrounding the nature of racial power relations during Reconstruction. Woodward, C. Vann, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Woodward, C. Vann, *Thinking Back: The Perils of Writing History* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1986); Rabinowitz, Howard N., "More Than the Woodward Thesis: Assessing The Strange Career of Jim Crow," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 842–56; Rabinowitz, Howard N., *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890*; Wynes, Charles E., *Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1961); Wade, Richard C., *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Dethloff, Henry C. and Jones, Robert P., "Race Relations in Louisiana, 1877-1898," *Louisiana History*, 1968, 301–23; Blassingame, John, W., *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Roger A. Fischer, "Racial Segregation in Ante Bellum New Orleans," *The American Historical Review* 74, no. 3 (February 1, 1969): 926–37, doi:10.2307/1873129; Dailey, Jane, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*; Ritterhouse, Jennifer, "The Etiquette of Race Relations in the Jim Crow South," in *Manners and Southern History*, ed. Ownby, Ted (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 20–44; Litwack, Leon F., *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*.

later that year, the enforcement of those laws did not cease. Courts continued to target

blacks in the enforcement of vagrancy laws in which race was not explicitly mentioned,

and white juries and judiciaries remained all white. Several individuals who were

committed to Central were noted as wandering laborers, likely indicating that they

refused to sign contracts for white employers.[148] Although blacks in Richmond were able

to fight for many rights and freedoms, they appeared unable to curtail the commitment of

blacks to the asylum. Rural blacks especially seemed to lack the collective power to

impact the workings of whites around them, including those whites who committed

blacks to the asylum.

Social control extended to incarceration patterns. Magistrates punished more

severely those crimes committed most often by blacks during this era, such as petty theft

and larceny. In 1876 petty larceny was upgraded to a crime that required the violator's

disenfranchisement, much as felonies were punished at the time. The city of Richmond

disenfranchised at least 2,000 blacks for petty larceny and for felonies. It is likely that

other highly populated black areas demonstrated similar trends.[149]

Blacks were also given harsher sentences than whites for violations they

committed. From 1871 to 1878, blacks' admissions to the state penitentiary exceeded

white admissions not only proportionally but also numerically. During this period an

average of 67 whites were sentenced each year versus 247 blacks. Additionally, prison

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[148] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

[149] Wynes, Charles E., *Race Relations in Virginia 1870-1902*.

officials leased black convicts to private industries but rarely leased whites. Convict

leasing reaped high death rates in Virginia as it did throughout the South. Rates of black

death also exceeded white rates of expiration both numerically and proportionally.

Further, blacks were jailed simply for their political views. Wynes reports that 200 blacks

sat in the state penitentiary because of their affiliation with Republicans.[150]

Psychiatric Views of Black Mental Health: A Mirror for Southern Paternalism

Early Southern psychiatrists' views of blacks mimicked the pro-slavery

paternalistic attitudes of the antebellum South.[151] Paternalism defined slavery as the

natural condition for black Africans. Similarly, psychiatrists argued that black mental

health is best supported under conditions of enslavement. Since civilization causes mental

illness, according to their argument, and the stresses of capitalistic striving initiate this

mental decay for whites, blacks and other "savages" stand a greater risk of mental

deterioration. Savage cultures, according to psychiatrists' arguments, were never complex

enough to produce mental illness. As a result, to throw weaker-minded peoples into

unsupervised living in a "civilization" would damn their masses to mental suffering.

Thus, psychiatrists identified slavery as the ideal condition for black mental wellness.

Under the guidance and protection of a white master, blacks could experience

contentment and the absence of worry, since their owners would supply their basic

necessities, including food, water, shelter, and clothing. Life for black slaves, they

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Grob, Gerald N., "Class, Ethnicity, and Race in Mental Hospitals"; Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*.

argued, was pretty easy, because whites cared for their every need (or so the reasoning went).[152]

Another reason why US psychiatrists identified slavery as the ideal condition for blacks is that they accepted the widespread view that blacks were lazy.[153] Physician Samuel Cartwright developed an elaborate description of the extent to which blacks would go to be lazy. He likened blacks' respiratory systems to those of white infants. Black do not get enough oxygen, he argued. The only way for blacks to get enough oxygen is to exercise. But they must be forced to exercise because they are averse to labor. So, white slave masters help blacks to do what is in their best interest, according to this theory. Without slavery, blacks would deteriorate into disease and live in poverty and filth. He alluded to post-revolution Haiti as an example of the decay blacks naturally bring upon themselves without white masters to train them. Of course, this argument makes little sense. Yet, Cartwright's argument demonstrates the circular reasoning that pseudo-science was based upon during this time period.[154]

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[152] Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910"; J.W. Babcock, "The Colored Insane," The Alienist and Neurologist 16, *Google Books*, May 30, 1895, http://books.google.com/books?id=jShYAAAAMAAJ&dq=%22The%20colored%20insane%22%20babcock&pg=PA423#v=onepage&q&f=false; Alan P. Smith, "Mental Hygiene and the American Negro," 1931; J.D. Roberts, "Insanity in the Colored Race," accessed April 9, 2013, http://books.google.com/books?id=z4VXAAAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA252&dq=The+colored+insane&hl=en&sa=X&ei=agVkUY_7MePS2QWb0oHYDQ&ved=0CFcQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=The%20colored%20insane&f=false; A.H. Witmer, "Insanity in the Colored Race in the United States," *The Alienist and Neurologist - Google Books*, August 1890, http://books.google.com/books?id=ViZYAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA19#v=onepage&q&f=false; James Cowles Prichard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (E. L. Carey & A. Hart, 1837).
[153] Jordan, *White over Black*.
[154] Cartwright, Samuel A., "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," 1851.

Treatment methods also mirrored the idea that slavery was the best condition for black mental health. Francis Stribling and John Galt, among others, wrote that black mental asylums should be located on no fewer than 300 acres of land so that the patients can work in the fields. Hard labor in the elements was viewed as the only effective treatment method for this population.[155]

Southern whites also looked negatively on black cultural religious practices, including hoodoo and the charismatic practice of Christianity. Hoodoo is a descendant of West African spiritual practices in which persons can heal and harm others using supernatural powers. Tricksters can inflict confusion, insanity, and sickness upon others. They can cause human bodies to become infested with reptiles such as lizards and snakes, and initiate fatigue to make someone waste away until they die. In hoodoo, harm is inflicted by placing a charm—a mixture of such items as a strand of the target's hair, graveyard dust, and a dried eyeball of a lizard, all together in a pouch—and hanging it in a location where the target will inevitably come into contact with it. These sicknesses can be healed by a witch doctor, who can at times determine where the charm is, who set the "trick", and how to break it. Often the charm must be dissembled, but other remedies include wearing a silver pendant around one's neck, and drinking particular potions. The hoodoo-believing black community viewed mental illness as resulting from a trick. Anxiety, mental confusion, terror, insanity, and disorientation were just a few perceived

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[155] Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885"; John Galt, "Asylums for Colored Persons," 1841.

results of conjure. If a person suspected they might be conjured, they might become terrified or try to kill themselves.[156]

Southern whites viewed hoodoo as evil and satanic.[157] White psychiatrists likewise came to pathologize its practice. W. M. Bevis argues that blacks' superstitious belief in hoodoo demonstrated their primitive nature and evolutionary inferiority. But he also viewed blacks' practice of Christianity as manic. Jumping, dancing, vocally acknowledging the sermon's content while it's being given, and preaching outside of church were all seen as signs of mania—overactive, emotional, and nonsensical expressions. Few attempts were made to understand black culture as a legitimate entity. Instead, it was all interpreted as a sign of inferiority and proof of white superiority.[158] Many violent attacks were launched against black churches, as well. Black churches in many ways symbolized black freedom and autonomy in the postbellum South, bringing white hostility.[159]

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[156] Fett, Sharla, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Bacon, A.M., "Conjuring and Conjure-Doctors in the Southern United States (Continued)," *The Journal of American Folklore* 9, no. 34 (July 1, 1896): 224–26, doi:10.2307/533412; Chesnutt, Charles, "Superstitions & Folklore of the South," April 5, 2014, http://www.mamiwata.com/hoodoo5.html; Puckett, Newbell Niles, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926).

[157] Wayland Debs Hand, "Physical Harm, Sickness, and Death by Conjury: A Survey of the Sorcerer's Evil Art in America," in *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America : Selected Essays of Wayland D. Hand* (University of California Press, 1980), 215–25.

[158] Alan P. Smith, "Mental Hygiene and the American Negro"; W.M. Bevis, "Psychological Traits of the Southern Negro with Observations as to Some of His Psychoses," 1921.

[159] Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*.

The Commitment Records from Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane (CLA)

Evidence suggests that the black mental institution, Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane (CLA), founded in 1869, also fit into the constellation of social control mechanisms used against blacks in Virginia. Commitment records from CLA, in Petersburg, VA, demonstrate that the institution not only served mentally ill patients but also functioned as a holding pen for blacks who fell short of whites' racial and cultural expectations. Ranging from 1874 to 1885 in origin, patients' files usually contain a warrant for the individual's arrest. This warrant declares that the person had been found to exhibit mental illness symptoms and that they should be committed to Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane. Patients originated from both within and outside of Virginia, but were detained somewhere within Virginia's borders. They hailed from any number of Virginia's counties. All of them were either committed with family consent or involuntarily. A patient's records also often contain one or more depositions. This was a questionnaire which was filled out by someone who knows or encountered the individual in question. This person could be anyone—a farmer, physician, shoemaker, family member, neighbor, or employer—anyone who believed they could attest to the person's unsoundness of mind. All depositions were based on the same twenty-two questions, which inquire of the deposition giver's name and profession, along with the detainee's age, marital status, place of origin, occupation, symptoms, and any previous treatments.

Between 1874 and 1885, three justices of the peace, ninety-nine percent of whom were white, and all of whom were employed at the county level, held the power to

determine a person mentally ill and send them to the asylum. Sometimes the person was held in a jail prior to their evaluation or confined by some other means such as chains or ropes.[160]

Of the 922 patients admitted to CLA between 1874 and 1881, 429 patients' records were available at the Library of Virginia for this time period. My sample contains 105 patients' records. A plurality of the patients were from Richmond city but they also hailed from 50 other counties in Virginia. Only two gender categories were utilized in the commitment questionnaire. Males and females were almost equally represented in the documents. My sample includes forty-eight women and fifty-seven men.

Eighty-nine percent of all detainees were involuntarily committed, meaning that neither they nor their family members consented to their mental institutionalization. One reason for this could be that after emancipation many blacks relocated, and they perhaps moved to vicinities far from their families. Long distance relocation is unlikely, however, because most blacks in Virginia moved only locally. At times they moved from a rural area to a city, but the vast majority of freed blacks remained in rural areas and moved to other plantations or nearby towns. A more likely reason for the absence of familial and personal consent to commitment is that black Virginians largely opposed the formation of the asylum. When the state of Virginia appropriated the hospital from the Freedmen's

Dain, *Disordered Minds; the First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Va., 1766-1866*; Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental Disabilities, 1844-1885"; Drewry et al., *The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada*; Michael B. Chesson, *Richmond after the War, 1865-1890* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1981).
[160] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Bureau in 1870, black members of the General Assembly protested the establishment of a

segregated black mental hospital. They demanded integrated mental healthcare. It is not

clear if they wanted integrated wards or if they supported segregated wards at the existing

asylums. The latter seems more likely.[161]

However, Francis Stribling, the superintendent for Western Lunatic Asylum, as

well as the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the

Insane's (AMSAII) Board of Directors insisted that integration of any kind was not

desired in Virginia mental institutions. The state of Virginia ignored the black

community's concerns with establishing CLA as a segregated mental hospital. Black

resistance to the asylum could have prompted the black community to reject the

segregated care of their family members. The eleven percent voluntary commitment rate

likely hints at widespread black resistance against segregated mental health care.

**Sent to the Asylum for Being Black: Reasons behind Patient Commitments to CLA,
1874 to 1881**

The reasons that sent people to Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane

(CLA) fell into four categories: *Mental Health Issues*, *Cultural Issues*, *Dangerous*

Behavior, and *Work Related Issues*. (Please see Figure 3.1 on page 77.) While fifty-two

individuals may have been mentally ill, due to suicidal tendencies, hallucinations, and

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[161] Dain, *Disordered Minds; the First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Va., 1766-1866*;
Randolph, Kirby Ann, "Central Lunatic Asylum for the Colored Insane: African Americans with Mental
Disabilities, 1844-1885"; William Francis Drewry et al., *The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United
States and Canada*, ed. Henry Mills Hurd (Johns Hopkins Press, 1916),
https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=aPssAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&authuser
=0&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR4; Michael B. Chesson, *Richmond after the War, 1865-1890* (Richmond: Virginia
State Library, 1981).

other symptoms, as many as forty-six, (or forty-seven percent) may have been committed for cultural differences, violent self-defense, and resisting working for whites.[162] Some detainees believed that they had a right to own the land they had worked as slaves; others seized such property as they thought belonged to them. Still others preached and prayed through the night, or feared that a conjurer's spell had tricked them. All of these beliefs and practices sent individuals to the asylum.[163]

There are several limitations to this research. The commitment questionnaires do not rank the descriptors, or supposed symptoms, ascribed to each patient. As a result, I recorded as many as ten descriptors per patient, for the sake of thoroughness. Most cases comprised descriptors from more than one of the four categories. Thus, I can only provide the percentages of people who had descriptors from a given category. To provide more clarity, I have divided each category into two or more subcategories.

The first of the four categories of reasons for commitment is *Mental Health Issues*. *Mental Illness* comprises a subsection of this area. Fifty-two patients in the sample experienced hallucinations, mental delusion, mania, depression, and other behaviors that connote a lack of mental wellness. The second subcategory under *Mental Health Issues* is *Intellectual Disability*. The three individuals described as "imbeciles" and as weak-minded are placed here. They were described as having that quality for an extended period of time and likely had a mental disability rather than a mental illness.

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[162] I base my estimation of the number of mentally ill individuals on the percentage of cases to whom descriptors from the Mental Illness subcategory were ascribed. Please see page 75 for a description of the Mental Illness subcategory.

[163] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Figure 3.1 Reasons for Commitment to CLA: The Four Categories
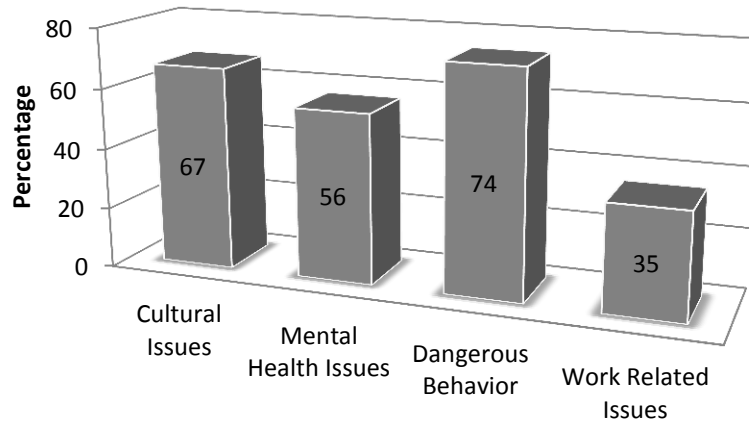
The next subsection is *Physical Illness*. Some behaviors, such as refusing to eat, restlessness, and sleeplessness, can be signs of depression or other mental illnesses, but they can also indicate other health issues, such as the presence of tumors or cancer. Thus I have isolated them from the clearer indicators of mental illness.

The final subcategory is *Addictive Behavior*. Individuals who drink too much might be placed in rehabilitation centers in the modern era. During this period, individuals with this addiction were more likely to be jailed than placed in an asylum, but both could occur. Addiction to smoking, however, was becoming more common during this period. Cigarettes were being manufactured in large quantities and consumed mostly by landowners and well-off whites. Hence, the individual castigated for this was probably apprehended either for stealing in order to keep up with this expensive habit, for

offending lower class whites because he could afford cigarettes, or for having this behavior in addition to more "troublesome" behaviors.

Fifty-three percent of the people in the sample exhibited behaviors that fell into the *Mental Illness* subcategory, and seem to be mentally ill. Thomas Miller is one of these. On March 29, 1876, Daniel Miller brought his twenty year old son, Thomas, to the justices of the peace in Powhatan County, Virginia. Thomas had been acting strangely for the past two weeks. He repeatedly proclaimed that he was Jesus Christ, and that the river Jordan lay below the ditch near their home. The younger Miller commenced with digging in the ditch and could not be stopped. Later, he ran in a circle of about three quarters of a mile in diameter with his right hand straight in front of him, shouting that this land had to be conquered and that no one would stop him, Jesus, from conquering it. Daniel, his wife, and his daughter tied Thomas and brought him to the justices of the peace. On May 29, 1876 he was sent to Central Lunatic Asylum.[164]

Delia Jenkins, age sixty, is another individual who appears to be mentally ill. Her daughter Susan brought her to the Lancaster justices of the peace on December 30, 1874. Delia had been tearing her clothing, using obscene language, and attempting to harm herself and others for about four months. Susan, a widow who had three children of her own, tied her mother up when she acted violent. A physician's deposition added that Delia was unable to recognize acquaintances and that she exhibited a loss of mind. She may have succumbed to the contemporary equivalent of dementia. With Susan's consent,

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[164] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 4, folder 5.

Delia was transported to Central on September 16, 1875. She waited for nine months in the jail for space to become available at the overcrowded asylum.[165]

The second category of reasons for commitment is *Dangerous Behavior*. Of the individuals in the sample who were ascribed behaviors from this category, seventy-one percent fit into the *Violent Behavior* subcategory, while six percent fell into the subsection entitled *Criminal Behavior*. Violent behaviors require a nuanced analytical approach. Violence can connote mental illness, but it is also a natural reaction to having one's belongings appropriated by whites, or as a response to other violations experienced at the hands of whites. Since the depositions often do not indicate the circumstances under which the person exhibited these behaviors, it is difficult to determine whether or not the future patient was provoked to violence. Eighty-five percent of the time, a physician completed the deposition. The physician did not necessarily know the individual or the conditions under which they were apprehended. And if he (all of the physicians were men) possessed such awareness, perhaps they sided with white supremacist notions of white entitlement to blacks' labor, property, and persons. Biting, threatening or enacting violence against people, and destroying objects could all be reactions to severe violations by whites. Yet they could also be signs of mental illness.

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[165] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 3, folder 13.

Burning things might more likely be related to mental illness, but it could also be a sign of grief.[166]

On January 1, 1880, a thirty-three year old housekeeper named Lucy Jordan was brought to the Louissa County justices of the peace for "burning up old rags, then her children's clothes, then her own, then carrying off and burying everything she could get her hands on." She may have had a contemporary manifestation of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in which she needed to be very sure that lice were absent from her home, or something of the like. Her deposition indicates that she was mentally ill for three years. She was married with eight children but family consent was not granted for her institutionalization. It is likely that a nonfamily member reported her dangerous behavior. Historically, black families often kept mentally ill family members at home, partly due to the mistrust of white-run hospitals and also due to delayed help seeking. If the ill family member gets out and makes a scene, they risk institutionalization by nonfamily members. This may have been the case for Ms. Jordan.[167]

The next subcategory of *Dangerous Behavior*, *Criminal Behavior*, connotes those actions for which individuals could be imprisoned during the late nineteenth century. These include cursing, stealing, young people disobeying their parents, and masturbation. The commitment of five individuals with these descriptions indicates that the asylum functioned to some degree as a catch-all institution. Juvenile detention centers would not

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[166] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
[167] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 7, folder 10.

have served the black population in Richmond before 1900, so black children with behavioral issues were likely placed in the asylum. Yet, the justices of the peace, as well as physicians, labeled these children as mentally ill. Fifteen year old Joshua Ash, for example, had been using violent and incoherent language for about a month and enacted violence against others. The physician who provided Ash's deposition suggested that the youth's addiction to masturbation was the cause of his mental illness. Without any mention of life circumstances that could have angered or violated this adolescent, the justices of the peace committed Ash to CLA without his family's consent on November 14, 1879.[168]

Joshua Ash could have been provoked to anger and violence by his experiences of economic and social subjugation. This is likely. Or he could have been a troubled youth. Either way, it appears that the asylum served as a repository for resistant individuals. When considering the performance of violence by blacks in this era it is important to acknowledge that after their personal or vicarious experiences with slavery, some blacks came to identify with their oppressors—slave owners and abusive employers included— and adapted violent behaviors.[169] If adopting these behaviors constituted mental illness, then of course former masters' and abusive white employers' mental health is also implicated, but ignored nonetheless.

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[168] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 7, folder 2.
[169] Painter and NetLibrary, Inc, *Soul Murder and Slavery*.

Blacks were institutionalized for a number of *Work Related Issues* that were arguably tangential to mental health. I have separated this theme into two subcategories: *Work* and *Comportment Issues*. Twelve percent of the individuals in the sample were institutionalized with neglecting *Work* as a main reason. This trend aligns with contemporary whites' demands that blacks sign labor contracts and provide a reliable workforce for white society's benefit. The next subcategory, *Comportment Issues*, describes behaviors that incapacitate a worker's efficiency. Included in this category are descriptions such as avoiding communication with others, being self-willed, acting out according to how one desires to carry herself, and going where one chooses when one wants to. These behaviors could indicate that the individual in question perhaps did not want to work for their present employer; or perhaps they were mentally ill or recovering from recent trauma and unable to keep at their work. Twenty-three CLA patients were institutionalized with *Comportment Issues* listed among the reasons.[170]

Comportment Issues could be considered problems in several situations. They could pose difficulty for black families supporting family members who do not work. Usually most members of black households during this period needed to work in order to acquire enough income for them to survive. A family member who was not working would have been an extra mouth to feed. It they were mentally ill, they also could have required constant care, which would keep another family member at home. Additionally, it would be an issue for white employers who want a reliable workforce. Whites in

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[170] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

general could also find it a problem. Yet, blacks were more likely to keep an individual with a mentally illness at home unless they became completely unmanageable. Black mistrust of hospitals took root long ago, in large part due to the experimentation blacks were subjected to during slavery. As stated earlier, blacks resisted the segregated asylum. Thus, it is more likely that whites committed blacks to CLA for work-related issues.

Twelve percent of the people in the sample were committed for resisting employment. Sixteen year old Martin Davis from King George County was brought before the justices of the peace on August 11, 1873. An unknown individual's deposition described him as jobless and wandering from place to place. Davis stole something, was flogged for the theft, and repeated his alleged offense. Whoever provided the deposition had not only flogged him but also used other "very harsh means" to "ameliorate" the young man's "disease".[171]

Many freed blacks believed that they had a right to own the land that they had worked all their lives as well as the property which their former masters possessed. In their view, all of it was acquired by the sweat of their brows and the blood from their veins. Martin Davis would have been three years old at the time of emancipation, so he would constitute one of the young, practically free-born blacks. Young blacks were often more resistant to the racial hierarchy than their elders. Yet, many blacks, no matter their age, resisted white attempts to control blacks after slavery by refusing to work for whites and choosing to work for themselves. Those blacks who chose self-employment were still

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[171] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 2, folder 4.

considered vagrants and wanderers in contemporary social and political dialogue, since they refused to sign labor contracts. Martin Davis could have been unemployed or self-employed and could have been taking items that he and his family believed they had a right to own. The circumstances under which he was committed do not seem to indicate mental unsoundness, but rather, perseverance. Nevertheless, Mr. Davis was sent to the asylum on January 17, 1874.[172]

Another incident indicates that justices of the peace acknowledged that the asylum was not simply a repository for the mad. Upon evaluating Gregory Smith on August 16, 1875, the justices of Halifax County wrote:

> We… who have this day examined the prisoner… have nothing to state in regards to his insanity, except his general deportment as a man who loafs and refuses to labor for any consideration, and is generally harmless, so far as we know or have heard. He has, however, under aggravation shown disposition to fight in some instances.

In other words, he is not insane, but he refuses to work and thus should be sent to the mental asylum.[173]

Land-owning whites did not consider selling home-grown fruits and vegetables, cooking and vending food at stands, or other forms of black self-employment, as work. Individuals could be arrested and castigated for vagrancy if they refused or failed to work

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[172] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 2, folder 4.
[173] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 1, folder 9.

for whites in particular.[174] This could easily have been Smith's reality. As the justices

plainly state, he is not mentally ill. There is nothing unsound about showing "a

disposition to fight" when one is "under aggravation" if the agitation in question is that of

being threatened with commitment to a mental hospital simply for choosing to live one's

life the way one chooses. Smith was sent to CLA on January 19, 1874 for these non-

offenses.[175]

Cultural Issues created the backdrop for commitments to CLA. Four areas

summarize this category: *Religious Practices*, *Speech*, *Cultural Trauma*, and

Interpersonal Strife. It appears that the trouble that got some individuals placed in the

asylum involved their religious beliefs and worship, their experience of cultural trauma,

and the relevance of interpersonal strife in their lives. Thirty-three percent of blacks were

committed to CLA for their *Religious Practices*, which includes descriptions such as

religious excitement, preaching, and praying through the night. These seem to be related

to black charismatic practices of Christianity. When whites observed blacks practicing

Christianity, they were often uncomfortable with blacks' expressions of worship. Of

course, religious fervor can also be a sign of mental illness. The incessant talking

associated with praying through the night and frequent visions of the supernatural can

indicate a hallucinatory state and loss of mind.

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[174] Brown, Elsa Barkley, "Uncle Ned's Children: Negotiating Community and Freedom in Postemancipation Richmond"; Taylor and Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, inc, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia*; Foner, Eric, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*.
[175] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 1, folder 9.

Whites found hoodoo even more disturbing than blacks' practice of Christianity. When individuals feared witches, complained of reptiles crawling under their skin, and were terrified that they might be conjured, whites often mistook this cultural difference for mental illness.[176] It is also quite possible that the anxiety, terror, and paranoia which at times struck hoodoo practitioners could have been perceived as mental illness. The fears associated with the harming element of hoodoo could also aggravate mental illness in individuals who are prone to anxiety. Further, knowledge of hoodoo could inform a person's hallucinatory experiences, bringing in-body reptile infestations into their perceived experience.

Numerous individuals appear to have been committed for believing that hoodoo is real and living accordingly. Cora Lumpkin, a resident of Portsmouth City, was evaluated on January 23, 1878. A physician's questionnaire indicates that for about two years Cora had exhibited a fear of witches and a fear that some people wanted to kill her. It is noted that Cora said she acted the way she does so that her absent husband would come home to her. It seems that Cora believed she had been conjured and that the trick was intended to make her husband leave. The physician reported that she tried to inflict injury upon herself once by jumping out of a tree. Either this was a suicide attempt or perhaps she thought that injuring herself might compensate the spirits and allow her husband to return. She had also been jailed two or more times previously. It is possible that she was mentally ill; she had syphilis in her youth, which is known to cause mental illness.

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[176] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

However, the physicians and justices could have concluded that such a tenacious belief in conjure could not be supported by a sound mind. She was sent to Central Lunatic Asylum accompanied by a guard on February 1, 1878.[177]

Susie Jones also believed in conjure. Evaluated by the Richmond City justices of the peace on November 8, 1875, Ms. Jones was certain she had been conjured. Two physicians stated that she was violent to herself and others, but it is not clear whether she began exhibiting violence before or after being apprehended and suspected of lunacy. It would be natural to fight individuals who sought to commit you to a mental institution when you are not mentally ill. She was sent to the asylum on March 18, 1876.[178]

Thirty-two percent of the detainees were sent to the asylum for speaking in a certain way: rambling; talking wildly, foolishly, idly, and incoherently; mumbling; being quarrelsome; screaming; and expressing derangement on any number of topics ranging from love to children. It is difficult to categorize speech patterns as explicit signs of mental illness. It is equally challenging to say that certain speech patterns always connote mental stability. Yet, it is noteworthy that speech carries such a strong theme in these commitments. Thirty-two percent of the detainees were sent to the asylum for speaking in a certain way. Presumably, what they said is not what whites expected or desired to hear from them. The fact that nearly all black / white interactions up until a decade earlier

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[177] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 5, folder 9.
[178] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 4, folder 8.

were strictly directed by white desires and demands indicates that whites likely did not know what to expect blacks to say when they were free to speak of their own accord. Abiding by white expectations likely seemed sane to white observers. But exposure to black cultural ideas, desires, and expressions likely jarred white listeners who continued to insist upon white cultural dominance and black inferiority.

Cultural Trauma is another reason why blacks were committed to CLA. Seventeen percent of blacks who were committed to the asylum appeared to be dealing with the impact of trauma in their lives. Individuals in this study, who composed the incipient generation of black citizens in the US, were grappling with the effects of trauma. Many of them had experienced slavery themselves, while others, who were born free, knew the stories. Trauma was central to their lived experience.[179] They feared being victimized by violence and were terrorized by the memory of slavery. They also suffered terrible poverty, leading to fears of unprotected exposure to the elements.

The experience of trauma, needless to say, was painful. But an individual's response to trauma does not necessarily constitute mental illness. Fifteen year old Smith Orange was committed to the asylum on March 19, 1879. He had recently heard of a relative being shot to death and was filled with terror. History tells us that blacks were subject to this sort of vulnerability during this period in Virginia, so his fear was not unfounded. His father took him to the justices of the peace because his son seemed to be

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[179] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

uncontrollably manic.[180] Blacks experiencing the shock of cultural trauma were committed to the asylum as mentally ill. Yet, expressing oneself after the loss of a loved one or other traumas is to be expected. Blacks often expressed their sorrow differently than whites did. It is possible that some blacks were committed because whites considered their cultural expressions excessive.
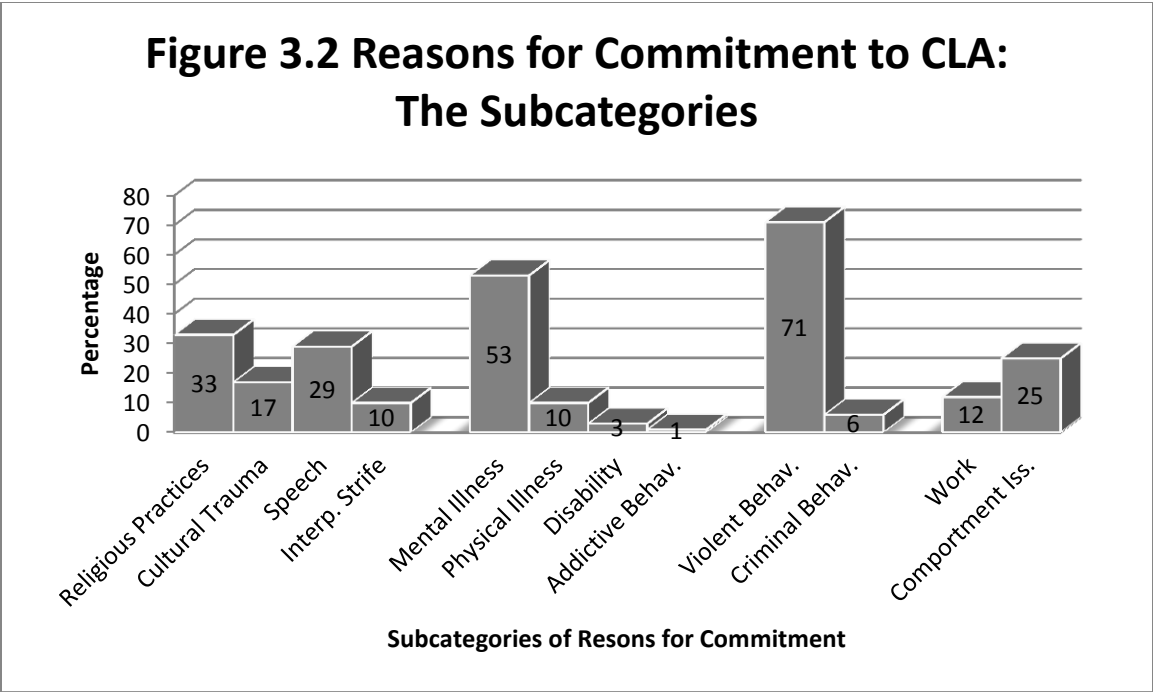
A wide variety of people passed through CLA from 1874 to 1881. Fifty-three percent were most likely mentally ill, while ten percent probably suffered physical illnesses. Twelve percent were sent to the asylum for resisting employment. Seventy-one percent were described as violent without accounting for circumstances that may have provoked them. And sixty-seven percent were committed for reasons related to religious practices, speech patterns, and their experience of cultural trauma and interpersonal strife. More than a hospital for the mentally ill, CLA appears to have functioned as a repository for individuals who violated whites' expectations of black behavior in the post-emancipation period. (Please Figure 3.2 on page 90.)

The history of the medical abuse of blacks has grown to include abuses in the asylum and in the mental health practice generally.[181] The historical literature on the Reconstruction era shows that whites sought to re-subjugate blacks after slavery's emancipation. Records from CLA indicate that the asylum functioned as a mechanism of social control. While some mentally ill blacks received needed services at Central

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[180] Records of Central State Hospital, 1874-1961. Accession 41741, State government records collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. Box 6, folder 10.
[181] Washington, *Medical Apartheid*.

Figure 3.2 Reasons for Commitment to CLA: The Subcategories

Bar chart with y-axis "Percentage" (0 to 80) and x-axis "Subcategories of Resons for Commitment":

- Religious Practices: 33
- Cultural Trauma: 17
- Speech: 29
- Interp. Strife: 10
- Mental Illness: 53
- Physical Illness: 10
- Disability: 3
- Addictive Behav.: 1
- Violent Behav.: 71
- Criminal Behav.: 6
- Work: 12
- Comportment Iss.: 25

Lunatic Asylum, others were sent there in order to rid whites of the discomfort black cultural expression and independence caused them. While most of the literature on blacks and asylums avoids the question of social control, this research evaluates the reasons why blacks' mental soundness was questioned, therefore providing a vantage point from which to determine the likelihood that CLA detainees were mentally ill or mentally sound.

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