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The responsibility of clothing slaves in the United States as described in slave petitions, 1775 to 1867

Ryan Jerel Aldridge

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CLOTHING SLAVES IN THE UNITED STATES AS
DESCRIBED IN SLAVE PETITIONS, 1775 TO 1867

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Ecology

by
Ryan Aldridge
B.S., Louisiana State University, 2002
M.S., Louisiana State University, 2008
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Abstract

The content analysis of eighteenth and nineteenth century slave petitions identified slave dress terms and descriptors by type and frequency and a descriptive analysis of slave dress petitions revealed the following themes: the expense and burden attributed to clothing slaves, slave dress neglect, hiring contracts that included slave dress, the use of slave dress as a reflection of the slaveholders character, compensation for slave dress provided by an individual other than the slaveholder, the quality of slave dress, the distribution of slave dress, and slave dress terminology descriptors. The most frequent specific provision request for slave dress items consisted of two sets of clothes, a single pair of shoes and a single blanket. Descriptive terms used to modify slave dress terminology attributed positive, negative or common or usual qualities to slave dress. The slave dress petitions described the slaveholder's role in dictating the type, quality and amount of clothing provided to slaves, ensuring the slaves received clothing and seeking redress for inadequate or neglected clothing provisions. The petitions revealed a very functional and property based approach held by slaveholders in regard to slave dress as a use for protecting the slave from the elements in order to preserve the value of the slave. At the societal level, the descriptions of inferior types and minimal amounts of slave dress provisions served to reinforce the slaves low social and economic status, hinder the creation of an individual slave identity through dress and undermined the humanity of slaves. The sample of slave dress petitions testified to the inadequate or neglected slave dress provisions described in slave narratives. Dress research studies describing dress in totalitarian and oppressive environments were used to draw comparisons with the slave dress experience across time and place. Use of the slave petitions in dress research drew attention to the need for modifications to existing dress

theories or the development of new dress theories in order to understand the creation of identity and meanings associated with dress to individuals in oppressive environments.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the United States was engulfed with societal, cultural and economic issues related to slavery. Legislative and county court petitions offer a well-defined case study of period historical documents that recorded attitudes and concerns regarding slavery, such as the responsibilities associated with providing dress to slaves. This study examined slave petitions from the period of the American Revolution through the Civil War, extracted petitions related to the dress of slaves, examined dress terminology included in the petitions, and provided descriptive examples of information within the slave dress petitions.

Dress can “reveal social, economic, and political factors which influence a particular time period and a particular people” (Hunt, 1990, p. 2). The relationship and role of dress to slaves and slaveholders was defined by regional, cultural, social and economic situations and differed accordingly. The need to study slave life from as many sources, regions and periods as possible can help researchers to understand the variation and complexity of the social situations surrounding slavery. The study of slave dress descriptions recorded in historic petitions contributed to the understanding of slave dress and slave life within the complex social environment of slavery in the United States of America.

Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992, p. 1) defined dress as “inclusive of all phenomena that can accurately be designated as dress” including the “assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body.” This study used their definition of dress to identify the petitions that contained slave dress items that were supplemental to the body. As a supplement to the body, dress serves two major functions as “alterants of body processes or as media for communication” (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992, p. 4). In altering the biological processes of

the body, dress serves as an interface between the biological and external physical environments at both the micro- and macro-physical levels. At the microphysical level where dress interacts directly with the body, slaves may have experienced physical discomfort due to the rough texture and poor quality of cloth used to produce their clothing. At the macro-physical level where dress serves as an interface between the body and the external environment, slaves could have used dress as protection from the weather or been hindered from protection from the weather by inadequate clothing provisions. The aspects of dress associated with appearance and communication can make social statements about age, social class, or religion within specific cultural contexts and social situations (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992). These social communications established by dress are derived, maintained, and modified according to social interactions and are used to establish identities, which is the basis of Stone's (1962) symbolic-interaction theory.

By determining the quality and amount of slave clothing provisions and controlling the slave's ability to personally acquire clothes, slave owners played a critical role in the slave's ability to alter their body processes through dress and use dress as a personal means for communication. Supplemental items of dress were important to both slaves and slaveholders as an interface between the environment and as a means for communication. In regards to dress allotments and the acquisition of dress items, the slave owner could have used dress to protect his or her property from being devalued by the environment and the slave could have used dress for self-preservation. As a means for communication, the slave owner could use slave dress as a display and extension of his own wealth, such as the clothing of domestic servants, and use dress to control the slave population through defining their low social status and limiting the possibility of social interactions based on appearances. On the other hand, slaves could have used

dress as a form of communication by altering the meaning and method of wearing the provided clothing, embellishing or altering provided clothing or acquiring additional items of dress second hand or through personal industry.

According to Feinberg, Mataro and Burroughs (1992), dress is used and manipulated daily to create a public display. Through the presentation and manipulation of dress, identities are created that announce associated positions and behaviors within society (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1992). The provision of slave dress by slaveholders played a large role in the creation of slave identity. Slave dress provisions imposed associated positions and behaviors on slaves and announced the identity and status of slaves toward other slaves, slaveholders and the rest of society. The impressions created by slave dress impacted preferences and aversions toward and among the differing cultural groups. The amount, quality and type of slaveholder dress provisions limited the slaves ability to use clothing to create individual or group identities and instead imposed and reinforced a group identity on the slave at the most basic levels based on skin color, low social and economic status, and existence as property.

According to symbolic interaction theory (Stone, 1962), appearance is used to establish identity, which ultimately allows or disallows social transactions. Slave appearance would have played a crucial role in the slave's ability to carryout social transactions on a daily basis. A favorable appearance or identity would have created grounds for more social transactions and discourse and an unfavorable appearance, whether by choice or not, would have made social transactions and discourse difficult if not impossible. Thus, the slave's ability or desire to participate in the creation and manipulation of appearances within the social setting of the period could have been advantageous or disadvantageous to their position within society.

In order to understand the responsibility of clothing slaves by slaveholders and its limiting influence on slave identity, the circumstances surrounding the petitions were researched including the restrictions and restraints that influenced the daily lives and freedoms of slaves described within slave hiring contracts, the legal system, slave's rights and the slave system. Also, the viewpoints, attitudes and beliefs of slaveholders were examined to better understand the reasons and motives presented in the petitions including the neglect or passing of responsibility for clothing the slave to other individuals including hiring individuals. The examination of prior slave research studies helped to position the current research study within the current body of knowledge regarding slavery and provided an understanding of how the slave petition research source influenced the results and findings of the study (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011; Schneider and Schneider, 2007; Martin, 2004; Durant, 1999; John, 1999; Plummer, 1999; Morris, 1996; McGary and Lawson, 1992; Finkelman, 1989; Miller and Smith, 1988; Newton and Lewis, 1978; Frazier, 1949).

The role of slaves related to the production of dress and slave dress studies served as a source of reference and comparison for the findings regarding slave dress in the current research study. The role of dress in the creation of identity was explored in order to understand how the provision of slave dress by slaveholders and individuals caring for slaves influenced the slave's ability to create an identity through dress. Since the petitions were from the perspective of slaveholders, slave narratives were used to provide information regarding the slave's thoughts, feelings, meanings and attitudes associated with the provision of dress by slaveholders. Also, dress research in the area of oppressive and totalitarian environments was included to better understand the role dress plays in these environments and how these research studies relate to slave dress.

The Race and Slavery Petition Project (RSPP) (Schweninger, 2005, 2003, 2001 and 1998) served as a new resource to contribute to the body of knowledge available related to slave dress. The RSPP contains slave related petitions from fifteen states and Washington D.C. and includes 17,487 total petitions, 2,975 legislative petitions and 14,512 county petitions from 1775 to 1867. Schweninger (2001) described the petitions as being a useful supplement to the available material in their ability to describe slave societies, race relations, laws and politics during the period. The research explored and organized the types and frequencies of slave dress terminology included in petitions through content analysis and described and analyzed themes within individual slave dress petitions.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

Slave rights, period laws and slave culture played an important role in the formation of beliefs and perspectives found within the slave dress petitions. Schweninger (2001, p. xxi) described Southerners' petitions regarding redress and grievances "involving race and slavery" as weighing the most heavily on their minds. Within the period legal system, slaves, who existed as property, could not petition to the courts. Thus, slaveholders served as the focus for the slave dress petition sample by either being responsible for producing the petitions or serving as the defendant in the petitions.

Slaves and the Legal System

The importance placed on the institution of slavery by Southerners set about legal justifications to morally and philosophically protect and solidify the economy and culture of the South. Plummer (1999, p. 102) described the laws surrounding slavery as "primarily aimed at the regulation and control of the conduct and rights of slaves for the purpose of exploiting their labor." Legal documents issued in courthouses were used by slaveholders to "manage their laborers" in the form of "deeds, indentures or letters of agreement, lawsuits, wills, probate inventories, and manumissions" (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 309).

According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011), courthouses served as places of joy when manumission and freedom was issued to slaves and fear when contracts of ownership transferred slaves away from their families or slaves were hired away in contracts to undesirable tasks or harsh temporary masters. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 309) described historic legal documents as "a valuable source for historians because they contain details about the lives of colonial and American slaves." The slave petitions found in the RSPP fall into this category of valuable legal documents that can provide information about the lives of slaves and slaveholders.

Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) stated the conveyance of slave ownership from one individual to another and the appraisals of probate inventories were two examples of historic legal documents that included descriptions of slave dress. When slaves were transferred to new owners, the slaves “gathered any clothing, blankets, tools and personal possessions they might have to take to their next home” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 311). During the appraisal of probate inventories, appraisers sometimes recorded “the presence of material to be made into clothing for slaves as well as shoes and socks for the decedent’s laborers” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 312).

The legalization of slavery turned slaves into property and as property slaves could not petition to the courts or testify against white men or women (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Schneider and Schneider (2007) described that as property slaves could not legally own anything, make contracts and agreements that would stand up in court, sue, have a trial by jury and were judged on grounds that would protect the property interest of the slaveholder. The courthouse served as a place where slaves as defendants on trial faced the most severe forms of punishment and only in capital criminal cases were slaves tried as people and held responsible for their own actions.

Hiring of Slaves

Redress and grievances regarding the hiring of slaves made up a prevalent topic of discussion within the slave dress petition sample. Martin (2004) described the development of slave hiring as an ideal solution to the damaging economical and dangerous social effects of idle slaves. Martin (2004) believed the slave hiring process weakened any slaveholder claims to paternalistic care and supported the idea of slaves as property and profit centers. Slaves were a major capital investment on a plantation and if profits from slaves became insufficient, slave

hiring allowed the slave owner to maintain a degree of profit without losing the slave property (Miller and Smith, 1988). Newton and Lewis (1978) described the process of hiring out slaves as a way for slaveholders to spread the influence and dependence on slave labor in the south.

Profit was the major motive for slaveholders to rent out their slaves, but hiring out also served social purposes. Some owners hired out slaves to escape the negative social stigma attached to selling slaves, others chose to hire out rather than sell in order to maintain the prestigious rank of slave owner, and some slaveholders hired out slaves they considered unruly (Miller and Smith, 1988). Slaves were also hired because plantations needed to meet the demands required of skilled or unskilled laborers and many individuals could not afford to purchase or maintain slave property. Tenants and small farmers who could not afford the capital or credit to buy a slave could hire one and the rich as well as the poor hired slaves with specialized skills. Unskilled hired slaves adapted to and performed all types of labor on small to large plantations, and in urban areas, including labor related to construction, factories, and railroads.

Martin (2004, p. 44) described the slave's reactions to being involved in the hiring process as resulting in a "spectrum of emotions." In regards to hiring, slaves asserted concerns regarding leaving and remaining near their families, the temporary reprieve of undesirable ownership situations, and the avoidance of undesirable hiring situations. In order to ensure profitable hiring outcomes, slaveholders negotiated the conditions of hire with hiring individuals as well as the slave, who would have been aware of the hiring situation and have his or her name placed on the hiring contract (Martin, 2004). In hiring situations, "The slaves' wishes obviously counted for something, and the industrial employer who was unwilling to meet the basic requests of his laboring men was risking present difficulties with his work force and future problems with

his hiring” (Newton and Lewis, 1978, p. 72). Poor slave treatment by the hiring individual could result in the contract being terminated or not renewed with the hiring individual being held liable for compensation and damages or cause difficulty with getting the hired slave to labor efficiently and profitably.

Slaves were not bystanders in the legal suits between their two masters and even instigated and participated in the disputes. Hiring individuals “were well aware that they could not afford to ignore charges that they neglected owners’ instructions about working conditions or that they dealt too severely with slave laborers” (Newton and Lewis, 1978, p. 69). Martin (2004, p. 94) described the courtroom as never being “far removed from everyday hiring activity.” The hiring individual’s liability for the care of the slave separated “hirers from other slave masters, the vast majority of whom could expect to manage slaves free from virtually any official oversight” (Martin, 2004, p. 93). Any negligence on behalf of the hirer in the form of “issuing work orders, inflicting punishment, distributing food and clothing-potentially threatened the property rights of the slave’s owner,” and any slaveholders that felt their slaves were being mistreated “went to court to seek legal redress for hirers’ neglect or brutality” (Martin, 2004, p. 94).

The main precedent used in court cases involving slave hire was the law of bailment, which referred to the rental of property such as horses and land. Morris (1996, p. 132) described the legal aspects of a slave hiring contract as being “more like the rental of a thing.” Signed contracts used in hiring agreements enforced the rules of slave use as a transfer of property, required the return of property and included the practice of due care while the property was in possession of the hiring individual. Hiring contracts included information such as the amount to be paid for the slave hire, the date the slave was to be returned, included requirements for

clothing, food, shelter, and medical care and restricted certain labor tasks and locations. Hiring agreements could specify the length of hire, which could be from days, months or as long as a year (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

With hiring contracts being unable to account for all circumstances, the general concept that applied to the care of slaves was that the slaves were to be treated with “humanity.” During the period of slavery, slaves “did not have any humanity that could be violated” and it was believed the slave owner’s “natural discretion and prudence checked any inhumane behavior toward their own slaves” (Martin, 2004, p. 100). In regards to hiring contracts, the slave’s humanity became “the legal property of a white person, not an inviolable natural right held by the slave, and this perception forced judges, when an owner sued, to determine whether inhumanity had actually been shown to the slave”(Martin, 2004, p. 100). The act of providing clothing and care to slaves or the negligence of providing such actions by slaveholders were seen as a reflection of the slaveholders humanity and his or her ability to be humane and were not performed in recognition of the slave’s humanity.

Morris (1996, p. 136) stated that “morality and law imposed duties on the hirer. A “culpable negligence” would make him not only liable for the hire, but also “liable for the value of the slave.” The reasoning behind this system of responsibility was to “create a motive of self-interest in hirers to care for the health of slaves and to “treat the slave humanely” (Morris, 1996, p. 136). Holding the hirers liable for the hire and value of the slave if negligent, served as a way to stimulate humane and proper treatment in individuals with no long-term investment in the property. However, the degree and number of slaves that were safeguarded by these measures could be debated based on the various slave and slaveholder viewpoints regarding the care of slaves. Hiring individuals could also be held responsible not just for “*malfeasance*, but for

nonfeasance of presumed or implied duties” (Morris, 1996, p. 140). Even if not written in the hiring contract, it was implied that the hiring individual “treat the slave humanely, and provide for his necessary wants” including clothing (Morris, 1996, p. 140).

Martin (2004) described the importance of specifying types and amounts of clothing in hire contracts in order to protect the slave property during the course of changing seasons. In order to ensure the slaves health and prevent death, slaveholders required warm clothing for winter and loose, dry clothing for summer. Martin (2004, p. 97) stated “owners justifiably suspected that hirers would be tempted to skim on clothing.” The difficulty of clothing slaves for hiring individuals resulted from the need for cash or credit to purchase the provisions, which could be scarce among hiring individuals who could not afford to purchase and maintain their own slaves.

Martin (2004, p. 97) described “cautious owners” as leaving “little ambiguity about the quality and quantity of the clothes that hirers should furnish to their slaves.” Owners that did not specify the quantity or quality for slave dress left the responsibility to the hirer, who was “governed only by custom” (Martin, 2004, p. 97). The provision of clothing to hired slaves was a major issue and “could easily prove a point of contention between owners and hirers: outfitting a slave for a year could average fifteen dollars or more, a sum that would have added twenty percent to the cost of a slave hired for seventy-five dollars” (Martin, 2004, p. 97). Martin (2004) states that not only were slaveholders concerned with clothing amounts but also, slaves were aware of the clothing requirements stipulated in their contracts and were apt to demand clothing they did not receive. Children were described as often going unpaid during terms of hire even if they performed work related task and the work experience, food and clothing were considered ample pay for child laborers.

The effects of slave hiring on the institution of slavery can be seen as two fold. The practice of hiring out slaves by owners created more flexibility within the slave system for both slaves and masters and prolonged the continuance of the slave system (Miller and Smith, 1988). The hiring of slaves became a step toward freedom for slaves by lessening the rigidity of slavery and introducing incentive wages paid to slaves to work over required amounts (Miller and Smith, 1988). On the other hand, hired slaves could labor under poor conditions in which they were mistreated, neglected, poorly fed and poorly clothed. According to Newton and Lewis (1978), hiring individuals had no long-term incentive or investment to properly care for slaves and overworked the slaves without regard to their health. Newton and Lewis (1978, p. 63) stated “slave hiring and industrial slavery were among the most brutal and exploitive aspects of the American slave system...areas where the business aspects of the institution were most highly developed and where the humanity of the slaves was most likely to be ignored.”

Slaveholders

Within the organization of slavery, Southern slaveholders and planters “were the absolute ruler of a small principality. His supreme authority was exercised primarily in the maintenance of a disciplined and efficient labor force” (Frazier, 1949, p. 29). Schneider and Schneider (2007, p. 88) described the duties of the white master as being based on “patriarchal attitudes, by which he was the overlord of his wife, his children, and his servants, his lightest word to be obeyed by all.” The paternal duties of slaveholders included the guidance, governance and protection of his family and slaves. The slaveholder made many important decisions that affected the plantation as well as the lives of the slaves that included “type of management, type of controls, hiring and firing personnel, purchasing and selling slaves, and type of punishment for slaves” (Durant, 1999, p. 8). The variety in slaveholder’s style of control ranged from “jovial and genial” to

“mean-spirited and vindictive” with some slaveholders living on the plantations and having direct control and knowledge of the slaves day to day existence while others lived in far away cities having their slaves watched by overseers (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 88).

Frazier (1949, p. 49) described the slaveholder’s control of the slaves as “maintained by tradition, customs, and habits, and the sentiment of superordination and the feeling of responsibility on the part of the masters were matched by the sentiment of submission and a feeling of loyalty on the part of the slaves.” The slave relationships and etiquette that developed in the South as part of the constant contact and interaction between slave and master did not seek to “divide master and slave but made them part of the same social organization” (Frazier, 1949, p. 51). The slaveholders used social interactions with the slaves such as the distribution of food, clothes and punishment to reinforce the paternalistic role as community provider and authority figure and to remind the slave of their dependence on the master (Finkelman, Vol. 8, 1989). The social relationships that developed between slaves and slaveholders facilitated the slave cultural system and influenced the slaves’ way of life (Frazier, 1949).

McGary and Lawson (1992) sought to understand the association of paternalistic care with Southern slaveholders. McGary and Lawson (1992, p. 16) described the various approaches to the slaveholder’s relationship with their slaves as having “the best interest of slaves at heart,” “misguided, ignorant, or morally weak” and as holding “a set of false beliefs which caused them to act in what we now can see were morally objectionable ways.” McGary and Lawson (1992, p. 16) described an opposing view of the slaveholder and slave relationship as understanding “what they were doing was wrong, but they did it anyway in order to gain economic power and social privilege.” According to McGary and Lawson (1992, p. 17) and his study of slave narratives, “paternalistic accounts of slavery cannot withstand close scrutiny...because slaves typically

described slavery and their slaveholders in ways that called paternalism into question.” McGary and Lawson (1992) believed slaveholders were motivated for their own good and aware of the moral dilemmas from both the inside and outside surrounding slavery and failed to understand or comprehend the humanity of slaves, which eliminated any claims of paternalistic care.

Frazier (1949, p. 30) described profit as “the main consideration in a system of commercial agriculture” with slavery providing “certain economic advantages to the planters.” Frazier (1949, p. 44) described the slave’s role to the planter as being an “instrument of production to be utilized for the maximum profit.” The plight of slaves was to be treated “as savages to be subdued, workers whose power had to be harnessed, and sources of profit - not as human beings” (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 78). *Slavery in America* (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 36) described “whites’ concern for profits” as the only thing that offered slaves any form of protection or care. The low social status of slaves and the high regard for profit in their labor endeavors allowed slave owners “to house, clothe, and feed their slaves only sufficiently to enable them to work” (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 80).

The rights of slaves were severally limited within the slave system and owners had absolute authority over slaves including discipline and punishment. Schneider and Schneider (2007, p. 78) stated “the isolation of the plantation and the legal inability of blacks to testify against whites effectively gave the master the power of life and death.” Slaves did not have “freedom of movement” without written permission from the owner, protection from illegal imprisonment, slaves “did not own his[her] own body” and slaves were “usually legally forbidden to buy and sell goods without his[her] owner’s specific permission” (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 90). However, the slaveholder was not in complete control of the relationship

and both parties used social behaviors and interactions to test the demanded and expected roles (Finkelman, Vol. 8, 1989).

Schneider and Schneider (2007, p. 80) described the institution of slavery as being dependent on the fact that “slave owners had to regard blacks as their inferiors.” Frazier (1949, p. 673) explained the social standing of slaves as “in the South the Negro had a *place* but it was an inferior place or inferior social status in the social structure.” John (1999, p. 46) described the contradicting perspective of slaves by slaveholder’s as “slaveholders defined blacks as savage, then entrusted them with their children; docile, then developed the black codes; and witless, then purchased them based on skills.” Slaveholders sought refuge in the façade that “white dominance was God-ordained white destiny...their birthright” (John, 1999, p. 44). The idea of racial superiority was constructed in the interest of slaveholders and at the expense of slaves in order to ensure the survival of the slaveholder’s way of life.

Slave Research

Miller and Smith (1988, p. 694) described the most successful studies of slavery as being inclusive of “a wide variety of sources” while maintaining an awareness “of the ambiguities and other practical limitations inherent in each type of source material.” Newton and Lewis (1978, p. 64) stated that only “through close and detailed case studies of the ways in which slavery functioned on a day-to-day basis can we begin to understand what it meant to be a slave in any phase of the American slave system, industrial or agricultural, urban or rural.” Newton and Lewis (1978, p. 64) believed “that records generated in the daily functioning of the system can give us some insight into the slave’s own reaction to his or her bondage.” Miller and Smith (1988, p. 698) described the sources for slavery research as the “vast array of folk and material culture data, along with relevant correspondence, oral histories, autobiographies, plantation

records, travel narratives, government documents, and contemporary newspapers.” Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989, p. 313) stated in regards to slave studies that “scholars customarily have consulted plantation journals, court records, census schedules, and travelers’ accounts - all of which yield valuable information about servitude.” The legislative and county court petitions used in this research study fall under the category of government documents and court records used to pursue slavery research.

Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989) described important sources from the perspectives of slaves during the period as slave petitions for freedom, letters to and from anti-slavery organizations, the American Colonization Society, the Liberian settlers, fugitive slaves, slave rebels, Negro informers, slave drivers, managers, house servants, artisans, hirelings, and field hands, voluntary or forced confessions by slave rebels implicated in insurrections and plots, and the well-known fugitive-slave narratives. Miller and Smith (1988) described the importance of studying slave-authored resources in order to understand the slave’s perspective on quality of life and living conditions. Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989, p. 336) believed that primary slave sources would “increase our understanding of the quality and extent of the varied responses of slaves.”

Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989, p. 313) described the most important limitation to slave research sources as being “entirely from the white man’s point of view.” Finkelman’s (Vol. 8, 1989) main concern in listing slaveholder or white’s point of view as a limitation was because of his belief in the need for more studies from the perspectives and resources of blacks during the period. Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989, pp. 315-316) described limitations to period documents provided by African American individuals as “many of the letters were written by privileged bondsmen - those house servants, drivers, and artisans - who comprised an “elite” group of perhaps five or ten percent of the total slave population. These slaves usually lived on the largest

plantations under conditions that were not representative of the average slave milieu.”

Finkelman (Vol. 8, 1989, pp. 314-315) described further limitations of slave sources as “fugitive slave narratives, slave autobiographies and recollections of freedmen and freedwomen have biases in the fact that they were written outside of the bonds of slavery often with a significant amount of time elapsed between slavehood and freedom and were often influenced by the period stereotypes of individuals who recorded the events or used the writings for propaganda purposes.”

According to scholars, there are many different approaches and sources to utilize when studying slavery. There are sources from the white perspective and the black perspective, each with their own benefits, biases and limitations. There are period documents such as court records that were constructed during the years of slavery and slave documents recorded after slavery ended such as the slave narratives from the Federal Writers Project. The slave petitions that will be used in the current research study have the advantage of being produced during the period in which slavery existed and recorded significant events that directly influenced the daily lives of slaves. A disadvantage mentioned by some scholars would be that the petitions are from the perspective of slaveholders and individuals caring for slaves and not from the area of needed research related to the first hand testimony of slaves (Finkelman, 1989).

Slave History

Du Bois (1915) sought to establish the meaning of slavery, reaction to slavery, and the path to freedom from the point of view of an African American. Slave scholars described this perspective as vital to understanding the institution of slavery. According to Du Bois (1915), the industry of slavery existed for 244 years in the United States. Frazier (1932) described the enslaved black population as growing from 697,634 slaves in 1790 to 3,953,760 slaves in 1860.

Frazier (1949) linked the development of slavery into a Southern institution with the rise of the agricultural plantation system and the need for a cheap and permanent labor supply, which sealed the fate of the Negro.

Most of the slaves brought to the New World came from West Africa, which constituted a diverse group of cultures with regional and linguistic differences (Miller and Smith, 1988). Du Bois (1915) described the United States Negro population in its most basic terms as a mixture of various African populations, a mixture of these populations with white Americans, and mainly designated by dark skin color but in some cases indistinguishable from the white population in coloration. These descriptors became the basis for many stereotypes that influenced the treatment of slaves. Frazier (1949, p. 22) stated “the fact that the Negroes were an alien race bearing distinctive physical marks was, doubtless, the basis for differential treatment from the beginning and later facilitated their enslavement.”

Durant (1999, p. 10) stated “the political, economic, and social forces of the larger society, forcefully transformed African ethnic identities and cultures into one socially defined Negro or black race.” Within the United States, the Negro identity and role “dictated that they could not be recognized beyond their ability to produce and their profitability as a slave commodity. All other aspects of the African’s existence were peripheral or nonessential if those aspects did not enhance the labor role. Therefore, African culture was not engaged with any sense of inquiry and/or respect” (Bankole, 1999, p. 194). Despite the oppression and lack of freedom inherent in the slave system, African Americans managed to develop a unique cultural system and way of life that provided meaning to their daily existence. African American culture during the years of slavery became a blend of the traditions and ways of life found in Africa, Europe and the New World. Within this unique African American identity, groups of African

Americans further developed distinct styles of African American culture that varied according to the time, region, ratio of individuals that being men to women and young to old and plantation size (Miller and Smith, 1988).

Newton and Lewis (1978) described the culture brought with slaves from the African continent to the New World as not physical in nature but mental and behavioral. Frazier (1949, p. 7) stated “individual slaves brought to America memories of their homeland and certain patterns of behavior and attitudes toward their fellow men and the physical world.” Miller and Smith (1988, p. 20) described culture as a “constant process of change; it develops in response to environment, by way of accretion through contact with various stimuli, and by innovation.” Frazier (1949, p. 7) believed the conditions and experience of slaves in the United States “destroyed the significance of their African heritages and caused new habits and attitudes to develop to meet new situations.” Slaves responded to the new environment forced upon them based on their mental and behavioral traditions and developed a social, material and physical culture that reflected their African sensibilities.

Regions with the smallest amount of racial mixing, a larger ratio of blacks to whites, minimal amounts of white supervision, and an extended period of introduction of new slave populations from the African continent to existing slave populations were important factors that influenced the slave’s ability to develop and maintain a distinct African American culture and society (Miller and Smith, 1988). The African American cultures developed by slaves in the New World included material objects, religion, language, song, dance, music, kinship and ritual practices, and folklore. On the other hand, smaller populations of blacks, tighter control by whites, and reduced additions of slaves from the African continent to existing slave populations negatively impacted the slave’s ability to develop a distinct culture and were more likely to adopt

and participate in the culture of European Americans. Frazier (1949, p. 7) stated “In 1860 in the South as a whole, three fourths of the farms and plantations had less than fifty slaves.... Only in Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina were there holdings with more than 500 slaves and such holdings constituted less than one per cent of the holdings in all these states except South Carolina.” These numbers are significant in helping to understand the difficulty that small numbers and groups of slaves must have faced when attempting to develop and maintain a cultural identity.

Slavery in the United States destroyed the civil and family institutions of Africa and created a less civilized family environment for the African American population (Du Bois, 1915). Frazier (1949, p. 11) goes on to state “there is scarcely any evidence that recognizable elements of the African social organization have survived in the United States.” Frazier (1949) believed the scarcity of authentic African social organizations, such as political and family structures, marriage traditions, naming traditions, moral, supernatural and religious traditions was evidence of slavery's negative influence over the African heritage brought with slaves to the New World.

The male to female ratio of slaves in the United States being almost twice as many males to females played a role in the quality of slave life in America. With such a skewed ratio, monogamy and family structures became difficult to maintain when combined with the practices of separating and selling families apart from one another and breeding slaves to increase property and profits. In America, Africans faced a culture of “sexual promiscuity, a weak community life, with common dwelling, meals, and child nurseries” (Du Bois, 1915, p. 113). Frazier (1949) also stated the isolation of slaves by both geographic location, division of labor on plantations and the

destruction of the family unit played an important role in the slave's difficulty to develop, sustain and transmit a unique cultural heritage.

Slave Life

The skills of slaves allowed them to gain graces with their masters by providing needed services and a profit center, as well as, providing economic freedom and forms of respect within the slave and white communities. The two general groups of slaves were differentiated by the forms of labor each group performed. The majority of slaves were field hands with their main responsibilities being "planting, cultivating, and harvesting...and many other tasks necessary to maintain the plantation and its population" (Finkelman, 1989, p. 131). The second group of slaves was comprised of domestic servants, who mainly performed duties pertaining to the master's living arrangements and consisted of "nurses, cooks, body servants, butlers, chambermaids, coachmen, and those artisans who lived in close contact with the white owner and family" (Finkelman, 1989, p. 131).

The division of labor within the slave community led to social distinctions between the two groups and was based on proximity to the master. The domestic servants were often seen as superior to the field hands by both whites and slaves, which was in part due to the domestic servant's exposure to white culture through proximity (Finkelman, 1989). Through observation of the dominant culture, domestic servants adopted different appearances, mannerisms and speech patterns than field hands (Finkelman, 1989). Material privileges were also afforded to domestic servants as a result of their visibility within the master's house and through the use of domestic servants as an extension of the display of wealth presented by the master, which included better food and clothing including uniforms on larger plantations. Field hands were seen to be inferior to house servants by both the white and black populations. Frazier (1949, p. 54)

stated “the most important distinctions in the slave population were due to advantages enjoyed by the domestic and personal slaves as compared with the field slaves.”

Finkelman (1988) described the selection of particular traits by slaveholders as desirable for domestic servants such as intelligence and light colored skin, which gave mulatto slaves an advantage over other slaves for domestic work. Masters were more likely to show favor and look upon mulatto slaves as superior in intelligence and ability due to the “infusion of white blood” (Finkelman, 1989, p. 134). Thus, the mulatto slave community as well as domestic servants due to characteristics earned and attributed gained privileges and benefits from their position in both the white and slave communities and were often able to pass these benefits to their children.

The occupational and societal structure of slavery minimized unrest and reinforced stability by providing little if any room for change or advancement in occupations. This was characterized by the high likelihood that slave children would perform identical occupations as their parents with kinship being “the critical influence on a slave’s occupation” (Finkelman, 1989, p. 209). In addition to the occupational and societal differences between slaves and field hands, gender differences existed within the division of labor (Finkelman, 1989). In the realm of field hands, gender was almost all together ignored with the expectations for male and female occupational tasks being almost identical. On the other hand, domestic servants were almost entirely female and skilled craftsmen were almost all male.

Within the slave community, slaves with valuable personal skills and individual traits such as freedom of movement, the ability to earn an independent income no matter how small, and the opportunity to transmit slave talents and culture to members outside the slave community as well as within the slave community gained more respect (Finkelman, 1989). Well-respected slaves could earn a place of recognition and influence among both white and slave communities,

which in turn influenced the social and cultural elements of the slave community and slave identity (Finkelman, 1989). Schneider and Schneider (2007, p. 91) described the slave experience in America as one of triumph stating “humiliated, deprived of identity, forced to work endless hours, and tortured, slaves nonetheless somehow maintained a culture and community of their own.” Through their ability to create a unique identity and culture based on their heritage and individual and group strengths and skills, slaves maintained a level of autonomy that in a way saved them from the oppression and abuse that surrounded them on a daily basis.

Slave Dress Research

Tandberg (1980, p. 89) states “...few sources deal with clothing of the poor. Even less information is available about garments worn by black American field slaves. Not a single work deals with their clothing in any depth.” Hunt (1996, p. 200) stated “Because of an almost total lack of [slave] clothing to examine, scholars must turn to other sources of information.” With this knowledge in hand, the slave dress scholar must be creative in the search for primary sources of information related to the dress of slaves.

Without extant garments, slave dress scholars have found information pertaining to slave dress in written and pictorial sources. According to Hunt (1996), slave dress can be studied through plantation records, letters, diaries, newspaper notices, paintings and period photographs. The primary sources used in Tandberg’s (1980) study of the cut and construction of Louisiana and Mississippi field slave clothing from 1830 to 1860 included plantation records, letters, diaries, drawings, paintings and photographs. In her study of African American female dress, Cocuzza (2000, p. 78) used “primary sources written by and concerning women and people of color, slave testimonies, letters written by free women of color, novels and poems written by free people of color, Creole proverbs and slave songs.”

Hunt (1996) used fugitive slave notices, sheriff notices, and store advertisements to better understand clothing and textiles used for slave dress in Georgia from 1800 to 1865. Runaway slave notices generally included information regarding the slaves: gender, name, height, body build, color, identifying scars, personality traits, and clothing. Notices that described clothing included fabric type, pattern, or color. Hairstyles and how garments were worn were also described in some of the fugitive slave notices. The sheriff notices that contained descriptions of dress were also clear in providing terms that specifically described certain aspects of identifiable dress styles, such as color, fabric type, or garment type.

Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) also used runaway slave advertisements to study clothing worn by slaves. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) found that the clothing used to describe runaway slaves also corresponded to their labor with runaway field slaves described as wearing coarse ill-fitting clothing and finer tailored clothing descriptions were often used to describe runaway domestic slaves. In some cases, masters provided information about stolen clothing taken by the slave from the plantation before their departure. According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011), some run away slaves remained physically near to the plantation and requested better treatment in the form of new clothes in order to ensure the slave's return to the plantation. The above examples of research studies support the use of written period documents to research slave dress.

Hunt (1990) observed that both urban and rural African American women in Georgia from 1870-1915 adopted western styles of fashionable dress and urban women more so than rural women. From a photographic standpoint, Hunt (1990) noted that rural women were often depicted performing work activities. Unfashionable dress items associated with rural women included the kerchief and apron and suggested an occupational or group identifier among rural African American women. Hunt (1990) suggested that the existence of non-fashionable dress

among rural African American women suggested ties to cultural traditions or engagement in occupational activities that may have required or encouraged the depicted clothing styles.

Slave's Role in Textile Production

All aspects of textile production could be found on certain plantations from the preparation of raw material to the production of finished goods. Slaves had full knowledge of textile and clothing production, from the plants and animals used, to growing, harvesting, and processing the raw fibers, spinning, dying, weaving, knitting, cutting patterns and sewing (Foster, 1997). After picking the cotton, slaves removed the seeds either by hand or with the aid of a cotton gin. Slaves were also responsible for carding the cotton fibers in preparation for spinning. Women were responsible for the spinning and weaving process along with the help of both young slave girls and boys (Foster, 1997, White and White, 1998). Slave men and women possessed knowledge of dying either threads or fabric with commercial, cultivated or wild plant dyes and used the colored thread to decorate and design fabrics (White and White, 1998).

Slave men and women performed similar tasks in the field but while in the slave quarters, tasks were divided based on gender (Foster, 1997). Women were responsible for work related to the manufacturing of cloth and clothing. One exception to female production of dress items was the production of leather goods and shoes by male slaves. Many of the slave shoemakers were considered master craftsman and were extremely knowledgeable in the area of shoe production. No matter what gender was involved, slaves possessed the necessary knowledge to produce a vast array of items for many different social classes (Foster, 1997).

Fabric Types Used in Slave Dress

Slaves wore a variety of plain and patterned textiles made from several different materials. In her study of fugitive slave notices, Hunt (1996) described woven textile patterns

worn by slaves as striped, checked or figured and the predominant colors as blue, black, and white (Hunt, 1996). Certain types of fabrics were often described and labeled for use as slave clothing material and were generally the least expensive types (White and White, 1998). White and White (1998) stated that it was most likely that the creativity found in slave dress evolved from the arrangement of provided ensembles rather than personal acquisition.

Important textile fibers used in slave clothing included wool, linen and cotton. Hunt (1996) mentioned forty-one specific fabric types, such as homespun, kersey, calico, and osnaburg in the use of slave clothing. Summer textiles used in slave dress included cheap, unbleached coarse or medium to poor quality linen or cotton, which was referred to as osnaburg, and winter clothing included the use of osnaburg and/or plains, an inexpensive woolen material (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Linen was an ideal choice for slave work clothing being that it was “strong, absorbent, and washable” and “relatively inexpensive and widely available” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 315). Osnaburg was used for slaves’ summer clothing including shirts and pants for men and dresses and petticoats for women. Schneider and Schneider described the textiles used to make slave clothing as “plains, a stiff, heavy, dark gray or blue woolen cloth, rather like carpet” that was “intolerable in the hot summers” (Schneider and Schneider, 2007, p. 81).

Slave garments could be made from a fabric produced specifically for use in slave clothing known as “Negro cloth.” Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 351) described Negro cloth as “the generic name given to the coarse woolen fabric used for clothes for slaves.” Negro cloth was available in a plain, unadorned woven material or raised nap wool and was described as a coarse, cheap, sturdy, durable, rough fabric. The textiles used to make slave garments were often

bought, produced and tailored in bulk, which reinforced the uniform appearance and decreased the individual identities of slaves (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

Slave Dress Production

Schneider and Schneider (2007, p. 81) stated “slave owners furnished slaves every year with either clothes or the material to make them.” Slaveholders could purchase ready made slave quality clothing off of the plantation, use female slaves to produce slave quality dress that could be used on the plantation or hire seamstresses off the plantation to do the work. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) described responsibilities for producing clothing from cloth as depending on the size of the plantation with slaves on small plantations being responsible for cutting and sewing their own clothing while slaves on larger plantations were distributed clothing that was cut and sewn by seamstresses on or off the plantation. According to Miller and Smith (1988), slave owners furnished needles, buttons, and thread to slaves in addition to cloth in order to facilitate garment production.

Tandberg (1980) described the vital role female slaves played in the construction and conservation of slave dress. Tandberg (1980) described slaves as relying on hand stitching for clothing construction and production was based on individual ability. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 417) described slave women as being responsible for producing “everyday clothes, linens, and, on some plantations, fine needlework and lace.” These seamstresses provided essential labor and clothing, linen, and other household textiles for the entire plantation population and could be hired out or used to produce goods for sale to neighboring plantations. Sewing chores were often performed after fieldwork was completed. Although the seamstress took on the burden of an additional workload, the slave seamstress took on a valuable position on the plantation that allotted her greater material benefits in the ability to hire herself out, access to

excess fabric scraps and notions, and the closer proximity and value to the mistress of the house allowed her greater bargaining power and recognition when compared to other slaves on the plantation (Katz-Hyman, 2011).

The slave owners chose the patterns used for slave clothing with little consideration to style and size. The cut for men and women was loose and baggy and could accommodate a variety of body sizes and shapes. The patterns and designs were kept simple and standard across sizes to conserve time and effort during construction. Tandberg (1980, p. 98) stated that “generally, only two sizes of any garment, for male and female, were made – large and small.” According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 123), slave clothing “became more uniform as the system of chattel slavery further entrenched itself in the Southern economy.”

Distribution of Adult Slave Dress

Slaveholders were responsible for meeting the basic needs of the slaves, which included distributing clothing (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). The adequacy and amount of clothing given to slaves is debated, but it was most likely distributed twice a year based on the seasons (Foster, 1997). According to Miller and Smith (1988), the slave clothing allotment developed into a predictable pattern of distribution by the third decade of the 1800s with slaves receiving clothing allotments every spring and fall. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 366) described slave clothing as being distributed “twice a year, before the winter and before the summer” and wool blankets being distributed “every year or every other year” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 367). Slaves received a lighter set of clothing for the warmer months and a heavier set for colder months (Foster, 1997).

Slaves “routinely received two gender-specific outfits, plus stockings, footwear, and blankets, from each allotment” (Katz-Hyman, 2011, p. 120). Slaves had “one or two changes of

clothing” with men being given “shirts and pants” and women “dresses” and both were given discretionary items that included jackets, caps, wrappers, and handkerchiefs (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 125). The distribution of winter allotments of jackets, woolen caps, coats, cloaks and capes were extremely important to the health and well being of the slaves. The distribution of stockings and underwear cannot be traced to a regular schedule like that of outer garments but slaves are described as obtaining these garments (Miller and Smith, 1988). The current research study explored the value of using petitions to add to the slave dress body of knowledge regarding the seasonal distribution of slave dress and the types and amounts of garments distributed.

Slave Clothing Maintenance

With the limited number of provisions, slaves were required to launder and maintain their garments in between periods of distribution. The task of producing homemade soap and starch along with the chores of washing, starching, and ironing clothing was a duty delegated to the slave women (Foster, 1997). The one or two garments a slave received each year was expected to be worn and repaired until they disintegrated, then used to patch other garments. The process of patching, mending and adjusting slave clothing led to a certain aesthetic that included the mixing of varied materials, patterns, and contrasting colors (White and White, 1998). Due to the high wear and tear of slave clothing and limited provisions, cloth was continually being produced, purchased and replaced seasonally (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Domestic servants and skilled slaves often received, acquired or had access to better quality clothing with more frequent replacements than field hands (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

Adult Slave Dress

A particular style of dress became associated with slaves by the eighteenth century and slaves, particularly field hands, were expected and forced to fit the stereotype (White and White,

1998). Slave clothing was often of a drab and uniform quality and limited to a relatively small number of items. Tandberg (1980, p. 89) described field hand clothing as cheap, durable, “coarse and simple” and “the plain cut and hurried construction produced loose, awkward clothing.” Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) described linen slave dress styles for men as breeches or loose fitting trousers. Most fugitive slave men were described as wearing a coat and a pair of pants, along with hats, shirts, vests, and shoes, which were mentioned less frequently (Hunt, 1996). The dress of slave men was often described as being a loose shirt that did not match the quality and style of shirts worn by members of the dominant culture (Foster, 1997). The field hand clothing could have been altered in the summer by removing the shirt and in the winter by adding a loose fitting, shapeless coat. Blue jeans and overalls were also described as being worn by slave men (Foster, 1997). The most common description and depiction of female slave dress was a simple bodice with skirt. Working women wore shifts or chemises that were plain knee length dresses with petticoats. Fugitive slave women were mostly described as wearing “a blue homespun frock or plain or striped dress and a bonnet or handkerchief tied around the head” (Hunt, 1996, p. 201).

Within the slave community, positions associated with power and prestige were often accompanied by more adequate and higher quality clothing allotments (Foster, 1997). Male house servants, who found themselves in the public eye on larger plantations, sometimes wore a fancy style of dress called livery that was provided by the owner and intended to enhance the owner’s status (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Livery was usually made of wool in two colors and trimmed with “livery lace.” Livery became less popular in the nineteenth century and was replaced with a clean and tidy appearance of more semi-fashionable dress items. Many slaves appreciated the fancier dress associated with particular tasks and the most differing form of slave dress was that worn by the domestic servants versus the clothing worn by field hands (Foster,

1997). Owens (1976) described domestic servants as wearing laundered dresses and pants, at least on larger plantations, which contrasted with the tattered garments worn by many field hands. Domestic slaves wore attire prescribed by the slaveholder that reflected the slaveholder's opinion of appropriate dress for domestic slaves (Foster, 1997).

Clothing was used to create a slave hierarchy with the favored slaves who were most often black slave drivers, domestic servants, carriage drivers and slaves that picked exceptionally large amounts of cotton acquired the nicest items of dress (White and White, 1998). Although the slave dress of domestic servants and more prominent slaves within the system was of a better quality and quantity, the freedom to choose what to wear was not evident. Domestic slave dress and appearance served as a reflection of the slaveholder's personal wealth and position within society (Foster, 1997).

Slave Children's Dress

The clothing allotments provided to children are not as well documented as those of adults because of their less prominent role in providing profitable labor on the plantation. Since children did not perform the same workloads as adult field hands, slaveholders felt it was unprofitable to provide them with full sets of clothing. Children were described as going naked or being given the simplest styles of clothing when needed as opposed to being given seasonal clothing allotments like adults. Boys and girls could be dressed in similar or identical styles of clothing. Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) described slave children as being dressed in a simple tunic. White and White (1998) also described the dress of young boys and girls as androgynous and consisting of a long shirt or smock. Slave children were described as being dressed in "a crude one-piece garment" or "long shirt" but references exist that elude to more complete items of dress being worn by slave children (Tandberg, 1980, p. 102).

When gender differences were recognized in slave children's clothing, boys were given one-piece knee length shirt-style garments and breeches in the winter and girls were given a one-piece dress. Slave boys were described as wearing only a simply constructed shirt year round but may have worn pants in certain situations including public appearances (Foster, 1997). Girls wore clothing called a slip and boys wore a long one-piece shirt or dress that went below the knees and most children went without shoes, hats or coats unless they lived in the city (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Slave children that worked in the owner's house were described as wearing hand-me-downs in a serviceable condition (Foster, 1997). Slave children and white children alike were dressed in unisex clothing, which mainly varied in quality of materials (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

At some point during their teens, males began to wear shirts and trousers and females began to wear dresses (White and White, 1998). Foster (1997) described the reception of dress items to mark the right of passage from childhood to adulthood for slaves. Boys were given pants when they reached manhood and girls received a style of dress associated with womanhood (Foster, 1997). Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) describe the transition from child to adult as reception of adult clothing styles and amounts in accordance with their ability to perform physical labor or bear children.

Elderly Slave Dress

Miller and Smith (1988, p. 214) described slavery as "an economic system that valued slaves, young as well as old, in accordance with their economic worth and productivity." Elderly slaves ultimately found themselves at the mercy of their masters and were seen by slaveholders as either a financial liability or found purpose on the plantation in the form of odd jobs. Clothing for the elderly was likely distributed on an as needed basis and no longer distributed on a

seasonal basis. Skilled elderly slaves could be hired out but field hands eventually became burdens and were forced to survive on the charity of other slaves. According to Schneider and Schneider (2007), elderly slaves could be suspect to the harsh punishment of abandonment. Despite laws to prevent abandonment of slaves, elderly slaves were still turned out by slaveholders to beg for food, clothing and lodging at the mercy of the public. The sample of petitions contained a few examples of slaves turned out by their master's and described the care provided to the needy slaves in the form of dress, lodging and food by neighboring slaveholders.

Meanings and Functions Associated with Slave Dress

Slave clothing was designed for utility and not to enhance the appearance of the wearer (Tandberg, 1980). According to Tandberg (1980), styles associated with slave clothing were consistent over the thirty year period studied, 1830-1860, and did not change according to fashionable styles adopted by the wealthy. Wearing fashionable clothing was seen as a form of individual expression and clothing was used to make slaves appear as a unit and visually identify them as an inferior group (Tandberg, 1980). The drabness of Negro cloth was deliberate and "Masters were hostile to the expression of individuality by slaves through the use of vivid colors" (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 351). Slaves tried to express themselves by either personally dyeing provided cloth or adding scraps of material they had obtained through various means. Ribbons or strips of cloth and other forms of ornamentation were used to enhance and individualize the slave dress provisions or to personalize second hand clothing (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

Slaves possessed a variety of personal property that included clothing despite the fact that slaves were legally the property of their owners and unable to own possessions. Skilled slaves or artisans could receive special clothing specific to their tasks but the clothing was often

considered property of the estate and not the slave. Slaves could receive secondhand clothing and some slaves mended, manipulated or acquired additional items of clothing in their spare time or on the open market through trade or with money earned through labor or tips. Slaves are also described as acquiring personal items for use, trade or sale through theft (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011), bartering with agricultural products and their own labor served as a major source for slaves to acquire goods, such as clothing, and personalize their identities.

Slaves prized fancy clothing acquired second hand or through their own personal ingenuity, which they wore to church and on special occasions (Miller and Smith, 1988). Slaves spent free time working on personal items of dress and used personal means to acquire additional or nicer items of dress. Dressing up on Sundays and for special events gave slaves an opportunity to express their individuality. “It is clear that enslaved men and women had access to a wide range of goods, that they wanted to have these goods, and that they were able to pay for these goods themselves” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 127). The ability to acquire or enhance items of clothing allowed slaves to develop personal identities as part of a unique culture. Foster (1997) described the ability of African societies to adopt and incorporate different forms of dress and textiles with traditional styles as an important theme in the antebellum south. The new items of dress were incorporated or added into the dress vocabulary of slaves. Slaves were innovative with the rearrangement, adaptation, and coordination of the different colors and designs of fabrics used as clothing (White and White, 1998). The modification and arrangement of clothing allowed slaves to develop a unique social and cultural environment through dress.

Slaves brought to the New World were quickly dressed in European styles and forced to conform to European ideals of decency (White and White, 1998). The European ideals related to

dress and decency that slaves faced often shared little in common with the dress ideals of their African homeland (White and White, 1998). The adjustment to European styles of clothing was seen as one of the many forms of pain and anguish inflicted on slaves (White and White, 1998). Clothing served various functions for slaves and slaveholders including protection for the slave from the elements, an outlet for expression and individuality and most importantly at the societal level as “a visible symbol used to distinguish the free from the slave” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 121).

According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 121), “laws required owners to clothe their slaves.” Slaveholders had an economic investment in their slaves and it was to their advantage to maintain their slaves’ health through the provision of dress (Foster, 1997). The provision of slave clothing was dependent upon several factors including physical environmental conditions and local customs (Foster, 1997). Clothing designs and provisions for women and men were associated with performing tasks in the southern climate. The majority of American slaves were field hands, who were dressed to meet the needs of the weather (Foster, 1997).

Slave clothing was a source of tension and concern for both slaves and slave owners because it consumed “a great deal of resources, human and financial” and “cut into the owner’s profit and represented a large fixed expense” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 122). Slaves had various reactions and complaints about the various items of dress they produced and received. Katz-Hyman (2011, p. 459) described slaves as complaining about the poor quality and irritating, rough “texture” of Negro cloth, “the sparse quantity of the clothing they received,” and the stiff and poorly fitting shoes.

Miller and Smith (1988) described the master as using slave clothing to make the slaves appear dependent and reinforce the master’s role as provider. From the slave’s perspective,

Miller and Smith (1988) described the slaves as adapting the provided dress to meet their own needs and establish their own styles and identities. Miller and Smith (1988) emphasized that, along with clothing, physical distinctions were used to separate and distinguish the groups. Slaves could obtain items of dress, but they could not alter their physical appearances. Through the provision of dress, the slave owner conferred basic identities to slaves. Dress established slave identities based on sex, age and status.

Slave Hair and Headdress

Styling and maintaining hair was a tradition found in the West African ancestors of slaves (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Due to a lack of personal time and tools used to style hair, slaves had to modify the practices of styling and caring for hair, which resulted in the adoption of head coverings and new tools and methods for the upkeep of hair (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). The hair of slaves was often described as growing natural and unkempt, but the description could have been due to a lack of time to arrange the hair rather than the desire to have a natural hairstyle (White and White, 1998). The hair of slaves was considered inferior and a shameful part of their appearance by whites.

Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011) mentioned changes in hairstyles and covering the hair in association with period beliefs that the texture of African hair was a physical marker of their racial inferiority. Based on these beliefs, slaves were encouraged by slaveholders to keep neat and orderly hairstyles (White and White, 1998). Domestic servants wore clean and attractive head coverings to hide their hair and present a neater appearance or were encouraged to style and straighten their hair due to their close proximity to the slaveholders.

Slave women were described as wrapping their hair in sections with string or threads to maintain and protect the hair under head coverings and to keep it smooth during the week (Katz-

Hyman and Rice, 2011). Slave women could also plait or straighten their hair and used combs, brushes, or cards to untangle and style their hair. Slaves who worked in the field had little time to style their hair except on the weekends (Foster, 1997). Young black girls normally wore their hair uncovered, either braided, string-wrapped, or short and loose. The hairstyles of slave men could include shaving parts of their head. Male slaves' hairstyles were influenced by African, Native American and white hairstyles and traditions (White and White, 1998).

The majority of hats worn by slaves were protective in nature but special styles of hats were worn for noteworthy occasions (Foster, 1997). Headwear was acquired by slaves as hand-me-downs, included in the allotment of clothing provided to slaves, given as a gift, hand-made or purchased by the slave (Foster, 1997). The four types of head coverings associated with slaves included head wraps, hats, caps and bonnets (Foster, 1997).

Foster (1997, p. 272) described the head wrap as "a piece of cloth fabric wound around the head, usually completely covering the hair and held in place either by tucking the ends of the fabric into the wrap or by tying the ends into knots close to the skull." Head wrap materials "were included in plantation supplies given to slaves" (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 270). Photographs and written documentation depicted the diversity of fabrics, from plain to patterned and from dark to light, that were used to construct head wraps (Hunt and Sibley, 1994). Head wraps could also be used to denote status, including marriage, occupation and age, within the black community through identifying different methods of tying the wrap or by the type and color of fabric worn (Cocuzza, 2000). Male, female and child slaves were known to wear head coverings, which served both labor related purposes such as to lighten the load of objects carried on the head and aesthetic and cultural purposes.

Slave women utilized a variety of styles and sizes in wrapping the actual piece of cloth around the head. According to Hunt and Sibley (1994), cloth could be wrapped and knotted at the top of the head, on the back or side of the head, and/or included a front or back flap of fabric. Hunt and Sibley (1994, p. 32) found the head wraps to be “more different than alike” with head wraps varying in the exact position of the knot and the tightness or looseness of the wrap, the amount of hair covered and whether the wrap was worn close to the head all around or allowed to extend at some point to protect the face or neck. Hunt and Sibley (1994) attributed differences in methods and fabric to available fabric, affordability, individual style and occasion. Hunt and Sibley (1994) stated the use of aesthetic expression and ingenuity found in the variety of methods used to wrap the flat pieces of cloth around the head as one of the most important conclusions of their research. Differences in wrapping styles, color and fabrication were seen as an expression of “the wearer’s individuality” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 127).

There is no clear origin for the development of the slave head wrap but necessity related to the tasks performed by slaves may have played an important role in the head wrap’s adoption (Foster, 1997). Female field hands were not required to wear head coverings but “in photographs and illustrations...black women at work in the fields generally appear with their hair covered by simple rags” (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 267). Head coverings used by female field workers most likely served a functional and protective purpose for their hair. The head wrap served as a form of protection from the sun or dirt and grime, absorbed perspiration, acted as an aid to carrying things on the head, hid undone hair and/or preserved hairstyles, since grooming was not afforded to slave women on a regular basis, and in itself could be seen as a decorative dress element (Foster, 1997, White and White, 1998, Cocuzza, 2000).

Slave Shoes

Slave shoes could be purchased ready-made from a local merchant or produced by skilled slave shoemakers. According to Foster (1997), most of the shoes used for slaves were handmade by men locally and manufactured shoes were a rarity. Slaves often described shoes as being of a poor quality, heavy, ill fitting and uncomfortable (Foster, 1997). Durability under the roughest circumstances was a characteristic and requirement for slave shoes in the South. Slave style brogans were made from hard, red leather. Men and women shared similar shoe sizes with standard widths and differing lengths. Slave shoe wear did not differ readily from styles available to poor whites but did differ from those of affluent whites during the period.

Slave shoe styles were broader at the toe than fashionable styles worn by whites. Also, the leather used for slave shoes was often un-dyed resulting in a cheaper more durable product that created a visible signifier of slave status. Slaves who disliked the un-dyed appearance of their shoes used cheap dyes or personal methods to achieve the appearance of the fashionable black leather worn by affluent whites (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011). Some slaves obtained dress shoes as cast-offs from the owner's family. Slave children could go barefoot or received shoes that were handed down or on large plantations, shoemakers constructed lighter weight shoes for children (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011).

In addition to the hardness of the leather, the clumsy uncomfortable fit of slave shoes could be used to explain why some slaves preferred to walk or work barefoot. According to Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011), it was rare that slaves would go barefoot and it was common for two pairs of shoes to be distributed to slaves annually. However, Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 127) stated that a number of slaves "went barefoot for most of their lives" either due to the "physical discomforts" of the shoes or due to the fact that shoes were "not a cheap commodity"

whether store-bought or homemade (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 127). Shoes or the lack of shoes could denote age and status (Foster, 1997). Some slaves practiced going barefoot but shoes were recognized as important for protecting the health of the valuable slave property (Foster, 1997).

Slave Blankets

Katz-Hyman and Rice (2011, p. 70) described blankets as second only to food as being “the commodity most commonly distributed” to slaves. “Procurement and cost of blankets were constant concerns of slaveholders, ... precise instructions regarding the quality, size, and source of blankets” were given to individuals responsible for purchasing the blankets (Katz-Hyman and Rice, 2011, p. 70). Blankets could be imported, produced on plantations or purchased from local stores. The slaveholders could use wool blankets that were available to the general public and made in a variety of sizes.

Slave Dress Findings and Trimmings

Archaeological remains of metal buckles, stone and shell beads, and bone buttons have been found in relation to slaves (Foster, 1997). Jewelry and earrings worn by slave men and women possessed a variety of meanings. Free women of color wore jewelry as pieces of ornament and adornment but also ascribed some types of jewelry with spiritual or protective purposes (Foster, 1997, Cocuzza, 2000). The wearing of beads and jewelry for protective purposes can be traced to African and Christian influences (Foster, 1997). Also, women of color could utilize accessories such as gloves, veils, and mantillas to maintain a lighter complexion and blur the racial lines (Cocuzza, 2000).

Slave Dress for Special Events

Slave dress for special events provided a better understanding of how slaves wanted to appear (Foster, 1997). Many slaves desired to acquire fancy or fine items of dress that could be worn for secular or sacred occasions (Foster, 1997). Slave dress worn during the workweek was differentiated from slave dress worn on Sunday (White and White, 1998, p 27). On Sundays and holidays, slaves paid great attention to their clothing and appearance based on the influences of African and American Christian traditions (Foster, 1997). Some of the most distinctive descriptions of slave dress were associated with Sunday attire (Foster, 1997). Slave baptisms and weddings called for special dress, which could be used to mark a rite of passage (Foster, 1997). Some slave women chose to wear their Sunday clothes with a few embellishments and accessories while others followed the dress and customs associated with American Christian weddings (White and White, 1998).

Slaves showed great interest in the dress associated with funerals and often dressed the deceased in their best clothes (Foster, 1997). White was incorporated into the dress and textiles associated with slave funerals, which was in contrast to the black reserved for traditional European and American funerals (Foster, 1997). The symbolism of cloth and clothing worn by the living and the dead associated with slave funerals became a unique form of African American expression and culture.

Slave Dress and Dehumanization

The prejudices associated with slave dress and appearances lasted many centuries and were even adopted into the beliefs of some African Americans (Foster, 1997). The denial of accustomed dress practices by deprivation or removal and marking of the skin by slaveholders were seen as bitter forms of punishment and the stripping of slave humanity (Foster, 1997). Also, the

bodily mutilation caused by physical labor performed by slaves became a marker of their inferior status (White and White, 1998). These forced practices influenced the perception of Europeans and Americans toward slaves as well as the slave's own perceptions regarding themselves.

An example of the slaveholder's disregard for the masculinity and femininity of slaves in relation to their own culture was in the denial of grooming and dressing practices (Foster, 1997). The slaveholder's possessed the power to provide or deny clothing and inadequate or inappropriate amounts were seen as a form of degradation, punishment and control (Foster, 1997). Slaves could be stripped during the trip from Africa to America, on the auction block or during punishment, which served as an extremely dehumanizing experience (Foster, 1997). Older slaves could be forced to shave their gray beards, pluck their gray hairs and paint their hair black to improve their appearance on the auction block (Foster, 1997). Slaves were able to control aspects of their body's to a certain degree but ultimately slaveholders could harm them physically and mentally through labor, dress and punishment (White and White, 1998).

The simplicity of dress provided to slave females was seen as an affront to their physical, emotional and sexual femininity and identity (Foster, 1997). Cocuzza (2000) stated that people of color were forbidden to dress their hair in the manner of white women and were required to cover their hair with a head kerchief. The fabric head wrap worn by free women of color, slaves and servants was instituted to limit the use of ornament and attention to the hair, reduce the amount of grooming, which was a privilege for the affluent upper class, signify an inferior racial status and tied the slaves to slavery.

Dress and Identity

Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) described dress as a non-verbal display chosen by an individual based on the available dress repertoire of a specific region and period that

communicates identity. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) described the communicative quality of dress as being most important for understanding social aspects of dress, but the biological reasons for the existence of dress strongly balanced the social aspects. Roach-Higgins, Eicher and Johnson (1995, p. 9) described dress from two viewpoints: “as the total repertoire of body modifications and supplements that a particular social group makes available to its members (e.g., American dress, men’s dress, adolescents’ dress) or as a particular display of body modifications and supplements that a specific individual assembles from an available repertoire for a particular time and place.”

Slaves would have been influenced by the available repertoire provided to them as a social group within the confines and restrictions of the dominant members of society and at an individual level based on the personal ability or inability to choose, acquire and display items of dress. Roach-Higgins, Eicher and Johnson (1995, p. 11) stated that the communication of meanings associated with dress are “based on his/her socialization within a particular cultural context as well as on the improvisations the person exercises when applying learned meanings of dress within specific situations.” The slave’s communication through dress identity would have been influenced by their socialization within the institution of slavery. Thus, socialization played an important role in either allowing or disallowing slaves to communicate identity through dress in social situations. Also, an individual slave’s or a slave group’s ability to use improvisation in dress would have increased their ability to communicate meanings through dress in social settings. The adaptation or addition of items of dress to the slave’s available repertoire would have increased and enhanced the communicated meanings found in slave dress.

Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) stated that an individual can have multiple identities, such as occupational, religious, age, gender, ethnic, racial or political, which can help to unify or

divide the individual from others in society. Roach-Higgins, Eicher and Johnson (1995, p. 12) stated “identities are communicated by dress as it announces social positions of wearer to both wearer and observers within a particular interaction situation.” This statement has strong implications for slave dress being that the quality, style and distributed number of items was more or less dictated by slaveholders, which would in turn have controlled the announcement of their social position to both themselves and the observer in social interactions.

The aspect of dress as a means of communication played an important role for slaves in the New World as they were forced to navigate the meanings of dress in unfamiliar social and cultural situations and were provided with an unfamiliar style of dress forced upon them by slaveholders. Slave dress and identity was also limited and defined by available materials and societal structures. The dress and identity of slaves would have evolved along with the changing American social structure and beliefs regarding African Americans during the period.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Stone (1962) expanded the symbolic interaction theory from communication mainly in the form of verbal discourse to include appearance as a form of identity communication in social interactions. Stone (1962) emphasized the importance of appearance in the establishment and maintenance of self throughout the development of an individual. Stone (1962, p. 93) described identity as the establishment of “*what* and *where* the person is in social terms.” Thus, the slave’s dress identity would have established and reinforced their low social and economic status. Stone (1962, p. 93) went on to state “it is in the coincidence of placements and announcements that identity becomes a meaning of the self.” Slaves would have been constantly announcing themselves and being judged by others as socially inferior based on their appearance and dress. According to Stone (1962) in the establishment of self, an individual presents appearances,

which are then reviewed by other individuals, and depending on the positive or negative aspect of the response, the individual can maintain or modify the appearance. The importance of appearance in the establishment and maintenance of self over time played an important role for slaves who were forced to wear poor quality and inferior styles of western clothing and faced great difficulty in modifying their appearance in order to move towards a more positive response in social transactions and social position.

Stone (1962) described the creation of identity as a constant process of evaluation and adjustment based on socialization. Stone (1962, p. 101) stated “as the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed, for, whenever we clothe ourselves, we dress “toward” or address some audience whose validating responses are essential to the establishment of our self.” In Stone’s (1962) definition of identity and its relation to dress, he implied a certain amount of freedom, autonomy, choice and independence given to an individual to assess and alter their identity through dress. In the case of slaves, this freedom was severely limited if not entirely nonexistent and this lack of freedom affected their ability to maintain an identity through dress as defined by Stone (1962).

In Stone’s (1962) study, slaves were more closely related to descriptions of male adolescents. Stone (1962, p. 114) stated “Among the men who experienced the wish for particular items of clothing in late childhood, most were concerned with escaping the investitures of the mother. The tenor of their remarks conveyed the undesirability of the clothing they were forced to wear as mother’s sons.” The slaves’ inability to fully or freely participate in adjusting or altering their identity through dress and their desire to alter and acquire an individual clothing identity suggests that slaves were not able to fully create a positive dress identity and like male adolescents sought to free themselves from the clothing forced upon them.

Slave Dress and Slave Narratives

Henry Bibb described his account of slave dress by describing a group of sportsmen that approached his master while he was ginning cotton. The group of men asked his master what was the “load of iron which was fastened about my neck with a bell attached” (Gate, 2000, p. 522). His master replied that “it was to keep me from running away” (Gate, 2000, p. 522). The group of sportsmen later purchased Henry Bibb in order to sell him. Before the men sold Henry, they had to “take off the irons and dress me up like a man, and throw away the old rubbish which I then had on” (Gate, 2000, p. 522). The narrative described individuals intending to resale Henry Bibb as dressing him “up like a man” indicating that his prior clothing did not reflect his manhood or humanity and disposed of the “old rubbish” clothing and irons that were a symbol of his inhumane treatment and neglect as a slave.

Henry Bibb also described his account of stealing items from the master and using them for his own account as his right for his toil and labor stating “under the scorching rays of the sun, without half enough to eat, or clothes to wear,” he had helped to produce all of the masters possessions. In another slave experience, Henry Bibb stated that his master allowed him to go about town in order to find someone willing to purchase him and his wife so that they could remain together but “before starting me out, he dressed me up in a suit of his old clothes, so as to make me look respectable, and I was so much better dressed than usual that I felt quite gay” (Gate, 2000, p. 498). The account described the effect of the “new” suit of clothes and how it positively affected the slave’s personal identity and conversely, how his slave clothing may have negatively impacted his personal identity. Also, the account described the practice of slaveholders providing better items of dress to slaves that were going to be sold in order to improve their appearance and hide the harsh reality of slavery.

Henry Bibb also described the importance of fugitive slaves buying or procuring clothing in order to avoid detection by hiding their badge of slavery known as clothing. Bibb stated his preparation for escape involved “the accumulation of a little money, perhaps not exceeding two dollars and fifty cents, and a suit which I had never been seen or known to wear before; this last was to avoid detection” (Gate, 2000, p. 460). The account described the importance of slave clothing as an identifier of slaves and slavery. Henry Bibb described his becoming self aware of his existence as a slave by being forced to work “often without clothes enough to hide my nakedness...I have also been compelled in early life, to go at the bidding of a tyrant, through all kinds of weather, hot or cold, wet or dry, and without shoes frequently, until the month of December, with my bare feet on the cold frosty ground, cracked open and bleeding as I walked” (Gate, 2000, p. 442). Henry Bibb also described in his escape that he suffered in the snow being “thinly clad...my shoes were worn through, and my feet were exposed to the bare ground” (Gate, 2000, p. 464). Henry Bibb’s narrative provided many accounts of clothing provision neglect in relation to slavery and the use of clothing either to hide or associate an individual with the harsh treatment of slavery.

The narrative of Sojourner Truth provided an example of slaves supplementing their dress allotments through their own industry and described the illegal sale of her son and her attempts to regain him. Sojourner Truth described her slave parents as having been respected enough by their master to be given a lot of land on which they raised crops to exchange for extra “articles of food or clothing for themselves and children” (Gate, 2000, p. 575). The story of her attempt to regain her slave son included a perfect stranger who approached her and asked how her attempts to recover her son were going. She replied that she felt everyone who was helping her including herself was growing weary of waiting for her time in court. The stranger then

advised her to visit the house of a local lawyer who could help her to quickly get her son back.

The narrative then stated “She needed no further urging, but trotted off at her peculiar gait in the direction of his house, as fast as possible, - and she was not encumbered with stockings, shoes, or any other heavy article of dress” (Gate, 2000, p. 604). The account of her appearance described the dress of an escaped slave as without stockings, shoes or any heavy articles of dress.

When she arrived at the lawyer’s house, he asked her for payment in return for helping recover her son speedily and she replied “I have no money, and never had a dollar in my life!” (Gate, 2000, p. 604). The lawyer responded by telling her that if she went to the Quakers in town they would give her money to pay him. The Quakers ended up giving her more money than the lawyer had requested and when people inquired afterwards about what she had used the extra money for she told them she had given it all to the lawyer. The questioning individuals “assured her she was a fool to do so; that she should have kept all over five dollars, and purchased herself shoes with it” (Gate, 2000, p. 604). Her response was “Oh, I do not want money or clothes now, I only want my son” (Gate, 2000, p. 604). The narrative provided an account of an escaped slave without shoes, stockings or any heavy articles of dress who was willing to forgo those luxuries in order to free her son.

In the narrative titled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Gate, 2000, p. 756), Harriet Jacobs described her account of slave dress as “I was indebted to her [her grandmother] for all my comforts, spiritual or temporal. It was her labor that supplied my scanty wardrobe. I have a vivid recollection of the linsey-woolsey dress given me every winter by Mrs. Flint. How I hated it! It was one of the badges of slavery.” The little girl described so many aspects of slave dress from her grandmother’s role in supplying her “scant wardrobe” to the type of material used to make her slave dress, linsey-woolsey, to the time of distribution, every winter, and the individual

who gave her the dress, Mrs. Flint, the plantation mistress. The most telling part of the account was her reaction to the dress given to her by the mistress as a badge of slavery for which she despised the dress.

Harriet also described that she feared to go about in daylight because if her master found her, he would order her back “to his office to inquire where I got my bonnet, or some other article of dress” (Gate, 2000, p. 814). The account seemed to describe the fact that slaves as property could acquire no property and the acquisition of additional items of dress had to be done with the permission of the master. Also, the account described the strict control the slaveholders exercised over the slave’s identity.

Harriet Jacobs discussed the difficulty of being a fugitive slave mother and caring for her enslaved children. Harriet Jacobs described her daughter’s meager clothing provisions on one visit as “She came to me clad in very thin garments, all outgrown” (Gate, 2000, p. 924). In another account, she stated “I was far from feeling satisfied with Ellen’s [her slave daughter] situation. She was not well cared for. She sometimes came to New York to visit me; but she generally brought a request from Mrs. Hobbs that I would buy her a pair of shoes, or some article of clothing... Thus many dollars of my earnings were expended to keep my child comfortably clothed.” Harriet, a fugitive slave mother, took it upon herself to provide adequate clothing for her slave child.

Harriet Jacobs also described her first punishment as a slave involving dress. She described that her grandmother had taken it upon herself to replace Harriet’s old shoes with new ones in the month of February, a time when she needed them because the ground was covered in snow. However, the shoes were new and made a sound when she walked in the house that annoyed the mistress. So, the mistress told her to remove the shoes and that if she put them on

again, she would throw them on the fire. After asking her to remove the shoes, the mistress then sent her on a long errand barefoot in the snow. She recalled the personal pain and fear for her safety and well being as a result of the incident.

Frederick Douglass described his master as owning one large plantation as well as owning twenty smaller neighboring farms that were run by overseers. Douglass described that it was at the main plantation that all of the slaves from all of the farms received their yearly allotments of clothing. Douglass described the associated age and gender allotments, costs, fabrics, and amounts and types of clothing provided in the yearly allotment as:

two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year. There were no beds given slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. (Gate, 2000, p. 287)

In this account, Douglass described his disgust with the idea of treating people as property and described the allotments of clothing and food given to slaves as a deprivation of necessities. Frederick Douglass stated as a child slave he suffered “much from hunger, but much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked - no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees.” The account supports descriptions of child slave dress provisions as being inadequate.

J.D. Green, a runaway slave from Kentucky, described his master’s treatment and how it affected his life. Green remembered being brutally flogged, which left his back “raw and sore for three months; the shirt that I wore was made of rough tow linen, and when at work in the fields it

would so chafe the sores that they would break and run, and the hot sun over me would bake the shirt fast to my back, and for four weeks I wore that shirt, unable to pull it off, and when I did pull it off it brought with it much of my flesh, leaving my back perfectly raw” (Gate, 2000, p. 958). The slave narratives provided slave testimony that revealed their feelings and thoughts regarding slavery and the provision of slave dress. The sample of slave narratives presents a more personal and unpleasant picture of slavery and slave life, especially in the form of dress, than the slaveholder perspective discussed in the petitions.

Dress in Authoritarian, Totalitarian or Oppressive Environments

Ban (2011, p. 148) stated “The application of visible stigmas (or, more mildly, distinctive signs) is a time-honored practice in all kinds of societies for a large variety of often despicable reasons.” Ban (2011) discussed other works of literature in order to better understand individual and group reactions and responses to assigned visual stigmas such as the scarlet A depicted in the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and the yellow star worn by Jews during World War II as depicted in *Fatelessness* by Imre Kertesz. Ban (2011) briefly described the use of the scarlet A as a symbol originally meant for scorn and ridicule but was transformed into a symbol of personal power. In regards to the scarlet A, “By proudly enhancing the visual aspect of the stigma she transforms it into something that succeeds in making a substantial statement about herself” (Ban, 2011, p. 149). In descriptions of slave dress, slaves were described as adding decoration and ornament to their dress in the form of color, pattern or method of application perhaps like the transformation of the scarlet A, they too succeeded in making a “substantial statement” about themselves and the world around them through the modification of slave dress.

In her research study, Ban (2011, p. 150) sought to understand the dynamic of visual stigmatization used “to represent individual freedom versus coercion” and how a visual stigma can represent both expression and oppression. Ban (2011) described *Fatelessness* as the story of a Jewish boy who grew up in a concentration camp during World War II. Ban (2011) described a conversation between the young boy and a young girl regarding whether the Yellow Star of David worn by Jews during World War II symbolized an inherent “difference between Jews and non-Jews.” The young boy in the story explained that the difference was not inherent but externally imposed on them. Comparing the description of the Yellow Star to that of slave dress, slaves were also not inherently different from slaveholders in mental capacity or physical ability but the slave dress imposed an external difference on slaves by the slaveholders. This external difference can then become a visual stigma of oppression or expression.

Ban (2011, p. 158) also pointed to a decree mentioned in the book that ordered the star that was to be worn by Jews “should not simply be yellow but a highly specific canary yellow.” Ban (2011) stated the regulation of the smallest detail that being a very specific color of yellow by the authorities showed their need to maintain authority by controlling every aspect of the people’s lives. The same statement may be said in regard to slave dress with slaveholders maintaining authority through the control of the amount, cut and quality of slave clothing provisions.

Ban (2011, p. 159) further described the boy’s relationship to the yellow star, the visual stigma, as “he later stops paying attention to the issue of the star on their clothing not just because he becomes used to it but, more important, because it becomes accepted by him as part of the system; in other words it becomes natural.” This observation also has possible

implications in regard to slave dress. Could some slave's have adopted slave dress as a natural part of the system without question?

Ban (2011) described attempts to make the yellow star, a visual stigma, more attractive. She compared this to the desire to make any accessory supplemented to the body appear as nice as possible. She also stated that there could be a sense of danger associated with the "feeling of 'naturalization'" of the visual stigma (Ban, 2011, p. 160). This process of naturalization can serve as an unconscious shield to protect the wearer from the given situation or a conscious decision to reject the intended meaning associated with the visual stigma (Ban, 2011). Did slaves naturalize slave dress as either an unconscious shield of protection or as a conscious decision to reject the authority of the slaveholder?

The uniform appearance of slaves was often associated with the provisions of dress allotted to slaves. Ban (2011, p. 165) described a similar situation during the Holocaust that created uniform appearance for the Jews and others as "they are already shaved, and they have received their prisoner's clothes; in other words they have all been robbed of their civilian identity and distinctive features." Ban (2011, p. 166) also described the desperation of uniformity as "stripped, literally, of their original identity and condemned to uniformity, the thought that clothes do make the man does not seem to be unfounded." The meanings of visual stigmas associated with the dress of Jews during World War II can be applied to the visual stigmas associated with slave dress in the United States creating a parallel between two social groups across time and place.

Maynard (2002, p. 190) in her study of English colonialism and indigenous populations described an aspect of the Western Civilization process as "the adoption of acceptable clothing codes and related etiquette and behaviors." Maynard (2002, p. 190) stated "A significant aspect

of past European interventionist policies in relation to the ‘indigenous problem’ was the dispensing of clothing...a practice that ultimately obliterated most forms of traditional attire.” Slaveholders in the United States dressed slaves in European styles in order to “civilize” them in the New World and subsequently erased all forms of traditional attire. Maynard (2002, p. 191) stated “Dress and fashion theory has traditionally centered on the role of fashion as the purview of the elite within civilized nations; it is considered part of the modern civilizing process itself...The absence of clothing has been regarded dialectically as a lack of, or sign of, that which exists outside of the civilized, that is it inhabits the realm of non-fashion or the ‘primitive.’” She used the example of the blanket ration provided to Aboriginal blacks by English Colonial Authorities in Australia to describe the process of “civilization.”

Maynard (2002, p. 191) described the reasons behind the blanket rations from the perspective of the Europeans as they “feared black nakedness as an uncomfortably barbaric and primitive state.” Maynard (2002, p. 192) described one effect of the act of covering indigenous bodies with blankets as the creation of “non-gendered, even non-existent” entities. Maynard (2002, p. 192) suggested that the “gifted blankets were a gesture of disempowerment; a material equivalent to policies of racial exclusion or protection.” Similar associations can be made between dress items provided by slaveholders to slaves. The slave dress served as a cover for the black body and created a separate and excluded social group that was largely nonexistent within the mainstream culture of the period.

Maynard (2002, p. 193) described the policy of giving blankets “in exchange for certain acceptable behaviors” as a tool for “social cohesion and reconciliation.” Maynard (2002) described blankets as having symbolic meaning beyond the provision of warmth and protection and associated them with the European’s desire to hide, obliterate and cover up the Aboriginal

people. The blanket when used as an item of dress by the indigenous people also served to highlight the stark contrast between the ‘civilized’ dress of the Europeans and thus reinforced ideas of social hierarchy and stratification. Slave dress also served similar functions as the Aboriginal blankets in its ability to be used as a tool for social control, cover black identity and provide a contrast and hierarchy between civilized and uncivilized members of society.

In her study of Hungarian Communist fashion, Medvedev (2008) described the existence of private fashion enterprises, fashionable items being worn within certain areas and groups, and some elements of diversity within the general population despite communist restrictions and control. Within the traditional Hungarian Society, Hungarian women learned sewing skills, which they used during communist control to maintain some level of variation in style and individual aesthetic choices. The study showed that even under Communist restrictions individuals were still able to express themselves through fashion. The research provided a parallel environment of authoritarian dress control like that of the slaveholder and slave relationship and suggests that slaves, like Hungarian woman, could have subverted restrictions and created individual meanings and identities through dress.

Medvedev (2008, p. 252) described the Hungarian Communist Regime as desiring “repression and containment of the citizenry” and freedom in fashion posed a threat to the totalitarian state, which “strived for a monopoly over all its components: design, production, pricing, distribution, exportation, importation, meaning, and visual documentation.” The primary role of dress in Communist Hungary “was to dress citizens in mass-produced readymade clothing, enabling them to concentrate all their energies on production.” Medvedev (2008, p. 255) also described the purpose of communist dress as “to prompt people to focus on commonality and solidarity, rather than to dwell on individuality and personal needs.” The

elimination of dress concerns by controlling every aspect of dress in order to allow citizens to focus on production and promote group solidarity sounded remarkably similar to the slaveholder and slave dress relationship.

Scott (1965, p. 129) described the Communist dress reforms of China as “designed to symbolize a new form of government by proving that “the rest” no longer existed, society had been changed as a whole.” To the slaves in the United States, dress had a similar meaning as both a symbol and physical reality. Slave dress served to wipe out their African heritage, instill a new form of rule by autonomous slaveholders and was evidence of their emergence in a new society. Scott (1965, p. 130) described Chinese Communist dress as “Economic, utilitarian and suitable for mass production, the drabness of the livery of the new state was succinctly justified by its creators.” At the time, China was in search of economic independence and the uniform, drab clothing reduced cost expenditures in the area of dress and served to focus the population on a new goal of an independent China. Similar statements can be made about the uniform, drab slave dress in the light of slaveholders’ desires to increase profits and reduce labor cost, while promoting economic independence for the plantations and slaveholders.

Bush and London (1995) studied the disappearance of knickers in order to better understand and analyze the psychology of dress. Bush and London (1995, p. 66) stated “the less important it is to differentiate people along a particular dimension, the less likely clothing will be the means of doing it.” Since it was extremely important to differentiate individuals in Southern society and slavery, clothing was used as a means to segregate groups and individuals.

Bush and London (1995, p. 107) associated stability in dress styles to the stability “in the social roles and self-concepts of members of that society.” Since slave dress styles changed little if any over the course of slavery, the slave’s social roles and self-concepts were also readily

stable and unchanging during the period. Bush and London (1995, p. 107) further stated “differences in modes of dress within a particular society are indicative of differences in social roles and self-concepts of members of that society.” The visible differences between slave and slaveholder dress reinforced their different social roles and self-concepts during the period of slavery.

The final hypothesis proposed by Bush and London (1995, p. 72) stated “The greater or smaller the variability of clothing styles in a society, the less or more respectively well-defined and conflict-free are social roles in that society.” According to the final hypothesis by Bush and London (1955), the greater variability of clothing styles between slaves and slaveholders created less well-defined and less conflict-free social roles. The final hypothesis is also supported through the study of slave dress because the definition of slavery was constantly being defined and redefined in order to justify its cause and existence. We also know the slave and slave master relationship was not conflict free due to the accounts of runaway slaves, acts of subordination by slaves and the desire for freedom by slaves.

Goffman (1995) studied patients of insane asylums in order to better understand the creation and management of identity. Goffman (1995, p. 119) stated “The individual ordinarily expects to exert some control over the guise in which he appears before others.” Goffman (1995, p. 119) went on to describe the destruction of this expectation in total institutions as “the individual is likely to be stripped of his usual appearance and of the equipment and services by which he maintains it, thus suffering a personal defacement.” Finally, Goffman (1995, p. 119) described the items provided to replace the ones denied as “of a “coarse” variety, ill-suited, often old, and the same for large categories of inmates.” The description of the experience of inmates in total institutions sounded very similar to slaves. Slaves brought from Africa were stripped of

their usual appearance and removed from the items used to maintain those appearances, which undoubtedly caused suffering. Not only were slaves removed from their traditional appearances and ideals of beauty, these were replaced with items of uniform, inferior quality, style, and fit like inmates of total institutions.

Knottnerus, Monk, and Jones (1999, p. 18) compared the slave plantation system to total institutions. While their research study was able to compare many factors of the plantation system to the total institution, they did not include dress as a similarity. Knottnerus, Monk, and Jones (1999) defined differences in the plantation system and total institutions as the economic concern of plantation systems, the lack of total separation from the outside world and the forms of punishment and eventual outcome of the individual in the total institution. With this being said, dress research in these areas would likely find differences in the amount of freedom, individuality and identity of dress with slaves likely having more differentiation and individuality from individual to individual versus prisoners and individuals in the more strict environments of total institutions such as concentrations camps, prisons or insane asylums.

Stone (1962) described adolescent males as desiring to free themselves from the childhood dress chosen and provided to them by their mother. The mother served as the totalitarian provider for the child until the child reached a certain age. In descriptions of slave dress research and narratives, slaves expressed similar sentiments in their desire to free themselves from the negative stereotypes and associations of slave dress by acquiring the dress of the dominant culture or peer group. The acquisition of freedom and the transition from slave dress to the dress of the dominant culture resulted in the formation of a new identity for slaves through dress and was realized when freedom of dress choice was obtained.

Barnes and Eicher (1992) described maternal care given to infants, which correlates to the paternal role assumed by slaveholders in providing dress to slaves. Barnes and Eicher (1992, p. 17) stated “At birth, when a child lacks verbal skills as well as the physical power and other skills required to manipulate dress, adult caretakers act as purveyors of culture by providing gender-symbolic dress that encourages others to attribute masculine or feminine gender and to act on the basis of these attributions when interacting with the child.” From the perspective of the slaveholders, the slave dress accomplished similar roles by forcing slaves to fit into slaveholder ideals of masculinity and femininity, decency and inferiority. The slaves did not lack the physical ability to dress themselves but according to slaveholders, they lacked the cultural knowledge to dress themselves appropriately in the roles assigned to them. The provision of gendered dress by mothers was described as important because it not only denoted gender, but also allowed others to attribute these characteristics on the child during social interaction. In the case of the slave and slaveholder dress relationship, it would have been important from the standpoint of the slave owner to impart characteristics of servitude and low social status in order to control social interactions from their standpoint and to have people act according to the established social order. Gendered dress is also described as eliciting “each individual to internalize as gendered roles a complex set of social expectations for behavior” (Barnes and Eicher, 1992, p. 19). Slave dress also encouraged slaves to internalize certain roles and develop a set of social expectations for their behavior.

Chapter 3 - Methods and Procedures

The research was designed to provide an analysis of a new slave dress source and contribute to the available repertoire of slave dress knowledge. The Race and Slavery Petition Project (RSPP) and the Digital Library on American Slavery (DLAS) were identified as sources of primary and secondary documents for the research study. The research was designed to explore the content of slave petitions for the inclusion of slave dress terminology, perform a content analysis of the selected petitions to determine the types and frequencies of terminology, and provide a descriptive and thematic analysis of the slave dress petitions.

Source

The RSPP involved a massive research effort that located, identified and cataloged 17,487 legislative and county court petitions from the eighteenth and nineteenth century related to slavery. Another important aspect of the RSPP was placing the entire 17,487 petitions on microfilm. The microfilm collection of petitions consists of 151 reels, accompanied by seven guide/indexes totaling about four thousand pages. Each of the individual 17,487 petitions consists of multiple handwritten pages from the eighteenth and nineteenth century in microfilm form, which makes researching the entire collection a daunting task for any researcher.

The DLAS was created to improve accessibility to the collection of primary slave petition documents included in the RSPP. The DLAS is an online reference source associated with RSPP that enhances the researchers accessibility to the petitions by providing information about the Petition Analysis Record numbers (PAR), state, year, location (county/parish), location type (jurisdiction/parish/county), abstracts and additional information. The DLAS abstracts were used to select the final sample of primary petitions to be used for the research study.

The RSPP contains detailed information on about 150,000 individuals, including slaves, free people of color, and whites and whenever possible names, age, gender, color, dates of ownership, economic and family information, occupation, how and when freed, names and status of family relations (DLAS, 2000-2009). The general topics of the court petitions include slave ownership, slave management, freedom suits, crime and punishment, health, death, social and civic life, marriage, women, family, and others (DLAS, 2000-2009). Due to the overwhelming number of extant county court petitions, criteria were adopted to insure the selected petitions would be representative of the county's petition holdings. The selection criteria used to narrow the body of extant legislative and county court petitions to 17,487 petitions included representation of every major geographical region within each state as well as the more densely populated black areas, all accessible petitions written on behalf of or by slaves and free blacks from selected counties, and all accessible petitions written by slaveholding white women seeking divorce or alimony (DLAS, 2000-2009).

The original legislative petitions and county court petitions can be found at respective state archives and county court houses. The microfilm edition of the RSPP contains a copy of all petition documents in the collection. Microfilm copies of the original petitions and related documents are published under the title *Race, Slavery, and Free Blacks: Petitions to Southern Legislatures and County Courts, 1775-1867* (Schweninger, 2005, 2003 and 1998). Content analysis was performed on the primary documents found in the microfilm version of the RSPP, which resulted in the findings of the research study. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the legislative and county petitions by state.

Table 1 - Legislative and County Petitions by State (Digital Library, 2000-2009)

State	Legislative	County	Totals
Alabama	18	753	771
Arkansas	*	118	118
Delaware	418	420	838
D.C.	0	357	357
Florida	11	256	267
Georgia	1	1103	1104
Kentucky	*	908	908
Louisiana	1	2412	2413
Maryland	*	1348	1348
Mississippi	151	640	791
Missouri	6	340	346
North Carolina	442	1003	1445
South Carolina	613	2041	2654
Tennessee	415	1050	1465
Texas	113	303	416
Virginia	786	1460	2246
Totals	2975	14512	17487

*=none extant

The main limitation of the petitions as described by the DLAS include the accuracy of the petitions as dependent on the period individuals involved in every aspect of the court petitions from recollection to recording. The petitions may contain areas of distortion or inaccuracy based on individual versions of events with imperfect knowledge, second hand information, the passing of time, interpretations or personal agendas. Despite the limitations, the RSPP was designed to provide a large and representative sample of the available slave petitions that are spread across 15 states and the District of Columbia and a span of over 90 years.

Historical Research

Flynn and Foster (2009) described historical research methods as being a natural, ongoing, evolutionary process. Historical research uses qualitative methods that describe and interpret data from the past that have not been previously manipulated (Flynn and Foster, 2009). In this historical study, extant eighteenth and nineteenth century petitions regarding slavery

served as the data source of primary written documents that were described and interpreted. According to Flynn and Foster (2009), the data are logically organized and placed within the context of the research according to related groupings of concepts or ideas.

Content Analysis

Holsti (1969), Carney (1972) and Krippendorff (1980) described an important aspect of content analysis as the ability to draw inferences from a historical source. Holsti (1969) believed the ultimate goal of content analysis, like any research method, was to improve the quality of inferences that can be made from the results. Carney (1972, p. 5) described the major concern of content analysis as the relationship or comparison of inferences “to some standard, norm or theory.” Krippendorff (1980, p. 21) defines an important aspect of content analysis as “making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context.” The scholars all point out important aspects of content analysis including the improved quality of inferences through the use of the research method, the ability to compare inferences to relevant norms and the ability to improve replicable and valid aspects of the results.

Deese (1969, p. 39) described content analysis as the interpretation of symbolic significance within historical documents that “are highly selected and altered accounts of what is in the original.” In this way, content analysis can be used to discover latent characteristics or to infer characteristics on historical documents. Hall (1969, p. 149) stated that categories used to organize information for content analysis should be determined by “research objectives” and if the research objectives are clear “the formulation of appropriate categories will follow as a matter of course.” Hall (1969, p. 149) described the difficulty in forming research objectives in new areas of research and believed the development of pertinent categories could not be established until the possible categories were exposed, which was a result of “extensive

familiarity with the material.” Research categories can consist of condensed statements that are conducive to empirical thematic analysis or the overall themes found in a subject area and subjects can be further broken down into elements, such as individual words.

Content analysis was described as asking a standard question to a predetermined body of historical documents, in such a way as to produce countable results. Holsti (1969) believed content analysis should be objective, systematic and have some degree of generality. He believed valid rules and procedures ensured objectivity, consistency in the application of rules as to the inclusion or exclusion of content, a systematic analysis, the ability to replicate the research and generality of results with other sets of data. Holsti (1969, p. 24) described a good research design as being “explicit and integrates procedures for selecting a sample of data for analysis, content categories and units to be placed into the categories, comparisons between categories, and the classes of inference which may be drawn from the data.”

Data Collection and Research Design

The first assessment in the research design dealt with identifying the slave dress sample of petitions to be included in the current research study from the 17,487 slave petition abstracts. Since the research was focused on slave dress, the first step in the research process involved the researcher reading through the 17,487 petitions abstracts located on the DLAS website and identifying petition abstracts that contained standard dress terminology, either terminology describing specific dress items such as shirt, pants or shoes or terminology referring to general dress descriptions such as clothing, raiment or garments that referred directly to slaves. The petition abstracts that contained standard dress terminology related to slaves were then analyzed according to the second set of criteria used to determine inclusion of the petition in the final sample.

The second assessment involved identifying petition abstracts within the selected sample that contained references to the focus of the research study that being the slaveholder and slave dress provision relationship. The assessment criteria involved in establishing and selecting petitions concerned with the slave and slaveholder dress relationship included that the slaveholder had to be either the plaintiff or the defendant within the primary petition document. The first two assessments eliminated petitions that contained standard dress terminology related to free individuals both white and black, jailed slaves with no identifiable slaveholder, Anti-Slavery societies that discussed the dress of slaves without direct reference to individual slaves or slaveholders, and slave theft of dress items, which did not describe the slaveholder and slave dress provisions relationship. After the selection of the primary petition documents sample and during the content analysis of the primary documents, eight petitions were eliminated due to the inability to locate dress terminology because of either illegibility or dress terminology described in the abstract was not present in the primary document. After these petitions were removed, the final sample of petitions included 150 primary documents.

The abstracts were used to facilitate the identification of petitions that contained slave dress terminology to be included in the final sample and the primary documents were used in the final analysis in order to improve the accuracy of the results. The first step in the final analysis of the selected sample of slave dress petitions involved locating the primary documents within the microfilm collection of the RSPP. After identifying and scanning the selected slave dress petitions, the Petition Analysis Record Number was used to gather information regarding the year the petition was filed and the state in which the petition was filed. The year and state were recorded for each petition included in the final sample to describe the sample distribution.

After the year and state were recorded for each petition, the next step in the research process involved the content analysis of the petitions for slave dress terminology. The process involved reading through all of the selected petitions and recording standard dress terminology and standard dress terminology descriptors that related to slaves. The information recorded from each petition included the identification of slave dress terms, the requested amount associated with each dress term whether it was a single, double, triple or quadruple request and descriptors used with each dress term and whether it was a single, double, triple or quadruple request. After recording dress terms and descriptors based on single, double, triple and quadruple request, identical or similar slave dress terminology and descriptors were added together to get a total frequency of dress terms and descriptors. Dress terms and descriptors regarding how slaves were to be returned to slaveholders at the expiration of a term of hire were recorded in separate chart. Figure 1 provides the method for recording slave dress terminology and the slave dress terminology descriptors. Figure 2 provides an example of a slave dress petition request and how the analysis method was applied.

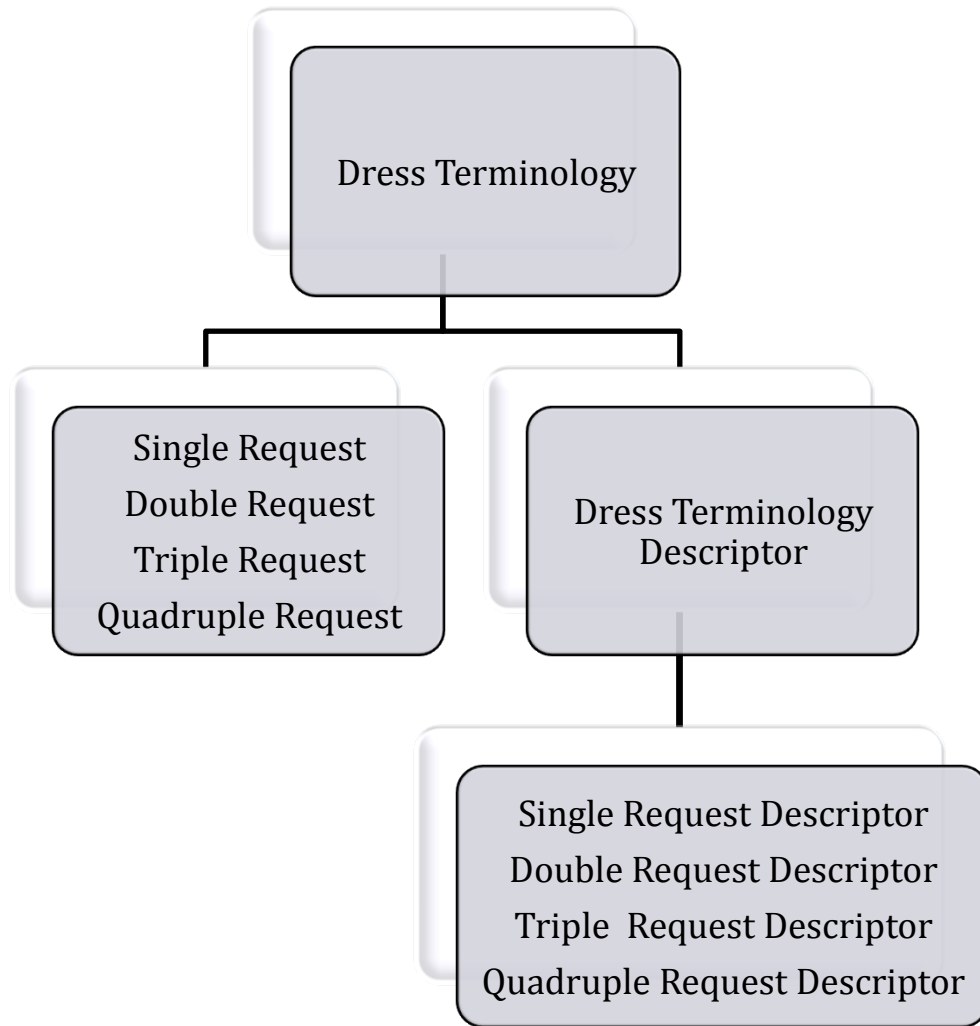


Figure 1 – Method for Recording the Number of Request Associated with Dress Terms and Descriptors

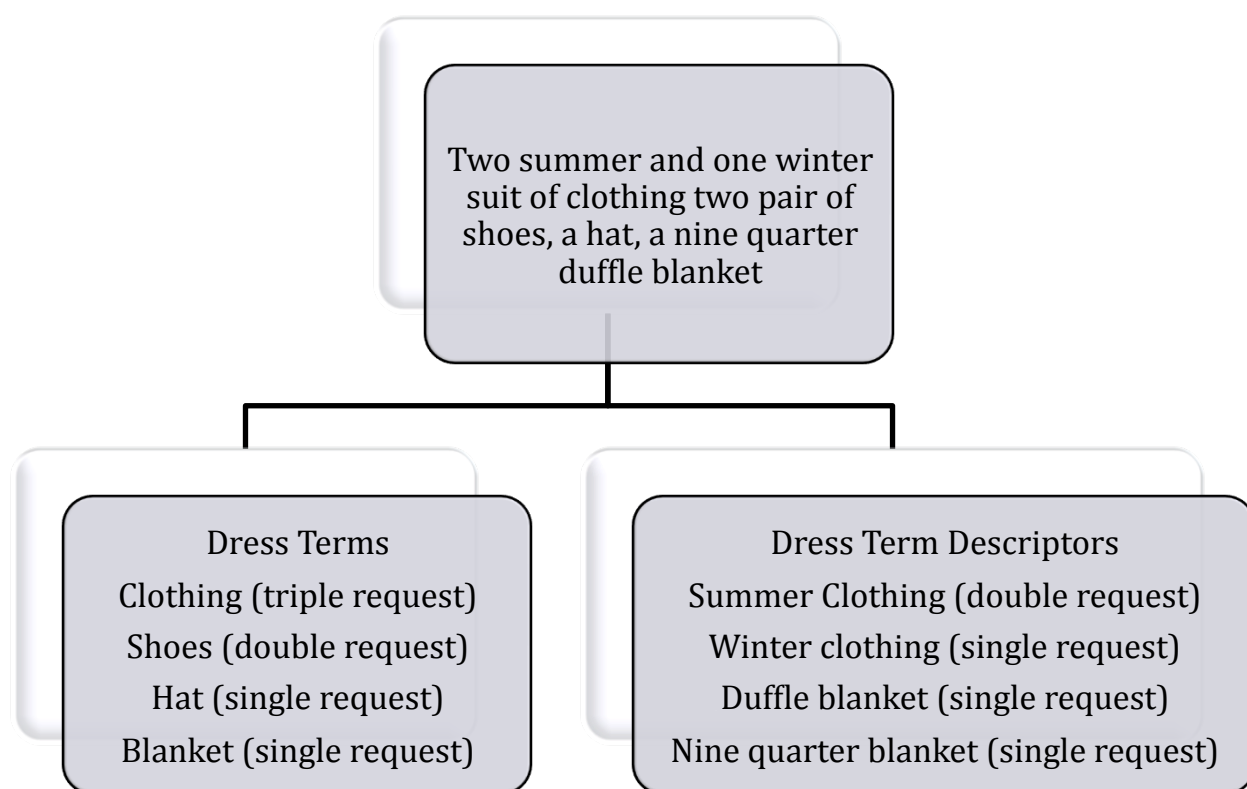


Figure 2 – Method for Recording Dress Terms and Descriptors and Associated Numbers of Requests

In the process of recording dress terminology frequencies, criteria were adopted to ensure the results of the analysis described the slaveholder and slave dress provision relationship, standardized the process and eliminated duplicate entries. The recording of dress terminology and dress terminology descriptors was done by individual petition. Each petition was analyzed and information was recorded related to the dress terminology types, specific vs. non-specific, the specific terms used within each petition, and the amount of each item requested by each slaveholder. If a specific or non-specific dress term or descriptor was repeated multiple times

within the same petition but was in reference to the same slave, the dress terminology was recorded on the first request and subsequent repetitions of the same request were not recorded. In a similar situation if the petition contained multiple slaves with identical clothing requests by the slaveholder for each slave, the dress terminology was only recorded once and repetition of identical dress requests for additional slaves was not recorded.

The research design was intended to count the frequency of the types of requests made in each petition by slaveholders or individuals responsible for clothing slaves and not to be a frequency count of dress terms and descriptors per petition. For example, if a slaveholder repeated the same request for shoes for the same slave four times in one petition, the shoes request was only recorded once. Also, if a slaveholder made the same single request for shoes for five different slaves within the same petition, the shoes request was only recorded once. For example, if a slaveholder requested two good pair of shoes for his slave or multiple slaves, the terms were recorded as a double request for shoes and a double request for good shoes. The elimination of duplicate terms and multiple request for the same provisions allowed the researcher to better understand the slave and slaveholder dress provision relationship and made the results more comparable across petitions by emphasizing the types of provision requests made by slaveholders whether the request was for one slave or one hundred slaves.

Specific slave dress monetary values were also recorded in the process of collecting data. Recorded dress values were divided into two categories or types. The first category consisted of petitions that described specific dress values and hiring values, which allowed for the analysis of a relationship between the expense and burden of providing clothing to slaves for the year in relation to their annual hiring wages. The second category consisted of monetary values for

individual dress items or monetary values listed in the provision of clothing and care provided to slaves.

The descriptive analysis was the final step of the research process and was used to discuss themes related to the slaveholder and slave dress provision responsibility by providing examples found within the petitions. The themes were based on the reasons or motives slaveholders or individuals caring for slaves discussed dress terms. The themes were also intended to add to the body of knowledge regarding existing slave dress research studies and themes. Themes that were discussed included expense and burden attributed to clothing slaves, slave dress neglect, hiring contracts that included slave dress, the use of slave dress as a reflection of the slaveholders humanity, compensation for slave dress provided by an individual other than the slaveholder, the quality of slave dress, the distribution of slave dress, and slave dress terminology descriptors. The descriptive analysis facilitated the discussion of slave dress mentioned in individual petitions from the sample and allowed the petitions to be examined from a more personal level.

Chapter 4 – Content Analysis and Data Collection

Of the 17,487 petition abstracts found in the RSPP, 150 were identified to contain standard dress terminology related to slaves and met the criteria that the slaveholder was either the plaintiff or defendant, which facilitated the understanding of the slave dress provision responsibilities in relation to slave ownership. The 150 petitions were examined for frequencies of elements including years, states, dress terminology and dress terminology descriptors. The overwhelming majority of petitions within the sample concerned with the dress of slaves came from the period 1820 to 1859 with the highest number of dress related petitions appearing from 1820-1829 and the second highest number of petitions appearing from 1840-1849 (Table 2). Sixty percent of the slave dress petitions came from Georgia (Table 3). Ninety-nine of the 150 petitions were related to slave hiring contracts with 84 of the 99 petitions dealing with slave hiring coming from the state of Georgia. Therefore, petitions describing slave-hiring contracts from the state of Georgia provided the most comprehensive portion of the sample.

Table 2 - Distribution of Slave Dress Petition Sample by Decade From 1775 to 1867

Year	Total
1775-1789	0
1790-1799	2
1800-1809	5
1810-1819	17
1820-1829	36
1830-1839	24
1840-1849	32
1850-1859	27
1860-1867	7
Total	150

Table 3 - Distribution of Slave Dress Petition Sample by State

State	Total
Alabama	4
Arkansas	1
Delaware	3
District of Columbia	1
Florida	0
Georgia	90
Kentucky	5
Louisiana	1
Maryland	5
Mississippi	0
Missouri	3
North Carolina	0
South Carolina	14
Tennessee	4
Texas	3
Virginia	16
Total	150

Dress Terminology

The analysis of the petition sample revealed information regarding the type, amount, quality and distribution of dress items received by slaves. The content analysis revealed the most prevalent request regarding dress terminology were references to the general dress term, clothes, and its various forms such as clothing, clothed and suits of clothes (Table 4). Within the sample of 150 petitions, 77 references were made to the general term clothes and its various forms. In addition to the 77 general requests for clothes, there were 37 specific requests for two sets of clothes or clothing, 24 requests for three sets of clothes or clothing and only one request for four sets of clothes for a slave. Shoes were the second most requested item in the slave petitions with 60 single requests for shoes or a pair of shoes and 14 specific requests for two pairs of shoes for a slave or slaves. Blankets were the third most requested item in the slave petitions with 70 single requests for blankets and two requests for two blankets. Both of the double requests for blankets involved a mother and child with the mother receiving two blankets.

Table 4 – Frequency of Dress Terms by Associated Number of Requests

Item	Single Request	Double Request	Triple Request	Quadruple Request
Clothes, Garments, Suits, Suits of Clothes, Cloaths, Clothing, Clothed, Raiment	77	37	24	1
Shoes, Pair of Shoes	60	14	-	-
Blanket	70	2	-	-
Hat, Bonnet, Handkerchief, Head Handkerchief, Covering for the Head	54	-	-	-
Leggings, Stockings, Socks	15	1	-	-
Jacket, Coat, Undercoat, Cape	14	-	-	-
Shirts	3	7	1	-
Pantaloon, Breeches, Trousers	3	3	1	-
Overalls	1	3	-	-
Frocks	-	2	-	-
Apron	1	-	-	-
Vest	1	-	-	-
Shifts	-	1	-	-
Slips (For a Boy)	-	1	-	-
Textile Yardage	-	1	-	-

Dress Descriptive Terms

The content analysis also involved the recording of descriptive terms used to modify dress terminology (Table 5). The most prevalent dress terms also included the most prevalent dress terminology descriptors. The most frequent descriptors used to modify the word clothing dealt with seasons of the year. The sample of petitions included 47 specific requests for summer clothing and 44 specific requests for winter clothing to be given to slaves. The third most frequent term used to describe clothing was the word, good. Thirty-eight specific requests were made to provide a slave with good clothing. The most frequent descriptor used to modify the dress term blankets was the type of fabrication specified as duffle. Duffle refers to a coarse, inexpensive, woolen fabrication that would have been deemed suitable for use by the poor or slaves. The second most prevalent descriptor for blankets dealt with the size of the blanket. Good size blankets and large blankets were used as descriptors to describe blanket size. Hats and shoes

were the most prevalent accessories given to slaves that were modified by descriptors. The sample of petitions included 8 specific requests for wool hats and 6 specific requests for new hats. The petition sample included 11 specific requests for good shoes and 10 requests for strong shoes to be given to slaves. Within the descriptors, good was the most mentioned adjective in the sample of petitions with 67 mentions of the word.

Table 5 – Frequency of Dress Descriptors by Associated Dress Terms

Dress Term	Dress Descriptor	Frequency
Blanket	Duffle	11
	Good	7
	Good size	5
	Large	5
	New	2
	Nine Quarter	2
	Three Point	2
	Bed	1
	Four Point	1
	London duffle	1
	Two and a Half Point	1
	Winter	1
Bonnet	Cotton	1
Clothes	Summer	47
	Winter	44
	Good	38
	New	22
	Suitable to the Season	15
	Usual Way, Usual, Usual	10
	way for servants	
	Good Substantial Material	6
	Necessary	6
	Substantial	4
	Woolen	4
	Complete	3
	Almost naked	2
	Customary	2
	Filled with Wool	2
	Good Grade	2
	Half	2
	Well	2
	Bed	1

Table 5 continued

Dress Term	Dress Descriptor	Frequency
Clothes	Cotton and Wool or Wool	1
	Inferior	1
	Negro	1
	Reasonable	1
	Suitable	1
	Sundry	1
	Wool or Homespun filled with wool	1
	Woolen or Half Woolen	1
Coat	Good	1
	Jeans	1
	Pea	1
	Strong	1
	Winter	1
	Woolen	1
Frocks	Cotton	2
	Strong	2
Hat	Wool	8
	New	6
	Felt	1
	Good	1
	Winter	1
Overalls	Summer	1
Oznaburghs	Ten Yards	1
Pants	Good	2
	Jeans	2
	Summer	2
	Filled with wool	2
	Winter	2
Plains	Five Yards	1
Shirt	Good	1
	Good	4
	Strong	2
	Summer	2
Shoes	Winter	1
	Good	11
	Strong	10
	New	3
	Coarse	2
	Double Soled	1
	Strong Sole	1
	Winter	1

Table 5 Continued

Dress Term	Dress Descriptor	Frequency
Slip	Good	2
	Woolen	1
Socks	Wool	2
	Winter	1

Descriptive terms were grouped and categorized according to descriptors and dress terms (Table 6). Positive descriptive terms included adjectives such as complete in reference to suits of clothing, double soled in reference to shoes, good, good grade, good size, new, strong, substantial, and well in reference to various dress items. Descriptive terms that alluded to a negative or inferior quality or provision amount included almost naked, coarse, half clothed, inferior, and Negro cloth. Positive dress term descriptors were more prevalent than negative descriptors. Types of fabrication and materials included cotton, cotton and wool or wool, felt, filled with wool, jeans, wool, homespun filled with wool, and half woolen. Descriptors used to suggest universal amounts and types of clothing when detailed clothing descriptions were not provided in petitions included customary, necessary, and usual or usual way. Specific slave blanket size descriptors included four point, three point, two and a half point and nine quarter.

Table 6 – Frequency of Dress Terms by Associated Descriptors

Dress Descriptor	Dress Term	Frequency
Almost naked	Clothes	2
Bed	Blanket	1
	Clothes	1
Coarse	Shoes	2
Complete	Clothes	3
Cotton	Frocks	2
Cotton	Bonnet	1
Cotton and Wool or Wool	Clothes	1
Customary	Clothes	2
Double Soled	Shoes	1
Duffle	Blanket	11
Felt	Hat	1
Filled with Wool	Clothes	2

Table 6 continued

Dress Descriptor	Dress Term	Frequency
Filled with Wool	Pants	2
Five Yards	Plains	1
Four Point	Blanket	1
Good	Clothes	38
	Shoes	11
	Blanket	7
	Shirt	4
	Pants	2
	Slip	2
	Coat	1
	Hat	1
	Plains	1
Good Grade	Clothes	2
Good size	Blanket	5
Good Substantial Material	Clothes	6
Half	Clothes	2
Inferior	Clothes	1
Jeans	Pants	2
	Coat	1
Large	Blanket	5
London duffle	Blanket	1
Necessary	Clothes	6
Negro	Clothes	1
New	Clothes	22
	Hat	6
	Shoes	3
	Blanket	2
Nine Quarter	Blanket	2
Pea	Jacket	1
Reasonable	Clothes	1
Strong	Shoes	10
	Frocks	2
	Shirt	2
	Undercoat	1
Strong Sole	Shoes	1
Substantial	Clothes	4
Suitable	Clothes	1
Suitable to the Season	Clothes	15
Summer	Clothes	47
	Pants	2
	Shirt	2
	Overalls	1

Table 6 continued

Dress Descriptor	Dress Term	Frequency
Sundry	Clothes	1
Ten Yards	Oznaburghs	1
Three Point	Blanket	2
Two and a Half Point	Blanket	1
Usual Way, Usual, Usual way for servants	Clothes	10
Well	Clothes	2
Winter	Clothes	44
	Pants	2
	Blanket	1
	Hat	1
	Jacket	1
	Shirt	1
	Shoes	1
	Socks	1
Wool	Hat	8
	Clothes	4
	Socks	2
	Coat	1
	Slip	1
Wool or Homespun filled with wool	Clothes	1
Woolen or Half Woolen	Clothes	1

Return Dress Request

Slaveholders used dress terminology when describing dress provisions for the return of slaves at the conclusion of a term of hire (Table 7 and 8). The most prevalent dress terms used to describe dress provisions for returning slaves included the general dress term clothes with 15 requests, shoes with 10 requests and blankets with seven requests. The most frequent term used to describe returning slave dress provisions was well, such as return the slave well clothed. The second most prevalent descriptor was the word winter used to describe clothing provisions for returning slaves. The reason for the prevalence of the word winter in regards to describing slave dress upon return from a term of hire can be attributed to the usual length and term of hiring

contracts. Hiring contracts generally began on the first of January and lasted until December, which resulted in slaves returning to their owners during winter.

Table 7 – Return Clothing Request

Dress Term	Single Request	Double Request	Triple Request	Quadruple Request
Clothes, Clad	12	2	-	1
Shoes	9	1	-	-
Blanket	7	-	-	-
Hat	5	-	-	-
Jacket, Coat	3	-	-	-
Socks	2	-	-	-
Overalls	1	1	-	-
Shirt	1	1	-	-
Trousers	1	-	-	-
Fabric	-	3	-	-
Yardage				

Table 8 – Return Clothing Descriptors by Dress Terms

Dress Term	Dress Descriptor	Frequency
Clothes	Well	8
	Winter	6
	Good	5
	Summer	3
	Necessary	2
	New	1
	Woolen	1
Jacket	Cotton	1
	Good	1
Overalls	Summer	1
Oznaburghs	Ten Yards	3
	Good	1
Plains	Five Yards	3
	Good	1
Shoes	Good	2
	Double Soled	1
Socks	Yarn	1
Trousers	Woolen	1

Slave Dress Values

The hiring values and clothing cost provided information related to the relative expense for slave owners and hiring individuals to clothe slaves (Tables 9 and 10). The year, state, gender, age and provisions were recorded to describe the sample distribution by time, place and slave characteristics. Six petitions provided examples of clothing cost and hiring values in regards to slave hiring. The average clothing cost described in hiring petitions was approximately \$18 and the average hiring value was approximately \$83. Clothing provided to slaves during the term of hire, which was an additional cost to the hiring wages, was worth approximately 22 percent of the hire value for the slave and consisted of a large portion of the annual hire expense. The descriptions of annual clothing values were higher for adult male slaves with an average of \$25 than male and female child slaves with an average of approximately \$12. Table 10 provides values mentioned in the petition sample including values for individual items of dress provided to slaves and requested compensation values for the clothing and care of slaves on behalf of the slaveholder. PAR 20482209 from the District of Columbia describes the annual cost of caring and clothing for two slave children at \$52 each per year.

Table 9 – Slave Dress Values and Hiring Values

PAR	Year	State	Gender/Age	Value	Provision	Hire Value
20680905	1809	Georgia	Male/Child	\$10	Clothes	\$80
20680914	1809	Georgia	Male/Adult	\$20	Three shirts, two pair of breeches, one coat, one pair of shoes, one pair of leggings or stockings, one hat, all of the quality which shall be of service to negro	\$80

Table 9 continued

PAR	Year	State	Gender/Age	Value	Provision	Hire Value
20681213	1812	Georgia	Male/Adult	\$30	two shirts, two pair of overalls, one winter pair of shoes, one winter jacket, one felt hat	\$70
20682710	1827	Georgia	Male/Adult	\$25	two summer suits of good clothing \$10, one winter suit of good clothes (woolen) \$10, hat \$1, pair of shoes \$1, a good blanket \$3	\$140.25
20682720	1827	Georgia	Female/Child	\$15	usual way, two suits of clothes, shoes, stockings, blanket, hat or bonnet or something to cover the head	\$50
20685006	1850	Georgia	Male/Child	\$10	usual clothing to wit, a summer and winter suit, hat, shoes, blanket	\$75

Table 10 – Slave Dress Values and Cost of Care

PAR	Year	State	Gender/Age	Dress Value	Provision
20680910	1809	Georgia	Male	\$1	Shirt and Overalls
20680910	1809	Georgia	Male	\$4	Clothes and Support three months
20682114	1821	Georgia	Female/Adult (Blind)	\$600	board, nursing, diet, clothing, attention
20482209	1822	District of Columbia	Male/Child between 13 and 14 years	\$156 - \$52 per annum	washing, mending, clothing, medicine and maintenance

Table 10 continued

PAR	Year	State	Gender/Age	Dress Value	Provision
20482209	1822	District of Columbia	Female/Child between 10 and 11 years	\$156 - \$52 per annum	washing, mending, clothing, medicine and maintenance
20482209	1822	District of Columbia	Male/Child 8 years	\$156 - \$52 per annum	washing, mending, clothing, medicine and maintenance
20682813	1828	Georgia	Female/Adult and four children	\$66	meat, drink, clothes and other necessities
21683206	1832	Virginia	Slaves	\$40	feed and clothe
21683419	1834	Virginia	Male/Adult	\$6	Pea Jacket
21684216	1842	Virginia	Seven Slaves	\$10.50	Seven pair of shoes
20785202	1852	Kentucky	Male/Adult	\$0.75	hat
21185203	1852	Missouri	Children	\$100	raising, clothing and taking care
20785301	1853	Kentucky	Male/Child	\$5	a new hat, a good bed blanket
21185601	1856	Missouri	Male/Child	\$608	board, lodging, washing and clothing
20686011	1860	Georgia	Female/Adult and Male/Child	\$30	three suits of good clothes, two blankets, two pair of shoes each
20786010	1860	Kentucky	Infant and Female/Child	\$150	clothing, feeding and taking care of
20786201	1862	Kentucky	Male/Adult	\$4.50	Clothed suitably to season and returned well clad including Winter Coat

Chapter 5 – Descriptive Analysis

The following chapter presents a descriptive and thematic analysis of the slave dress petition sample. The analysis involved identifying and discussing aspects of slave dress provisions regarding the expense and burden attributed to clothing slaves, slave dress neglect, hiring contracts that included slave dress, the use of slave dress as a reflection of the slaveholders humanity, compensation for slave dress provided by an individual other than the slaveholder, the quality of slave dress, the distribution of slave dress, and slave dress terminology descriptors. Many petitions in the sample shared similar content and reasons regarding redress and grievances for slave dress.

Slave Dress as a Burden

PAR 20184603 from Alabama (1846) described the burden associated with clothing slave women and children. The petitioner stated that he was “at the entire expense” of feeding, clothing and providing medical care for Caroline, a slave mother, and four of her five children. The petitioner described that the four children had been “a bill of expense to him in these particulars from the time they came into his properties until the present.” The petitioner went on to describe that Caroline had used “at least one third if not one half of the values of her services in taking care of the said children.” After describing the burden and expense related to the care of the slave woman and her children, the petitioner claimed that he was the joint owner of Caroline and her five children. The petitioner claimed that his partner and joint owner of the slaves had taken one of the children, a valuable male child, away from the petitioner’s care and possession and was employing the male slave and collecting all of the profits from the valuable male slave’s labor. While the joint owner was profiting from the male slave’s labor, the petitioner had incurred all of the cost related to clothing and caring for the female slave and the other four

children. In order to recover the debt incurred for clothing, feeding and caring for the mother and four slave children, the petitioner desired that the mother and four children be sold. The petition presents an example of the financial burden slaveholders faced when clothing and caring for female and child slaves. Caroline, the mother of five slave children, was unable to perform profitable labor because she was too busy caring for her children. The petition presented a difficult circumstance for the slave mother and her children and described how the clothing and care expense could have possibly led to their sale and separation from one another.

PAR 20186424 from Alabama (1864) discussed the burden of clothing slaves in 1864 during the American Civil War. In particular, the petition described the difficulty of hiring slaves during this time due to high clothing cost and low hiring wages. The petitioner, the mistress of the plantation, had become the administratrix of the estate after her husband's death. Individuals with interest in the estate desired that the slaves should be hired out in order to increase their profitability. However, the petitioner desired that the slaves remain on the plantation and explained the fallacy behind the thought that hiring out the slaves would increase their profitability. She described the difficulty related to hiring slaves at that time as "Your petitioner alleges, that it is furthermore profitable to keep the said slaves on the plantation of Decedent, and make crops, than to hire them out; for the pay that field hands hire but for nominal prices, especially women and children, the difficulty of providing clothing, shoes, and blankets, to, being so great." The petitioner did not describe in detail whether the difficulty in providing dress to hired slaves was a result of the scarcity of supplies or due to the monetary expense of providing clothing, shoes, and blankets to slaves in the South during the American Civil War. If the cost of hire did not exceed the cost of clothing and caring for the slaves, it would not have been profitable for either the owner or hiring individual to enter into a hiring agreement, an

agreement in which both parties were expected to monetarily benefit. Also, the petition highlighted the difficulty of providing for women and children slaves since the value of their labor could sometimes not exceed the cost of their clothing and care making it difficult to hire them out.

Petition 20785718 from Kentucky (1857) provided another example of the expense of clothing and raising slave children. The petition stated “the costs and expenses of rearing clothing and supporting paying the Dr bills and taxes of the four younger children...greatly exceed any service they are able to render to him the three youngest being all under the age of seven years and of course unable to labor.” The petition described that the slave children’s inability to labor and provide a service or profit to the slaveholder within the plantation system made them a burden and expense to clothe and care for. As a result of their expense, the slaveholder desired that the slave children and their mother be sold. The petition reinforced the idea of slaves as property that were clothed and cared for in response to their ability to provide a service, labor or profit.

Petition 21382013 from South Carolina (1820) described an account of idle slave men and children that had become a burden to the estate due to clothing and care cost. The petition stated “a number of said negro men to wit four and valuable as carpenters the occupation of their former master, but since his death they have become idle and hardly bring in wages sufficient to cloth them and pay their taxes and the others from their age and infancy are an expense to the estate.” The petition described another example of the personal burden and responsibility faced by slaves to earn their keep in order to meet the needs of providing at a minimum the value of their own clothing and care or face the horror of separation from friends and family by being sold from the plantation.

Petition 21383326 from South Carolina (1833) described the petition of a widower, who was “unable to manage or work the said slaves to any advantage and that in proportion to their intrinsic value they yield a very inconsiderable income that they are liable to very heavy expenses for food clothing doctors bills.” The petitioner claimed that the slaves were worth more to her for their value as property than from their value as labor, which generated less income than the expense of their clothing and care. Since she was unable to manage the slaves to her financial “advantage,” she desired that the slaves be sold.

In the sample of petitions, slaves that became a burden and expense to the estate and could not provide enough labor or profit to offset the cost of their clothing or care faced a common plight, the auction block or private sale. The clothing and care of female and children slaves were most often described as being an expense and burden to the estate due to their inability to perform profitable labor. However, the petition sample did provide an example of idle valuable male slave carpenters that were unable to earn enough wages to compensate the slaveholder for their clothing and care.

Slave Dress and Neglect

Petition 20382103 from Delaware (1821) presented the case of a free black man, William Harman, whose children were taken from him and were being held as slaves. The petitioner stated that the slaveholder did not provide the children with “sufficient provisions of clothing but keeps them almost naked and half starved.” According to the petitioner, the children were subjected to harsh and cruel treatment in the form of physical beatings and clothing neglect. The description of the children as going “almost naked” coincides with previous research that suggested slave children were provided with minimal amounts of clothing or went naked.

Petition 20382402 from Delaware (1824) also described the treatment of a child being held as a slave. The petition was written by a free black woman, Hannah Boyer, who believed her son was suffering from poor treatment at the hands of his master and was going to be sold out of the state. The petitioner stated that she had “good reason to believe that her son is badly treated by his master and others that being but a weakly boy he is compelled to work beyond his ability and obliged to go about in frosty weather almost in a naked state and frequently whipped and otherwise abused, as well by his master, as others of his family.” The petition provided examples of the abuse of slave children through a lack of clothing provisions and being forced to work in unfavorable weather conditions with or without proper clothing. The previous two petitions also presented the cases of free parents concerned with the proper care and treatment of their slave children.

PAR 20185203 from Alabama (1852) described a detailed account of the neglect of slaves related to the lack of clothing provisions. At the time of the slaveholders death, his children were minors and too young to inherit his slave property. As a result of their youth, William P. Gould was made executor of the estate and became responsible for managing the slave property on behalf of the estate. The minor heirs to the estate property accused William P. Gould of neglecting the estate’s slaves while they were under his care and management. The petitioners stated “William P. Gould in utter disregard of the rights of your orator and oratrixes, and careless to the calls of humanity permitted the slaves of your orator and oratrixes to remain without any blankets or other bed clothing to protect them from the cold of winter from the time he took charge of them, until about the first of the year 1844, a period of five years, during which time the women were frequently driven through cold, wet, and bad weather.” The petitioners charged as a result of the neglect and treatment, which included the lack of blankets and bed

clothing provisions, that “breeding women on said Plantations were rendered almost entirely barren, and worthless.” As a result of the bareness, the petitioners claimed to have lost “at least forty negro children which would have been worth to your orator and oratrixes at least four thousand dollars, besides said women are thereby greatly injured in value.” The petitioners desired the estate administrator be held accountable for “his neglect in procuring blankets for so many years for the said women slaves.” The petitioners clearly described the treatment of the slaves as neglect that resulted from the lack of proper bed clothing and blanket provisions. The petitioners reinforced the slave’s position as property by describing their main concerns in regards to the lack of provisions as the loss of value of the deceased or unborn slave children that being forty children at a value of four thousand dollars and the slave women who were “injured in value” and “worthless.” The petition also presented the harsh reality of slave life where the women were forced to go five years without blankets or bed clothing, while surviving in poor housing and being forced to work in cold and rainy weather.

Petition 21385143 from South Carolina (1851) described the account of slaves left to grandchildren by their deceased grandfather. The grandchildren’s father, Charles Amos, was placed in charge of the slaves until the grandchildren reached the age at which they could claim the slave property. The petition stated “Charles Amos, who, supposing himself to have no interest, or title in the same, refuses to keep them [slaves] any longer, without being paid for doing so; has refused to pay taxes for them for years; keeps them unemployed, not half fed, or half clothed, and under circumstances, calculated to injure the property and impair its value, if, not to endanger it and yet refuses to surrender the possession of the same to any of those who are interested and who want to take care of it and account for the value of the hire.” The children accused their father of neglecting the food, clothing, care, and employment needs of the slave

property that they were to inherit when they reached the age of maturity because he had no short term or long-term financial interest in the slave property. The petitioners stated “that said negro property being so much neglected, so miserably provided for so perished for want of food clothing and attention, now greatly depreciated in value.” The petition clearly described the slaves as property and the result of their clothing and care neglect was depreciation in value. The petitioners wished to sell the slaves before the neglect caused even more depreciation in their value.

Petition 21183902 from Missouri (1839) described the case of a slave that died during the course of a one-year hiring term as a result of lack of clothing provisions and humanity on behalf of the hiring individuals. The petitioner stated “nor did the said defendant or either of them during the said time clothe the said boy nor did nor would they or either of them furnish him with two shirts...two pair of summer pantaloons...two pair of socks...vest...one hat...one blanket...nor did nor would the said defendant or either of them treat the said boy with humanity.” The petitioner described the hiring individual’s lack of humanity and subsequent failure to provide dress provisions as the cause of the slave’s death. The slave boy had died during a cold, damp period as a result of pleurisy. The petitioner believed that if the boy had been treated humane and given the agreed upon clothing provisions, the hire would not have resulted in his death.

Petition 21385953 from South Carolina (1859) described children petitioning against their mother, Louisa, who was managing the slaves they would inherit after her death. The petitioner’s desired the slaves be taken from their mother’s management and hired out. The petitioners charged “that the property aforesaid in possession of the said Louisa is badly cared for, the livestock poor and weak the food and clothing of the negroes inferior; that no overseer at

all is employed to take charge of them and that persons known to be harsh and severe are often called in to inflict punishment for the most trivial offenses by reasons whereof...one or more of these are often lying in the woods in unnecessary suffering for food and raiment.” In order to have the slaves taken from their mother’s care and hired out, the petitioners presented a case against their mother that described the slave clothing as inferior and that slaves had to unnecessarily subject themselves to a lack of “food and raiment.”

Additional testimony from Petition 21385953 regarding the case between Louisa and her children revealed the following statements. An individual testified that he “has seen some of her negroes at his house occasionally from what he has seen he was not struck with their want of clothing but they appeared from their haggard and abject appearance to be not well fed – referring more particularly to negro children who going around his fence looking for cattle has not noticed any marks of cruelty on them.” The testimony ranged from accusations that Louisa neglected her livestock, poorly managed her crop, worked her slaves in “bad weather” and “cold rains” and had a “bad” reputation in the neighborhood for being “loose.” In defense of Louisa, individuals testified that the slaves “were in as good condition as negroes generally are,” “looked as if they were as well clothed as the common run” and “her negroes looked about as well as anybody’s negroes...never saw anything which would indicate that they are badly fed or clothed.” In this petition, the appearance and condition of the slaves and their dress were used as a direct reference to determine the competence of the slaveholder and whether she should be allowed to continue managing her slaves or be forced to hire them out.

The preceding petitions presented contrasting views of slave neglect. Within the petitions, the slaveholders presented the view of slaves as property and were mainly concerned with injury to the slave’s value. On the other hand, the free father and mother petitioning on

behalf of their enslaved children were concerned for the wellbeing and treatment on a more personal level. The petition regarding the slaves of Louisa and her children presented conflicting views of the slave neglect regarding dress. The children claimed the slaves were neglected and provided with inferior clothing. On the other hand, individuals that testified in the petition described the slave clothing and appearance as no different than the common slave. Petitions involving clothing neglect seemed to have been directed by underlying, personal motives such as the removal of slaves from someone's possession or paternal instincts.

Slave Dress and Hiring Contracts

PAR 20286113 from Arkansas (1861) provided a detailed description of the hiring value of slave adults and children. The petitioner stated "that he has hired said slaves to wit: 2 negro women at \$80 00/100 each which is the largest amount that said slaves could be hired for that he hired 1 negro man for \$150 00/100 per year. 1 negro boy for 55 00/100 per year. 1 negro girl for \$25 00/100 per year. 1 old negro woman for \$30 00/100 a year, and one small boy for his victuals and clothes." The petition described the differences in the value of slave labor and how gender and age played an important role in the value of the slave. The male slave hired for \$150 a year. On the other hand, the negro girl and old woman hired for \$25 and \$30 per year respectively. The labor of the small boy being of least value was hired out for food and clothing only with no wages to be paid to him. The lower hiring rates attributed to women, elderly and child slaves often resulted in them being deemed a burden and expense to the estate.

Petition 20680905 from Georgia (1809) presented the case of a hired slave that did not receive the required clothing according to the hiring agreement. The petition stated "the said Robert [hiring individual] agreed to furnish him with good clothing during the time for which he was hired and return him with the same at the expiration of that time; and whereas the said

Robert having failed either to furnish him with good clothes during the time for which he was hired or to return him with good clothes at the expiration of the time, became liable afterwards...to pay your petitioner so much money as such clothes would have been reasonably worth...and your petitioner avers that they have been reasonably worth ten dollars.” The provision of clothing by the hiring individual was a mandatory and expected term of hiring agreements. If hiring individuals did not meet the dress requirements of slaves, they were held legally and financially responsible by the slaveholder as in the case of this petition. The petitioner also provides the value of the slave clothing at ten dollars.

The testimony of the defendant, the hiring individual, in Petition 20680905 provided his reason for not providing clothing to the slave or paying the amount for the clothing. The defendant testified “that the negro boy was a runaway the greater part of his time and dishonest and faithless.” Also, the defendant responded “As to his clothing the defendant saith he was as well provided as is usual.” In his defense, the hiring individual claimed the slave was dishonest and a runaway thus relieving him from the obligations of the agreement. In testimony contrary to that of the petitioner, the hiring individual also claimed that despite the slave being a runaway he still provided the slave with the usual clothing. The petition presented an interesting case of contrasting testimony from the slaveholder and hiring individual as to whether or not the slave was provided with the agreed upon clothing.

Petition 20684210 from Georgia (1842) provided another example of a defendant’s response to accusations by the slaveholder that he did not provide the slave clothing requested in the hiring contract. The petition stated that the slave man, Glenn, was “to be furnished with the usual clothing” during the term of hire. However, the defendant claimed that Glenn was hired “for his services as a shoemaker that said negro man was injured and diseased so that he was

unable to perform the ordinary service of his trade and that said negro man was taken away from the possession of these defendants...depriving these defendants of the use and service of the said negro man.” The defendants argued that because the slave did not meet the requirements of the original contract in the ability to perform the agreed upon labor as a shoemaker or in remaining for the entire length of the hire, they also had no reason to uphold the terms of the contract, which included clothing the slave.

The petition 21681009 from Virginia (1810) described the account of a slaveholder demanding payment from a hiring individual, who had failed to pay for the hire. The hiring individual claimed he had “not been in possession of said negro more than four or five weeks before he discovered him to be of the most vile and worthless character and habits and particularly addicted to stealing, for which upon one occasion the complainant was about to chastise him, when the said negro absconded.” The hiring individual claimed that during the four or five weeks the slave was in his possession “he the complainant supplied him with cloathing [sic] of values fully equal to the value of his hire for the said period. And this complainant had expected that said Parker [slaveholder], as he declared himself to be, very well satisfied; and would have called on the complainant and deliver up to him his said bond to be cancelled as in justice and equity he ought have done.” The hiring individual claimed that he had provided clothing to the slave that was equal to the value of the slave’s wages for the brief period he was in possession of the slave. The hiring individual claimed that the slaveholder agreed that the clothing was fair payment for the abbreviated time of hire and had also previously agreed to cancel the debt against the hiring individual based on the value of the clothing provisions.

Petition 20685112 from Georgia (1851) provided another example of a hiring individual’s response to allegations by a slaveholder that his slaves, Anna and her child, were not

provided with the requested clothing. The hiring individual's response to the allegations was that "they owe the plaintiff nothing in manner and form as he has alleged...if they owe the plaintiff anything upon the instrument set forth in plaintiffs declaration that the consideration of said instrument has partly failed in this that heretofore to wit on the first day of September in the year 1851 said plaintiff took the said negro woman mentioned out of the possession of Mitchell Bell one of the defendants and three months before the time expired." The hiring individual stated and believed that since the slave was removed from his possession before the contract expired the instrument and its obligations had failed and he was not liable for clothing the slave, Anna, and her child. The preceding petitions present a clear picture that hiring individuals did not feel obligated to provide a slave with clothing or wages if they ran away, were removed from the possession of the hiring individual before the term of hire expired or were unable to perform the agreed upon labor task.

Petition 20681207 from Georgia (1812) described an explanation for how the responsibility for providing slave dress during the term of hire passed from the slaveholder to the hiring individual. The petition stated that the hiring individual "promised to pay unto your petitioner seventy two dollars for the hire of a negro man Piper...and to return said negro...with five yards of plains, ten yards of oznaburgs and a pair of shoes all good for value received." The hiring individual was responsible for providing the slave's clothing provisions "for value received" meaning that during the term of hire, the hiring individual was receiving the true value of the slave that being his labor and the profits that manifested from that labor. The petition described how the hiring contract was intended to be monetarily beneficial for both the slaveholder and the hiring individual and the individual in possession of the "value" of the slave assumed responsibility for clothing the slave. The petition also served as a view of slaves as

property in the eyes of slaveholders and hiring individuals by basing the provision of clothing and care on the value of the slave. The slave was not receiving clothing in regard to his humanity but in response to the value in labor and profits he was providing to the hiring individual.

Petition 20682710 from Georgia (1827) provided a detailed account of the expense involved in clothing a hired slave. The petitioner stated that the hiring individual “for value received in the hire of a negro fellow named Jim...promised to furnish said negro with two summer suits of good clothing and one winter suit of good clothes, woolen, including a hat a pair of shoes and a good blanket.” The slaveholder then stated in the petition that the hiring individual had failed to provide the summer and winter clothing that were “worth ten dollars each and that the said hat was worth one dollar and that the said pair of shoes was worth one dollar and that the said blanket was then worth three dollars.” By the petitioner’s account, the total clothing expense for the slave, Jim, would have been 25 dollars for the year. The petition described the slaves hiring wages for the year as \$140.25. This means the additional clothing cost was worth approximately 18 percent of his annual hiring wages. The yearly slave clothing expense for Jim described the monetary burden of providing clothing to slaves by both hiring individuals and slaveholders and how the clothing expense cut into the profits of both hiring individuals and slaveholders. The expense of clothing slaves also made it understandable from the viewpoint of maximizing profits or from an inability to afford slave clothing for slaveholders and hiring individuals to provide fewer items of clothing or neglect the clothing needs of slaves.

Petition 20682720 from Georgia (1827) provided a yearly clothing expense for a hired slave and explained what the petitioner considered the “usual” way to clothe slaves. The petitioner stated “for the hire of a negro girl Elizabeth which said girl is to be clothed in the usual way two suits of clothes shoes and stockings and blanket and hat or bonnet or something to cover

the head...and your petitioner avers that the said negro girl Elizabeth was not clothed in the usual way...and that the said articles of clothing mentioned in the said instrument were of the value of fifteen dollars.” The petition shed light on a few subjects related to the dress of slaves. First, the petition revealed the very functional approach slaveholders held in regard to slave dress. The slaveholder stated the slave was to receive a “hat or bonnet or something to cover the head.” The slaveholder was not concerned with the particular style or type of item to covered the head just that something functional served the purpose of covering the head. Second, the petition stated the slave was to be dressed in the “usual way.” From the petitioner’s viewpoint, a common or “usual” slave dress existed. According to the slaveholder, the “usual” slave dress included two suits of clothes, shoes, stockings, a blanket and something to cover the head. The “usual way” could have also been in reference to the quality and style of clothing associated with clothing request. The final revelation in the petition was the value of the clothing or the expense to the hiring individual for clothing the slave. According to the petitioner, the slave’s clothing was worth fifteen dollars and the annual wages for her hire was \$50. The additional cost of her clothing was worth approximately 30 percent of her annual hiring wages. The additional expense of clothing the slave girl was worth a significant portion of her hiring wages.

Petition 20685006 from Georgia (1850) also provided an example of the expense of providing clothing for a slave. The slaveholder requested the slave boy, Spencer, was to receive “the value of the usual clothing to wit a summer and winter suit hat shoes and blanket which the said McAlister [hiring individual and defendant] refuses and neglects to furnish said boy with agreeably to contract all of which clothing is of the value of ten dollars.” The slaveholder also used the term “usual” in describing the slave’s clothing allotment and described the requested slave dress as a summer and winter suit, hat, shoes and a blanket. The slaveholder described the

cost of the slave boy's clothing for the year as "ten dollars." Spencer was hired "for the year 1849" at a price of \$75.00 for the year. If the cost of his clothing was worth ten dollars for the year, his clothing cost would have been worth almost 13 percent of his total wages, which would have been a considerable expense for the hiring individual.

Petition 20785202 from Kentucky (1852) described the importance of the expense related to every article of clothing provided to slaves. The petition stated that the "defendants failed to give said boy a hat which plaintiff states is worth 75 cents...he prays judgment for his debt and the taxes he paid and the value of a hat and for other proper relief." The defendant claimed that they promised to provide the slave, George, with a hat and also bound themselves "not to drive him in weather that would render him unhealthy and regard his health as my [defendant and hiring individual] own property." The petition presented what appeared to be the case of a diligent owner. The fact that the petitioner included the 75 cents for the cost of the hat, requested the slave not be worked in inclement weather and be treated by the hiring individual as their own property described the slaveholder's dedication to the protection of his property and the importance of maximizing profits and holding the hiring individual accountable for every expense.

Petition 20786201 from Kentucky (1862) described how a slave was to be clothed according to the hiring agreement and specifically what the petitioner considered a breach of agreement. According to the petitioner, the hiring individual "did not clothe said slave Mack suitably for the seasons and did not return him to the plaintiff well clad but did not furnish said negro Mack with a winter coat by reason of said failure the plaintiff sustained damages to the amount of four dollars and fifty cents." The petitioner specifically stated that the slave, Mack, did not receive a "winter coat" that was a required dress item in order to be considered dressed

suitable to the season and well clad. The petition also contained a statement regarding the defendants required treatment of the slave as “during said term we are to treat said slave with humanity.” The slave still did not receive the proper clothing even though the hiring individual bound himself to treat Mack with humanity during the term of hire.

Petition 21680503 from Virginia (1805) presented the case of a hiring individual who provided more clothing than the required amount in the hiring agreement and desired compensation for the overage. The defendant testified in the petition that he agreed to pay for the hire of the slave but “when the complainant delivered to the defendant attachment of sundry cloathes [sic] furnished by said complainant to the said negro and which cloath [sic] as the said complainant truly states he was not bound to furnish and for the same reason his defendant believed he was not bound upon any principal to allow account for...said complainant was at liberty to cloath [sic] said negro whilst in his service as he chose, but was not bound to return him otherwise better clothed [sic] than when he received him.” The slaveholder claimed that since the clothing item was not included in the hiring agreement that he was not bound to compensate the hiring individual for returning the slave “better clothed than when he received him.” The petition described the importance of the hiring agreement in establishing slave dress requirements and the contracts effect on individual feelings of liability.

Petition 21683419 from Virginia (1834) also described the account of a hired slave being provided with an additional garment not included in the hiring agreement but said to have been provided at the request of the slaveholder. The petition stated that the hiring individual “by the special direction of the said Jane [slaveholder]...he furnished the said negro man with an extra garment commonly called a pea jacket which cost \$6 and that the said Jane...promised to give your orators bond credit for that amount, but did not do so, no doubt through forgetfulness.” In

both cases dealing with the provision of additional or better items of clothing given to hired slaves, the hiring individuals had to petition to the courts for compensation from the slaveholders. The petitions reinforce the idea that it was truly the hiring individuals responsibility to provide for the clothing needs of the slave during the term of hire and the slaveholder did not feel obligated to compensate the hiring individual for any clothing expenditures during the term of hire even if the clothing was additional or better items than what was requested in the hiring contract.

Petition 21684223 from Virginia (1842) described the unique case of a female slave named Comfort, who was owned by the petitioning individual but in the possession of the petitioner's brother. The petitioner stated that Comfort was, "founded on the tender consideration of the dictates of benevolent humanity, permitted to be and remain in the possession of said Samuel B. [petitioner's brother] – the mother of said Comfort being a negro slave belonging to and in possession of said Samuel B. and that said Comfort during her childhood aforesaid was maintained, clothed and fed by said Samuel B." The petition also stated that Comfort was permitted "when somewhat grown and capable of useful service, further to continue in the possession and service of said Samuel B. for and in consideration only that he the said Samuel B. should continue to feed and clothe said Comfort during the period of her possession and service." The petitioner stated that Comfort was "well and kindly maintained, clothed and fed" while in the possession of her brother during her "helpless and inefficient childhood." The petitioner explained that as part of the agreement her brother understood that "he the said Samuel B. should faithfully return and deliver the said Comfort into the possession of your complainant whenever your complainant should or might desire, direct or require, or whenever the said Samuel B. should or might choose to do."

The petitioner described the agreement as being designed “to be, and constituted, in truth and fact, in law and equity, a hiring (and nothing else) of said Comfort to said Samuel B. for the compensation of maintaining, feeding and clothing said Comfort.” The petitioner described that while still in possession of her brother; she gave birth to two children, Lucy, about four years old, and Margaret, about two years old. Comfort and her children remained in the possession of the petitioner’s brother and he maintained responsibility for “clothing and feeding and sheltering them all.”

The petition described that after Comfort and her children were returned to the petitioner and rightful owner, a judgment was levied against her brother for the payment of a debt in the form of a claim on Comfort and her children. The petitioner presented the case and unique circumstances to the court in order to prevent the sale of Comfort and her children in order to pay her brother’s debts. She claimed the slaves were her rightful property and the agreement between her brother and her was done out of “proper and necessary humanity” and was designed to be a hiring of the slaves with the agreement that her brother would clothe, feed and shelter the slaves in return for Comfort’s services. The petition presented the idea that although the slave was clothed and cared for by the petitioner’s brother since birth at no expense to the slaveholder except for the purchase price this did not imply ownership of the slaves by her brother.

Slave Dress as a Reflection of Slave Owner’s Character

Petition 21585111 from Texas (1851) described the account of minors, whose slave property was being managed by an estate administrator. The petitioners claimed that the administrator of the estate “falsely and fraudulently stated in his said accounts...that the labor and services of the said slaves, were not worth to him more than their clothing food and taxes and...refused to charge himself with any sum as the value of the labor and services of the said

slaves.” The defendant claimed “his conduct and management was that of a careful prudent and diligent man. He was attentive to provide food and clothing and necessary supplies for his negroes both old and young.” The petitioners presented a negative view of the individual managing the slaves by claiming he undervalued the slaves of the estate at clothing and care only in order to keep the profits of their labor for him rather than return the profits to the estate. On the other hand, the defendant claimed to be a “prudent and diligent” manager of the slaves by specifically mentioning that he provided clothing and care to all slaves including the young and old, which made up the group of slaves most likely to be neglected. The petition provides another example of slave dress provisions being used to determine the competence of the slaveholder and whether or not the slaves should remain in the defendants care.

The defendant further explained his reasons for working the slaves under his management as opposed to hiring them out as “there was little or no demand in the way of hiring negroes during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841 and 1842 It would have been considered unsafe to hire – negroes could then be procured for their food and clothing – It was otherwise in the years 1843 1844 and 1845 during these years men were worth from ten to twelve dollars per month and women from eight to ten dollars per month. The demand was not sufficient at all times to secure these prices at places where the slaves would be well treated.” As a diligent slaveholder, the defendant did not desire to subject his slaves to undesirable hiring agreements.

Petition 20379901 from Delaware (1799) presented the case of a slaveholder petitioning the court to allow him to sell his unruly, runaway slave currently held in the jail outside the state. The neighbor’s testimony included in the petition was used to establish the character of John Cochran, the slaveholder. The neighbors testified “We the undersigned subscribers and neighbours [sic] of John Cochran believe him to be a good master to his servants that he feeds

and cloaths [sic] them well and very indulgent in every respect. We do further believe and certify that his negro man Bill who we are informed is in the jail of New Castle is a bad fellow from his masters account and from a variety of circumstances that we are acquainted with that he is a nuisance to his master and to the neighbourhood [sic] in general.” The neighbors claimed the slaveholder was “a good master” because he clothed and cared for his slaves well and the slaveholder should not be held accountable for the ungovernable slave who was “a bad fellow.” The petition presented a case in which neighbors used proper slave clothing provisions to describe a slaveholder’s character as “good.”

In the above petition the, the master’s good character was established by the fact that he clothed his slaves well. However, Petition 20681917 from Georgia (1819) used the lack of clothing provisions provided to slaves as a reflection of the slave owner’s bad character. The slaveholder, Paul Wilkins, petitioned the courts against the defendant, William Ward, whom he claimed had defamed his name and character by accusing him of treating his slaves inhumanely. The petition testimony revealed the following statements “You” meaning the said Paul H. Wilkins “are the damndest, cruelest, rascal to your negroes that the United States hold” and I meaning the said William Ward “can prove things that will send you” meaning the said Paul H. Wilkins “to the penitentiary.” “You” meaning the said Paul H. Wilkins, “half starve and clothe, your negros; you have a negro fellow on your plantation, who has lost a part of his foot by your cruelty.” The testimony went on to describe how the slave lost part of his foot as “a certain negro man slave, named June, the property of the said Paul, whom the said Paul caused to be placed...in an inclement season...in the stocks, and whose feet, by reason of said confinement...became frost bitten...and was, by reason of said confinement, injured in both feet.” The defendant used a story of clothing neglect to describe the slaveholder’s inhumane

treatment toward his slaves and to represent his bad character. While the proper provision of slave dress could be used to describe a “good master,” improper clothing provisions and the resulting bodily harm to a slave were used to describe the “damndest, cruelest” master.

Compensation for Slave Dress Provided on Behalf of Slaveholder

Petition 21185601 from Missouri (1856) described the case of a free man of color, Giles Prince, and his attempt to be compensated for the clothing and care of his slave son, Richard. The slave boy’s father, Giles Prince, claimed that the “defendants are indebted to him in the sum of six hundred and eight dollars for the board lodging washing and clothing of a certain slave boy named Richard.” The petitioner claimed that he acted to clothe and care for the slave boy at the request of the defendant. The defendants denied every allegation of the plaintiff in the petition and testified that “the said plaintiff is the father of the said slave boy named Richard...that the said boy Richard remained and lived with the said plaintiff as his father, at the request of the plaintiff, and without any agreement or understanding that the said defendants were to pay him therefore and the boarding, lodging washing and clothing furnished and provided by him to and for the said slave boy Richard, was furnished and provided by him voluntarily as the father of the said boy.” Furthermore, the defendants claimed “the services of the said boy Richard...have been worth more to the said plaintiff than the expense of supporting and providing for him.” In response, the father denied “that he received any services whatever from the said slave boy Richard or that he was capable of rendering any service...that on the contrary said slave boy Richard was too tender an age to have rendered any services.” The father of the slave child believed he should be compensated for the care and clothing of his slave child and that he cared for the child at the request of the slaveholder. However, the slaveholder

claimed the child's father was aware that he undertook the clothing and care responsibilities without an agreement to be compensated.

Cassy Craig, a free woman of color and former slave, presented her case in Petition 20482209 from the District of Columbia (1822). During Cassy Craig's enslavement, her master promised her freedom. After she was promised freedom but before she was freed, she gave birth to three children. After she was freed, the children were allowed to remain with Craig although legally still enslaved by the defendant. Craig claimed that her and her now deceased husband "brought up and maintained said children from their birth finding them all their victuals, lodging, cloathing...and that said children have continued always to reside with her to this time." At the time Craig made these claims, an in-law of the slaveholder had claimed the children and desired to remove them from the possession of Craig. Craig stated that the in-law, Thomas Hall, refused "to make any allowance or compensation for their maintenance and support. Your oratrix thinks it just and equitable that before said children should be taken from her, she should be paid a reasonable compensation for their maintenance and support during the period she has enjoyed her freedom." The petition revealed that Craig was not questioning her children's status as slaves or the fact that someone desired to remove them from her possession but desired to be compensated for the expense of clothing and caring for the slaves while she cared for them as a free woman.

The preceding petition dealt with providing clothing and care to child slaves. Petition 20682114 from Georgia (1821) dealt with the care of a blind slave woman. The petitioner stated that she "provided board nursing diet clothing and attention for a certain blind negro woman slave...at the special instance and request of the said Joshua Gay [defendant and slaveholder]." The petitioner claimed that the defendant had promised to pay her "as much money as the said

board nursing diet clothing and attention was worth.” The petition did not describe how or why the arrangement came about between the petitioner and the defendant or why the slaveholder or individual caring for the slave would agree to care for a blind female slave. However, the petition did reveal that the clothing and care of an undesirable and unprofitable blind female slave was not provided by the slaveholder but by an outside individual and even that individual did not want to shoulder the financial expense of clothing and caring for the slave.

The petitioner in Petition 20682907 from Georgia (1829) desired compensation for clothing a slave involved in a fraudulent sale. The petitioner claimed that the individual who sold him the slave claimed that the slave was sound and healthy at the time of sale. However, after the petitioner purchased the slave and took him into his possession he discovered the slave was “unsound and unhealthy whereby the said slave became and was no use or value to your petitioner. And your petitioner hath been put to great charges and expense in and about the feeding, cloathing nursing and taking care of the said negro slave in the whole amounting to a large sum of money.” In the claim, the petitioner sought to recover compensation for the clothing and care expended on the valueless slave after the sale and while in his possession. Since the petitioner considered the conditions of the sale fraudulent, the petitioner believed the sale was void and thus his time spent clothing and caring for the slave were actually the responsibility of the original owner.

Petition 20881203 from Louisiana (1812) described the account of an overseer who was seeking compensation from the slaveholder, Mr. Herault, “for making sundry clothes and garments for the negroes of the said Herault.” An individual that testified in the case stated that “Nathan Rhodes [petitioner and overseer] made some cloths for the negroes of Mr. Herault, which this deponent understood was to be paid by the negroes – and that the negro Blaize did

pay in corn for the said work.” The case stated that the slaves were responsible for reimbursing the overseer for producing their clothing. The testifying individual also stated that one slave, Blaize, paid the overseer for his work in making sundry clothes and garments in corn. However in the petition, the overseer was seeking compensation from the slaveholder and not the slaves for overseeing the provision of slave clothing.

Petition 21384706 from South Carolina (1847) described a petitioner that desired compensation for clothing an elderly slave abandoned by her slave owner. The petition described that the plantation of the female slave’s master became insolvent at which point he left the state and abandoned the elderly female slave. The petition stated “several years since she was found in the road near the house of your petitioners father in a helpless state he took her in...she remained on his farm with his negroes and was fed and clothed by him and well provided for...She is now upward of ninety years of age or it is supposed and will probably not live long but your petitioner submits that the court of the poor ought to take charge of her.” The petition described that she was abandoned “in an almost helpless condition that she was taken in and supported by the family since that time merely as a charity...as she is very often entirely unable to help herself that she has never been able since he knew her to do any work that was valuable and that she is now wholly unable to live unless supported by charity.” The ninety-year-old elderly female slave was still being valued and assessed according to her ability to perform labor. Since she was unable to perform labor, the petitioners clothed and cared for out of mere “charity” and believed she belonged in the poor house.

Petition 11385903, a legislative petition, from South Carolina (1859) described a petition involving the care of a seventy-year-old blind and abandoned slave named Burrell. The petitioner described that the slave had “wandered about in the neighbourhood [sic], and came to the house

of your petitioner, about the first of December 1858, when your petitioner from feelings of humanity, rather, than said slave should starve, took charge of him, and has clothed, supported, and maintained him ever since – your petitioner is not aware, that there is any provision made by law, whereby, said slave can be made chargeable to the District of Lancaster; or that there is any legal liability for his support and maintenance, resting upon any person, against whom it can be enforced.” The petition described another case of the uncertain future faced by elderly and abandoned slaves. The petitioners were no longer willing to care for the elderly slaves out of charity and were seeking other ways to care for the slaves.

Petition 21484619 from Tennessee (1846) described the case of a brother caring for his mentally ill sister and her slaves. The petitioner stated that his sister “has been for many years not only mentally afflicted but that she is long has been of very feeble precarious bodily health...she has been unable to render your petitioner any aid or assistance in the management of his household affairs, or in any other way except perhaps the making of two or three coarse garments...your petitioner has also had the trouble and expense of rearing, feeding and clothing two negro slaves from their infancy to the present time who are the property of the said Elizabeth [his sister]...for all which care trouble and expense he has never received any compensation.” Testimony revealed that Elizabeth had in her possession a female slave who had given birth to two children. While the children were still young, the adult female slave drowned leaving the slave children orphaned. The petitioner after assuming the care of his sister also took on the burden of feeding and clothing the slave children from his own accounts.

Testimony regarding the care of the slave children revealed statements such as the following “do not think that John [the petitioner] would clothe and feed the two negroes for less than 23 dollars each a year” and “always understood that John Gamble [the petitioner] has raised

the two negro children I do not consider the children to be worth their food and raiment until within the last two years.” The petitioner desired compensation for caring for his sister and the slave children from his sister’s accounts and wanted the court to decide if it would be expedient to sell the slaves in order to provide his compensation for caring for the slaves and to begin a fund for his sister’s care.

Petition 21685218 from Virginia (1852) presented a similar case of a family member caring for the slaves of an “unsound” sister-in-law. The petitioner claimed that when his sister-in-law was declared unsound and during her division of property his plantation was assigned from her estate “chiefly negroes whose production value or immediate profit was small while those of a different quality and character were assigned to those who participated with her in the division. Hence it resulted that your orator had thrown upon his plantation and under his care and management a number of breeding women with their families who could be of no possible service to him.” The petitioner claimed “that your orator in the care, management and raising of the said slaves has been put to great trouble, inconvenience, labor and expense. He has raised a large number of young negroes and maintained them and their mothers...he has clothed the whole of them almost entirely at his own expense.” The petitioner sought compensation from his sister-in-laws estate for the clothing and care of her less profitable slaves at his expense. In the preceding petitions, neither the individual caring for the slaves or the slaveholder claimed responsibility for the financial burden of providing clothing to undesirable slaves. Elderly, female and child slaves presented a strong theme in the petitions related to the desire of slaveholders and individuals caring for slaves to circumvent the responsibility related to clothing this group of slaves.

Slave Dress Quality

Petition 20680914 from Georgia (1809) provided a detailed description of the amount and quality of clothing a male slave was to receive during the term of hire. The petition stated “The above note was given for the hire of a negro man which I am to pay the tax of and cloath him in the following manner to wit three shirts, two pairs of breeches one coat one pair of shoes and one pair of leggings or stockings and one hat all of the quality which shall be of service to the negro.” The quality emphasized the difference between the quality of the dress of slaveholders and that of the slave. The quality of slave clothing was to be serviceable for a negro and would not have been of the quality used by the slaveholder but of a lesser quality. The slaveholder makes a direct reference to the inferior quality of the slave dress and reinforced slave stereotypes and identity of the period that being of lower or inferior social status.

Petition 20683907 from Georgia (1839) described the quality of clothing to be given to a slave boy as “two suits of winter and one of summer cloth of good substantial material suitable to the season one pair of shoes one blanket and one hat of fine quality for negroes.” The petitioner used the terms “good substantial material” and “fine quality” but the dress descriptors are still in reference to the clothing made for “negroes.” The slaveholder appeared to be requesting the finest quality “negro” clothing and hat available, which would have still been inferior to the dress of slaveholders and of a quality that would have reinforced the low status and identity of slaves.

Petition 20684108 from Georgia (1841) described the quality of clothing to be provided to a slave man, Nat, as “one winter suit of clothing two summer suits of clothing one pair of wool socks one wool hat two pair coarse shoes one nine quarter blanket...all the clothing to be of what is called good negro clothing.” The petitioner distinctly stated in the hiring agreement for

Nat's clothing to consist of the quality and type of clothing associated with "good negro clothing." The slaveholder stated the slave was to receive "two pair of coarse shoes." Although the slaveholder requested wool clothing for winter, two pair of shoes, and three suits of clothing, the slaveholder provided telling clues as to his true regards to his attitude towards slaves and their humanity by stating that the shoes be "coarse" and the quality of clothing be good for "negro clothing."

Distribution of Slave Dress

The timing for distribution of slave clothing was mentioned in Petition 20681216 from Georgia (1812). The petition stated the hiring individual "promised and bound himself to furnish the negro hired to him by the middle of June with a shirt and pair of trousers and at the end of the year ensuring to return the negro supplied with the following articles of clothing that is to say with a coat and pair of trousers of woolen and shirt, a pair of yarn socks, a hat, a blanket and a pair of shoes." The petition supported slave research that described light clothing given to slaves in summer and heavier clothing in winter and coincided with slaves that received two sets of clothing annually based on the seasons. Although most of the petitions in the sample mentioned general dress terms such as clothes or clothing, the most prevalent descriptive request was for two sets of clothing.

Petition 20681504 from Georgia (1815) stated the hiring individual was to furnish the slave "with a summer and winter suit a blanket and pair of shoes." The petition was not as descriptive and detailed in reference to the allotment as the preceding petition but the slaveholder did clarify that the slave should receive "a summer and winter suit." This clothing request also supported the provision of two suits of clothing annually to slaves and that the suits be

appropriate to the season. However, this petition did not specify the exact date or month in which the slave was to receive the summer and winter suit.

Petition 20682613 from Georgia (1826) also described the time of year for the hired slaves clothing distribution and associated the seasons with the slaves clothing. The petition stated “furnish said negro with two good suits of clothes one as furnished in the spring and the other in the fall each to be suitable to the season one pair of good strong shoes one duffle blanket of good size and hat.” Each set of clothing was to meet the needs of the slave for that particular season of work that being spring and fall. The petition also supported the distribution of two suits of clothing being given to slaves annually.

Petition 20682705 from Georgia (1827) described the dress hiring terms of a slave named John. The petition stated the slave was to be given “one summer suit and two winter suits of clothes a hat a blanket and pair of shoes all in due season and return said negro well clothed.” The petition provided an example of a slave that would have received three suits of clothing over the course of the yearly hiring as opposed to the more prevalent request for two sets of clothing per year. The hiring contract stipulated the slave was to receive one summer suit of clothing and two winter suits of clothing perhaps less clothing was needed in the summer to protect the value of the slave as opposed to the more damaging weather conditions the slave would have faced in the winter. The slave was to receive the appropriate amount, style, weight and fabrication in the appropriate season.

Petition 20684009 from Georgia (1840) provided a timetable for distribution of slave clothing during a term of hire. The petition stated the hiring individual was to provide the slave with “two suits of clothes one of said suits to be of woolen or half woolen, one blanket, one pair of shoes, one hat...one of said suits of clothing to be given to said negro by the first of June and

the other on the first of December.” The timetable and descriptions of clothing were consistent with a summer and winter clothing allotment and the distribution of two suits of clothing to slaves annually and provided a precise month for distribution.

Slave Dress Terminology Descriptors

Petition 20681514 from Georgia (1815) provided an example of a descriptive word used to modify the clothing provisions required in a hiring agreement. The petition stated the hired slave was to be furnished with “customary clothing including a blanket, and a hat.” The clothing descriptor used in this petition was “customary.” Owners could use descriptors instead of listing detailed accounts of the slave dress because clothing was considered part of the due care slaves were to receive while in the care of the hiring individual. If the slave was not provided the “customary” clothing or the clothing was neglected, the hiring individual could be held legally liable for the damages.

Petition 20681524 from Georgia (1815) described that the slave was to receive “two complete suits of clothes, one of cotton and wool, or wool, a strong pair of shoes and a hat.” Instead of providing a detailed list of clothing items, the slaveholder in the petition states the slave is to receive two “complete” suits of clothes. The petitioner in Petition 20683410 from Georgia (1834) described the clothing to be given to a slave as the “necessary clothing during the term.” The petition was unclear as to whether the “necessary” clothing was predetermined in the hiring contract or if the “necessary” clothing would be provided on an as needed basis over the course of the hire. However, based on the other petitions in the sample the “necessary” clothing was most likely a predetermined amount. Petition 20785301 from Kentucky (1853) stated in the hiring terms that a negro boy named Albert was to be clothed “in the usual way that servants are

clothed and to give him a new hat and a good bed blanket.” The slaveholder’s use of the words usual way and servant reflect the uniform or usual appearance associated with slaves.

Slave Dress Provisions Described in Slaveholder’s Will

Petition 20684309 from Georgia (1843) presented the unique case of the provision of slave dress being mentioned in the will of a deceased slaveholder. The petition stated “lastly it is my will and desire the following negroes my property and in my possession Liz, Eddy, Cherry, Henry and Young Henry and Patrick may be kept together by my executions and that they may be clothed and supported out of my entire assets and effects without being hired for the space of one year from my decease and that in the meantime my said executors do make application to the Legislature of the state of Georgia to free them.” The deceased slaveholder desired to meet the clothing needs of his slaves from the assets of his estate and not from the burden of their own labor by hire while they awaited emancipation.

Chapter 6 – Summary and Discussion

The content analysis of The Race and Slavery Petition Project (RSPP) revealed the positive identification of slave dress terminology within extant eighteenth and nineteenth century slave petitions and identified the source as valuable tool for slave dress research. The organization of collected data facilitated the grouping of terms, concepts and ideas, which lead to the findings of the research study. Categories were established after the content analysis was conducted and consisted of empirical data in the form of identifiable slave dress terms and descriptors by type and frequency and the descriptive analysis of slave dress petition themes such as expense and burden attributed to clothing slaves, slave dress neglect, hiring contracts that included slave dress, the use of slave dress as a reflection of the slaveholders character, compensation for slave dress provided by an individual other than the slaveholder, the quality of slave dress, the distribution of slave dress, and slave dress terminology descriptors.

The overwhelming majority of petitions concerned with the dress of slaves came from the period 1820 to 1859. Ninety-nine of the 150 petitions were related to slave hiring contracts. Petitions from Georgia made up sixty percent of the total slave dress petitions sample and 85 percent of the petitions dealing with slave hires. Within the sample of 150 petitions, 77 references were made to the general term clothes. The sample included 37 specific requests for two sets of slave clothes and 24 requests for three sets of slave clothes. Sixty single requests were made for shoes or a pair of shoes, and 14 requests were made for two pairs of shoes. Blankets were the third most requested item with 70 single requests for blankets and two requests for two blankets. Besides the general request or mention of clothes, the most frequent specific provision request for slave dress items consisted of two sets of clothes, a single pair of shoes and a single blanket.

Within the sample of slave dress petitions, there were 47 requests for summer clothing and 44 requests for winter clothing. Thirty-eight requests were made to provide slaves with good clothing. Dress term descriptors used to describe blankets included the terms duffle, good, good size, and large blankets. The sample of petitions included 8 requests for wool hats, 6 requests for new hats, 11 specific requests for good shoes and 10 requests for strong shoes. The term “good” was used 67 times to modify slave dress terms. Descriptive terms used to modify slave dress terms were incorporated to ensure the hiring individual would provide the slave with the best slave clothing possible. Dress term types and amounts and descriptors ensured that the decisions regarding slave dress during the time of hire were not left up to the discretion of the hiring individual, who had no long term interest in the slave property. The inclusion of dress terms and descriptors helped ensure the utmost level of humanity on behalf of the hiring individual by holding them accountable for specific dress items.

Positive descriptive terms included adjectives such as good, new, strong, substantial, and well. Descriptive terms that alluded to a negative or inferior quality or provision amount included almost naked, coarse, half clothed, inferior, and Negro cloth. Types of fabrication and materials included cotton, cotton and wool or wool, felt, filled with wool, jeans, wool, homespun filled with wool, and half woolen. Descriptors used to suggest a uniform or common slave appearance included customary, necessary, and usual or usual way. Types of blankets given to slaves were described as four point, three point, two and a half point and nine quarter. The most frequent term used to describe returning slave dress provisions was well, such as return the slave well clothed. The second most prevalent return dress descriptor was the word winter, which can be explained by the length of hiring contracts that began on the first of January and ended in December.

Slave hiring contracts included information related to required clothing provisions and related values, time frames for seasonal clothing distribution, and hiring wages. The cost of clothing slaves was seen as a burden and an undesired expense in certain petitions and added a considerable percentage to the cost of a slave's hire. Based on the six petitions in the sample that included hiring wages and dress values, the average clothing cost related to slave hires was approximately \$18 and the average hiring value was approximately \$83, which meant the additional clothing provided to slaves above their hiring wages was worth approximately 22 percent of the hire value. Slave dress expenses for male slaves were more costly than slave dress provisions for male and female slave children.

The discussion of dress related to hired slaves resulted from the desire of both parties to profit from the venture and provide some amount of physical protection for the slave property. When this did not occur, legal action held individuals accountable for a breach of contract to recover damages for the slave's wages or damage to the slave's health. During the term of hire, hiring individuals were held responsible for providing the slaves with the required clothing amounts by slaveholders. The expense of clothing slaves relative to the annual hiring wages and food and boarding costs could have resulted in the provision of fewer or inferior items of clothing or the complete neglect of the slave's clothing needs in order to maximize profits, decrease overhead costs or as a result of insufficient capital to purchase slave dress items. The petitions described slaves receiving clothing for value received, which reinforced the theme of slaves as property in the eyes of slaveholders and served to reduce the humanity of the slave.

The petitions regarding hiring contracts mainly described accusations by slaveholders that their slaves did not receive adequate or the agreed upon clothing during the term of hire. In their defense, hiring individuals claimed they did not provide clothing or wages to hired slaves

because the slave's were dishonest, runaways, removed from the possession of the hiring individual by a third party before the end of the hire term or injured and unable to perform the agreed upon labor tasks. Hiring individuals believed that, if the slave broke the contract and did not perform labor for the entire length of the contract, they were not responsible for meeting the terms of the contract, which included the provision of clothing.

The petitions described the slaveholder's role in dictating the type, quality and amount of clothing provided to slaves, ensuring the slaves received clothing and seeking redress for inadequate or neglected clothing provisions. The sample of petitions described the use of "Negro cloth" or materials designated for slave use, which served to reinforce the uniform appearance and decreased the individual appearance of slaves. The petitions described the limited amounts of clothing given to slaves annually, which would support ideas that slaves would have had to maintain and repair clothing in order to make the clothing last the course of the year. Also, the limited number of allotted dress items reflected the slaveholder's constant burden and expense of needing to purchase and replace slave clothing.

The petitions revealed a very functional approach held by slaveholders in regard to slave dress as a use for protecting the slave from the elements in order to preserve the value of the slave. At the societal level, the descriptions of inferior types and minimal amounts of slave dress provisions served to reinforce the slaves low social and economic status, hinder the creation of an individual slave identity through dress and undermined the humanity of slaves. Slaves were influenced socially and individually by the available repertoire of dress provided to them by slaveholders. The quality, style and amount of slave dress dictated by slaveholders controlled the announcement of their social position to themselves and society. Slaves' full participation in the

symbolic interaction theory (Stone, 1962) would have been limited by their inability to free themselves from the dress confines of the slave system and slaveholder.

The discussion of humanity in the slave petitions was mainly from the perspective of the slaveholder's humanity either in the form of the slaveholder using his or her humanity to perform an action toward the slave or an individual appealing to an individual caring for a slave to use his or her humanity to improve the treatment of a slave. The petitions reiterated the slave's position as property by describing slaveholder concerns with slave dress provision neglect as resulting in damage to the slave's property value or the desire to free themselves from unprofitable groups of slaves, which suggests a profit based approach to slave care and not a paternalistic or humane approach.

The petitions presented examples of the burden and expense slaveholders faced when clothing and caring for female and child slaves, which led to the slaveholder's desire for their sale and possible separation from one another. The difficulty of providing for women and children slaves came from their inability to perform valuable labor tasks to cover the cost of their clothing and care, which also made it difficult to hire them out. The petitions related to the clothing provisions of women, children and elderly slaves reinforced the idea of slaves as property that were clothed and cared for or sold according to their ability to provide a service, labor or profit. In the petitions, children were described as going almost naked and being physically mistreated. Elderly slaves were described as being abandoned by their slaveholders and were provided clothing and care at the charity of neighboring slaveholders. The petitions also revealed themes involving the care and provision of clothing to undesirable and unprofitable, abandoned elderly slaves or women and children slaves as being provided by individuals other than the slaveholder, who were often females. The individuals that cared for

undesirable groups of slaves claimed the slaveholders had promised compensation for the care of the slaves or sought redress from the court in the case of elderly slaves.

Slave clothing was used in petitions to describe the level of care given to slaves and ultimately the competence of the slaveholder. Descriptions involving slave dress were used in disputes to determine possession of slaves or in attempts to have slaves removed from slaveholders. The proper or improper provision of slave dress was used to determine the slaveholders character with slaveholders described as providing adequate clothing to their slaves as being worthy slaveholders and individuals who neglected the clothing provisions of their slaves were described as being inhumane masters.

Petitions described individuals concerned with the harsh and cruel treatment of child slaves in the form of physical beatings, clothing neglect and being forced to work in unfavorable weather conditions. Petitioners concerned with the neglect of slave children requested better working conditions and treatment of the slave children as well as adequate clothing provisions. The examples regarding the desire for better treatment for child slaves included petitions presented in separate cases of a free mother and a free father with slave children.

The petitions included examples of slaves provided with additional items of clothing by the hiring individual that were not mentioned in the hiring contract or agreement. The hiring individuals claimed the items were provided at the request or guarantee of compensation by the slaveholder. The slaveholders claimed that, since the clothing items were not included in the hiring agreement, they were not bound to compensate the hiring individual for providing or returning the slave with better or additional items of clothing. Also, the petitions described the provision of clothing to slaves by relatives on behalf of family members who owned slaves but were mentally incapable of managing slaves. The relatives that cared for the slaves of incapable

family members sought redress and compensation from the property of the incapable family members through the sale of the slaves or monetary compensation from their estate.

The yellow Star of David worn by Jews in World War II (Ban, 2011), uniform dress in communist China and Hungary (Scott, 1965 and Medvedev, 2008), dress provided to native Aborigines in Australia by British Imperialist (Maynard, 2002), and dress provisions provided to patients of insane asylums (Goffman, 1995) were used to draw comparisons between the slave dress experience and the experience of other individuals in oppressive or totalitarian environments. Visible stigmas and their associated meanings were similar between the Yellow Star of David worn by Jews during World War II and slave dress (Ban, 2011). Visible stigmas used by slaveholders in regard to slave dress manifested in the form of inferior fabrication, style, cut and quality. The description of visible stigmas as an imposed rather than inherent characteristic was comparable to slaves. Although slaves were not inherently different from slaveholders, slaveholders perceived them as inferior and the slave dress imposed an external difference on slaves by the slaveholders, which could have been internalized or naturalized by slaves as a sign of oppression or expression.

Similar associations can be made between the dress provided by slaveholders to slaves and the blankets provided to Aborigines by British Imperialists (Maynard, 2002). Like the blankets given to Aborigines, slave dress served as a cover for the black body and created a separate and excluded social group that was largely nonexistent within the mainstream culture of the period. Slave dress also served similar functions as the Aboriginal blankets in its ability to be used as a tool for social control and provide a contrast between civilized and uncivilized members of society.

Hungarian Communist dress and slave dress shared similar intended functions (Medvedev, 2008). The individuals in power in the slave South and Communist Hungary used uniform dress styles to eliminate dress concerns in order to allow individuals to focus on labor and production, promote group solidarity and increase control of the population. Slave dress and communist Chinese dress served to wipe out an existing heritage, instill a new form of rule by autonomy and was evidence of the emergence in a new society (Scott, 1965). Also, Chinese leaders like slaveholders used dress to increase profits, reduce labor cost, and promote economic independence.

Slaves like individuals in total institutions were stripped of their usual appearance and removed from the items used to maintain those appearances (Goffman, 1995). Not only were slaves removed from their traditional appearances and ideals of beauty, the ideals were replaced with items that were uniform, inferior in quality, unfashionable and poor fitting like inmates of total institutions. A comprehensive comparison of individual experiences and research studies regarding dress and oppressive and totalitarian environments across time and place could provide a better understanding of the role dress plays for oppressed individuals.

The slave narratives were used as a comparison and contrast to the ideas presented by slaveholders in the petitions (Gate, 2000). The passages in the slave narratives described accounts by former slaves of inadequate clothing provisions and inhumane treatment. The sample of slave dress petitions testified to the inadequate or neglected clothing request for slave dress and supported the descriptions of neglect and harsh treatment found in the slave narratives. The slave narratives present a more personal account of slavery and slave dress from the perspective of former slaves, which was not directly present in the petition sample.

Slave petitions add to the body of knowledge and resources regarding slave dress and provide information related to the types, quality, amount, distribution, cost, neglect and the circumstances surrounding the provision of slave dress by slaveholders. Use of the slave petitions in dress research also draw attention to the need for modifications to existing dress theories or the development of new dress theories in order to understand the creation of identity and meanings associated with dress to individuals in oppressive environments. Fashion theory focuses on the dominant culture but slaves existed as part of a subculture or group that was unable to socialize and dress within the available customs and dress repertoire of the dominant culture. Slaves were not in control of their bodies or the decision making process regarding the adoption and modification of dress styles based on social interactions. Slave dress was the domain of the slaveholder and served to define the slaves personally and socially and served as a symbol of oppression and neglect for slaves of all ages and genders. Theories regarding dress and identity do not account for oppressed individuals who had little or no control over their dress and how this affects the creation of identities. Slaves made up a large percentage of the United States population numbering in the millions and from a historical and human perspective it is important to develop theories related to understanding the role dress played in the creation of their personal and group identities and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the total phenomenon of dress in the United States.

Slaves existed in a society dominated by white slaveholders without rights, personal freedom or the use of the legal system. Theodore D. Weld described the injustice of slavery in *Slavery As It Is* (Gate, 2000, p. 663) “He fleeces you of your rights with a relish, but is shocked if you work bareheaded in summer, or in winter without warm stockings. He can make you go without your liberty, but never without a shirt.” The quote serves as a reminder that dress

provisions were just one of the many injustices slaves faced in the United States. Whether slaves received one, two or three suits of clothes a year, what they really yearned for were the rights, liberty and freedom to create a personal identity.

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Appendix – Slave Dress Petition Sample List

Petition #	State
20183104	Alabama
20184603	Alabama
20185203	Alabama
20186424	Alabama
20286113	Arkansas
20379901	Delaware
20382103	Delaware
20382402	Delaware
20482209	District of Columbia
20680408	Georgia
20680905	Georgia
20680909	Georgia
20680910	Georgia
20680914	Georgia
20681005	Georgia
20681007	Georgia
20681207	Georgia
20681208	Georgia
20681209	Georgia
20681213	Georgia
20681216	Georgia
20681504	Georgia
20681514	Georgia
20681524	Georgia
20681802	Georgia
20681808	Georgia
20681813	Georgia
20681917	Georgia
20682001	Georgia
20682010	Georgia
20682108	Georgia
20682113	Georgia
20682114	Georgia
20682204	Georgia
20682209	Georgia
20682301	Georgia
20682307	Georgia
20682510	Georgia
20682608	Georgia
20682613	Georgia
20682614	Georgia
20682615	Georgia
20682618	Georgia

Appendix Continued

Petition #	State
20682701	Georgia
20682702	Georgia
20682705	Georgia
20682706	Georgia
20682710	Georgia
20682717	Georgia
20682720	Georgia
20682802	Georgia
20682803	Georgia
20682805	Georgia
20682812	Georgia
20682813	Georgia
20682902	Georgia
20682907	Georgia
20682910	Georgia
20682919	Georgia
20683102	Georgia
20683111	Georgia
20683303	Georgia
20683407	Georgia
20683409	Georgia
20683410	Georgia
20683505	Georgia
20683703	Georgia
20683801	Georgia
20683901	Georgia
20683902	Georgia
20683907	Georgia
20683912	Georgia
20683913	Georgia
20683914	Georgia
20683915	Georgia
20684002	Georgia
20684003	Georgia
20684009	Georgia
20684105	Georgia
20684108	Georgia
20684109	Georgia
20684201	Georgia
20684202	Georgia
20684207	Georgia
20684208	Georgia
20684210	Georgia

Appendix Continued

Petition #	State
20684211	Georgia
20684213	Georgia
20684301	Georgia
20684304	Georgia
20684307	Georgia
20684309	Georgia
20684604	Georgia
20685006	Georgia
20685112	Georgia
20685205	Georgia
20685306	Georgia
20685403	Georgia
20685515	Georgia
20685516	Georgia
20686011	Georgia
20686115	Georgia
20785202	Kentucky
20785301	Kentucky
20785718	Kentucky
20786010	Kentucky
20786201	Kentucky
20881203	Louisiana
20979203	Maryland
20981208	Maryland
20983527	Maryland
20984712	Maryland
20985958	Maryland
21183902	Missouri
21185203	Missouri
21185601	Missouri
21286130	North Carolina
21382013	South Carolina
21382803	South Carolina
21383307	South Carolina
21383326	South Carolina
21384360	South Carolina
21384544	South Carolina
21384649	South Carolina
21384706	South Carolina
21384819	South Carolina
21385143	South Carolina
21385243	South Carolina
21385519	South Carolina

Appendix Continued

Petition #	State
21385705	South Carolina
21385953	South Carolina
21386414	South Carolina
21484420	Tennessee
21484619	Tennessee
21485138	Tennessee
21485422	Tennessee
21584916	Texas
21585111	Texas
21585404	Texas
21680414	Virginia
21680503	Virginia
21681009	Virginia
21683103	Virginia
21683206	Virginia
21683315	Virginia
21683419	Virginia
21683530	Virginia
21684216	Virginia
21684223	Virginia
21684402	Virginia
21684425	Virginia
21685219	Virginia
21685703	Virginia
21685715	Virginia
11385903	South Carolina
11386001	South Carolina
11681805	Virginia
11684301	Virginia

Vita

Ryan Jerel Aldridge was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and raised in Gonzales, Louisiana. In 2002, he received a Bachelor of Science degree in textiles, apparel design and merchandising from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. Following graduation, he received an associate's degree in respiratory therapy from Our Lady of the Lake College and worked in the neonatal intensive care unit at Woman's Hospital. In 2008, Mr. Aldridge received a Master of Science degree from the School of Human Ecology at Louisiana State University. Mr. Aldridge worked as a graduate assistant in the School of Human Ecology from 2006 to 2010. He began pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the School of Human Ecology at Louisiana State University in 2008.