

been obscured because the psychical processes that were involved could not have been as easily discerned as physical exchanges.

Slaves could not completely control their sexual activities any more than they could completely control any other phase of their existence. Although masters were often able to compel submission and breeding, blacks still managed to develop shared community values concerning their sexual relationships. Although blacks were rather free in their premarital sexual activities compared to whites, slaves did adhere to clear codes of behavior. The slave testimonies indicate that frequently there were standard procedures to be followed regarding courtship. Furthermore, the slave writings convincingly demonstrate that families occupied a position of central importance for slave life. Blacks were concerned with marriage despite restrictions against the institution. Slaves considered fidelity and caring for their loved ones a virtue. Perhaps the most telling observation that may be noted is that slaves continued to develop love for one another despite the circumscribed conditions imposed by slavery. Blacks frequently exposed themselves to grave danger in order to remain with their spouses, children and relatives. The slave testimony eloquently attests to the efforts blacks underwent to maintain a home and a family.

If a community is a group of people who develop a shared set of values, then slaves certainly evolved community practices pertaining to their sexual relationships. Although the environment of slavery was not conducive to strengthening traditional family ties, blacks were insistent upon forming familial relationships. Slaves may not have conducted themselves according to white standards of behavior, but their statements eloquently express a code of behavior to which they adhered. Most slaves emphasized family relationships which formed an integral aspect of their existence. This family pride reflects the strong sense of community which slaves developed. Although other aspects of community development may or may not have occurred, slaves clearly formed community values to guide sexual relationships.

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Sexuality and the Slave Community

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