

A SERIOUS BUSINESS: SLAVE PRICES IN JAMAICA, 1674-1784

INTRODUCTION

The buying and selling of slaves was serious business in seventeenth and eighteenth century Jamaica, in part because slavery was a central to the economic development of the island, in part because slaves made up a significant component of individual wealth (close to half of personal wealth recorded in probate inventories, and in part because buying a slave was fraught with difficulties. Slaves were valuable in many different ways. They produced money through their labours on sugar estates and other forms of agricultural or commercial enterprise.¹ They were highly liquid assets, unlike real estate, that could always be easily sold if a person got into financial difficulties or if he wanted to leave the island. They were property that could be used as collateral for debts or as security for undue indebtedness. They were also appreciating assets. Despite adverse demographic conditions for enslaved people in Jamaica, which meant that the slave population would have declined by several thousand people a year if not continually replenished through fresh arrivals from the Atlantic slave trade and which meant that individual slaves may have declined in value as they aged or became ill, the overall value of slave property, especially in the prosperous years from the mid eighteenth-century onwards was generally increasing. Owning a slave not only offered prestige and social status to the slave owner but was economically advantageous. Slaves made money every year and retained their value and often increased their value as slave prices continued to rise year on year.²

¹ David Ryden estimates that the average annual gross returns on slave investment between 1752 and 1807 at 17.8 percent. He estimates the average return of rum and sugar generated per slave on a sugar as a proportion of estimated slave values per annum. David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), .

² For the prices of slaves in Jamaica, see also Trevor Burnard, "Evaluating Gender in Early Jamaica, 1674-1784," *The History of the Family*, 12, 2 (2007), 81-91. For the prices of slaves elsewhere in British America, see Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom and Thomas Weiss, "Slave Prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722-1809," *Journal of Economic History*, 61 (2001), 616-39; David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and David Richardson, "Slave prices, The African Slave Trade and Productivity

Nevertheless, buying a slave was expensive. An adult male slave cost more to buy than an ordinary white man earned in a year as a bookkeeper and perhaps a third to a half what a skilled overseer might earn per annum. If one was lucky, the slave one bought survived what Jamaicans called the “seasoning period” – the first three years of an African’s arrival in Jamaica resulted in a dramatically high mortality rate – and would not run away or prove a recalcitrant worker. But no insurance existed to guard against a slave sickening soon after purchase or proving a poor worker or succumbing to an accident in the dangerous environs of a sugar estate. Therefore, when buying a slave one needed to choose carefully. Ideally, one tried to assemble as much agency information about a possible slave as one could and tried to make sure that unscrupulous sellers did not try and pass off dubious slave merchandise onto gullible buyers.

AN INDIVIDUAL SLAVE PURCHASER

The Jamaican overseer and slave owner, Thomas Thistlewood, gives us some hint in comments from his voluminous diaries, about how slaves were bought and sold and about how much skill had to go into buying enslaved people. On 17 March 1761, five years after he had bought his first slave but in a period when he was still very much a newcomer to owning slaves, he wrote down what he thought were useful principles for buying Africans to become slaves:

‘In regard to buying off Negroes, I would Choose men Boys, and girls, none exceeding 16 or 18 years old, as full grown Man or Woman Seldom turn out Well, and beside they shave the Men So Close & glass them over So much, that a person Cannot be Certain he does not but old Negroes, have obscured those with Cutt faces (Chamboys, I think they Cut them) do not doe vastly Well at

in Eighteenth Century South Carolina: A Reassessment,” *Journal of Economic History*, 66 (2006), 1054-65 and Mancall, Rosenbloom, and Weiss, “Rejoinder,” *Journal of Economic History*, 66 (2006), 1066-71

Egypt, yet as that may only be by Chance, have no great exception to them: Those negroes that have big Bellies, ill Shaped Legs & great feet, are Comonly dull and Sluggish, & not often good, whereas those Who have a good Calff to their Legg and a Small or Maderate Sized Foot, are Commonly Nimble, Active Negroes. Many Negroe Men are bursten and are always the Worse for it, therefor one Would not buy them if perceptable, have also observed that many New Negroes, who are bought Fatt and Sleek from a board the Ship, Soon fall away such in a plantation, Whereas those which are Commonly hardier. Those whose Lips are pale, or Whites off their Eyes yellowish, Seldom healthfull.³

These recommendations only worked, however, if the buyer had good market access and was not prevented from making a personal assessment of individual slaves. Thistlewood was very angry when he went to a sale aboard a slave ship in Savanna la Mar on 15 July 1776 and saw what he thought was sharp practice. He `Attended the Negroe Sale, in the house where Jimmy hays, formerly kept a Tavern.' It was, he thought, `a very unfair Sale, as Mr. Salmon permitted Mr. Goodin, Dr. Walker, Bessie Murray, Fanny Duncan, &c &c to pick before the Sale began.' Moreover, he continued, `whole parcels [were] placed ready for particular people, besides above 20 off the best left aboard, picked out before they Come ashore.' In addition, the sale did not start till `past Noon' and was `held in a dark room. The Men exposed first, & the Women afterwards.' `How,' he expostulated `could a Negroe be examined when [there were] 200 people at least in a Small room, & the door next the Sea kept Shut?'

Thistlewood bought slaves from `guinea' merchants who were consigned shipments of slaves from Africa. He described how on 29 April 1765 "about 8

³ 15 July 1776, Diaries of Thomas Thistlewood, Monson 31/12, Monson Deposit, Lincolnshire Archives. All references to the diaries are by date alone.

O'Clock Mr. McDonald, Mr: Cope, Mr Haughton and me Set out for Lucea.' They 'got there about 10 O'Clock' and 'immediately went aboard the old guinea ship, and the sale began.' Thistlewood bought heavily, using John Cope, his employer, as security for his purchases: 'I got together 10 New Negroes, into Mason Quashie' hands, Who Was With us on Board, and bought them off Mr Cuthbert at the Following prices, 2 Men at £56 per head; 2 Men Boys & 2 young Women at £54 per head; 3 girls at £52 per head and one Boy a £51 = £535.' He also bought slaves from Jamaican purchasers. He bought his first slave on 3 January 1756 from 'a Mason' on Hertford Pen, giving him 'my Note for 43 pound, to be paid him on or before the 1st May Next, with Lawful Interest till paid which will Make it £43 16s and 9 ¼ pence.' Thistlewood commented that 'he is an Ebo about 16 years of Age, Measures 4 feet 9 ½ inches.' He 'Named him Lincoln,' after the English county Thistlewood was born in. On 21 February 1758, Thistlewood 'bought off Mr.: John Parkinson two New Negroe Men at 51 pounds each and a New girl at 46 pounds =148 pounds.'

He was also a seller of slaves, although not for himself but on behalf of friends and clients. On 28 September 1773, for example, he organised a public vendue to sell slaves belonging to his neighbour and friend, Samuel Say. He sold every slave at good prices – 30 slaves going for £2,054.27 Jamaican currency or £1,467.36, or £48.9 per slave, which was exactly the average value of slaves in inventories left by people dying in the western parishes of Jamaica in this period. (See Table ?). The 30 slaves were bought by 9 different men, each buying between 2 and 5 slaves. Thistlewood was one of the buyers (the purchaser who spent the least), buying the slave boy, Strop, for £55 and the slave woman, Fanny, for £61.

THE USEFULNESS OF PROBATE RECORDS

This paper looks at what an analysis of slave prices tells us about the economic importance of slavery in Jamaica during the period of the Atlantic slave trade before 1785, when abolitionism changed the rules of the game in the British West Indies. It uses as its source an extensive data base of slave prices drawn from probate inventories made for deceased Jamaicans between 1674 and 1784. Probate inventories have long been recognised as valuable sources of information about levels of wealth, changes in wealth distribution, composition of wealth holding and consumption patterns and have been used by historians of British North America to examine economic growth and wealth patterns. I have used inventories in previous works to establish wealth levels in Jamaica before the American Revolution.

Inventories were enumerated listing of non-landed assets made so that creditors and heirs of the deceased might be protected from loss. An enumerated accounting prevented assets being dissipated before claims were settled. These enumerations were done by two appraisers, generally neighbours of the deceased and men who had a good knowledge of the current value of property in their locale. Appraisers received a fee for their services so they had a strong incentive to be careful about how they valued property. They were particularly careful about evaluating slaves. Although the ways that slaves were described in inventories changed over time, with more agency information being provided from the 1720s onwards about the various mix of attributes that went together to make up a slave price, at all times the listing of slaves in inventories seems to have been very accurate and in line with the prices paid for slaves in vendue sales (sales of goods by auction). The gap in prices between vendue sales and inventory prices was 2.5 percent, which is a low figure given that vendue sales recorded in inventories tended to be forced sales of very indebted people and thus likely to have slaves going at a discount. When

sales were not forced, then the prices in vendue sales were remarkably close to prices noted in inventories, as the above example from Thomas Thistlewood shows.

The data set for this study is very large. I have examined 57 of the 65 volumes of inventories (four are missing; four have yet to be examined) compiled for deceased Jamaicans between 1674, when records begin, and 1784.⁴ The total number of inventories examined is 10,192 of which 9,347 form a sample that details slave numbers and prices, the value of debts listed among personal property and currency and silver plate. I have tabulated the numbers of slaves owned in each inventoried estate and have counted up for each estate with slaves the number of males and females and the number and value of men, women, boys, girls and children (where no gender is specified). I have also summed the value of slave property in each individual estate. The result is price data for 234,699 enslaved persons, valued at £6,996,915.25 at an average price of £21.88 per enslaved person. Prices were made in Jamaican currency which, from the second quarter of the eighteenth century, converted to sterling at a rate of £1.4:£1.⁵ The behaviour of slave prices – the most important productive assets within the Jamaican economy – help us understand more than we do at present about the pace and pattern of economic growth in the Jamaica. The analysis presented here should tell us more about the economy of British Jamaica before 1785 and the role that slavery played in developing that economy. It also provides us with comparative price data that can be used to compare Jamaica with other slave owning places in the Americas. I

⁴ Other studies that use Jamaican inventories include Christer Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica Colonial Society and Culture During the Era of Abolition* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).

⁵ The reference for these inventories is Inventories, IB/11/1-64, Jamaica Archives, Spanishtown, Jamaica. The prices of slaves were recorded in Jamaica currency. They have been converted in this price index to sterling using a price deflator compiled by John J. McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money? A Historical Commodity Price Index for use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States*, 2d. ed. (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 2001).

take as a priori in doing this the comments in a recent article by David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis and David Richardson that stresses the importance of the plantation sector in New World economic growth before the nineteenth century. The plantation sector was the most dynamic sector in the New World economy before 1800, with rates of economic growth that corresponded well to rates in industrialising Britain and the USA and with strong productivity gains, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century.

THE WEALTH OF JAMAICA

Jamaica was an amazingly productive place in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Without an especially impressive resource base (the island is small and full of mountains and not well connected to European shipping lanes), it had become the world's leading sugar exporter by 1805 and the leading coffee exporter by 1810. Productivity was extraordinarily high. Between 1750, when per capita wealth was around £8 sterling, and 1800, when per capita productivity was £29.2, Jamaican productivity expanded to reach probably its natural limits. As Barry Higman notes, the Jamaican economy performed strongly not only in comparison with other plantation economies but also relative to emerging industrial nations. On the eve of the American Revolution, when individual wealth (if not productivity) probably peaked, Jamaica was as important to Britain in terms of wealth creation as a large British county such as Lancashire or even Yorkshire.

The people who established Jamaican productivity were Jamaican sugar planters. These planters – men from a variety of social and geographic origins but generally not from the highest social circles in Britain - took advantage of Jamaica's natural advantages in the production of a high-value commodity export,

sugar, and established in Jamaica a highly profitable system of slave management in which they successfully manipulated complex agro-industrial technology, a complicated integrated trade network, linking Africa and Europe with the Caribbean, and, most importantly, a brutal system of labour exploitation that ruthlessly used and discarded overworked, badly fed and abused slaves of African descent.

Jamaican slavery was a wonder of the modern age. The men who forced slaves to do their bidding were among the most accomplished capitalists of their time. It might be true that the great wealth of the few depended on the poverty of the productive many but as those many were not Britons and were not even properly people, insofar as they did not have legal possession of their bodies, the interests of the many did not really need to be taken into account.⁶

HUMAN PROPERTY AS WEALTH

A large proportion of that wealth was in the form of human property. Tables One and Two give aggregate figures on the value of slave property in seventeenth and eighteenth century Jamaica. They show that as slave prices increased, so the wealth of Jamaica was augmented. In Table One, I use the prices of slaves as laid out in Table Two and apply them to estimates of population in order to get approximations of Jamaican wealth over time. It needs to be stressed that these figures are based on a good deal of guesswork but the figures that are obtained fit roughly with contemporary estimates of Jamaican wealth. In 1774, for example, Edward Long estimated Jamaican wealth at £25,500,000. I came to a figure of £24,109,144 in my recalculations for the same year. I based my calculations on the assumption that slaves made up 45 percent of non-landed property and that the ratio of realty to personalty was 45:55. That figure seems

⁶ B.W. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2005), 1-6; Trevor Burnard, "‘Prodigious Riches’ The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution," *Economic History Review*, 54 (2001), 506-24.

roughly correct for the 1770s, when the proportion that slave property made up of all estates was 42 percent and 56 percent for estates containing slaves. For purposes of simplicity, I have applied the same ratios to earlier periods, although as slave property made up a smaller percentage of all non-landed property earlier in the century (the corresponding figures for estates probated before 1700 are 32 and 45 percent), the overall wealth figures for these years should be treated by caution. Nevertheless, if I have understated the value of non-landed property other than slaves for earlier periods, I have probably overstated, by using a ratio of 45:55, the value of land in Jamaican wealth estimates. [Insert Tables One and Two here]

SLAVE PRICES AND JAMAICAN POPULATION TRENDS

I have made estimates of slave population figures in Jamaica between 1673 and 1787. The estimates are not especially reliable, being guesses for most years. The most reliable seem to be for 1722, 1739, 1754, 1774 and 1787, when we know that censuses were taken. If only these dates are used then we see that that the ratio between slave population growth and the volume of the slave trade increases in a steady pattern, with annual growth in the slave population being 28.6 percent of the annual number of slaves imported in Jamaica between 1722 and 1739, 44.6 percent between 1739 and 1754 and 54 percent between 1754 and 1774. These figures fit with the assumptions made in Eltis, Lewis and Richardson, that the attrition rate in the Jamaican slave population, derived from population benchmarks and annual slave arrivals, declined from 4.80 percent per annum in the western Caribbean between 1670 and 1700 to 3.45 percent per annum between 1700 and 1750 and to 2.77 percent per annum between 1750 and 1790. Between 1774 and 1787, however, attrition rates in the Jamaican slave population were noticeably higher than the decades immediately before or after. The slave population increased by

only 1,625 per annum when slave imports reached 7,573 per annum, meaning that nearly 80 percent of potential population gains from slave importation were lost through high slave mortality. The great percentage of these losses came during the American Revolution and especially during the years in the early 1780s when a series of hurricanes ravaged Jamaica, causing a crisis of slave subsistence, in which perhaps 15,000 slaves died in three or four years.⁷

Data does not allow us detailed investigations into the extent to which ameliorative measures helped improve attrition rates in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century nor help us understand changing age/sex ratios in the island. What does seem to be the case, as shown in Table Three, is that male/female ratios remained remarkably consistent over time, with males accounting for between 53 and 54 percent of all slaves from the late seventeenth century to the mid-1780s. It was only after the end of the slave trade that sex ratios began to work in females' favour. In 1807 the ratio of males to females was 102:100. It had reached parity by 1817 and worked towards a dominance of females by the end of slavery, when there were just 96.5 males for every 100 females.⁸ [Insert Tables Three and Four here]

The ratio of children to adults, however, did change over time. These data need to be treated with caution, as appraisers were inconsistent in how they defined who was a boy, a girl or a child in inventories. In general, both males and females were treated as boys and girls until late puberty, ages 16-18, when they were reclassified as adults. But such reclassifications were not consistent. Girls, in particular, might be considered women at younger ages than boys might be

⁷ Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. 33 (1976), 615-41; Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006).

⁸ Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 71-2.

considered men. Thus, there is probably a bias towards girls in the data set. Moreover, price data indicate that some teenage boys and girls were valued as high as adult males and females, suggesting that they were used in workforces as prime hands. Appraisers very seldom, and never before the 1770s, included ages in their listing of slaves, so it is difficult to make any conclusions about the differential effects of choosing different years for when a boy or girl became an adult. It may be that the evidence presented here merely reflects changes in reporting procedure. Nevertheless, the data does suggest, as in Table Four, that adults became an increasing percentage of slave forces. In the decade between 1715 and 1724, 71.7 percent of slaves were adult. By the decade between 1775 and 1784, that percentage had jumped to 77.6. Why adults became increasingly dominant in the slave population is unclear but probably is connected to the volume of the Atlantic slave trade and changing patterns in gender and sex structures within that trade.⁹

Population benchmarks can be used to make rough estimates of Jamaican wealth. These estimates are admittedly crude and are based on a number of untested assumptions but I think that the trend is correct. Using the assumptions about the ratio realty to personalty and the value of slave property in non-landed wealth, I estimate that the total wealth of Jamaica increased from £314,434 in 1673 to over £4 million by 1722, to over £10 million by 1754, to £22 million in 1774 and to £29 million in 1787. A large proportion of that wealth was made up in slaves. The increase in slave population and, more particularly, the growth in slave values were major factors in the augmentation of individual and collective wealth. The growth of the wealth of the island was especially pronounced after 1740, when slave prices took off after a very

⁹ David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864," *Economic History Review* 46 (1993).

long period of relative stagnation. By the 1770s, the annual growth in slave property was of the order of over £500,000.

SLAVES: WERE THEY OVERPRICED?

Was this wealth real or illusory? Was the rapid rise in the price of slaves justified by the amount of money that planters were able to gain from slave labour or was the rise in the price of slaves a bubble, in which people paid too much for inputs of labour, based on overly optimistic estimations of the future profitability of the West Indian plantation sector? Table Two provides some answer to these questions. It shows that there were two distinct periods in slave prices between 1674 and 1784. Until the late 1730s, slave prices were essentially stagnant. Buyers bought slaves for £13 or £14 in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Thirty years later, they were paying not much more - £18 or £19. From 1740, however, slave prices began to rocket upwards. Ten years after the average slave was being bought for £18, the average purchasing price had increased to £28. By the late 1760s, the average value of a slave in a Jamaican inventory was £39 and by the end of our period slaves were valued, on average, at over £45 each.

Local slave valuations increased at a faster rate than did the prices of slaves through the Atlantic slave trade. Before 1740, there was a discount of about 25 percent for slaves in inventories compared with the prices that were received for newly arrived Africans. Inventoried slaves were worth, on average, 74 percent of newly arrived slaves before 1740. After 1740, that discount largely disappeared. The corresponding percentage for the period 1740-85 was 94.6 percent. Indeed, slaves listed in inventories were valued more highly than were newly arrived slaves in the late 1740s, the early 1760s and after 1774. Why were resident slaves valued so highly after 1740? Possibly the higher valuations have something to do with increasing

percentages of adults within slave forces. It possibly also had something to do with increased life expectancy rates for slaves after the early 1730s, as seen in falling attrition rates. Possibly, also, changes in credit arrangements, which led to interest rates in Jamaica dropping from 10 percent before 1738 to 8 percent between 1738 and 1751 and 6 percent after 1751 may have had an effect on raising slave prices. Nevertheless, lower discount rates should have had an effect equally on newly arrived slaves and upon slaves resident on Jamaican estates. Eltis, Lewis and Richardson estimate that increased life expectancies and declining interest rates accounted for 20 percent of the rise in slave prices after 1738.¹⁰

It seems to me, however, that the main explanation for the relative rise in the values of inventoried slaves vis a vis newly arrived slaves relates to both increased productivity among slaves and also to a growing sense of confidence in the future economic prospects of the plantation sector. Slaves may have started to have become over-valued, although there was no shortage of buyers for slaves, as the opening anecdotes from Thistlewood suggest, either on board slave ships or at local vendue sales. Slaves do not seem to have become truly expensive until near the end of the slave trade, as planters tried to stock their plantations with as many slaves as they could as a hedge against future demographic decline. In the last three years of the slave trade, newly arrived slave prices (which had been increasing rapidly from the late 1780s) jumped £11, to £73.17. Meanwhile, sugar prices fell from around 60 shillings per cwt. in the 1790s to 45 shillings per cwt. between 1800 and 1807. At this stage slaves were a massive 149.1 percent of the price of sugar shillings per cwt.¹¹

Before the 1790s, however, slaves do not seem to have been overpriced. What seems more likely is that over time slave prices came to increase to levels that

¹⁰ David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis and David Richardson, 'Slave Prices, the African Slave Trade and Productivity in the Caribbean, *Economic History Review* 58 (2005), 681.

¹¹ Ibid.

reflected the actual value of plantation profits. Gradually, slave prices came to become almost equal to the price of sugar. Before 1720, slave prices were about 50 percent of the price of sugar. They increased after that date to 75 percent of the price of sugar before reaching 90 percent of the price of sugar from the early 1760s. Eltis, Lewis and Richardson suggest that this relative rise in slave prices reflects considerable productivity improvements. Rapid expansion in output in terms of both value and volume and rises in the prices of slaves relative to the price of sugar suggest strongly, they argue, productivity improvements of some order. Both contemporary opinion and present day economic analysis suggest that the prices of slaves were closely tied to productivity and the expected performance of sugar. As one observer put it in 1803, when sugar prices fell “the price of Negroes must Fall, at least if they bear a proportion to the fall in Produce.”¹² Eltis, Lewis and Richardson suggest that productivity must have, at a conservative estimate, doubled between 1700 and 1790. Work by David Ryden and J.R. Ward support such an interpretation. Ward divided aggregate output by the number of slaves working in sugar to show appreciable gains in output per hand from the 1730s onwards. Ryden argues that whereas aggregate worker productivity was just over 500 pounds (512) of sugar per sugar-estate slave in the 1750s, this productivity measure had increased to nearly 1,000 pounds (974) of sugar per slave.¹³

SLAVES; WERE THEY UNDERPRICED?

Indeed, what the figures suggest is not so much that slaves were over-priced in the third quarter of the eighteenth century relative to productivity but that slaves in the first third of the eighteenth century were under-priced. Before the 1740s, if a planter

¹² P.J. Mills to John Clark 1 February 1803, Sharp Papers, R.55.7.128 9 (c) 6 and 7, cited in Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, 234.

¹³ J.R. Ward, “The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650-1834,” *Economic History Review*, 31 (1978), 206; Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, 226.

bought a slave from a slave ship then tried to resell it, he would lose money on the deal. Slaves were depreciating rather than appreciating assets. The major value of a slave was not what that slave might make on being resold in an open market but was what a slave would be able to produce in respect to annual income.

The low price of slaves in the first three decades of the eighteenth century is something of a conundrum because Eltis, Lewis and Richardson suggest that productivity improvements were especially explosive between the early 1710s and the early 1730s.¹⁴ These are the least well known periods of Jamaican history, statistically a dark age where we know virtually nothing about population data, economic growth or trade statistics. Nevertheless, we can hypothesize that the following factors may have been important in explaining the under-pricing of slaves in this period. First, Jamaica was still a frontier society with much land underdeveloped. Planters concentrated on developing this land and on trying to increase the value of their real property rather than the value of their slave property. Data from St. Andrew Parish, admittedly an early settled and well-developed parish, suggests that the increase in land prices was explosive in the first thirty years of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ Second, the Jamaican economy was in the doldrums in this period, at least after a period of prosperity between 1714 and 1720. Sugar prices were especially low in the early 1730s, not coincidentally around the time that a major piece of imperial legislation, the 1733 Molasses Act, was passed.¹⁶ These were years of adversity in which many small landowners may have gone to the wall and when Maroons held off British troops in the Jamaican interior, costing Jamaica much money and fuelling fears of

¹⁴ Eltis, Lewis and Richardson, 'Slave Prices,' 684.

¹⁵ In St. Andrew Parish in the 1670s, the average price of land was 34 pence per acre. In the 1720s, the average price per acre had increased to £1.89. Prime sugar land was especially expensive. In 1713, a sugar estate sold for an average £8.40 per acre. *Jamaican Deeds, 1670-1730*, Island Record Office, Twickenham Park, Jamaica.

¹⁶ Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Molasses Act and the Market Strategy of the British Sugar Planters,' *Journal of Economic History* 17 (1957), 62-83.

insecurity. The Council and Assembly of Jamaica lamented in 1734 that the island was laid low due to “the lowness of our produce with in Great Britain, the loss of our trade and the heavy taxes we have been under the necessity of raising to defray the expence of the parties fitted against the rebellious negroes.”¹⁷ In addition, as Nuala Zahedieh points out, the Jamaican economy was not exclusively a plantation economy. It was actually a dual economy, with mercantile profits from trading with Spanish America at least as significant as profits from trading.¹⁸ In short, there were a variety of alternatives to concentrating on increasing the value of slave property that white Jamaicans could concentrate upon in trying to augment individual wealth.

Nevertheless, there are a number of contradictory piece of evidence from this period that suggests that slave prices should have been rising more than they did. Productivity improvements were one factor that should have led to slave prices increasing. Moreover, it was becoming increasingly clear that owning large numbers of slaves was the way to fortune. The ending of the Royal African Company’s monopoly and the entry of private traders into the Atlantic slave trade helped lead to a jump in annual slave imports, from 2,000 per annum in the late seventeenth century to over 3,000 per annum by the 1710s and early 1720s to over 4,000 per annum by the 1730s. Table Five shows the impact of increasing slave imports into Jamaica at a time when white population was at best static and most likely declining. The size of the average slave force for slave owners increased dramatically over time, with the crucial period when slave forces jumped in size being the decades immediately after 1700, when the average size of a slave force increased from 16 to 24. From the 1730s, the average size force was in the mid 30s (the average slave force was 36 for the years 1725-1784).

¹⁷ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, 1734-5*, 100, (London: Public Record Office,).

¹⁸ Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies: London and the Atlantic Economy, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

The 1720s and 1730s were probably the crucial decade. In this decade, the large slave owners consolidated their hold over Jamaican society and politics, with the social and political dominance reflected in their growing economic wealth. It is in the 1730s that we see for the first time extremely large estates where there were many hundreds, even thousands, of slaves. The first men to die with other 900 slaves died in 1736 – Sir James Campbell of Westmoreland Parish, with 921 slaves and Peter Beckford of Clarendon Parish, with 1,699 slaves. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the death of these two men (long established slave holders who began building their slave holdings in the first decade of the eighteenth century) in the same year with very large slave holdings meant that the average slave force listed between 1735 and 1740 rose to 58 slaves.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES, 1700-1750

The growth of very large slave forces is one of three major changes that occurred in the structure of Jamaican slave holding in the first half of the eighteenth century. The first change was that the price of slaves increased dramatically from the mid-1740s. The second is that the price of men slaves accelerated past the price of women slaves, reflecting the tendency of planters to add value to their slave property through training up slaves to be tradesmen. The third change, and a change that predated and probably predetermined the other changes, was that the size of slave forces increased, with the increase in size being especially pronounced at the top end. Table Six shows the increase over time both in the proportion of slave forces that contained sizeable numbers of slaves and also in the proportion of all slaves who lived in very large slave forces. Before 1700, only 10.6 percent of slave forces, containing 54.4 percent of slaves, were larger than 35 slaves. Only 6.1 percent of slave forces were larger than 74 slaves, containing 33.7 percent of all enslaved people while less

than 1 percent of slave forces, with just 11.9 percent of slaves contained more than 150 slaves. In the next quarter century the percentage of large estates doubled and the percentage of very large estates increased nearly four-fold. The modal experience for slaves was increasingly to be a slave in a slave force that had at least 35 slaves: 71.1 percent of slaves listed in inventories between 1700 and 1724 were in slave forces with more than 35 slaves. The trend towards greater concentration of slave forces continued after 1725, with the growth of very large slave forces of 150 and more slaves being especially noticeable. By the 1730s, however, the increase in the size of slave forces seems to have reached a natural limit. Nearly half of enslaved persons – 48.3 percent – lived in very large slave holdings, of 150 or more slaves, with 83 percent of slaves living in slave forces of 35 or more slaves. The percentage of all slave forces that were more than 150 slaves had more than doubled since the first quarter of the eighteenth century and had increased more than five fold since the late seventeenth century. If we exclude from our tabulations the inventories of Kingston residents, then the percentage of slaves in slave forces over 150 slaves – in other words, plantation slaves-rises to 50.7 percent. This essential pattern of slave holding lasted until the end of slave holding in 1834. Barry Higman tabulates that 49.1 percent of slaves were in the 5.2 slave forces that contained 150 or slaves in 1832.¹⁹

Table Ten shows that not only had the shift towards most slaves being in large slave forces begun in earnest in the 1720s and been consolidated in the 1730s, that decade saw the greatest concentration of slaves before the end of slavery, with 56.3 percent of all slaves residing in the 5.8 percent of slave forces that contained 150 or more enslaved people. In that decade, the slaves on very large slave estates were also valued more highly than slaves in general than in any other decade: the average value

¹⁹ Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 274-75.

of a slave on a very large slave holding in the 1730s was 104.7 percent of the value of all slaves valued in that decade.

MAXIMISING VALUE

It was on these large estates that one of the most consequential changes in how slaves were deployed on estates happened. Slave owners naturally wanted to maximise their returns on slave investment by trying to increase the value of their slave property. One way of doing this was to encourage increased reproduction rates among enslaved people through giving female slaves incentives for having children and through some alterations of work patterns so that pregnant slaves were better treated than they had been during pregnancy. There is little evidence that this strategy was seriously considered by slave owners before they were pressured to do so through the ameliorative measures forced upon by abolitionists from the 1780s. Planters preferred to buy rather than breed partly because when slave women became pregnant, they deprived planters of productive workers for at least the period of their confinement. In addition, the children that these women gave birth to were not highly valued by slave owners. In the 1770s, the average price of slaves designated as children (slaves under the age of ten, generally) in the 1770s was £8.70, 36.7 percent of the value of boys and 20.8 percent of the value of the average slave. Infant and child mortality rates were so high that planters could not see the point in worrying very much about developing child friendly policies on their plantations.²⁰

A more economically rational way of augmenting slave property was to try and increase the price of individual slaves by giving them skills that were perceived to be valuable in the marketplace. The quickest and most effective way of increasing individual slave values was in training the most likely male slaves to be tradesmen.

²⁰ There is an extremely large literature on this topic. For a penetrating summary and accurate analysis, see Kenneth Morgan, 'Slave Women and Reproduction in Jamaica c. 1776-1834,' *History* 91 (2006), 231-53.

Before the 1730s, planters faced opposition from white tradesmen who believed that if slaves were allowed to become tradesmen, then they would be squeezed out of the marketplace. For a variety of reasons, white Jamaicans stopped listening to white tradesmen's complaints about competition from slave tradesmen. From the 1730s the larger planters began to train up their own slaves as tradesmen. My evidence for this shift is a little circumstantial, based as it is on the increased appearance in slave lists of men designated as "carpenters" or "masons" or "coopers." It is possible that this appearance of slave tradesmen in slave lists merely reflects changes in recording techniques but other evidence, notably the rapid increase in the average prices of slave men vis a vis other slaves, suggests that occupational differentiation among slave men was a new policy from planters conducted from the 1730s onwards.

Why did white tradesmen change their minds and become reconciled to planters training up slaves as tradesmen. The answer seems to be that they were indulging in the same practices themselves? Table Eight provides some clue to tradesmen's change of attitude. The average price of slaves owned by tradesmen from 1770 onwards was £47.06, nearly £4 more than the average price of slaves. The slaves of tradesmen were relatively more expensive than other slaves because tradesmen had the largest numbers of slave tradesmen within their slave forces.

Slave tradesmen were given a strong premium in the market. In the 1770s, slave tradesmen were valued at £84.45 while healthy men slaves of working age were valued at £67.16 and healthy men slaves of working age who were not tradesmen were priced at £61.63. The differential between tradesmen and prime male hands was 27 percent. The gap was even larger if the price of tradesmen is compared to the price of all men slaves (including the unhealthy and superannuated slaves). The differential between tradesmen and men slaves was 43.6 percent. Bearing in mind that only the

most promising male slaves were trained as tradesmen, if a slave owner converted a field hand into a tradesman he not only got increased revenue (tradesmen had a 26.7 percent premium over field hands in 1832),²¹ but he was also able to make valuable human resource decisions, moving less good slaves into the field and more productive slaves into trades. More sustained attention to other aspects of the plantation process meant that these human resource decisions had few negative consequences as plantation productivity increased despite field hands being probably lower quality over time. Making a male slave a tradesman had great financial advantages and few, if any, negative financial consequences.²²

PRICE DIFFERENTIALS

The high prices afforded slave tradesmen probably accounted for a considerable percentage of the strong differential that began to exist from the 1730s onwards in the value of men and women. As Table Seven shows, much of the increase in slave prices can be attributed to a rapid increase in the value of adult men from the 1730s onwards. Men became significantly more valuable than women from the 1730s onwards. In that decade, the difference between the price of slave men and the price of slave women was a whopping 36 percent. The differential declined in subsequent decades but it still remained a significant difference, at over 25 percent, in the 1770s and 1780s. The premium for men over women was appreciably more important than the differential between boys and girls, suggesting that most of the premium was due to the high prices afforded slave tradesmen, with carpenters – valued at an average price of £86.52 - being the most highly valued of all slave tradesmen.

²¹ Higman, *Plantation Jamaica*, 238.

²² For improvements in plantation productivity, see in general Ryden, *West Indian Slavery* and J.R. Ward, *British West Indian Slavery, 1750-1834: The Process of Amelioration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

The high valuation of slave tradesmen working within large gangs of slaves on sugar estates demonstrates that Jamaicans valued sugar production over all other forms of enterprise. Slaves working in sugar were given a premium over other kinds of slaves, despite the much greater mortality rates that pertained in sugar than in other slave occupational categories. The nature of how slaves were described, or not described, in inventories makes it difficult to be precise about the premium that was given to slaves working in sugar but it clearly existed. Ironically, given that most literature on slave culture suggests that urban slaves were more likely to have a range of skills and talents than were rural slaves, slaves in towns and slaves owned by people who characteristically lived in towns – merchants, Jews, women, and free blacks- were valued significantly lower than were slaves owned by planters who lived in the countryside. Table Eight shows that for slaves inventoried between 1770 and 1784 the value of slaves owned by merchants, women or free blacks was only 92 percent of the value of the average slave. It also shows that Jews, invariably town dwellers, owned slaves that were worth on average only 85 percent of the value of the average enslaved person. Slaves belonging to the residents of Kingston or Port Royal were similarly under valued: as seen in Table Nine, the average value of a slave owned by people resident in these towns was 87.8 percent of the average value of all slaves. Conversely, slaves owned by planters (the owners of the vast majority of slaves) were valued at 103.8 percent of the value of slaves in general. The value of slaves also varied according to geography. Slaves were most expensive in the fast developing sugar growing regions of western Jamaica, as can be seen in Table Nine. In western Jamaica, slave prices were 113.5 percent of the value of slaves in general, with the average slave listed in inventories filed after 1770 for people living in

western Jamaica being £11 or 29.2 percent more valuable than the average slave in Kingston.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of slave prices helps to confirm that planters were rational economic actors who created an economically rational system that got more rational over time. Of all the information noted above, perhaps the most relevant piece of information is that enslaved people collectively began to be valued more correctly, in the sense that the money they were valued at reflected ever more closely their economic contribution to plantation enterprise. In short, planters made better and better use over time in their employment of their human capital resources. It is correct that the most remarkable feature of an analysis of slave prices in eighteenth century Jamaica is how great was the increase in slave prices over time, showing that investment in human capital made economic sense in and of itself, as well as contributing to improvements in plantation productivity, and encouraging free Jamaicans, from men of middling wealth like Thomas Thistlewood to the greatest planters, to invest as much spare capital in the purchase of new inputs of human capital into their wealth portfolios. But just as remarkable was the extent to which slave owners became increasingly precise in their valuations of individual slaves and slave forces as collective entities. From being overpriced in the early eighteenth century, slaves became appropriately priced by the mid-eighteenth century.

Moreover, as the valuation of slaves became more precise and more scientific and as slave owners' agency information about individual slaves became more sophisticated, slave owners were increasingly able to make decisions on the deployment of enslaved persons within slave forces that made best use of individual

humans' capacity, intelligence and willingness to work.²³ In short, they increasingly maximised their investment in humans by constructing increasingly responsive human resource strategies. Planters began to follow the advice of put forward by British agricultural reformers that they could not make the best returns from their properties if they did not value human and animal property accurately. In Britain, agricultural improvement arose from managing livestock better. In the West Indies, managing human property and its deployment was the key to plantation profitability. Writing about slave prices shows how this process was done. Yet one cannot but be aware of how disturbing it is to write about these sorts of topics given modern sensibilities. It is clear in the methodologies and topics of the new school of 'critical accounting history,' in which scholars are looking anew at topics such as the accountancy of slavery, that there is a moral dimension to studies of slave prices.²⁴ In this case, the information presented above as detached and abstract pieces of data reveal a deeper truth: the distressingly small gap in the minds of Jamaican slave owners in how Africans and animals were viewed.²⁵ The commodification of humans brought great value to those people who owned humans. But it encompassed evil. Appreciating how the pricing of slaves changed over time in Jamaica helps us understand that evil more acutely.²⁶

TABLE ONE: VALUE OF SLAVE PROPERTY IN JAMAICA, 1673-1784

²³ Trevor Burnard, 'Counting and Accounting: Representing Slaves as Commodities in Jamaica, 1674-1784,' in Daniela Bleichmar and Peter C. Mancall, eds., *Collecting Across Cultures: Material Exchanges in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 177-91

²⁴ See, inter alia, Richard K. Fleischman and Thomas N. Tyson, "Accounting in Service to Racism: Monetizing Slave Property in the Antebellum South," *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 15 (2004), 376-99 and Fleischman, David Oldroyd and Tyson, "Monetizing Human Life: Slave Valuations in United States and West Indian Plantations," *Accounting History*, 9 (2004), 35-62.

²⁵ See Philip D. Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750-1751," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 52 (1995), 47-76 and Karl Jacoby, "Slaves by Nature? Domestic Animals and Human Slaves," *Slavery & Abolition*, 15 (1994), 89-99.

²⁶ For a penetrating interpretation of slavery in early British America that views it in terms of 'evil,' see Christopher L. Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Year	Slave Pop.	Growth p.a	Slave Imports p.a.	(3)/(4)	Slave Price	Total Value Slaves	Growth p.a. (£)	Total Value All Property
1673	8,874	N/a	652	N/a	13.41	£119,268	N/a	£314,434
1693	46,527	1883	2141	87.9	14.99	697,440	£28,909	£1,838,706
1722	93,333	1614	3035	53.2	18.83	1,757,460	36,552	£4,633,734
1730	96,946	452	4653	9.7	19.81	1,920,500	20,380	£4,316,324
1734	100,970	1006	4444	22.6	19.81	2,000,216	19,929	£5,273,296
1739	115,779	3000	4685	64.0	18.25	2,112,967	22,550	£5,570,549
1746	131,166	2198	4788	45.9	28.01	3,673,960	222,999	£9,685,894
1749	140,000	2945	6751	43.6	28.01	3,921,400	82,211	£10,338,236
1754	151,667	2334	5358	43.6	25.85	3,920,592	-162	£10,336,106
1761	171,273	1961	6707	29.2	33.98	5,819,857	271,324	£15,343,259
1768	194,721	3350	6705	50.0	36.14	7,037,217	173,909	£18,552,663
1774	224,918	5033	6970	72.2	37.91	8,526,641	248,237	£22,479,325
1778	239,471	3638	9060	40.2	44.08	10,567,783	510,286	£27,860,517
1787	246,043	730	6912	10.6	45.17	11,113,762	60,664	£29,299,918

Population figures are derived from David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (New York: Cambridge, 2009), Table B.1. Ryden explains how reported population figures for slaves in Jamaica were consistently understated. He notes how the eighteenth century historian, Edward Long, worked out the differences between slaves listed for tax purposes and the actual number of slaves in a population. The difference between the two population numbers was 14.5 percent. I have therefore taken recorded figures of population and increased them in each instance by 14.5 percent.

For average slave prices, see Table 2.

I used Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Bridgetown, Barb.: University of the West Indies Press, 1974), Appendix IX for retained slave imports into Jamaica, 1702-1775. For other years, I used the Transatlantic Slave Trade Data Base

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces> In order to keep figures consistent, I have reduced the figures from 1775-1787 in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Data Base by 17 percent, in order to account for slaves landed but not retained on the island.

TABLE TWO: SLAVE PRICES IN JAMAICA, 1674-1784

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Year	No. Obs.	Average Slave Price	Average New African Price	(2)/(3)	Average Sugar Price	(2)/(5)
1674	11	13.41	19.86	67.5%	23.50	57.1%
1675-79	128	14.81	19.35	76.5	21.78	68.0
1680-84	64	13.67	16.72	81.8	20.38	67.1
1685-89	177	13.67	18.44	74.1	21.52	63.5
1690-94	173	14.99	20.19	74.2	35.26	42.5
1695-99	6	16.61	23.33	71.2	39.38	42.2
1700-04	164	18.18	23.51	77.3	43.28	42.0
1705-09	42	16.73	25.06	66.8	33.40	50.1
1710-14	272	15.83	23.00	68.8	55.15	28.7
1715-19	109	16.67	18.39	90.6	32.33	51.6
1720-24	83	18.83	24.99	75.4	25.50	73.8
1725-29	333	19.40	30.55	63.5	26.00	74.6
1730-34	348	19.81	22.82	86.8	19.75	100.3
1735-39	197	18.25	28.25	64.6	22.10	82.6
1740-44	516	21.93	28.46	77.1	29.88	73.4
1745-49	623	28.01	26.19	106.9	35.00	80.0
1750-54	422	25.85	30.90	83.7	33.14	78.0
1755-59	593	29.23	30.93	94.5	39.08	74.8
1760-64	591	33.98	32.33	105.1	36.00	94.4
1765-69	695	36.14	39.22	92.1	36.84	98.1
1770-74	337	37.91	43.01	88.1	36.18	104.8
1775-79	599	44.08	43.07	102.3	45.36	97.2
1780-84	592	45.17	44.44	101.6	49.10	92.0

The average price for new Africans is derived from David Eltis and David Richardson, "Prices of African slaves newly arrived in the Americas, 1673-1865: new evidence on long-run trends and regional differentials," in David Eltis, Frank Lewis, and Kenneth Sokoloff, eds., *Slavery in the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge, 2004), 181-218. Eltis and Richardson look at prices in the Caribbean as a whole, not just Jamaica. Slaves, after adjusting for transportation costs, generally cost 20 percent more in Jamaica than in Barbados between 1751 and 1775.

The average price of sugar is derived from David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and David Richardson, "Slave prices, the African slave trade, and productivity in the Caribbean, 1674-1807," *Economic History Review* 58 (2004), 679.

TABLE FIVE: TOTAL WEALTH AND VALUE SLAVE PROPERTY, JAMAICAN SLAVEOWNERS, 1674-1784

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Year	N.	TEV	Value Slaves	(2)/(3)	(2)/Debt	Ave.No. Slaves
1674	11	392.53	103.06	30%	14	7
1675-79	128	495.42	202.89	46	15	14
1680-84	64	666.39	254.97	47	16	19
1685-89	177	627.88	214.09	41	14	16
1690-94	173	517.85	218.39	49	9	15
1695-99	6	475.52	227.07	45	22	16
1700-04	164	967.20	391.73	48	13	24
1705-09	42	808.55	417.78	53	12	26
1710-14	273	884.38	359.76	59	9	24
1715-19	109	1127.79	403.15	52	15	24
1720-24	83	2022.29	662.99	49	22	34
1725-29	333	1666.69	590.31	49	19	29
1730-34	348	2058.33	830.71	46	25	40
1735-39	197	3205.80	1108.18	49	24	58
1740-44	94	1765.79	683.29	46	22	33
1745-49	623	2252.65	875.99	49	20	33
1750-54	422	2693.61	973.08	48	24	37
1755-59	593	2340.02	1061.97	52	20	37
1760-64	591	2538.04	1111.13	55	21	33
1765-69	695	3057.55	1210.58	52	24	34
1770-74	337	4033.21	2097.37	56	22	52
1775-79	599	3699.31	1459.77	57	23	33
1780-84	593	3423.12	1475.67	55	27	33

Source: Inventories, IB11/3/1-64

N=Observations, estates with slave property only.

TEV= all non-landed wealth, converted to sterling using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*

Slaves = value of slave property in sterling

Debt/(3) = equals the percentage of debt in estates that contain slaves. This figure includes both estates that contain debt and estates that do not contain debt.

Ave.No. Slaves = the average size of individual slave holdings for estates with slave property.

TABLE THREE: MALE/FEMALE RATIOS IN SLAVE POPULATIONS

Year	N.	Male	Female
1675-84	2992	54.2%	45.8%
1685-94	5565	52.2	47.8
1695-04	4069	51.2	48.8
1705-14	7596	53.1	46.9
1715-24	5465	54.3	45.7
1725-34	23484	55.0	45.0
1735-44	28174	53.5	46.5
1745-54	35717	54.2	45.8
1755-64	41013	53.8	46.2

1765-74	41008	53.5	46.5
1775-84	38800	53.2	46.8

Source: Inventories, 1B/11/3/1-64

TABLE SIX: JAMAICAN SLAVE FORCES BY PERCENTAGE OF SLAVES IN VARIOUS SIZED SLAVE FORCES

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Number	1674-99	1674-99	1700-24	1700-24	1725-84	1725-84	1725-84
1-5	7.6	47.0	3.7	36.2	2.6	2.0	36.5
6-15	17.0	28.1	11.1	28.2	7.2	5.8	26.9
16-35	21.0	14.3	14.1	15.4	10.5	9.5	16.1
36-75	20.7	6.1	21.9	10.9	13.6	14.0	9.4
76-150	21.8	3.6	27.4	7.0	17.8	18.3	5.9
151+	11.9	0.9	21.8	2.4	48.3	50.7	5.2
Number	8739	559	17056	671	208904	180191	5847

Source: Inventories, 1674-1784, IB/11/3/1-64

- (1) Percentage of slaves in slave forces of various sizes, 1674-1699
- (2) Percentage of slave forces containing various numbers of slaves, 1674-1699
- (3) Percentage of slaves in slave forces of various sizes, 1700-24
- (4) Percentage of slave forces containing various numbers of slaves, 1700-24
- (5) Percentage of slaves in slave forces of various sizes, 1725-1784
- (6) Percentage of slaves in slave forces of various sizes, Kingston excluded, 1725-84
- (7) Percentage of slave forces containing various numbers of slaves, 1725-84

TABLE FOUR: AGE/SEX PERCENTAGES IN THE JAMAICAN SLAVE POPULATION, 1675-1784

Year	No.	(1)	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Children	Adult
1675-84	2248	75.1	41.1	33.7	10.6	8.5	6.1	74.8
1685-94	4453	80.0	38.0	34.7	8.2	5.7	12.2	72.7
1695-04	2993	73.6	38.6	34.5	10.4	8.4	8.1	73.1
1705-14	6719	88.1	39.0	34.0	8.6	6.3	12.1	73.0
1715-24	4811	88.1	39.3	32.4	12.2	8.7	7.3	71.7
1725-34	17792	75.2	40.3	32.9	12.2	9.6	5.0	73.2
1735-44	20362	72.2	39.2	35.0	12.1	9.4	4.2	74.2
1745-54	26006	72.8	40.8	34.5	11.6	9.4	3.7	75.3
1755-	21688	52.9	40.3	34.2	12.7	10.7	2.1	74.5

64								
1765-74	23797	57.9	41.0	35.1	12.1	9.9	1.8	76.1
1775-84	21736	55.3	41.7	35.9	11.1	9.7	1.6	77.6

Sources: Inventories, 1674-1784. As noted in the text, appraisers varied in what type of slaves they considered to be boys, girls and children. Moreover, not all slaves were denoted as either adults or children. (1) gives the percentages of all slaves who were designated by reference to whether they were men, women, boys, girls or children.

TABLE SEVEN: SLAVE PRICES AND GENDER DIFFERENTIALS IN THE JAMAICAN SLAVE POPULATION

Year	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1675-00	17.56	15.14	8.95	7.16	13.8	20.0%	49.0	52.7
1700-24	22.25	18.46	10.96	8.76	17.0	20.1	50.7	52.5
1725-35	18.74	16.12	10.10	8.08	14.0	20.0	46.1	49.9
1735-44	22.96	14.70	9.70	7.84	36.0	19.2	57.8	46.7
1745-54	31.08	21.33	13.52	11.17	31.4	17.4	56.5	47.6
1755-64	37.84	25.28	17.84	14.71	33.2	17.5	52.9	41.8
1765-74	40.80	29.86	20.66	16.92	26.8	18.1	49.4	43.3
1775-84	51.10	37.91	25.28	20.11	25.8	20.5	50.5	47.0

Source: Inventories, IB/11/3/1-65

- (1) Percentage by which men valued more than women
- (2) Percentage by which boys valued more than girls
- (3) Percentage by which men valued more than boys
- (4) Percentage by which women valued more than girls

TABLE EIGHT: SLAVE FORCES AND VALUE OF SLAVE PROPERTY BY OCCUPATION OR STATUS OF SLAVEOWNERS, JAMAICA, 1770-84

Occupation	N.	TEV	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Esquires	186	11931	7182	61	166	43.49
Merchants*	164	9607	2325	23	42	39.62
Planters**	441	1641	1011	66	23	45.33
All Planters	627	4694	2842	64	65	44.79
Tradesmen	189	1058	425	53	9	47.06
Doctors	57	2013	823	43	18	43.86
Women	212	1040	593	69	15	39.93
Jews	70	5661	1511	53	41	36.51
Free People	64	347	275	79	7	39.74
Total	1529	3666	1603	56	37	43.13

Source: Inventories, 1770-84, IB11/3/55-65

- (1) Total Value of slave property, converted to sterling, using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That In Real Money?*
- (2) Slave Property as a Proportion of Total Estate Value, converted to sterling, using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*
- (3) Average number of slaves per inventory in each category.

(4) Average value of individual slaves, converted to sterling, using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*

*Included in merchants are people denoted as “Esquire” who live in Kingston. These people were invariably the leading merchants of the town. Some people denoted as esquires who lived outside Kingston may also have been merchants rather than planters.

** The category “Planters” does not include esquires. The category “All Planters” combines esquires not living in Kingston with planters.

TABLE NINE: SLAVE PRICES BY PARISH OF RESIDENCE, 1770-1784

Region	N	(1)
Kingston	387	37.86
East	192	42.85
Central	380	42.23
North	199	44.82
West	371	48.93
All	1529	43.13

Source: Inventories, 1770-84, IB11/3/55-65

(1) = Average slave price in sterling, using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*

I have defined region as follows: Kingston = the parishes of Kingston and Port Royal; East= St. Andrew, St Thomas in the East, Portland, and St. David; Central = St Catherine, St John, St Dorothy, St Thomas in the Vale; Vere; Clarendon, St. Elizabeth; North=St Mary, St Ann, St George; West=Westmoreland, St James, Hanover, Trelawney

TABLE TEN: CHARACTERISTICS OF SLAVE FORCES WITH 150 OR MORE SLAVES, 1675-1784

Years	N.	(1)	N. Slaves	(2)	(3)	(4)
1675-99	5	0.6	1039	11.9	12.92	89.9
1700-09	6	2.0	1481	29.4	16.84	94.1
1710-19	7	1.4	1498	16.3	15.63	97.5
1720-29	16	3.0	4460	35.5	20.65	107.1
1730-39	40	5.8	14213	56.3	20.14	104.7
1740-49	49	3.3	15613	42.3	24.52	97.1
1750-59	54	4.1	19045	51.0	27.30	98.1
1760-69	65	3.9	18959	44.4	34.77	98.9
1770-79	57	4.5	20030	53.5	42.50	101.6
1780-84	27	3.5	9299	47.8	44.73	99.1

Source: Inventories, 1675-1784, IB1/11/3/1-65

(1) slave forces 150+ as a percentage of all slave forces

(2) Slaves in slave forces 150+ as a percentage of all slaves

- (3) Average price of slaves, converted to sterling, using the deflator in McCusker, *How Much is That in Real Money?*
- (4) Price of slaves in very large slave forces as percentage of price of slaves in all slave forces