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"May Change Name and Pretend to be Free": A Corpus Linguistic Investigation of Surnames Adopted by Fugitive Slaves As Advertised in Colonial American Newspapers Between 1729 and 1818

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Traditionally, it has been assumed that the adoption of surnames among African Americans evolved from the simple emulation of onomastic norms common among European American slave owners. In recent years, however, careful analysis has revealed that this initial assumption may have been premature. The naming behaviour of early African American residents has shown itself to be an extremely complex phenomenon, one which goes far beyond mere imitation. While this emerging scholarship has been useful in pointing out directions, there has yet to be a systematic linguistic investigation of this population. The present investigation provides an empirical analysis of surnaming patterns among fugitive slaves as advertised in colonial American newspapers between 1729 and 1818.

KEYWORDS fugitive slave, surnames, colonial America, newspaper advertisements

Introduction

To date, the vast majority of studies published on slave naming have tended to focus on first names (e.g. Greene, 1944; Cohen, 1952; Schafer, 1981; Parker, 1983; Windley, 1983; Hodges and Brown, 1994; Laversuch, 2006). By comparison, surprisingly few studies have examined the phenomenon of slave last names (e.g. Inscoe, 1983; Kolchin, 1995; Franklin and Schweninger, 2000). One of the primary reasons for this oversight may be the prevalence of many as yet untested though nevertheless

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prevalent beliefs about slave names; one of the most common being that slaves did not have last names. No doubt, this assertion is based upon simple observation. Indeed, reflecting the process of dehumanization inherent in colonial slavery, many archival documents from this period do not name slaves as single individuals, but list them collectively as bulk goods to be bought and sold, traded and exploited. In those seemingly rare instances when slaves were mentioned by name, it was not uncommon for them to be referred to with a single first name.

Despite this fact, there is also compelling anecdotal counter-evidence which attests to the existence of last names among colonial slaves. For example, in the United States today, it is still commonplace for school children learning about the American Revolution to hear the riveting story of Crispus Attucks, one of the first patriots to be shot and killed during the Boston Massacre of 1770. The child of a Native American father and African American mother, Crispus Attucks also happened to be a mulatto fugitive slave. Other examples of prominent (self-)emancipated slaves with both first and last names include the following: Sarah Allen (1764–1849); Benjamin Bannaker (1731–1806); Frederick Douglass (1817–1895); Elizabeth Freeman (1742–1829); James Forten (1766–1798); Jupiter Hammon (1711–1806); Harriet Ann Jacobs (1813–1897); Sojourner Truth (1798–1883); Nat Turner (1800–1831); and Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784). As this brief list confirms, there is strong evidence which speaks for the presence of surnames among fugitive slaves during the Colonial period.

The express purpose of the present investigation was to empirically test the following popular beliefs about fugitive slave surnames (FSSN) during the colonial era: 1) FSSNs were frequently occupational; 2) in comparison to the masters' surnames (MASN), the FSSN inventory was limited in number and diversity; 3) FSSNs were indistinguishable from MASNs; 4) FSSNs were usually toponymic markers of presumed place of origin; and 5) no discernible derivational pattern can be found among FSSNs. After describing the methodology used to test each of these assumptions, this paper presents the collective demographic profile of the fugitives examined. Then the empirical validity of the above assumptions will be presented. The paper will then conclude with a brief discussion of the most important insights won.

Methodology

The compilation of the final corpus used for the current study took place in two steps. In the first, a random set of 1155 fugitive slave advertisements[1] featured in six previously published colonial American newspaper compilations from along the Eastern seaboard was selected.[2] Of this original set of advertisements, 131 texts (11.34 percent) were identified as profiling a slave with both a first and last name. This set then served as the final corpus and was accordingly coded for textual (newspaper name, place of publication, year of publication); demographic (age, gender, occupation, racial classification, pass status, suspected destination, place of origin); and onomastic variables (first and last name of masters and slaves). The strength, direction, and significance of the statistical relationships between and across these variables were then tested. In this way, it was possible to discern some of the singular and collective factors relevant for FSSNs in the colonial corpus.

Results

The overall demographic profile of the fugitive slaves

The statistical analysis quickly revealed that the prototypical fugitive in the sample had the following profile: a male,[3] semi-skilled tradesman, *c.* twenty-eight years old, who was born in the North American colonies, and was of mixed descent (i.e. "mulatto"). A more detailed description of the entire corpus itself is contained in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1

COLLECTIVE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FUGITIVES

	Race (%)		Age		Sex		Origin
Negro	44.27	Maximum	50	Female	5.3	13 colonies	70.2
Mulatto	41.14	Minimum	14	Male	94.7	Caribbean	10.8
Other	14.59	Mean	28.2				

As shown in Figure 1, a cross-comparison of the newspaper advertisements by year that the advert was published (i.e. ADYEAR) and the ages of the runaway slaves at the time of their escape (i.e. RUNAGE) reveals that the majority of the fugitives ran away between their late twenties and early thirties, during the years 1770 and 1780. In Figure 1 below, a graph demonstrating the relationship between these two variables is displayed. Similar results have been obtained in other early investigations of colonial slavery (e.g. Mullin, 1972; Schafer, 1981; Wada, 2006).

This period was probably no accident, for it was at this time that the cries for Americans to shed the shackles of tyranny had reached their zenith.[4] It was precisely during this period that the words of leaders like George Washington and Thomas

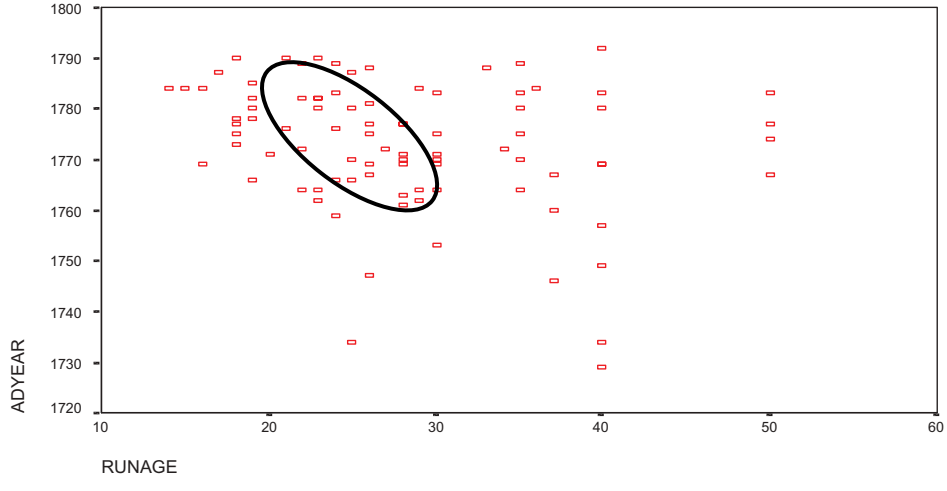

FIGURE 1 Scatterplot of runaway age by year of newspaper publication.

Jefferson, men who would later be recognized as the founding fathers of the new fledgling republic, ignited the air. Sadly, of course, one of the perennial ironies of US history is the fact that many of the most ardent freedom fighters were also prominent slave holders. Nevertheless, if the slave advertisements are anything to go by, their public declaration for man's inalienable right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" were not lost upon the slaves.

Assumption 1: The last names of fugitive slaves were frequently derived from their principle occupation

A total of 49.1 percent of the fugitive slaves featured in the advertisements were described as having mastered a trade, one which presumably would have guaranteed them a viable income. As Table 2 shows below, the slaves' occupations were quite varied. However, the most common professions were personal servant, seaman, carpenter, musician, and cooper.

A comparison of the slave occupations with the FSSN inventory did not reveal a significant match. Thus, the slave who was a dressmaker did not have the last name *Taylor*, and the slave who served as personal manservant was not called *Butler*. There were, however, a few notable exceptions. In the October 6 1735 edition of the *New-York Weekly Journal*, an advertisement appears for *William Smith*, a multilingual negro fugitive who had the "trade of Black-Smith" (Hodges and Brown, 1994: 10).

Nevertheless, as a general rule, the FSSNs did not seem to have been occupational. Indeed, occupational surnames accounted for only 15 percent of the sample. The same proportion was seemingly attributional. For example, in 1787, the May 30 edition of the *Pennsylvania Gazetteer* contains a notice for the mulatto runaway *Caesar,* "a great professor of religion" who, upon his escape, reportedly changed his name to the biblically inspired *Jacob Holy* (Smith and Wojtowicz, 1989: 152).

TABLE 2

THE REPORTED OCCUPATIONS OF THE FUGITIVE SLAVES

		f	%	Cum%			f	%	Cum%
1.	Apprentice	2	1.5	1.5	12.	Printer	1	0.8	32.9
2.	Barber	1	0.8	2.3	13.	Sawyer	1	0.8	33.7
3.	Bricklayer	2	1.5	3.8	14.	Sadler	1	0.8	34.5
4.	**Carpenter**	**7**	**5.3**	**9.1**	**15.**	**Seaman**	**9**	**6.9**	**41.4**
5.	Cook	1	0.8	9.9	16.	Shoemaker	3	2.3	43.7
6.	**Cooper**	**3**	**2.3**	**12.2**	17.	Smith	3	2.3	46.0
7.	Farmer	1	0.8	13.0	18.	Soldier	2	1.5	47.5
8.	Minister	1	0.8	13.8	19.	Waggoner	1	0.8	48.3
9.	**Musician**	**5**	**3.8**	**17.6**	20.	Watchmaker	1	0.8	**49.1**
10.	Mil. Musician	2	1.5	19.1	21.	No prof.		**51.8**	100.00
11.	**Personal Servant**	**17**	**13.0**	**32.1**					

TABLE 3
PATRONYMIC MARKERS IDENTIFIED AMONG THE FUGITIVES' SURNAMES (FSSN)

	Marker	Affixation Process	Examples from Corpus
1.	-s	[Edward] + [-s] > [Edwards]	Evans, Richards, Roberts, Williams,
2.	-son	[Karl] + [-son] > [Karlson]	Dobson, Dawson, Hanson, Johnson,
3.	M'-	[M-] + [Calman] > [M'Calman]	M'Gee
4.	Ap-	[Ap] + [Humphrey] > [Pumfrey]	Powel, Powelse

Far more prevalent than the attributional and occupational surnames, however, were those marking patrilineal heritage. The four most common patronymic markers found in the corpus are displayed above. Here again one sees one of the tragic ironies of US slavery. How ironic that a people whose family lines were systematically violated would gravitate towards surnames which marked such relationships. It is, of course, doubtful whether these names were intentionally chosen by the fugitives as overt markers of their family lineage — if for no other reason, by the eighteenth century, most patronymic systems had largely eroded such that a man bearing the last name *Johnson* was not actually the son of a father with the first name *John*.

This is not to say, however, that the fugitives made no attempt to mark their family ties with surnames. In 1772, for example, a *Virginia Gazette* advertisement placed by Paul Michaux describes a 'mulatto' fugitive slave *Jim* who reportedly took on the surname *Cheshire*, the first name of his Native American father (Windley, 1983a: 125). Similarly, in the April edition of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* from 1744, a notice appears for *George* and *William Hugill*, two brothers who escaped together and who were, as fate would have it, pursued by another set of relatives, *George* and *Valentine Robinson* (Smith and Wojtowicz, 1986: 23). The presence of such advertisements provides intriguing counter-evidence to the popular assertion that slave surnames, when present, were not hereditary.[5]

Assumption 2: In comparison to the masters' surnames, the inventory of slave last names was limited in number and diversity

To test the validity of this assertion, the complete set of the masters' surnames was first compiled and then compared to that of the fugitives. The two respective name inventories are presented in this section.

As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, a total of 102 different last names were identified among the fugitive slaves, just two fewer than those identified for the slave masters. Thus, the slave last names were found to be equally numerous. To test for comparative onomastic diversity of the two different groups, the frequency of occurrence for each name was calculated. For the entire corpus, no single surname was found to represent a cluster with a frequency of 6 (f6). Name clusters for both the MASNs and the FSSNs are shown in Figure 2.

As the line graph in Figure 2 illustrates, name clusters with a frequency of greater than two (f2) were extremely rare for both the masters and, perhaps even more importantly here, the slaves. Among the fugitives, the surnames which appeared the most often, were the following: (f5) *Jones*; (f4) *Johnson*, *Dobson*; (f3) *Adams*, *Brooke*, *Cornish*, *Williams*; and (f2) *Alexander*, *Brown*, *Edward*, *Dix*, *Hugill*, *Jackson*, *Kelly*,

TABLE 4

THE INVENTORY OF THE MASTERS' SURNAMES (MASN)

1.	Adams	22.	Clarke	43.	Hardyman	64.	Mathews	85.	Salter
2.	Allen	23.	Colegate	44.	Hare	65.	Michaux	86.	Savin
3.	Anderson	24.	Comes	45.	Heard	66.	Milburin	87.	Seth
4.	Bartholomew	25.	Coryell	46.	Heslop	67.	Minson	88.	Singer
5.	Baugh	26.	Cresap	47.	Hunlock	68.	Montgomery	89.	Smith
6.	Bean	27.	Cullen	48.	Hunter	69.	Morgan	90.	Starett
7.	Benat	28.	Darnall	49.	Jackson	70.	Morton	91.	Stewart
8.	Bird	29.	Davison	50.	Johnson	71.	Nicols	92.	Stodder
9.	Bordley	30.	de Kudel	51.	Johnston	72.	Palmer	93.	Sullivan
10.	Botts	31.	Dorsey	52.	Jones	73.	Parmyter	94.	Taliaferro
11.	Bouchell	32.	Douglass	53.	Karg	74.	Peirce	95.	Tomlinson
12.	Bradt	33.	Elzey	54.	Kello	75.	Pierce	96.	Waggaman
13.	Brooke	34.	Evans	55.	Kelsall	76.	Postelwait	97.	Walker
14.	Brookes	35.	Fitzhugh	56.	Key	77.	Price	98.	Wellls
15.	Brown	36.	Furman	57.	King	78.	Quayne	99.	Wescot
16.	Bruce	37.	Glaze	58.	Lee	79.	Rees	100.	Whiteford
17.	Bush	38.	Graham	59.	Legare	80.	Ridell	101.	Whitehead
18.	Byrd	39.	Graybill	60.	Luckie	81.	Ridley	102.	Wolfe
19.	Carroll	40.	Green	61.	M'Kean	82.	Robertson	103.	Wood
20.	Chambers	41.	Hammon	62.	Marks	83.	Robinson	**104.**	**Wynne**
21.	Chevis	42.	Harding	63.	Martin	84.	Rock		

Linch, *Pemberton*, *Roberts*. The following name clusters were identified for the masters: (f4) *Walker*; (f3) *Stodder*, *Dorsey;* (f2) *Anderson*, *Hardyman*, *Heslop*, *King*, *Riddell*, *Robin*, *Savin*, and *Smith*.

Figure 2 also demonstrates that surnames which appeared only once were by far the most common for both inventories. This finding would seem to indicate that the fugitives displayed a remarkable degree of ingenuity in adopting their surnames. Indeed, as Inscoe concluded: "The novelty of slave nomenclature, then, testifies to the willingness and the ability of slaves to maintain an identity uniquely theirs" (1983: 554).

Assumption 3: Fugitive slaves routinely took the last names of their former masters

To test this popular assertion, a one-tailed Pearson R Correlation Test ($p = 0.05$) was run to determine if a statistically significant relationship could be detected for the masters' and slaves' personal names, both first and last.

The test result revealed a small yet statistically significant relationship (0.168) between the set of first names for the two groups. However, no such relationship could be detected for the last names. In fact, the correlation coefficient between the FSSNs and the MASNs was only a meager 0.080 and by no means statistically

TABLE 5

THE INVENTORY OF THE FUGITIVES' SURNAMES (FSSN)

1.	Alexander	22.	Dobson	43.	Hugill	64.	Lynch	85.	Rouse
2.	Bannaker	23.	Duglass	44.	James	65.	M'Gee	86.	Salter
3.	Boudron	24.	Dyson	45.	Jeffreys	66.	Marshall	87.	Sampson
4.	Brown (e)	25.	Easter	46.	Jeffries	67.	Minors	88.	Scribens
5.	Brayan	26.	Edward	47.	Jennings	68.	Montague	89.	Sellars
6.	Bucher	27.	Ehaw	48.	Jeste	69.	Murrey	90.	Sernetor
7.	Butler	28.	Evans	49.	Joe	70.	Natt	91.	Sharpe
8.	Byas	29.	Fly	50.	Johnson	71.	Orange	92.	Smith
9.	Cambel	30.	Francisco	51.	Johnston	72.	Patterson	93.	Spencer
10.	Cheshire	31.	Fransway	52.	Jones	73.	Pemberton	94.	Start
11.	Chester	32.	Frederick	53.	Kelly	74.	Poole	95.	Stow
12.	Clark	33.	Gardner	54.	Kupperth	75.	Powell	96.	Thomspn
13.	Cornish	34.	Gratenread	55.	Lake	76.	Powelse	97.	Waddy
14.	Coale	35.	Green	56.	Lee	77.	Preston	98.	Welsh
15.	Cromwell	36.	Grimes	57.	Leek	78.	Purkins	99.	Wenyam
16.	Cuffee	37.	Hanover	58.	Levy	79.	Reid	100.	Whitehead
17.	Daw	38.	Hanson	59.	Linch	80.	Rich	101.	Williams
18.	Dawson	39.	Harris	60.	Lincoln	81.	Richison	**102.**	**Wood**
19.	Dermen	40.	Holy	61.	Locker	82.	Richards		
20.	Dismal	41.	Hood	62.	Luscas	83.	Richardson		
21.	Dix	42.	Hoy	63.	Lydnsay	84.	Roberts		

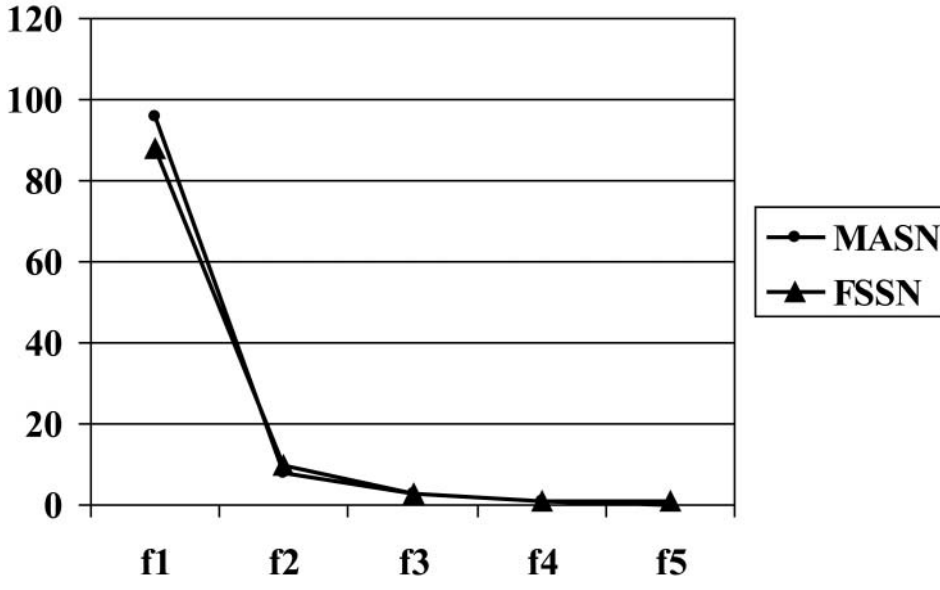

FIGURE 2 The comparative percentages of surname clusters with frequencies between 1 and 5.

significant. This means that only 0.64 percent of the variance found among the slaves' last names was attributable to the masters' surnames. So how did it come to pass that over 80 percent of the slave surnames in the corpus were British in origin? Certainly, there is some anecdotal evidence that some emancipated slaves did decide to take on the surnames of their former owners (e.g. Cohen, 1952; Inscoe, 1983; Windley, 1983). But it is somewhat counter-intuitive to assume that runaways would have routinely taken on the names of their hunters. So, where did their surnames come from?

To find one possible answer to this question, one may not need look very far. During the colonial period, the US American labor force was not only fueled by the burgeoning slave trade, but also by the regular influx of British migrants who came to the new world to work as indentured servants. Upon their arrival, many were shocked to find that the tyranny which they had hoped to escape in the Old World was alive and well in the New. Not a few of these disillusioned servants also eventually opted for a life on the run. It is no coincidence, then, that the newspaper advertisements examined contained many examples of runaway slaves and servants who had decided to cast their lot together. One such example is given in Figure 3.

It certainly would not be a great stretch of the imagination to speculate that, sometime after their elopement, the fugitive *Bob* might have taken on the last name of his partner *Ann Broughton*. Were such alliances between servant and slave then a source of British surnames among fugitive slaves? To answer this question a much larger corpus would be needed. In addition, case studies of individual plantation records containing the names and fates of indentured servants and slaves would also be helpful in testing this hypothesis. However, the circumstantial evidence already uncovered here certainly provides a compelling counter-hypothesis to the idea that a mistreated runaway slave would readily take on the last name of the captor he/she had chosen to flee.

Assumption 4: The last names of fugitive slaves were usually toponymic markers of their presumed place of origin

This popular assertion most probably comes from the fact that in the seventeenth century many of the first slaves registered in the North American colonies had such surnames. For example, "[i]n 1644, eleven Africans petitioned the New Amsterdam Council and Willem Kieft, the colony's Director General, for their freedom. Their names were *Paulo* ***Angolo***, *Big Manuel*, *Little Manuel*, *Manuel de Gerrit de Reus*,

Pennsylvania Gazette
January 15, 1766

RUN away, last NIGHT, from the Subscriber, **a Servant Girl**, named **Ann Broughton**, aged about 20 Year [. . .] Also **a Negroe Man**, **named Bob**, very well made [. . .] about 30 [. . .] they **will probably pass for Man and Wife**. Whoever brings them home, or secures them in any Goal, so that their Master may have them again, shall receive Thirty Shillings Reward for each, from GEORGE ROSS (Smith & Wojtowicz 1986, 80)

FIGURE 3 Eighteenth-century newspaper advertisement for an escaped slave and servant.

Simon **Congo**, *Anthony* ***Portuguese***, *Gracia, Piter* ***Santomee***, *Jan* ***Francisco***, *Little Antony* and *Jan* ***Fort Orange*** [emphasis added]" (http://www.slaveryinnewyork.org accessed on 19 January 2011). The diversity of the toponymic surnames clearly reflects the geographic scope of the colonial slave trade.

An examination of the fugitive slaves' surnames also yielded several toponyms; however, as Table 5 demonstrates, aside from the surname *Hanover*, the overt toponyms in the corpus were related to locations in the British Isles (e.g. *Cheshire*, *Cromwell*, *Lincoln*, *Pemberton*). Based on an interview conducted with a former slaveowner, Armstrong uncovered a possible reason for the presence of such geographical names among slaves: "When a baby was born the day an important ship arrived, the port from which it sailed or the destination of the cargo it was to carry back were drawn on for a name" (1931: 62). Perhaps then names of British sea vessels also served as a source of FSSN.

Assumption 5: Fugitive slave last names did not follow any discernible derivational pattern

Statistical analysis determined that 56.5 percent of the corpus reportedly maintained their original names after escape. There are several possible reasons why a fugitive might have decided to retain his/her pre-flight name. First and foremost was the fact that a complete change of name would have made it that much harder for friends and relatives to locate him/her. Another possible explanation may have been the difficulty of obtaining papers with a new name. Yet another might have been the lack of necessity. As Franklin and Schweninger explain: "[t]he most common form of absconding was not actually running away at all, but what might be termed 'truancy', 'absenteeism', and in some cases, 'lying out.' [. . .] The great majority of slaves who sneaked away from their farms and plantations knew exactly where they wanted to go, namely to visit their wives, husbands, sons, daughters, other family members, and friends" (2000: 98). In such cases, there would have been no need for the runaways to change their original names.

For those slaves wishing to start a new life in freedom, however, some measure of onomastic disguise was necessary. An examination of only those advertisements in which the fugitive was described as having changed his/her name after escape uncovered several patterns. Table 6 displays the percentages of and examples for the five most common name changing patterns identified in the corpus. The source column provides the author and the page number of the original compilation respectively.

Among those strategies displayed above, one of the most basic was the first (S1); namely, the retention of the slave's previous first name and the simple addition of a last name. For example, in October 1775, Mark Bird placed an announcement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for a runaway previously known by the African name *Cuff 'Friday'*. According to Bird, the fugitive subsequently added the surname *Dicks* upon his escape. Compare this example to the fugitive slave once known as *Quaco*, another African Day Name for 'Wednesday'. In March 1773, *Quaco* reportedly exchanged this moniker for the popular English forename *William* and then added the Celtic surname *Murrey*. Like Mr Dicks and Mr Murrey, slaves on the run "obviously recognized that the use of single names for slaves, and two or even three, names

TABLE 6

POST-ESCAPE NAME-CHANGING STRATEGIES

	Strategy	Pre- Escape Name		Post-Escape Name	Source	%
1.	Keep first name and add last name	*Cuff*	→	*Cuff Dicks*	SW126	15.2
		Abraham	→	*AbrahamDobson*	SW81	
		Lewis	→	*Lewis Roberts*	WVA193	
2.	Change first name and add last name	*Quaco*	→	*William Murrey*	SW112	42.4
		Joe	→	*Prince Orange*	SW103	
		Amy	→	*Betty Browne*	WVA301	
		Ibbe	→	*Sabrah Johnson*	SW85	
3.	Lengthen short form of first name and add last name	*Jemmy*	→	*James Williams*	WVA248	28.8
		Bob	→	*Robert Alexander*	SW111	
		Tone	→	*Anthony Welsh*	SW109	
4.	Keep first name and change last name	*Richard Lincoln*	→	*Richard Pierpoint*	SW136	1.7
		David Johnson	→	*David Cornish*	SW153	
5.	Other	*John*	→	*Juan Francisco*	SW292	11.9
		Cudjoe	→	*Cooper Joe*	WSC48	
		Bill	→	*Will Wood*	WMD398	

SW=Smith & Wojtowicz; WVA= Windley Virginia; WMD= Windley Maryland; WSC= Windley South Carolina.

for whites and free blacks differentiated and stigmatized them [. . .]" (Inscoe, 1983: 548). Overtime, such onomastic reinventions mirrored this sub-population's cultural transformation from African to African-American.

Further comparison of the above strategies also reveals a gradient of subterfuge: from S1 (the simple addition of a last name) to S2 (the complete abandonment of the former first name and the addition of a new surname). A comparison of these levels of subterfuge across the two largest racial classifications (i.e. *negro* vs. *mulatto*) offered many important insights. In the Table 7, segment "E" provides information about the *overall* onomastic choices of *both* the mulattoes and negroes in the corpus.

TABLE 7

THE RELATIVE FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTGES OF POST-ESCAPE NAMING STRATEGIES BY RACIAL CLASSIFICATION

	Post-flight Naming Strategy						Total
Classification		**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**S4**	**S5**	
mulatto	Freq.	3	6	9	0	1	19
	A(%) / B(%)	15.78 / 42.86	31.58 / 31.58	47.37 / 75.0	0.00 / 0.00	5.26 / 14.29	
negro	Freq.	4	13	3	1	6	27
	C(%) / D(%)	14.81 / 57.14	48.15 / 68.42	11.11 / 25.00	3.70 / 100.00	22.22 / 85.71	
Total	Freq.	7	19	12	1	7	46
	E(%)	15.22	41.3	26.09	2.17	15.22	

Accordingly, with only 2.17 percent, the least popular option for both subgroups was S4 (i.e. keeping one's original first name, and changing the last).

The segment labelled "A" features the percentages of mulattoes who utilized each one of the five post-escape naming strategies. Segment "B" presents the relative percentages of mulattoes who used each of the strategies out of the total number of both mulattoes and negroes. Thus, among the mulattoes alone, 15.78 percent used S1, making it the third most popular strategy for this subgroup. Out of the total number of fugitives who used S1 (7), however, mulattoes constituted three-sevenths or 42.86 percent. The same information may be obtained for the preferences of the negroes by examining segments "C" and "D" (i.e. segment "C" presents the percentages of negroes who used each one of the post-escape naming strategies; and segment "D" gives the relative percentages of negroes using each one of the strategies out of the total number of both negroes and mulattoes).

Among the fugitive negroes, the most popular naming strategy was S2 (i.e. completely abandoning the first name and adding a last name). With 68.42 percent, the percentage of negroes who chose this level of onomastic subterfuge was much higher than for the mulatto escapees (31.58 percent). Instead, the runaway mulattoes seemed to have preferred retaining some remnant of their original name. For instance, mulattoes accounted for 75 percent of the fugitives who chose S3 (i.e. using the full form of their previous first name and adding a surname). An example here comes from the September 8th advertisement placed in 1775 by Virginia plantation owner, David Walker, who had simply referred to his human chattel as *Jemmy*. After making his escape, *Jemmy* reportedly took on the full form of his nickname and added a last to become *James Williams* (Windley, 1983a).

The above differences in preference may relate to the very different challenges faced by these two subgroups of runaways. Fugitive mulattoes may have had far better chances avoiding public suspicions by simply claiming to be freeborn by virtue of having had a free mother of European or Native American heritage. This story would have been completely plausible during the eighteenth century when colonial legislatures generally agreed that the status of mulatto children followed the condition of the mother (Higginbotham, 1978). The prevalence of this legislation also meant that many colonies had already developed thriving, free mulatto sub-communities into which a runaway of obvious mixed heritage could have been relatively easily absorbed (Hodges, 1997).[6] By comparison, the chances for successful escape among slaves with pure African heritage may have been far reduced for several reasons. First and foremost, fugitive negroes discovered without white supervision would have aroused far more suspicion, and would therefore have been at much greater risk of being apprehended. In addition, due to the ever increasing color-coded prejudices of the times, runaway negroes may have been far less likely to garner the help of benevolent strangers. Given these formidable challenges, to maximize their chances for freedom, runaway negroes may have been under far more pressure to adopt entirely new names and thereby identities.[7]

Discussion and conclusion

One of the most significant insights to be won from the present investigation is the potential benefit of applying the empirical techniques of corpus linguistics to

onomastic research. By doing so, it becomes possible to test the validity of many of the most common (mis)conceptions about naming. Just as importantly, the quantitative approach taken here also helped to shed light on many onomastic trends which might otherwise have remained hidden. Chief among them were the intergroup differences uncovered in the level of onomastic disguise employed. Ultimately, however, it is hoped that this investigation has shown how much there is to be learned by continuing our research into slave nomenclature. By tracing the names of our ancestors we may gain greater understanding of and appreciation for the ways in which names encrypt the power hegemonies of our societies, both past and present.

Notes

[1] The scientific utility of using fugitive slave advertisements to gather reliable information about slave life is explained by Greene: "Unlike the slave dealer, who, in advertising, employed all the subterfuges of high pressure salesmanship in order to dispose of his wares, the owner of the runaway probably gave a honest and precise a description of his slave as possible, on the theory that the more forthright the description, the greater the possibility of recovering his property. For this reason, advertisements for runaway slaves are a mine of invaluable information — information which, when collected, analyzed and synthesized, affords an otherwise unobtainable picture of the slave [. . .]" (1944: 125).

[2] The six newspaper compilations came from the following sources: Parker, 1983; Smith and Wojtowicz, 1989; Hodges and Brown, 1994; Windley, 1983a; 1983b; 1983c.

[3] The strong gender imbalance identified is not an artifact of the sample. As Smith and Wojtowicz explain: "Young men typified escapees [. . .] That the burden of child care generally fell to black women undoubtedly limited their escape opportunities, since few may have been willing to flee without their offspring" (1989: 13–14).

[4] The suspected destination of almost one-third of the sample was the military forces. Importantly, most of these fugitives, (24.7 percent) did not decide to cast their lot with the American colonists. Instead, the majority made off for one of the colonies' adversaries such as the British loyalist forces. One must not search long to uncover a reason for this trend. As early as 1779, Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander-in-Chief, officially authorized the immediate manumission of any and all slaves who joined the British armed forces to put down the colonial insurrection (Higginbotham, 1978: 138).

[5] In an interview, Martin Jackson, a former US slave, explained his reason for having selected his surname: "One of my grandfathers in Africa was called Jeaceo, and so I decided to be a *Jackson*" (Inscoe, 1983: 534). For a careful case study of slave naming practices within a single family, see Cody, 1987.

[6] A further reason for refusing to radically alter one's name may have come from an act of personal defiance, publicly decreeing to all who would hear their true lineage and right to live in freedom.

[7] For a detailed discussion of the sociohistorical intersection between racial classification and the US colonial legal system, see Laversuch, 2005.

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