

the responsibility of advancement on the individual's ability to work. Job training and cash payments such as the EITC are based on working and less on the income gap between what one needs to survive and what one currently is earning. While the author does imply this may not be the correct method, the exposition is not heavy handed. The reader is left to ponder the question and no doubt there are arguments for both methods. Most economists would acknowledge the disincentives created by early welfare programs. This book, importantly, asks the question of how we balance the disincentives of traditional welfare programs with the uncertainty of the current workfare system. The author notes the particularly poor timing of the shift to the workfare model as the stability of the labor market became more tenuous. This book is an excellent contribution to the literature and understanding of the American welfare/workfare state.

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The Color Factor: The Economics of African-American Well-Being in the Nineteenth-Century South. By Howard Bodenhorn. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xiv, 320. \$39.95, cloth.
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In *The Color Factor*, Howard Bodenhorn ventures where most economic historians and many others have preferred not to tread: skin color within the African-American population. His core proposition is that during the era of slavery, mixed-race status was more fully and explicitly acknowledged and recorded than has been appreciated, so that the later emergence of the "one-drop-rule" as the American standard constituted a "fundamental shift" of prevailing practice (p. 33). Furthermore, this salience had economic consequences, because "relative to dark-skinned African-Americans, light-skinned, mixed-race men and women achieved higher levels of economic well-being in nearly all measureable dimensions" (p. 2).

Consolidating 17 years of research on this topic, Bodenhorn presents an impressive amount of quantitative evidence, drawn from a diverse range of historical sources: the Virginia and Maryland Free Negro and Mulatto Registries (the documents that first piqued his interest); federal manuscript census returns for several southern cities; Virginia Tax Records; IPUMS samples for 1850 and 1860; advertisements for runaway slaves; and Freedmen's Bureau registries of marriage and marriage certificates. Remarkably, all of these documents include mixed-race categories, often with additional detail on skin color, thus supporting the author's principal argument. The book deploys this diverse material to examine relative access to freedom, occupations, marriage, wealth, education, height, and mortality, typically presenting three-way comparisons for white, black, and mixed-race individuals and families.

The body of supporting evidence is indeed impressive, but assessing it as a whole suggests that the author's more sweeping generalizations are somewhat overstated. For example, although the Virginia and Maryland registries suggest that free mixed-race men and women were taller than free blacks (by about one-half inch), the 1860 census of mortality manuscripts do not show any systematic difference on the basis of color (pp. 184–85). The largest gaps in infant mortality were between slaves and free persons

of any type. This finding is significant because, in contrast to Brazil, the great majority of mixed-race persons in the United States were in fact slaves. Within slavery, the occupational advantage of the lighter-skinned was modest at best (pp. 64–66). This evidence seems to contradict the statement that “mixed-race people were considered more white than black and were treated as such” (p. 35). On balance, however, Bodenhorn’s conclusions are judicious, and the presentation of quantitative materials is sufficiently thorough and clear (including more than 60 pages of appendices) that readers may make their own assessments.

Consigning much technical material to appendices makes the main text of *The Color Factor* accessible to a wide readership of historians and students of race. Many of these potential readers may be turned away, however, by the author’s repeated self-identification with an “economic” approach to nearly all of the behaviors under scrutiny, defined in terms of exogenously-determined preferences and rational cost-minimizing actions towards well-defined goals (pp. 56–57). Often this formulation seems unnecessarily provocative, as in its application to inter-racial sex on plantations, where the one inference drawn is a positive association between plantation size and the presence of at least one mixed-race infant (pp. 59–62). Since the presence of any random trait will be positively related to population size, this exercise hardly constitutes “testing the economic approach.” To be clear: Bodenhorn is by no means an economic hard-liner. Most of the time he follows his own dictum that “it is better not to claim more than theory and observation reveal” (p. 187).

On one specific issue, however, Bodenhorn really does intend to promote a rational-choice interpretation, namely his suggestion that mixed-race slaves were often in better position to *negotiate* for their freedom than were ordinary field hands (p. 51). Those who were skilled or had experience as domestics could offer “good behavior and diligent service” in exchange for freedom on an agreed date in the future. Although the credibility of such bargains was obviously questionable, Bodenhorn points to two antebellum court decisions that upheld the rights of slaves in such cases (pp. 79–80). It is undeniable that mixed-race individuals were over-represented in manumissions, a fair (but unknown) share of which represented the offspring of the owner himself—a consideration that surely must have influenced the bargaining relationship. Bodenhorn acknowledges that manumissions of any type were far less common in the American South than in other slave systems (p. 80), but he nonetheless argues that for the favored mixed-race few, self-purchase or negotiating freedom was a more attractive option than running away. Although mixed-race slaves were also overrepresented among runaways (as inferred from advertisements), Bodenhorn concludes: “The path to freedom was trod at least as often by negotiators as by fugitives” (p. 96). It will be interesting to see how this comparison plays out in relationship to the runaway study now underway by Jeremiah Dittmar and Suresh Naidu.

One important question deserves more sustained attention that it receives here: If the shift from multi-raciality to the one-drop rule was so fundamental, why and how did it happen? Although the phrase “Nineteenth-Century South” appears in the book’s subtitle, virtually all of the empirical analysis pertains to the slavery era, the postbellum transition relegated to an interesting but hasty Epilogue. Bodenhorn notes that color continued to matter within the African-American community, but because it mattered less to outsiders, “whites just forgot” (p. 189). This formulation does not quite seem adequate. One suggestive graph compares the relative frequency of the terms “mulatto”

and “miscegenation” in American English between 1800 and 2012, showing that the latter term (coined only in 1863) largely eclipsed the former by the early twentieth century (p. 190). To this reader, the graph raises the possibility that the institution of slavery itself may have played an essential role in maintaining the racial differentiation so clearly documented here. That this transition question now seems pressing is testimony to the rich historical harvest offered in *The Color Factor*.

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Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South. By Talitha L. LeFlouria. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. xi, 257. \$39.95, cloth.
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In *Chained in Silence*, Talitha LeFlouria offers a rich and vibrant study of women ensnared in Georgia’s convict labor system from the end of the Civil War through WWI. She seeks to address two weaknesses in the historiography of southern prison, labor, and gender studies. First, she chides historians of convict labor for paying scant attention to woman prisoners, though she warmly praises and builds on Mary Ellen Curtin for her work on the role that black women played in Alabama’s penal regime. Second, she urges scholars of black working class women to expand their canvas. While acknowledging that “wage-earning poor black women” found work primarily in domestic and agricultural labor, she underscores the significance of “unwaged, bound black female labor” (pp. 5–6, 64). In Georgia, unlike Alabama where the State’s prison officials and convict lessees observed “gender norms,” convict lessees employed these women in industrial labor, often working them alongside male prisoners. Women prisoners in Georgia could be found laboring in logging, brickyards, saw mills, along railroad tracks, in broom manufactories, and in the coal mines (though the evidence for this industry is less clear) (p.76). Convict lessees, LeFlouria notes, hired prisoners out of economic expediency and had no qualms about exploiting these women as “non-gender exclusive” labor. In one Georgia camp, black women prisoners “plowed fields, sowed crops, paddled through rivers of cotton, felled trees, sawed lumber, ran gristmills, ginned cotton, forged iron, cooked meals, cleaned camp quarters, and washed their faded strips” (p. 12).

By locating women in these wide-ranging forms of labor, LeFlouria comes to her central argument—these women were at the center of the modernizing postbellum New South. She describes these women as “modernizing instruments” and underscores the New South’s march towards “modernity.” In making this argument, LeFlouria is at pains to distinguish Georgia’s management of its prisoners from the exigencies of slavery. Unlike slave owners, neither Georgia’s postbellum governments nor its various convict lessees had any interest in having the prison labor force grow in number through childbirth. Some women gave birth while in prison, but that rationale of convict labor meant that lessees provided scant accommodations to pregnant women. They were treated mercilessly and exploited horribly. The convict lessees “reviled” maternity. Pregnancy diminished the value of these women as workers, rather than enhance their value (p. 190).