

Extra-Marital Mating Patterns in Caribbean Family Studies: A Methodological Excursus

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RÉSUMÉ

Ce texte traite de deux problèmes reliés aux recherches socio-anthropologiques dans les Caraïbes. D'abord, il met en doute certains des postulats qui ont conduit à des conclusions sur les «causes» de formes maritales trouvées dans certains secteurs de la société caraïbe. Dans ces conclusions on assume que les autres segments de la société ont d'autres formes maritales sans avoir vraiment vérifiée cette hypothèse. En second lieu, le texte conteste les méthodes de recherche utilisées: on devrait utiliser davantage du matériel d'archives.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to fill in some theoretical and methodological gaps in socio-anthropological studies of mating patterns and family structures in Caribbean societies in the hope that the discussion will lead to a re-assessment of the conventional theoretical perspectives often advanced to explain contemporary marital practices and extra-marital births in the region.

The paper questions some of the major theoretical assumptions that have generally formed the bases for research, as well as conclusions, in respect to "causal factors" for the mating patterns and other sexual practices among certain segments of Caribbean societies. The paper questions whether the incidence of "illegitimate" births can be adequately understood solely from the perspectives of "maternity" without a consideration of "paternity" and its social

and ethnic correlates. Pre-marital sexual practices and mating patterns do not only involve dyadic relationships between individual males and females, they also implicate the general societal ethical/value system within which such behaviours occur (Manyoni 1977: 418; Mintz & Price 1976: 14-15; R. T. Smith 1971: 463).

Most research on "family structures" among Caribbean societies has so far been sectionally oriented. This raises the question, whether the resultant conclusions drawn from such narrowly focused approaches can be epistemologically valid as *reflections of a given Caribbean society, qua society, without comparable research being also conducted among other segments of the same society.*

A number of Caribbeanists have recently indicated an awareness of this shortcoming. Vera Green (1973: 17) has aptly pointed out that 'there are few studies of the Caribbean which cover existing variations between rural and urban sectors, and between the various classes and racial groups'. Green further notes that the bulk of the studies have 'concentrated primarily on the Negroid elements of the population in areas where class and ethnic heterogeneity is [sic] often obvious' (*ibid.*). (See also Rubin, 1960: 119-120; Mintz, 1965; Hoetink, 1967; M. G. Smith, 1965.

Similarly, Raymond T. Smith (1971: 471) has complained that previous work on the study of Caribbean family structure raises 'a host of general theoretical problems' than are answered. I suggest that one of these "problems" is *methodological*, and entails serious implications not only for theoretical issues, but also for analytical conclusions derived therefrom. The 'host of general theoretical problems' that Smith suggests, can at once be specified as: marital attitudes, patterns and practices; extra-marital sexuality; pre-marital births (the legitimacy-illegitimacy dichotomy) and the historical factors influencing the evolution of these behaviours (Manyoni 1977: 417-427). The historical factors ineluctably loom pre-eminently in any consideration of socio-anthropological problems posed by contemporary mating patterns in Caribbean societies.

It is the thesis of this paper that present-day sexual attitudes, behaviour and mating patterns, family structures and value systems among West Indian societies are a consequence of the historical forces deriving from the pervasive socio-economic plantation system of the 17th to the 19th centuries. By "plantation socio-economic

system", I mean the *total* social structure encompassing all the component groups of white, coloured, and black segments; and masters, servants and slaves whose relations were shaped by, and dependent upon, the plantation productive enterprise. These segmental relations were neither random nor by chance, but were structurally regulated by legal prescriptions and customary conventions. I propose to show how the patterns of sexual behaviour, mating habits, and extra-marital births traditionally associated with the slave and former slave sector in the Caribbean are inextricably bound up with the *value system shared by the whole society* in which these manifestations are evident.

The paper is thus by implication a critique of the "African derivation thesis" which attempts to account for the prevailing mating patterns and family structures among Afro-Caribbean peoples by ontological reference to their African origins (vide Herskovits & Herskovits, 1947: 287-317. See also M. G. Smith, 1954: 17-21 for a critical discussion of this issue). This leads to the methodological concerns of this paper which question the adequacy of field-research methods and techniques conventionally employed in Caribbean socio-anthropological studies.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Much of the research conducted in the Caribbean region has been by means of the traditional "survey/interview" method, or "selected case-study" method. Few studies have utilized the extensive archival data readily available in local and metropolitan depositories. Even where analysts employ sophisticated statistical data to support their assumptions about marital patterns, they fail to utilize the most reliable of such statistics — the official Registers of Marriages and Births which furnish all the vital information about the parties concerned, e.g. age, occupation, civil status, religion, number and status of babies born. Such data tell us more about the actual state of affairs than survey data collected by the researcher from respondents who, more often than not, state *normatively expected* behaviour or the ideal form of marital practice (vide R. T. Smith, 1956: 259).

What we need to do is to separate pre-marital sexuality and child birth from common-law co-habitation. Two different aspects

of the mating problem are involved here — the one relating to *sexual* behaviour and the other to *marital* behaviour. There is no necessary connection between the two forms of behaviours even though they may be related sequentially. Several writers (Henriques, 1953; Simey, 1946; Kerr, 1952; Goode, 1960; 1961; Rodman, 1971) have attempted to link these behaviours to what they term “lower-class normative system”. Blake, (1961: 110-114) questions the validity of the “normative explanation” and shows that the protagonists of the “lower-class normative system” — even by the evidence of their own data — fail to support their claims that ‘the loose association of concubinage is preferred by many women’ among this sector. The explanation, Blake suggests, should be sought in structural factors such as economic and historical factors, sex-ratio and lack of pressure on men to marry. Similarly, de Vaal Malefijt & Hellerman (1973: 118-119) hold that the dual system of mating is perpetuated and maintained by cultural factors such as values and attitudes toward males and females, and the economic dependence of females and children. Greenfield (1973: 44) also settles for the “structural” explanation to account for the variation in domestic patterns prevailing in the Caribbean region.

The “African cultural origins” thesis advanced by some Caribbeanists has not provided a fuller and satisfactory explanation as to why the alleged cultural traits could have survived transplantation and slavery, and why they persist in contemporary Caribbean societies. The “African genesis” explanation ignores three fundamental facts pertaining to Caribbean societies — the cultural variability among the enslaved imported African populations; the “structural ethos” of plantation slave society; and the historical conditions under which mating patterns and marital regulations developed.

It is the argument of this paper that all these factors are fairly well documented in a number of primary sources in local and metropolitan archives to provide adequate and reliable bases for an explanatory analysis of contemporary practices. Later on in the paper I provide detailed analysis based on such documentary evidence and statistical data from various official sources covering more than three centuries¹.

¹ The documents examined include calendared entries of State Papers from 1630 covering the entire slavery period; Parliamentary Papers relating to slave colonies

In the English-speaking Caribbean, there are no socio-anthropological studies comparable to a recent work on Hispanic 19th century Cuba relating to the study of racial attitudes, sexual values, marriage, class and colour in a slave society done by Verena Martinez-Alier (1974). The work is a fine demonstration of the utility of the documentary method in socio-anthropological research in these societies.

Martinez-Alier has utilized extensive documentation of marriage cases provided in the files of administrative and judicial proceedings in cases where parents opposed a given marriage on grounds of deviation from the normative system as perceived by 19th century Cuban society. In her analysis of the marriage pattern, ideal normative behaviour and deviation therefrom, she shows through extensive documentation how Cuban 'racial perception was a direct consequence of the degree to which slavery and its exigencies had affected the *total social structure*' (1973: 2. Italics added). Thus the norms established by the dominant sector pervaded all sectors of the society so that 'At every point a coloured person whether slave or free, was forced to shape his behaviour in accordance with the actions and expectations of *the dominant white sector, who, in turn also had to adjust to the presence of the non-whites*' (*ibid.* Italics added). The work is studded with unassailable documentary evidence reflecting the dominant attitudes and concomitant behaviour current at the time.

The present paper aims to show how a diligent utilization of archival materials may contribute to a more reliable explanation of the origins of some contemporary practices among the Afro-Caribbean segment. The material also throws light on the attitudes and practices that were current among the rest of the society, as well as on the degree to which the political and religious establishments were implicated in the persistence of these practices. It is not intended to suggest that some of the historical factors, e.g. African origin, slavery, race and class — were by themselves deterministic in the continuance of contemporary behaviours. Rather the view

which include "Returns" of valuable statistical data and "Reports" on slavery conditions in the West India plantations; Records of church correspondence relating to slavery and christianization; Parochial Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials; Registers of Births, Marriages and Divorces; Blue Books (Colonial Reports); Census Returns; Legitimacy Registers, and Royal Commissions of Inquiry Proceedings and Reports.

advanced here is that they were all jointly influential in shaping the societal ethos that subsequently developed among the respective Caribbean societies with regard to mating patterns and pre-marital sexuality.

Several Caribbeanists have questioned the adequacy of explanations based on the first two factors — African origin and slavery (i.e. the cultural and economic determinants), and have pointed out that while these factors may have been a *necessary* condition for the emergence of certain forms of mating behaviours, they are not a *sufficient cause* for their persistence (see R. T. Smith, 1957, 1971; Solien, 1960; Sherlock, 1966; Schlesinger, 1968a, 1968b; Mac Donald & Mac Donald, 1973; Green, 1973; Manyoni, 1977). I would like to focus on the thesis advanced by the MacDonalDs to show that even where the authors are correct in rejecting cultural and economic determinism implied in African genesis and slavery, they fail to adduce the sort of documentary evidence (advocated here) that would buttress their alternative explanation (the ethnic family ideology). The MacDonalDs rightly argue that ‘West Indian matri-focality cannot be derived simply from West African matrilinearity [sic] because many of the West African people were patrilineal...’ (1973: 192). However, the MacDonalDs fail to adduce the necessary historical data to explain their argument that ‘the contemporary Negro family-household is not just a carry-over from institutions imposed by slavery and plantation labor’ (1973: 188).

To be sure, matrifocality in Caribbean family and/or household patterns derives less from African genesis than from locally imposed conditions under slavery, which in the course of time became a legally enforced prescription at least in some islands. For example, the Prevention of Bastardy Act No. 666 of March 1838 passed in Barbados² ensured the *continuance of the matrifocal system* after Emancipation. It stipulated that children born out of wedlock were to “follow the settlement of their mother and be maintained by her until 16 years of age. If the mother marries then the husband will be responsible for all the children illegitimate or not’. As the historical record on marital patterns, mating behaviours and pre- and extra-marital births clearly shows, and contemporary

² See Clauses 7 and 8. The full title of the legislation is ‘An Act for the Government and better Ordering of the Poor in this Island and the Prevention of Bastardy’, *Parliamentary Papers: Justice in the West Indies*, Vol. 15, 1825.

research affirms, it requires no great sociological imagination to see that the majority of households will at any time consist mainly of mother-centred domestic units. Almost a century later the practice was further supplemented by the passage of the Legitimacy Act No. No. 3 of 1930, which made legal provision for the incorporation of a woman's (occasionally a man's) "illegitimate" children into a subsequent marital house.³ It is also clear from the record of contemporary practices during slavery that *the domestic unit always consisted of a mother and her children irrespective of who their genitor(s) or father(s) may be*. It should be noted that the genitor of any given black or coloured woman's children could be another slave (black or coloured), or a white servant or a white master, but it made no difference in the domestic affiliation of the progeny.⁴ The only man with the right to exercise *patria potestas* over such mother-centred units was the white master, (M. G. Smith, 1965: 108).

M. G. Smith (1965: 31) has rightly warned that it is 'unsatisfactory to attribute peculiar New World Negro family types to "historic conditions of slavery" without making a far more detailed comparative analysis of these than has yet been attempted'. In the almost one decade and a half since this caveat was sounded, none of the studies done during this period has attempted to utilize the record of those "historic conditions" (as distinct from mutual citations of "collegial" published sources) to make such comparative analysis or even on a local basis.⁵ It seems to me quite nonsensical for a contemporary researcher to assert, without palpable documentary evidence, that 'Sexual promiscuity was a means whereby the slave could experience a moment of pleasure as well as defy the authority and wishes of his master. Because men greatly outnum-

³ The Act came into force on July 1, 1931. *Laws of Barbados Vol. V. 1928/5 — 1942/8*, Bridgetown, 1944.

⁴ Convincing evidence of this practice may be gleaned from a contemporary record of a Barbados parish (1793-1825) on the 'children of Martha Luke, a Xtian Slave belonging to Mrs. Mary Gibbes (St. James) baptized on 13 May 1794', and gives a list of 8 children born between 7 December 1775 and 25 February 1794, most probably sired by the Master. — Register of Baptism: Coloured People, St. James, 15 April 1793 — 10 December 1825 P. 806, BDA.

⁵ See for example recent studies in: Lambros Comitas, *The Complete Caribbeana* 1900-1975 Vol. 1, Chapters 8 and 9, New York, KTO Press, 1977; and the recent Essay by Sidney W. Mintz & Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective*, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia, 1976.

bered women there was no opportunity for them to pair off in a "natural" manner. Thus sex became a heightened form of recreation and play' (Erickson 1962: 110). The author adduces no concrete evidence either from local conditions or on a comparative scale to corroborate both the moral allegation and the demographic assertion. Comparative census data and other statistical evidence on sex ratios in Caribbean populations would tend to contradict Erickson's assertions. As early as the 1670's the sex ratio was already in favour of females as Table 1 shows.

I shall now want to discuss the relationship between the evolution of mating patterns, marital prescriptions and extra-marital sexual behaviour on the one hand, and the "normative thesis", on the other. The literature on the subject has been well summarized and annotated by Schlesinger (1968a, 1968b), and I shall here focus on the documents hitherto unincorporated in any of the published sources. The "normative" argument appears to me to be inextricably linked with the development of all those aspects of plantation society which constitute its social ethos, that is to say, socio-economic status, relations of production, race, colour and religious orientation. From almost the inception of the plantation slave system, two fundamental moral issues consistently dogged the slave holding regimes — christianization of the slaves and recognition of slave marital status.⁶ Much of the social fibre and mores of Caribbean slave societies for almost 200 years became enmeshed by these two issues, and the "normative system" that subsequently developed affected *all segments* of the society.

MATING PATTERNS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The historical record relating to mating patterns under the plantation slavery system indicates that formal marriage was primarily a prerogative of the upper- and middle-class white minority. However, the formal institution of marriage existed concomitantly

⁶ The moral dilemma slavery posed for the planter regimes is attested to by the long list of exchanges of correspondence, regarding the civil status of the slave, between local planter interests and metropolitan authorities from the mid-17th century to the very end of slavery. Details are contained in various calendared *State Papers* and from Colonial Office Records. Valuable information is available on SPG correspondence with their Barbados Codrington Plantations in: Bennett (1958) and Klingberg (1938).

TABLE I
Population of Barbados 1673

<i>Complexion</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Whites	12,874	8,435	21,109
Blacks	15,063	17,121	32,184

SOURCE: Compiled from information furnished by the Council of Barbados to the Council for Trade, May 28, 1673 — *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1669-1674*, No. 1101. See also Ligon 1673: 46-47.

NOTE: Two centuries later The Barbadian Legislature felt proud to report that 'in this Island, ... for many years the sexes have been pretty nearly equal, or if there has been any difference, the female sex has preponderated...'. *House of Assembly Debates, Barbados, 1816-1818*, p. 496. BDA.

with the system of concubinage which was widely practised by all sectors of the society. Thus, concubinage as a system of mating and domestic arrangements became sufficiently pervasive to be a socially, if implicitly, acceptable manner of procreation outside formal wedlock. The pervasiveness of these behaviours has been noted by many contemporary observers during the 18th and 19th centuries (Dickson, 1789: 92-93; Southey, 1827: 198; Thome and Kimball, 1838: 76; Schomburgk, 1848: 88-90; Sewell, 1862: 68-70; Davy, 1854: 78-79, 93; Caldecott, 1898: 37-39).

The lowest ranks of the population, the blacks, were in all slave societies considered *outside* the formal institution of legal matrimony. In this respect, both State and Church⁷ shared a strong disapproval of slave marriages, a situation that continued unmitigated until the eve of emancipation. From about the mid-17th century, West Indian planter / legislators had persistently objected against metropolitan attempts to extend christianization to their slaves, and consequent recognition of their matrimonial rights. Barbadian planters, for example, had addressed memorandum after

⁷ The failure of the (Established) Church to stand up to the iniquities of the slavery system is well documented to raise any doubts about its role. It should be recalled that the Church of England was itself a substantive slave-owning institution in Barbados — see Frank J. Klingberg, "British Humanitarianism at Codrington", *Journal of Negro History* 23, 1938 pp. 451-486; and J. Harry Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838*, 1958.

memorandum to the Council of Trade and Plantations in London expressing fears that the conversion of the slaves would 'destroy their property, [and] endanger the island, inasmuch as converted negroes grow more perverse and intractable than others, and hence of less value for labour or sale' (*Calendar of State Papers: Colonies, 1677-1680, No. 1535*). In addition, to supplement a law of 21 September 1676 passed specifically to prevent Quakers from having 'Negroes at their meetings... and to have negroes as hearers of their doctrine and taught in their principles, whereby the safety of the island may be hazarded', the Barbadian legislature urged informants to report on Quakers bringing negroes to their meetings.⁸ The slaves were considered 'a sort of people so averse to learning that they will rather hang themselves or run away than submit to it. Conversion will impair their value and price, and injure not only the Planters but the African Company...'⁹

Similar opinions were expressed by planters in other slave territories. Judicial and ecclesiastical arguments were brought to bear on the issue. Writing from Nassau (Bahamas) Attorney-General William Wylly, gave as a legal opinion that '...from the very nature of slavery, it is evident that no slave can enter into a valid contract. It follows, that a marriage between a slave and a free person is a mere nullity. But the consent of the owner would materially alter the case; and... may probably be considered as amounting to an emancipation'.¹⁰ Taking the opposite view, the Reverend Dr. John Stephen of Nassau, addressed a lengthy exposé on the subject to Governor Charles Cameron in May 1816, and part of his thesis deserves generous quotation. Stephen raises basically two questions: 'Whether the marriage of slaves is, or is not, conformable to the principles of our laws? And, whether a slave, if married with his master's consent, could, on proof of that circumstance, ground a claim for his liberty?' After attesting to the beneficent consequences of legal matrimony, Stephen questions whether the suggested alternative by the planters and the state

⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonies: America and the West Indies, 1677-1680*, October 10, 1680 No. 1535; and *Journal of Assembly of Barbados*, July 10, 1677 in *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680* No. 319.

⁹ *Assembly of Barbados to Board of Trade and Plantations*, March 30, 1681, *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1681-1685* No. 59.

¹⁰ Wylly to Governor Charles Cameron, January 26th, 1814, *British Parliamentary Papers: Slavery and the West Indies 1818-1823*, Correspondence — Marriage of Slaves, p. 218.

would in any respect restrain the slaves from 'the most licentious and illicit intercourse with one another...' because of, *inter alia*, 'the prevalence of bad example [which] may prompt or impel them'. The suggestion made was that 'every benefit of lawful marriage may be secured, and all the evils of promiscuous intercourse between the sexes prevented among that class of people, by encouraging them, and perhaps obliging them, to live in a state of concubinage, or of cohabitation without marriage...' Stephen then alludes to the very ambiguity of plantation slave society. 'But indeed the very mention of cohabitation as a substitute for marriage, is a plain admission that marriage... is indispensably necessary to the happiness of society. Why, then, that union should be denied the same sanction of law, and the same privileges, in one class of people, that it receives in another, it would be difficult to explain on principles of right reason...' ¹¹

In Barbados, the planter / legislators when urged by the metropolitan authorities to extend christianization to the slaves, voiced their objections in no uncertain terms: 'We are ready to do anything for the encouragement and good usage of Christian servants, but as to making negroes Christians, their savage brutishness renders them wholly incapable'.¹² The frequency of these objections prompted the Lord Bishop of London in 1680 to formally advise the Council of Trade and Plantations at Whitehall that there were no grounds for the 'apprehensions of the planters that the conversion of slaves may deprive the owners of their present power and disposal of [the slaves]'.¹³ The principle of religious freedom and civil rights proved to be incompatible with the institution of slavery. Metropolitan intentions and colonial opinion continued to differ radically in respect to the exercise of civil rights including religion and marriage among the slaves. In their "Instructions of Commission to Sir Jonathan Atkins" as Governor of Barbados in 1673, the Lords of Trade and Plantations had stipulated: 'That persons of different opinions in religion may not receive any discouragement;... and in

¹¹ Stephen to Cameron, May 2nd, 1816, enclosed in Cameron to Earl Bathurst, July 12th, 1816, *Brit. Parl. Papers... 1818-1823*, pp. 217-227.

¹² *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1681-1685*, No. 59, Assembly of Barbados in reply to Governor Dutton's speech.

¹³ Bishop of London memo to Council of Trade and Plantations, August 28, 1680, *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680*, No. 1488; Also *op. cit.* No. 1563, October 30, 1680, Instructions to Sir Richard Dutton.

no case to suffer any man to be molested in the exercise of his religion'.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Governor Atkins and his Council of Barbados went ahead and passed a severely restrictive law aimed specifically at the Quakers, and the reasons are not hard to find. On submitting the new Act to the London authorities, Atkins sent along an explanatory letter which made no secret of the real motives of the Barbadian planter/legislators. 'The Act made expressly against the Quakers seems severe', Atkins informed their Lordship, 'but it is necessary [for]... they drew hundreds of Negroes to their meetings', a situation which if not checked, 'might have brought... the ruin of the place'.¹⁵ The original Act No. 64 of 1676 deploring the fact that 'many Negroes have been suffered to remain at the meeting of Quakers as hearers of their Doctrine and taught in their Principles' was further strengthened 'with additional and very severe clauses' by Act No. 69 of 1678, and 'made perpetual by No. 71, passed in 1681'.¹⁶ The authorities at Whitehall tacitly acquiesced to this flagrant disregard of their injunction to Atkins, no doubt to avoid any conflict likely to interfere with the smooth operation of plantation trade.¹⁷

I have already suggested that the explanation for the irregular mating patterns among especially the black slaves may be found in the prevailing attitude and practices of both the civil and religious authorities of the time. There is sufficient documentary evidence that both authorities connived to deny legal matrimony and/or to recognize marriage bonds between slaves. One of the most illuminating pieces of evidence is contained in a lengthy formal communication from Beilby Porteus, then Lord Bishop of London, to the West Indian planter interests dated 2nd April, 1788.¹⁸ The

¹⁴ Lords of Trade and Plantations to Sir Jonathan Atkins, December 19, 1673, *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1669-1674*, No. 1186.

¹⁵ Sir Jonathan Atkins to Lords of Trade and Plantations, January 31, 1678, *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680*, No. 592.

¹⁶ Lucas MS volumes, Barbados Public Library, Bridgetown, pp. 392-393. See also *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680*, No. 661, April 16, 1678. *Journ. of Assembly of Barbados*.

¹⁷ This is verified by a Minute of a Council of Trade and Plantations' meeting of October 8, 1680: 'Their Lordships think it best to leave the Governor, Council and Assembly [of Barbados] to find out the best means for converting the negroes without injury or danger to property...' — *Journal of the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680*, No. 1535.

¹⁸ "A Letter to the Clergy of the West India Islands, 2nd April, 1788." (15 pp. printed), Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

letter reveals all the ambiguities of the slave's status in the eyes of the Church, and the ambivalence of the authorities towards him.

The first [matter] of importance is, the instruction of the Negro Slaves in the principles of morality and Religion, compassion, justice, Christian charity, evidently require this kind of office at our hands, towards those who, though they are of a different colour, are of the same nature with ourselves; created by the same God, descended of the same common parents, ...and equally entitled to the benefits and promises of that Gospel which was intended to bring salvation to all men, and by the express command of its divine Author, was to be preached to every creature (p. 4).

In order to allay possible planter fears liable to result from such apparently "revolutionary" ideas, Porteus adds an important assurance designed to convince the planters that the Church was not about to overturn the *status quo* of plantation society.

The Gospel enjoins everyone to be content with that state of life to which it hath pleased God to call him; to be faithful, honest, sober, and diligent in business. It enjoins servants of all kinds, and Slaves among the rest, to be obedient to their masters, and to please them well in all things; with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not men. [Negroes were to be] carefully instructed in these duties, and... taught to perform them under pain of God's displeasure and future punishment (p. 6).

In his second "Letter to the Governors, Legislatures and Proprietors of Plantations in the British West India Islands", of January 1, 1808,¹⁹ Porteus expresses considerable concern about what he calls 'the promiscuous and unbounded illicit commerce of the two sexes, in which the Negro Slaves are permitted to indulge themselves without any check or restraint'. But the Bishop's main concern is for 'the increase by births of the native Negroes... sufficient to keep up that stock of Negroes which the cultivation of the islands requires' (p. 6). There is little doubt that what Porteus is advocating is not the amelioration of the slave condition but a more efficient and assured continuation of slavery under Christian conditions. His Lordship claims, that if his plan for the 'conversion of Negro youth' is adopted, then 'The planters will in a few years *at a very trivial expense* to the Proprietors raise up a race of Christian Negroes, who will amply repay their kindness by the increase of their population, by their fidelity, their industry, their honesty, their sobriety, their humility, submission, and obedience to their masters, all of which virtues are most strictly enjoined, under pain of

¹⁹ The Letter is dated January 1st, 1808, (25 pp. printed), Rhodes House Library, Oxford.

punishment by divine religion in which they will have been educated' (pp. 13-14, italics original).

Earlier I suggested that christianization, education and marriage for the slaves were three closely intertwined problematic issues that encumbered the planter regimes throughout slavery. Porteus took full account of the longstanding fears of the planters 'that it will be extremely dangerous to give them [the slaves] this qualification [to read]; because it will enable them to read newspapers and pamphlets, filled with the most pernicious doctrines, hostile to all good government, and incite them to insurrection, rebellion, and disobedience to their masters.' (p. 19). To assure the skeptical and intransigent planters, Porteus stresses that 'there is no intention of teaching the Negro children to *write* but only to *read*; which will always be a strong mark of discrimination, as wall of partition, between them and the white inhabitants; will always preserve a proper distinction and subordination between them and their superiors, and present an insurmountable barrier against their approaching to anything like an equality with their masters' (pp. 21-22, italics original).²⁰ Porteus then supports his contentions by citing St. Paul's injunctions to the various congregations of Ephesus (vi: 6), Colossus (I, iii: 22), and I Peter iii: 8 regarding the duties of servants to masters (p. 24). Porteus ends his Letter with the ominous comment that the planters 'have obtained the most absolute dominion' over 'both body and soul' of the slave (p. 25).

Apart from the policy of keeping the institution of marriage out of reach of the slaves during the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, it would appear that Barbadian authorities had problems also with regulating marriage practices among the white sector of plantation society. It could be inferred from the language of a law of 1st October, 1734, entitled "An Act for Preventing Clandestine Marriages", that the matrimonial habits of the population were far from satisfactory. The Act was necessitated by a concern that 'divers marriages have been clandestinely consummated in this Island, without knowledge, consent or approbation of parents and other relations, and often to the utter ruin of the

²⁰ About 158 years earlier that astute observer of 17th century Barbadian slavery, Richard Ligon (1673: 50) noted that the planter opposition to the christianization of the blacks was a device for maintaining rigid social distinctions among the various status groups in plantation society. See also *ibid* pp. 52-53.

persons thereby running themselves into unsuitable matches'. The Act acknowledges that 'It has been customary and usual here to marry in private houses, and not in the Churches' and further forbade on pain of heavy fines any 'master, mistress or owner of any house' to permit any clandestine marriage 'to be celebrated in his or her house, or in any backside yard, garden or other place belonging thereto'.²¹

Many observers during the 18th to the 20th centuries noted the prevalence of "loose" unions or concubinage among all sections of the plantation society. 'Many [whites], William Dickson had observed during thirteen years of residence in Barbados, 'are not ashamed to live in such habits of intimacy with the female domestic slave...' (1789: 92-93). Similar observations were recorded by Bishop Caldecott (1898: 37-39) who says that the majority of white men 'consorted with the Negro women without restraint, either from their own corrupted consciences or from public opinion', and that when coloured concubines adopted christianity, 'their renunciation of base connections gave the greatest offence to the white community'. Caldecott is of the view that family life in Barbados was retained only among the upper rank, 'and even with them it was too frequently married... by the presence within the house itself of coloured "mistresses" and their offspring'.

Fifty years earlier, Sturge and Harvey (1838: 142, 148) had noted that while 'concubinage is now considered discreditable, and marriages are now fast increasing among the coloured and black population' (p. 142); it was the whites who complained of 'the change which had taken place in the sentiments of the coloured people, and the presumption of the coloured female in aspiring to marriage' (p. 148). Sewell (1862: 68) reports finding intercolour loose sexual unions being 'very general, and illicit intercourse... sanctioned, or at least winked at, by a society which utterly

²¹ Act No. 26, 1734: *Laws of Barbados Vol. 1, 1648-1858*, London 1875, pp. 26-27. As early as 1676 Governor Atkins had informed the London authorities that: 'As to marriages, for seven years past [he] finds no rule to guide him, or any living [person] to inform him, all who conform to the Church of England are either married by license or asked three times in Church...', Atkins to Lords of Trade and Plantations, July 4-14, 1676, *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1675-1676*, No. 973. See also Council of Trade and Plantations to Sir Richard Dutton, October 30, 1680 (regarding their Lordships' concern for the prevalence of incestuous marriages among the white population) — *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1677-1680*, No. 1563; *quod vide* No. 1488, August 28, 1680.

condemns and abhors a marriage between two people of different color'. These mating behaviours were part of the general ethos of plantation slave society which continued beyond the termination of the slave-based socio-economic organization. As Thome and Kimball (1838: 76) noted, 'colored ladies have been taught to believe that it was more honorable, and quite virtuous to be the kept mistresses of *white gentlemen*, than the lawfully wedded wives of *colored men*' (italics original). Thus the documented historical record makes it abundantly clear that we cannot begin to provide adequate explanation for what is now considered the sociological problem of contemporary mating behaviour and family forms among the so-called lower-class black West Indian sector, without due consideration of the prevailing ethos of the total society as the context of behaviour.

CASE STUDIES: BARBADOS AND OTHER SLAVE COLONIES

In Barbados for almost two centuries, the planter-dominated legislature had doggedly fought against the principle of christianization of the slaves for economic, social and security reasons. Slave christianization (baptism) and marriage were deemed incompatible with the economics of plantation slavery and any effort to alter this relationship was construed as tantamount to "destruction of property". This chattelization of the blacks had been assured by the Acts No. 82, August 8, 1688, "for the governing of Negroes", and that of 29 January, 1674, which declared 'slaves to be "Real Estate" and absolute property of their owners'.²² Security reasons were often cited as justification for denying both education and baptism for the slaves. In their petition to the Board of Trade and Plantation on 8th October, 1680, the "Gentlemen Planters" of Barbados argued that 'the disproportion of blacks to whites being great, the whites have no greater security than the diversity of the negroes' languages, which would be destroyed by *conversion*, in that it would be necessary to teach them all English' (*Calendar of State Papers Colonies*, 1677-1680 No. 1535, Italics added).

²² *Cal. State Papers, Col. 1669-1674*, No. 1214, and Richard Hall, *Acts Passed in the Island of Barbados From 1643 to 1762*, (London, 1764), re Act No. 82 of August 8, 1688.

Apparently planter apprehensions about possible slave insurrections were dramatically confirmed by a slave rebellion of 14 April 1816 which was nipped in the bud. In the aftermath of that disturbance, the Council of Barbados staunchly defended the planters' continued opposition to the christianization of slaves on the ground of 'self preservation and security against slave insurrection motivated by misplaced Christian principles'.²³ It does not appear to have ever occurred to the slave owners that threats of insurrection may have been due to their own intransigency in ameliorating slavery conditions. Barbadian planters were absolutely convinced that they were 'humane, kind and provident' towards their slaves. They saw themselves as the victims of 'prejudices, interested views, blind fanaticism and abused by falsehood', holding that slavery 'is not condemned by Divine authority.'²⁴

Between 1818 and 1826 a continuous tug-of-war ensued between the metropolitan authorities in London and the local legislature in Barbados revolving around three issues vital to planter interests — slave marriage, baptism and emancipation. At last the Barbadian legislature conceded the principle by presenting a Bill (No. 2, 17 October 1826) designed to be 'An Act for the Encouragement of Baptisms and Marriages amongst the Slaves and for the Observance of the Lord's Day...' and passed it as Act 82, 1826. As will be seen in the provisions of this Act, the planter-legislators did not fail to provide for safeguards against the newly-permitted slave conversion from 'destroying their property'. The Act begins quite innocuously by enjoining 'all owners or possessors of Slaves, and their agents, attornies, and representatives in this Island [to] endeavour to instruct their Slaves in the principles of the Christian religion, and shall cause to be baptized by any clergyman of the established Church of England, all their Slaves hereafter to be born, and also all such of their Slaves already born, as shall be made sensible of the duties of the Christian faith' (Clause I).²⁵

²³ "Report of a Committee of the Council of Barbados to enquire on the Condition of Slaves 1824" — *West Indian Slavery: Selected Pamphlets 1816-1827*, pp. 30-31.

²⁴ *Op. cit.* pp. 11-12. See also "Report from a Select Committee of the House of Assembly appointed to enquire into the origins, causes, and progress of the late Insurrection", Bridgetown 1816.

²⁵ See *Parliamentary Papers relating to the treatment of Slaves in the West India Colonies 1827*, pp. 205-206, and *Parliamentary Papers 1826: Slave Legislative Acts 1823-1825*.

These apparently noble intentions were designed to conceal the centuries-old intransigency harboured by the planters against the very sort of action the new law purported to be changing. The first stringent proviso the Act lays down in Clause 2 is that the intending slave parties to a marriage should be 'the property of the same owner', and that the marriage be solemnized by a 'clergyman of the established church [conditional] on the said Slave's producing the consent in writing of the owner, his or her attorney, agent, or representative' authorizing its celebration.

On submission to the Colonial Office, the Act was rejected on precisely those provisions restricting freedom of marital choice. The reasons advanced by the Colonial Secretary are illuminating and deserve generous quotation:

On the subject of marriage, I regret to say that the provisions of this Act [No. 82/1826] are very defective. The consent of the owner is an indispensable [sic] condition in every case, however capricious or unjust may be his refusal. It is necessary also that the slaves to be married should be both the property of the same person. No provision is made for the very numerous cases where the same person may own one or two slaves only in his domestic service, or where from consanguinity or other causes, intermarriage between the slaves of a small gang may be impossible. Nor can it be permitted that any class of His Majesty's subjects should be deprived of the power of performing matrimonial connexions, except upon conditions which may often be revolting to the feelings, and injurious to their moral character. It is difficult also to perceive the policy of confining the right of celebrating marriages to the clergy of the Established Church, nor why other teachers of religion should be deprived of the salutary influence over the minds of the slaves which the enjoyment of this power should confer.²⁶

It was not until 1838/1839 that the Barbadian legislature at the behest of the Colonial Office came up with a comprehensive marriage law that took into account the anomalous position of the ex-slave population in the post-emancipation period. Some of the clauses which Lord Bathurst had strongly criticised in the 1826 Act were still very much evident in the 1839 Act apart from a slight tempering in the wording. The new Marriage Act No. 689 of 6 March, 1839,²⁷ among a number of other matters relating to

²⁶ Under-Secretary of State, W. Huskinson to J. B. Skeete, President of Council of Barbados, October 18, 1827, *Parliamentary Papers 1828-1829*, Vol. 76, p. 55.

²⁷ *Parliamentary Papers 1837-1841*. See also "The First Report of the Commissioners on the Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice in the West Indies" *Parliamentary Papers: Justice in the West Indies*, Vol. 15, 1825.

matrimony, provided for the recognition of slave marriages; that is, marriages which were already solemnized were to be declared valid; and that *de facto* marriages were to have retroactive effect if solemnized within one year of the passing of the Act. The declared intent of the Act was to remove 'doubts... as to the validity of certain marriages contracted and solemnized previous to the abolition of slavery between slaves, and between parties one of whom was a slave and also in some cases between free persons of colour, and since the abolition of apprenticeship, and other persons of free condition'.

Yet the so-called "doubts" existed more in the minds of the planter/legislators rather than among the people involved since these "doubts" were of the legislature's own making, issuing directly from its constant refusal to recognize the validity of slave marriages conducted by, as it bluntly declared, 'Ministers of the Christian religion, other than clergymen of the United Church of England and Ireland [the Established Church]'. This had been the case since the 1630's. However, by now the legislature had thought it 'expedient and necessary that all such doubts be removed, and such marriages and reputed marriages should be ascertained and confirmed'.

It was thus pressure from the Colonial Office rather than due to a change of heart on the part of the planters that led to the apparently uncharacteristic *volte face* in respect to recognition of non-*white* and non-*Anglican* performed marriages. The planter/legislators now appeared contrite and motivated by a concern for social justice especially where children were involved: 'Many marriages, *de facto*', they declared, 'have taken place between persons, one or both of whom were in the condition of slavery, but which marriages *de facto*, have never been sanctioned by any public ceremony or formally registered, and in many such cases the parties have had offspring...'. The Act would now correct this situation and enable 'such persons to confer upon their children the benefit of children born in lawful wedlock...' (Clause XVI).

Given the planters' resolute tenacity of conviction in their opposition to slave conversion and marriage, it is a matter of little surprise to find these sentiments embodied in the final clause of the 1839 Marriage Act admitting slaves into the state of legal matrimony. Having accorded the ex-slaves the right to marry, the Act nonetheless re-affirmed the existing fetters on them. 'Nevertheless...

such marriages shall not confer on the parties or their issue, *any rights inconsistent with the duties which Slaves owe to their owners or to the government*, are by law entitled to assert over the Slaves and their progeny...' (italics added).

I shall now want to discuss specific marital cases from Parochial records and State Papers hitherto not subjected to sociological research and analysis in current Caribbean studies. These cases should go a long way to disprove the untenable explanations based on "African cultural origins" and "lower-class negro normative system". The cases further confirm that contemporary mating patterns are squarely rooted in slavery, and their explanation must be sought in those conditions.

CASE STUDIES: BARBADOS

The Marriage Registers of all Parishes in Barbados appear to confirm the claim made by some observers that prior to 1826 marriages between slaves were neither solemnized nor accorded any official recognition.²⁸ In St. John's Parish, special registers were kept for slave marriages from May 1827, and the first recorded marriage is dated 3 May, 1827. It was that of 'Sam William and Betty Colia, both of this Paris[h], and Slaves of the Society's Estate were married in this church by banns with consent of both parties, this third day of May one thousand eight hundred and twenty seven by me John Packer. This marriage was solemnized between us in the presence of J. H. Gittens, Rector and Robert Clarke' (and followed by 'The X of Sam William, The X of Betty Colia').

The second and last marriage for the year 1827 was conducted some three weeks later between one 'Joseph Blackman of the Parish of St. George, Free Coloured male, and Sussanah Bonham, of the Parish St. George, Slave on Lemon Arbour Estate', who were married in the Parish Church of St. John 'by License with consent of her owner, the Honb. — J. A. Holder' on 27 May 1827. No further marriages are recorded for that year.

²⁸ See, e.g. Frank J. Klingberg, "British Humanitarianism at Codrington" *Journal of Negro History* 23, 1938 p. 467, and J. Harry Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados 1710-1838*, 1958, p. 116.

Some slave owners (who included clergymen) appear to have taken an active interest in the marital welfare of their slaves. On 30 June 1830 'Sanso and Mary both slaves of Joseph W. Harris' of St. John were married before Curate B. J. Nurse of St. Mark's in the presence of owner Joseph Harris himself as a witness. On January 7, 1831, the Rev. John Hothersall Pinder joined in marriage his male slave, Fabricious, with Betsy Maria, another slave of the Society's Plantation. Some of these early marriages were between slaves and free persons. The Rev. J. H. Gittens joined in marriage 'John Richard Holder and Thomazin Millington, the former, slave of J. H. Nurse of Todd's, the latter free', on 4 July 1831 in the Parish Church of St. John. The following table summarizes the total number of "slave" marriages in the Parish of St. John from 1827 to 1848.²⁹

TABLE 2

Slaves and Apprentices Marriages in the Parish of St. John 1827-1848

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1827	2	1838	14
1829	4	1839	36
1830	6	1840	30
1831	10	1841	20
1832	11	1842	12
1833	22	1843	8
1834	97	1844	2
1835	53	1845	1
1836	44	1846	2
1837	14	1847	2
		1848	2
Total: 412			

SOURCE: Compiled from the *Parochial Register of Marriages* for the Parish of St. John 1827-1848, pp. 17-39. BDA.

²⁹ Detail extracted from *Parochial Register 1827-1848*, St. John's Parish, Barbados, (Marriages of Slaves solemnized in Parish of St. John in the Island of Barbados) pp. 17-39, Barbados Dept. of Archives.

The first few years of legal marriage for the slaves indicate a significantly slow beginning as only 2 marriages were celebrated in 1827, 4 in 1829 and 6 in 1830. From 1831 the figures rapidly increased, doubling with every subsequent year. The notable decline in marriages after 1843, may be attributed to a number of reasons. One palpable reason is the change of Ministers. It appears that the Rev. Thomas Watts, Rector of St. John, had relinquished office in 1843 and was replaced by the Rev. E. H. Parry who does not seem to have had the same enthusiasm as Watts. During the Watts' ministry, the annual marriage figures were significantly high. Parry managed to solemnize only 8 marriages between 1843 and 1847. Another reason may have been the decline of interest as the novelty wore off among the apprentices themselves. Also with the termination of slavery perhaps the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was under less pressure from its critics at home to exercise its responsibility for the moral rectitude of its own slave population at Codrington.

The year 1834 saw the largest number of marriages between slaves, an unprecedented high of 97, most of which conducted by the progressive Thomas Watts up to January, 1836. From 1835, with a total of 53 marriages, the numbers rapidly declined to a mere 2 in 1848. Only 1 marriage is recorded for 1845 between ex-slaves in the Parish of St. John.

Apart from the fluctuation in numbers of slave marriages, there was a notable increase in *inter-plantation* mobility, and in marriages between slaves belonging to different owners or Estates. The marriages that took place after 1834 show a number of grooms and brides to have come from different Estates. Interesting sociological information about the marital patterns that were developing at this time may be gleaned from a number of slave marriages recorded in some Parishes. On February 12, 1831, 'Jacob and Mercy Ann [both of St. John] the former a free Blackman, the latter a Slave of Mrs. Margaret Goddard were married' by banns before the Rev. J. H. Gittens. Also 'married by banns on 10th April 1834' were 'Jackey belonging to Mrs. Bascom and Selah belonging to Mr. Lyder'; then on 27th July, 1834, 'Tom Francis belonging to Mr. George Tunney married 'Phibba Bess belonging to Mr. Long'. And 'Married in this Chapel by Banns this second day of August A.D. 1834, [was] Abel of Cliff Cottage to Hagar, Apprentice labourer of Mrs. Harding'. On August 23, 1834, 'Jack of the Bath Estate, St. John, married

Phillis of Fortescue's in St. Philip's'. The Rev. Thomas Watts joined in marriage 'Richard of Palmer's Estate to Peggy of Mount Pleasant on February 20, 1834'; and a month later united 'Jack Firebrass of Thicket Estate with Susan Boucher a free coloured Woman on 23 March 1834'; and so was 'Exeter of Society's plantation married [to] Hannah Moll of Sealy Hall on April 6, 1834'. A few days later Watts solemnized a marriage between 'Andrew of Bath plantation and Peggy of Society's plantation on April 10, 1834'.

In the Parish of St. Thomas³⁰ a rather interesting marriage took place between 'Samuel Bennet (commonly called Sammy Watson) belonging to Mrs. Rebecca Batson of the Parish of Christ Church, and Sattice Ann, belonging to Elizabeth Willoughby and

TABLE 3
Summary of Interplantation Slave Marriages — 1832-1834

<i>Date</i>	<i>Groom</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Bride</i>	<i>Location</i>
8.9.32	George	Lemon Arbour	Harriet	Steward Hill
18.1.33	Sammy	Colleton	Molly Blossom	Society
2.8.33	Samuel Bennet	Christ Church	Sattice Ann	St. John
5.12.33	Philip Jordan	Clermont	Elizabeth Princess	Welches
31.12.33	Money John	Colleton	Benniba	Society
20.2.34	Richard	Palmer's	Peggy	Mt. Pleasant
27.2.34	John Prince	Mt. Pleasant	Mary Bess	Steward Hill
6.4.34	Exeter	Society	Hannah Moll	Sealy Hall
10.4.34	Andrew	Bath	Peggy	Society
16.5.34	Jemmy	Haynes Hill	Betty Henry	Society
12.6.34	Jack Mingo	Society	Annie	Sealy Hall
17.6.34	Hary Jones	St. Joseph	Jenny Rose	Society
11.7.34	Scipio	Haynes Hill	Mary Princess	Sealy Hall
30.8.34	Cudjoe	Bath	Patience	Society
23.8.34	Jack	Bath	Phillis	Fortescue

SOURCE: Compiled from various *Parochial Registers of Slave Marriages*, BDA.

³⁰ Details extracted from *Parochial Register of Slave Marriages for St. Thomas 1828-1834*, pp. 409-413 BDA.

Sarah Willoughby, minors, under the charge of Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Watson, widow, of this Parish... in this Church by banns and with consent of the Parties this Twenty second day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty three' before John Packer, the Rector. It is probable that the groom was scion of Mrs. Elizabeth Watson's deceased husband.

Before emancipation all the Parishes lagged behind St. John in the encouragement and performance of slave marriages. St. Thomas and St. Peter appear to have been particularly tardy in performing slave marriages. In all only 16 marriages between slaves were conducted in St. Thomas in the period September 1828 and July 1834. St. Peter fared even worse with a record of only 1 slave marriage in the entire period 1825-1834. Only the Parish of Christ Church appears to have approximated the record of St. John's performance.

The first slave marriage in Christ Church³¹ was celebrated between 'Jeffry Nurse, slave of Richard Nurse and Lucy Turpin

TABLE 4

Marriages of Slaves and Apprentices: Christ Church 1826-1838 Barbados

<i>Pre-Emancipation</i>		<i>Apprenticeship</i>	
1826 . . .	1	1835 . . .	41
1830 . . .	3	1836 . . .	72
1831 . . .	1	1837 . . .	115
1832 . . .	4	1838 . . .	222
1833 . . .	3		
1834 . . .	34		
Total	46	Total	450

SOURCE: Compiled from *Parochial Register of Marriages: Slaves, Christ Church, 1826-1838*, BDA.

³¹ Details extracted from *Parochial Register of Marriages: Slaves 1826-1838*, Christ Church, BDA.

slave of Sarah Turpin' before Dr. T. H. Orderson on 15 June 1826. Nothing further happened until 1830 when 3 slave marriages were conducted, followed by only 1 in 1831 between 'Sancho Daniel, free blackman and Rosetta Pilgrim slave'. In 1832, two marriages were celebrated and recorded in the parochial register reserved for slaves and freedmen; and only 3 are shown for 1833, 2 for slaves and 1 for free blacks. A tremendous increase occurred in 1834 when 34 marriages were conducted in the Parish between slaves or between slaves and freedmen. The last marriage described as between slaves is that of 'Billy Bourne a slave on Maxwell's Estate and Peggy Assah slave of Dorcas Lashley' on 31 July 1834 by Christopher Gill. Thereafter, the phrase "attached to" is employed to designate civil status of the parties. The first marriage after emancipation is an entry of 7 August 1834 for the marriage of 'Benjamin and Jenny Rose attached to the Ridge Estate'. From 20 February 1835 the parties are identified as "Apprenticed Labourer" of such and such Estate. The progressively upward trend in marriages between ex-slaves can be seen from the comparative annual figures for the period before emancipation and that covered by the Apprenticeship System as shown in Table 5.

One of the crucial issues about the civil status of the slave was his capacity to legally witness any action. Legal matrimony tended to modify this capacity at least in matrimonial proceedings. In St. John slaves who had already been joined in marriage were sometimes invited to act as witnesses to the marriages of their confreres. For example, we find that Jacob of the Society's Plantation who had been joined in marriage by Thomas Watts to Sue in January 1832 was later one of the two witnesses at the marriage of "Christmas and Betty Bella of Society Plantation" on June 8, 1833. Jacob's own marriage had earlier been witnessed by another slave called Primus.

Similarly, Scipio who had been married to Kate Joan by John Packer on 28 May 1830 was invited to attest the marriage of Rita and Kate Hannah who were joined in marriage on 30 August 1833. Also Cuffy College (of the Codrington Estates) acted as a witness to two slave marriages during 1833. When the Rev. John Watts joined in marriage "Hector and Cooba on January 4, 1833," and later also "Quashy Howard to Mary Ann on 16 August 1833", Cuffy was the official witness on both occasions.

TABLE 5
Marriages in 9 of 11 Barbados Parishes 1825-1830
by Ethnic/Social Categories

Parish	Category	Year						Total
		1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	
St. Michael	White	26	28	32	37	42	24	189
	Couloured	9	11	11	18	15	8	72
	Slave	-	-	-	1	-	3	4
	Sub-total	35	39	43	56	57	35	205
Christ Ch.	White	12	12	8	3	13	7	55
	Couloured	-	1	-	2	2	1	6
	Slave	-	1	-	-	-	3	4
	Sub-total	12	14	8	5	15	11	65
St. Thomas	White	7	2	7	5	5	2	28
	Couloured	-	1	-	-	-	1	2
	Slave	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
	Sub-total	7	3	7	6	5	3	31
St. Andrew	White	2	7	10	14	8	4	45
	Couloured	1	-	1	-	1	1	4
	Slave	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Sub-total	3	7	11	14	9	5	49
St. Lucy	White	7	4	6	3	5	6	31
	Couloured	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Slave	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Sub-total	7	4	6	3	5	6	31
St. George	White							69
	Couloured							2
	Slave							5
	Sub-total	-	-	-	-	-	-	76
St. James	White							25
	Couloured							-
	Slave							3
	Sub-total	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
St. Joseph	White							40
	Couloured							-
	Slave							-
	Sub-total	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
St. Philip	White							52
	Couloured							6
	Slave							2
	Sub-total	-	-	-	-	-	-	60

SOURCE: *Parliamentary Papers: Extinction of Slavery, 1832*, (Extracts from Returns relating to the Slave Population: Barbados, pp. 24-30).

In other cases we find a slave who had previously acted as a witness in the marriage of a slave couple while he was still single soon getting married himself. Quasho Bob was one such case. Quasho had performed the role of witness to the marriage of John Bull to Cooba which took place on July 12, 1832. By April 12, 1833 we find Quasho Bob himself before the altar being joined in marriage to Lubba Rose.³²

OTHER SLAVE COLONIES

The question of slave marriages was a troublesome one for all the slave colonies before 1825. While in some plantation colonies like Barbados the restrictions were formalized into law and largely observed by the compliant clergy, in others the non-performance was left much to customary neglect by the clergy of the Established Church of England.³³

In Antigua this would appear to be the case rather than the active opposition of the planters. Rector George Collins of the parish of St. Philip put the matter in a nutshell in a letter to Governor Sir Benjamin D'Urban on 14 September 1821: 'I beg to inform your excellency that during the space of thirty years I never knew or heard that marriages were ever performed by clergymen of the church of England in this Island between slaves. I have been Rector of the Parish of St. Philip about eighteen years, and have never been applied to, to officiate at the marriage of slaves.' Furthermore he had 'married no free black or coloured persons' between the years 1808 to 1814. He celebrated the first marriage between a 'Free Coloured couple' in 1818, another one in 1817 and the last two in 1820 one of which was between a 'Fair man and a black woman'. (p. 50)

In St. George's parish, Rector James Coull similarly reported on September 26, 1821: 'During forty-two years and nine months that I have been Rector and Incumbent of the Parish of St. George, I had never been called upon to marry any slaves, till, on the 29th, April 1820, the honourable and Reverend Richard Burgh Byam

³² Collated from information in *Parochial Register of Marriages 1827-1848*, St. John's Parish, BDA.

³³ All data and information quoted hereafter are extracted from *Parliamentary Papers relating the Slave Population in the West India Colonies* Vol. 1, Part II, 1823.

wrote to me, requesting me to publish the banns of marriage between two mulatto slaves, belonging to the estate of William Byam Esq., his father... I complied with his request, and published the banns. But on due consideration that neither of the parties had applied to me to marry them, and being assured, by undoubted authority, that the woman was twice the age of the man, of a licentious character, and been faithful to none of several husbands, for while she had a mustee husband she had a child by a black man, and afterwards when she had a coloured husband, she had another child by a white man; and a third child, all of different colours, and was remarkable for her infidelity; and no marriage being lawful here unless solemnized by a minister of the church of England, and he cannot marry a free person to a slave under penalty of 50 (pounds). No beneficed clergyman had ever married any slaves. I have had only two marriages of coloured and black free persons at St. George during an incumbency of nearly forty-three years and none in St. Peter's of which I have been Rector ten years'. (p. 51)

For the parishes of St. John and St. Paul, Rector Samuel W. Hartman was less self apologetic as he wrote to the Governor on the subject: 'Your Excellency will perceive that there is not any marriage of slaves in either Return; there is not a single instance of any such occurrence on record in either register, the circumstances having been invariably considered as illegal; nor is it easy to see how so solemn and binding a contract can possibly be entered into by persons who are not free agents'. (p. 51).

MONTSERRAT: Rector Joseph Gerrald reported a total of 19 marriages between "Free Black or Coloured Persons" during the period 1808 to 1821, and none for slaves (p. 63).

DEMARARA: Reverend W. T. Austen of St. George's Chapel wrote on February 4, 1822 that 'No entry of marriages appears on the register of St. George's Chapel, previous to 1812, between the classes of persons beforementioned (i.e. Free Coloured and Black Persons); and there is reason to think that no *such* marriage was ever solemnized before that date. The marriages of slaves is a thing unheard of in this colony, and I humbly conceive this holy institution to be altogether incompatible with the state of slavery under existing laws and regulations.' However, Austen was able to

account for a total of 44 "marriages solemnized between Free Coloured and Black Persons from the year 1812-1821". (p. 81)

An interesting and revealing letter was written by a non-Anglican clergyman Rev. Rickard Elliot to Government Secretary R. Chapman of Demarara on December 13, 1821: '...I beg to observe that I am not of the Established Church, marriages solemnized by me would not be legal; I have therefore refused to comply with the requests of the free black and coloured people, and have not married any of them: but as the slaves have no legal inheritance, they could suffer no loss or inconvenience from their marriages not being considered legal; and knowing by experience that marriages among negroes promote morality, economy, and domestic happiness, I have married a great number of them, but have not kept a regular list of marriages until the last two years; which is as follows: In 1820... 124, 1821... 100 total 224.' (p. 81)

Presbyterian Reverend Archibald Browne of St. Andrew's Church Demarara expressed some concern about the definition of "coloured people": 'In the... Return I have comprehended under the head "Coloured People" all who are descended by one of their parents from the race of Free Indians, as well as those that are of Negro extraction. Besides these intermarriages between persons of the same class, two young women of colour have been united by me in lawful wedlock to white young men...

As for slaves I should not consider myself justified in celebrating marriage between them without previous assurance, obtained from competent authority, that such practice is conformable to the existing laws of the Colony; and, moreover, without being certified in each particular case, that the owner of such slave or slaves did not object to that sort of union'. Browne could still show a total of 19 marriages between free coloured persons from 1819-1821. (p. 82)

Evangelist John Davies of an unidentified denomination wrote to say that as he was not of the established church of England. 'I have not considered myself authorized to solemnize marriages in a legal sense;' but quickly added, 'though, with a view of rendering the negroes who attend my ministry more morality & c. I have required them to make a solemn promise of fidelity, & c. to each other; which a great many of them have done...' (p. 82).

Missionary John Smith of Bethel Chapel, returned a total of 96 marriages he had celebrated among slaves between 1817 and 1821. He had conducted 5 in 1818, 3 in 1819, 27 in 1820 and 6 in 1821. (p. 82)

TRINIDAD: In all slave territories the low record of slave marriages was consistent, and Trinidad was no exception. Between 1808 and 1821 a total of 448 marriages were celebrated between "free coloured people" (p. 121) and only 3 for slaves as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6
Marriages of Free Coloured and Slaves 1808-21: Trinidad

Year	Free Coloured	Slave	Year	Free Coloured	Slave
1808	28	-	1815	39	-
9	20	-	16	34	-
10	23	1	17	76	1
11	21	-	18	17	-
12	33	-	19	47	-
13	20	-	20	42	-
14	25	-	21	23	1
				448	3

SOURCE: Compiled from information extracted from: *Parliamentary Papers relating to the Slave Population in the West India Colonies* Vol I, Pt. II, 1823, P. 121.

ST. VINCENT: On December 5, 1825 the local legislature passed an Act providing for the christianization of slaves and for their intermarriage by the Established Church of England, by consent of the owner or deputy. This new concession was conditional in that 'such marriage shall not confer on the parties and their issue any rights inconsistent with the duties which Slaves owe to their owners'. Such a slave marriage was not to be construed as a means 'which might destroy the rights or injure the property of their owners'. Similar provisions abound in legislative Acts of other colonies as well.³⁴

³⁴ See 'Consolidated Slave Act, 16 December, 1825' in *Parliamentary Papers 1826*, p. 80.

CONCLUSION

I have endeavoured in this paper to show how sociological research of archival material may be utilized to shed considerable light on some of the troublesome sociological problems respecting mating patterns among Caribbean societies. The materials adduced here to show the connection between contemporary mating behaviour and antecedent factors suggest a re-assessment of our methodological approaches to Caribbean research. However, space does not permit me to deal either with the rest of the slave colonies or with the post-emancipation era, a period of which valuable statistical data are available. I shall conclude this discussion with a generous quotation from the previously mentioned document in which the Rev. John Stephen deliberates on the subject of slave marriage in its social context to further prove the inadequacy of sociological explanations based solely on "negro lower-class normative behaviour" and "African cultural origins".

Stephen's observations apply equally well to all West India plantations slave colonies: Stephen argues that were the slaves 'Freely allowed, and properly encouraged, to enter into lawful wedlock, they would then learn to set a proper value on the virtue of chastity... Could the... objection to the marriage of slaves be admitted to have any weight, it must be allowed to have equal weight against the marriage of free people in this part of the world; for it is well-known that infidelity to their husbands is by no means unexampled among females of that condition, *white* as well as *black*... Men in this part of the world have long been accustomed to see slaves, and coloured people in general, living in that illicit and licentious manner in which they do,... they seem never to reflect... that this very circumstance [the licentious manners of the female negroes, arising from the difficulty of obtaining lawful marriage] is the grand instrument of corrupting the manners of the white population, by affording the male part of them the ready means of gratifying their most depraved appetites, without much degrading their character in the opinion of their fellow-citizens, and the natural consequence is, that marriages are thereby rendered less frequent, and the sanctity of marriage is less strictly regarded, even among *them*, than they would otherwise be... If any necessity then exists for denying [the slaves the privilege of marriage], it is entirely a necessity of our own making...'. (pp. 224-225 italics original)

The paper has thus shown how socio-anthropological research in Caribbean societies may be methodologically improved by a proper utilization of archival material pertaining to the slavery period. The thrust of my argument has been to place the contemporary mating practices squarely in the social context in which they developed, and to show how these practices were perpetuated by legal prescriptions and social conventions of the dominant segment of plantation society. The paper has demonstrated the need for a more cautious approach to facile explanations of extra-marital mating patterns among the so-called lower-class negro segment of these societies. I have argued that in the absence of comparative research results on other segments of the same society, partial sociological explanations based on exogeneous influences (e.g. African cultural origins) will remain inadequate and will continue to vitiate field research.

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