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At the Margins of the Plantation: Alternative Modernities and an Archaeology of the "Poor Whites" of Barbados

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Abstract

This dissertation is an historical archaeological examination of the “poor whites” or “Redlegs” of Barbados. Excavations were undertaken from October 2012 to July 2013 in an abandoned tenantry, Below Cliff, on the east coast of the island, once inhabited by dozens of families locally referred to as the “poor whites” or “Redlegs”, said to be the descendants of seventeenth century European indentured servants. Combining archaeological, ethnographic, and historical methodologies, this dissertation explores class relations of Below Cliff residents to processes of capitalism as well as other island laborers, including Afro-Barbadians. Additionally, racial categories are interrogated through an analysis of complex and interracial genealogies of Below Cliff residents that call into question the legitimacy of determinate racial categories of black and white. I argue that Below Cliff is best understood as an alternative modernity, a place in which residents were directly affected by processes of modernization, but through their own ways of relating to economic forces and their own experiences of race relations they were able to engender alternatives to modernity that were all their own.

**At the Margins of the Plantation:
Alternative Modernities and an Archaeology of the
“Poor Whites” of Barbados**

by

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B.S., University of Maryland, 2007

M.A., University of Chicago, 2009

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology.

Syracuse University

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Figures and Tables.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Race, Class, and Archaeologies of the Plantation	30
Chapter 3: Indentured Servants to “Redlegs”: “Poor Whites” Throughout Barbadian History.....	75
Chapter 4: Husked Coconuts and Deep Units: Methodological Considerations	113
Chapter 5: Class Relations and Everyday Life Below the Cliff.....	156
Chapter 6: Interrogating Racial Categories Below the Cliff.....	202
Chapter 7: Alternative Modernities and Archaeological Ambiguities	238
References	276

Table of Figures and Tables

Figure 1.1: Map of Barbados.....	3
Figure 1.2: “Redleg” Fishermen of Barbados.....	16
Figure 1.3: Photograph of Wilson Norris.....	20
Figure 3.1: 1646 Hapcott Map.....	81
Figure 4.1: View from the Top of Hackleton’s Cliff.....	122
Figure 4.2: 1908 Photograph of Below Cliff.....	124
Figure 4.3: Excavation Unit at the Fitz-Bailey Household....	127
Figure 4.4: Plotted House Sites in Below Cliff.....	129
Figure 4.5: Map of Cliff-top Entrances to Below Cliff.....	130
Figure 4.6: Wilson Norris’ House Foundation.....	133
Figure 4.7: View of Raised House Foundation/Platform.....	134
Figure 4.8: Excavation Units 1, 2, and 4.....	135
Figure 4.9: Wall Feature in Unit 5.....	137
Figure 4.10: Interior Excavation Units Taken to 200 cm.....	139
Table 4.1: Below Cliff Artifact Quantities and Percentages...	142
Table 5.1: Occupations of Below Cliff Residents.....	167
Figure 5.1: Community Members Moving a Chattel House...	172
Figure 5.2: Plan View of Wilson Norris’ House Site.....	175
Figure 5.3: Profile of NE Wall of Units 18 and 20.....	177
Figure 5.4: Ceramic Sherds from the Gibson Household.....	179
Table 5.2: Chart of Ceramic Sherd Types Collected.....	182
Figure 5.5: Sample of Imported Ceramics.....	183
Figure 5.6: Sponged/Stamped Whitewares.....	185
Figure 5.7: Sample of Bottle Glass.....	189
Figure 5.8: Tin Can Fragments and Tin Can Drinking Cups...	192
Figure 5.9: Sample of Buttons.....	194
Figure 5.10: Sample of Cuprous Nails.....	199
Figure 6.1: Map of Below Cliff Households and Entrances....	212
Figure 6.2: Sample of Locally Produced Earthenware.....	221
Figure 6.3: Locally Produced Glazed Hollowwares.....	222
Figure 6.4: Burial Record of Ann Shepherd.....	232
Figure 7.1: “Redleg” Fishermen of Barbados	238
Figure 7.2: Fred Watson, Uncle of Wilson Norris.....	240
Figure 7.3: Members of the Extended Norris Family.....	261

Chapter 1

Introduction

The “poor whites” of Barbados have been historically and contemporarily presented as a unique, puzzling, and anomalous demographic. Outside of Barbados, their existence is largely unknown. Within the British Isles literature, documentaries, and music have popularized them to be the long lost descendants of exiled “Cromwellian slaves” (see for instance O’Callaghan 2000). Throughout Barbados they fall victim to pernicious stereotypes and are socially marginalized. Conceptually, their very existence as poor and “white” puts them at odds with the metanarrative of an Atlantic World social, political, and economic hierarchy that was laden with racial attitudes that legitimized the white over black mentality and reality (Jordan 1968; Amussen 2007; Mills 1997). This dissertation presents a new approach to interpreting the lives of the “poor whites” in the past and present as well as their position *within* Barbadian society, rather than their exclusion from it. Historical archaeological methods have recovered significant data illuminating the realities faced by “poor white” community members on a daily basis. Additionally, by way of exploring the historical record it is possible to reveal how the attitudes of Barbadian and colonial elites engendered a particular discourse about the “poor whites” that shaped how they are perceived in the past and in the present. Finally, through a case study of the “poor white” village tenantry of Below Cliff, we encounter a friction between the perception of the “poor whites” and what was and is occurring at the local level within these communities. This friction contests static conceptualizations of race and challenges us to interrogate the “white” in “poor white”.

The “poor whites”, “Redlegs”, “Ecky-Beckies”, or “Buckra Johnnies” (as they are pejoratively referred to) have inhabited the island for nearly four centuries. Thousands

arrived in the seventeenth century as indentured servants or small farmers. In the wake of the sugar revolution, however, the “white” underclass was soon prodded to the margins of the plantation landscape as English planters met increasing labor demands with a heightened involvement in the African slave trade (Beckles 1985 and 1989; Menard 2006; Newman 2013). While indentured servitude and its permutations (such as apprenticeship) would persist well into the post-emancipation period, the majority of this “poor white” demographic, whose numbers consistently hovered between 8,000 and 15,000 from the eighteenth to the twentieth century (see Shepherd 1977), sought refuge on the “rab lands” of the island, those plots deemed unworthy of sugar production. In addition to urban neighborhoods in the Bridgetown area, it was (and still is) here in these rural communities that the “Redlegs” have made a meager living on the margins of the plantation landscape.

This historical archaeological investigation seeks to address the lived realities of the “white” underclass of Barbados from their arrival to the island as indentured servants to their inhabitation of village tenancies. Despite the existence of several known “poor white” tenancies around the island, Below Cliff was selected as the primary focus of investigations. Thus, I have incorporated archaeological, historical, and ethnographic data from this now abandoned tenantry village in the parish of St. John (Figure 1.1). The site was surveyed and excavated during the 2012-2013 academic year through the support of the Fulbright IIE Grant. Now hidden by dense forest overgrowth, Below Cliff sits directly underneath Hackleton’s Cliff along the island’s east coast, and was home to hundreds of “Redleg” families for several centuries. Archaeological and historical data confirm the occupation of the village from at least the mid eighteenth and possibly mid

seventeenth century to the early 1960s. During this time the village held an estimated 100 different households.

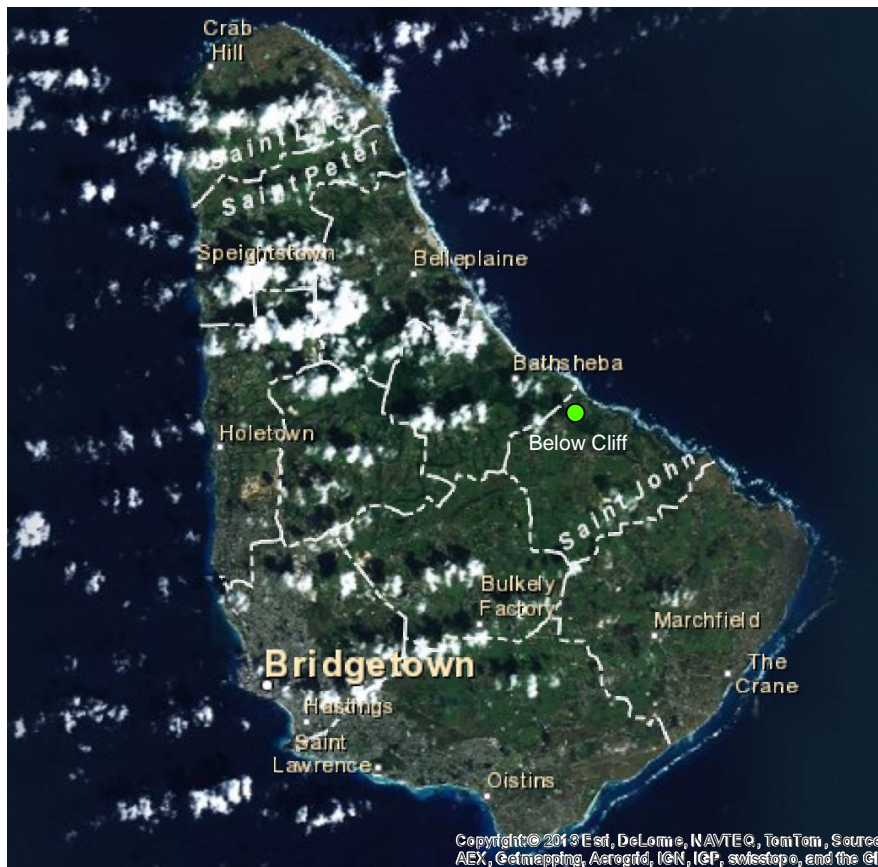


Figure 1.1: Map of Barbados identifying the location of Below Cliff. Point plotted by author, base map courtesy of ESRI ArcGIS.

This is the first archaeological investigation of the “poor whites” of Barbados. Although a small number of anthropological case studies have been conducted on the “poor white” community in St. John from the 1960s to the 1970s (Davis 1978; Rosenberg 1962; Simmons 1976; Watson 1970), most scholarly attempts to address the “poor whites” have succumb to the perpetuation of stereotypes (for a notable exception see Shepherd 1977 for a broad historical overview of the “Redlegs”). While this project owes a debt of gratitude to these works, it is also a noticeable departure from their approaches that treated the “poor whites” or “Redlegs” as a distinct and bounded ethnic

group. While each of these works illustrates some degree of interaction with and cultural similarities between the “Redlegs” and the Afro-Barbadian population, their analyses are still dependent on notions of racial distinction that reify the categories of black and white thereby fueling the perception of “poor white” isolation.

Before proceeding it is necessary to address the central terminology in this study. “Poor whites” will consistently be written with quotation marks for two reasons. Firstly, like “Redleg”,¹ the phrase “poor white” is a historical and contemporary pejorative referring to impoverished people with pale complexions that are typically found on the island’s east coast and throughout the rugged region known as the Scotland District in the northeast of the island. Other pejoratives used throughout this dissertation, including “Ecky-Beckie” and “Buckra Johnnies”, will be similarly used in quotation marks to represent the derisive nature of the terms. Secondly, the adjectives in the label “poor white” are the very subjects of inquiry within this study. Arguments concerning the instability of racial boundaries and categories question the implied purity of the term “white”. Additionally, despite the ubiquitous usage of the term “poor white” within the historical record and contemporary Barbadian society, uncritical usage of the term allows the group’s poverty to be a defining attribute of their identity. In essence, the use of quotation marks indicates that this study challenges the assumptions, discrimination, and politics that are laden within the “poor white” label.

This dissertation addresses the construction of the discourses that engendered notions of “poor white” exceptionalism and exclusion. These discourses would

¹ The term “Redleg” derives from the sixteenth and seventeenth century term “Redshanks”, referring to Scottish highlanders who had their legs turned red from exposure to the sun, a phenomenon which was common amongst European laborers in the Caribbean (Shepherd 1977:3). “Redlegs” becomes commonly used to refer to the “poor whites” by the 1780s (Lambert 2005:100).

eventually lend themselves to historical and public understandings of the “poor whites”. It is against this background that I present archaeological, historical, and ethnographic data to provide a more inclusive interpretation of the “poor whites”. The research undertaken for this dissertation sparked significant questions concerning the entanglements of race and class. What did it mean to be “white” and “poor” in Barbados? How porous were the boundaries between white and black and what was done to patrol or maintain these physical and conceptual boundaries? What does the material record of the “poor whites” lend to an interpretation of daily life? How does the material record of the “poor whites” compare with that of contemporaneous Afro-Barbadian contexts? This dissertation attempts to address such questions, amongst others, in a study that navigates the history of the “poor whites” of Barbados from English settlement in 1627 to the present. Such a history entails a critical examination of racial identity and categories as well as an archaeological exploration of poverty.

The research questions enumerated above were in part developed through in-depth literature reviews and two short trips to Barbados prior to the 2012-2013 field season.² They were, however, expanded and altered as my project commenced and developed. Methodological difficulties and realizations reached during the course of research effected the questions that were being asked and how and where excavations were conducted. These transformations were also significantly influenced by my interactions with Barbadians who offered unique and personal information about their experience and their knowledge of local areas. The metamorphosis of this dissertation project took a natural progression based on my experiences in the field. In many ways,

² These trips took place in the spring and summer of 2011 and were funded by the Roscoe-Martin Fund and the Department of Anthropology at Syracuse University as well as the Mae O’Driscoll Scholarship.

anthropological fieldwork is a serendipitous project (Rivoal and Salazar 2013).

Therefore, research processes will be described below to explain the rationale of my research questions the methods employed in attempts to answer them.

Research Reimagined

I intended to conduct dissertation research on the Irish in Barbados. Several thousand Irish voluntarily and involuntarily arrived in Barbados throughout the seventeenth century and typically labored under terms of indentured servitude.³ Most indentured servants, regardless of ethnic origins, experienced harsh treatment but it was the Irish that occupied a particularly low socioeconomic status within seventeenth century Barbadian society due to colonial frictions and antecedents in Ireland, English discrimination against the Catholic faith, and a general belief that the Irish constituted a “riotous and unruly lot” (Beckles 1990; see also Handler and Reilly N.D.; Reilly N.D.; Welch 2012). Inspired by a burgeoning archaeology of the Irish diaspora (Brighton 2009), I sought to locate sites on plantations and in inconspicuous locales where the Irish would have lived as laborers on plantations, subsisted as small farmers in villages, or discreetly congregated outside the gaze of their English masters.

Methodological difficulties hindered my ability to complete an archaeological investigation of the Irish in Barbados. Determining spaces that were inhabited or utilized by the Irish was nearly impossible. Plantations for which lists of indentured servants existed would occasionally list the use of Irish servants (see Welch 2012) but provided no

³ Population estimates for seventeenth century Barbados are unreliable and are virtually nonexistent for the numbers of Irish during this time period. Despite thorough research by Aubrey Gwynn in the early twentieth century, it is impossible to determine the number of Irish that arrived in Barbados (1932). Additionally, estimates that claim that Cromwell sent 50,000 Irish are grossly exaggerated given population figures for the entire island from the 1630s-60s (O’Callaghan 2000). It is, however, safe to estimate that there were several thousand Irish on the island throughout the century (see Handler and Reilly N.D.).

indication of where on the landscape such individuals would have resided. Additionally, while material culture had previously been uncovered in inconspicuous spaces such as caves (for a prehistoric case study see Lange and Handler 1980; for an historical case study see Smith 2008:104-133), it would have been nearly impossible to associate collected materials to a particular ethnic group such as the Irish. Village contexts provided the best potential to discern archaeological contexts associated with Irish inhabitation but were in remote and heavily forested areas of the island and may therefore be the focus of excavations in future field seasons.⁴

My review of the literature on the Irish and getting familiar with the Barbadian landscape, however, would prove fruitful. The two would complement each other as I developed new research questions and reimagined the world the Irish would have experienced whilst in Barbados. As I travelled the island surveying plantations, participating in hikes, visiting historical sites, and meeting research informants it became evident that on a relatively small and densely populated island (even by seventeenth century standards) significant interaction would have been taking place between servants and the enslaved despite historical literature that had largely treated them as disparate populations. Generating a dialogue between the narratives and experiences of servants and the enslaved was a venture into a growing body of literature on trans-Atlantic encounters of the historically underrepresented across racial boundaries (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; O’Neil and Lloyd 2009; Shaw 2013).

Methodologically, it was necessary to expand in scope from a specific focus on the Irish to a more inclusive examination of the “poor whites” for a number of reasons.

⁴ One village in particular, formerly known as Irish Town, in the parish of St. Thomas is particularly promising and will be surveyed in future field seasons.

As mentioned above, it was difficult to discern seventeenth century sites that were particularly “Irish” or could readily be associated with an Irish presence. Additionally, as the seventeenth century drew to a close and the number of laborers arriving from Europe became severely diminished (see Reilly and Handler N.D.), ethnic differentiation amongst the island’s white laboring class became less observable. By the 1690s authorities were less likely to use Irish, Scottish, or English as identity markers within official records and more frequently utilized “poor white” as a racial catch-all for the underclasses of European descent. Villages and tenancies were established that were home to “poor whites” of heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds. The village explored in this dissertation, Below Cliff, was home to families bearing English, Scottish, and Irish surnames including Fenty, Moore, Goddard, Norris, MacPhearson, Wilkie, King, Croney, Gibson, and Downie.

Conceptually, I experienced a growing awareness of the intense interaction that was and had been taking place between these “poor white” communities and enslaved Africans/Afro-Barbadians (and free Afro-Barbadians, following emancipation in 1834-1838). The realities of these interactions are acknowledged within archaeological and historical literature but their nuances and effects have seldom been taken seriously. The dynamics of the relationship between the enslaved and their masters have been given priority within plantation societies (see for instance Delle 1998; Epperson 1990; Ferguson 1992). If, however, we prioritize the relationships between these working class individuals, would our interpretations of the landscape, the archaeological record, social relationships, and racial and class divisions change? If so, how? Armed with altered research questions, I expanded my methodologies to incorporate literature on the “poor

whites” of Barbados and began surveying plantation tenancies and village settings that were once home to “poor white” families.

The areas chosen for investigation will be described in detail in Chapter four. The village of Below Cliff was a unique village setting in which to conduct excavations given the recent time of abandonment. Since the village was abandoned in the early 1960s there were several living community members who grew up in the village, remember it well, and were willing to speak with me about it. Additionally, the socio-political climate on the island was such that there was a growing awareness and acknowledgement of the history of the “poor whites” and their place in Barbadian history and society. Therefore, I was simultaneously dealing with descendant communities in individuals who claimed “poor white” ancestry as well as living community members.

It is therefore imperative to acknowledge that social science research can, and often is, altered due to local circumstances and political climates. This is particularly true in postcolonial contexts. In developing a postcolonial or “noncolonialist” archaeology, Matthew Liebmann summarizes that “This means considering the political climates in which archaeologists generate research questions and interpretations and recognizing that archaeological work is not conducted in a social or cultural vacuum” (2008: 8; see also McGuire 2008). Given archaeology’s disciplinary ties to histories of colonialism and developing notions of modernity (see Thomas 2004), researchers need to be weary of how projects affect and are effected by local politics. Echoing the postcolonial call in archaeological method and theory (see Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Lydon and Rizvi 2010), it is necessary to address these issues at the fore of this dissertation and how they effected my research project.

The Politics of “Poor White” Scholarship in Barbados

Despite economic problems that have arisen amidst the global recession,⁵ Barbados remains one of the most stable economies in the Caribbean region and many Barbadians have enjoyed a relatively high standard of living since independence in 1966. This, of course, is not to say that poverty or unemployment aren't problems on the island, but industry, tourism, and foreign investment have assisted in building a stable economy despite the island's extreme population density.⁶ Therefore, a substantial middle class and the emphasized importance of education allow for a public body that actively engages with history, culture, politics, and national identity. Understanding the local political climate and how Barbadians identify with their history and culture was therefore imperative as my research commenced and developed.

Institutional, private, and governmental support is responsible for lectures, cultural events, television programming, conferences, workshops, forums, holiday events, festivals, memorials, hikes, and tours that promote the island's history and culture; institutional bodies include the University of the West Indies, the Barbados National Trust, the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, and the National Cultural Foundation. This in turn led to a surprising level of public knowledge of and engagement with my research project. Navigating national politics quickly became necessary as it became evident that the themes and issues that I was addressing were of emotional, historical, cultural, political, and personal consequence to local people. In general, Pan-

⁵ Since the global recession beginning in 2007-2008 there has been a sharp decline in the amount of tourists that visit the island annually. Being that tourism is the island's top industry, this has substantially hindered the nation's economic performance (see Gmelch 2012). Additionally, the sugar industry, which dominated island economics for centuries, has dwindled in terms of output, placing more pressure on the tourism industry.

⁶ At 166 square miles, the island's population was 283,221 as of 2012, making it one of the most densely populated countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Africanism and a black cultural identity are significant forces on the island. Despite the island's nickname of "Little England", most Barbadians identify with their African roots which is reflected in local dance, music, festivals, literature, and education. The English influence is no doubt present, specifically in the structure of the government, the continued (though diminishing) strength of the Anglican Church, the use of the English language, and a relative cultural conservatism. There exists, however, a tension between the influence of the colonial parentage and the embracing and celebration of their African and Afro-Barbadian identities (Burrowes 2000). In terms of demographics, according to statistics compiled by the Commonwealth, roughly 93% of the population is classified as being of African descent while 3% are of European descent; this indicates that 96% of the population considers themselves as being white *or* black rather than a mix of the two. The specifics of this phenomenon will be discussed in more detail below, but it is significant in terms of local politics and how my research project was received.

Despite the overwhelming majority of individuals classified as being of African descent, a significant amount of wealth remains in the hands of the island's white population, a condition first established in the seventeenth century. This condition, however, witnessed significant transformations following emancipation and in the decades surrounding independence. Following emancipation several planter families received compensation for their loss of "property", sold their plantations, and returned to England (Beckles 2013). The twentieth century experienced what is understood locally as a white exodus; the 1950s-70s witnessed an outflow of white Barbadians who feared how they would fare during the transition to independence and a government run by black Barbadians. The "exodus" was composed of white Barbadians of all economic

backgrounds, but of particular importance is the emigration of planter families that remained after emancipation and held extreme wealth and property for centuries.

These circumstances allowed for social mobility for several “poor white” or “Redleg” families. While the process was often slow, several “poor whites” from the east coast were able to “make it over the hill” and migrate to Bridgetown during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries working as skilled and unskilled laborers, clerks, cashiers, dock workers, shopkeepers, or merchants (see for example Lewis 1999). Under such circumstances it was possible for select individuals to acquire enough capital to purchase land, including large plantations. Therefore, the exodus of the traditional plantocracy gave rise to a new planter class that had come from humble origins as “poor white” Barbadians. In fact, some of the island’s wealthiest families can and have traced their ancestries to nineteenth and twentieth century “Redleg” families such as the Goddards, Simpsons, Sheppards, Williams’, and Davis’.⁷ In general, most middle and upper class white Barbadian families claim ancestry with “poor white” Barbadians and “Redleg” families that live on the island’s east coast acknowledge the successes of their counterparts.

The Barbadian political and economic climate was significant as my project reached local audiences. During numerous private conversations in which I would describe my research I was met with great enthusiasm from select members of the “white” middle and upper classes who were excited to hear about the history and sufferings of the “poor whites” rather than that of Africans or Afro-Barbadians. On one occasion, I was told that the history of slavery was “forced down the throats” of school

⁷ These families, amongst others, own a plethora of domestic and international companies which include car dealerships, property, racing horses, retail shops, catering services, contracting and construction, hotels, restaurants, and sugar plantations.

children. Such individuals believed that it was necessary to research and publically address the island's history of "white slavery". Tracing their ancestry to these "poor whites", such individuals argued that their ancestors had suffered the inhumanity of slavery like Afro-Barbadians and were pleased to hear about a research project examining the lives of these "poor whites". In many ways, the promotion of the "white slavery" discourse was a claim of historical victimization whereby descendants vindicated themselves from any involvement in processes of racial inequality or oppression in the past *and* present. The historical veracity of the existence of "white slavery" is a complex issue⁸ but regardless of how scholarship has approached the topic, public interest in the subject explicitly signals the inherently political nature of research focusing on the "poor whites".

Due to academic and public interest in the project I agreed to give several public lectures which were widely attended. They frequently sparked lively conversation during question and answer sessions. Weary of the political implications of this project, it was important for me to address the issue of "white slavery" and make clear my research questions, methods, and motivations. In talks that focused on the history of the "poor whites" I was adamant that there was no such thing as "white slavery" within the Barbadian context despite widely read popular culture histories that have argued otherwise (Hoffman 1992; O'Callaghan 2000; Jordan and Walsh 2008; Akamatsu 2010; for fiction see McCafferty 1995). I was also conscious of my own identity as a white visitor to the island and considered how that would influence how I was perceived on the island.

⁸ This question is addressed in a forthcoming publication by Handler and Reilly but see also Beckles 1996.

In making clear my intentions to place the narrative of the “poor whites” within the broader trajectory of Barbadian history and in conversation with that of Afro-Barbadians, new dialogues were sparked that inspired new research questions and directions. Two events, in particular, were formative in the development of my research project. Amateur historian and owner/operator of the Springvale Folk Museum, Newlands Greenidge was actively involved in my research from my first weeks on the island in October of 2012. I had recently decided that I would conduct excavations and historical research on the Below Cliff village in the parish of St. John and Newlands, who was familiar with the village and neighboring community was generously sharing his knowledge of the village and the names and contact information of community members that may have been of some help. He mentioned an older gentleman who he recalled had grown up in the village. I then asked the man’s age and if he was white or black. At this, Newlands chuckled and asked, “Why does he have to be one or the other?” The poignant question was critical in recognizing my assumptions about the “Redlegs” of Barbados and reimagining my research questions.

The other event was a lecture I was asked to give organized by the Barbados National Trust in March 2013. The lecture received overwhelming interest, was recorded for local television, and was attended by over 250 people. I presented my initial archaeological findings as well as my initial interpretations about village life and the place of the “poor whites” in Barbadian history and society. Following the lecture, questions from the audience sparked a lively conversation about family genealogies and racial identity on the island. One gentleman in particular was a crowd favorite. He appeared to be in his late-40s-early-50s and was dark in complexion. I was later told that

his surname was Fenty, a common name found in the village and surrounding community of my study (including the pop diva Rihanna). Mr. Fenty relayed a story from his childhood when his Grandmother asked all of her Grandchildren to line up for supper. The order was based on their skin complexions and within the same family there was a wide array of skin tones ranging from pale white to black. The story was undeniably laced with racist undertones and speaks to racial hierarchies that still haunt the former English colony but there was a comfortable atmosphere in the hall and audience members, some possibly sympathizing with his story, laughed at Mr. Fenty's entertaining delivery.

Following the lecture a number of families of diverse racial ancestries came to speak with me. During the lecture I used an image of a group of "Redleg" fishermen taken on the island's east coast in 1908 and to my surprise, many of the Barbadians that came to speak with me had copies of the same photograph (Figure 1.2). The men pictured were the ancestors of those with the photograph. In one instance, two of the individuals present shared surnames but not skin complexion and were able to trace their ancestry to the same person in the photograph. My interactions with these individuals illuminated a slew of familial connections in contemporary and historical Barbados that called into question the racial identities of members of the "poor white" demographic.



Figure 1.2: Photograph locally known as "The 'Redlegs' of Barbados". Pictured are fishermen residents of Bath in the parish of St. John taken in 1908. Photo courtesy of Mr. Richard Goddard.

I arrived in Barbados with several preconceived notions of how race and racial identity were historically categorized and how it was conceived in the present. These notions were symptomatic of what Michael Monahan refers to as the “politics of purity” whereby racial identities adhere to an all-or-nothing binary of black or white (2011). Additionally, they were partly instilled by historiography and scholarship of Barbados which seldom deals with the topic of racial intermixture and relies on and reifies the black/white binary.⁹ Despite some cumbersome encounters with Barbadians described above, specifically those that maintain the legitimacy of “white slavery” and their “rags to riches” success (in some cases laced with racist undertones), I more often encountered

⁹ This theme will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, particularly chapters 2 and 6, but for notable exceptions see Handler 1974; Beckles 1993; Forde-Jones 1998; Davis 1978).

individuals who understood the nuances of racial identity on the island and embraced its complexities (Stuart 2012). As a friend once told me, “I think you’d be hard pressed to find a truly ‘white’ Barbadian”.

East Coast Encounters, Ethnographies, and Archaeologies of Poverty

The village of Below Cliff was formally abandoned in the early 1960s and dozens of local residents remember growing up there or had friends or family members that had once lived there. The recent date of abandonment of this village presented the opportunity for an ethnographic and oral history component of this dissertation research which hadn’t been anticipated. Engagement with local and descendant communities has been a mainstay of historical archaeological for a number of years (see McDavid and Babson 1997; Marshall 2002; Shackel and Chambers 2004; Merriman 2004; Little and Shackel 2007). As local residents and/or people with familial connections to those being researched, community members may have a vested interest in the research being conducted and the interpretations being generated. Additionally, stakeholders can provide their own interpretations that may differ from that of researchers based on their unique perspectives. I therefore spent a substantial amount of time engaging with community members, particularly older residents who remember life in the area when the village was still inhabited. I collected oral histories for family genealogies and gathered oral traditions about what life was like in the Below Cliff area in generations past. The details of these informal interviews will be discussed in later chapters, but the data proved invaluable in interpreting the archaeological record.

At this juncture, however, the contemporary poverty experienced by many St. John residents deserves attention. At the risk of reducing local residents or descendant

communities to their roles as research informants, the realities of poverty experienced by these individuals speak to the historical processes that produce and perpetuate economic hardships and allow researchers the opportunity to connect with such individuals as *people* rather than as sources of data. As François Richard has recently observed, “as students of global processes and people who research traditionally silenced, oppressed, or disenfranchised communities – subalterns, ‘peoples without histories,’ ‘those of little note’ – impoverishment, marginalization, and economic inequalities are frequently imbricated into the edifice of our research, all the more resoundingly when descendants claiming historical or cultural connections to the sites we excavate continue to suffer the structural inequities and broken geographies perpetrated by capitalist development worldwide” (2011:167). Grasping how local and global economic forces affected the lives of community members was essential in having meaningful interactions with St. John residents and in comprehending realities faced on a daily basis.

Although I was an outsider, I was warmly welcomed by members of the St. John community. People were generally kind, good natured, polite, and forth coming with locally grown produce. It was, however, quite difficult to get residents to open up about their family histories or their personal thoughts about the history of the “poor whites” and their place in contemporary society. My prolonged stay on the island was helpful as I became a familiar site in the community. It was, however, my appearance and purpose for being in the community that proved most fruitful in gaining trust and building relationships. I would typically walk or drive around the community after conducting surveys and excavations in the Below Cliff tenantry. In my encounters with community members, I would therefore be quite dirty and sweaty from a day’s work. Locals could

discern a difference between my appearance and that of a typical tourist. On more than one occasion I was asked if I was a Gibson (a popular surname amongst “poor white” families in the area). My consistent presence in the community and the indications that I had been working warranted me a certain level of trust. Whereas I had previously spoken with residents in front of their houses, I was soon invited into homes and offered food and drink. Residents also became more transparent and were willing to speak with me openly about their family histories, their lives in St. John, and their memories of the Below Cliff tenantry. Additionally, many offered the names, phone numbers, and addresses of friends and family members who would be of help to me and my project. Gaining the trust of community residents was essential to the success of my project; this was made possible through my personal appearance. Therefore, the working class identity is still strong within St. John, an identity that opens possibilities for developing community ties to archaeological research (McGuire and Reckner 2005). Many residents are fisherman or small farmers. Despite significant changes that have taken place in the area over the past 50 years, poverty is still a daily reality.

Increasingly, over the past generation, many “Redleg” or “poor white” individuals have experienced social mobility, taking advantage of education, economic opportunity, or emigrating. Most that still live in St. John, however, are working class individuals that struggle with poverty. My main contact, Wilson Norris (Figure 3), is in his early 70s and worked in the sugar industry for most of his life; he held many positions within the industry from being a cane cutter to a foreman in the sugar works at the Belle Plantation. He has since retired and despite the pension he receives from the government he is usually unable to pay his utility bills. To make ends meet, the 71 year old climbs up and

down Hackleton's Cliff each morning to collect 50 coconuts from the woods that were once the Below Cliff tenantry (where he spent his childhood). He then sells the coconuts to a local bakery for 35 cents BBDS (17.5 cents US) each. Wilson expressed frustration in how the sugar industry was managed, local politics, and the recent trends in local music. He didn't, however, ever complain about his lot in life. He works hard, is proud of the person that he is, and boasts of the beauty of his island.



Figure 1.3: Wilson Norris of Clifton Hall. Wilson spent the first fourteen years of his life living in Below Cliff. Pictured here is Wilson with his sharpened hoe which was used to husk the coconuts found atop his head. Photo by author.

The attitudes expressed by Wilson were fairly typical of other families I encountered in the area. Despite stereotypes and a demographic label describing the “Redlegs” as poor, residents were determined not to let poverty define their identities or daily lives. As Wilson's cousin, Ainsley Norris, nostalgically commented on life during

his childhood in Below Cliff, “You know, we didn’t have much, but we were happy. I’d move back if I could.” Given the attitudes and sentiments of St. John residents and former residents of Below Cliff, I had to negotiate an archaeological analysis that examined the historical processes and material manifestations of poverty whilst being careful not to allow a state of poverty to define the lives community members, past and present. In Barbados, as in most world areas, stigmas against poverty often demoralize individuals that are perceived to be lazy, deserving of their destitute lifestyles, and are often criminalized (Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011b). Those that have benefitted from socioeconomic mobility may acknowledge their humble ancestry but neoliberal or “bootstrap” ideologies often generate paternalistic attitudes or blame towards the poor. As a mother in an upper class “white Bajan” family once told me, “my daughter wanted to date a Croney boy, but I wouldn’t have it.” The woman was aware of her “poor white” ancestry but was unwilling to allow her daughter to broach class lines and date a young boy from a known “poor white” family. The discrimination received by “poor white” individuals and families were historical realities that persist in the present. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid reifying stereotypes and providing scholarly data to quantify or legitimate discriminatory ideologies.

Organization

This introduction has discussed the politics of conducting research in contemporary Barbados and how these politics bear on St. John residents. The majority of this dissertation will discuss the histories of the “poor whites” in colonial Barbados,¹⁰

¹⁰ The term “colonial Barbados” is fairly ambiguous since it comprises the period from 1627 to 1966. Within this extensive period Barbados underwent several significant socioeconomic transformations

in part, to illuminate the processes that led to the current place of the “poor whites” in Barbadian society, both materially and historically. These processes will then be discussed at the local level, specifically Below Cliff. Historical, geographical, ethnographic, and archaeological data will be utilized in developing interpretations about a former “poor white” tenantry and the Barbadians that once lived there. As will be evident below, this dissertation, while focusing on the “poor whites”, will include all members of Barbadian society from planters, managers, enslaved laborers, free people of color, colonial authorities, and visitors to the island. Relationships between “poor whites” and members of these groups, as well as the fluid boundaries between them, will be a pivotal point of analysis in constructing the “poor whites” as an essential component of Barbadian history and society rather than being marginal and isolated outcasts.

I begin with the theoretical considerations that inform my research questions. Argued to be one of the world’s first modern regions (Mintz 1974; Palmié 2002; Scott 2004; Trouillot 1992; James 1963; Beckles 1997), the Caribbean offers the unique potential to explore modernizing processes and the local consequences of and responses to these processes. Furthermore, in presenting the “poor white” problem, it is evident that modernity and its associated ideologies of race and class have dramatically shaped how the “poor whites” have been portrayed within historiography. A review of “poor white” historical and limited anthropological scholarship will illustrate that such literature tends to treat the “poor whites” as a historically monolithic group that is and has been rigidly bounded by racial and class identity markers. Instead, I turn to historical and theoretical approaches to the Atlantic World, particularly the Caribbean, that challenge the dominate

including the sugar revolution, the establishment of a sugar and slave society, plantation amelioration, rebellion, emancipation, and riots (see Beckles 2007).

discourses and narratives of the Caribbean and present evidence for alternative modernities. These are utilized to interrogate the production, validity, the integrity, and the boundaries of racial categories in Barbados. In destabilizing racial categories significant questions are raised concerning how race is constructed, deconstructed, and reimagined at the local level. In short, I ask, what is the “white” in “poor white”? Racial boundaries and their malleability also evoke the relationship between race and class, the entanglements of which therefore weigh heavily in considering the archaeology of poverty.

Given the proliferation of historical archaeological research on plantation spaces, this body of literature is then briefly reviewed, highlighting contributions as well as gaps. Of particular significance is how the plantation is interpreted as a unit of analysis. Evidence from Trents Estate (Armstrong and Reilly N.D.) and Below Cliff illustrate stark transformations in how the plantation landscape was organized from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Through an analysis of geographical space it is possible to question traditional interpretations of landscapes of power and their analogous relationship to ideologies of racial hierarchies. Additionally, through a comparison of the two contexts, it is possible to observe the dynamics of power structures as the sugar and slavery systems developed on the island. Finally, questions are raised concerning the “poor white” village tenantry as a “marginal” space. These theoretical considerations suggest that these plantation spaces are zones in which racial categories and ideologies destabilize and that reimagining how the plantation as a unit of analysis is interpreted can raise significant questions concerning the localized entanglements of race and class.

Historical context is then provided in Chapter 3 to explain the processes through which the “poor whites” came to occupy village tenancies and other marginal spaces around the plantation landscape. For over two decades following the English settlement of the island in 1627, the island’s population was primarily white.¹¹ Europeans primarily labored under contracts of indenture on small farms (ten to twenty acres) until the sugar revolution of the mid-1640s drastically altered island society, economy, politics, demographics, and geography. European laborers continued to arrive on the island throughout the seventeenth century but as planters increasingly favored the labor of enslaved Africans, fewer servants came and those that remained found their services no longer needed as plantation laborers. In the decades leading up to the eighteenth century the sugar and slave society had fully blossomed and the “poor whites”, numbering in the range of 10,000 (Shepherd 1977), were cast to the “rab” lands of the island, areas unsuitable for large scale agricultural production. Through the use of limited historical sources their existence as militia and small farming tenants is traced throughout the period of slavery. The “poor whites” more substantially enter the historical record in literature surrounding abolition debates. Travel writers as well as local historians and radical abolitionists comment on the state of the “poor whites” which serve to inform contemporary stereotypes, including those used by historians and fiction writers. Despite an exodus of sorts following emancipation (Watson 2000b), many “poor whites” continued to reside along the island’s east coast as well as in the urban center, Bridgetown; many communities dwindled in the postcolonial period but the parish of St.

¹¹ Population figures and racial demographics will be discussed in more detail below but for a brief overview of early population figures see Dunn 1969; Handler and Lange 1978: 14-15, 20-29.

John, home to Below Cliff, still holds what is locally known to be the last vestiges of the “Redlegs” of Barbados.

The methods discussed in Chapter 4 illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of this research project. Though primarily archaeological, research also incorporated historical, geographic, and ethnographic methodologies for a more comprehensive study of the “poor whites”. The process of discovering, surveying, and excavating at Below Cliff in St. John is discussed in detail. As discussed above, however, ethnographic methods were essential in establishing how to commence archaeological surveys and excavations in the Below Cliff village (Reilly 2013). Additionally, the collection of oral histories from former residents of Below Cliff and descendants of former residents proved fruitful in understanding village dynamics, local genealogies, and local cultural identity. This project also entailed substantial use of primary sources viewed in Barbadian archives, both national and local. Parish vestry minutes were consulted as they provide detailed information about local residents deemed worthy of “poor relief”, a requirement of which was being white. The majority of archival work thus entailed the use of local vestry minutes as well as registries of births, deaths, and marriages, a marked change from previous studies of the “Redlegs” which rely on traveler accounts, Council minutes, and literature surrounding the abolition debate which spoke to the “poor white” experience in general rather than locally.

Chapter 5 takes class relations as its primary focus. I begin with a description of a discourse of “poor white” idleness or their portrayal within primary and secondary historical materials to be cast as refusing to occupy themselves in useful forms of labor. From here, data from Below Cliff is considered to more accurately describe the realities

of poverty with which residents coped, the nature of their economic activity in terms of informal and moral economies, as well as their relation to broader capitalist processes undertaken on Clifton Hall plantation on top of the cliff. Those living below the cliff struggled in a harsh environment prone to deadly rockslides while simultaneously grappling with impoverishment. Therefore, I consider artifact use as well as reuse in interpreting the material culture collected. Additionally, through a critical analysis of baptismal registries I examine how local authorities perceived and documented “poor white” occupational identities. Through particular ideologies of acceptable and unacceptable forms of labor, individuals were cast as either gainfully employed or as idle without given occupations. In opposition to reductive discourses that cast the “poor whites” as lazy, I suggest a complex and dialectical relationship between “poor whites” and processes of capitalism.

Despite the inextricable links between issues of race and class (discussed in Chapter 2), race and racial identities and boundaries are considered in Chapter 6. Similar to the discussion of discourses of laziness in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6 I present portrayals of the “poor whites” as being socially isolated, racially arrogant, and purely “white”. Data presented from the Below Cliff tenantry direct counters such notions of isolation through evidence of “poor white” participation in local island markets with Afro-Barbadians. Furthermore, similarities in architectural techniques as well as household spatial organization are indicative of cultural exchange between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians. While than being concerned with cultural origins of particular ways of life, I suggest (following Sidney Mintz 1974) that localized encounters on the plantation landscape facilitated cultural influence in both directions between the seemingly disparate

“poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians. In the final sections of the chapter I engage with local vestry minutes and registries to question the rigidity of racial boundaries. Evidence suggests that interaction and intermixing were common occurrences between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians. Despite planter and administrative attempts to segregate racial groups and police racial boundaries, evidence suggests that boundaries were porous and frequently contested.

Chapter 7 highlights the broader implications for the existence of Below Cliff as a plantation space representative of an alternative modernity. Class relations illustrate a dynamic, complex, and at times contentious relationship between Below Cliff residents and broader processes of capitalism. Following the work of Vinay Gidwani (2008) I suggest that resident’s labor patterns can be aptly described through a “politics of work” in which labor activities may not have been harnessed by capitalist processes. As such, planters, elites, managers, authorities, and others committed to plantation production would have viewed their habits with scorn and perceived them to be detached from productive forms of labor. Rather, their labor more accurately represents an alternative to binary models of dominance by or resistance to capitalism. Despite significant struggles with poverty, residents were making their own choices as to how they related to broader economic networks and activities.

In considering plantation spaces occupied by “poor whites”, the material signatures of poverty are manifest in the archaeological record, representing the quagmire facing Barbadian creole elites who were committed to the reality and persistence of racial hierarchies that determined one’s socioeconomic status. Below Cliff was a village tenantry which was largely out of sight and out of mind of planters. Therefore, as

laboring classes interacted and intermixed, it became evident that ideologies of racial separation and purity met with only limited success. While tenants certainly weren't immune to the effects of living in a racist plantation society, it is evident that racial boundaries were unclear, porous, lacked stability, and were being negotiated at the local level. Furthermore, these spaces provided the setting to challenge racial norms as human nature and interaction transgressed what have been understood as being stringent demographic delineations. Finally, this discussion of unstable group boundaries lends itself to a critique of historical archaeological practices of and reliance upon grouping. I explore the inherent dangers in reproducing and reifying group differences that were and in many cases still are the sources of discrimination, oppression, and inequality. I suggest a disciplinary future in which we more critically engage with the fluidity of group boundaries and diminish our reliance on essentialized group identities.

This research project marks the first attempt to archaeologically investigate the "poor whites" of Barbados. As has already been discussed, and will be discussed in further details in the chapters that follow, while the focus of this dissertation is the "poor whites", it is evident that despite historical and contemporary misconceptions of "poor white" isolation, they played a significant role in the development of Barbadian society. The research questions presented and addressed in this dissertation are therefore significant in understanding the dynamics of plantation spaces, the historical processes that engender and maintain poverty, and how these phenomena affect contemporary notions and entanglements of race and class. Primary sources reveal that planters and island officials had particular ideas concerning the social positioning of the "poor whites" as well as the significance of racial hierarchies and the maintenance of racial boundaries.

Evidence suggests, however, that village spaces are arenas in which racial boundaries have the potential to disintegrate. The material traces of poverty and an unforgiving landscape illustrate the hardships faced by tenantry residents. On the margins of the plantation the “poor whites” coped with harsh living conditions and constructed a space within which elite notions of race and class were challenged and reimagined.

Chapter 2

Race, Class, and Archaeologies of the Plantation

A small group of descendants of the white indentured servants, the ‘poor whites,’ existed on the fringes of Barbadian society in total isolation, mainly in the rural districts of St. John and St. Philip. They were so proud of their racial purity that they resisted assimilation into the mainstream of Barbadian society, especially with the black population – David Browne (2012:16).

The pejorative “poor white” is an explicit commentary on this group’s exceptional racial and class status within historical and contemporary Barbadian society. Their “white” identity positions them as a minority demographic on an island that, according to recent statistics, is 93% black (Commonwealth Statistics 2012). Their condition of impoverishment, however, separates them from the white elite. Their existence, therefore, is an historical and social anomaly, a quagmire within Caribbean society. That is, however, if their state of cultural and racial distinctiveness is readily accepted as historically valid and contemporarily suitable. In other words, the narrative of “poor white” exceptionalism, marginalization, and distinctiveness fits well into the broader narrative of Caribbean modernity. The crux of this chapter then, is to destabilize historical and contemporary understandings of “poor white” racial and class identity to present possible alternative modernities that existed on local levels but have since been denied or suppressed in favor of dominant discourses.

Barbados was visited by the English in 1625 and was established as a colony in 1627. Painted in broad strokes, it quickly developed into a plantation economy based on the institution of African slavery, emancipation ended institutional slavery but did little to alter or balance the white over black socioeconomic hierarchy, and in the wake of independence in 1966 the post-colony’s agricultural production diminished in favor of an economy dependent on tourism. Despite England’s relatively late entrée into New World

colonial expansion, as compared to Spanish and Portuguese endeavors, the seventeenth century was a formative period in which plantation societies exploded and expanded across the Barbadian and broader Caribbean landscape. Despite significant local variations across space and time, the plantation system would have an unparalleled impact on Caribbean society, politics, economics, and geography over the next several centuries (for Barbados see Beckles 2007; for the broader Caribbean see Williams 1984; Higman 2011). This metanarrative is, however, a drastic oversimplification of what constitutes the modern period throughout the Caribbean region. Despite instances of historical veracity and the tragic realities associated with these overarching processes and events, they can be over-determinate in how they are remembered, presented, and wielded in the present (Richard 2010:3-4). In short, Atlantic encounters and exchanges are far more nuanced at the local level and dominant discourses of modernity, specifically how race and class became rigidly defined and determinate, need to be interrogated to explore their porosity and (in)stability.

Locally occurring nuances within the context of the plantation, or even fissures in the dominant narratives of Atlantic World historiography and society, inherently confront processes of capitalism and capitalist relations. The approach taken here borrows much from classical Marxist and materialist historical archaeologies that have confronted the power dynamics and character of capitalism that engendered material and structural inequalities in the past and present along lines of race, class, and gender (Leone et al. 1987; Leone 1995 and 2005; Leone and Potter 1999; McGuire 1992; McGuire and Paynter 1991; Mullins 1999; Spriggs 1984; Orser 1996; Delle et al. 2000). It is also, however, a marked departure from such approaches since, as I argue, capitalist forces

weren't necessarily defining or determinate features in the lives of "poor white" Barbadians, although they were certainly significant. Planters, governmental authorities, merchants, investors, colonial agents, managers, skilled workers, and enslaved and free laborers were all inculcated in processes of modernization and responsible (in different capacities and positions) for the production, reproduction, maintenance, and transformation of the systems and structures that constituted (and still constitute) capitalistic modernity in the Caribbean. While such systems and structures involved the exploitation, degradation, and oppression for many for the benefit and profit of very few, all played a role in how processes of modernization were developed and transformed. Given inherent power dynamics, how processes of modernization were imposed, the successes and/or failures of instilling their associated ideologies, and the ways in which everyday realities transformed at the local level were dialectical in nature. These dialectical relations involved a constant dialogue between actors at different positions within a power structure but who nonetheless had substantial impacts on how modernity was experienced at the local level.

A particular metanarrative of Caribbean modernity has largely influenced the way regional history and society is portrayed and perceived in the past and present, the specifics of which will be discussed in more detail below. Within the fissures of this metanarrative, however, exist the alternatives that developed and transformed as a result of the dialectical relationships between individuals and groups encountering and responding to the onset of processes of social modernization. While such alternatives have been consciously and unconsciously suppressed or ignored (Fischer 2004; Trouillot 1995; Schmidt and Patterson 1995), historical archaeology is well suited to unearth and

illuminate localized material manifestations of contexts where and when individuals didn't adhere to the prescribed norms of Caribbean modernity. In what follows the conceptual problems associated with an analysis of the "poor whites" will be unpacked to contextualize such a study within broader Caribbean scholarly debate. Next, archaeological approaches to the plantation are considered with particular attention paid to Marxist interpretations in addition to the emerging body of literature concerning the archaeology of poverty. Finally, we turn to a critical examination of Caribbean modernity and those that have presented hidden or alternative histories that seek to reimagine how historiography is understood and approached. Specifically, I turn to ontologies of race and the instability of racial identities within localized settings. These inform my own approach to an archaeology of alternative modernities.

The "Poor White Problem"

The sugar revolution that erupted in Barbados in the 1640s dramatically altered the trajectory of world history and spawned the economic, political, and social structures associated with plantation agro-industry that enveloped much of the New World (Dunn 1972; Higman 2000). The nuances and permutations of this system have long been the focus of considerable scholarly study. Since the groundbreaking work of Caribbean intellectuals such as C.L.R. James ([1938]1963) and Eric Williams ([1944]1994), Atlantic World histories have been explored that center the African and Afro-Caribbean experience in addition to the dark legacy and reality of colonialism, capitalism, and slavery (see also Césaire [1955]2000; Fanon [1952]2008, [1961]2004). While Howard Johnson has argued that such analyses have had the unintended effect of dismissing the narrative of the white minority's experience (1998:ix), I argue that the experience of

wealthy white males loomed large and omnipresent within the very structures and institutions that sought to circumscribe the lives of the enslaved and other exploited colonial subjects (Mills 1997). Though this may be the case for the plantocracy it presents challenges when considering a “poor white” minority that coped with perpetual poverty within a slave society, a largely black post-emancipation colony, and later, nation. In essence, an investigation of the “poor whites” of Barbados appears to run against the grain of vindicationist scholarship as espoused by W.E.B. DuBois. In his formulation, such scholarship sought to “set straight the oft-distorted record of the Black experience and to fill in the lacunae resulting from the conscious or unconscious omission of significant facts about Black people” (Drake 1987, vol. 1:xviii; cited in Foster 1997:2). As Paul Mullins (2008) has recently articulated, such an approach is well suited for historical archaeologists conducting research in settings where individuals and groups are coping with persistent racism and the legacy of slavery in the present. In conducting research that is situated in a world that in many ways continues to reflect “white over black” consciousness, ideology, structures, and realities that were developing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where does that leave an analysis of impoverished “whites” situated within a sugar and slave society?

This conceptual quagmire lies at the heart of anticolonial rhetoric as championed by Franz Fanon and illustrates the consequence of the seemingly straightforward label at the heart of this dissertation: “poor white.” Despite historiography and semi-ethnographic studies of the “poor whites,” little has actually been said about the label itself and its significance within Caribbean scholarship. As mentioned above, the existence of thousands of “poor whites” is seemingly contradictory to the overarching

structures and metanarrative of colonial society and economy. In his scathing critique of colonialism and insistence that Marxist approaches are often insufficient in adequately addressing the realities of imperialist endeavors, Fanon argues that “In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (2004:5). Peter Simmons employs Fanon’s tautology to present the “poor whites” as evidence of the shortcomings of Fanon’s assessment of colonial society and economy (1976:3). Rather than tearing down Fanon’s colonial critique, however, the “poor whites” reify its astuteness. Their exceptionalism necessitates the adjective qualifier. The employment of the term alerts users to the out-of-place-and-time condition of the group. To further illustrate the conceptual implications of the term, what analytical use or social significance would be garnered from placing the “poor” qualifier in front of various nonwhite groups such as slave, black, or Afro-Barbadian?

Historically, Hilary Beckles (1988) has presented the “poor white problem” as a political question faced by Barbadian authorities within the decades surrounding emancipation, a phenomenon discussed in detail in the following chapter. An estimated population of between 9,000 and 12,000 “poor whites”¹² had for centuries struggled with poverty and had shown little to no signs of social mobility despite paternalistic efforts on the part of planters and administrators (see Lambert 2001 and 2005; Shepherd 1977:79-101). Barbadian and colonial elites grappled with the conceptual and practical paradox of

¹² The figure given here is a median based on historical estimations. Seventeenth century population figures are approximations and often unreliable. Additionally, even in later centuries when figures are more reliable, socioeconomic breakdowns of the “white” population aren’t provided. Therefore, Jill Sheppard has estimated that at any given time the population of the “poor whites” was likely three fourths of the total “white” population. Within these parameters, the population fluctuated from an estimated 12,000 in 1715 to about 9,000 at the time of emancipation (Sheppard 1977:34, 43).

a sizable “poor white” demographic within a rigidly bounded racial society (Beckles 1988; Watson 2000b). If we then consider the metanarrative of white plantocratic rule and black impoverishment and oppression, the historical “poor white problem” is also a contemporary theoretical and conceptual one. While analyses that address “white” oppression, discrimination, and impoverishment do not necessarily deny a history of race based maliciousness, can we consider an epistemology of race as a conceptual category that is completely removed from supremacist ideologies (see Hartigan 2005; Monahan 2011).

With this and other questions in mind, where can we situate an investigation of the “poor whites”? As discussed above, the need for the economic qualifier of “poor” within the pejorative “poor white” reaffirms the significance of anticolonial discourse as well as scholarship that has explicitly illustrated the “white over black” realities of Atlantic World history (see Wolf 1982; Mills 1997; Jordan 1968). Therefore, it is imperative to avoid a recapitulation of the broader colonial, capitalistic, and exploitative narratives. On the other hand, it is equally futile to argue that the “poor whites” were and are simply an exceptional case that deserves attention solely for their exceptional character. It is an essential premise of this dissertation that despite their seemingly anomalous and exceptional status within Caribbean society, the “poor whites” were far more ingrained within local society than has been previously acknowledged. Therefore, it is necessary to interrogate how and why they have been interpreted as such in addition to attempting to uncover the lived realities of these individuals within plantation society.

In his explication of the Racial Contract,¹³ political philosopher Charles Mills has argued that “though there were local variations in the Racial Contract, depending on circumstances and the particular mode of exploitation...it remains the case that the white tribe, as the global representative of civilization and modernity, is generally on top of the social pyramid” (1997:30). In an attempt to cement the status of the Racial Contract as a political, social, economic, ideological, and philosophical rule, Mills privileges the broader implications of the Contract while minimizing the “local variations”. It is, however, within these local variations that we are able to observe the successes and failures of the tenets of the Racial Contract, or in our case, modernity, and begin to unpack how and why they succeeded or failed. To begin this endeavor involves an interrogation of the very categories upon which Mills’ Contract is based.

The interrogation of racial categories and identity has informed interdisciplinary approaches to critical whiteness studies, many of which have been concerned with the immigrant experience in the United States in the mid-to-late nineteenth century (see Igantiev 1995; Roediger 2005). Within historical geography, similar approaches have been applied to the Barbadian context. In particular, the work of David Lambert has sought to destabilize historical notions of whiteness within colonial Barbados (2001; 2005a; 2005b). He argues that “whiteness” or “being white” is never a complete process and that discourses of whiteness were continually shaping notions of race within the colony as well as in the metropole (2001: 347-348).

The past two decades have also witnessed a rise in historical literature centering the poor white experience in the rural south of the antebellum United States (see for

¹³ Mills argues that the Racial Contract is the ideological and epistemological foundation upon which modern notions of governmentality, economy, society, geography, and philosophy are built, superseding other contractarian agreements such as the social contract (1997).

example Bolton 1994; Cecil-Fronsman 1992; Forret 2006). This literature serves as a useful comparison to this analysis of Barbadian “poor whites” given James Stark’s comment in the early twentieth century that “The poor whites occupy relatively the same position in Barbados that the ‘crackers’ do in the Southern States” (1903:102; see also Hartigan 2005:Chapter 2). As Significantly, Jeff Forret has altered misconceptions about relations between the enslaved and poor whites, arguing that the fact that “many slaves and poor whites socialized or traded, ran off or made love together, demonstrates that race could not always have been the decisive factor in determining the course or tone of their interactions” (2006:18). His work is a breath of fresh air amongst studies that continually reify the white/black binary of racial distinction. Despite these empirical and theoretical insights provided by critical whiteness studies and historical scholarship (particularly in demystifying interracial relationships), such literature largely ignores the significance of local nuances and dynamics of racial interactions and relationships in the development of racial identities. For these considerations, anthropological engagements with race provided a useful framework for approaching the racial identities and relationships for those living below the cliff.

Towards a more Anthropological Archaeology of Race

In a 2006 review/discussion of archaeologies of race, Shannon Dawdy levelled a rather harsh critique against archaeologists claiming that, “Archaeologists are thinker-tinkers (and bad ones at that), rather than inventors; they are intellectual *bricoleurs*, a primitive sort of social scientist” (2006b: 153). Her tongue-in-cheek deployment of the anthropological/archaeological ancestral designation of “primitive” reflects a serious state of affairs for a discipline that has long studied, but rarely theoretically engaged with, the

“object” of race, racism, or racialization. Despite Dawdy’s encouragement for archaeologists to more critically engage with race on a deeper, theoretical, and more global scale and race’s continued centrality as an archaeological analytic and political underpinning (Franklin 1997 and 2001; Mullins 2008), since its publication surprisingly few volumes have heeded this call (for exceptions that give some degree of primacy to issues of race see Battle-Baptiste 2011; Hayes 2013; Voss 2008; Orser 2007; Shackel 2011; for a unique prehistoric/historic dialogue about race and archaeology see Gosden 2006).

Further to Dawdy’s point, now more than ever, archaeologies of race are becoming synonymous with archaeologies of slavery and/or the African diaspora. Archaeological approaches have viewed race as being practiced (2004), essential in the construction of identity and space (Orser 2001), an embodied social construction (Battle-Baptiste 2011; Epperson 2004), a politically salient illustration of contemporary inequality (Mullins 2008), a fluid emic and etic identity across space and time (Babson 1990), and an “ideological assertion of otherness, inferiority, and fragmentation” (Epperson 1990:29). Despite these varied approaches, such analyses have largely adhered to a binary model of race reliant on designations of black and white without critically engaging with how these identities were (both biologically and socially) developed, transformed, and inscribed in the past. In other words, archaeologists have been primarily occupied with racism rather than race as an object of critical study. In general, cultural and biological anthropologists have been far more attuned to the nuances of racial identity/difference and in developing useful theoretical and methodological approaches to the subject (Hutton 2005; Hartigan 2005; Edgar and Hunley 2009;

Goodman 2013; for a perspective on anthropology's engagements with race in the past see Caspari 2003; Baker 1998 and 2010). The dialectical relationship between cultural and biological approaches to race, what Alan Goodman (2013) refers to as "cultural-biologicals", is now being given serious thought in terms of how race is historically, socially, ecologically, and politically constituted (see also Gravlee 2009 and 2013; Smedley and Smedley 2005; Hartigan 2013).

Within the scope of these anthropological approaches to race, in conjunction with critical whiteness studies, whiteness has transitioned from a taken for granted, unmarked social category to a central object of study within anthropological literature (Rasmussen et al. 2001; Hartigan 1999 and 2005; Tyler 2012; for pertinent sociological and philosophical literature see Wray 2006; Wray and Newitz 2013; Jacobson 1998; Monahan 2011; Frankenberg 1993 and 1997). Though the approaches taken by these authors vary greatly, there is general consensus on several fundamental points. First, each recognizes that the idea of a "white collective" is a myth that is often promulgated in arguments emphasizing white domination over non-whites. In other words, white is now recognized as a heterogeneous racial category across space and time. Second, closely following the first parameter, there are particular boundaries to a white identity which are engendered, policed, contested, and altered. Finally, class and gender are viewed as significant and co-constituting identities that drastically affect the way in which race is defined, perceived, embodied, and experienced.

Despite the common ground established with these three assertions, there are significant points of divergence within this literature that inform the approach taken in my analysis of Barbadian "poor whites". I will therefore facilitate a dialogue between

three approaches that are, at times, fundamentally divergent from one another yet essential in an attempt to develop a holistic way of interpreting the racial (as well as class and gender) dynamics and identities of those living below the cliff. I begin with John Hartigan's (2005) cultural approach to the study of "white trash" and whiteness in *Odd Tribes: Toward a Cultural Analysis of White People*. Hartigan provides an historically grounded analysis of poor whites beginning in the American south in the years leading up to the Civil War and spanning the poor white expansion throughout the Midwest, the eugenics movement, the post-World War II era, and ultimately arriving in heterogeneous white neighborhoods in urban Detroit. Hartigan espouses a cultural approach that privileges the localized relational, interactive, and performative aspects of race: "Cultural analysis demonstrates how the co-construction of race, class, and gender distinctions operates according to place-specific dynamics that ground and facilitate the concurrent production and reproduction of multiple overlapping and mutually reinforcing identities" (2005:258).

Hartigan presents unique data sets in the form of ethnographic fieldwork, literature, popular culture, and historical accounts to present the heterogeneity of whiteness. Of particular significance for the purposes of my own study of "poor whites" is his emphasis on white middle/upper class anxieties and self-examination as being crucial in the development of discourses on the white underclass. Hartigan's approach is presented in sharp contrast to ideological forms of analysis largely influenced by Said's (1978) model of Otherness. Largely critical of Bonilla-Silva's (2001) treatment of race as a substitute for racist ideology, Hartigan's major point of contention is that an ideological approach (2005:12),

brackets off attention to the social processes that are encompassed by cultural analysis: the work of sorting out matters of belonging through the recognitions and replication of sameness and similarities, the construction of affinities and the contests over common depictions of collective identity, which each typically bears the convoluted traces of the site where that work is done.

I am indeed supportive, as most anthropologists would be, of Hartigan's emphasis on localized processes as they are certainly significant in the analysis of racial processes below the cliff. I do, however, find Hartigan's cultural approach to be too dismissive of ideology and empire in the making, remaking, and experience of race.

Though partially influenced by Hartigan's work (2012:207-211), Katharine Tyler's (2012) *Whiteness, Class and the Legacies of Empire: On Home Ground*, engages with the ideological approach to argue that the production and reproduction of whiteness amongst rural and urban white middle class individuals from Leicester/shire, England is constituted by a collective "white amnesia" of England's colonial past and persistent processes of Othering nonwhites, specifically "Brasians" (those of Indian or Asian descent) and Afro-Caribbean blacks living in England. As she argues, "Notwithstanding the distinctions between White working- and middle-class discourses within specific places, my argument is that intrinsic to White racialised discourses across class and geographical locations is the reproduction of White discourses of coloniality in the present" (213). She continues, "This discourse reproduces and maintains a racially dichotomous worldview in the present that underpins the co-construction of a racially unmarked White American [and British] self in relation to racially marked Others" (*ibid.*). Tyler makes a convincing point about the significance of ideological discourses associated with colonialism and difference and how they affect racial dynamics and identities in diverse local contexts.

In the ensuing chapters it will become evident that such discourses came to be crucial in defining, reproducing, and attempting to maintain modern constructs of racial difference and boundaries in Barbados. These broader discourses and ideologies constitute a significant component of what encapsulates modern Caribbean history. Given my interest in exploring alternative modernities, however, it will be crucial to interrogate the salience (or lack thereof) of these discourses and ideologies. In other words, in presenting evidence that destabilizes these ideologies and discourses, we can recognize the inability of their essentialist character to explain how racial identities are locally produced, reproduced, experienced, and embodied. Furthermore, Tyler's ideological approach runs the risk of reproducing and reifying dichotomous models including the West and the rest, colonizer and colonized, white and black, and dominant and suppressed. In fact, her analysis of the Other and their role in the production and reproduction of whiteness in England homogenizes immensely diverse individuals and groups from multivalent colonial realms and eras.

It is this very essentialism and reification of categories and concepts that inspired Michael Monahan's (2011) philosophical theorization of race in *The Creolizing Subject: Race, Reason, and the Politics of Purity*. Monahan argues that traditional approaches to racial analysis suffer from an adherence to a "politics of purity" whereby one's racial identity is ascribed to concrete and bounded "all-or-nothing" racial categories. Referring back to historical scholarship on the American south, through an analysis that illustrates the social dynamics between poor whites and the enslaved in antebellum Virginia and North Carolina, Forret reifies white and black racial identities, presenting them as *a priori* and real boundaries that are explicitly defined. Similarly, despite efforts to reveal

“the dynamics and disputed terrain of colonial whiteness” (2001:337), Lambert ultimately reifies and bounds racial categories, essentializing the “poor white” subgroup as culturally and racially homogeneous and distinct within the Barbadian context.

Alternatively, Monahan suggests an interrogation of the epistemological roots of these racial categories to better understand the biological, social, and political dimensions of racial ontology and identity and how such categories are always in a state of becoming, they are never complete. If class formation processes are infused within this discussion, which Monahan explicitly omits (2011:122), the approach is useful for contextually interrogating Barbadian “poor white” racial and class identity and positionality. What are the boundaries that separate the “Redlegs” from free people of color? Furthermore, while the legal designation between the “poor whites” and the enslaved may appear straightforward, how are these boundaries maintained, for example, if an enslaved male has a child with a “poor white” woman? In interrogating these embodied and multiple ontologies of personal identities (Harris and Robb 2012), I ask what and where is the “white” in “poor white”?

In my study, I propose an approach to race that borrows from critical whiteness studies but is far more anthropologically informed. While recognizing the significance of broader ideologies of racial distinctiveness, as well as hierarchies and power dynamics, localized analysis of cultural interaction and relations will attempt to interrogate the stability of racial identities as they were developed, imposed, and embodied in the past. In essence, to avoid the theoretical “poor white problem”, it is necessary to critically engage with physical and conceptual boundary maintenance between “poor whites” and larger Barbadian society in the past and present and to draw out the fragility and

porousness of those boundaries (Forde-Jones 1998; Jones 2007). Sociologist Rogers Brubaker has highlighted the danger of group based analysis along lines of ethnicity that is applicable to our investigation of race. He warns that undisciplined grouping practices homogenize individual variation, problematizing the very nature of groups as a useful analytical construct. He further claims that such practices essentialize and reduce groups to a few underlying characteristics, ultimately missing other significant aspects of individuality and identity (2004:9-10). Ultimately, if racial identities (imposed and/or self-perceived) can be contested, they can be reimagined to generate a more accurate depiction of village and tenantry life on a Barbadian plantation. I argue that localized and non-elite understandings of race didn't necessarily adhere to dominant (plantocratic) notions of how individuals were defined according to race or their place within Barbadian society.

As mentioned above, the development of dominant ideologies about race and alternatives to them were and are intimately tied to similar processes affecting social class. Despite arguments claiming that Barbados is and has historically been an entirely class based society, often using the "poor whites" as justification for this ascertain (Keagy 1972), race based hierarchies played an integral role in the development of social classes on the plantation landscape. Archaeological research is well suited to analyze class and race formation processes as they unfolded and continuously became reimagined in emerging capitalist/colonial spaces. The processes that took place in Barbados beginning in 1627 would significantly alter the trajectory of Atlantic World history. The sugar revolution, beginning in the 1640s, would establish a high functioning and remarkably profitable agrarian capitalist network that not only transformed global trade,

but substantially altered how race, class, and labor were conceptualized, managed, and (re)defined in localized plantation settings. As a traditional space of archaeological research, I now turn to archaeological approaches to the study of the plantation to specifically engage with the role of laborers on the plantation, the significance of spatial orientation and landscape, and the place of “poor whites” within plantation production.

Archaeologies of the Plantation Landscape

The plantation is an emblematic space of early New World capitalism representing trans-Atlantic flows in the form of goods and bodies. It is within this arena in the seventeenth century that new labor regimes were developed that were a marked transformation from labor systems practiced in Western Europe and West Africa (Newman 2013). Additionally, as the “cultural hearth” of the plantation system that would come to dominate England’s New World colonies for centuries to come, Barbados is an indexical setting to observe the transformations that occurred at local levels before, during, and after the shift to sugar production. While the specifics of the sugar revolution and its aftermath, particularly how it affected the “white” underclass, will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, I now turn to how plantation archaeology has informed my own approach to analyzing these transformations. Despite the overwhelming literature of plantation archaeology, both in terms of quality and quantity, there are particular trends that have been especially useful in the development of a plantation archaeology of the “poor whites”. Marxist approaches are essential to this discussion as they privilege the power relations that were intimately tied to the development, management, and maintenance of social classes. Such approaches, however, are insufficient for an analysis that seeks to understand relations between laboring or non-

elite classes on the plantation of heterogeneous racial ancestries, an area of investigation that has been largely neglected by archaeologists (for exceptions see Otto and Burns 1983; Orser 1988). Additionally, as the epigraph of this chapter illustrates, the “poor whites” have been portrayed as a demographic existing on the margins or fringes of the plantation landscape. As I argue below, through a reorientation of plantation space, such seemingly peripheral spaces can be reimagined as central spaces of social interaction and production.

Plantation studies have been a mainstay of historical archaeology since the 1960s and have remained an integral part in what can be termed African-American or African diaspora archaeology (see for example Orser 1990; Singleton 1999, and 2009a). The contributions of archaeologists conducting such research have been invaluable in unearthing and interpreting the material signatures of the lifeways of enslaved Africans and their descendants. This scholarship has produced an enormous body of literature illuminating the nuances, complexities, and harsh realities of everyday life on the plantation (see for example Singleton 2009a; Haviser 1999; Armstrong 1990; Deetz 1993; Heath 1999; Honerkamp 2009; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005). Additionally, the landscape of the plantation has been a focal point of analysis, with archaeologists investigating how space was imagined, produced, experienced, and laden with power dynamics. For the purposes of this study, the work of James Delle (1998) is particularly useful, specifically his analyses that views plantation landscapes as material spaces that were purposely designed and produced to maximize profit and control labor. Therefore, plantations can be viewed as spaces within which negotiations took place between

management and the enslaved as these groups struggled to surveil and control or resist, respectively.

Despite common features and basic tenets in production strategies, the plantation as a unit of analysis varied across space and time, as did the archaeological study of the space (for a review of early investigations of plantation slavery see Orser 1990). Within such analyses, however, plantation space is often divided into specific and familiar bounded units including the village, great house, fields, works, and provision grounds. As such, archaeologists adhere to plantation divisions that were designed, constructed, and often mapped by planters or plantation managers. Despite planter attempts to circumscribe movements of the enslaved and plantation tenants on and away from the plantation,¹⁴ such landscape subdivisions aren't necessarily useful modules of analysis for investigating how plantation laborers or residents experienced the plantation setting. While understanding the power structures inherent within plantation organization is crucial for unpacking the harsh realities of these emblematic spaces of capitalism and enslaved responses to them, such analyses privilege the relationship between laborers and authority figures and/or power structures, often times obfuscating significant relationships between laborers. Therefore, a careful mediation is necessary to avoid an essentializing adherence to binary models of plantation analyses; control or resistance, "the world the slaves made" or "the world that was created and controlled by planters" (Singleton 1999b:12).

¹⁴ In Barbados, juridical action was taken by planters in the mid seventeenth century to ensure that no enslaved person could leave the plantation without written permission from their master (Jennings 1654:16-21). Additionally, a 1657 proclamation by Governor Searle mandated similar written permission for Irish servants (see Gwynn 1932:236-237).

The idea that plantations were purposely constructed to control labor and maximize profits is not new (an abundance of literature focuses on this theme but for a Caribbean case study see Delle 1998). Additionally, recent archaeological investigations have revealed that, due to landscape constraints, planters frequently made choices about whether the control of labor or production efficiency were more important (Bates 2014). While plantation design and planter/managerial strategies for laborer surveillance and subjection were certainly significant in affecting how laborers (enslaved and indentured in the case of Barbados) experienced life on the plantation and the power structures inherent in the institution of bound labor, they didn't necessarily dictate laborers' daily lives and practices.

In considering the inability of planters/managers/overseers to control every aspect of the lives of plantation laborers, specifically the enslaved, archaeologists have largely focused on two arenas of responses or cultural behaviors in the face of plantocratic domination; resistance and the persistence of African or Afro-Caribbean cultural traits. The two most overt forms of resistance were running away, sometimes followed by the establishment of maroon communities, and open rebellion. While the former has received a fair amount of archaeological attention (Agorsah 1994, 1999, and 2007; Weik 1997) the latter is only beginning to be seriously studied by archaeologists (see Orser and Funari 2001; Norton 2013).¹⁵ More common, however, has been an approach that views the enslaved as agentive actors within the plantation infrastructure rather than passive laborers who succumbed to the domination of the plantocracy and their stewards. These approaches have taken a variety of forms including the study of African symbolism and

¹⁵ Within Barbados, despite the fact that the island is only 166 square miles, densely populated, and relatively flat, marronage was still a common feature of island society (see Handler 1997).

production techniques in the making of ceramics (Ferguson 1992; Hauser and DeCorse 2003; Loftfield 2001; Finch 2013; Fennell 2003, 2009, and 2010), the function and significance of local (il)licit pottery markets (Hauser 2008 and 2011), the reuse and alteration of European goods (Armstrong 2003), and consumer choice and personal preferences in consumption patterns and identity formation (Wilkie 1999; Wilkie and Farnsworth 2005).

Although a gross oversimplification of the high quality and quantity of work done under the banner of African American or African diaspora archaeology, our conception of the plantation and its integral components needs to be expanded to incorporate the nuances of landscapes home to laborers that weren't of African descent or were of mixed ancestry (for more see Chapter 7). Within the Caribbean, archaeological research has thus far failed to address the significance and presence of non-black laborers on the plantation landscape (for a notable exception dealing with nineteenth century East Indian indentured servants on a Jamaican plantation see Armstrong and Hauser 2004). Given that enslavement was the preferred and overwhelming form of labor on plantations throughout the historical period, such a scholarly focus is understandable. In contexts where other forms of labor were utilized and non-enslaved people were in residence, however, their place within plantation production and the nature of their social relationships need to be considered in order to generate a more comprehensive interpretation of life on the plantation. Additionally, such considerations reveal how non-elites understood their relationship to the plantocracy as well as to other non-elite populations. In other words, it is necessary to ask how indentured servants and their descendants fit into the plantation scheme as laborers and later, as tenants. Additionally,

how did such tenants relate to enslaved and, following emancipation, free Afro-Barbadians with whom they shared a similar economic status but not necessarily a phenotype?

In order to address such questions it is necessary to reorient how archaeologists analyze and interpret the plantation landscape. “Poor whites” have traditionally been portrayed as being marginal in various capacities including their minor role in the island’s sugar industry, their perceived social isolation, and their tendency to reside in tenancies on the peripheries of plantations. More broadly, in agricultural societies marginality was often associated with those areas deemed unsuitable for profitable agricultural production (Millhauser 2013). Contrary to such interpretations, “poor white” tenantry villages in Barbados provide evidence that spaces designated as “marginal” or “peripheral” were actually centers of heightened social interaction, production, and activity between impoverished laborers, both enslaved and free.

Although outside the realm of the plantation, Douglas Armstrong (2003) has illustrated the significance of seemingly peripheral Caribbean spaces in his analysis of the East End community in St. John, US Virgin Islands. Through a shift in the archaeological gaze from plantation cores such as the works, the great house, and the village, Armstrong highlights the autonomous economic activities of East End residents as well as multifocal kinship relations, both of which are counterintuitive to the capital intensive production scheme of the plantation and the attempted plantocratic control of familial and kinship networks of the enslaved. In short, these spaces are essential in uncovering zones that operated in ways that didn’t adhere to plantocratic norms. They need not be, however, spaces that can be discretely associated with conscious or explicit

resistance. Resistance, in principle, privileges the relationship between laborers and elites as the former directly combat or are insubordinate towards the latter. Interactions and social networks existing in these “marginal” spaces encompass social relationships that aren’t necessarily defined by corollaries to owners and overseers. While situated within the processes of modernity and capitalist production on the plantation, economic activity undertaken below the cliff represents an intriguing dialectic involving forms of work that directly contributed to plantation production and labor that wasn’t appropriated for the accumulation of profit (Gidwani 2008; see also Chapter 7).

Social relationships and interactions taking place between non-elites were impacted by various markers of difference (Shaw 2013). In tenancies inhabited by “poor whites” and villages occupied by enslaved Afro-Barbadians, legal distinctions between free laborer and slave were certainly taken seriously and no doubt had a tremendous influence on how such individuals perceived themselves and others. In some cases, “poor whites” took advantage of their legal distinction from the enslaved. In 1741 the attorney for the Codrington Estate, A. Alleyne, noted that “poorer sorts of whites” on the plantation were setting a bad example for the slaves in addition to stealing from them, noting that they were “often worse than the negroes [in terms of Christian practices], by receiving all stolen goods and trafficking with them on Sundays and cheating them of their corn by giving a leaf or two of tobacco for a pint of corn” (USPGA 1741:Vol. B8, Item 51). Therefore, as this passage illustrates, one’s legal status as free or enslaved was also entangled with, but, as will be discussed below, not entirely determinate of, an individual’s racial status.

Despite marked legal and social differences between the enslaved (and later, free Afro-Barbadians) and “poor whites” there was a status marker that such non-elites shared - their economic class. Archaeologies of the plantation have tended to eschew discussions of class and class formation in favor of race, ethnicity, gender, and the power structures of the plantation (Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011b:4; for exceptions see Orser 1988; Epperson 1990). In confronting a lack of engagement with class across the archaeological discipline, Wurst and Fitts embrace a Marxian relational model of class that moves “away from static models of socio-economic status to more dynamic approaches that will illuminate the complex intersection of material culture and class interaction” (1999:4). While such an approach is instrumental in analyses of social inequality that emphasize “the struggles among members of society over the exercise of social power” (Paynter and McGuire 1991:1), it also draws attention away from relations *between* non-elite groups and individuals.

Class Relations and Confronting Poverty

What is necessary then, is an archaeology that engages with the historical processes that engendered the formation of social classes whilst understanding relations between laborers. E.P. Thompson’s approach to the role and use of history in the formation and understanding of social class is more aptly suited than Althusserian (for theoretical perspectives that have been particularly influential for archaeologists see Althusser 2001) approaches that operate on synchronic or structuralist levels. In his cutting and often theatrical critique of Althusser, Thompson argues, “No historical category has been more misunderstood, tormented, transfixed, and de-historicised than the category of social class; a self-defining historical formation which men and women

make out of their own experience of struggle, has been reduced to a static category, or an effect of an ulterior structure, of which men [sic.] are not the makers but the vectors” (1978:48). Illustrating a similar point by utilizing Lukács to complement rather than critique Althusser, Mark Leone suggests that “If exposing ideology was our [archaeologists working in Annapolis] task, and if Althusser provided scholarly ways of doing it through empirical work, then Lukács argued that a historian’s job was to trace how an ideology came to be” (2005:181). Within this setting, the historical processes that effected the development, transformations, and maintenance of social class were inextricably tied to racial identity and the function of the plantation system. Therefore, an analysis that privileges the specifics and consequences of, as well as responses to, historical processes within the history of capitalist production illustrates the limits and ahistorical nature of structuralist approaches.

Careful attention to the processes that led to the establishment of “poor white” tenancies on the same landscape as villages for the enslaved certainly entails an engagement with the relations between planters/overseers/elites and non-elite laborers (enslaved and free) within an agrarian capitalist system. In this sense, I agree with Mark Leone’s summation of the tenets of a Marxian archaeology, namely

that capitalist society is based on unequal power. Unequal wealth knows no limits, and neither does poverty. This leads to divisions within society, called *classes*, and their relations are often and inevitably antagonistic. These antagonisms are distinguished by racism, sexism, and other ideologies of inferiority and superiority, whose results are called *subordination* and *domination* (2010:52, emphasis in original).

Such an approach, however, fails to grasp relations *between* classes or individuals that are oppressed, exploited, and deemed inferior. In addition, the construction, reconstruction, and negotiation of difference between these non-elites necessitates an engagement with

how such individuals simultaneously coped with poverty and each other. The “poor white” struggle to survive on a harsh landscape was shared by enslaved Afro-Barbadians, albeit under different circumstances. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate what constitutes these differences through an analysis of the material manifestations of poverty. Archaeologies of poverty only recently broached the disciplinary boundaries (Mayne and Murray 2001; Spencer-Wood and Matthews 2011a). The contemporary implications of such an approach are addressed in the introduction but for the purposes of archaeology it is significant to consider the material implications of poverty. Like Wurst and Fitts (1999), Spencer-Wood and Matthews (2011a) acknowledge that an engagement with poverty entails a relational definition of class. Furthermore, in discussing relations between non-elite groups, differences amongst the impoverished, whether along racial, ethnic, gender, religious, or other lines, we must simultaneously grapple with the forces and processes that engendered landscapes of poverty to understand how these individuals experience their world and each other (for an analysis of a racial diverse landscape of poverty in Appalachia see Barnes 2011).

When confronting poverty, however, the material record is often scant, presenting unique methodological and theoretical challenges. One specific challenge is a qualitative and quantitative lack of the things that constitute the material record. Poverty, defined by an explicit lack of and/or access to monetary wealth, goods, services, and the means of socioeconomic mobility, forces archaeologists to confront physical absences in the archaeological record. In engaging with the recent turn within the social sciences towards materiality, Severin Fowles argues that “thing theory’s major blind spot is, quite literally, that which is unseen – or, rather, that which is absent but nevertheless

experienced as a presence precisely because its absence is marked or emphatic” (2010:25). Fowles considers material as well as conceptual absence from Neolithic figurines to the absence of the state or civilization in Lewis Henry Morgan’s early analyses of culture. Therefore, while not explicitly engaging with poverty or material inequality, Fowles raises significant questions about how we confront archaeological absences in impoverished contexts. A relative absence of material culture needs to be placed in dialogue with broader class relations and structures that made manifest and perpetuate the realities of poverty. Such conditions and relations demand that we take seriously the relationship between impoverished persons and their material possessions.

This theoretical consideration has practical implications for more subtly interpreting the material record of impoverished people. As Spencer-Wood and Matthews point out, “Since it can be expected that poor people would carefully curate their few possessions, any differences among archaeological sites of the poor probably have meaning, even in a small sample” (2011b:6). Therefore, in interpreting the archaeological record of the “poor whites” one must carefully consider the choices made on the part of consumers, the options available to them no matter how limited they may be, and specifically how material culture was utilized. The latter is particularly significant given that within such contexts items can, and often are, reused for purposes other than their original intended function. Artifact reuse infuses material culture with new and alternative meaning, casting doubt on claims that “dominant groups create and control the meanings and uses of material culture” (Shackel 2000:234). For instance, through an analysis of outdated and modified ceramic wares in an impoverished district of urban New Orleans, D. Ryan Gray has argued that in addition to evidence of thrift on

the part of impoverished residents, the reuse or modification of items is also “part of an active attempt to remain independent and self-sufficient” (2011:68). While the specifics of how these theoretical considerations apply to material excavated from the Below Cliff “poor white” tenantry will be discussed in Chapter 5, it is nonetheless important to illustrate how the analysis of materials associated with poverty necessitates nuanced, subtle, and alternative methods of interpreting material culture.

This project is complicated by the entangled elements that affected the lives of Below Cliff residents. This “poor white” tenantry was situated on a plantation landscape but is off-kilter with traditional archaeologies of the plantation in that they were the laboring poor but weren’t enslaved. Additionally, their pale skin and “white” identity marks them as distinct from enslaved and, following emancipation, free laborers of African descent. Below Cliff, along with other “poor white” tenancies and villages around the island, is and has been viewed as a marginal space inhabited by a socially isolated demographic. As suggested above, however, a reorientation of how the archaeological landscape is viewed and interpreted reveals that such marginal zones can be spaces of significant social interaction and the persistence of a way of life in spite of a harsh environment and impoverished conditions. By focusing on this seemingly peripheral space, it is possible to archaeologically engage with poverty, both the processes and structures that engender poverty, and how community members relate to one another and their circumstances. As Chris Matthews argues, such an archaeological approach looks “at the process of impoverishment within the overarching social system of meaning that both defines ‘the poor’ and connects impoverished people to others in their communities through ongoing political economic relations” (2011:45). This

discussion illustrates the lens through which I interpret the data presented in later chapters. It owes much to plantation, African diaspora, Marxist, class, and poverty archaeologies but is simultaneously is a mediation between and a departure from some of their major tenets.

The archaeological approach purposed here takes seriously the realities of poverty experienced by Below Cliff residents and looks to the material manifestations of these conditions (artifacts that include the landscape) to explicate relations between “poor white” residents, other non-elites including Afro-Barbadians, and the Barbadian plantocracy. Such materials speak to the physical dimensions of everyday life on the plantation landscape but also speak to deeper and localized understandings of how laborers understood their racial identities, understandings that didn’t necessarily mesh with dominant racial ideologies. As has already been discussed above, an instrumental aspect of this dissertation is to interrogate the racial categories that sought to define and circumscribe the roles and places of “poor whites” in Barbadian society. Situating the “poor whites” as marginal, isolated, and inconsequential subgroup was critical to plantocractic attempts to maintain racial boundaries and reaffirm the island’s status quo. These boundaries and the inherent socioeconomic hierarchies that they are inextricably linked to were crucial characteristics of Caribbean modernity.

Cross-Currents of Gender

Race and class are explicit themes focused on throughout this dissertation and also serve to thematically organize later chapters. It is of the utmost significance to acknowledge that issues of gender are implicit within the overarching discussions of race and class. In her analysis of empire and imperialism Anne McClintock suggests that “no

social category exists in privileged isolation; each comes into being in social relation to other categories, if in uneven and contradictory ways. But power is seldom adjudicated evenly - different social situations are overdetermined for race, for gender, for class, or for each in turn. I believe, however, that it can be safely said that no social category should remain invisible with respect to an analysis of empire” (1995:9). I would add that her argument transcends analyses of empire and is suitable for studies of capitalism or modernity (including the contemporary, or what González-Ruibal [2008] has referred to as supermodernity). In essence, while discussions may be framed through a particular lens such as race, class, or gender, it is not necessarily the case that the other categories are irrelevant or indeterminate. Rather, the categories and concepts are inextricably linked. This point, of course, hasn’t been lost on archaeologists and the entanglements of these concepts are inherent within disciplinary literature. As Mrozowski et al. have pointed out, “As a field concerned with understanding the material dimensions of capitalism, historical archaeology must examine how material culture relates to the social categories constructed within the capitalist system, particularly race, class, and gender” (2000:xiv).

While not the subject of in-depth discussion or investigation, gender is intimately entangled with race and class throughout this dissertation. I have chosen to center this project on race and class as the data presented below most directly speaks to these concepts; this is most explicitly illustrated in the moniker “poor white”. Despite this focus, however, gender is subtly and consciously intertwined within these discussions. In considering relations between Below Cliff residents and processes of capitalism we can engage with gender divisions in labor patterns on the plantation landscape (for

archaeologies of gender and its association with labor and landscapes see Armstrong 2003; Delle 2000; Gilchrist 1999; Baugher and Spencer-Wood 2010). In Chapter 5 I present particular elite discourses about acceptable and proper forms of labor as illustrated through parish baptismal registries in which a column is reserved for the child's father's occupation. This suggests that females were perceived to be irrelevant within island labor patterns. When, in rare instances, women's occupations are given within such records, they usually adhere to gendered stereotypes whereby females occupy traditional "women's work" such as seamstresses or domestics. Conversely, data presented in Chapter 5 speaks to the diverse roles played by both men and women at the household level and community level. In addition to playing crucial roles within the household Armstrong argues, in his analysis of the East End community, "Women contributed directly and indirectly to the economic and social welfare of the community" (2003:280).

In the Chapter 6, issues of race are intricately tied to reproduction practices, policies, and perceptions. Therefore, racial boundaries and their rigidity or porousness are dependent upon gender relations (Forde-Jones 1998; Jones 2007). The Barbadian plantation landscape was an incredibly intimate realm of colonial encounters in which enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians, planters, managers, and "poor whites" interacted with one other. Such encounters are rife with sexual liaisons, exploitation, sexualities of masculinity and femininity, intimacy, sexual policies, and politics (see Voss and Casella 2012). Chapter 6 illustrates that particular practices and policies sought to police racial boundaries through punishments against "poor white" women who developed sexual relationships with Afro-Barbadians. In general, island authorities were determined to

maintain a perceived “racial purity” amongst island residents. In response, evidence suggests that “poor white” females exhibited sexual autonomy and actively chose to reproduce with Afro-Barbadians, thus blurring the color line.

Despite a lack of direct engagement with gender, its implications crosscut discussions of race and class throughout this dissertation. Just as there were prescribed ideologies concerning racial and class identities, Barbadian men and women were expected to adhere to particular roles that circumscribed their economic activities, reproductive habits, and places within society. On the other hand, following Hilary Beckles (1999), Barbadian women, specifically “poor white” women within this case study, had their own notions of their places within plantation society which conflicted with, contradicted, and transformed elite discourses. As I have suggested throughout this chapter, spaces like Below Cliff fostered vastly different understandings of race, class, and gender relations. In closing I explore how these understandings can be considered as alternative modernities.

An Archaeology of Alternative Modernities

If this dissertation purposes an archaeology of alternative modernities, we therefore begin with modernity. This is no easy task as theorists have proposed various definitions to characterize what is generally agreed to be the period of the last 500 years of human history. Max Weber posits that modernity is associated with a particular ethic that fostered the advent and acceleration of capitalism (2006[1930]). Eric Wolf associates modernity with European imperialism, Eurocentrism, and denial of non-European culture and history (1982). Bruno Latour’s conception of modernity (or the denial that it was ever achieved) involves attempts to use reason and positivism to

distance humankind from nature (1993). Though not explicitly deemed modernity, Charles Mills characterizes the past 500 years as being defined by a geopolitical and socioeconomic racial hierarchy that consciously or unconsciously privileges whites at the expense of non-whites (1997). In her critique of the exceptionalism and cluttered characteristics of modernity, Shannon Dawdy has remarked that (2010:762):

Scholars have used modernity as a stand-in for all or part of that inexorable cluster of capitalism, secularism, industrialization, colonialism, the onset of Atlantic slavery, individualism and the divided subject, technological involution, urbanization, global integration, science and rationality, mass literacy, aesthetic modernism, the nation-state, and so-on.

The elusiveness and ambiguity of modernity as a theoretical construct has also spawned an onslaught of labels attempting to define and bound the critique, death, acceleration, failure, or nonexistence of modernity such as postmodernity (Harvey 1990), late capitalism (Jameson 1991), and supermodernity (González-Ruibal 2008).

The debates surrounding modernity bear significance in the struggle to comfortably define the discipline of historical archaeology. Many still find relevance in James Deetz's classic definition espoused in *In Small Things Forgotten*, claiming that it to be, "the archaeology of the spread of European cultures throughout the world since the fifteenth century, and their impact on and interaction with the cultures of indigenous peoples" (1996[1977]:5). Over the years this definition has been expanded, critiqued, altered, and reaffirmed in a number of fashions. Permutations of this definition include Orser's (1996) "four haunts" approach to an archaeology of the modern world, Silliman's (2005) approach to culture contact and colonialism, Leone's (2010) critical archaeology, and archaeologies of capitalism (Johnson 1996; Matthews 2010; Leone and Potter 1999; Hamilakis and Duke 2007). In all cases, however, the past 500 years or so have been

privileged and marked as exceptional, creating a disciplinary schism between those studying the pre-1492 era. This divide has been critiqued on a number of levels. On the macro level, Shannon Dawdy critiques the ease with which historical archaeologists have accepted the nature of the discipline to be synonymous with the study of modernity. The practices of historical archaeology, and anthropology more broadly, she argues, “remain very much embedded in an eschatology of modern rupture”, i.e. the schism between pre-modern and modern (2010:763).

I make no pretense about resolving these grandiose, yet significant, debates. It is important, however, to consider the localized and regional implications for the study and experience of modernity. In short, modernity is experienced and perceived differently across space and time. Additionally, rather than being a static entity or a directional progression, it is never complete and its associated processes alter and function differently based on local contingencies. For instance, how modernity is perceived, (re)constructed, and experienced in the past and present is vastly different and often divergent in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean despite historical and contemporary similarities such as colonialism and its legacies (for sub-Saharan Africa see Newell 2012; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993). Therefore, rather than utilizing overarching and cumbersome definitions or conceptualizations of global modernity, a more regional and localized approach can situate how the loaded phenomena and processes discussed above played out on particular landscapes, within particular psyches, through localized politics, in socioeconomics, and in the shaping of history.

Since the work of C.L.R. James (1963), Caribbean scholars have emphasized the inextricable link between the region and modernity, with Stephan Palmié suggesting that,

“the Caribbean might well be regarded as one of the first truly modern localities” (2002:41). David Scott, in explicating James’ understanding of Caribbean modernity, argues that the Caribbean was an “inaugural modernity” for two distinct reasons. First, “there were no nonmodern formations in the Caribbean with which the colonial powers had continuously to contend” (Scott 2004:125). As Scott notes, James was surely exaggerating this point and recent historiography has illustrated the depth and severity of European genocide against Caribbean Amerindians (see Beckles 2013). Since this case study focuses on Barbados, however, the point is well taken given that the island was uninhabited at the time of English arrival. James’ second parameter has been echoed by many scholars who have characterized Caribbean modernity by the onset and rapid expansion and acceleration of agro-industrial production (in most cases, sugar) (see Mintz 1974:9-10; Ortiz 1995; Palmié 2002:41-42). Concomitant with the rise of the plantation complex was the exponential increase in the number of enslaved Africans being sent to the islands. As a region, the English, French, Dutch, and Danish West Indies imported an approximate 3,992,194 enslaved Africans from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, roughly 40% of all captive Africans sent to the New World (The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database).¹⁶ As Scott points out, “plantation slavery is the fundamental institution through which [the modern] experience is shaped and articulated” (2004:126). Despite ambiguities about the nature of and distinction between bound laborers in seventeenth century Barbados given the presence of European

¹⁶ Note the exclusion of the Spanish West Indies. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database provides general numbers for the expansive Spanish Empire which includes Central and South America in addition to their Caribbean territories. Therefore, those that disembarked in the Spanish Caribbean have been omitted from this estimate.

and African laborers (see Newman 2013; Shaw 2013), race based plantation slavery became indexical of Caribbean modernity.

Therefore, this system was dependent on essential and definitive racial identities, i.e. if an individual was black he or she a slave. In Barbados, as was the case throughout the Caribbean, there were certainly ambiguities that complicated what authorities sought to be a clear-cut rule. For instance, manumissions were uncommon, but possible. Additionally, mixed race individuals referred to as mulattos born to free women of color or white women were free. If, however, we turn to island census data it appears that mixed race individuals and free people of color were a rarity within island society. While acknowledging the unreliable nature of these population figures, Handler's compilation of statistical data on the Barbadian freedmen in the late-eighteenth-early-nineteenth century illustrates how few individuals on the island were considered free people of mixed ancestry or "coloured". Interestingly, by this time Barbados is argued to be the most creolized island society in the Caribbean (Beckles 2002).¹⁷ Unfortunately, a more detailed phenotypic breakdown for the enslaved population is unavailable given that the enslaved were racially determined to be "negroes". Within the freedmen population of St. Michael (the parish home to the island's urban center, Bridgetown) in 1773, however, 136 were registered as "coloured" and 78 were listed as "black" thus composing 0.73% and 0.42%, respectively, of the total St. Michael population. Although these percentages would rise to 2.65% and 2.25% shortly before emancipation, respectively, it is still evident that free individuals of mixed ancestry composed a small minority of the St.

¹⁷ Creolization is a complex and often ambiguous concept (see Shepherd and Richards 2002; Palmié 2006; Dawdy 2000) but within this context it refers to the proportion of island-born individuals including the enslaved. Following calls for the amelioration of plantation conditions, the slave population in Barbados began to naturally increase, a phenomenon unique within the English Caribbean (see Beckles 2002).

Michael and island population (Handler 1974:17-21). Therefore, on a densely populated island census records indicate that only a small minority of individuals fell outside of the comfortable white and black categories (and therefore, free and enslaved). There are two possible readings of these statistics. If accurate, they reflect an overwhelming success of modernity and its underlying ideologies on all levels of island society. This entails an almost complete refusal on the part of all Barbadians, regardless of class, to procreate with individuals outside of their own racial group. If taken at face value and the veracity of racial categories is assumed, it would appear that ideas of racial purity and hierarchies were well maintained in Barbados. Alternatively, and more plausibly, such statistics reflect the power wielded by the producers of the historical record.

A substantial body of literature grapples with the strategies employed by such authorities and archival producers that suggest alternative ways of reading official documents (Cohn and Dirks 1988; Shaw 2013; Stoler 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Reading archival absences, critically engaging with documents to uncover particular slants and biases, and understanding the motivations of those producing such documents implies that what is taking place on the ground isn't necessarily what is represented in the historical record. This is arguably best understood by historical archaeologists who have long prided themselves on providing voice to the voiceless and evidence that can recover the lives of those lost to history or narratives that counter such histories (see Shackel and Roller 2013). While this disciplinary foundation is no doubt significant, historical archaeology is in an advantageous position to illuminate not only resistance on the part of historical actors against power structures and oppressive forces like colonialism, capitalism, racism, and sexism (to name a few), but also the sheer

failures of modernity and its associated ideologies. Archaeologies that illustrate the failures and destructive nature of modernity have been proposed by Alfredo González-Ruibal (2006). Through his work in East Africa he argues that in addition to exposing and critiquing the numerous tentacles of the modernist narrative, archaeological techniques and sensibilities “seem particularly suitable for unveiling the darkest side of the modern project” seen in “territories devastated by war, famine, disease and force re-settlement, all fostered by a dream of reason gone berserk” (2006:196). If these sites exemplify the destructive forces and failings of modernity in the most physical modes possible, ideological failings are more difficult to discern and less visible, but no less significant.

Proposed here is an archaeology of alternative modernities. Such an approach investigates spaces in which dominant ideologies associated with modernity were unsuccessful in infiltrating the consciousness of community members. Evidence of these failings can be found in the materials produced, consumed, used, and discarded by community members, the spatial orientation of the areas they inhabit, how they make their livings, the domestic structures in which they reside, and the choices individuals make in spouses, places to worship, and places to be buried. These seemingly mundane items, practices, and choices encompass what constitutes everyday ways of living that were distinct from the prescribed and desired behaviors and attitudes associated with localized modernity. To be clear, there is an explicit difference between this approach and modes of resistance. Resistance, even when conceived in de Certeauian terms of everyday practices (1984), still implies a conscious effort on the part of actors to counter domination or oppression through various means. Everyday practices enacted in spaces

home to alternative modernities need not be conscious efforts on the part of actors. Rather, modern ideologies manifest in the actions taken by authorities and officials to circumscribe the lives of non-elites didn't necessarily affect those that they sought to control. It is useful, however, to engage with more blatant forms of resistance to substantively unpack how such transgressive behavior that deviated from the established order and ideologies of modernity offered the potential for alternative modernities.

Despite my supposition that alternative modernities need not be associated with discreet acts of resistance, the concept owes much to a growing body of literature that has shed light on suppressed historical instances of actors directly contesting the major tenets of modernity including colonialism, capitalism, racism, and sexism. Linebaugh and Rediker's *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) presents an inter-Atlantic historical account of rebellion and resistance on the part of the "hewers of wood and drawers of water", or the working class masses of the modern world. Their work masterfully illustrates the refusal of individuals and groups to adhere to burgeoning ideologies about modernity, particularly class exploitation and racial hierarchies. The work highlights trans-Atlantic examples of rebellion and resistance by heterogeneous racial and ethnic groups who found common ground in their experiences of discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization; the rebellion plot planned in Barbados was one such example that involved European indentured servants and enslaved Africans (123-127; see also Ligon 2013:74-75). Ultimately, despite the efforts of those in positions of power to paralyze the "many-headed hydra", the authors argue that such ideologies and discourses only ever meet with partial success and that explicit rebellion and resistance are evidence of solidarity on the part of the masses.

Susan Buck-Morss (2009) and Sibylle Fischer (2004) engage with similar themes, centering the Haitian Revolution to discuss radical antislavery and universal human liberty in the wake of the only successful slave rebellion in the Atlantic World. Buck-Morss rhetorically asks, “What if that every time that the consciousness of individuals surpassed the confines of present constellations of power in perceiving the concrete meaning of freedom, *this* were valued as a moment, however transitory, of the realization of absolute spirit? What other silences would need to be broken? What *undisciplined* stories would be told?” (2009:75, emphasis in original). Within these questions and her addressing of them Buck-Morss illustrates a philosophical and practical exclusion of Haiti from discourses surrounding Enlightenment ideals of liberty despite the rebellion’s demonstration of them. Fischer (2004) extends the Haitian conversation to the Dominican Republic and Cuba to illustrate the extensive knowledge of the Haitian Revolution amongst Caribbean inhabitants (of all classes and backgrounds) and what its success potentially meant throughout the region. Fischer illustrates how discourses of universal human liberation and radical antislavery were purposely suppressed via cultural, political, economic, and social maneuvering to deny the blossoming alternative modernity that was exemplified by a free Haiti.

Ultimately, these works illustrate stark silences or purposeful suppressions within the historical record that limit interpretation and memory. Michel-Rolph Troulliout’s separation of “history as told” and “history as happened” takes these silences to task to account in how Haiti is remembered, how and why silences are produced, and what they deny in terms of modernity and history. In presenting the Haitian Revolution as an impossibility or non-event, Troulliout suggests that, “Built into any system of domination

is the tendency to proclaim its own normalcy. To acknowledge resistance as a mass phenomenon is to acknowledge the possibility that something is wrong with the system” (1995:85). This passage is significant for a number of reasons. First, the practice of proclaiming a system’s normalcy is an ongoing process that continuously unfolds through the actions of those that have a hand in dominating but also those who unconsciously reaffirm the nature of the system and its associated characteristics. Within this latter category we need to include the reproduction of history by those who uncritically adhere to the narratives and discourses of modernity. Secondly, as stated above, evidence that something is wrong with the system need not be seen in outright resistance but in the everyday lives of those who never recognized the “normalcy” of the system to begin with. With this in mind we turn to the “poor whites” to sketch a preliminary picture of what modern spaces were *supposed* to be and what they *actually* were or represent.

The historical interpretation of the “poor whites” is one of racial purity, isolation, idleness, and destitution (see Chapter 3). Historical and contemporary accounts of the “poor whites” comfortably claim that the entirety of the population suffers from a racial arrogance that makes the prospects of miscegenation in the past and present impossible (although more recent accounts have claimed that racial intermixing is a mid-twentieth century phenomenon; see Keagy 1972, 1975; Price 1957). Additionally, seemingly innocuous stereotypes such as idleness and social isolation are essential to the narratives of Caribbean modernity. In hyper-productive spaces such as the Caribbean plantation, those deemed idle and lazy are severed from the socioeconomic landscape. By being non-entities within the sugar production process, “poor white” poverty is expressly portrayed as being a self-inflicted result of their own idleness and isolation. This

portrayal of the “Redlegs” resolves the ambiguity of an impoverished demographic with “white” skins; the only reason that these “white” people are poor is because of their own laziness and refusal to participate in the sugar industry. The narrative of modernity is thereby reified and kept safe. Such interpretations imply the success of dominant ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority that permeated Caribbean socioeconomic life. While impoverished, an anomaly within Caribbean plantation society, their perceived racial purity coupled with their self-inflicted poverty assuaged planter fears of unadulterated mixing of races that shared an economic status (Beckles 1993; Forde-Jones 1998).

Given that the separation of races was an essential trope to Caribbean modernity, how are we to question its legitimacy and reality? If we accept the possibility that such attempts to instill ideologies of racial supremacy and distinct racial boundaries were met with limited success, where can we find evidence of their failures? Interracial marriages were seldom sanctioned by the established church (and were further suppressed if one of the parties was enslaved) so such unions seldom appear in marriage records (for exceptions see Beckes 1993:78). Similarly, interracial children born out of wedlock appear infrequently within baptismal records and if registered, it was common to have only the mother listed (this pattern is linked to a lack of sanctioned marriages amongst such couples). We are therefore confronted with historical silences that deny realities that wavered from the established order. Furthermore, given that such acts like intermarriage and miscegenation weren’t explicit or particularly boisterous acts of resistance, their occurrences are clouded within the historical record. As argued in later

chapters, local evidence from Below Cliff illustrates that historical and archaeological data can confront such silences.

The evidence presented throughout this dissertation goes beyond the deconstruction of stereotypes. I argue that the stereotypes were constructed for the purposes of maintaining the illusion that modernity and its associated ideologies were successfully imbedded within island society. These ideologies and their material manifestations changed as ideas about race transformed during the seventeenth century and continually warped to compensate for the palimpsest of modernity. Two essential tropes of Caribbean modernity will be interrogated, deconstructed, and analyzed at the local level to view their successes and failures. The first is the strict boundary between races that paralleled and informed the island's socioeconomic hierarchy. The second involves the relation between these racial groups and capitalist production processes. As the story goes, island (and absentee) "whites" held positions of power, reflected the civility and bourgeois character of "Little England", and ensured that plantations were functioning efficiently. Enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians were the "brutes" that had been rescued from their backward existence in Africa to be redeemed as productive laborers in the New World. The degenerate "poor whites" lived a backward lifestyle on the margins of the plantation landscape and lived in squalor and destitution due to their own idleness. Their refusal to labor in the same capacity as the enslaved and free people of color was due to a pride in their "white" identity. If this is the narrative of Barbadian modernity, what were and are the plausible and very real alternatives?

Through a reorientation of analysis of plantation space, it is evident that seemingly marginal spaces like Below Cliff were home to alternative modernities.

Within this space the boundaries between white and black racial identities were contested (even if unconsciously) and blurred. Those identified as “white” weren’t wealthy planters that dominated and owned the enslaved. While some labored on the plantation, there wasn’t a wholesale commitment to the sugar economy. Rather, residents of Below Cliff were small farmers and fishermen that subsisted on their own production, traded with neighbors (including the enslaved and free people of color), consumed locally produced goods in addition to imported material, and interacted and intermixed with individuals of diverse racial ancestries. The existence of such spaces that facilitated these particular lifestyles threatens the dominant narratives of Caribbean modernity and destabilizes the very concepts and ideologies that were (and still are) essential for its perceived success and reality. The historical and archaeological evidence presented throughout this dissertation illustrates that residents of Below Cliff, whilst coping with a harsh environment and poverty, were maintaining a lifestyle representative of an alternative modernity.

This investigation of the “poor whites” has the potential to interrogate central ideologies and characteristics of Caribbean modernity suggesting that “marginal” spaces can foster an environment in which the failures of modernity manifest themselves in the form of alternatives. As mentioned above, however, the potentiality of these spaces is dependent upon historical circumstances and localized contingencies. Therefore, the following chapter examines the historical narrative of the “poor whites” of Barbados. Additionally, I engage with how the “poor whites” have been portrayed in primary and secondary sources to illustrate how uncritical readings of the historical record have informed contemporary perceptions of the demographic. As will become evident,

historiography of the “poor whites” reaffirms modern ideologies associated with racial purity and social isolation. Engaging with this literature and historical narrative is essential in understanding how and why the “poor whites” came to inhabit spaces like Below Cliff.

Chapter 3

*Indentured Servants to “Redlegs”:
“Poor Whites” throughout Barbadian History*

*When you see de ‘ecky-bekky’
Man yuh so surprise, cause dey look funny:
Yellow hair, speckly-face an’ dey feet brick-red.
Is fo’ dat we does call dem de Redlegs.*

-Barbadian folk song “Backra Johnnies – Da Redleg Song” (Marshall et al. 1981)

From the earliest English settlement of the island to the contemporary period, a “white” underclass has persisted in Barbados despite centuries of impoverishment and socioeconomic marginalization. In the contemporary their socioeconomic marginalization is extended to how they are treated within the historical record. As this chapter will illustrate, however, the island’s “white” underclass was crucial in the development of early plantation society. Furthermore, following the establishment of a plantation slave society, planters lamented the decline in the white population and made efforts to bolster the number of white inhabitants able to serve in the militia. Despite limited socioeconomic power, the “poor whites” were also inculcated in the debates surrounding emancipation. Their anomalous existence within plantation society was described by authors who frequently used their condition to make political arguments for or against slavery. In short, rather than being marginal within or isolated from the inner workings of Barbadian history and society, evidence proclaims the crucial role of the “poor whites” within these historical processes.

Broader narratives of Caribbean historiography grappling with the forces of colonialism, capitalism, plantation production, and slavery were also constitutive of the “poor white” experience in Barbados. Charting Barbadian history beginning in the second quarter of the seventeenth century explains why and how poor Europeans arrived

and lived on the island and provides historical context for understanding the plight of the “poor white” populations in future centuries. Additionally, the “poor whites” would become particularly significant in debates surrounding emancipation and their existence on the island would engender a “poor white problem” in the post-emancipation period. This chapter highlights the processes that established and maintained a “poor white” underclass. It also serves to situate the “poor whites” within island society and debates surrounding emancipation. Finally, these debates are illustrative of the production of essentialist perceptions of the “poor whites” that define them as a distinct and bounded demographic, reifying them as exceptional and isolated within island society and history.

Given the broad temporal scale for this analysis and for the sake of brevity, secondary literature will be heavily relied upon to provide sufficient historical context. Additionally, I intend to complement an analysis of this literature with a critical interpretation of available primary sources. Barbados has a rich body of historical literature dating back to Richard Ligon’s *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (2013) first published in 1657 which provides some of the most descriptive ethnographic details of the seventeenth century West Indies. Additionally, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century histories have contributed broad overviews of the island’s social, economic, geological, natural, military, and agricultural past (Hughes 1750; Frere 1768; Poyer 1808; Schomburgk 1848; Stark 1903; Handler 1974; Tree 1977; Hoyos 1978; Watson 1979; Puckrein 1984; Campbell 1993). The work of Barbadian historian Hilary Beckles is particularly influential, specifically his early work, given its focus on indentured servitude and the transition to sugar and slavery (1980, 1982, 1985, 1989, 1990, and 2007; Beckles and Downes 1987). There is a dearth of literature,

however, that specifically deals with the “poor whites”. Jill Sheppard’s *The “Redlegs” of Barbados: Their Origins and History* (1977) remains the most comprehensive source to date, tracing the development of a “Redleg” identity on the island from the earliest year of settlement in 1627 to the mid twentieth century. The text provides a broad social history of the demographic but is limited in scope due to the nature of the historical record, particularly during the eighteenth century. These limitations, amongst others, will be discussed in more detail below.

Barbados is well suited for an historical analysis framed within Atlantic World historiography. Rather than previous approaches which privileged European empires and their links with Old and New World outposts and colonies, an Atlantic World approach acknowledges that “the links and exchanges were as often between people of many different origins as they were within strictly imperial lines” (Kupperman 2012:1). Viewed from this perspective, we can explore more fluidly the nuances and complexities of Caribbean and Atlantic interactions, exchanges, and connections (Curet and Hauser 2011; Greene and Morgan 2009; Palmié and Scarano 2011). While this analysis will be locally situated in Barbados, the island’s history involves tremendously diverse ethnic groups, which each contributed to the development of Barbadian society. It is therefore important to note that the narrative of the “poor whites” doesn’t exist within a social or historical vacuum, which many analyses of this group have often fallen victim to perpetuating. Rather, an inclusive approach acknowledges the English, Irish, Scottish, African, and Barbadian influences on the emergence of a “poor white” demographic and the specific realities of their daily lives.

Geography and Settlement

Barbados is the southeastern most island within the Caribbean region, though it technically falls outside of the Lesser Antilles chain. Unlike most of its Windward and Leeward island neighbors which are volcanic in origin, Barbados is a limestone island. Geologists refer to it as an “accretionary prism” or “wedge”, “created when part of the North Atlantic Plate buckled and crumpled as it slid under the Caribbean Plate over millions of years” (Barker 2011:29). Although formed by tectonic activity, the island is relatively flat compared to neighboring Caribbean islands, making it an ideal landscape for intensive agricultural production. The majority of the island is covered by a thick coral limestone cap except in the Scotland District of the northeastern portion of the island where erosion has exposed the shale and sandstone sediments (MacPherson 1963:73-74). The island experiences a hot and humid rainy season from June to November and a milder dry season from December to May. Its easterly location also places it outside of the hurricane belt making destructive storms less frequent occurrences for residents.

Due to the rough waters of the eastern coastline, the four main towns are situated along ports of the western and southern coast line: from south to north Oistins, Bridgetown (the capital), Holetown, and Speightstown. Holetown was the first settlement established by English settlers in 1625 and the majority of the population has hugged the western and southern coastline since that time. The areas’ calm waters and gentle topography made a suitable place to establish permanent settlements and develop urban and rural landscapes. The Scotland District covers nearly one seventh of the island and is home to some of the most rugged terrain which led early settlers to name the region after its resemblance to the highlands of Scotland. Hackleton’s Cliff extends to

the south from the center of the Scotland District into the southeastern parish of St. Philip. The plateau above the cliff is some of the most fertile land on the island and was (and is) home to some of the largest and economically successful sugar plantations. The region below the cliff is prone to frequent land and rock slides due to the instability of the escarpment and the dramatic slope that leads from the cliff down to the coast. The significance of this landscape will be discussed in more detail below.

Peter Campbell argues that, “There is ample evidence that Barbados was uninhabited when it was settled by the English in the 1620s, and it is quite possible, and would be consistent with archaeological evidence, that it had no human inhabitants a century earlier” (1993:11). Located in the remote southeastern region of the Caribbean, the uninhabited nature of the island provided a unique setting for early English arrivals to establish settlements without considering relations with local indigenous populations.¹⁸ The 1620s and 30s were watershed decades in terms of Caribbean ventures for the English which witnessed the settlement of Barbados (officially in 1627), St. Christopher (1623), and Montserrat (1632), amongst others. While many of these island holdings would be contested by Spanish, French, and Dutch forces due to their geographic position “beyond the line” (Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh 1972), Barbados would enjoy relative tranquility from outside threats.¹⁹ The early years of settlement, however, were marked by tumultuous internal conflict over which discovery party held proper claim to the island.

¹⁸ While Amerindians weren’t present upon the arrival of English ships, natives were brought from the Dutch settlement in Guiana as part of the first settlement expedition (see Handler 1969 and 1977).

¹⁹ Despite threats from the Dutch who landed in the Bridgetown harbor in the 1660s, imperial forces never invaded the island.

The disputes entailed a transatlantic dialogue with James I, Charles I, and the two factions competing for rights to the land, the Courteen expedition and that of the Earl of Carlisle. Eventually the land was granted to the Earl of Carlisle with credit being given to his powers of persuasion and due to the fact that he was apparently “the more popular man” (Harlow 1926:9). Barbados was peripheral not only in the Caribbean region (in terms of its geographic isolation) but also in the minds of English authorities at the time. The island was uninhabited, and in the minds of authorities who had never been there, was perceived to be a wilderness. Carlisle was granted 10,000 acres on the island by the Crown who knew nothing of the island and based on historical accounts, seemed irritated by the disputes and claims. Additionally, the dispute had a significant impact on the island’s development with historian Vincent Harlow suggesting that “The resultant strife in the colony itself between the followers of the two claimants seriously retarded its development” (*ibid.*).

While tensions on the island persisted, the actions of the Crown allowed focus to shift to clearing land and establishing the earliest plantations on the island. The clearing of the land proved no easy task. “The chief initial obstacle for all Barbados farmers, large and small, was that the land was covered with rain forest, which was very hard to clear” (Dunn 1972:51). To settle outstanding debts, Carlisle’s land was rented to tenants or given as payment of debt to interested investors. Initial plots were small, few individual parcels exceeding 100 acres in size and most plots dotted the western coast of the island. As Dunn notes, “the great majority of patents issued by Governor Hawley from 1637 to 1639 fell into the range of thirty to fifty acres. To an English peasant farmer thirty acres would not seem paltry, for it was larger tract than most husbandmen

enjoyed at home” (1972:51). Although most of the plots were small by comparison to later Barbadian sugar plantations, larger plots owned by individual landlords did appear on the landscape in the early years of the settlement. As Menard points out, however, most landowners couldn’t provide enough capital to develop large plantation systems. Therefore, most of the larger plots were divided and leased to tenants to generate an income on land that landowners couldn’t afford to put to agriculture themselves (Menard 2006:17-18).

This phenomenon is well illustrated by the 1646 Hapcott Map (Figure 3.1). The land being depicted is that of Fort Plantation which would later become Trents Plantation, one of the sites of archaeological excavation undertaken during the 2012-2013 season. The map was drawn for the purposes of a mortgage as several small plots were being consolidated into a larger estate that would eventually produce sugar. The landscape depicted is one of transformation as small tenant farms are giving way to processes of capitalization and large scale agro-industrial production (Armstrong and Reilly N.D.; Armstrong et al. 2012). The map, however, is unique and significant in that it projects a visual representation of pre-sugar Barbados, an era that is often given minimal scholarly attention in comparison to the sugar revolution of later years. The map was also pivotal in developing a research strategy for archaeological survey, which will be discussed in more detail below. At the moment, the map serves to illustrate the landscape that early immigrants, voluntary or coerced, would have experienced.



Figure 3.1: 1646 Hapcott Map depicting Trents Estate. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.

In the early years of settlement the arrival of ships with provisions was infrequent and unreliable, forcing settlers to provide their own means of subsistence on plots while experimenting with various cash crops to develop a successful agricultural economy. As for provisions, early Barbadians subsisted on a wide produce base as indicated by Oldmixon's 1708 history of the island; "Having clear'd some Part of the Ground, the English planted Potatoes, Plantines, and Indian Corn, and some other Fruits" (B3). Throughout the course of the first two decades of the English occupation of Barbados there were significant attempts to build an economy upon tobacco, cotton, and indigo before the transformation of the island in the wake of the introduction of sugar cultivation. Small plantations functioned under the labor of indentured servants.

Servants were predominantly from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.²⁰ As Dunn's table below illustrates, in the early years of Barbadian plantation society smaller plots were labored on by white indentured servants with enslaved Africans appearing in small numbers. Additionally, Hilary Beckles notes that the white population in Barbados grew at a faster rate than in Virginia and Maryland, with the white population of Barbados exceeding each colony by the mid-1640s (1989:18).

From the earliest years of settlement through the 1650s indentured servitude was the dominant form of bound labor on the island. During the first decades of settlement the majority of servants coming from the British Isles voluntarily signed contracts whereby the laborer agreed to a certain number of years of servitude (usually between three and seven years) in exchange for passage across the Atlantic and food, clothing, and shelter during their time of service. Following the termination of their period of indenture, contracts often awarded servants a small plot of land (usually ten acres) or a small sum of money or its equivalent in cash crops. As the demand for labor grew, however, especially with the advent of the sugar revolution in the 1640s, coerced servitude impressed upon vagrants, criminals, children, and military prisoners became far more common. In speaking of the servant trade from Bristol, Vincent Harlow describes that "A minor offender would, on conviction, be persuaded by an officer of the court to beg for transportation in order to avoid hanging. These transportees were assigned to the mayor and aldermen in town, who sold them to the planters, and grew rich" (1926:298). Additionally, prisoners from Cromwell's invasion of Ireland in 1649 and the Battle of Worcester in England in 1651 contributed to the servant population of the island. The

²⁰ Evidence also suggests that there were smaller numbers of Portuguese, Spanish, French, and German indentured servants (see for example Gunkel and Handler 1970).

growth in the number servants arriving to Barbados under such circumstances inspired Henry Whistler to comment in 1654, “This Illand is the Dunghill wharone England doth cast forth its rubidg” (cited in Sheppard 1977:20). Furthermore, Jill Sheppard has surmised that “by 1655 a total of twelve thousand prisoners of war was alleged by the planters of Barbados to be employed by them, which would have represented nearly half the total white population” (18).

Early scholarly attempts to historically contextualize the institution of indentured servitude have argued that the exact origins are unknown but that its underlying principles can be found in the apprenticeship system of sixteenth century England (see Galenson 1984; Smith 1947). When such principles are extended to colonial territories, however, the rationale behind the terms of indentureship becomes clearer. For instance, Nicholas Canny has illustrated that early English settlers part of the Munster Plantation in late-sixteenth-early-seventeenth century Ireland had trouble binding their English laborers/apprentices to their land. In essence, contracted or apprentice laborers were arriving to work on Irish plantations and simply moving to more desirable plots (Canny 2001:152). Therefore, within the contexts of new colonial landscapes, new labor practices were necessary to control and manage laborers. While Simon Newman has argued that institutions of bound labor were markedly different in Barbados than their Old World precedents in England (2013:62), it is evident that labor management in different colonial contexts influenced how laborers would be bound to masters and property on the Barbadian landscape. Along with the use of enslaved natives from Guyana and Africa, this practice was employed from the earliest years of English settlement of the island.

Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* was based on his experiences on the island from 1647-1650 and is one of the richest primary sources in terms of ethnographic detail. For the purposes of this study, Ligon's account illustrates the hardships experienced by indentured servants from the arrival on the island to their experiences laboring on small farms and sugar plantations. One of the most frequently cited passages on the subject of servants' treatment at the hands of their masters claims that "I have seen such cruelty there done to Servants, as I did not think one Christian could have done to another" (2013:73). His account illustrates that indentured servants suffered similar treatment to that of enslaved Africans.

The principles underlying the institution and the legal structures governing them, however, mark dramatic disparities between indentured servitude and slavery. Contracts tended to be one-sided, constructed to benefit the servant's master and the period of indentureship could be readily extended as punishment for infractions committed. Despite the exploitative nature of the contracts, as opposed to the conditions of enslavement, the period of servitude usually lasted no longer than ten years, at which time the former servant was supposed to be awarded their freedom along with a small plot of land.²¹ Additionally, a child born of an indentured servant was free as opposed to a child born of an enslaved woman who was born into slavery. In some instances political or military prisoners were sentenced to life terms as servants but their legal status was still distinct from that of the enslaved. This point bears particular significance in the wake of recent literature promoting the narrative of "white slavery" within the Caribbean and North American regions (see Jordan and Walsh 2008; O'Callaghan 2000).

²¹ This practice became less common as the sugar revolution took over and arable land was at a premium. If land was awarded at all, it was usually "rab land" that was undesirable for agricultural production (Beckles 1989).

Significantly, the epithet “white slaves” was reported to have been used by enslaved Africans who were describing the laboring conditions of predominantly Irish servants working on the island in the late 1660s (cited in Handler and Shelby 1973:118). The comment also warrants mention as it illustrates an overlap in the form of labor preferred on the island. As the island was transitioning to the intensive production of sugar it was simultaneously increasing in the use of enslaved labor from Africa. For a period of time, however, European indentured servants and enslaved Africans were working alongside one another. This would have been one of the first instances where the white underclass on the island would have been interacting with and laboring alongside Africans and Afro-Barbadians (Shaw 2013).

The Rise of Sugar and Slavery

A tremendous body of literature surrounds the sugar revolution and the social, economic, political, and geographical transformations that occurred in its midst and wake (for classic examples see Dunn 1972; Mintz 1985; Williams 1994[1944]). For Barbados in particular, the literature is equally bountiful (Beckles 1989 and 2007; Menard 2006; Newman 2013; Gragg 2003; Parker 2011; Puckrein 1984). Russell Menard has argued that the processes associated with the sugar revolution were underway years before the proposed late 1640s start of the “revolution” and instead suggests that these processes would be more adequately described as a “sugar boom” (2006:4). Ultimately, his argument falls to semantics and at times runs the risk of undermining the sheer enormity of the changes that the sugar agro-industrial brought upon the Atlantic World. While the full scope of these changes is beyond the realm of this work, they will be discussed in

reference to how they affected labor schemes and how the body of European indentured servants and former servants fared during and after the transition to sugar agro-industry.

Prior to the growth of the sugar economy on the island the early settlers experimented with a number of other cash crops that met with varying degrees of success. Most of these ventures involved plots of 10 to 50 acres and were worked by modest numbers of indentured servants and less frequently by enslaved Africans or Amerindians. The familiar plantation landscape associated with the sugar industry had not yet been established and laborers were likely living in close proximity to the planter houses (Armstrong and Reilly N.D.). The specifics of this early landscape will be discussed in more detail below in reference to the archaeology of Trents Estate. In the late 1620s, trying to match the success of the crop in Virginia, farmers turned to tobacco. While some farmers met with moderate success, the price of tobacco would drop during the 1630s (Menard 2006:20) and Barbadian tobacco would come to have the reputation of being “illconditioned, fowle, full of talks, and evillcolured” (21). By the mid-1630s cotton had become the crop of choice and cotton would frequently be used as the most popular exchange commodity on the island. However, like tobacco, cotton wasn’t turning a dear enough profit and those farmers that were able to acquire sufficient capital looked elsewhere to invest and make their fortunes.

While sugar had been grown in small quantities since the 1630s, the name often associated with the sugar revolution is James Drax who began planting the crop extensively in 1643 after receiving investment and technology from Dutch growers in Pernambuco, Brazil (see Parker 2011). Although capital and labor intensive, sugar cultivation grew exponentially throughout the 1640s and 50s. Smaller farms of 10 to 50

acres that once grew tobacco, cotton, other cash crops, or provisions were quickly consolidated to establish 200-300+ sugar estates. Small tenant farmers growing crops with loosely defined property boundaries would be bought out and boundaries would be rigidly and legally defined as land was capitalized to make way for burgeoning sugar estates backed by joint stock companies in England (as well as through Dutch and Jewish investments).

Most significantly, for the purposes of this study, the sugar industry drastically altered labor practices and ideology on the island. As sugar began to engulf the island in the mid-1640s, an insatiable demand for more land and more laborers provided the impetus for a heightened English involvement in the African slave trade. This, however, didn't signal a halt in the importation of indentured servants from Europe. On the contrary, as Hilary Beckles has illustrated, the white population on the island continued to increase throughout the 1650s, though not at the same rate as it had in previous years or as fast as that of enslaved Africans (1989:18). The exponential growth of the white population from 1,400 in 1628 to an estimated 30,000 in 1668 illustrates the socioeconomic allure of the colony and the sheer profits that were being acquired by planters that had invested in sugar (see footnote 21 on population estimates by Handler).

As planters sought to maximize profits and harness a controllable and hardworking labor force, the labor of enslaved Africans began to be favored above that of European indentured servants. This shift has been analyzed on a number of economic and social levels (see Beckles 1985; Beckles and Downes 1987; Newman 2013) but what is most significant for the purposes of this study is that the servant trade wasn't severed as the population of the enslaved skyrocketed and that the white underclass on the island

didn't disappear. In fact, despite Richard Dunn's assessment that the shift from servants to slaves took place at a remarkably quick pace (1972), Hilary Beckles' analysis of this transition illustrates that it was a gradual process that took place over the course of several decades from the 1640s to the 1670s (1989). While seventeenth century demographics are difficult to report with much accuracy, Handler reports that the slave population grew from 5,680 in 1645 to 38,746 by the time of the 1680s census, a number that is surely underestimated given that planters were providing low numbers to avoid taxes. Eventually, as the sugar and slave system engrossed the island, the white population on the island began to decline and by 1715 the ratio of enslaved to white Barbadians was greater than three to one.²²

The ascent of the institution of slavery in the English West Indies signaled dramatic changes beyond sheer demographics. As early as 1636, colonial authorities were attempting to legally circumscribe the position of the enslaved within island society. At this time the Governor and his Council issued a resolution "that Negroes and Indians, that came here to be sold should serve for life, unless a contract was before made to the contrary" (Handler 1969:46). These early attempts at legally codifying slavery also had significant implications for white servants. The 1661 act regulating the terms and treatment of the enslaved is listed directly before a similar act dealing with white servants, signaling explicit distinctions between the two institutions of labor (Hall 1746). While indentured and enslaved laborers suffered similar treatment and were exposed to a similar degree of strenuous labor, they were legally separated, indicating that a juridical and social hierarchy was put into place regardless of daily living conditions.

²² Population estimates have been compiled and provided by Jerome Handler (personal communication) and are slated for a forthcoming publication.

The transformations associated with the sugar revolution also included the role of laborers on early farms and later, large sugar plantations. While the earliest laborers were likely used for brute strength to clear the island and work the fields, early sugar estates needed the assistance of skilled laborers. As Hilary Beckles notes, “The grinding, boiling, curing, refining and distilling processes of sugar manufacture demanded industrial machinery which had to be assembled, maintained, and at times modified”. He continues, “This meant that a labour force with basic literacy and a familiarity with advanced industrial technology was necessary” (1985:34). In the early years of sugar production, these tasks were seldom allocated to enslaved laborers who believed to be incapable of handling such responsibilities. Therefore, while European servants were certainly utilized as field hands along with enslaved Africans, they also benefitted from positions of prominence and responsibility on the plantation in the form of skilled labor.

Again turning to Richard Ligon, we see that planters had few qualms about utilizing white servants in field gangs. Ligon describes the “seasoning” period for indentured servants and their harsh days of working in the fields from sun-up to sun-down (2013:50). As growing sugar plantations were in constant demand of laborers, indentured servants more frequently found themselves employed in what would, by the eighteenth century, be referred to as “nigger work”. By the 1650s planters were also growing more comfortable employing enslaved Africans in skilled labor positions. Economically, the use of an enslaved laborer was less expensive than purchasing a few years of labor from an indentured servant. Socially, overseers and drivers grew more confident in the abilities of select members of the enslaved population and white laborers began to find their services as skilled laborers no longer needed on the plantations. While

indentured servants would continue to be found on the plantations well into the eighteenth century, by the passing of the slave and servant codes in 1661, labor on the plantation was overwhelmingly dominated by enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians (Beckles 1985:44-45).

Despite legislature during the 1670s mandating planters to keep one white servant for every ten African slaves for the purposes of keeping a sizable island militia,²³ planters made their commitment to slavery clear as illustrated by one of the most prominent planters, Colonel Henry Drax. Drax is responsible for a 1679 document in which he provides potential planters with a set of instructions for profitable operation of a sugar estate. Drax states that “I shall Not leave you many white Servants [,] the ffewer the better” (Thompson 2009:575). The census of the following year indicates that Drax was true to his word; Drax owned 327 slaves and only seven white workers despite the militia requirement (576). Drax doesn’t explain why having fewer white servants is for “the better” but given the purpose of the document, it is likely that he found the use of enslaved labor far more profitable. The influence of this document became widespread and was the basis for the infamous plantation instructions penned by Belgrove in 1755. In short, the instructions put together by Drax explicitly illustrate the shift to the use of enslaved labor as a more efficient model of profit extraction from the plantation.

In addition to the economic motivations for the shift described above, social motives similarly played a major role in the decline in use of indentured servants.

Twenty years prior to the publication of Drax’s instructions a lively debate was sparked

²³ The law in question is described by Richard Dunn (1969:8) but his source is unclear. Laws concerning militia requirements were frequently altered throughout the seventeenth century; for instance, a 1697 act required that one servant serve in the militia for every twenty acres of land owned (Hall 1764:138-155; see also Handler 1984).

in Parliament regarding the use of white labor in Barbados. Planter and merchant Martin Noell, was called before Parliament to defend his harsh treatment of white laborers or “slaves”. Despite Noell’s claims that he had not been mistreating his laborers and the great profit that their labor was bringing back to the motherland, Parliament expressed its unease in utilizing Englishmen in such a fashion. In the end it was decided that Englishmen, even prisoners who had been “Barbadoed”, were not to be “enslaved” and subjected to the harsh treatment that would be meted out to enslaved Africans (Beckles 1982). In essence, the debate set a precedent for the correlation between racial identity, exploitation, and treatment. Social and economic forces ensured that as the seventeenth century wore on, a distinct racial hierarchy would be rigidly ingrained within Barbadian law and society as the use of white bound labor would decline.

The sugar revolution sparked processes of extreme capitalization of property and massive consolidation of land. Small farms of ten to fifty acres were purchased and consolidated into expansive plantations of 300+ acres. Additionally, pasture land between farmsteads with loose boundaries were rigidly codified into bounded property and making it possible for plots of ten, fifteen, fifty, and forty acres to be consolidated into a single estate of 200 acres (see Armstrong and Reilly N.D.; Armstrong et al. 2012). Ligon mentions the rapid increase in land value using the plantation of Major Hilliard as an example; “For, before the work began [sugar cultivation], this Plantation of Major Hilliards, of five hundred acres, could have been purchased for four hundred pound sterling; and now the halfe this Plantation, with the Stock upon it, was sold for seven thousand pound sterling” (2013:136). These processes had a direct impact on servants who had completed their period of indenture. Servants signed contracts which promised

ten acres of land following their release. Expanding sugar plantations, however, left little space available for the practices of small farming. Records indicate that servants were hesitant to sail for Barbados due to the lack of available land the island's reputation for the harsh treatment of servants. In 1679 Governor Atkins commented that "few white servants come, from the scarcity of land available for them when they have served their time; they prefer Virginia, New York, and Jamaica where they can hope for land" (cf. Shilstone 1933). Small plots that remained were usually located on "rab land" or land unsuitable for agricultural production. Those that were fortunate enough to acquire small plots of land often found it nearly impossible to generate a profit within a society based on large scale sugar production and were often bought out by larger planters.

The sugar and slavery society that emerged in Barbados drastically altered the trajectory of Atlantic World history. Simon Newman has recently called for a shift in geographical focus for the advent of plantation slavery, arguing, "In numerical terms the Chesapeake was a sideshow, and during the seventeenth century a great more white bound laborers and enslaved Africans went to Barbados: for every enslaved African who stepped ashore in the Chesapeake before 1701, nearly fifteen had disembarked in Barbados" (2013:25-51). While the profits that planters had enjoyed in the late 1640s and 50s began to level off as the seventeenth century wore on, the system that they had engendered would be transposed onto the Jamaican and South Carolina landscape; the former quickly overtaking Barbados as the richest of England's New World colonies (Dunn 1972).²⁴ The effects that these changes brought upon systems of labor and the laborers themselves were equally astronomical as the use of enslaved labor took favor

²⁴ For connections between Barbados and South Carolina see Greene et al. 2001, Alleyne and Fraser 1989, and Hoffius 2011.

over that of white indentured servants. Planters would rely on enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians until emancipation in 1834. As sugar and slavery became engrained within West Indian society, the white underclass slipped into the backdrop of Barbadian political and economic life whilst still remaining part of its social fabric.

The “Redlegs” and the Rise of Tenantries

Prior to and during the sugar revolution the ethnic origins of the white servant population were significant in determining one’s place within Barbadian socioeconomic hierarchies. While servants arrived by the thousands from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, it was the Irish that “constituted the largest block of servants on the island, and they were cordially loathed by their English masters” (Dunn 1972:69).²⁵ Evidence suggests that based on colonial antecedents and conditions in Barbados that planters and authorities held particular distain for Irish indentured servants who were typically cast as rebellious and culturally inferior to other servants; once referred to as a “riotous and unruly lot” (Beckles 1990; Block and Shaw 2011; Handler and Reilly 2014; Newman 2013:81-83; Reilly N.D.; Welch 2012). As Block and Shaw have recently argued, “In the English colonies, servants of all nationalities were subject to harsh working conditions, but Irish Catholic subjugation was magnified by English Protestants’ sense of cultural and religious superiority” (2011:35). Whereas the early years of colonial settlement had experienced an influx of impoverished but voluntary servants from an English countryside that was experiencing overpopulation and landscape transformation (Newman 2013:17-35), the late 1640s witnessed an influx in prisoners of military conflicts, vagrants, and criminals, particularly from Ireland.

²⁵ Pedro Welch has warned against overestimating the population of Irish servants (2012) but unfortunately, reliable figures are lacking to draw any accurate estimates on the ethnic origins of servants.

As the seventeenth century drew to a close and the trade in indentured servants drastically diminished, significant social transformations affected the white underclass on the island. While evidence suggests that an Irish, English, or Scottish identity may have been marginally important to individuals and communities based on surnames and settlement clusters (see Reilly N.D.), racial identity far outweighed ethnic origin as a marker of socioeconomic status. Therefore, groups or individuals that may have been identified as Irish, English, or Scottish began to be grouped together as “poor whites” or “Redlegs” (Sheppard 1977:41).²⁶ The rise of an unemployed white underclass on the island is concomitant with a dwindling in their appearance in the historical record. While there is an abundance of literature concerning the European indentured servitude on the island as well as the social positioning of the “poor whites” in the decades surrounding emancipation, there is a paucity of material that concerns the “poor whites” during the majority of the eighteenth century, a century that was entirely dominated by the sugar and slavery system.

The latter half of the seventeenth century witnessed a departure of the majority of “poor whites” from their roles as laborers on sugar plantations. Many swarmed to the urban center of Bridgetown (for the nuances of the urban population in Bridgetown see Welch 2003) while others would come to occupy newly established tenancies on the margins of plantations, whether as militia tenants, small farmers, or plantation employees. Despite the decline in use of white labor on the plantations, Jill Sheppard argues, “It would be a mistake...to regard the plantations as having been totally denuded of white servants” (1977:43). In this capacity, however, Sheppard is only referring to

²⁶ There are a number of local oral traditions that suggest multiple origins for the term “Redleg” but the most commonly accepted suggests that European laborers would quickly develop a bright red burn from the sun on the backs of their exposed legs as they labored in the fields of the plantation (Sheppard 1977:1-3).

servants in their roles as laborers on the plantations. She illustrates that throughout the eighteenth century whites served as managers, drivers, bookkeepers, housekeepers, groomsmen, and herdsman. Heather Cateau presents similar data, presenting the various positions open to waged white workers on the plantation; “The standard occupations available on plantations were attorneys, overseers and bookkeepers, but many estates had additional white personnel. This group included: carpenters, plumbers, coopers, masons, ploughmen, coppersmiths, millwrights, wheelwrights and blacksmiths” (2006:8).

Plantation records provide evidence of whites fulfilling such roles but they provide few details as to where and how these individuals lived. Many of these plantation employees weren’t allotted housing near the works complex and therefore resided on tenancies on the land of the plantation. Not all tenantry residents, however, were employed by the plantation and a more detailed analysis of such tenancies illustrates the diversity and nuances of tenantry life during the period of slavery.

While it is commonly believed that tenancies are a post-emancipation phenomenon where formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadians established villages on the boundaries of the plantation (Bergman 2013), evidence suggests that “poor white” tenancies appeared on the Barbadian landscape as early as the 1650s.²⁷ Plots allocated for tenancies typically lay at the very margins of the plantation at a substantial distance from the great house and in some cases, the villages for the enslaved. These tenants would have seldom occupied positions of prestige or respect on the plantations since overseers and bookkeepers were frequently provided with housing within close proximity

²⁷ For instance, a deed from 1653 for Clifton Hall plantation (which owned the land where Below Cliff was situated) indicates that 40 acres below the cliff was leased out (BDA: RB3/3:11).

of the great house.²⁸ Therefore, with the exception of when tenants would pay rent or work on the plantations, inhabitants of “poor white” tenancies were often out of sight and out of mind.

Burial and baptism records from the parish of St. John during the period of slavery confirm that “poor white” tenants fulfilled a number of functions on plantations, working as gardeners, distillers, laborers, shoemakers, masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, school masters, domestics, hucksters, and seamstresses (BDA:RL1/26). While their pale complexion warranted them a number of legal and social advantages, such occupations provided tenants with few opportunities for social mobility. While ethnographic analogies are tenuous, Harry Rosenberg has described the limited options for social mobility available to the St. John “poor white” community of the 1960s (1962:55). Migration to Bridgetown became a viable option as positions for clerks became more readily available and the plantation infrastructure also offered social mobility for select individuals but many “Redleg” families found it difficult to “make it over the hill” and it is therefore not surprising to see similar surnames as tenantry residents for several generations. While Heather Cateau has argued that positions such as bookkeeper or overseer on a plantation were used as “stepping stones” for social mobility (2006:7), Gary Lewis has amply illustrated that despite the social prestige of being a bookkeeper rather than a laborer, such positions offered marginal economic benefits and many plantation employees would fall into the category of the working poor (1999:3-4).

Throughout the eighteenth century “poor white” militia tenants were seldom called upon to fulfill their military duties. There were no substantial slave rebellion

²⁸ This is a marked difference from the landscape of the Antebellum US south in which archaeologists have observed overseers’ dwellings at a distance of one mile from the great house. This is more typical of plantations with a dispersed rather than centralized settlement (Otto and Burns 1983: 194-195).

threats between 1692 and 1816 and imperial conflicts didn't reach the shores of the island. Therefore, although Barbadian law decreed that planters supply one militiaman for each twenty acres owned (Hall 1764:138-155) it is unknown how strictly this act was enforced and if a tenants' role within the militia had any bearing on their daily lives. More likely, militia tenants operated as small farmers, growing provisions as well as crops to sell in local markets, a practice observed by William Dickson during in late eighteenth century visit to the island. Dickson notes that "in Barbados many whites of *both sexes*, till the ground, without any assistance from negroes, and poor white-women often walk many miles loaded with the produce of their little spots, which they exchange in the towns for such European goods as they can afford to purchase" (1789:41, emphasis in original). Dickson's observations speaks to gender sharing as well as division of labor in addition to shedding light onto the subsistence patterns of "poor whites" that occupy small plots of land.

Given the island's size and the close proximity of many "poor white" villages to the coast, fishing was a common occupation amongst community members and constituted a substantial component of local diet. The significance of fishing within such tenantry communities has received relatively little attention as such activities are overshadowed by the socioeconomic dominance of sugar plantations. Pedro Welch has argued that, "in several small island communities in the Caribbean, farming the marine environment, not sugar, represented the main economic activity" (2005:20). While Welch provides evidence for a viable "poor white" fishing industry in post-emancipation contexts, island residents were utilizing their proximity to the coasts from the earliest

days of settlement. Henry Colt commented that Barbados was home to “more fish and better fishing” than neighboring Caribbean islands (Harlow 1924:92; cf. Welch 2005:21).

Evidence also suggests that “poor white” tenants displaced by the transformations of the sugar revolution heavily relied on fishing in the seventeenth century (and for centuries to come). During a meeting of the St. John parish vestry on April 10th, 1676, vestrymen voiced their concerns about an individual who desired to claim ownership to fishing rights in the parish. The minutes from the vestry meeting describe the individual as “greedy” and “avaricious”, arguing that a private claim to the industry would be a devastating blow to the local economy (BDA D273, 1649-1682:35):

Which will not only be prejudiciall to ye Inhabitants in General by depriveing of the benefit of ffresh ffish for there Tables, but also to the poorer Inhabitants who draw there principle livelihood and subsistence by there Trade and occupation of ffishing, By sole or parte where of they supply there necessities, and with ye remainder ffeed there ffamilies, off which should they be deprived it would inevitably bring them to see great poverty that they must either have releiffe from ye parish to support there ffamilies or be inforced to departe ye island.

The passage seemingly reflects compassion on the part of parish vestrymen who didn’t want to see fishing rights fall into the hands of an individual. A more sinister interpretation of the passage, however, may indicate that the vestrymen feared that severing access to the sea would force impoverished villagers to rely on parish relief which would inevitably come out of planter/vestry pockets. The relationship between the vestry and “poor white” inhabitants of St. John will be discussed in more detail in later chapters but it is evident that “poor whites” relied heavily on access to fresh fish for inexpensive protein since at least the mid seventeenth century.

In addition to fishing, many “poor whites” were small farmers, growing their own provisions as well as crops for sale through internal markets. When Rev. Nicholls, who

was born in Barbados, was asked by Parliament in the late eighteenth century if white people labor in Barbados he responded, “Those who are called tenants...do commonly work in their grounds with their negroes, if they have any, or else cultivate the whole with their own labour; that ground is commonly in provisions, not in canes” (HCPP 1790:334). A generation later, William Dickson would similarly comment, “the white militia tenants, and even some small proprietors and their families, certainly do work *like* Negroes, in the comparatively easy employment of raising provisions, cotton, &c. Probably they think themselves degraded by working in that manner; but they must do it, or starve, - or plunder the Negroes, as they often do” (1814:429). Both passages are indicative of a tenuous relationship between the “poor whites” and their neighbors of African descent, with whom they shared a similar economic status. While the specifics of this relationship will be discussed in later chapters, the passages are illustrative of the common practice of subsistence farming amongst “poor white” tenants.

The Militia

Despite the decline in the white population as the seventeenth century progressed, white Barbadians consistently composed the overwhelming majority of the island’s militia. The militia was originally established to prevent foreign imperial invasion. Forts and other defensive structures were quickly built upon the English settlement of the island. The settlers, however, wouldn’t have to face any substantial conflict with imperial forces and as the sugar revolution swept the island a new fear would develop amongst island elites.²⁹ As the white population declined and that of the enslaved rose

²⁹ In 1665 a Dutch fleet entered Bridgetown harbor but troops never reached the coast. This was the most significant incidence of imperial conflict in Barbados during the seventeenth century (see Handler 1984:18).

exponentially from the 1640s to the 1660s, a fear brewed amongst the plantocracy of internal conflict in the form of slave revolts. Despite conspiracies of a servant rebellion in 1634 and joint servant and slave conspiracies in 1649, 1686, and 1692 (see Handler 1982), planters were increasingly weary of slave rebellions as they witnessed a depletion in the number of able-bodied white militiamen.³⁰

Their concern over the depleted state of the militia was augmented by their distrust of those who were serving. As mentioned above, the Irish were perceived to be a particularly rebellious group and their numbers in the militia caused officials to comment on the deplorable state of the militia in the 1660s. In 1667 Governor Willoughby made such ethnic preferences clear, stating that, “We have more than a good many Irish amongst us, therefore I am for the downright Scot, who I am certaine, will fight without a crucifix about his neck” (Stowe MSS 755, f. 119; cf. Sheppard 1977:35). As discussed above, as the seventeenth century came to a close, the ethnic identities of the island’s white underclass became less significant and records indicate that there was a general want of any white servant who could serve in the militia, regardless of their ethnic origins.

During the closing years of the seventeenth century concern about the state of the militia was again raised as officials complained that harsh treatment and the lack of available land were driving whites from the island and preventing others from arriving. This, in turn, depleted the numbers available to serve in the militia. In a report to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in 1695 laments the condition of the island’s defensive force as well as the treatment of white servants (Fortescue 1903:446):

³⁰ Another rebellion conspiracy that was entirely associated with enslaved Africans took place in 1675 (Handler 1982).

I dare say that there are hundreds of white servants in the Island who have been out of their time for many years, and who have never a bit of fresh meat bestowed on them nor a dram of rum. They are domineered over and used like dogs, and this in time will undoubtedly drive away all the commonalty of the white people and leave the Island in a deplorable condition, to be murdered by negroes or vanquished by an enemy, unless some means be taken to prevent it. Nor can we depend upon these people to fight for defence of the Island when, let who will be master, they cannot be more miserable than their countrymen and fellow-subjects make them here.

This passage reveals not only the weakened state of the militia, but also the harsh treatment experienced by servants and the poverty suffered by former servants.

Those who served in the militia did so under a status of militia tenants, a practice implemented in the 1671 “Act to prevent depopulation.” The Act “provided for the rating of two tenants, with leases of at least three years on plots of two acres of land, as the equivalent for Militia purposes of three freemen or servants” (Sheppard 1977:38). A later act in 1697 required that one white militia tenant be supplied for militia service by planters for every twenty acres owned (Hall 1764:138-155). While it is unclear how rigidly planters adhered to such requirements, it is evident that they were partially responsible for the establishment of white tenancies within the boundaries of sugar plantations.

For the plantocracy, the militia was another arena in which to affirm their status, for wealthy planters held positions as officers while indentured servants and plantation tenants served as the rank and file of the defense force. As for the enslaved, a mid-seventeenth century ordinance allowed for their arming (with edged weapons, not firearms) only in the case of emergencies and they were never fully enlisted (Shepherd 1977:58; Handler 1984). Given that there were no imperial conflicts or internal slave rebellions from 1692 until 1816, however, militia tenants can more amply be described as

small or subsistence farmers. Their status as militia tenants, however, reinforced a particular boundary between them and their enslaved neighbors. Serving as a buffer between planters and the enslaved, the racial and economic status of the “poor whites” would become contested, challenged, essentialized, and overtly political in the decades leading towards and following emancipation.

The “Poor White Problem” in the Age of Emancipation

Karl Watson has argued that the history of the “poor whites” “is far more akin to the history of the blacks [than the white elite], with whom they share centuries of marginalization, discrimination, oppression and poverty” (2000b:131). While this assessment holds weight in terms of the realities of poverty and discrimination, these populations lived under very different historical circumstances, with Africans and Afro-Barbadians experiencing the realities of enslavement rather than indentured servitude or life as small subsistence farmers. The legal and social demarcations between these populations became accentuated in the decades leading to and following emancipation. As antislavery thought swelled in the Europe and slave rebellions erupted throughout the Caribbean region (including Barbados in 1816), the “poor whites” as well as free people of color became “liminal” groups of interest as planters and colonial authorities debated the issue of slavery.³¹

David Lambert, following Homi Bhabha, defines liminal groups as “those which were neither obviously dominant nor subjugated, occupying a position of ‘in-betweenness’ in the colonial order” (2005:81). Specifically referring to early nineteenth century Barbados, Lambert summarizes, “neither white and dominant, nor black and

³¹ For the conceptual and ideological implications of the age of revolution within the Caribbean context see Fischer 2004.

subjugated, the poor whites and free people of colour were unsettling figures in slaveholding culture” (*ibid.*). This statement neatly encapsulates the role played by these groups within island and Atlantic debates surrounding slavery. In the decades preceding emancipation a number of visitors and local writers would comment on the state of the “poor whites” in order to support their arguments for or against the institution of slavery. These arguments are significant in that racial and class diversity was being acknowledged and attempts were being made to justify the existence and socioeconomic positioning of these demographics. Furthermore, as writers continued to utilize these populations in order to justify their political, economic, or humanitarian positions, “poor white” and free person of color became an essentialized identity where certain characteristic defined individuals that were perceived to be of these particular categories. Finally, these portrayals of the “poor whites” would come to inform contemporary historiography, thereby perpetuating eighteenth and nineteenth century stereotypes.

In the 1780s William Dickson visited Barbados from England. His *Letters on Slavery* was a radical antislavery treatise that depicted the horrors of the slave system and the current state of the English colony. The “poor whites” frequently appear in the narrative, being described as “totally ignorant and regardless of all laws human and divine” (1789:37). Due to their racial arrogance, he goes on to claim that “Many of the poor whites are disposed to take, and too many of them do take, every advantage over the negroes which the laws leave in their power” (41). In general, Dickson was attempting to illustrate that “The poor whites in Barbados have no idea that the blacks are, any way, intitled [*sic.*] to the same treatment as white men” (57), arguing that racial identity was no correlate for one’s intellectual capacity or degenerative status. In effect, negative

comments towards the whole of the “poor white” population sought to support his argument for emancipation and equal rights for the enslaved.

Dickson’s progressive attitudes were aligned with that of Joshua Steele who arrived in Barbados in 1780 to take command of two large plantations (Guinea and Kendal) that had been left to him following the death of his wife and step-daughter. Steele promoted the implementation of ameliorative measure to improve conditions for the enslaved as well as promote more “rational” or “enlightened” plantation management techniques. Although it is unlikely that he ever implemented these plans, Steele sought to provide each of his slaves with two acres of land in order for them to become self-sustaining. Eventually, he planned to manumit his slaves who would, by that time, have the necessary skills to survive as small farmers. Additionally, Steele established a Barbadian branch of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, which, along with other goals, sought to provide the necessary materials and structures to enable “poor whites” to emerge as a middling industrious class on the island (see Lambert 2005:41-72). Contrary to Dickson’s depiction, Steele argues that with the proper support, the “poor whites” were capable of functioning within a Barbadian class based society.

Poyer’s 1808 *History of Barbados* provided support and encouragement for the “poor whites” under different auspices. Poyer, a Barbadian-born middle class white man, was a staunch apologist of the institution of slavery and his *History of Barbados* defended the institution against abolitionists. Poyer feared that a growing body of middle class free people of color threatened the racial hierarchy that for so long had defined Barbadian socioeconomic life. In a letter to Lord Seaforth (the incoming governor of Barbados) in

1801, Poyer argued that the maintenance of a “well constituted society” depended on the preservation of “distinctions which naturally exist...First between White inhabitants and free people of Colour, and Secondly between Masters and Slaves” (1941:162). As such, he argued that the “poor whites” were hard-working, industrious individuals who struggled to make a living due to the rise of the free people of color (see Lambert 2005:73-104).

Several traveler accounts also depict author encounters with the “poor whites” in pre-emancipation Barbados. Two authors, in particular, offer explicitly malicious portrayals of the “poor whites”; George Pinckard (1806) and Henry Nelson Coleridge (1826). Although not overtly political like the works of Dickson, Steele, or Poyer, these accounts provide details about fleeting interactions with “poor white” individuals which then inform their generalizations about the population as a whole. For instance, Coleridge offers this lengthy, yet qualitatively significant, description of the “Redlegs” following his encounter with a “poor white” woman in the Scotland District (1826:272-274):

In consequence of the large white population in Barbados there exists a class of people which I did not meet with in any other, of the islands...These men are called the Tenantry, and have an indefeasible interest for their lives in a house and garden upon the respective plantations...[T]he greatest part of them live in a state of complete idleness, and are usually ignorant and debauched to the last degree. They will often walk half over the island to demand alms, and if you question them about their mode of life and habits of daily labor, they stare in your face as if they were actually unable to comprehend the meaning of your discourse. The women who will work at all, find employment in washing and mending the clothes of the negroes; and it is notorious, that in many cases whole families of these free whites depend for their subsistence on the charity of the slaves. Yet they are proud of Lucifer himself, and in virtue of their freckled ditchwater faces consider themselves on a level with every gentleman in the island.

Expressing similar sentiments, Pinckard claims that the “poor whites” are “descended from European settlers, but from misfortune, or misconduct, in some of the race, are reduced to a state far from independence; often, indeed, but little superior to the condition of free negroes” (1806:132). Pinckard’s would go on to comment on the possibility of racial degeneration, the implications of which, along with other consequences and fears associated with intermixing, will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In the late 1820s, shortly before emancipation, Frederick William Naylor Bayley, the son of a military officer, would visit Barbados and would comment on the “poor whites” he came across in Bridgetown (1833:62):

Of all the classes of people who inhabit Bridgetown, the poor whites are the lowest, and the most degraded: residing in the meanest hovels, they pay no attention either to neatness in their dwellings or cleanliness in their persons; and they subsist too often, to their shame be it spoken, on the kindness and charity of slaves. I have never seen a more sallow, dirty, ill looking, and unhappy race; the men lazy, the women disgusting, and the children neglected: all without any notion of principle, morality, or religion; forming a melancholy picture of living misery, and a strong contrast with the general appearance of happiness depicted on the countenances of the free black, and colored people, of the same class.

These accounts illustrate the harsh depictions of the “poor whites” that came to define them within a race based society that was typically dependent on white superiority, power, and control. This phenomenon bears striking similarities to the discourses produced about “white trash” during the contemporary period in the American south (see Hartigan 2005:Chapter 2). By this time the direct relationship between impoverishment and physical health, appearance, degeneration, etiquette, nourishment, and hygiene were being observed and acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic (for a case study of such effects from the American south see Novak 2008:Chapter 3). On visiting Ireland this led Frederick Douglass to comment in relation to the physical appearance and wellbeing of

an individual that an a man “may carve out his circumstances, but his circumstances will carve him out as well” (Douglass 2008[1854]:38). Despite the similarities in this developing discourse, the “poor white” situation was unique within the Caribbean given their proportionally high population percentage on a densely populated island.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century observers harshly and strategically incorporated the “poor whites” into their accounts of Barbadian society. These accounts served to bound and marginalize the “poor whites” as both exceptional and isolated within a plantation society that was coming to grips with the inevitability of emancipation. In 1832, two years prior to emancipation (or the start of the apprenticeship period), Edward Eliot, in a lecture at the Bridgetown Cathedral would comment on the current state of the “poor whites”. Arguing that most of the carpenters, masons, tailors, smiths, and shoemakers were mostly free people of color, he noted that this was “at a time when a large white population are in the lowest state of poverty and wretchedness” (1833:225-226). The problem of “poor white” poverty was exacerbated by full emancipation in 1838 with a flood of free Afro-Barbadian laborers on the market. With historical roots in the period of slavery, Hilary Beckles has argued that “By the end of slavery in 1838 a heterogeneous white working class had fully developed, and society was characterized by an element of ‘black over white’ at its lowest levels” (1988:1). Additionally, without the threat of slave rebellion the island’s militia was soon disbanded. “This in effect meant that those whites who occupied rent-free land on the plantations in return for services rendered in the militia, suddenly became squatters, with no legal claim to the land they occupied” (Watson 2000b:134).

The “poor white problem” was a question of what to do with a largely unemployed population that was sinking further into the depths of poverty following emancipation. Throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century Barbadian officials viewed emigration for the “poor whites” as a viable solution. Beginning in the 1850s Governor Hincks orchestrated efforts to send “poor whites” to neighboring Caribbean islands. Arguing that emigration to distant regions such as England, Canada, or New Zealand would be a drastic change in climate, Hincks, and later his replacement Walker, would propose that the “Redlegs” would find suitable homes in St. Vincent, the Grenadines, the Bahamas, or Jamaica. Many of these proposals were rejected for a number of political and economic reasons but eventually it was determined that St. Vincent, along with the Grenadines, would be suitable island homes where they would receive five to ten acres of land (Watson 2000b: 138-148). Citing a report that “confirms that as many as 400 poor white Barbadians had settled in St. Vincent and that another 100 had been sent to Bequia [the Grenadines]”, Karl Watson has estimated that “between 1860 and 1870 some 600 and 700 poor whites left Barbados to settle in the Windwards” (147). “Poor white” communities can still be found on St. Vincent and Bequia today and are locally known as Barbadians. Despite the emigration of hundreds of “poor whites”, however, thousands remained on the island and continued to be viewed as a problem for local administrators and planters.

By the start of the twentieth century the condition of the majority of the “poor whites” had improved little despite efforts for reform through poor relief and education (see Shepherd 1977:79-101). These conditions, however, weren’t unique to the “poor whites”. Widespread poverty and growing unemployment swept across the island as

global sugar prices declined and England looked to other Caribbean territories (such as Cuba) and to the beet sugar producing regions of Eastern Europe to purchase sugar (for labor conflicts during this period see Carter 2012). This led to a tremendous outflow of Barbadians to Panama to work as laborers building the canal (estimates reach as high as 45,000 laborers; for more on Barbadians in Panama and the effects of return migration and money see Richardson 1985). Additionally, health issues such as malnutrition and hookworm plagued the “poor white” population. A 1917 Rockefeller Foundation study revealed that 65% of the “poor whites” suffered from hookworm compared to 36% of the black population (Watson 2000b:134).³² Official efforts to promote emigration in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and migration to Panama in the late-nineteenth-early-twentieth century were factors in the decline of the total white population on the island which dropped from 16,207 in 1861 to 12,063 in 1911; it is estimated that the “poor whites” made up the majority of the white population (Shepherd 1977:70).

Throughout the twentieth century the “poor white” population continued to decline. As agricultural production diminished, emigration continued to be a factor in population decrease. Additionally, many rural “poor whites” made their way to Bridgetown with hopes of social mobility. Despite social unrest due to mass unemployed which climaxed in class riots in 1937 (see Browne 2012), many “poor whites” were able to take advantage of employer preference for light skinned employees and were therefore able to procure jobs as clerks, bank and office workers, cashiers, dock workers, and skilled laborers in the city (Shepherd 1977:109-110). By the 1960s and 70s it was observed that the “poor whites” could only be found in two discrete areas; the urban context of Bridgetown and in the rural community of Newcastle or Churchview in the

³² It remains unclear how the racial identities of the study participants was determined.

parish of St. John (Keagy 1975:20).³³ Historical and semi-ethnographic works of 1950s-70s attribute the dwindling of the “poor white” population to social mobility and outward migration but are torn on the issue of miscegenation (Price 1957; Keagy 1972 and 1975). The implications of such arguments will be discussed in detail in later chapters concerned with racial identity and discourse but by the 1960s it was evident that those traditionally defined as “Redlegs” were a dwindling demographic.

The “Poor White” Narrative Moving Forward

Despite the critical position taken on many of the sources used in presenting a brief history of the “poor whites”, this has largely been a top-down approach to the construction of the narrative. Like the enslaved, few records provide the voices of the “poor whites” and their history was therefore produced by planters, authorities, and visitors whom seldom thought very highly of the population as a whole. Additionally, they were viewed and portrayed as being homogeneous; pure white, impoverished, malnourished, idle, and marginal to island society. Their story received somewhat of an extra degree of silencing due to the fact that they belonged (and still belong) to a minority demographic that is identified as “white” within the Americas, a context which fostered and witnessed travesties against Africans and those of African descent. The racial binary that emerged had devastating consequences that still effect how history is perceived, constructed, and embodied in the present. As the previous chapter illustrated, these historical realities have engendered a particular and purposeful version of modern history whilst suppressing and denying others.

³³ The contemporary Newcastle community is adjacent to the abandoned Below Cliff village, the subject of the archaeological excavations discussed in later chapters.

Thus far, this dissertation has laid a foundation for theoretically and metaphorically unearthing suppressed histories and alternative modernities. Specifically, racial categories, particularly the “pure” binary of black and white, have been interrogated to suggest that individuals may not have identified or been identified as belonged to an all-or-nothing racial group. Additionally, we have seen the historical processes that engendered and maintained a “poor white” demographic within a plantation society that was largely based on a “white over black” socioeconomic hierarchy. It is therefore necessary to converge on the local settings where these historical processes unfolded and where alternative modernities were cultivated. The next chapter presents the methods employed to answer specific research questions about the daily lives of the “poor whites” and their place within Barbadian history and society in relation to other islanders including the enslaved, planters, authorities, etc. It is only within these localized settings that the broader narratives of Barbadian history and contemporary perceptions of the “Redlegs” can be challenged.

Chapter 4

Husked Coconuts and Deep Units: Methodological Considerations

Research for this dissertation was primarily conducted from October 2012 to August 2013 with shorter research trips to Barbados occurring in April and June of 2011. The long term fieldwork was carried out through the support of the Fulbright IIE program which provided the necessary funds to reside in Barbados for ten months. Due to a high cost of living on the island it wasn't possible to hire an excavation crew so excavations took place when visitors, volunteers, friends, family, or students were on island. Additionally, a significant debt is owed to my adviser, Douglas Armstrong, who was more than willing to assist when available. Therefore, given that excavation time was limited, substantial time was also spent at the Barbados Department of Archives and at St. John's Parish Church which holds the records for St. Margaret's Church, the local church for Below Cliff residents. Finally, time was also spent conducting informal interviews with former residents of Below Cliff, descendants of former residents, "poor white" Barbadians around the island, and Barbadians who had family connections to "poor whites". These historical archaeological and semi-ethnographic methods provided the data for addressing my research questions which were frequently and significantly altered over the course of my time in Barbados.

Although this dissertation is principally concerned with data accumulated from the Below Cliff area, it should be noted from the onset that during my time in Barbados excavations also took place at Trents Estate on the island's west coast in the parish of St. James, near Holetown. This project, under the direction of Douglas Armstrong, was designed to investigate the major social, economic, political, and geographic changes associated with the earliest years of settlement, the sugar revolution, and the centuries

following the shift to a sugar and slave society. While this dissertation doesn't directly deal with the material uncovered at this site, its significance for this study lies in its yielding of discrete contexts associated with the presence of European indentured laborers. Therefore, although excavations from this site have produced an abundance of material culture relating to the island's earliest indentured servants, this information mostly serves to contextualize how and why "Redlegs" would inevitably settle in places such as Below Cliff (for more on this project and its initial findings see Armstrong et al. 2012; Armstrong and Reilly N.D.).

Below Cliff is one of several "poor white" tenancies located around the island, primarily along the rugged east coast, that was a potential site of archaeological research (refer back to Figure 1.1). The site was chosen based on the feasibility of successfully conducting excavations, the historical material available, and local informants who provided invaluable insights into the tenantry's past (see Reilly 2013). The village lies below Hackleton's Cliff, a major geological feature that spans a substantial portion of the coastline, and was therefore aptly referred to as Below Cliff (both locally and within the historical record). The village, abandoned in the early 1960s, may have been settled in the mid seventeenth century but archaeological material has only thus far confirmed occupation to as early as the mid eighteenth century (see below). Given that the former village has been overtaken by thick forest since its abandonment, walking surveys of the forest were undertaken to locate house sites in order to recreate the landscape during occupation. Archaeological excavations were undertaken at three households which were chosen based on acquired knowledge of the families that had previously lived there and

the potential for uncovering contexts related to previous occupations, a process discussed in more detail below.

In general, Below Cliff was chosen as the site of excavation because of its association with the “poor whites” of Barbados. Being that the “poor whites” or “Redlegs” of Barbados are largely descended from indentured servants, the two sites (including Trents Estate) follow the trajectory of the “white” underclass of Barbados from their arrival on the island as indentured or wage laborers to a marginalized “poor white” demographic coping with poverty on the peripheries of the plantation landscape. Despite a sizable historical literature on the period of indentured servitude and, to a lesser degree, the “poor white” demographic in Barbados (see the previous chapter), this is the first archaeological project to explore sites associated with indentured servitude and the “Redlegs” (Reilly 2013). Therefore, broad research questions concerning household construction, access to material goods, and dietary patterns were of critical importance as excavations commenced. Additionally, given that Barbados has a rich history of historical archaeology dating the 1970s (see Handler and Lange 1978), these assemblages were intended to serve as a comparative tool to interpret the socioeconomic positioning of the “white” underclass in relation to seventeenth century urban populations (Smith and Watson 2009), enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians (Handler and Lange 1978; Handler et al. 1989; Loftfield 2001), and the formerly enslaved in post-emancipation contexts (Bergman 2013).

Archaeological data is complemented by historical data acquired from the Barbados Department of Archives as well as parochial records from St. Margaret’s Church. Although argued to be a historically invisible group (Watson 2000b), the

“poor whites”, often like the enslaved, make fleeting appearances within the historical record. Additionally, their skin complexion afforded them distinct social advantages which precipitated their appearance within official government and parochial records such as baptismal, marriage, and burial registries as well as pensioner lists of those deemed worthy of receiving poor relief from the parish vestries (Marshall 2003). Furthermore, in the early decades of English settlement, it was not uncommon for land and property owners to mention indentured servants by name in wills or deeds. Wills and deeds associated with Fort Plantation (later Trents) were scoured to determine the demographics of the laborers on the Estate as well as those tenants who were renters on the property (Armstrong and Reilly N.D.).

For Below Cliff, more extensive archival research was conducted. Official registers of baptisms and burials include a specific place of residence for individuals listed beginning in 1825. Therefore, it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty how many individuals were living in the village before this time. Baptismal and burial records were consulted for the parish of St. John from the years 1825 to 1848 and entries with a place of residence given as Below Cliff or Clifton Hall (the plantation where tenants of Below Cliff rented land from) were recorded. Additionally, given that the Below Cliff tenantry was situated in close proximity to the tenantry of Newcastle, residents of this tenantry were recorded as well. St. Margaret’s Church was opened in 1862 and was located closer to Below Cliff than St. John’s parish Church. Therefore, residents of the village would have attended St. Margaret’s, a hypothesis confirmed by local residents. Baptismal, burial, and marriage records from 1862 to 1970 were

consulted and following the same methodology as those undertaken with the St. John records, Below Cliff residents were recorded.

The “poor whites” were also a frequent topic of discussion within the Barbadian Council and at meetings of the parish vestries. Council Minutes were reviewed from the mid-nineteenth century and entries pertaining to the “poor whites” were transcribed including anonymous letters, reports on education and poor relief, and legislation on the militia and apprenticeships. Substantial qualitative and quantitative data was also acquired from the parish vestry minutes. The vestries were parochial bodies formed in the seventeenth century in each of the 11 parishes. Vestrymen were elected to board positions and were almost exclusively members of the plantocracy (with some also holding colonial administrative posts). The vestry was responsible for the maintenance of the parish church, repairing the roads and highways, collecting tithes and taxes, allocating funds and salaries, establishing and coordinating parochial educational institutions, and most importantly for the purposes of this study, distributing poor relief to the deserving white population (Marshall 2003). Therefore, these records proved invaluable in determining the social advantages warranted to the “poor whites” as well as how these individuals fared within socioeconomic climate of the plantation scheme.

The third methodological component of this project entailed informal ethnographic techniques. Since the “poor whites” are still present on the Barbadian landscape it was essential to speak with members of these communities, particularly those that spent their childhoods living in Below Cliff or those that had ancestors who lived there. My main informant was Wilson Norris, a 71 year old resident of Clifton Hall tenantry who spent his childhood, until the age of 14, below the cliff with his family.

Although retired from his post as an agricultural laborer (cutting cane and laboring in the works), he still climbs down the cliff each morning to husk coconuts which he then sells to a local bakery. I spent several mornings working alongside Wilson, employing the “go-along” ethnographic technique (Kusenbach 2003), as we walked through the forest that was once his home. His insights into village life were unique, formative, and tremendously honest reflections of his childhood and his impressions of the former and contemporary “poor white” community. Other members of Wilson’s family provided essential information about family lineages and village life including his cousin, Ainsley Norris, and his uncle, 89 year old Fred Watson.³⁴ Throughout the remaining chapters, I also make reference to other “Redleg” community members with whom I had contact.

The three methodologies discussed above were pursued to provide a more holistic interpretation of the history of the “poor whites” and their place within Barbadian society in the past and in the present. As mentioned above, this is the first archaeological investigation of the “Redlegs” of Barbados and it was therefore essential to complement archaeological data with other sources and alternative archives. An historical archaeological approach to this study provides intersecting data sets that allow for interpretations that the historical record alone is ill-equipped to provide. Despite calls for an “informed imagination” (Shaw 2013:9) in the reading of historical archives that have acknowledged and significant silences (Trouillot 1995), archaeological and ethnographic data have the potential to circumvent archival shortcomings (see Schmidt and Patterson 1995). As in other world areas, historians working in Barbados have only selectively

³⁴ Note that the majority of interlocutors were male. While I encountered and engaged with female community members (some of whom will be discussed in later chapters), the only living former residents of the tenantry I met during my research were males. This provided a gendered perspective in how these individuals viewed the landscape and recalled local ways of life.

utilized archaeological literature and data. Despite this disciplinary gulf (see DeCorse and Chouin 2003), it is hoped that the methodologies described below will illustrate the power of the historical archaeology to operate on multiple scales from the global to the extremely local. Although this project is multifaceted and temporally broad, these methodologies proved to be successful in addressing significant research questions as well as raising new directions for future research.

Hidden in the Woods

More often than not, anthropological and archaeological fieldwork is serendipitous. As Rivoal and Salazar argue, “There has always been a tendency in anthropology for the ‘field’ to shape the research design, rather than the other way around” (2013:180). This section therefore takes a narrative form to describe the serendipitous yet formative events that led to the choosing of a field site. This process is often overlooked within archaeological research but was a significant challenge in attempting to locate former “poor white” communities around the island. Historical maps of Barbados privilege large plantations that dotted the landscape for centuries, seldom providing the locations of small villages or plantation tenancies. As the sugar revolution enveloped the island and the white underclass made its exit from the plantation as laborers, they came to inhabit tenancies on the margins of plantations or established villages on “rab land” deemed unworthy of large scale agricultural production. Here, they served as militia tenants or subsisted as small farmers and fishermen (Shepherd 1977). As noted by Sir Woodville Marshall, there were between 16 and 18 known villages around the island by 1832 (1988:4). It is likely that several more existed but were washed away from the island landscape and memory. Due to the marginality of the

inhabitants and the often unpredictable landscapes (many of these areas were prone to land slippages and rock slides), these villages and the housing structures within them were often ephemeral. This led to what has been called the “vanishing village” (*ibid.*). For instance, the village of Irish Town appears on an 1857 map of the island. At the time, it had a sizable population of over 200 residents, which diminished as the nineteenth century wore on until its abandonment and eventual overgrowth in forest by the end of the century.

Villages like Irish Town that have been nearly erased from the island’s landscape are difficult, yet significant, places to conduct research. These sites are often inaccessible by car and if the area is seldom traversed by local residents or hikers, paths have low visibility and are often overgrown. Additionally, the longer a village has been abandoned, the less likely it is to find living former residents or descendants of former residents who retain knowledge of the village. As Ronald Hughes noted in his ethnohistorical article about residents of St. Elizabeth Village, St. John, collecting this particular form of local information is essential to understanding life in Barbados of years past and in the present (1979). Finally, as villages were abandoned, villagers often removed their boarded homes and sometimes, foundation stones, to reconstruct in a new location, thereby erasing surface indications of former habitation. Therefore, finding and physically being able to conduct research in these lost villages presents methodological difficulties.

Hikes organized by the Barbados National Trust offered me the unique opportunity to explore regions of Barbados that are off the beaten path. One such hike traversed the steep terrain of Hackleton’s Cliff as hikers meandered through the woods of

a dense forest on the border between St. Joseph and St. John. This particular area of Barbados is home to a concentration of “poor whites” or “Redlegs” but at the time, the woods through which we hiked were still mysterious to me and several of the other hikers. As we made our way through the thick vegetation I noticed an abundance of imported, European-made refined earthenwares on the ground surface littered throughout the forest. Additionally, through the trees it was possible to make out the faint outlines of former house foundations, many coated in moss or pushed from their original positions by the intrusion of trees. I pressed our knowledgeable guide, Sam, for any information he had on the area. He was able to tell me that he believed that it was an old village that had been lived in by former indentured servants.

Historical research and oral traditions have since confirmed that the large area under Hackleton’s Cliff was once divided into parcels owned by Clifton Hall, Newcastle, and Colleton plantations. The parcels were rented to tenants who occupied boarded houses and worked small agricultural grounds for subsistence purposes. Many residents were employed by the plantations while others fished the waters off the nearby coast (see Chapter 5). A deed from 1653 indicates that Clifton Hall had consisted of 200 acres “above the cliff” and 40 acres of “leased land” situated “below the cliff” (Barbados Department of Archives [BDA] RB3/3:11). It is unclear if this reflects a single renter who was utilizing the space for crop production or the land was being leased out to a number of tenants. It is clear, however, that from an early date, the owner of Clifton Hall wasn’t using the land below the cliff for agricultural production. While archaeological evidence has yet to confirm seventeenth century occupation, it is certainly possible that former indentured servants were living below the cliff as the sugar revolution was

commencing in the 1640s and 50s. At the time of the hike, however, only broken ceramics and articulated foundation stones provided evidence of the former village. Thick vegetation had quickly reclaimed the area and the forest canopy concealed the village from onlookers gazing across the landscape from atop the cliff (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: View from the top of Hackleton's Cliff. The forested area below was once the tenantry village of Below Cliff. Photograph by Douglas Armstrong.

My experience on the National Trust hike persuaded me to pursue the history of the former village in more detail. Encouraged by Dr. Karl Watson, who was able to provide me with provisional details about the former village, I contacted Mr. Richard Goddard. Mr. Goddard's grandfather, J.N. Goddard (who later launched a chain of well-known and successful grocery stores) had grown up in the former village and Mr. Goddard was deeply interested in his family's history and their former place of residence. Mr. Goddard generously shared what he knew of the former village as well as family

stories about his grandfather and the time that he had spent “below the cliff” before “making it over the hill”. Additionally, with the help of St. John community members in the 1970s, he made an attempt to construct a map of the village and establish the names of families that had lived in corresponding houses. He also shared with me a rare 1908 photograph taken from the top of Hackleton’s Cliff that depicted the village in the early twentieth century. The photograph (Figure 4.2), reveals a dramatic contrast between the early twentieth century community and the contemporary forested landscape (refer back to Figure 4.1). The research benefits of this photograph are invaluable in terms of visualizing an historical landscape that no longer exists. It was also fortunate that Mr. Goddard personally knew the current owner of the land under the cliff and acquired permission for me to conduct research in the area. Finally, Mr. Goddard drove me around the area both below and above the cliff near Clifton Hall and Newcastle plantations, providing information about landmarks and family stories. He drove me into the woods as far as the dirt path would permit and pointed out the direction in which I would find more house sites.



Figure 4.2: Photograph of Below Cliff taken from the same vantage point as Figure 4.1. The photograph dates to 1908. Courtesy of Richard Goddard.

With more detailed knowledge of the former village and some clues about the families that had once lived there, it was necessary to determine if an archaeological project would be feasible. The forest needed to be explored in more detail to determine where and how to conduct archaeological excavations. Archaeological surveys commenced involving treks through the woods to locate signs of former places of habitation through the presence of material culture scatters on the ground or standing house platforms made of limestone. These locations were then marked with flagging tape and recorded in order to return and conduct more rigorous archaeological tests. This process proved fruitful in uncovering the location of several housing platforms that once

held boarded homes. However, the most invaluable result of these surveys was a serendipitous encounter with a man walking through the woods with a bag of coconuts.

Unperturbed by the large, and no doubt heavy, load carried atop his head, the man introduced himself as Wilson Norris. Wilson, a resident of Clifton Hall tenantry, explained that he traversed a pathway up and down the cliff each morning to collect 50 coconuts to later sell to a nearby bakery. More importantly, for the purposes of this study, Wilson, now in his early 70s, had spent his childhood in the former village. Wilson agreed to meet with me at a later date to discuss daily life in the village, what he remembered about growing up there, and the other families that comprised his former neighbors. The contributions of Wilson and other research participants are critical in understanding landscapes and lives of years past. Additionally, insights provided by Wilson sparked new and intriguing research questions. Few archaeological projects benefit from such resources and when they do, they provide qualitative depth and rich detail that complement historical and archaeological interpretation (for such a case study in the Caribbean see Armstrong 2003).

Reconnaissance, Mapping Below Cliff, Shovel Tests, and Challenges

The description of the process that led me to discover the location of the Below Cliff village was dependent upon ethnographic methodologies as well as the use of oral traditions of family genealogies. Once the former village was discovered, archaeological methodologies in the form of shovel testing and unit excavations were utilized before turning back to ethnographic methods to narrow my search for more promising excavation locations. During the early days of excavations, time was spent in the home of Wilson Norris asking him questions about his childhood and what he remembered

about the village. These questions were designed to provide background information about the village and its former inhabitants. It wasn't until I later decided to pursue other ethnographic methodologies that I was able to shift my focus of excavations.

My initial excursion through the woods identified several housing platforms which would serve as the location for unit excavation and shovel test pits. The first house site chosen was said to be the home of the Fitz-Bailey family. Although not on a raised platform, the location of the house site was identifiable from the articulated stone foundation that was partially buried in the soil. This site also happened to be where we coincidentally ran into Wilson Norris and he identified the family that had once lived there. Additionally, he commented that the family was "dark" which I would later come to discover meant that they were either of mixed race or black. The implications of Wilson's racial terminology will be discussed in later chapters.

The excavation of a household of mixed race or black inhabitants was intended to serve as a comparative assemblage with artifacts uncovered from homes with former "poor white" inhabitants. Additionally, it was unclear as to the racial identities of the families that may have previously inhabited the household and such an ambiguity would have provided unique and significant interpretative challenges. Therefore, a 1 m X 1 m unit was placed on the exterior of the household with the foundation serving as the west wall of the unit (Figure 4.3). Excavations proceeded very slowly due to the soil's clay like consistency (common for certain areas of the parish of St. John). The unit was taken to a depth of 59 cm with roughly the bottom 10 cm being sterile. While imported ceramics, earthenware, glass, clay tobacco pipes, and other artifacts were recovered, the

artifact count wasn't substantial enough to warrant further excavations on the household, especially considering how time consuming the excavation process had been.



Figure 4.3: Excavation unit strung on the exterior of the Fitz-Bailey household. Photo by author.

In order to locate a more suitable location for unit excavation, shovel test pits were undertaken. In total, 21 test pits were dug at various house sites throughout the wooded area. With few exceptions, a test pit was dug on the interior and exterior of defined house sites when possible. The location of the test pits was determined based on the presence of material culture on the surface. If the test pit proved to be sterile, however, the surface material wasn't collected or bagged as it was when material was uncovered within the test pit. In total, 12 of the 21 test pits were sterile and varied in depth between 5 cm and 80 cm until bedrock was reached. The most successful shovel test pits were located in the yard/walkway area to the northeast of Wilson Norris' former

home which was discovered whilst working in the woods with Wilson. This particular test pit (STP 12) would be the location of the first unit excavated in the vicinity of Wilson's former home.

Without the assistance of Wilson Norris it is unlikely that his former house spot would have been found due to the thick forest and the lack of navigable trails. Following my initial meeting with Wilson Norris I joined him on several occasions on his daily trips to husk and collect coconuts. To supplement his pension of \$144 BBDS (\$72 US) a week, Wilson husked and collected 50 coconuts a day to sell to a local bakery for 35 cents BBDS each. This "go-along" ethnographic methodology (Kusenbach 2003) allowed me to observe Wilson as he comfortably and familiarly navigated the pathways of the tenantry where he spent his childhood. In contrast to the nervousness and discomfort often associated with "official" interviews, Wilson more freely spoke with me about his family, his life, the village and its former inhabitants, island politics, etc. Additionally, working alongside Wilson allowed me to gain his trust, facilitating open dialogue that might not have been possible in an interview setting.

Our trips through the woods were crucial in developing an understanding of the landscape of the former village. By the time Wilson was born, in 1941, many of the families had left Below Cliff but he was still able to point out house sites that were occupied during his childhood and he could readily identify the families that had inhabited them. Two separate trips through the woods with Ainsley Norris, Wilson's younger cousin, and Ainsley's grandson Jonathan were similarly useful in understanding the social dynamics of the village. The excursions with Ainsley were specifically for the purposes of learning about the village so we spent more time going over the details of

places and names. He was keen to point out spots where men socialized (drinking and playing cards or dominos), where relatives lived, friends and neighbors who had children with whom he socialized, and pathways that led from one house to the next. Wilson and Ainsley were also able to speak at length about the occupations of older family members and neighbors, as well as dietary habits.

Following the purchase of a handheld GPS device I was able to plot the locations of each of the identified house sites and enter the names of the families that were known to have lived there (Figure 4.4). Being that some of the former residences were uninhabited by the time Wilson and Ainsley were born, several points are left unnamed on the map provided in Figure 4.4. Besides house sites, other points of interest were plotted including places of social gathering and entrances leading in and out of the woods from the top of the cliff.



Figure 4.4: Close-up map of house sites plotted within the Below Cliff tenantry. Household surnames refer to the last known residing family and were provided by local informants. Map by author.

The latter are of particular significance as many of the village residents would have climbed up the paths to go to work on the plantations in the mornings, children would have used them to pay the monthly rent to the plantation manager, and before the erection of St. Margaret's church, villagers would follow the paths to get to and from St. John's church for services. Additionally, traffic would have likely flowed in both directions and during the period of slavery enslaved laborers would have traveled to Below Cliff via these pathways in order to socialize, trade, or participate in any number of other activities. The three main entrances utilized by residents, going from north to south, were the Ladders, Monkey Jump, and the Gates (Figure 4.5).

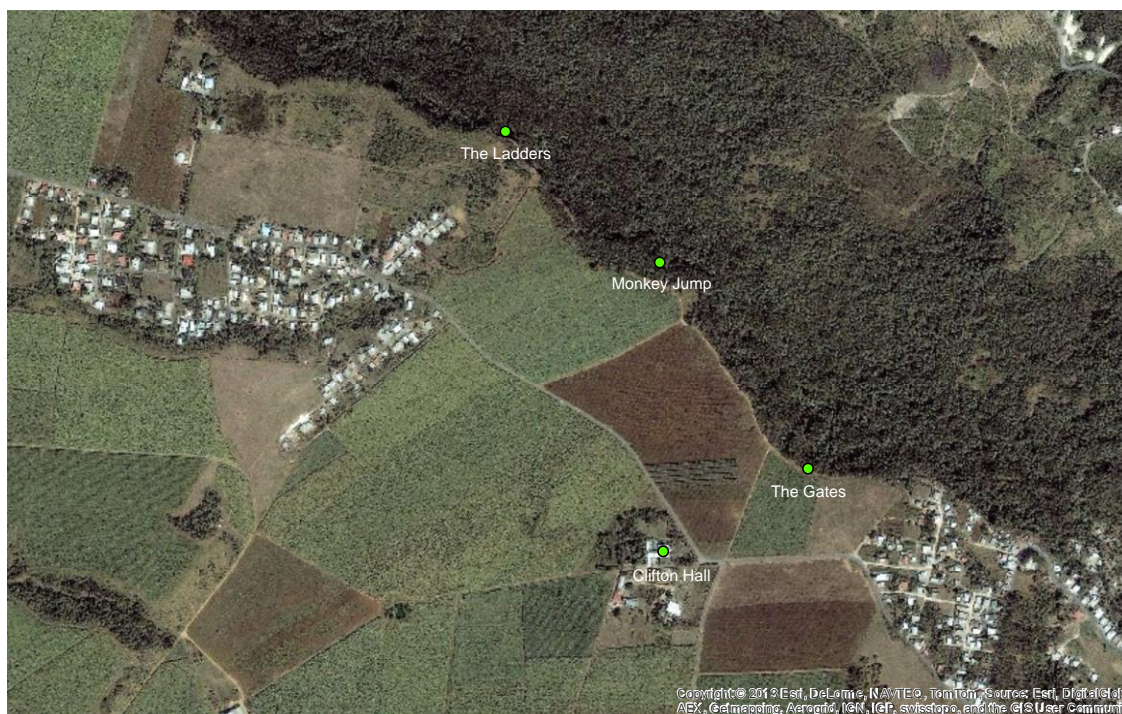


Figure 4.5: Clifton Hall Great House depicted along with the three points of entry at the top of the cliff; from northwest to the southeast the Ladders, Monkey Jump, and the Gates. Map by author.

The thick forest that now conceals the former village provided several methodological challenges. First, establishing a direct and maneuverable path through which to drive and walk to a site of excavation was difficult. The land to the east of the

woods (downhill from the cliff) is mostly comprised of banana fields as they now prove more profitable than sugar for production on a small scale. Therefore, the main road is paved but all roads leading closer to the woods are dirt paths that form the boundaries of the banana fields. The size of my car didn't allow for any extreme forms of off-road driving so for the majority of the time spent excavating it was necessary to park at the home of the Gibson family at the bottom of the hill (Mr. Gibson's grandfather was a former resident of Below Cliff) and hike a distance of about a mile uphill to the site. Fortunately, due to the remoteness of the site, it was possible to leave larger pieces of equipment in the woods, hidden from view, without the threat of being stolen.

The remoteness of the area was also of particular concern to local residents when they became aware of what I was doing. I was warned that nearby there were younger men growing marijuana in the woods. While I never encountered such individuals (or their product), it was still a concern I was conscious of. Additionally, the whole region is prone to unpredictable rock slides (to be discussed in more detail below). These two concerns were determining factors in limiting my time spent excavating in the woods alone. When on my own, my time was better spent in the archives as I awaited the availability of other crew members to continue excavations. The woods also presented difficulties in terms of survey work. The tree line made it impractical to conduct surveys using a total station. Additionally, the steep slope of the area provided too much fluctuation in elevations. Therefore, the plotting of GPS coordinates was the most practical means of obtaining data for mapping. Despite these methodological challenges, survey work and conversations with informants eventually led to the site of primary excavations.

Explorations of the Norris House Site

During the course of my excursions with Wilson and Ainsley I was introduced to the house site upon which Wilson was born and raised. This particular household was selected for excavations for several reasons. First, the rectangular outline of the foundation and the raised and flat platform make it easy to discern the orientation of the house and its associated features (Figure 4.6). Secondly, Wilson and Ainsley were able to provide detailed information about household features and features associated with the surrounding area including the walkway, garden areas, pig and fowl pens, a detached kitchen, and a trash pit. The house was also unique in that it was at one time a two-story structure housing Wilson's family on the upper level and a small shop operated by Wilson's aunt on the ground floor. Therefore, the immediate area of the house would have been a social space where villagers met and socialized, making it an optimal location for uncovering material culture associated with leisure time and for recovering a sample of goods which villagers had access to through the shop. However, excavations revealed no evidence suggesting that the structure was two stories in generations earlier than the time of Wilson's aunt's shop. The visible foundation was rectangular in shape and measured 6.6 by 3.9 meters. The foundation also rested on a tall platform composed of articulated as well as unarticulated pieces of limestone. The nature of these stones will be discussed below but the northeast foundation wall was approximately 1.5 meters above the ground surface below (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.6: Wilson Norris' childhood home. The rectangular limestone foundation is highlighted in red. Photograph by author.

Shovel test pits were first placed in the former walkway area below the housing platform to the northeast. This particular region was selected due to the high concentration of imported ceramics and, to a lesser degree, glass shards found on the surface. Three test pits were placed on a grid corresponding to compass orientation. The grid coordinates of the test pits correspond to their position in relation to the 0/0 point which was the northeast corner of the foundation. STP 13 was the furthest away from the foundation and also the shallowest, yielding fewer artifacts than the other two. Therefore, three 1 m X 1 m excavation units were placed next to each other running along an east west axis, perpendicular the northeast wall of the house's foundation. Cultural levels were relatively easy to follow and adhered to 10-15 cm levels. There were few disturbances such as roots or large stones and bedrock was reached at a depth

between 40 and 50 cm (depending on the slope of the particular unit). The three excavation units provided a sufficient sample of material from the household's exterior and given that no features were uncovered, it was decided not to continue excavations in this region (Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.7: View of the northeastern foundation wall. The rectangular limestone foundation seen in Figure 7 sits atop this housing platform. Photo by author.

Focus then shifted to features surrounding the house's interior including the detached kitchen and the trash pit. Wilson Norris had pointed out the trash pit, remembering that his family had utilized the pit since he was a child. The trash pit was lined by stones articulated in a circular shape with a diameter of 125 cm. For the purposes of excavation it was bisected on a north south axis so levels could be taken down while revealing the stratigraphy in the profiles. The overwhelming majority of

material recovered from the one meter of excavated soil consisted of twentieth century plastics, ceramic, and glass with select sherds of nineteenth century ceramics. No stratigraphy was observed.



Figure 4.8: Excavation Units 1, 2, and 4 in the pathway adjacent to Wilson Norris' childhood home. Photo by author.

Excavations were put on hold in the trash pit because of screening difficulties due to heavy rains in December. Conversations with Wilson Norris in January revealed that he recalled filling in the trash pit with soil and modern garbage in the 1970s. It is possible that the trash pit once operated as a well and was transformed into a trash pit once it had dried out. Nonetheless, it was decided to focus excavations elsewhere. Excavations on the detached kitchen were also short lived. The northwest foundation extended beyond the boundaries of the house and provided a back wall for the detached kitchen which sat

in front of the house, to the southwest of the front entrance. Few artifacts were uncovered from the shallow unit and this included a minimal amount of faunal remains which were surprisingly scarce given the function of the area.

Excavations then shifted to the household itself including units placed on the interior and exterior. In total, 13 1 m X 1 m units were placed inside the foundation of the house (10 units) and outside the foundation's northeast (2 units) and southeast (1 unit) walls. The exterior units were lacking in material culture as well as identifiable stratigraphy. Large, immovable stones made excavations impossible, and work was abandoned in these areas. Despite the lack of material culture, the presence of the large boulders were indicative of rockslides and it is evident that residents built boarded structures on top of larger stones that came to rest following a slide. The interior of the house, however, proved fruitful in terms of material culture acquired and stratigraphic data. Rather than a grid corresponding to compass directions like the units placed in the walkway area, the orientation of the units within the structure's interior corresponded with foundation walls. The north corner of the foundation provided the northwest and northeast walls of the first unit placed inside the structure (Unit 5). Excavations revealed a feature in the northern corner of the house at a depth of about 10 cm. The feature consisted of flat pieces of cut limestone arranged as if part of a flooring surface. However, it only extended about 80 cm along the northwest wall from the north corner (Figure 4.9). The function of this feature is still unknown and it was mysterious to Wilson and his cousin, indicating that it was likely constructed during an earlier period of occupation.



Figure 4.9: Articulated wall unearthed in Unit 5 at a depth of 10 cm. It is possible that the stones represent a former foundation. Photo by author.

Intersecting with this feature was an articulated limestone wall that appeared at a depth of 10-15 cm. The wall ran parallel with the southwest foundation wall that was visible on the surface (but rested about 50 cm north east of the surface foundation) and represents the foundation of a former structure. It is possible that the rubble found on the exterior of the northwest wall is the destroyed portion of the same foundation wall that was uncovered during excavations. In other words, evidence suggests that structures were simply built upon previous structures (following destruction or a move) albeit with slightly altered orientations and dimensions depending on the landscape and available building materials. Aside from these features, the units placed throughout the interior of

the structure revealed a clay/rock floor surface at a depth of about 25-30 cm. It is likely that the two levels represent different occupation periods.

At about 50 cm a layer of loose limestone rubble appeared, likely indicating a rockslide/fill episode when the house had been destroyed by a slide, the platform re-flattened, and a new house constructed. The entirety of the housing platform rests at the bottom of a rather steep decline and therefore rests in the midst of a slide zone, making the inhabitants of this particular house more susceptible to the dangers of slides.

Therefore, environmental dangers were daily realities with which residents coped and were crucial in rebuilding processes in addition to destruction (Dawdy 2006a). The fill layer reached a depth of about 80 cm where more consistent soil appeared. This context, likely an occupation layer given the abundance of material cultural, continued to a depth of about 100-110 cm. At this point extremely large stones/boulders appeared making excavations very difficult. The stones were loose, however, indicating that bedrock had not yet been reached. Additionally, material culture (imported ceramics in particular) was recovered within the loose stones. It is believed that this layer again corresponds to a rockslide and reconstruction episode.

Excavations at these depths became increasingly difficult given the limitations of space. Additionally, the loose layers of limestone contributed to the danger with the looming threat of collapsing walls. Therefore, units had to be excavated to different depths to allow for access in and out of the deepest areas until suitable space was opened for excavations to continue to greater depths (in essence, creating a makeshift staircase out of neighboring units). Bedrock was finally reached at a depth of 200 cm (in Units 7 and 14). In total, six units (7, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18) within the structure's interior were

taken to depths greater than 150 cm to reach bedrock. Limestone boulders became larger towards the bottom of these units making excavations even more challenging and providing further evidence of the occurrence of a rockslide (Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10: Interior unit excavations illustrating thick stratigraphic layers of loose limestone fill. Large boulders were present towards the bottom of excavation units. Photo by author.

Despite challenges, persistence in the excavation process was fruitful and imported ceramics were recovered at depths of 200 cm, below large limestone boulders. Evidence confirms that the region was inhabited for several centuries (likely beginning sometime around the 1650s) but it appears that domestic structures were ephemeral. These findings have significant implications for discussions of taphonomy and the relationship between villagers, poverty, and their environment.

With a few weeks of field time remaining after the completion of excavations at the Wilson Norris' former homestead, six excavation units were excavated at the former home of Hampton and Gorringer Gibson (Gorringer was Wilson's aunt). The ruins of the foundation were discovered following a small fire that burned a parcel of tall grass during the spring dry season. While the full extent of the structure's foundation wasn't visible, it was evident that the house had been significantly larger than Wilson's former home.

Conversations with Wilson revealed that his aunt and uncle had twelve children, explaining the size of the structure, and that prior to their occupation of that space, Wilson couldn't remember any other families living there. Therefore, this was an ideal place to provide more evidence of ephemerality in terms of household occupation.

Unlike Wilson's childhood home, the foundation at the Gibson household was incomplete making it difficult to discern the extent and orientation of the structure.³⁵

Additionally, small, three sided foundations were found throughout the region below the cliff which were initially thought to be parts of house foundations. Following conversations with the Norris family, however, it was determined that these were the remains of pig and goat pens. The pens were constructed with great care, illustrating the investment of time and funds associated with the rearing of animals. This, however, caused great confusion in discerning which walls were pens and which were foundations.

Three shovel test pits were placed at the Gibson household (one to the northwest of the house, one to the southwest, and one within the interior). The test pit on the exterior of the northwest wall of the structure (STP 14) proved most fruitful in material culture and also went to a depth of 70 cm. Six 1 m X 1 m excavation units followed in an

³⁵ This also explains why no maps or plan views of the foundation are provided as they would simply be depictions of a single corner amongst disarticulated stones.

attempt to expose the extent of the foundation wall. Unfortunately, excavations failed to definitively identify the extent of the former foundation and loose limestone found throughout the units proved difficult in discerning limestone rubble from foundation stones. Within all six units roughly the top 40 cm was rather loose loam soil mixed with loose limestone. Within these contexts imported ceramics, glass, and plastics were common artifacts, indicating that these deposits were associated with the habitation of the Gibson family. At deeper depths (up to 75 cm in Unit 6), however, soils had a more sandy consistency. Additionally, within these contexts large sherds of white salt-glazed stoneware were recovered along with locally made earthenwares (Figure 5.2). The change in material culture from one stratigraphic layer to the next further supported the hypothesis created during excavations at Wilson's childhood home. The region was home to ephemeral structures that were frequently destroyed, moved, and rebuilt throughout the area. In the case of the Gibson household, it appears that occupants inhabited the space in mid-to-late eighteenth century (as evidenced by the white salt-glazed stoneware), left it vacant for most, if not all, of the nineteenth century, and returned in the twentieth century.

Despite methodological challenges including small crew sizes and an unstable work environment (for both physical and social reasons), excavations proved fruitful in unearthing the remains of the former "Redleg" tenantry village. The region is now shrouded in thick forest but with the help of local interlocutors it was possible to navigate the dense woods to generate a picture of an almost invisible former landscape. STPs were strategically placed in areas with visible limestone foundations in order to focus excavation efforts. While unit excavations took place at three different households, the

majority of time was spent at Wilson Norris' childhood home. In total, 3,582 artifacts were collected from the Below Cliff tenantry which were carefully washed, sorted, and analyzed (Table 4.1). Currently, the artifacts are housed at the Barbados Museum along with the collection from Trents Estate, excavated under the direction of Douglas Armstrong. The interpretation of the archaeological data can be found in the ensuing chapter. In what follows, I discuss the methods employed in pursuing historical data to complement the archaeological materials.

Artifact Category	Number	Percentage
Imported Ceramics	748	20.88
Locally made earthenware	299	8.35
Glass	769	21.47
Nails (and fragments)	475	13.26
Metal	261	7.29
Shell	73	2.04
Bone	115	3.21
Small Finds (buttons, plastic, etc.)	487	13.6
Plaster/Cement	45	1.26
Charcoal	121	3.38
Tobacco Pipe	33	0.92
Brick	156	4.36
Total	3,582	100

Table 4.1: Below Cliff artifacts recovered and collected arranged by artifact type. Table by author.

Digging in the Archives

Time spent on the island without the assistance of a crew to excavate was better served in the archives than conducting excavations for reasons described above.

Therefore, sporadically, several weeks were spent in the Barbados Department of Archives and in St. John's Church which holds the parochial records for St. Margaret's, the local Anglican Church for Below Cliff residents following its construction in 1862. I had a specific research agenda in mind when it came to Below Cliff in that I was seeking records that were specific to the tenantry as well as Clifton Hall plantation. However, I

was also interested in surveying materials associated with the “poor whites” more broadly. Few volumes have entirely focused on the “poor whites” (for notable exceptions see Davis 1978; Shepherd 1977; Watson 1970) and scholarly works that make reference to the “poor whites” often lack historical depth and succumb to generalizations (see for instance Browne 2012; Hoyos 1978; Keagy 1972, 1975; O’Callaghan 2000; Price 1957). Additionally, few authors have utilized local records such as baptismal, marriage, and burial records to investigate the “Redlegs” at the community level. Instead, there has been an overwhelming reliance on travel accounts and broader discussions of the “poor whites” on an island wide-level (see Chapter 3). Therefore, by utilizing local as well as national archival sources, it is possible to maneuver through different spatial scales. This methodological approach has theoretical implications, suggesting that the global and local need not be mutually exclusive; rather, they can and do inform one another (see Brooks et al. 2008).

My archival research began by utilizing the Hughes and Queree notes housed in the Barbados Department of Archives. These notes are a fairly comprehensive compilation of will and deed transfer of property summaries for large Barbadian plantations. These notes allowed me to trace the ownership of Clifton Hall plantation from the mid-seventeenth century to the early twentieth century and provided specific references for the wills and deeds that detailed the holdings of the property throughout the generations. Early wills and deeds associated with the property were scoured for references to the “poor white” tenants living under the cliff. While these documents failed to produce any viable information about property inhabitants, as mentioned above an early deed transfer from 1653 designated 40 acres below the cliff as “leased land”

(BDA RB3/3:11). Despite a lack of specific information about residents in the wills and deeds, the “white” legal designation of “Redleg” Barbadians afforded them opportunities not extended to the enslaved population (and seldom to free people of color, see Handler 1974). Although propertyless, the “poor whites” of Clifton Hall were listed in the parochial registers of baptisms and burials for the parish of St. John. Additionally, beginning in 1825, places of residence were listed, making it possible to determine which individuals were living in Below Cliff at the given time.

Baptismal and burial records from the parish of St. John are available on microfilm at the BDA for the years 1825-1848 (BDA RL1/26, 27, 28, and 29). These volumes were searched and every listing of an individual with a place of residence listed as “Below Cliff”, “Below the Cliff”, “Clifton Hall”, “Clifton Woods”, “Clifton Hall Land”, “Newcastle”, and “Newcastle Land” was copied. I chose to transcribe the entries listed for Newcastle since tenants of this plantation were also living under Hackleton’s Cliff and the property bordered the land of Clifton Hall (the boundaries were rather loosely defined). Therefore, an accurate representation of those living under the cliff would have to be inclusive of those living on Newcastle land. Unfortunately, these records presented minor difficulties in that the recording of these entries were dependent upon the Reverend that entered the individual being baptized or buried. While a specific place of residence (specific village or plantation) was given in the overwhelming majority of cases throughout the registry, on select pages every entry reads “St. John” or “In the Parish” for the place of residence. In such instances, unless the family name was familiar and could be associated with Below Cliff, the entries had to be omitted from my list of transcriptions as their places of residence were unknown.

A similar strategy was employed in searching baptismal, burial, and marriage registries from St. Margaret's Anglican Church. St. Margaret's was established in 1862 to serve St. John residents living in the broader area from immediately under the cliff to the coastline. In contrast to the parish church of St. John where members of the plantocracy attended services seated in their rented pews and had family burial plots, St. Margaret's housed a majority of working class individuals of diverse racial identities (being that the church was constructed in the post-emancipation era, many of the formerly enslaved were baptized members of the Anglican Church). I was granted permission to review their registries, now held at the parish church of St. John. Volumes began in 1863 and continued to the present but Below Cliff entries ceased by the mid-1960s. As was the case with the records from St. John's parish, entries with a place of residence associated with Clifton Hall or Newcastle were transcribed. For burials, if either place of birth or death fell into these categories the entry was recorded. The same circumstances applied if either the bride or groom of a marriage were residents of the Below Cliff tenantry. It was also common for the occupation of an individual (in the case of a burial or marriage) or that of the individual's father (in the case of a baptism) to be listed in this registry. These listings would prove valuable in interpreting how residents of Below Cliff made a living.

For an island-wide perspective on the "poor whites" during the occupation of Below Cliff, I returned to the national archives. Two particular forms of records were utilized in conducting this research: the minutes from parish vestry meetings and minutes from Barbadian Council meetings. This methodology allowed for a multi-scale analysis of the "poor whites"; the parochial registries provided data for Below Cliff, vestry

minutes for the parish of St. John, and Council minutes for the entire island. While minutes from Council meetings have been a heavily mined resource for historians working in Barbados, the use of the minutes from vestry meetings has been surprisingly slim. Their limited use may be attributed to a lack of detailed discussions about groups other than the “poor whites” who have been underrepresented within the historical scholarship. While it can only be speculated as to why the volumes have seen such little attention, scholars who extensively utilized these sources have been able to provide incredible historical depth on particular events, individuals, and the social and parochial institutions of the island (see Forde-Jones 1998; Marshall 2003; Shepherd 1977).

The vestry minutes that are available to the public at the BDA are a random assortment of volumes that survive. The earliest volume comes from the parish of St. John for the years 1649-1682 and has been transcribed and published due to its historical significance (see Campbell 1983 and 1984). The contents of these volumes range from the collection of parish taxes or tithes, the maintenance of the church, the salaries allotted to parish employees, reports on parish highways, lists of those receiving quarterly pensions (commonly referred to as the “poor lists”), registries and administrative affairs for parochial educational institutions, and miscellaneous matters that are brought to the attention of the vestry. While I have utilized a number of different volumes from multiple parishes for this study, the majority of data acquired came from volumes from the parish of St. John for the years 1792-1820 (BDA D279) and the parish of St. Philip for the years 1794-1835 (BDA D273). These particular parishes were home to a large concentration of “poor whites” and Below Cliff was situated within St. John. The years chosen reflect a correlation between archaeological and historical data of tenantry

occupation within the several decades surrounding emancipation. These volumes were analyzed and all entries pertaining to the “poor whites” were transcribed including pensioner lists, orders concerning education, medical care, taxes, and letters submitted to the vestry.

The use of the minutes from Council meetings was far more selective given the large breadth of matters discussed during the course of the meetings. While the Council had been discussing the white underclass and how to legislatively govern them since the mid-seventeenth century, the meetings that were reviewed for the purposes of this study were from the 1840s. Given time constraints it would have been impossible to survey the minutes of all of the meetings from the period of occupation of Below Cliff; such minutes consist of tens of thousands of pages. Alternatively, in the 1840s, the BDA provides summaries of items discussed and documented within the minutes. These surveys were reviewed and the meetings from 1845-1847 (BDA Minutes of Proceedings 1845-1846 and 1846-1847) were selected for their discussion of the militia (which was composed of a substantial number of “poor whites”), the education of the poor, and items specifically described as “poor whites”.

The minutes for the meetings of a single calendar year consist of over 1,000 pages on microfilm. The minutes were scoured searching for specific entries concerning the “poor whites”. Discovered items were transcribed. Of particular interest were committee reports on the education of the poor (which made specific mention of the “poor whites”), annual reports and statistics of the island hospital and its patients, a review of island legislation, and an anonymous letter condemning the idleness of the “poor whites”. These items were transcribed as they reflect attitudes towards the “poor whites” at a

particularly pivotal period within Barbadian history. Following emancipation the “poor white problem” (Beckles 1988) became an increasingly pertinent issue as job competition between recently emancipated Afro-Barbadians and “poor whites” brought the entanglement of race and class to the fore in public discourse (Craton 2009[1982]:45-46). It was therefore essential that I investigated primary records to get a semblance of how these conversations and issues were making their way into official policy and debate.

With the exception of wills and deeds and select vestry minutes from the seventeenth century, the majority of my historical research based within the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The decades preceding emancipation and the post emancipation period coincide with the available archaeological data for Below Cliff and therefore, this archival research provides the necessary context on the local and island-wide level for situating the “poor white” experience within the broader narrative of Barbadian history.

“You mean, the Redlegs?”: Ethnographic Endeavors and Casual Conversations

Ethnographic methodologies and casual conversations with Barbadians proved to be a far more crucial aspect of this research project than had been anticipated. While underrepresented within Barbadian historiography, there is a striking public awareness of the demographic. Although the awareness is rooted in some semblance of historical context, the majority of public knowledge about the “poor whites” consists of generalizations and pernicious stereotypes that are reified within the historical literature.³⁶ Therefore, new research questions were developed in order to unpack the historical production of these stereotypes and how they had infiltrated public thought and

³⁶ While this phenomenon was discussed in more detail in chapter 3, see Browne 2012:16; Hoyos 1978:96-98; O’Callaghan 2000; Price 1957.

memory. Conversations with friends, historians, academics, and the “poor white” community assisted in addressing these complex questions. More formal ethnographic methodology was utilized within the St. John community. While no formalized interviews were conducted, specific informants were consulted regarding family genealogies, village demographics and organization, daily life within the village, and personal thoughts on the “poor white” or “Redleg” identity.

Throughout my stay in Barbados I frequently found myself in casual conversation explaining why I was on the island. I would describe my research project and often indicated that I was studying the history and lives of the “poor whites” or the “white” underclass on the island. This explanation generated mixed responses which ranged from excitement of the prospect of this underrepresented group receiving attention to utter confusion as to why anyone would study such a topic. While reactions varied, the overwhelming majority would frequently ask a corrective question. In response to my descriptor of “poor whites”, individuals would usually respond, “you mean, the Redlegs?” or “are you talking about the Ecky-Bekkies?”. These pejoratives are still widely used across the island but are seldom used perniciously towards an individual. Within the “poor white” community, residents are aware of the terms and their usage but would seldom utilize them to describe themselves or their families. More frequently, they would identify themselves in nationalistic terms, simply as Barbadian (or Bajan) with less frequent usage of “white” Barbadian. The imposition and persistence of the terms, their historical significance, and their use within Barbadian dialect speak specifically towards how the public perceives the demographic in the present and how that perception shaped and continues to shape “poor white” identity. Therefore, these

conversations were critical tools for better understanding the “poor whites” within public imagination.

Localized ethnographic methodologies were undertaken in St. John to provide insights into the community the once lived in Below Cliff. Due to the relatively recent dates of village occupation, the gathering of oral traditions provided overwhelming insight into village life. Despite the use of ethnographic methodologies, IRB permissions were not acquired due to the fact that I collected oral tradition rather than conducting, recording, or transcribing formal interviews. Unhindered by IRB guidelines and permissions, I was better able to comfortably and casually discuss Below Cliff and its former residents with local community members. Very few St. John residents are still alive that were born in Below Cliff. These residents were mostly born in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s which made it difficult for some of these individuals to accurately recall memories of the village (this was the case with Edwin Fenty, Ansol Norris, and Seaford Norris). Others, such as Elton King, passed away shortly before I had the opportunity to speak with them. However, three members of the Norris family (Wilson, Ainsley, and Eustace) and Fred Watson provided remarkably vivid recollections of former villagers and village life. Finding these individuals and acquiring their trust, however, was not a simple task.

Armstrong’s work with the East End community of St. John (2003) similarly benefitted from the local knowledge of former village residents. In contrast to Armstrong’s project, however, I was not invited into the community, making it difficult to establish contact with former villagers and their descendants. My serendipitous encounter with Wilson Norris was only the first step in the process of establishing a

positive relationship in which Wilson felt comfortable speaking openly about himself, his family, his former place of residence, and his thoughts about Barbadian society. My first few meetings with Wilson were rather awkward encounters involving large blocks of silence punctuated by questions and short answers. Wilson would typically provide very short, deliberate answers to questions about his family and life below the cliff.

Additionally, when I had first asked whether there were other community members who might be able to help me he responded that he couldn't think of anyone since everyone had either died or moved away.

Trust was gradually established and much is attributed to a shift in where and how our conversations took place. Rather than meeting with Wilson at his home on top of the cliff in Clifton Hall tenantry, I began accompanying him on his daily trek into the woods to husk and collect coconuts. These expeditions served two purposes. First, I was able to ask Wilson about specific features and house sites that we passed while hiking through the forest. Additionally, I worked side by side with Wilson, establishing a rapport. By sweating, getting my hands dirty, and carrying sacks of coconuts with Wilson I was quickly able to earn his trust. Following these trips our relationship had noticeably changed. We openly conversed about politics, family, economics, work, sports, music, and his childhood. Additionally, he began volunteering names and phone numbers of people that might be able to help with my research, including his younger cousin, Ainsley Norris.

Ainsley, six years Wilson's junior, now lives in College Savannah, St. John in a house with his wife on a small plot where his two sons also have houses with their families. With the number given to me by Wilson, I called Ainsley who was audibly

thrilled to hear about my project. Ainsley would frequently refer to the “poor whites” as the “invisible people” of Barbados and was all too willing to share his knowledge of the place in which he spent his childhood. Along with his grandson, Jonathan, we took two trips through the woods where he nostalgically spoke of the families that once inhabited the house spots. Ainsley’s sharp memory provided the names of the families that now appear on the map produced from plotted GPS points within the village (Figure 4.4).

As excavations continued on Wilson’s childhood home, my encounters with local community members became more frequent. I typically parked by car near three households of individuals with ancestors who had once lived in Below Cliff; the Gibsons, Downies, and Kings. What began as polite waves when passing in the morning turned into longer conversations when residents saw me emerge from the woods soaked in sweat and caked in mud and dirt. Residents began stopping me in the road to give me fresh produce and they were willing to talk to me about their family genealogies. Additionally, my post-excavation appearance was similar to that of an individual who had spent his or her morning working the fields. On a number of occasions I was mistaken for a community member, twice being asked if I was a member of the Gibson family. Additionally, word had spread throughout the community about the work that I was conducting. On one occasion I picked up a hitchhiker (which I often did in the area) who upon hearing my name and my accent asked if I was the “guy digging in dem woods”.

My research also greatly benefitted from insights provided by descendants of the “Redlegs” who had made it “over the hill”. There is a thriving community of middle and upper-middle class “white” or light skinned families on the island who are open about their family ancestry. Conversations with such individuals often took place at dinners or

following public lectures. Many of these individuals were keenly interested in the research I was conducting. The overwhelming majority of such conversations revolved around genealogy and the tracing of ancestors. These encounters left me with a slew of family surnames and family places of origin in Europe and regions of Barbados (i.e. the Corbins were from England and lived in Boscobelle or the Goddards were from Somerset and lived in St. John and St. Philip). While such individuals were open about family genealogy they were surprisingly silent about their own personal perceptions of the “poor whites” or “Redlegs”. In other words, they openly discussed and embraced their humble roots but distanced themselves from the “poor whites” in the present.

Questions Old and New

The methodologies discussed above allowed for the collection of the data analyzed and presented in this dissertation. They can be best described as archaeological, geographical, historical, and ethnographic. While the employment of these methodologies isn’t unique within historical archaeological scholarship, this project has several unique methodological components or challenges that deserve attention. First, the project encapsulates an extensive temporal range; from the mid seventeenth century to the present. Archaeologically, this timeframe is punctuated by a lack of data corresponding to the early-to-mid eighteenth century. Secondly, heightened public engagement with and interest in the project facilitated the development of new research questions and expanded on methodologies.

This project operates from the English settlement of the island in 1627 to the present. While admittedly temporally broad, the 350+ year scope of analysis is necessary to undertake a holistic investigation of the “poor whites” in Barbados from their arrival in

the seventeenth century to their lives today in St. John. Historical and anthropological works on the “poor whites” invariably include historical contextualization concerning indentured servitude, the sugar revolution, and the eventual departure of the “Redlegs” from the plantation landscape (Davis 1978; Shepherd 1977; Watson 1970). While these processes have received substantial scholarly attention, they have not been investigated archaeologically. Therefore, the work conducted at Trents provides a significant and unique material perspective of life for indentured servants. While historical data suggests that Below Cliff may have been established as a tenantry in the mid seventeenth century, archaeological material only confirms habitation by the mid eighteenth century. Therefore, a significant gap problematizes an archaeological investigation of the “poor whites” throughout the modern era. Despite the fact that historical data will be included for this period, the archaeological omission is glaring. However, it is hoped that future archaeological research will be able to acquire data to fill these material gaps. Taking this data gap into consideration, the archaeological material from Trents and Below Cliff are representative of examples of the “poor white” experience throughout the historical period. Additionally, the material collected from the Gibson household in the final few days of excavations indicates that other households throughout the Below Cliff region may hold archaeological materials from earlier periods.

My engagement with the St. John and Barbadian public dramatically influenced the development of new research questions and shifted methods in directions that hadn’t been anticipated. Barbados has a thriving history community that actively participates in public lecture events. During my time on island lectures were usually a weekly occurrence and most were well attended (usually at least 20 people with larger lectures

drawing several hundred). These lectures provided a forum for me to interact with the scholarly and public community that was interested in my project. It was within these circles that conversations about family genealogies emerged which would eventually enter into my research strategy as I begin to interrogate race and racial categories. Additionally, these networks generated research leads in terms of potential sites to excavate. Based on preliminary surveys, some of these former villages/tenantries are still home to articulated limestone platforms whereupon boarded houses once sat. Therefore, these networks have provided the locations of potential future sites of excavation.

The methodology for this project deviated slightly from what was presented in my proposal. Trents was excavated as intended but my proposed excavations of caves in the parish of St. Lucy were abandoned due to the rich data presented below the cliff. The methodologies employed have generated substantial qualitative and quantitative data to address research questions about the “poor whites” and their place within Barbadian history and society. Additionally, as my research design developed and transformed, new questions were generated to address unanticipated data and findings. As is typical of long term field projects, I ultimately left Barbados with just as many questions as when I had arrived. However, the questions had changed. Older questions had been addressed and new ones become more complex. The data presented throughout this dissertation will illustrate the history of the “Redlegs” is one of both social inclusivity and political, economic, and historical marginalization. Additionally, as work progressed, my ethnographic, historical, and archaeological data pressed me to critically engage with issues of racial identity and seek to find the “white” in “poor white”.

Chapter 5

Class Relations and Everyday Life Below the Cliff

“Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed.” - Herman Melville

The synthesis and interpretation of the data compiled through the employment of the methodologies discussed in the previous chapter will be presented thematically over the course of the final three chapters. As discussed in Chapter 2, this dissertation is primarily concerned with an historical archaeological investigation and interrogation of race and class within Barbadian society and the “poor white” community more specifically. This chapter will explore class formation processes and their material manifestations in the Below Cliff tenantry village. The archaeological material uncovered during excavations provides evidence of the lived realities of poverty with which residents coped. Poverty is reflected in household items, environmental instability, and a landscape indicative of the socioeconomic hierarchies that existed on the island. Additionally, this chapter will explore class relations in multiple incarnations including the relationship between tenantry residents and processes of capitalism (this includes their relationship to labor, management, and authorities/owners). Additionally, I investigate the dynamic and nuanced relationships the “poor whites” other laborers such as enslaved and free Afro-Barbadians. Finally, at a more basic level, I attempt to generate a depiction of everyday life for Below Cliff villagers to remedy tired stereotypes that have historically and contemporarily plagued the “poor whites”.

In interpreting archaeological, historical, and ethnographic data from the Below Cliff tenantry and neighboring community a number of surprising conclusions can be drawn that directly conflict with historical and contemporary stereotypes. For the

purposes of this chapter, we consider the discourse that condemns the “Redlegs” as destitute and lazy. Evidence provided below illustrates that authorities were ambivalent about how to manage the “Redleg” population. Vestry Minutes suggest that many planters felt that it was their Christian duty to support this struggling demographic. Others, however, felt that the group’s inherent laziness would prove relief efforts fruitless. In general, the “poor whites” were portrayed as lazy and unwilling to participate in the sugar industry or any other kind of profitable trade that contributed to island society (Lambert 2005). This discourse contributes to the overarching portrayal of the “Redlegs” as being marginal and isolated, cut off from broader Barbadian socioeconomics.

This chapter first unpacks this discourse to illustrate how authorities viewed the work habits and economic status of the “Redlegs” through vestry minutes, Council minutes, traveler and local accounts, and baptismal and burial records. Next we turn to archaeological, historical, and ethnographic evidence that more aptly depicts the degree to which “Redleg” community members were connected to local capitalistic processes and how these connections did or didn’t mesh with elite ideas about labor. Through an interpretation of this data I propose a more representative depiction of everyday life for residents of Below Cliff. This includes struggles to cope with an environment prone to frequent rockslides in addition to impoverishment. Archaeological evidence points to consumption patterns that were limited by minimal expendable income but additional options through local markets. Chapter 3 elucidates the historical processes that led to the establishment of a “white” underclass on the island. While these class formation processes have received a degree of scholarly attention (Shepherd 1977; Beckles 1989;

Watson 1970) little has been said about the everyday lives of the “poor whites” in the past and present (for notable anthropological exceptions see Rosenberg 1962; Davis 1978). Through elucidating the realities of everyday within a “poor white” tenantry village, this chapter seeks to address particular biases within the historical record that are representative of how labor was and is perceived within capitalist society.

“Nurtured in the lap of prejudice and distinction”: Elite Portrayals of and Attitudes Towards the “Poor Whites”

Given that the “Redlegs” didn’t fall under the umbrella of the enslaved or the elite they occupied a tenuous position within the Barbadian socioeconomic hierarchy as the island shifted to a sugar a slave society beginning in the seventeenth century. During this period it became evident that this “white” underclass, no longer desired as plantation laborers, was in need to assistance as evidenced through parish vestries allocating money for their relief as early as 1655 (BDA D279:1649-1682, p. 6). In conjunction with official attempts to assuage the economic hardships of the “poor whites” was the development of a discourse of laziness. As minor contributors to the sugar industry (to be discussed in more detail below), their distance from the island’s dominate economic sphere caused their own labor patterns to be perceived as unorthodox or nonexistent. The implications of this phenomenon speak to elite ideas about labor, their actions in governing the population, and how local residents responded to these actions.

Chapter 3 explicates the development of a discourse of idleness leveled against the “Redleg” population. Visitors to the island as well as local elites and authors would likely agree with Coleridge’s assessment that the “greatest part of them [the “poor whites”] live in a state of complete idleness” (1826:272). John Colthurst would echo

such sentiments a decade later suggesting that the “poor whites” “are a most idle and good for nothing set, proud, lazy and...miserably poor” (1836:31, see Marshall 1977). In his *Barbadoes, and Other Poems* (1833) Barbadian born Matthew Chapman would similarly brand the “Redlegs” as “idle and insolent” (96). These comments illustrate that in the years surrounding emancipation there was a general perception of “Redleg” laziness that was well ingrained amongst the Barbadian elite as well as visitors. If we look to the period of the rise of slavery we see glimpses of the origins of this discourse. In a 1676 letter from Governor Atkins to the Lords of Trade in England, Atkins would lament the condition of the former indentured servants arguing that there was “no encouragement and no land for them, nor anything but hard service and small wages”. He would further argue that “Most come from Ireland and prove very idle; Three blacks work better and cheaper than one white man” (Sainsbury 1893:445). This suggests the establishment of a particular discourse in the seventeenth century that portrayed the “poor whites” as lazy which persisted throughout the period of slavery and well into the post-emancipation period (see Watson 2000b).

From the earliest years of settlement elites, planters, and authorities made attempts to better the condition of the “deserving poor” through “outright gifts (donations) and capital gifts (endowments) to extend poor relief schemes, to establish educational institutions, to educate select groups of the deserving poor, and to keep churches in good repair” (Marshall 2003:167).³⁷ While there were multiple motivations for these actions, religious duty certainly played a major role in compelling (and even forcing) residents to provide relief for the island’s poor evidenced in the parish vestry’s

³⁷ Poor relief has a long history in England and such practices would be transported to and transformed within Caribbean colonies (for England see Slack 1995; for Jamaica see Roper 2012; for Barbados see Marshall 2003).

responsibility in collecting and allocating poor relief funds from parish residents. This relief, however, was only extended to those identified as “white” and “Non-whites, whether slave or free, were deliberately excluded from participation” (167). Therefore, the parish vestry minutes housed in the Barbados archives provides a rich resource from which to garner elite attitudes towards the “poor whites”, elite attempts to improve their conditions, and the successes and failures of these attempts.

On June 25th, 1655 we find the earliest reference to parish money being collected via taxes to support poor relief. The entry reads that “one pound of suggar p acre be leavyed this yeare for the repairing of the Church and the mantainance of the poore in the pish” (BDA D 279:1649-1682, p. 6). There is no indication of how this money is to allocated or to whom. It isn’t until over a decade later in January of 1667 that specific reference is made a recipient of poor relief: “Ordered from the day above said that Dennis Fallin for his future relief be allowed him eighty pounds of suggar per month” (BDA D 279:1649-1682, p. 17). The surname Fallin suggests that this individual was from Ireland or of Irish descent but no further information is provided as to why he is receiving relief. It likely stands to reason, however, that only those deemed deserving through an inability to work (illness, injury, or otherwise) would be assisted. Further support for this hypothesis is provided below but from its inception poor relief wasn’t provided on a community wide or wholesale basis.³⁸ Additionally, it is debatable as to whether assistance was actually granted to those deemed deserving of relief given that a 1675

³⁸ Debates surrounding who was deemed deserving of poor relief within the English sphere would span the Atlantic with the likes of John Locke weighing in on the issue in 1697. Locke was a proponent of scarce poor relief that should be meted out only in the rare circumstances when someone was physically unable to work. In his formulation, poor relief for those deemed able to work would take the form of employment that would benefit the community at large (see Bourne 1876:377-391).

entry notes that “severall persons are refractory in the payment of the said Leavey” (BDA D 279:1649-1682, p. 31).

Unfortunately, the parish vestry minutes aren’t available for the parish of St. John for the eighteenth century until 1792 by which time the documentation of the poor relief was much more thorough and descriptive. By this time the vestry minutes provide detailed lists of the names of those who were receiving quarterly pensions and how much they were receiving. Interestingly, for the purposes of this study, many of the surnames of residents receiving poor pensions correspond to the surnames of contemporary community members. While social mobility was certainly a possibility (twentieth century examples are well known around the island), this evidence suggests that many “Redleg” families struggled with poverty for several generations. Within these lists for the period 1792-1820 we find Goddard, Gibson, Norris, Mayers, Ince, Fenty, Charge, Standard, King, Downey, Marshall, Moore, and Bailey. The parallel in names suggests a minimal amount of relocation or social mobility of these “poor white” or “Redleg” families. In fact, many of these names found in the poor relief registry correspond to households with known previous inhabitants found on the map in Figure 4.4 in Chapter 4 (see page 128). While the lack of relocation and social mobility likely has multiple contributing factors, it still suggests limited success on the part of the Vestry to assuage “poor white” poverty.

Parish vestrymen were aware of the mixed results that their poor relief efforts were having on the “poor white” population. It is difficult to gauge how relief efforts were reformed on an island scale but the vestry minutes from the parish of St. Philip (directly south of St. John) offer some insight into how the vestry attempted to reformat

the pension system. An 1808 report was delivered to the vestry based on a study carried out by a vestry appointed commission that investigated each individual case of poor relief to determine the legitimacy of the claim. In half of the cases, the commission concluded that the recipients of quarterly pensions didn't deserve the sums they were receiving. While they deemed some unable to work due to disease, illness, old age, or injury, many were determined to be capable of some form of industry. Additionally, they determined that many women were having children in order to receive parish support. As they argued, "those who receive payment on account of Children, the Pension we consider acts to the discouragement of Industry by taking away the greatest of all Stimulus to exertion, the desire to support our Offspring and rather excites heedless and inconsiderate Poor, to contract Marriage and acquire Families, when they have neither established the means, nor possess the Industry to support them" (BDA D 273:1794-1835, Feb. 9th, 1808). Instead, children were to receive clothing. In all, of the 64 individual pension cases, 32 (exactly 50%) were either severed from the poor relief system or received some form of decrease in the funds or services they received.

Of particular significance is the commission's assessment that poor relief was discouraging recipients from working or contributing to local industry. A similar assumption was expressed in an anonymously authored letter found in the Barbados Council Minutes of 1847. During that year the vestry of St. Joseph, the parish directly north of St. John, requested additional funds for poor relief following a severe drought that had hit the "poor whites" particularly hard. The author, arguing against the allotment of extra funds, was highly critical of the poor relief system which in the post-emancipation era was still reserved for "poor whites" in an attempt to bolster their

position against that of the recently freed Afro-Barbadians. He argued that such relief was the cause of “Redleg” idleness and lack of industriousness: “the very means adopted to raise them [the “poor whites”] above their fellows [Afro-Barbadians] has been the very means to work out their destruction and sink them to the very abyss of misery and woe, they are nurtured in the lap of prejudice and distinction, and thereby despise the means of earning themselves an honest livelihood” (BDA Barbados Council Minutes:1847).

Investigations into the poor relief system are telling of elite perceptions of the “poor whites” and of poverty in general. In essence, “Redleg” poverty was a self-fulfilling prophecy as well as a tautology; the “Redlegs” were lazy and in need of relief, which discouraged them from working and encouraged the cycle of idleness and poverty.

As European laborers began to make their exit from the plantation as laborers in the seventeenth century, those left jobless and landless quickly developed a reputation (whether warranted or not) as being idle and detached from local industry.³⁹ This reputation would continue throughout the period of slavery and well into the post-emancipation period, thus making the understanding of class formation processes essential in unpacking class relations to capital, production processes, and other classes (including those separated by racial identity) (Thompson 1978; Wurst and Fitts 1999). Entries concerning poor relief in the parish vestry minutes are representative of the ambivalent stance elites took on the matter of how to (or not to) provide assistance for impoverished parish residents. The parish vestry displayed a continued commitment to providing pensions for those deemed deserving (Marshall 2003). However, there were

³⁹ In some instances this reputation emerged while Europeans still served as indentured laborers. Their perceived idleness and inefficient labor habits in comparison to Africans became one of the motivating factors in the shift to enslaved labor. The passage above concerning the inefficiency of Irish laborers is one such example of elite perceptions of “white” labor practices.

mixed feelings as to who was deemed deserving and how this was to be determined. Ultimately, the record indicates that elites were unhappy with the poor relief system, explicitly voicing their opinions that relief encouraged idle lifestyles and perpetuated the cycle of “Redleg” poverty. Comfortable with the adage that the “poor whites” were impoverished because of their own laziness, little is documented concerning how individuals and communities supported themselves or made their livings. Before turning to archaeological findings from Below Cliff, I first look to registries of baptisms, marriages, and burials in an attempt to elucidate how Below Cliff residents were defined occupationally within official records.

Planters, Laborers, Carpenters, and Domestics: Occupational Identity and Class Positioning in Below Cliff

The significance of parish registries of baptisms, marriages, and burials goes well beyond the production of family genealogies and are integral in generating a semblance of local demographics, residence patterns, marriage practices, mortality rates and average ages, and occupational statuses, amongst other localized patterns and practices.⁴⁰ From the outset it is pertinent to again note the power dynamics inherent within the production (and use or interpretation) of official records and censuses and registries are prime examples of documents through which power is manifest (Cohn and Dirks 1988; Stoler 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). Following James Scott (1988), Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s concept of “identification effects” views the census (amongst other official registries) as one of the “theoretical and empirical tools that classify and regulate

⁴⁰ Local registries (as well as vestry minutes) often provide more detailed information than national censuses and within Barbados both forms of documentation have been thoroughly utilized by historians and anthropologists (Dunn 1969; Handler 1974; Gragg 2000; Shaw 2013; Stafford 2003; Marshall 2003; Watson 2003).

collectivities” (2003:90). At this juncture I focus on how occupational identities are understood, classified, and documented and what these identifications reveal about how labor was conceptualized in Barbados. Detailed registries for the parish of St. John begin in 1825, nine years before emancipation. Therefore, the registries reflect labor patterns amongst the “poor white” population during a period of significant transformations on the island. Following emancipation, it is possible to make informed assumptions about the identities of the formerly enslaved within the record. Additionally, in 1862 St. Margaret’s opened its doors at the bottom of the cliff which quickly became the religious institution of choice for Below Cliff residents who made up a major component of the church’s congregation. While the years represented within this sample aren’t necessarily indicative of patterns that were established in earlier centuries, given that the region was inhabited for a long period of time through a pattern of consanguinity, similarities in labor patterns are likely to be found throughout earlier generations. This also stands to reason given that the economic landscape remained committed to sugar production throughout the period of slavery and well into the post-emancipation era.

Baptismal, marriage, and burial registries were organized in a standard and more detailed format in the parish of St. John (and across the island) beginning in 1825. Information expected to be provided included the name of the individual (first and surname), age (in the case of marriage and burial), names of parents (in the case of baptism and marriage), place of residence, and occupation or occupation of the individual’s father. Despite standard organization, the recording of information was left in the hands of the reverends presiding over official ceremonies. Unfortunately, throughout the St. John’s and St. Margaret’s registries information was sporadically

recorded with several omissions and inconsistencies, making a holistic interpretation of the data impossible but nonetheless significant in gleaning partial understandings of labor patterns.⁴¹

Given that occupation data is particularly scarce within burial and marriage records from St. John and St. Margaret's, only information compiled from baptismal registries will be considered here. Of the records analyzed from 1825 to 1965 there were 878 individuals baptized with a place of residence given as Below Cliff or Clifton Hall.⁴² Of these 878 baptized children, occupations for their fathers (or in select cases the mother) are provided for 462 individuals or roughly 52.6% of individuals. Of the occupations listed, laborer was the most common mode of employment of Below Cliff residents, accounting for 222 (or roughly 48%) of the 462 occupations given. Other common occupations listed were planters (small farmers), carpenters, fishermen, shoemakers, bookkeepers, and policemen. A table illustrating occupational distribution

⁴¹ Baptismal, marriage, and burial records were consulted for the parish of St. John for the years 1825-1848 while the records from St. Margaret's were consulted from the time of its opening in 1863 to the abandonment of Below Cliff in the early 1960s. Time didn't permit for the analysis of St. John records from 1848 to 1863 but further archival research is planned to remedy this gap in data.

⁴² In the post-emancipation era (after 1838) is possible that those listed as residents of Clifton Hall were residing on top of the cliff in the newly established tenantry. However, given that St. John's parish Church is in close proximity to the post-emancipation tenantry, it is likely that those residing on Clifton Hall lands and being baptized at St. Margaret's were living below the cliff. This was confirmed by former village residents.

can be found in Table 5.1.

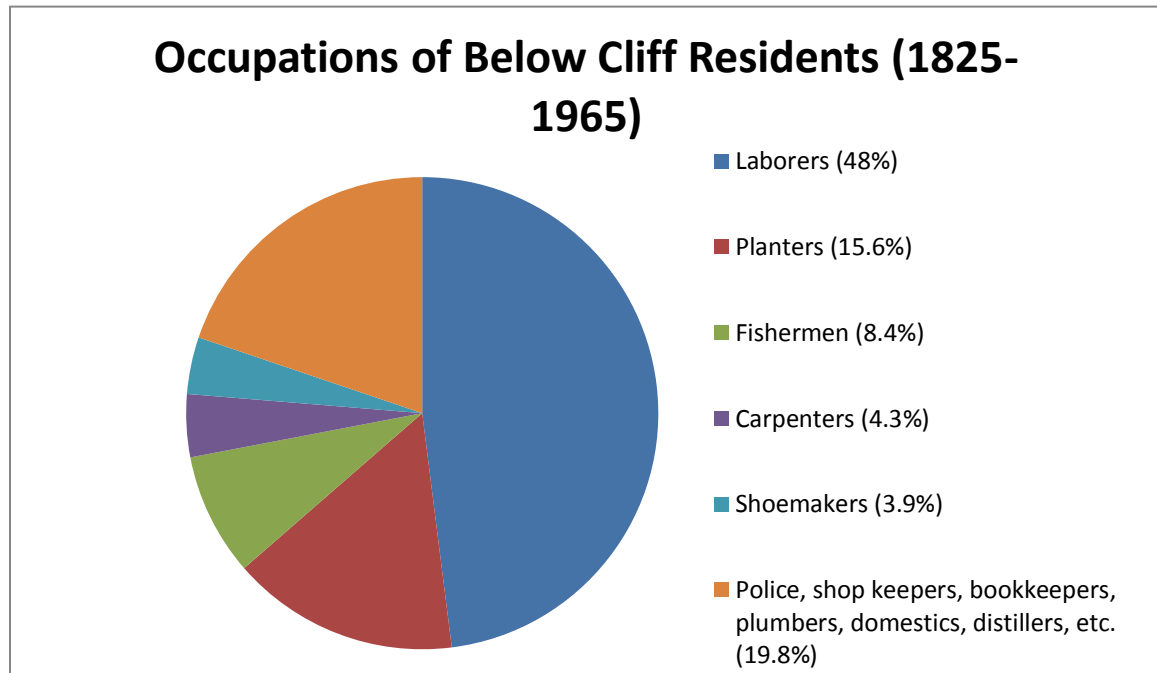


Table 5.1: Occupations of Below Cliff residents compiled from St. John (BDA RL1/26) and St. Margaret's (SMR) baptismal registries.

Distinct patterns are also noticeable within each individual volume consulted indicating that perspectives on employment changed with time and the individual recording the information. For instance, in the 1825-1848 baptismal registry for St. John 67 (33.2%) of the 202 individuals registered had fathers who were described as planters. In sharp contrast, of the 262 individuals baptized at St. Margaret's between 1863 and 1965 only 5 (1.9%) are listed as planters. There is no clear explanation for this phenomenon but there are a number of possibilities for the dramatic drop in individuals listed as planters. It is possible that the change is simply representative of a change from St. John Reverends documenting baptisms to those of St. Margaret's. This seems unlikely since several different Reverends were documenting baptisms at each location and there doesn't seem to be relationship between specific Reverends and how

occupations were documented. This could also reflect a shift in vernacular throughout the nineteenth century of how small farmers were documented. There may be some true to this hypothesis but the fact that the term planter still appears well into the twentieth century casts doubts on this suggestion.

I suggest that as the period of slavery drew to a close and as discourse concerning “poor white” idleness became more socially ingrained, changes took place in how “poor white” labor was perceived by authorities. Based on how individuals are listed in baptismal registries it is possible, to a fair degree of certainty, to ascertain whether an individual was a formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadian. As illustrated by Pedro Welch (2013), following emancipation, many formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadians chose to be baptized in local parish churches. These individuals were therefore listed as “adults” and when their children were baptized they were typically listed without a surname. It is significant to note that of those individuals believed to be formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadians, none of them are listed as planters or having a planter father. This suggests that prior to emancipation and immediately in its wake, there was an explicit attempt to differentiate “poor white” labor and occupational identity from that of Afro-Barbadians regardless of how their occupations differed in reality. The fact that formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadians were residing in Below Cliff following emancipation speaks directly to interracial interaction and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. At this juncture, however, we can briefly expand on what these labor patterns reflect about elite conceptions of labor and work.

As suggested above, the designation of planter may have been assigned to “poor white” small farmers whose labor needed to be explicitly distinguished from that of the

formerly enslaved. Therefore, shortly after emancipation, when the labor of Afro-Barbadians and “Redlegs” was legally held to the same standard, the designation of planter nearly vanishes from the registries. More pertinent to our discussion of class relations, however, is the lack of specificity within the overwhelming majority of occupations given. Of the 462 occupations provided 222 were listed as laborers and 72 were listed as planters thus composing roughly 64% of all occupations provided. Specific information about the labor being undertaken is lacking so it is impossible to determine whether individuals work in the sugar fields, in the works, as mechanics on machinery, or any other of the host of “laboring” positions available in the region. Cast simply as laborers or planters, the roles of the “poor whites” are official documented as being unskilled and even unnecessary in the case of those simply left out.

Additionally, patterns emerge when gaps are observed and analyzed within the registries. For instance, throughout particular date ranges when occupations are seldom listed, an occupation was far more likely to be recorded if the individual had a skilled occupation such as a carpenter, shoemaker, bookkeeper, fisherman, or police officer. Therefore, read as an artifact, the registry data reflects a particular ideology of capitalist labor where individual identities are attached to single occupations within the labor system. Just as clocks (Smith 1994) or ceramics (Leone 1999; 2005) can be representative of the imposition of routine, order, possessive individualism, and discipline within capitalistic labor patterns (see also Glennie and Thrift 1996; Thompson 1967), so too can we view these registries as an attempt to order, classify, and identify individuals by their singular perceived role within capitalist production. Additionally, we can view the omission of occupations as a possible way of inscribing their livelihoods as

out of synch with this, antithetical, or unimportant to the imposed order, taxonomy, and ideology of labor. The can therefore trace the connection between discourses of “poor white” idleness and how labor was perceived and organized within the plantation landscape. In other words, “Redlegs” were portrayed as lazy or idle because their occupational identities frequently failed to meet authoritative expectations about productive and contributive forms of labor.

As is evident from this discussion, the production of such official registries is laden with power structures and particular (capitalistic and individualistic) notions of socioeconomics. Despite the fact that those recording this information weren’t planters, parish priests were central figures within the political infrastructure given that the established church held considerable power within Barbadian society. Though significant, these interpretations are based on a top-down official record that contains purposeful and significant silences (Trouillot 1995). Therefore, I share Ann Laura Stoler’s assessment of “colonial archives both as a corpus of writing and as a force field that animates political energies and expertise, that pulls on some ‘social facts’ and converts them into qualified knowledge, that attends to some ways of knowing while repelling and refusing others” (Stoler 2009:22). While some forms of knowledge made be repelled and refused within the production (and, in some cases, the interpretation) of the historical record, archaeological methodologies are well-suited to provide alternative perspectives from alternative archives. I now turn to the material record to consider what excavations revealed concerning class relations within the “poor white” community.

Taphonomic Processes and Coping with an Unstable Environment

Of the harsh stereotypes leveled against the “poor white” population there is validity to claims of perpetual poverty. While some residents of the contemporary community of Church View and Newcastle (neighboring communities of what once was Below Cliff) have attained some semblance of economic success and live rather comfortable working class lives, it is no secret most still cope with impoverishment.⁴³ A drive through the contemporary community reveals small boarded homes, rusted-out cars, agricultural tools for the working of provision grounds, and weather beaten clothes strung up to dry in the hot sun. A similar scene would have been encountered by visitors winding the paths through Below Cliff half a century ago (refer back to Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4 for a 1908 photograph of the village). Simply alleging that “Redleg” community members lived in poverty does little to explicate or understand the depth of the realities of impoverishment. Therefore, before delving into how the archaeological record lends itself to an interpretation of “poor white” relations to capital, I first turn to the material markers to poverty and what they reveal about everyday life for Below Cliff residents.

Features visible on the surface as well as stratigraphy uncovered during the course of excavations revealed taphonomic processes linked to a fragile environment and residents left with few choices as to where to reside. As discussed in Chapter 4, households were discovered throughout the forested region due to visible articulated limestone foundations. Limestone is ubiquitous across the island and large pieces are rife in the Below Cliff region due to frequent rockslides following heavy rains. Despite the

⁴³ Given that Barbados is a tropical tourist destination, large homes occupied by expats or wealthy families from the island’s west coast can be found scattered along the east coast. However, the overwhelming majority of residents within this region are working class.

abundance of limestone, some of which was carved for use within foundations, there were few examples of complete walls. In most cases, as is still the favored construction technique, limestone was only placed underneath the boarded walls as needed to support the structure, rather than contiguously around the entirety of the perimeter. Additionally, as house sites became abandoned, the former foundation stones were frequently reappropriated for use at a new site. In most cases, housing platforms were haphazardly put together as if structures needed to be quickly assembled atop the platform to provide shelter. Ephemerality was (and is) a central characteristic of the chattel house, a staple Barbadian vernacular form of architecture.

The chattel house is said to originate in the post-emancipation era and is typically associated with Afro-Barbadians (see Handler and Bergman 2009:36; Fraser and Kiss 2011). Following emancipation the 1840 Masters and Servants Act gave rise to plantation tenancies for the formerly enslaved on residents constructed their homes, worked for wages on the plantation, but didn't own the land on which their homes rested. Therefore, if residents were evicted or chose to move, they would be able to disassemble the boarded walls and community members could assist in carrying the walls to a new housing platform (Figure 5.1). In their most basic forms, chattel houses tended to be two room 18 by 10 foot structures with hipped roofs (Watson and Potter 1993:377). As residents accumulated enough capital and as families grew, additional rooms would be added onto the original structure. Therefore, this traditional vernacular architectural form has been linked to land tenure policies birthed after emancipation (Watson and Potter 1993). As evidenced by the environment found Below Cliff, however, such architectural forms were also practical in recognizing the ephemeral nature of housing structures due

to rockslides. If a rockslide damaged portions of a boarded house or disturbed the immediate landscape, the chattel house form made it relatively easy for community members to move the structure to a new location.



Figure 5.1: Community residents disassembling a chattel house in the parish of St. Peter. Photo from <http://islandman48.blogspot.com/2009/11/there-is-little-that-tells-as-much.html>

Evidence of such household ephemerality abounds in Below Cliff. One of the most visibly articulated limestone foundations was found at Wilson Norris' childhood home. Additionally, it sat atop a raised platform consisting of a mix of earth and rubble limestone. The surface foundation had dimensions of 3.9 X 6.6 meters (or 11.7 X 19.8 feet), relatively close to the specifications outlined about by Watson and Potter. Wilson confirmed that his former house had been a chattel house and that for a short period it had been two stories, housing his family on the upper floor and a shop run by his aunt on the ground floor. Wilson knew little about the previous household(s) but the rubble pile

under his housing platform suggests that there was at least one previous structure in the same location. Although the orientation of the previous foundation is difficult to assess given the contemporary landscape, it appears that there would have been a slightly different orientation and positioning of the previous foundation. A plan view map of Wilson's childhood home (Figure 5.2) illustrates the existence of an articulated foundation wall below the surface and slightly to the northeast of Wilson's childhood home. Additionally, disarticulated limestone rubble to the foundation's northeast and northwest may be the ruins of a previous foundation. The most recent household reflects an entryway facing southwest. While the entryway is unknown for the previous foundation, its orientation suggests that it was situated in a different direction. It is possible that a rockslide damaged the previous structure and altered the immediate landscape in such a way that the new structure had to be reoriented to rest level on the new platform surface. Additionally, given that dates associated with imported ceramics indicate continuous inhabitation between the two structures,⁴⁴ this suggests a commitment on the part of residents to remain in this particular location. Perhaps the occupants had a particular attachment to the location through either family ties or a relatively fertile yard area in which to grow crops or, more likely, residents had few or no alternative places to live.

⁴⁴ Material culture and its associated stratigraphy will be discussed in more detail but levels 1 and 2 have been associated with the more recent boarded house while level 3 likely begins the former house site. Imported ceramics remained relatively consistent across these levels with an abundance of ironstone and whiteware.

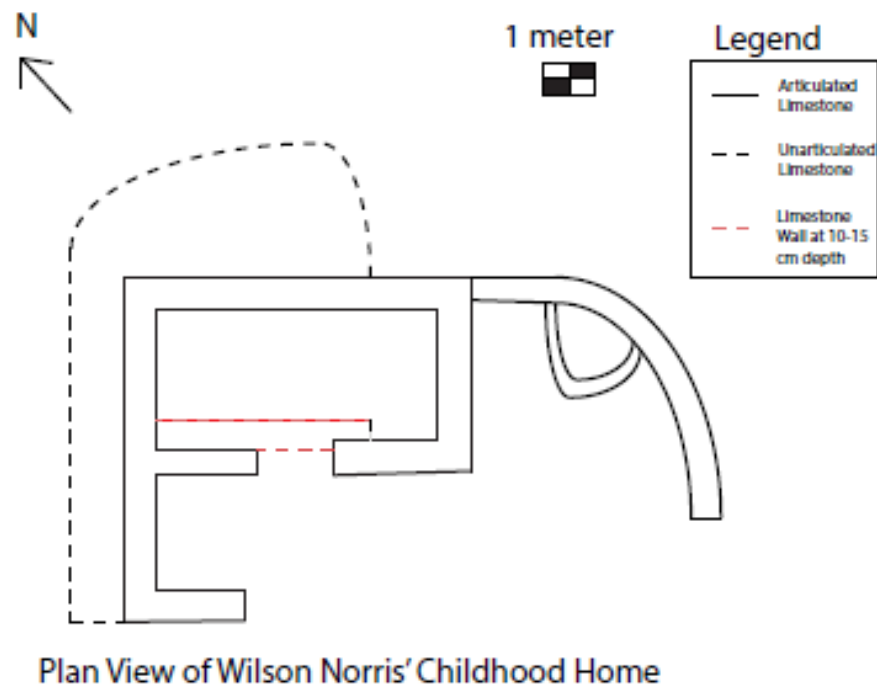


Figure 5.2: Plan view of Wilson Norris' childhood home. Large rectangular foundation represents Wilson's childhood home as well as the detached kitchen to the southwest and the enclosed garden area to the southeast. Map by author.

As noted in Chapter 4, excavations revealed a surprising depth in the units within the interior of Wilson Norris' childhood home. As excavations breached 30 cm in depth, it became abundantly clear that previous rockslides played a major role in the taphonomic processes of the site. While soil consistencies varied slightly from unit to unit, level 1 (0-15 cm) contained the most recent occupation layer in loamy dark brown/black soil that transitioned to a compact clay soil that may have been the floor surface of the previous occupation phase. Level 2 (15-30 cm) was a compact, clay-like deposit. While these stratigraphic layers were rather straight forward, things proved difficult once the loose rubble layer appeared in level 3 (30 cm). 30 to 80 cm was dominated by limestone rubble from smaller sized stones (diameters from roughly 5 to 10 cm) towards the top of the

context to larger stones (diameters from roughly 10 to 20 cm) closer to 80 cm. Within this context excavations proved difficult and trowels were often abandoned as stones were removed by hand. From 80 to 110 cm soil replaced the loose limestone indicating another habitation layer. From 110 cm to bedrock (the depth of which varied depending on the unit but it was roughly hit between 190 and 200 cm) limestone rubble reappeared and at the bottom of excavation units tremendous boulders (well over 100 lbs.) had to be removed to expose the bedrock. Excavations persisted despite difficulties due to the fact that material culture was found within each of these contexts with imported ceramics frequently found wedged between loose limestone fragments. In fact, two sherds of sponged whiteware were found resting atop the bedrock directly underneath a tremendous boulder at the base of one of the units.

The stratigraphy suggests at least two separate destruction episodes evidenced by the two thick layers of limestone rubble (Figure 5.3). Additionally, the presence of material culture throughout the limestone layers suggests that residents may have been piling trash as well as limestone to level the housing platform following a slide in order to rebuild or replace a boarded chattel house. The rubble layers also pose an interpretive conundrum given that stratigraphic integrity may be disturbed. For instance, within the limestone fill layer between 30 and 80 cm, small fragments of plastic were uncovered. These twentieth century bits of material culture were inconsistent with the early-to-mid-nineteenth century imported ceramics and its presence may be due to the fact that the limestone layer wasn't capped and materials could literally slip through the cracks and become imbedded with older contexts. The fact that the house site was directly affected by the instability of the Below Cliff environment is evidence of residents' plight of

poverty. There is no evidence to suggest a gap in habitation so it appears that following the destructive consequences of a rockslide, residents simply began the rebuilding process at the same location.

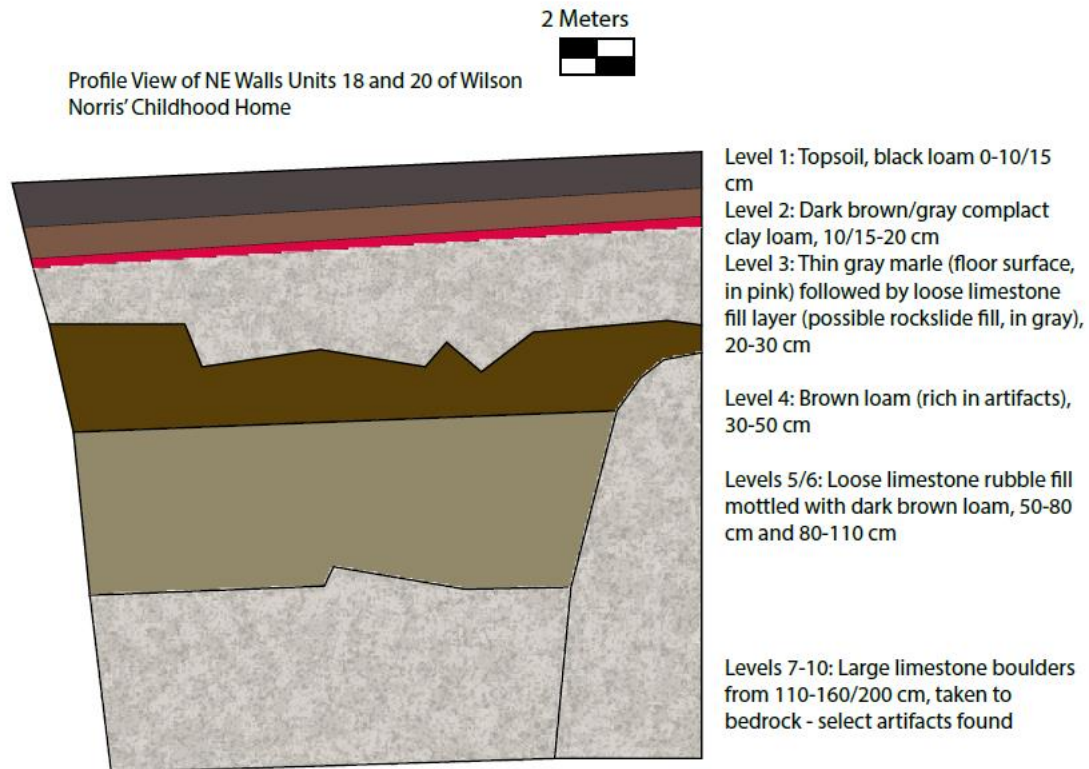


Figure 5.3: Profile of NE walls of Units 18 and 20. Note the discrete layers of loose limestone fill. Such layers are indicative of rockslide episodes and are illustrate in the same gray color on the profile. The large gray protrusion in the bottom right is a large limestone boulder. Profile by author.

Other house sites in the tenantry reflect a similar ephemerality but with significant gaps in occupation periods. The last house site to be excavated was the former home of Wilson's aunt, Gorringer, and her husband Hampton Gibson (refer back to the household map, Figure 4.4 for the location of Hampton Gibson's former home, found directly southwest of Wilson's former home). Since excavations were conducted here as the field season was coming to a close, one three STPs and six one by one meter excavation units were placed around the house site. All six excavation units were placed on exterior of the

northwest foundation wall given that the STP placed in the area yielded the highest concentration of material culture as well as soil deeper than 50 cm. All six excavation units were littered with loose limestone. The stones weren't as large as foundation stones but were sizable enough to cause confusion as to which stones may have been part of a foundation platform. Given the often haphazard construction of housing platforms, excavations were inconclusive in determining the extent of the platform foundation.

Despite the abundance of limestone rubble, a change in soil color signaled a new stratigraphic context after roughly 30-40 cm (depending on the excavation unit). Surface and level 1 finds date to the mid-to-late-nineteenth century and twentieth century based on the preponderance of ironstone as well as whiteware. Within level 2, however, few imported ceramics were recovered with the exception of barley patterned white salt glazed sherds (one base and one rim) dating to the mid-eighteenth century. These sherds were uncovered within the same context as five cross-mending sherds of a locally made green lead glazed coarse earthenware flatware (Figure 5.4). The significance of locally produced coarse earthenwares found within the overwhelming majority of excavation contexts will be discussed in the final two chapters. For our present purposes, however, the presence of the white salt glazed stoneware within a stratigraphic lens directly beneath a mid-to-late-nineteenth century context suggests that the house site had been abandoned at some point in the mid-to-late-eighteenth century (possibly due to a rockslide) and reoccupied roughly a century later.



Figure 5.4: White salt glazed stoneware sherds (left) and locally made green lead glazed coarse earthenware (right) recovered from level two of excavation units at the former home of Hampton and Gorringe Gibson. Photo by author.

Evidence from these house sites suggests that rockslides were an everyday threat to the lives and wellbeing of Below Cliff residents. This archaeological evidence in conjunction with the ethnographic evidence collected from former residents sheds light on the often undocumented realities of life in unstable environments. In fact, I came across only one documented case of an individual being injured by a rockslide. The Vestry Minutes of St. Philip (directly south of St. John) reveal that in January of 1826 John Thomas Goddard needed to have his arm amputated “occasioned by the crush of a large stone” (BDA D273: 1794-1835). Archaeological excavations and what they revealed about taphonomic processes speak to the events associated with destruction but also community responses to such events. Shannon Dawdy has argued that, “Although the literature on the anthropology of disaster readily admits the ability of catastrophic events to dramatically reveal the relations between a community and its environment, the

focus tends to be on the major event of the disaster itself (hurricane, earthquake, drought, etc.) and policy reaction, rather than on the day-to-day microprocesses through which individuals, households, and neighborhoods define *recovery* by moving around debris, burying past living surfaces, and rearranging the landscape” (2006a: 720). It is therefore imperative that we examine how residents of Below Cliff coexisted with their environment and coped with its unpredictability given their limited economic means. Rockslides were of course seen as destructive and deadly events but often their occurrence was the first step in rebuilding, as the stones that fell from the cliff side were used in the housing platforms and less frequently, within the foundations.

Material Manifestations of Poverty and Artifact Reuse

Based on a capitalist model, poverty is directly related to things or, in some ways, a lack thereof. Despite a relative lack of material goods consumed, used, and discarded at sites inhabited by those struggling with poverty as generally compared to sites occupied by those of a higher economic status, those materials that *are* present reflect how poverty affects residents’ access to goods, their consumption choices, how materials were used, how they were repurposed, and how they enter the archaeological record. Below I explore what individual and groups of artifacts reveal about the realities of poverty with which Below Cliff residents coped. While only a sample of the materials excavated will be considered here, those discussed certainly speak to themes beyond economic status. How materials do and do not reflect racial identity will be considered in the following chapter but in the spirit of this chapter we remain engaged with class relations.

I first turn to the most ubiquitous form of material culture traditionally found at historical archaeological sites, ceramics. Ceramic analysis has long been linked to

interpretations of socioeconomic class. Most notably, George Miller (1980, 1991) developed his CC index to classify English made ceramics on a scale depending on market value in order to interpret the general socioeconomic positioning of those who consumed and used the goods (see also Spencer-Wood 1987; for consumer culture see Mullins 2012). This approach has been critiqued for being economically deterministic, eschewing consumer tastes and symbolic meaning (Camp 2011:17; Cook et al. 1996), in addition to its failure to account for market availability (Brighton 2001). The latter is particularly significant when considering an island colony at the southeastern extreme of the Caribbean region, especially as its economic significance waned at the turn of the nineteenth century and market availability certainly played a role in consumption options.⁴⁵ Despite the shortcomings of the CC index and its ability to determine economic status based on imported ceramics, the reality of poverty reminds us that economic standing severely hinders one's options when consuming goods.

Impoverishment has material correlates in the ceramics unearthed in Below Cliff. In total, 1,047 ceramic sherds were collected. This is a relatively small number considering the extent of the excavations undertaken. As mentioned in Chapter 2, however, the scarcity of material culture should not stand alone as simple correlate to poverty. Rather, the ceramics present need to be properly categorized and analyzed in order to adequately interpret what the absences along with what is present reveal about the consumers and users of these items. Of the 1,047 sherds 299 were locally made course earthenwares and 748 were imported (Table 2).

⁴⁵ Despite an economic boom in the island's sugar industry due to the Haitian Revolution, in general, the profits seen by Anglo sugar producers in the Caribbean began to dwindle as the Cuban and Brazilian market expanded in addition to the growth of the beet sugar industry in Eastern Europe.

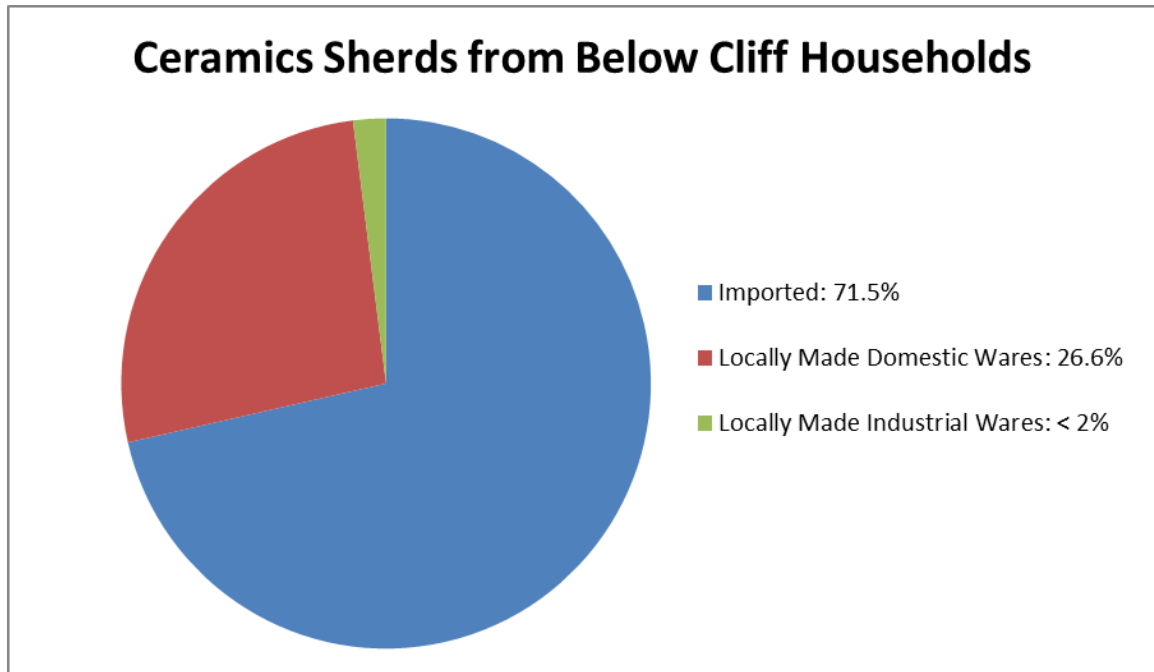


Table 5.2: Pie chart of ceramics collected from Below Cliff. Chart by author.

The locally produced coarse earthenwares will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter but for the purposes of class relations, the fact that only 21 of the 299 locally made ceramics uncovered were readily identifiable as industrial wares suggests that Below Cliff residents were actively participating in local markets to acquire domestic wares. There is no specific historical data to suggest whether imported ceramics were more or less expensive than locally produced wares in Barbados but, in general, locally produced goods would provide a more affordable alternative to imported ceramics (for locally produced ceramic markets in Jamaica see Hauser 2008).

The imported ceramics, which constituted roughly 71% of the total ceramic assemblage, were entirely produced in Britain (not specifically England) and ranged from white salt glazed stoneware (only found in small numbers at the house site of Hampton and Gorrington Gibson) to twentieth century decorated porcelainous stoneware. The ephemerality and frailty of the landscape dramatically affected the wares of ceramics

found as well as their condition. Hampton and Gorringer Gibson's house site had likely been occupied by a family at some point in the mid-to-late-eighteenth century.

Conversely, Wilson Norris' house site revealed no creamware and minimal pearlware (23 total sherds). Additionally, the constant threat and less frequent reality of rockslides led to few large sherds being uncovered. The overwhelming majority of sherds recovered are small in size and seldom measured more than 5 cm in length (Figure 5.5). Therefore, the limestone rich environment caused significant damage to ceramics, causing the small size of the sherds recovered. The ceramics collected from the excavation units placed within the walkway adjacent to Wilson Norris' former home displayed similar signs of breakage, likely due to frequent foot traffic.



Figure 5.5: A sample of imported ceramics recovered from the interior of Wilson Norris' childhood home. The small size of the sherds pictured is consistent with the entirety of the assemblage with few exceptions.

The variety of imported ceramics present reveals interesting consumption patterns and choices in addition to illustrating the occupational periods of the households. While a small amount of pearlware was present (roughly 3.5% of the total imported ceramic assemblage), the majority of the assemblage dated from the 1820s onward with a preponderance of whiteware, yellowware, and ironstone (in total accounting for 84.4% of the total imported ceramics). Surface collections from a household occupied by Wilson Norris' uncle (immediately to the northwest of Wilson's former home) revealed a preponderance of decayed porcelaneous stoneware dating to the twentieth century. When considered as a whole, the ceramics indicated that the tenantry households were primarily occupied in the decades leading up to emancipation (1810-1830) through the mid-twentieth century. Interestingly, there was also a significant amount of Scottish spongeware sherds (Figure 5.6). This ware type is roughly contemporaneous with its English-made counterpart with production beginning in the 1830s. There are, however, noticeable differences in the decoration between the two wares. First, the color schemes differ with blue being the favored color on the English version and maroon and dark green frequently appearing on the Scottish. Additionally, the Scottish version typically has a black annular band around the rim of the vessel. The differences also extend to the application of the decoration. As can be seen in Figure 5.5, the decoration is more crudely applied in the case of the Scottish wares. Typically, the colors run outside of their designated boundaries and appear rather sloppy when compared to the English sponged decoration (Cruikshank 2005; Kelly 1993).

The differences in decoration allowed for a distinction to be made between the two types of spongeware. Of 88 sherds decorated with the sponge technique, 46 were

readily identifiable as Scottish. One sherd even had a maker's mark reading "Glasgow" (see Figure 5.6). Therefore, of 748 imported ceramic sherds recovered 11.8% were identified as being decorated using the sponge technique with 52.3% of these wares being of the Scottish variety. It is likely that several of the undecorated sherds belonged to vessels bearing sponged decorations along with rim sherds that solely displayed a black annular band. Therefore, it is fair to say that spongewares make up a substantial portion of the ceramic assemblage in Below Cliff. Unfortunately, as noted by Webster (1999:60), many of these Scottish wares were frequently unmarked making it difficult to readily assign place of production. While the specific site of production may be difficult to determine with any certainty, the sponge technique and its appearance can be reliably associated with Scotland. As Webster notes, "Although sponge-printed wares were made by many English potteries, particularly in Staffordshire, the technique of sponge-printing has always been particularly identified with Scotland" (1999:68).



Figure 5.6: Sponged/stamped whiteware produced in England (left) and Scottish spongeware (right). Note the maker's mark reading "Glasgow" in the bottom right in addition to the crude application of the sponge decoration on the Scottish sherds.

More pertinent to our discussion, these Scottish wares were less expensive than the English alternatives. Despite the lack of specific market values, Webster categorizes these wares as belonging to the “bottom end of the ceramics market” (1999:60). In considering Brighton’s argument surrounding market availability (2001:20-21) it doesn’t appear as if Below Cliff residents or Barbadians in general lacked access to English produced whitewares (including spongewares). At the risk of generalizing and lacking quantitative data, whitewares are ubiquitous artifacts throughout the island, often littering the ground surface in fields and urban areas. Therefore, it isn’t likely that whitewares were unavailable to Below Cliff residents. While we may posit that local taste was a prerequisite for the purchase of Scottish wares, a more likely explanation is that impoverishment limited consumption choices and that residents frequently chose the more affordable option. While exact percentages are unavailable at this time, Scottish spongewares were also found during surface collections of a mid-nineteenth century tenantry inhabited by the formerly enslaved at the Mount Plantation, St. George in 2011 (Finch et al. 2013). Given that such ceramics were recovered from a tenantry site associated with Afro-Barbadians, it appears that poverty was more of a determinate factor in ceramic consumption than any particular form of ethnic or racial preference.

As briefly noted in Chapter 2, artifact reuse is intimately connected with impoverishment but is also indicative of individual and group attempts to remain “independent and self-sufficient” (Gray 2011:68). Therefore, in acknowledging the economic circumstances that led residents of Below Cliff to reuse particular materials, we also need to acknowledge their ingenuity while carefully avoiding assumptions about

functionality. In Below Cliff artifact reuse is best exemplified when glass shards and tin can fragments are complimented by evidence from oral traditions. Like ceramics, relatively few glass shards were recovered given how many units were excavated and the depths that many reached. In total, 769 glass shards/bottles were collected. Significantly, of these 769 shards and whole bottles, 478 (roughly 62%) were collected from the surface or within the first level of unit excavation.⁴⁶ Therefore, based on stratigraphy as well as the machine made production method on the complete bottles collected, more than half of the glass recovered was from the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Despite few diagnostic shards from sub-level 1 contexts it is still possible to generate some initial interpretations about consumption and in considering oral sources, how glass items were reused. As is typical of many historical archaeological assemblages, the majority of glass was from bottles with beer, wine, mineral water, soda, pharmaceutical, and liquor bottles represented (Figure 5.7). Condiment and ointment jars along with mineral water and soda bottles were predominantly found on the surface, some with decals still present. Decals and production techniques indicate that they were twentieth century bottles. Locally produced mineral water, soda, and beer bottles demonstrate that, once made available, locally produced goods were favored over imports which likely had to do with the less expensive price of local brands. Of particular significance was the preponderance of beer, wine, and liquor bottle glass. In total, bottle glass composed roughly 87% of the entire glass assemblage, the overwhelming majority

⁴⁶ This count includes 58 shards that were collected from STPs. While discrete stratigraphic layers weren't easily discernable within STPs, the overwhelming majority of shards collected were on the surface or just below the surface and are therefore included in the count.

of which likely being from alcohol bottles.⁴⁷ Dates associated with manufacturing methods are consistent with those garnered from imported ceramics. Machine made condiment bottles were collected from the surface and within Level 1 of excavation units, indicating twentieth century occupation. When present, seam lines indicated nineteenth and twentieth century mold production techniques.

The relatively high proportion of alcohol related bottles demands that we confront the stereotype of alcoholism that has been leveled against the “Redlegs” for centuries. In general, stereotypes of alcoholism often went hand-in-hand with idleness. An anonymous author recollected his experiences in Bridgetown prior to 1805 and of the “poor whites” he notes (*Sketches and Recollections* 1828:27):

Few of them have been well educated, or bred to any business or profession; or, if they have, they are too proud or indolent to follow it...in no other colony is the same number of unemployed whites to be met with as in Barbados. Many of them differing little in dress and mode of life from their slaves. Some, indeed, cultivate their lands, raise stock, and sell fruits and vegetables, by which they earn a livelihood; but the majority prefer billiards, smoking, and drinking, to any useful employment.

While stopping in the Scotland District during an island tour in 1837 Thome and Kimball would similarly comment that the “poor whites” “live promiscuously, are drunken, licentious, and poverty-stricken [sic.], - a body of the most squalid and miserable human beings” (1838:57). The high quantity of glass from alcohol bottles may seem to support the stereotype of high alcohol consumption amongst Below Cliff residents. In considering oral sources provided by local residents, however, an alternative interpretation emerges. A complete Black & White Scotch Whiskey bottle was recovered from the trash pit adjacent to Wilson’s childhood home (Figure 5.7). The company

⁴⁷ While the size and undiagnostic nature of many of the shards made it difficult to identity bottle type with any certainty, color and shape in conjunction with diagnostic shards that *were* present suggests that alcohol bottles were the most common vessels represented.

started production in 1884 and this particular bottle was produced between 1890 and 1910. I found the presence of this bottle strange given the expense of imported items, particularly a luxury item such as scotch whiskey from the United Kingdom.



Figure 5.7: Finish and neck of a mineral water bottle (top-left), finish and body fragments of twentieth century machine made bottles found on the surface (top-center), Black and White Scotch Whiskey bottle (right), and a tumbler base along with the base of an English beer bottle found in the level 3 along the north east interior wall of Wilson Norris' childhood home.

Despite its 1890-1910 production date, Wilson Norris remembered the bottle as being used as a container for water throughout his childhood. Given its distinct features and the fact that it was found in a trash pit that Wilson himself had filled, I have no reason to doubt Wilson's claim that the bottle was used to hold water. While I can only speculate as to how the Norris family acquired the bottle, it is possible that as a gardener at Clifton Hall, Wilson's father acquired it from a manager or the owner following the emptying of its initial contents. Additionally, it is possible that Wilson's father had purchased the bottle for a special occasion. Regardless, in conjunction with oral sources,

the archaeological record suggests that items were used for very long periods of time and for purposes outside their original functions.

During a trip through the woods with Wilson's cousin Ainsley, we spotted several shattered alcohol bottles found resting underneath large stones. Ainsley relayed that the limestone had at one time functioned as a dripstone with the alcohol bottles collecting the water that had naturally been purified after passing through the porous stones. Given the insights of these oral sources it is necessary to assess the strength of the evidence of alcoholism and pursue other interpretations about the uses of alcohol bottles. In his study of alcohol related bottles in Barbadian caves, Frederick Smith has suggested these spaces were inconspicuous locales in which the enslaved gathered to consume alcohol and plot rebellion. More specifically, he posits that early nineteenth century alcohol bottles recovered from Mapps Cave in the parish of St. Philip may have associated with the planning of the rebellion of 1816 (also known as Bussa's Rebellion) that began in the same parish (2008 and 2014). While Smith's hypothesis is certainly plausible, it is also likely that alcohol bottles were being placed in caves to collect water from dripstones. Therefore, although recovered bottles may have been produced in the early nineteenth century, they may have been used for several decades following the consumption of the alcohol.

Of the 769 shards only 39 were identified as being glassware/stemware. Vessels represented include at least two tumbler glasses present along with a possible decanter, the shards of which comprised nearly 25% of the glassware shards recovered. Therefore, the shortage of drinking vessels sparked questions regarding the use of relatively common household items such as cups and glasses. Answers came through the

solicitation of local residents and metal artifacts. The tropical climate poses challenges for the recovery of metal artifacts and this proved to be the case during excavations in Below Cliff. Few metal artifacts were collected at depths greater than 30 cm and those that were recovered from the first 30 cm were severely corroded, small, and difficult to identify. It was, however, possible to identify small fragments of tin cans based on rim fragments as well as the thickness and shape of the fragments. The tin can fragments weren't given much thought beyond their function as containers for canned goods until conversations with local residents and a trip to a local folk museum. Collected oral traditions confirmed that tin cans were frequently reused as drinking vessels (Figure 5.8).



Figure 5.8: Tin can rim and base fragments uncovered during excavations at the childhood home of Wilson Norris (left). Recreations of tin cans used as drinking vessels displayed at the Springvale Folk Museum (right). Photos by author.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence of smithing in the Below Cliff tenantry.

Therefore, the tin can fragments can't definitely be associated with drinking vessels.

Given the oral sources, however, it is highly likely that such material reuse was taking

place. The revelation that tin can fragments were reuse items illustrates the significance of collecting oral traditions and speaking with local community members, an often overlooked methodological component of archaeological research (for more on the significance of oral sources see DeCorse and Chouin 2003; DeCorse 2013:12-16). As reuse items, tin can fragments directly speak to struggles with poverty as well as local ingenuity and innovation in order to subsist.

My discussions with local residents, especially Wilson Norris further proved essential in analyzing and interpreting a diverse assortment of buttons recovered during excavations of his childhood home. In all, 96 buttons were recovered with all but five being found in levels 1-3. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of buttons were from deposits dating from the mid-to-late-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century and came from units within the interior of the household. Buttons were diverse in terms of materials (bone, ceramic, plastic, shell, and metal), size (ranging from 9.4 mm in diameter to 20.2 mm), color, and decoration (Figure 5.9). In fact, of the 96 buttons there is not a *single* matching pair despite the fact that multiple buttons were recovered from single contexts within the interior of the household.



Figure 5.9: Sample of buttons recovered from levels 1-3 within the interior of Wilson Norris' childhood home.

Initially, I posited that a previous occupant had been a seamstress, somewhat succumbing to gendered stereotypes that associated buttons to a form of “women’s work”. This was a reasonable assessment given Coleridge’s disparaging comments in 1826. In speaking of the idleness and backwardness of the “poor whites”, he notes that “The women who will work at all, find employment in washing and mending the clothes of the negroes” (1826:274). I was, however, weary of projecting observations from the period of slavery onto material culture associated with the post-emancipation era despite the fact that the cleaning and mending of clothing would have certainly taken place in the home at this time.

One soon presented Wilson with my finds and asked if anyone in his family had been a seamstress due to the high number of buttons found on site. He responded in the negative but offered an explanation as to why I had found so many buttons of different

varieties. According to Wilson, many residents wore button-down shirts whilst working. The wear and tear caused from extreme physical labor frequently caused the loss of buttons or the widening of the holes through which the button fit. Therefore, shops (like the one run by his aunt) sold packages of buttons of various sizes. Accordingly, as shirt holes began to widen due to wear and tear, button size increased in order to securely fasten the shirt closed. While it is untenable to project this interpretation of buttons into the past, this oral source posits a hypothesis that directly challenges Galle's cost signaling interpretation of metal buttons. Buttons could certainly be a symbolic representation of the consumer's "knowledge of current styles as well as their ability to participate in the market economy" (Galle 2010:25) but we shouldn't overlook their banal functions and how variation in style, size, and decoration may serve a function purpose that is linked to impoverishment. Far from displaying wealth or the most current styles, button consumption in Below Cliff was an economic decision on the part of residents who found it more affordable to buy new, larger buttons than discarding a worn shirt. Far from a romanticized notion of consumers displaying their wealth and fashion sense, buttons can also be harsh reminders of economic hardship.

This discussion has illustrated how particular forms of material culture are linked to poverty. As mentioned above, simply labelling the "Redlegs" as poor or destitute is a vapid exercise that ultimately explains little about how they lived their daily lives. Archaeological excavations have revealed the material manifestations of poverty, consumption choices made by residents despite economic restrictions, and innovation and ingenuity seen through material reuse. Additionally, oral sources allowed for alternative interpretations that would have been overlooked without the insights of community

members. In short, the data gathered sheds light on the everyday realities experienced by Below Cliff residents, the choices they made, and the practices employed to cope with a harsh environment and difficult economic circumstances. In referring back to early sections of this chapter, how does this lifestyle intersect, if at all, with elite perceptions about labor and the role of the “poor whites” within local production and economic spheres? We have explored an elite discourse of laziness based on particular ideologies and notions of proper forms of labor and employment along with the physical realities that Below Cliff residents dealt with on a daily basis. In the concluding section I consider archaeological, historical, and ethnographic/oral data to present an interpretation of the ambiguity of “poor white” relations to localized capitalist processes.

Economic Frictions and Ambivalent Occupational Identities

One of the many transformations that occurred during the sugar revolution was the development of a rigid correlative between one’s phenotype, their legal status, and their socioeconomic function within the burgeoning sugar industry. Therefore, as indentured servitude slowly began to fade as a significant form of bound labor, those who came to be known as the “Redlegs” or “poor whites” were physically, economically, socially, and conceptually severed from the island’s dominant production industry. Thus, we see the logic of the development of a discourse of “poor white” laziness, idleness, and isolation. This discourse is visible in how elites and visitors described the “poor whites” and how they categorized them in official documents. However, do these portrayals and categorizations realistically describe how communities such as Below Cliff functioned on a daily basis or within broader Barbadian economic spheres? In this final section I suggest that spaces such as Below Cliff were arenas for an entanglement of the hyper

capitalistic production processes of the plantation and a moral economy at odds with elite ideologies of labor and acceptable occupational identities.

Historical data gathered from official registries provides some clues as to the diverse occupations of Below Cliff residents. When complemented by archaeological and ethnographic data, however, we see that such registries are limited in what they express. By categorizing individuals within single occupational identities these documents fail to account for the multi-occupational nature of many Below Cliff residents. In speaking with former residents and descendants of former residents, it became abundantly clear that, out of necessity, most community members were small farmers, fishermen, carpenters, seamstresses, *and* general laborers. Additionally, rather than solely relying on wage labor (as is expected with a capitalist system), community members operated in a semi-moral economy, assisting neighbors in farming, carpentry, and other daily household tasks under the assumption that such practices would reciprocated. In observing a moral, or what he called a “second”, economy in urban Côte d’Ivoire, Sasha Newell notes that “Transactions did not typically produce as much financial gain as one would imagine, and such profits tended to be immediately diffused back into the network in any case. Instead, the economy was dominated by social investments and the maintenance of social relations” (2012:96). While not completely counterintuitive to capitalistic networks or processes, in Barbados such an economy would have appeared at odds with a capitalist plantation system in which labor was harnessed for the explicit purposes of profit accumulation. Furthermore, its participants would have been marked as being isolated from island socioeconomics.

Wilson Norris' baptismal record can be found in the St. Margaret's registry in the year 1941. Stanley Norris (Wilson's father), along with his wife Clarine, is listed next to his son's name. In this entry Stanly is described solely as a "laborer". When I presented this information to Wilson he found it rather perplexing. Wilson associated the designation of "laborer" as someone who cut cane when he was adamant that his father had been a gardener at Clifton Hall plantation. Additionally, according to Wilson, Stanley planted crops in the yard areas of the house, raised pigs and fowl, cultivated a small patch of sugar cane which he harvested and sold to Clifton Hall, went fishing when time permitted, and assisted with household maintenance and carpentry around the community. Ainsley, Wilson's younger cousin of six years, was equally surprised when his father, Cecil, was similarly referred to as a "laborer" in his baptismal entry. Former residents of Below Cliff and current residents of the neighboring communities harbored drastically different perceptions of work and occupational identity than those who were responsible for keeping official records. I would likely be hard pressed to find an individual who would disagree with the assessment that they "labored", but how they identified themselves and others in their community was far more complex.

To explicitly counter claims of "Redleg" idleness and laziness, time spent excavating Below Cliff and interacting with local community members made it abundantly clear that subsisting and maintaining one's home was a full time job that required constant attention. Additionally, this responsibility was shared by community members. Mrs. Fenty, an elderly woman who lives in the community next to the forest that used to be Below Cliff, recalls the sight of community members carrying the boards of a house up the road to reassemble the structure at a new location (see Figure 5.1

above). The task would frequently take the better part of a day and enlisted the services of 10-12 able-bodied community members. Ainsley and Wilson recalled a similar scene when Wilson's aunt decided to close her shop and Wilson's home was downgraded from a two-story to a one-story structure. Leslie Layne, known for his expertise in carpentry, directed operations as boards were removed one at a time and the structure was slowly lowered down to rest comfortably atop the limestone foundation.

As would be expected from such vernacular architectural styles, nails were a common artifact encountered during excavations. In total, 475 ferrous metal nails or nail fragments were recovered along with 18 cuprous nails, tacks, and fragments. During the course of excavations it was noticeable that most of the nails were coming from portions of interior units that bordered foundation walls indicating that many of the nails were likely used on the boards of the home. Given the assortment of nail material as well as the range in size it seems that residents weren't particularly selective in the nails used to keep boards in place (Figure 5.10). Given the tropical environment and the unstable landscape it is likely that occupants frequently had to tend to rusted nails, rotting boards, and general repairs. Therefore, it isn't surprising that a wide variety and proportionally high quantity of nails were recovered.



Figure 5.10: Sample of cuprous nails from levels 1-2 of interior units of Wilson Norris' childhood home.

Chris Matthews has recently analyzed a shift that occurred in building construction, deconstruction, and maintenance as capitalist processes developed within American contexts. Referencing James Deetz, he notes that within early colonial society “builders revealed aspects of the shared corporate culture that tied together those living in early colonial communities”, continuing that “this work was part of the larger circulation of value within a community” (2010:64). Conversely, following the shift to capitalism, contrary to the “shared corporate culture”, he argues that “When builders completed the work [of building a home], their relationship with homeowners was complete” (69). I agree with Matthews’ assertion that the onset of capitalist modes of production involved specific divisions of labor as well as divisions within the sociality of communities based on socioeconomic class. This argument, however, fails to recognize that such transformations don’t take place wholesale across the landscape. In other words, shifts in

community and laborer relations were gradual processes and some transformations in community relations may have never taken place at all. In essence, while forms and processes of hyper capitalism (most evident in the processes of sugar production) were taking place on the plantation above the cliff, a moral economy or form of “early” capitalism was concomitantly coexisting below the cliff.

The entanglements and frictions between these two economic schemes can be seen in the individuals that participated in each system in various capacities. As bookkeepers, watchmen, distillers, boilers, and cane cutters, some Below Cliff residents would have been directly implicated in sugar production as wage laborers. As producers and consumers of locally grown crops, participants in the local fishing industry, or neighbors assisting in the maintenance of a house or its moving, their lives below the cliff were a marked departure from the cane fields and works on the plateau above. Long associated with “peasant communities”, moral economies have been interpreted as alternatives to or active resistance against the state and/or capitalistic processes (see Scott 1976; Fafchamps 1992; for “peasant communities” in the Caribbean see Mintz 1974). Presented as non-capitalist, moral economies support community networks that provide affordable goods and services based on individual and community needs rather than free market pricing. Despite its anti-capitalist underpinnings, evidence from Below Cliff suggests that despite fundamental differences, moral economies and capitalist networks need not be diametrically opposed or mutually exclusive. As participants in both forms of economies, Below Cliff residents carved a unique niche for themselves within Barbadian socioeconomics with the result of being historically ostracized from the very processes that they were an integral part of.

This chapter has presented a particular discourse of “poor white” idleness that was developed by elites and island visitors after “white” laborers were no longer needed in large numbers on the plantation. Physically and conceptual severed from integral roles in sugar production, the “Redlegs” were cast as lazy, the cause of their own destitution. Archaeological evidence has illustrated the material manifestations of “Redleg” poverty but has also pointed to specific instances of ingenuity through artifact reuse. Additionally, in considering local economic systems, specifically the existence of a semi-moral economy, we see the frictions between the capitalist processes unfolding atop the cliff and those taking place below. We can therefore view the discourse of idleness failure of elite ideologies of labor to understand multi-occupational identities or modes of production and subsistence that fell outside the purview of explicitly capitalist processes. Thus far, however, we have only considered the relationship between elites and those living below the cliff. Their role within the plantation economy as well as alternative social and economic practices involved other actors, specifically enslaved and free people of African descent. The next chapter considers these interactions to place the “poor whites” within the broader framework of Barbadian society.

Chapter 6

Interrogating Racial Categories Below the Cliff

“Their [the ‘poor whites’] history is far more akin to the history of the blacks [than the white elite], with whom they share centuries of marginalization, discrimination, oppression and poverty” – Karl Watson (2000b:131).

The previous chapter illustrated that elite ideas about labor didn’t necessarily mesh with how “poor white” residents of Below Cliff made lives for themselves despite poverty, a harsh environment, and a physically and conceptually strained relation to sugar production. It spoke to issues of class relations as well as frictions between two coexisting modes of economy operating atop and below the cliff. As mentioned in Chapter 2, however, class relations and formation processes and inextricably linked to those of race. Notions of racial identity and their relation to class status began to develop in Barbados in the seventeenth century as the island transitioned to a sugar and slave society. Throughout the period of slavery, however, these notions continued to be interpreted, reinterpreted, transformed, deconstructed, and reconstructed within local contexts. This chapter explores the degrees to which Below Cliff residents interacted and intermixed with their enslaved and free Afro-Barbadian neighbors within their tenantry and in neighboring communities. Through this analysis we begin to interrogate the very racial categories that were essential to Barbadian (as well as other New World contexts) socioeconomic hierarchies and structures.

Recent historical and archaeological literature has addressed the processes associated with the construction of ideas about human differences as they unfolded in seventeenth century Barbados (Shaw 2013; Boren 2013; Hayes 2013). The rapid technological and economic developments associated with the sugar revolution demanded a reorganization of labor practices and colonial governance as the population

of Africans in the Barbados skyrocketed in the mid-seventeenth century. Religious, national, and ethnic differences eventually gave way to phenotypic hierarchies as race-based slavery became ingrained within New World socioeconomics (Mills 1997). This transition is visible in seventeenth century Barbadian laws which “sought to divide the laboring class into two separate and unequal groups, ‘Christians’ and ‘Negroes’” (Rugemer 2013:442). Therefore, throughout the seventeenth century categories such as white, black, slave, servant, Christian, pagan, English, Irish, Scottish, and African were significant markers of difference that placed individuals along a socioeconomic spectrum that was constantly in flux and susceptible to negotiation.

In her study of Irish and Africans in seventeenth century Barbados, Jenny Shaw argues that throughout the seventeenth century, these groups were able to manipulate elite ideologies about difference through cooperative acts of resistance as well as other methods of contesting hierarchies. She concludes that, “as the seventeenth century drew to a close the ability to counter elite ideologies appeared to collapse altogether” (2013:185). I take exception to Shaw’s assessment given that ideologies (elite or other), particularly those about race, are always in a state of becoming (Monahan 2011). It is certainly the case that by the close of the seventeenth century elite ideas about racial hierarchies had been made more rigid and become manifest in local governance, codified into colonial law, and visible within island socioeconomics. However, ideologies concerning race, racial identity, and racial difference were being contested, interrogated, and complicated from the seventeenth century to the present. Additionally, it is imperative that we bear in mind that the appearance of these ideologies and their presence within the historical record reflect the desired state of affairs within Barbados and elite

attempts to make them realities. We again turn to the localized setting of Below Cliff to examine the success and failures of broader ideologies of racial hierarchies and identities through material culture recovered during the course of excavations, oral sources provided by local residents, and the historical record.

Race in Barbados and “Poor White” Racial Purity

In a region plagued by race-based slavery for nearly four centuries it is self-evident that race is a complex sociopolitical issue that had (and continues to have) significant bearing on everyday life for millions of individuals. It is naïve, however, to assume that racial politics and classificatory schemes were similar throughout the region or that preconceived notions of how race functioned within United States history, for example, were prevalent and practiced within other New World contexts. Sidney Mintz argues “that the perception of race differences by the majority, which has so consistently shored up the operation of racial oppression in the United States, simply has not functioned in the same ways in Caribbean societies”. Rather, he argues, in the Caribbean region, “the operation of racial bias has generally been more subtle and more complicated” (1974:21). Therefore, while blanket arguments concerning the general white over black nature of social structures and colonial infrastructure may hold water to some degree (see Jordan 1968; Mills 1997), local context is needed if we are to make specific claims about the nature of race relations and racial identities within a particular island setting.

Since the earliest years of English settlement of the island, Barbadian elites and colonial officials sought to account for the island’s population in broad racial terms. Although population figures are unreliable for this early period, collection and

interpretation of these sets of data by Dunn (1969, 1972), Handler and Lange (1978), and Handler (Personal Communication) all illustrate that the seventeenth century demographics were calculated using different, but related, terms. For instance, demographic breakdowns were based on place of origin (Africa or Europe)⁴⁸, legal status (slave or free), and phenotype (white or black). The numbers themselves aren't of immediate significance for the purposes of this argument. Rather, we see that from early on the population was categorized within broad racial categories that were heavily determined by one's place of origin. This phenomenon would persist throughout the period of slavery and well into the post-emancipation era. Jerome Handler has argued that Barbados was a unique case within the Caribbean colonies in that there was not a complicated matrix of racial identities. Rather, the Barbadian system was similar to the American "one drop rule" whereby if one had an ancestor of African genealogy, it was impossible for that person to ever be considered fully "white" (1974:68-69). In other words, African genealogy was more determinate of one's racial identity than skin complexion.

This system stood in marked contrast to more complex and subtle racial typologies established in other Caribbean territories. For instance, M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry's (1797) eighteenth century description of Saint-Domingue documented and elaborated on 11 distinct racial categories that were used in the French colony. Furthermore, we know that these categories and concepts were fluid and transformed over time such as within Spanish Puerto Rico where categories such as "mestizo" and

⁴⁸ Unlike other English Caribbean territories such as Montserrat, expanded demographics for individuals of European origins were not recorded. For instance, it is unclear how many Irish, English, or Scottish individuals comprised the "white" population throughout the seventeenth century (for Montserrat see Akenson 1997).

“criollo” shifted in meaning covering place of birth and genetic ancestry throughout the early colonial period (Schwartz 1997). While within the same imperial realm as Barbados, the Jamaican racial taxonomy was slightly more complicated. Borrowing from the Spanish who had previously controlled Jamaica until 1655, Edward Long describes at least four terms for people of mixed ancestry including mulatto, sambo, quadroon, and mestize (Long 1774:260-261; see also Jordan 1962:192). In short, legal as well as social racial taxonomies varied across Caribbean contexts.

In lieu of the more subtle and genetically fractal taxonomic scheme, Barbadians relied on a more binary model of racial identity whereby individuals were categorized as white, black, or mixed (mulattoes). During his visit to the West Indies in 1833 Captain Studholme Hodgson commented that “He who is ambitious of entering into what is designated *good society* in the West Indies, must especially be prepared to exhibit an undoubted pedigree of three generations of *white* ancestry” (1838:58, emphasis in original). Conversely, he sarcastically remarks “but woe, woe to the unhappy wretch, if among his ancestors can be numbered one in whose veins flowed some of the African blood” (59). These passages reveal the inextricable links between race and class within Barbadian society as well as strict adherence to notions of racial purity. Despite the fact that Hodgson would go on to enumerate the racial categories and their characteristics as relayed to him by a woman at a ball (62), the presence of African blood was the most significant element of one’s racial identity rather than its genetic percentage. This schematic, however, wasn’t necessarily clear-cut and discrepancies often arose. Such discrepancies are informative of the porousness of racial categories and the fluidity of racial identity. I explore such issues throughout this chapter as they pertain to individual

identity in addition to the interaction of individuals across these supposedly definitive racial identities.

By the close of the seventeenth century there was an apparent crystallization of the association of plantation labor with black skins. Slavery had become synonymous with Africans and Europe was no longer being tapped as a resource for procuring plantation laborers.⁴⁹ Slave codes around the Atlantic World ensured that there was legal support for the treatment and ownership of African bodies which heightened the significance of one's racial identity. Painted in broad strokes, ideologies of racial identities and hierarchies seemed impervious to contestation and negotiation, as per the suggestion of Jenny Shaw. These ideologies were dependent on a lucid and pragmatic classificatory scheme through which to determine one's racial identity. Adherence to what Michael Monahan (2011) refers to as the "politics of purity (see Chapter 2) allowed for a simplistic schematic that placed individuals within the categories of black or white, thereby determining an individual's place within Barbadian socioeconomics.

The development and success of these ideologies was contingent upon constant maintenance of these racial boundaries. Therefore, from the seventeenth century to the present the "poor whites" have been portrayed as an isolated and racially pure demographic and necessarily so. During the course a Parliamentary commission on the state of the slave trade and colonial commerce, Barbadian Governor Parry would comment in 1789 that the "lowest class of white inhabitants...live all separate from each other, either as tenants on detached pieces of land belonging to the plantations, or as occupiers of little parcels of ground, appertaining to themselves" (HCPP 1789:17).

⁴⁹ There were, of course, exceptions to this rule including dozens of Scottish rebels being sent to labor in Barbados following a rebellion in 1745.

Again turning to traveler accounts, it is significant that the “white” phenotype of the “Redlegs” was frequently an observation deemed worthy of comment. In his 1806 *Notes on the West Indies, Vol. II*, George Pinckard would note the entirely European appearance of several “poor whites” he came across while passing their cottages in the island’s Scotland District. Despite their European appearance, he also noted that they identified as being “true Barbadians” (1806:131-139). Coleridge similarly commented on the phenotypic attributes of the “Redlegs” during his stay on the island in 1825. He noted that their perceived racial arrogance was “in virtue of their freckled ditchwater faces” (1826:274). These commentaries reveal that the racial status of the “poor whites” was dependent on phenotypic appearance in conjunction with their free legal status. As such, direct links are constructed between the “Redlegs” encountered in early nineteenth century Barbados and their European ancestors. In short, pale complexion equated to European ancestry and white identity while dark complexion was equated with the enslaved and African descent.⁵⁰

Similar to the discourse of “Redleg” laziness, portrayals of the “Redlegs” as being racially pure and arrogant permeate twentieth century and contemporary literature. Peter Simmons suggests that miscegenation was first observable in the 1970s, particularly in the urban context, which, he argued, would eventually lead to the decline of the traditional “Redleg” identity (Simmons 1976:22). Conversely, one year earlier, Thomas Keagy would argue that “Although the whites live in close associate with the blacks, and resemble them culturally, they have maintained their racial pride and opposition to racial admixture, and, therefore, their homogeneity” (1975:20). To recapitulate one of the

⁵⁰ There were, of course, exceptions to this general rule, particularly within the population of free people of color which will be discussed below (Handler 1974).

points seen in the epigraph for Chapter 2, David Browne expresses similar sentiments, claiming that, “They [the ‘poor whites’] were so proud of their racial purity that they resisted assimilation into the mainstream of Barbadian society, especially with the black population (2012:16). Sean O’Callaghan’s downright racist assessment of the contemporary “Redleg” population bluntly states that, “They [the ‘Redlegs’] look down on the blacks and have never intermarried with them” (2000:207). The literature discussed illustrates century’s long commitment to a binary model of racial identity. In addition to racial identities being enamored with imaginations of purity, we see a stark social separation of these apparently disparate groups. Presented below is evidence that interrogates the rigidity of Barbadian racial identities as well as the perceived social distinction between Afro-Barbadians and “poor whites”.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to address particular ambiguities about “cultural” identity raised within the previously mentioned literature as well as the epigraph that begins this chapter. The rhetoric employed by these authors makes no mistake in explicitly identifying the “Redlegs” as being purely of European descent and therefore, white. The ambiguity emerges, however, when confronting the “cultural” identity of the “poor whites”.⁵¹ Despite racial distinctiveness, it appears that little separates “Redleg” culture from that of Afro-Barbadians. Depending on how such literature is interpreted, are these authors surprised that white and black people had remarkably similar daily lives? Are they confused that two disparate cultural identities are amalgamating into a racially ambivalent cultural form? More pressing for

⁵¹ I use “cultural” in quotes to reflect its political and uncritical usage within such literature in addition to its weakened ability to have analytical weight within anthropological literature within the past several decades. In particular, it is now recognized that cultural groups no longer exist with closed, self-evident boundaries (a similar case will be made below for the concreteness of racial categories). Trouillot has gone so far as to suggest the abandonment of the term (2003: chapter 5).

anthropological interpretation, however, are the broader implications for these cultural forms. In eighteenth through twentieth century Barbados can we reasonably argue for the existence of a purely “white” or “black” Barbadian culture? If so, to put it bluntly, what is “white” and what is “black” culture? How are these cultural identities (or singular identity) affected by socioeconomic positioning? This chapter, along with the closing chapter, addresses these questions through an assessment of the plantation landscape, artifacts recovered during excavation, and historical data.

Reading the Landscape and Spatial Organization

Despite the fact that the entirety of the Below Cliff tenantry wasn’t mapped, interesting household patterns emerged from the areas of the landscape that were explored and documented. Additionally, an analysis of the broader Clifton Hall plantation landscape warrants significant interpretations about the interaction of individuals below and above the cliff. In general, the Below Cliff landscape would have appeared disorganized and erratic to planters and other elites. As illustrated by James Delle (1998) in his analyses of Jamaican coffee plantations, the plantation was a space in which the state of nature was to be harnessed, controlled, systematically organized, and rigidly managed to maximize labor efficiency and profit (see also Armstrong and Kelly 2000). While the natural landscape, natural disasters, and acts of resistance on the part of the enslaved were all contributing factors in the successes and failures of elite attempts at organization and control (for a systematic analysis of plantation efficiency see Bates 2014), it is undeniable that there was a particular logic to plantation organization that hindered upon power relations and order. This was reflected not only in the great house, the works, and fields, but within the villages inhabited by the enslaved.

Douglas Armstrong's analysis of seventeenth and eighteenth century Jamaican slave villages illustrates a particular attempt by planters to organize, surveil, and control laborers through the establishment of linearly arranged slave quarters with standardized architectural forms usually situated in close proximity to the works, overseers quarters, and the great house depending on topographic variables (1990; Armstrong and Kelly 2000). Not unique to Jamaica, such laborer organization finds correlates in other New World settings such as Mulberry Row at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (see Kelso 1997:Chapter 3). At Seville Plantation, however, Armstrong and Kelly argue that the second slave village, established in the closing decades of the eighteenth century, reflected a dramatic transformation in which African Jamaicans "had an opportunity to define social boundaries within the village on their own terms" (2000:386). Rather than exhibiting characteristics of planter mandated organization and construction, the village and houses "not only exhibited well-defined and expanded house-yard compounds, but they also show considerable variation in the specifics of house design, construction and alignment" (387). Armstrong and Kelly suggest that this later slave village reflects African Jamaican social behaviors and practices that entail particular forms of social interaction, small farming practices, household organization, and spatial organization.

In turning to the spatial organization of Below Cliff we see stark similarities in how tenantry space was organized from the overall landscape to the layout of house-yard areas. The spatial overlay map with GPS points first seen in Figure 4.4 is expanded below (Figure 6.1) to illustrate the broader landscape and illustrates the layout of the portions of the tenantry that were mapped during the course of archaeological surveys and excavations.



Figure 6.1: Map of Below Cliff households as well as tenantry entrances atop the cliff. Map by author.

A far cry from the linearity and rigid boundaries that were characteristic of planter dominated and designed plantation spaces, this tenantry appears to be disorganized and haphazardly constructed. Households are grouped in small clusters and although it is tenuous to project such patterns into the past, in the decades before the tenantry was abandoned, these clusters were associated with kinship networks (nuclear and extended families). For instance, information provided by Wilson and Ainsley Norris illustrates that many of the households surrounding their childhood homes were occupied by relatives. Additionally, like the late eighteenth century slave village in Seville, Jamaica (Armstrong and Kelly 2000:380) the environment played a major role in determining household positioning and orientation based on local topography (a crucial consideration in Below Cliff) as well as trade winds. In terms of spatial use, visible changes in vegetation in the area today indicate previous spatial functionality in the past. For instance, parcels of tall grass and other weed-like small bushes found adjacent to

residential platforms were areas that were once meager sugar fields worked by local residents that sold their harvest to neighboring plantations.

The presence of these small sugar fields is representative of a degree of autonomy in terms of agricultural production that was typically absent within slave villages but other spaces of agricultural production mirrored slave village provision grounds. Directly southeast of the foundation of Wilson Norris' childhood home is the faint outline of a semicircular stone wall. Given the architectural styles typical of the area (and island as a whole) the articulated wall was dismissed as being part of the structural foundation. Conversations with Wilson revealed that the wall had once served as a retaining wall for a small provision ground in which sweet potatoes and yams were grown (Figure 5.2 in Chapter 5 provides a plan view of Wilson Norris' childhood home and surrounding features). Additionally, to the southwest of the household were the small ruins of three walls of a square. This was the last vestiges of what were once several pigpens. The fourth wall had simply been a piece of corrugated metal that could be moved to keep the pig inside or release it to feed. Finally, the northwest foundation extended beyond the perimeter of the household in a southwestern direction. This extension served as the backing foundation/wall for the household's detached kitchen. Excavations inside and surrounding the detached kitchen revealed few artifacts confirming assumptions that such areas are frequently swept to keep clean.

In returning to landscape and spatial observations made at Seville, Armstrong and Kelly note similar uses of space when African Jamaicans expressed their autonomy in the late eighteenth century slave village. In discussing the activities undertaken in the surrounding household areas they suggest that (2000:382):

The yard activities should include exterior kitchen and food preparation areas, gathering areas, animal pens, and gardens. With the exception of specific activity areas, such as hearths and planted garden beds, the yard area should be relatively artifact-free because of repeated yard sweeping, with increased artifact frequencies at the edge of the house and along the perimeter of the cleared yard.

This description is strikingly similar to the spatial layout observed in Below Cliff and the associated activities that took place within such spaces. Historical evidence also points to these practices taking place in Barbados contemporaneously with the inhabitation of the Seville slave village. Transcriptions of interviews that were part of a Parliamentary committee report on the slave trade and commerce in the American colonies describe observations made by Barbadian elites about the practices of “poor whites”. In 1790 Rev. Nicholls was asked by Parliament if “white people even labour in the open air in the island of Barbados”. His response was in the affirmative with specific references to the “poor whites”, claiming that “Those who are called tenants, being men who serve in the militia for a small allotment of land, and persons in similar circumstances as to the quantity of land they occupy, do commonly work in their grounds with their negroes, if they have any, or else cultivate the whole with their own labour; that ground is commonly in provisions, not in canes” (HCPP 1790:334-335). Rev. Nicholls assertion that the grounds were not in sugar cane aligns with Jerome Handler’s (1966) research on small-scale cane farming which illustrates that such practices became more popular beginning in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Therefore, it is likely that subsistence agriculture was a common feature of life below the cliff throughout its occupation with small-scale sugar farming picking up during the twentieth century.

Thus, the data presented above suggests a level of autonomy on the part of Below Cliff residents to arrange their tenantry in ways that facilitated a subsistence lifestyle

within an unstable environment. This certainly relates to discussions presented in the previous chapter associated with class relations and economic practices but is equally pertinent to discussions of race given the comparison with Seville, Jamaica. There is no doubt that Armstrong and Kelly are accurately describing transformations that occurred through the expression of autonomy on the part of African Jamaicans. We need to consider, however, to what degree we may associate such spatial organization and what unfolds within such spaces with a particular racial identity or place of origin. In essence, what makes this form of social organization a particular manifestation of “African”, “black”, “white”, or “European” culture? If stark similarities can be observed in practices taking place within specifically designed social spaces how are we to reflect on the fact that one was an African Jamaican slave village and one was a “poor white” tenantry?

A broader analysis of the plantation landscape offers a possible explanation that avoids racial correlates with particular forms of spatial organization and socioeconomic practices. Depicted in Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4 is a map illustrating the three pathways which former tenantry residents used to climb from the bottom of the cliff to the top in order to pay rent or go to work on the plantation (two of which are still safely navigable today). Conversations with local residents revealed that the entry points were called the Ladders, Monkey Jump, and the Gates (from north to south). Monkey Jump also corresponds to the sugar field located adjacent to the entryway. The field directly south of Monkey Jump is called Negro Yard which research has shown, often indicates that it was the former location of a slave village (Handler and Lange 1978:46). The orientation of the landscape was such that Below Cliff residents who worked at Clifton Hall would

have encountered enslaved Africans and Afro-Barbadians on a daily basis prior to emancipation. Additionally, given that Below Cliff was situated far out of sight of the great house and works, it would have been possible for the enslaved to traverse the pathways down to the village below. This suggests that “poor white”/Afro-Barbadian interaction was likely a part of daily life on the Clifton Hall landscape prior to emancipation which likely affected such relationships in the post-emancipation era.

The experiences of Afro-Barbadians and “poor whites” were dramatically shaped by the landscape which was in turn shaped by its inhabitants. These interactions fostered relationships that frequently would have led to cultural exchange in the form of architectural techniques, agricultural practices, food preparation, dietary preferences, innovation in artifact reuse, and spatial organization, to name a few of the characteristics identifiable within the archaeological and ethnographic record. Interestingly, and arguably most significantly, evidence has yet to be uncovered that would suggest a directionality for these cultural influences. In other words, if one were inclined to ask such questions, we may ask whether the “poor whites” were adopting Afro-Barbadians cultural traits or vice-versa. In returning to the classic work of Sidney Mintz (1974), however, we are reminded of the significance of local contingencies and circumstances as well as the transformative nature of culture especially within oppressive conditions. Therefore, while it is certainly in our interest to explore the degree to which particular traits or practices were carried from a distant homeland such as African or Europe, the quest for distinct “Africanisms” may obfuscate local transformations that have less to do with cultural origins and more with the nature of everyday life on the plantation landscape (Mintz 1974:26-28). To be clear, I am not suggesting that particular cultural

traits and practices from Europe or Africa failed to make the journey to the New World or that observing them is a frivolous endeavor. Rather, I suggest an approach that focuses on local transformations that don't necessarily rely on original cultural forms (Armstrong 2003). This suggestion will be explored in more detail in the closing chapter but in introducing this hypothesis I seek to remove focus from the concept of cultural (as well as racial) distinctiveness and further explore the degree to which historically specific cross racial/cultural interaction was responsible for the emergence of particular ways of life observable in Below Cliff.

Locally Produced Coarse Earthenwares and Integrated Markets

The argument developed above suggests that the landscape of Clifton Hall facilitated interaction between residents above and below the cliff who represented diverse ancestries. Similarities in spatial organization found in Jamaican slave villages and Below Cliff illustrate the transmission of cultural traits and practices across regardless of racial identity or ancestry. Further evidence of such interaction across these spaces and racial lines is found through a consideration of the locally produced coarse earthenwares that were recovered during excavations below the cliff. Coarse earthenwares are ubiquitous across the island especially given the use of locally produced sugar cones that were essential to the production of sugar. While industrial earthenwares such as sugar cones and pots have been recovered from domestic sites in Barbados (Armstrong and Reilly N.D.; Finch 2013; Agbe-Davies 2009), the wares discussed below were produced specifically for domestic use and represent "poor white" participation in local markets.

The production of earthenware has a rich history in Barbados dating back to at least the mid seventeenth century and has been the focus of several anthropological and archaeological studies (see for example Handler 1963a, 1963b, 1965; Stoner 2000; Finch 2013; Loftfield 2001). Historical sketches by Jerome Handler indicate that “In former days [likely referring to the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries] pottery-making was primarily a plantation based industry, in which pots were made that were used in the manufacture of Muscovado sugar” (1963a:129). Despite the use of wooden containers and imports from England for sugar cones, locally made wares were essential to the production process beginning sometime between 1650 and 1680 when islanders began to properly fire locally made vessels (131-133). The origins of cottage pottery industries are more difficult to trace. Handler highlights the significance in local Sunday markets and that by the early eighteenth century locally made ceramics were a common good found for sale or barter within such settings (139-140). While these markets have traditionally been associated with the enslaved and their descendants (Mintz 1974; Handler 1963a; Hauser 2008), evidence from Barbados suggests that “poor whites” were also active participants. As noted by Handler, “these markets served as vehicles through which the personal produces of the slaves were exchanged among themselves and with others, e.g., poor-whites, on a cash or kind basis” (1963a:139-140). In referring back comments made by Codrington’s attorney in 1741 found in Chapter 2, we see that some of the impediments to converting the slaves to Christianity were perceived to be “the attraction of marketing activities on Sundays and the bad influence of poor whites” (USPGA 1741:Vol. B8, Item 51).

In addition to market spaces fostering interracial interaction, we see similar racial diversity in those who were producing such goods. In addition to historical data illustrating the immigration of English potters to work on Barbadian plantations in the seventeenth century (Handler 1963a:133-135), Handler's ethnographic work in the Chalky Mount potting village of the Scotland District reveals that Afro-Barbadian potters speak of white potters initiating the island's cottage industry (142). While he explicitly highlights the indeterminate nature of these oral traditions, it is significant that Afro-Barbadian potters openly refer to the craft being practiced across racial lines despite the fact that it had become an exclusively Afro-Barbadian craft in the village of Chalky Mount at the time of Handler's ethnographic research (1963a:142). Therefore, historical and ethnographic data suggest that markets were spaces in which Afro-Barbadians and "poor whites" alike interacted to buy, sell, and barter goods grown and produced by diverse individuals.

"Poor white" participation in markets is similarly represented in the archaeological record through the recovery of locally made coarse earthenwares. Preliminary data concerning locally produced ceramics was presented in Chapter 5, but to reiterate, locally made earthenwares accounted for 299 or 28.5% of the 1,047 ceramic sherds collected. Pertinent to the distinction between plantation industry and cottage industry for pottery manufacture, only 21 or 7% of the 299 earthenware sherds were readily identifiable as industrial wares (sugar cones or pots) indicating that Below Cliff residents were consuming and using domestic ceramics produced by local cottage industry potters rather than the wares produced on and for the plantations. It is also possible that the few sherds of industrial wares are representative of reuse for purposes

other than their intended industrial function. Regardless, the overwhelming majority of earthenware sherds were domestic wares acquired locally for domestic use.

Unfortunately, similar to the condition of the majority of the imported sherds, most of the earthenware sherds were small body fragments with few diagnostic features. As seen in Figure 6.2, however, glazes of various colors were not uncommon decorations and were found on the interior and/or exterior of 34.5% of the earthenware sherds. Glazes were primarily lead-based and clear, taking the tint of the clay. Colored glazes, however, were also present on select sherds and included yellow, light green, olive green, and brown glazes. Significantly, glaze color schemes used in the production of more recent (last 20 years) Barbadian craft ceramics were absent within the assemblage. These more recent decorative patterns include bright floral colors as well as a specific drip technique. In general, the variety in glaze prohibits any particular interpretation of consumption preferences or function beyond the retention of liquids for hollowware storage vessels.



Figure 6.2: Locally produced earthenware sherds recovered from Level 1 of Unit 1 at the former household of the Fitz-Bailey family. Note the diversity of glazes. Photo by author.

The condition of the sherds was likely due to environmental disturbances such as rockslides in the case of those sherds uncovered from the interior of the household as well as heavy foot traffic for the units placed within the pathway to the northeast of Wilson Norris' childhood home. In general, little could be said of the majority of the sherds besides the fact that they were likely locally produced and that due to the relative thinness of body sherds they were likely from domestic vessels. Additionally, like the imported wares, the majority of sherds were collected from the surface and within the first 10 cm of soil.

Despite the lack of diagnostic sherds, select base, rim, and shoulder sherds provided clues as to the various forms of vessels represented. Analysis revealed that 44.5% of the sherds could be identified as being hollowware vessels. This is in keeping

with the popular vessels forms documented by Handler during his fieldwork in Chalky Mount. The most popular vessel forms (though diminishing in quantity produced at the time of Handler's fieldwork) were monkeys (typically used to keep water cool), goglets (pitchers), and conarees (used for storage and food preparation) (1963a:146-147). As can be deduced from the descriptions, all of these vessels were hollowwares. Diagnostic sherds recovered indicate that several of these commonly produced hollowwares were consumed and utilized by Below Cliff residents. Figure 6.3 provides photographs of the most diagnostic sherds recovered indicating that storage vessels, monkeys, and shallow bowls or dishes for food preparation were all represented within the Below Cliff assemblage.



Figure 6.3: Manganese and clear and green lead glazed sherds (top-left); base of a hollowware, likely a monkey (top-right); rim and base sherds of a pitcher or other storage vessel with a clear lead glaze; also note the diverse coloration of rim sherds due to inconsistent firing (bottom-left); green lead glazed base sherds of a shallow bowl or platter for food preparation (bottom-right).

The recovery of these locally produced hollowwares provides material evidence that Below Cliff “Redlegs” were not only participating in local markets but also consuming the popular vessel forms that were being produced and consumed by Afro-Barbadians. Additionally, stratigraphic data suggests that Below Cliff residents had been long-time consumers of such goods as well as ratio of locally produced ceramics to imported ceramics over time. Despite their absence within select contexts (particularly deeper levels where artifact counts dropped significantly), earthenware sherds were common artifacts throughout various temporal contexts. Such sherds were ubiquitous across the surface near house sites but were also found towards the bottom of the deeper excavation units in the interior of Wilson Norris’ former home (late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century contexts). Additionally, the five cross-mending green glazed sherds of a shallow hollowware or food preparation platter (bottom-right of Figure 6.5) were found within the same stratigraphic contexts as white salt glazed stoneware sherds. Therefore, the consumption of locally produced wares wasn’t a recent or post-emancipation phenomenon but, rather, extended back to the period of slavery.

Although tenuous based on the limited sample size and number of units excavated, we can also sketch a preliminary hypothesis that Below Cliff residents had previously been far more committed to the use of locally made earthenwares than they were in the final decades of the tenantry’s inhabitation. Although stratigraphy is difficult to discern within the former household of Wilson Norris due to the significant disturbance caused by rockslides, the three units excavated in the pathway to the northeast of the household provide some stratigraphic clues to changing consumption patterns. Stratigraphic layers within these units were discerned through subtle changes in

soil color from a black loam on the surface to a lighter brown clay-like soil approaching bedrock. Excavations were therefore undertaken in roughly 10 cm levels depending on soil change. A large majority of sherds (both imported and locally produced) were recovered from the surface and within the first 10 cm of excavation. Within levels 2 and 3 there was a noticeable decrease in the number of sherds of each category recovered. Of interest, however, was the increasing proportion of locally produced wares from level 1 to level 3. The percentage of locally produced wares increased from 16.7% in level 1 to 25% in level 2 and to 37.3% in level 3. Given the lack of discrete stratigraphic changes it is difficult to argue for such a relationship with any certainty but, if stratigraphic principles hold, it appears that Below Cliff residents had previously been more committed to consuming locally produced earthenwares. The reasons for this shift may be multiple but likely include an increasing availability or affordability of imported ceramics as well as the decline in cottage pottery industries around the island.

Historical accounts suggest and archaeological data confirms that “Redlegs” were avid participants in local markets through their consumption of locally produced coarse earthenwares. Additionally, as our analysis of the Below Cliff landscape and spatial organization illustrates, it is likely that residents were producing food stuffs for sale or barter within such markets. Markets, essential socioeconomic spheres of the lives of Caribbean laborers (Mintz 1974; Hauser 2008 and 2011), took a unique form in Barbados where seemingly disparate racial demographics interacted and exchanged goods. Furthermore, evidence suggests that such interactions weren’t limited to the post-emancipation era but also existed during the period of slavery. While it is difficult to discern the degree to which emancipation effected the interactions of “poor whites” and

Afro-Barbadians within markets or other similar settings, it is evident that the legal status of Afro-Barbadians as slaves didn't hinder or restrict such interactions despite elite attempts to maintain boundaries.

“A Numerous Race of Mulattoes”: Policing and Penetrating Racial Boundaries

Thus far I have discussed the emergence of a discourse that suggested an ideology that accepted “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian racial distinction and isolation. Evidence presented above, however, suggests that the plantation landscape of Clifton Hall facilitated interaction between the enslaved (and later formerly enslaved) and the “poor whites” in inconspicuous locations such as Below Cliff. Furthermore, archaeological evidence confirms that “poor whites” were avid consumers of locally produced coarse earthenwares including hollowware vessel forms that were commonly produced and consumed by Afro-Barbadians. Within the context of twenty-first century scholarship we may not, nor should we, be surprised that seemingly disparate impoverished groups were interacting on a daily basis and that such interactions affected how individuals lived their everyday lives. It should also come as no surprise that given such interaction, intermixing and intermarrying would have been a common phenomenon on the Barbadian plantation landscape. Therefore, this section addresses elite attempts to police racial boundaries and the successes and failures of these attempts. The perpetuation of a binary model of thinking about race within the Barbadian context is the starkest success of such elite attempts but evidence from local settings along the island's east coast suggests that racial boundaries weren't as straight forward as they were intended to be.

Historical scholarship touching on racial intermixing in Barbados is not new but has seldom been the explicit focus of research projects (Handler 1974; Bush 1981; Beckles 1993; Jones 2007).⁵² A notable exception to the lacunae of such analyses is Cecily Jones' (Forde-Jones 1998) investigation of poor white women and the mapping of racial boundaries in nineteenth century St. John, Barbados (the parish home to Below Cliff). Rather than racial intermixing being the focus of research, Jones takes the opposite tact and exposes how elites attempted to monitor and maintain racial boundaries. Through her analysis of the St. John parish Vestry Minutes Jones argues that relief provided by the parish to "poor white" women was a "consequence of the colonial authority's attempt to incorporate disenfranchised poor whites in general, and poor white women in particular, into a white ruling-class cultural sphere that rested on an ideology of white supremacy" (1998:10). Below, this loaded claim will be unpacked to explore how ideologies of white supremacy and racial separation were transmitted within Barbadian society. I then interrogate the level of success of this ideology and suggest that white supremacy and racial distinctiveness only met with limited success within settings where documented racial intermixing was taking place.

Despite the lack of Barbadian legislature that explicitly prohibited interracial marriages or progeny, evidence suggests that such relationships were discouraged and therefore seldom appear within the historical record.⁵³ We do, however, have evidence that the interacting and intermixing of "whites" and "blacks" caused distress among

⁵² Within this body of literature the politics and significance of racial intermixture are often secondary concerns in favor of the socioeconomic position of free people of color (Handler 1974) or the role of white women within colonial society (Bush 1981; Beckles 1993; Jones 2007).

⁵³ The development of seventeenth century Barbadian law illustrates the establishment of a distinction between indentured servants and slaves which came to be cast along racial lines (Handler and Reilly N.D.; Rugemer 2013). Despite the legal separation of laborers along racial lines, racial intermixing wasn't outlawed.

island elites, specifically planters whose labor pool relied upon the system of racial slavery. While it isn't possible to explicate the nuances of racial ideologies in Barbados from 1627 through the twentieth century, we can gain a semblance of these ideologies through how they became manifest within the historical record in the decades surrounding emancipation. Interestingly, evidence of these ideologies simultaneously illustrates elite desires for racial purity and distinction as well as their frustration when instances of interracial comingling were taking place, thus suggesting failures of their ideologies to take hold at the local level.

The most commonly cited examples of racial intermixing are the results of instances of planter or manager sexual exploitation of enslaved females (Jennings 1990; for a recent case study in Cuba see Morrison 2010). As in other slave colonies, Barbadian planters and managers frequently wielded their power over their property through the rape of the enslaved. Michael Craton has noted that domestic slaves were particularly vulnerable to such attacks, even going as far as claiming that "many female domestics were little better than prostitutes" (2009:44-45). In one of the earliest documented instance of such a relationship in Barbados, Morgan Godwyn described "a mulatto child" born of a "father being of the Scottish nation, and the other his domestic slave" (1680:113-114). Such brutalities were common enough for Colthurst to express his disgust over how this travesty affected the compensation received by planters following emancipation in 1834. In September of 1836 he commented that "These planters are also receiving the full compensation for their own bastards, begat by themselves or by their rascally white underlings, by slave women, who because the mothers were slaves, were the moment they were born, themselves, slaves by law!!"

(Marshall 1977:75). Therefore, while it is impossible to provide quantitative data on the preponderance of planter/slave (forced) relations and the resulting mixed race progeny, the fact remains that such individuals would be born as slaves or, in the post-emancipation period, as black Barbadians.⁵⁴

Despite the preponderance and harsh reality of these exploitative events, alternative forms of interracial relationships frequently commented upon by elites and observers fomented between “poor whites” (servants and wage laborers) and the enslaved. While the extent to which such relationships involved marriage is difficult, if not impossible, to discern, sexual relationships as well as mixed race children often received the scorn of commenters. As with relationships between planters and the enslaved, relations between laborers of different racial identities were often plagued by the abuse of power. Within the Parliamentary Papers are found comments by an anonymous planter in 1788 attributing the “Natural increase of Negro Slaves” not only to their promiscuity but also to “the lascivious abuse of authority in white servants, over the immature and unprotected females” (HCPP 1789:27). Despite the decline in use of indentured labor in the late seventeenth century, it appears the use of “white” labor was common enough by the late eighteenth century for this planter to comment on the sexual abuse of enslaved females at the hands of “white” laborers/servants.

The power dynamics inherent within plantation slave society allowed the sexual exploitation of female slaves to continue almost unabated throughout the period of slavery. However, this shouldn’t eclipse the fact that mutual and romantic relationships developed between laborers of diverse racial identities, much to the chagrin of planters

⁵⁴ There were instances of planters manumitting pregnant female slaves of the progeny of their relationships with enslaved women but such instances seem to be the exception rather than the rule (for more on manumissions see Handler 1974; Handler and Pohlmann 1984).

and other elites. For instance, in an 1824 report, plantation manager Alleyne would comment that, “whenever I have discovered any attempts on the part of the white servants to form connections with the females of the estate, I have invariably discharged them” (Anonymous 1824:104). In 1798 Wood, a manager responsible for Newton Estate, would write the owners in England providing an “Annual summary of the condition of your property”. Within this letter Wood describes his frustration in his failed attempts to control the female slave. He writes, “They all of them either have or have had white husbands, that is, such men who keep them. Mary-Thomas, since I came here [i.e. took up managing Newton plantation] got into a connection with the bookkeeper. I ordered him immediately to be disciplined. She was with child by him and delivered...in May last of a boy” (Newton Manuscripts [NM] 523/381/1). Despite the best efforts of island elites and management to patrol racial boundaries, it is evident that relationships developed with resulting offspring complicating the island’s binary model of racial identity.

A generation later Mary Thomas of Newton Plantation, along with her children, appears again in the records of Newton Estate. In 1815 Robert Haynes, a prominent Barbadian planter who happened to own Clifton Hall, commented in a letter to Lane, the owner of Newton, that there had been difficulties in dealing with Mary and Kitty Thomas and her three children. The women had been such trouble that Polly Kitty Williams, daughter of Kitty Thomas was sold for a black girl of “equal value”. Commenting on the difficulties faced in dealing with Polly Kitty Williams, Haynes notes that “Since her birth she has never as much as turned over one straw for you, she is as white as either of us and in fact I could not find an occupation for her” (Watson 2000a:n.p.). In his interpretation

of this passage Karl Watson argues that the racial identities of these women illustrates that in contrast to the United States which harbored a more rigidly defined racial taxonomy (i.e. the “one drop rule”), Barbados was home to “a more flexible attitude which allowed shifts in racial classifications to take place over several generations” (*ibid.*). I agree with Watson’s assessment to an extent given that Haynes noted the ambiguity in the race of these women and their children. Despite the acknowledged phenotypic variation between these “white” women and the other slaves, however, given that these pale skinned children were born to enslaved women, they too were slaves. Therefore, under Barbadian law, their “white” appearance didn’t override their status as slaves and, thus, a black racial identity. Haynes’ only reluctance is in their “white” *appearance*, not their “white” *identity*.

In looking more closely within the vicinity of Below Cliff we see instances of interracial relations between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians persisting well into the post-emancipation era. Although such instances are scant within the historical record, they are nonetheless significant within the localized St. John and St. Philip area of the island where a concentration of “poor whites” resided for centuries (and in the case of St. John, continue to reside). Additionally, given the nature of the parish records, we simultaneously see elite attempts to police and prohibit such comingling. Woodville Marshall’s (2003) research on the Carpenter Trust of St. Philip is particularly revealing of elite attempts to police racial boundaries and laborers actively behaving otherwise. The Carpenter Trust was established in Richard Carpenter’s 1662 will which stipulated that deserving members of the poor (white) community were to receive particular allotments of muscovado sugar and small parcels of land on which to reside. The local Vestry was

responsible for carrying out the parameters of this Trust each year and determined who qualified as deserving members of the poor community. The Trust is active in the contemporary period but hasn't existed without discrepancies. For instance, throughout the nineteenth century women were frequently evicted from Trust lands for immoral behavior (as determined by the Vestry). One such "immoral" act that was grounds for eviction was a white woman giving birth to a mixed raced child, which occurred in April of 1873 when a Mrs. Bascom was discovered to have "lately had a coloured child" (Marshall 2003:186). Despite the charitable nature of the Trust in providing land and financial support for those deemed worthy, Marshall has argued that "Eviction from Parish Land [parcels allocated to the deserving "poor whites"] and removal from the pensioners' list were obviously the main weapons used by the Vestry in their long war against the undeserving poor" (2003:186). As evidenced here, one aspect of this war was the struggle to maintain what elites believed to be racial purity amongst the "white" community.

Remaining in the parish of St. Philip, an entry in the burial registry during the final decades of the slavery reveals an individual instance of explicit resistance against elite attempts to divide laborers along racial lines. On January 3rd, 1804 Ann Shepherd's burial was registered with a peculiar note beside her name. Shepherd's burial record, displayed in Figure 6.4 reads "Ann Shepherd, white woman the grand, and great grand mother [sic.], of a numerous race of mulattoes as appears by her own affidavit taken previous to her death by present Rector – aged 100" (BDA RL1/25:108). Ms. Shepherd's burial entry is unique and peculiar for a number of reasons. Her 100 years of age at the time of her death was certainly novel within early nineteenth century Barbadian society.

Additionally, it is odd that she is specifically identified as being a “white woman”. Given that it was uncommon for the enslaved or free people of color to be recorded in parish registries during the period of slavery, it is strange that Ms. Shepherd was immediately identified as being white. Furthermore, it is odd that a five line note accompanied her entry when the overwhelming majority of entries were simply listed with their name, date of burial, and age at time of death. Perhaps Ms. Shepherd’s old age warranted the extra space within the registry and the inclusion of these personal details but the exact reasoning is unknown. Regardless, Ms. Shepherd was explicit in her affidavit that she was to be identified as a white woman and the matriarch of a kinship network that comprised “a numerous race of mulattoes”. Additionally, the entry is explicit in noting that this information was “by *her own* affidavit” (emphasis added). This assertion suggests a semblance of pride felt by Ms. Shepherd not only because of her large family but because of the fact that they were mixed race individuals.

1804
 January 1st Cholmley Cutram aged 35
 " 3rd Ann Shepherd, white woman
 " " the grand, and great grand mo-
 " " ther, of a numerous race of mulattoes
 " " as appears by her own affidavit taken
 " " previous to her death by present Rector
 " " aged 100 }

Figure 6.4: Burial record entry for Ann Shepherd (BDA RL1/25:128). Burial registry digitized and provided by Family Search (www.familysearch.org).

Shortly after the death of Ann Shepherd an instance appears in the St. John Vestry Minutes which possibly suggests further interaction between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians, causing great vexation amongst the Vestrymen. At meeting on the first of November, 1806 members of the Vestry discussed how seating was to be arranged for services at St. John Parish Church. They detailed the names of several families that owned or rented pews (the overwhelming majority of which were owners of local plantations) and turned their attention towards the available pews. It was determined that “That the South Gallery be appropriated for the reception of the poor of the Parish, the pew No. 15 for the reception of the Coloured people, and that the Girls of the Female School of Industry be seated on the Western side of the Organ loft” (BDA D279).⁵⁵ Therefore, given that the majority of pews were owned/rented by local planters, the concern over seating was raised specifically about “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadian (for the School of Female Industry see footnote).

Interestingly, it appears that the proposed seating assignments failed to organize the assembly in the manner desired by the Vestry. On August 3rd, 1807 the Minutes read, “Whereas the southern Gallery in the Church has been comfortably and decently fitted up for the Reception of the Poor of the Parish during Divine Service, and that said Poor obstiately [sic.] refuse to sit there, Ordered that the Churchwarden withhold from such as shall hereafter continue to refuse to occupey [sic.] the said Seats, their quarterly Pensions until they conform to what has been desired of them” (BDA D279). The Minutes provide no further details and the entry is open to interpretation. Given the Vestry’s attempts to

⁵⁵ The School of Female Industry was a small training facility in the parish designed to instruct young “poor white” girls how to conduct domestic chores to prepare them for domestic service. At any given time the school would have housed no more than 10-15 young girls so the allocated space was likely limited to a single pew (for more on the School see Jones 1998).

circumscribe the seating arrangements of “poor whites” and free people of color, it would seem that their frustration with the “poor whites” not sitting in their designated seats may be associated with where they were *choosing* to sit. It is unlikely that the “poor whites” would be allowed to sit in the pews owned or rented by planters. One can hardly imagine the outrage of a planter arriving for Sunday services to find a “Redleg” seated in his reserved seat. Therefore, it is more likely that the “poor whites” were seating themselves in close proximity to or alongside free people of color. While this interpretation is speculative, it stands to reason that the policing of the color line within domestic, social, and official spheres extended to religious services, especially those where planters were present. It then stands to reason that planter outrage would ensue following the comingling to “poor whites” and free people of color. Additionally, if this interpretation is correct, it provides evidence of explicit resistance on the part of “poor whites” as well as free people of color to adhere to prescribed notions of racial distinctiveness and separation.

The threat put forward by the Vestry is also worthy of discussion. As described above, poor relief was doled out only to those deemed worthy of such charity. Additionally, the Vestry was responsible for establishing the parameters with which recipients were obliged to comply. As seen in the case of Ms. Bascom from St. Philip described above, failure to comply with Vestry requirements could result in removal from the pensioners list. Apparently, “poor white” refusal to sit within the designated area of the church was sufficient grounds to withhold quarterly pensions. If the interpretation of “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian comingling is warranted, we see a complicated relationship involving the policing of racial boundaries as well as the ideologies

associated with charity and poverty. The impoverished condition of the “Redlegs” was a sufficient cause for almsgiving but such charity wasn’t unconditional. As evidenced from these cases found in St. Philip and St. John, maintaining distinct boundaries between the “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian population was of greater significance than providing relief for those (“whites”) in need.

*

This chapter has presented a particular discourse put forward by island visitors and plantation managers of an explicit separation of the “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians (enslaved and free). The groups are presented as racially pure and culturally distinct with the “poor whites” being projected as isolated and proud of their racial purity. Furthermore, and more pertinent to our discussion of racial categories in the past and present, it is evident that such a discourse has persisted within contemporary analyses of Barbadian history as well as contemporary perceptions of the “poor white” population. Beyond the wholesale acceptance of historical stereotypes, the perpetuation of this discourse suggests a more subtle danger involving the terms and categories that were (and are) necessary to produce an ideology of distinction and separation. The historical and contemporary reliance on determinant identity markers such as “white” and “black” reifies the supposedly pure nature of these categories, thus creating challenges for interrogating their salience and stability (see Monahan 2011).

Archaeological and historical evidence provided a means to confront this discourse and its associated ideologies, questioning the veracity of racial separation and the legitimacy of “white” or “black” racial purity. In first turning to the landscape encountered below the cliff I suggest that despite its marginality in terms of sugar

production and positioning below the cliff on the boundaries of a plantation, the environment facilitated significant degrees of interaction between the “poor whites” below and the enslaved Afro-Barbadians above the cliff. Interaction can be further observed in cultural exchange between those living above and below the cliff in the form of vernacular architecture, small farming practices, and spatial organization of house and yard area. Heightened interaction between these legally distinct yet racially intermixed groups afforded by the natural and produced environment may have been the impetus for many Afro-Barbadians to choosing to reside in the Below Cliff tenantry following emancipation.

Recovered locally produced coarse earthenwares provide tangible evidence of such interactions. Complementing historical evidence illustrating that “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians were participants in informal island markets (as producers and consumers), archaeological data suggests that Below Cliff residents were consuming hollowware vessels often associated with Afro-Barbadian forms, production techniques, and preferences (Handler 1963a). While evidence of such consumption patterns are in no way revolutionary, nor surprising, it calls into question the strong tradition within historical archaeological scholarship of associating vessel forms, production techniques, and/or consumption practices with ethnic or racial identity, the full implications of which will be discussed in greater detail in the closing chapter. For the our present purposes, however, these locally produced earthenwares, along with domestic architecture and house/yard organization, raise significant questions about claims of distinct “poor white” vs. Afro-Barbadian cultural traits. In returning to the epigraph of this chapter, Watson’s insightful argument that places the “poor white” historical experience in conversation

with that of Afro-Barbadians is essential in initiating an interrogation of the constructed boundaries that separate these seemingly disparate groups. Taken a step further, however, it is necessary to not only challenge the perceived opaqueness of these racial boundaries but also to question the veracity of cultural distinction (for a cultural approach to race see Hartigan 2005).

Finally, as proposed in Chapter 2 and to be discussed further in the closing chapter, the localized failure of modern ideologies of racial distinction to dictate individual behavior or affect one's consciousness need not be associated with direct resistance. Within certain instances, however, such as those evidenced by Ms. Shepherd's burial record, Ms. Bascom's mixed race child, and the Vestry Minutes of St. John, it is evident that resistance is possible and did in fact transpire. Additionally, such acts of resistance often had severe consequences such as the eviction of Ms. Bascom or the severing of parish relief from those "poor whites" refusing to sit in their designated pews. These instances of resistance and their consequences are indicative of particular attempts made by local elites such as planters and Vestrymen (who were often one and the same) to police racial boundaries between impoverished laborers who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. Furthermore, documented instances of such resistance exemplify the limited success of such attempts to produce and maintain a sturdy schism between seemingly disparate racial demographics.

Chapter 7

Alternative Modernities and Archaeological Ambiguities

“Modernity is not one, but many” – Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (2001b:17).



Figure 7.1: Photo of "Redleg" fishermen taken in 1908 in Bath, St. John. Select men pictured are members of the Watson family, Wilson Norris' matrilineal kinship line. Photo courtesy of Mr. Richard Goddard.

Fred Watson was born in Bath, St. John (located southeast of Below Cliff) in 1926 and currently lives in Glenburnie, a small village on the coast just east of Below Cliff. Having spent his life in the rough waters off the island's east coast he has an intimate knowledge of local fishing practices, the fishing industry, and rural life in a region with a diverse racial population. The photograph displayed above (Figure 7.1), as well as in the introduction, was presented to Mr. Watson on a summer afternoon in his small chattel house home where he sat quietly working on a fishing net alongside his wife. When presented with the photo Mr. Watson commented that he had never seen it

before but quietly and quickly responded that “this is a family photograph.” With brief hesitation he was able to point to most of the individuals pictured, provide their name, and explain their relation to other men pictured as well as their descendants currently living in the area.

The photograph is widely known amongst island history buffs as well as those interested in family genealogy. On several occasions I encountered individuals who had traced their ancestry to one of the impoverished men pictured in the 1908 portrait of the “Redleg” fishermen. Until my conversation with Fred Watson (Figure 7.2), however, I had never heard it referred to as a “family photograph”. Represented are members of the Watson, Goddard, King, and Haynes families, surnames popular amongst the “Redleg” population for several generations and still present in St. John today. Fred was able to identify several of his father’s and mother’s brothers that were pictured in the photograph including his mother’s brother Simeon Goddard found on the lower left and his father’s brother Joe Watson found in center of the back row. The revelation that the photograph depicts an extended matrilineal kinship network was made more significant by the realization that phenotypes indicate that this network involved Afro-Barbadian as well as “poor white” genealogies.



Figure 7.2: Fred Watson, uncle of Wilson Norris, casting his net on the docks of Consett Bay in the parish of St. Philip. Photo by author.

More remarkable yet was Fred's connection to the Norris household that was the primary site of archaeological investigations. Fred's sister, Clarine Watson, was Wilson Norris' mother, making Wilson the nephew of Fred Watson. Wilson, whose pale skin warranted his involvement as an interviewee in documentaries about the "Redlegs" as well as being the focus of a local newspaper story entitled "The Last White Cane Cutter", is of mixed race ancestry, a fact he openly admits and willingly discusses. Of particular interest is the language used by Wilson in discussing phenotype and racial identity. On my next visit with Wilson following my discussion with Fred Watson I inquired about his mother. He quickly produced a framed black and white photograph of his mother likely taken when she was in her thirties. Despite the age of the photograph as well as the quality of the coloration, it was evident that Wilson's mother's complexion was rather

dark. As I looked at the photograph Wilson commented “she a dark woman”. This language was in keeping with how Wilson described former inhabitants of Below Cliff households or contemporary community members. For instance, when walking by the ruins of the Bradshaw residence Wilson commented that the patriarch “worked in a shop and was a dark fella”.

Without any particular knowledge of the specific research questions about race that I was interested in investigating or any prior knowledge of the terms that I preferred to use, Wilson chose to use the terms “dark” and “light” on a sliding spectrum when referring to the racial identity of an individual. This vocabulary was new to me as an outsider who had previously relied on the binary model of racial identification (white/black). This experience, along with others within the contemporary “poor white” community, as well as the data uncovered during the course of my research alerted me to nuances of localized experiences in the past and present despite totalizing narratives and simplistic models of the modern experience that have come to define how the Caribbean region is understood and studied.

The tangible consequences of modernity are ubiquitous features on the Barbadian landscape including vast sugar fields, opulent plantation “great” houses, and rows of deteriorating chattel houses inhabited by descendants of slaves. Despite observable and significant variation between and within islands, these symbols, scars, ruins, monuments, and memorials of modernity characterize the past and present of the Caribbean. This dissertation has attempted to go beyond the acknowledgement of variation within this metanarrative of modernity. What I suggest, and I am not the first to do so, that modernities are multiple and contextually articulated. This case study of the “poor

whites” of Barbados has sought to illustrate the complex relationships between planters, administrators, enslaved and free Afro-Barbadians, and “poor whites” inhabiting the plantation landscape. In Below Cliff, a space cast as marginal, a particular way of life was developed that was out of synch with traditional understandings of Caribbean modernity but nonetheless modern.

Below Cliff as an Alternative Modernity

Discussed briefly in Chapter 2, the concept of alternative modernities has roots in the late 1990s/early 2000s but was short lived within anthropological literature (Gaonkar 2001a; Knaft 2002a; Holston 1999; Taylor 1999). This relatively small, yet compelling, body of literature leads with the premise that modernity is inescapable given the onset of globalization spanning the past five centuries (Trouillot 2003). Even in the face of resistance to processes of modernity it stands to reason that the whole of the world’s population has been affected by its forces in some fashion. While modernity as a concept has been vastly critiqued along the lines of its association with progress, development, capitalism, colonialism, liberalism, and general inequality, Knaft notes that approaching modernity “as a differentiated and variegated process” (2002b:3) demands local analysis given that “the way people engage the ideologies and institutions of a so-called modernizing world provides a valuable vantage point for understanding contemporary articulations of culture and power” (4). Therefore, localized engagement with how historical actors responded to modernizing processes reveals how alternative modernities are engendered as a result of these contentious relations.

Before progressing, however, it is necessary to confront critiques that have been leveled against the concept of alternative modernities as well as the dangers inherent in

academic pluralisms. To address the latter, Knauf has suggested that the recent scholarly preference for pluralizing concepts and forces has resulted in an “adjectival softening” that ultimately weakens academic insight (2002b:35). This can be due, in part, to an adherence to extreme relativism whereby localized difference, diversity, and exceptionalism diminishes the significance and analytical merit of broader processes such as colonialism, capitalism, power, and modernity at large. Utilizing a different point of departure but ultimately arriving at a similar point, John Kelly (2002) argues that modernity’s sublime character, like that of civilization, demands that we abandon the term as a central analytic of the social sciences in favor of the grotesque (for his purposes, American power since World War II) in order to approach and adequately oppose the detrimental forces of modernity. A similar relativism and lack of a lucid engagement with the more consequential applications of power and subordination became associated with and a point of critique of post processual archaeology in the early 1990s, a movement that owes much to a general fascination with the emergence of postmodernism (see Trigger 2006:Chapter 10; Harvey 1989). While this critique is understandable, engagements with local, regional, and global instantiations of power ultimately assuage concerns that extreme relativism can temper the ability of local analyses to be more broadly relevant. As such, my own research project was keenly aware of institutional structures that operated on multiple scales in an attempt to speak to broader experiences in the colonial and capitalistic Atlantic World.

A more germane critique, which also presents suggestive avenues of conceptual development, comes from David Scott’s (2004) reading of C.L.R. James’ *The Black Jacobins*. In his analysis of the plantation as an inaugural space of modernity Scott

positions the Haitian Revolution's romantic and tragic hero, Toussaint Louverture, as a conscript of modernity whose place within processes of modernity made the possibility of an alternative modernity a reality. Therefore, Scott argues that "the idea of alternative or subaltern modernities operates by constructing a normative expectation of resistance or overcoming". Scott continues, "Imagined in this way, what is obscured is the extent to which the transformed terrain on which these creative responses are being enacted is itself positively constituting (or rather, reconstituting) these subjects, their new objects of desire, and the new concepts that shape the horizon of that desire" (114-115). He finds nothing particularly disheartening about such interpretations but finds the underlying model of repression and resistance misguided (115):

I am urging, therefore, that we need a way of describing the regime of slave plantation power in which what is brought into view is less what it restricts and what resists this restriction, less what it represses and what escapes or overcomes this repression, and more the modern conditions it created that positively shaped the way in which language, religion, kinship, and so on were reconstituted.

Therefore, while burdensome and oppressive, Scott suggests we view the forces of modernity as opportunistic in their capacity to generate the conditions for the very ability to resist. In this sense, we see the positive, productive power of modernity that gives rise to its own alternatives.

Despite Scott's focus on plantation slavery, his approach is applicable in analyses of all conscripts of modernity. Additionally, although Scott's appeal is phrased as a critique of alternative modernities, it is evident that it conveniently doubles as a subtle champion of its central tenets, namely, that despite the ever-present and imposing forces of modernity, those affected are active participants in reconstituting the nature of such forces and associated ideologies due to their envelopment within such processes. The

settlement and development of the Barbadian colony brought into contact a host of individuals from all walks of life (mostly coerced), who, for better or for worse, would play a role in the processes of modernization that overtook the island. As such, it was their very situatedness within such modernizing processes that offered a positive power of possibility. Presented with these possibilities, actors responded in multiple ways from direct resistance to a host of alternative ways of being that not only provided counterforces to processes of modernity (that don't necessarily reduce to resistance) but altered their nature.

These processes, as they unfolded with the advent of European expansion, have been separated into two categories by Trouillot (2003) while not made conceptually or analytically distinct; social modernization and cultural modernity. Despite the fact that the two are inextricably linked, Trouillot argues that "the distinction becomes necessary inasmuch as it illuminates specific historical moments and processes" (2003:37). Therefore, the former can be viewed as those forces associated with the expansion and development of capitalism, colonialism, the state, industrialization, etc., what Trouillot labels the "creation of place" (37). Alternatively, he describes cultural modernity as having to do "with those aspects and moments in the development of world capitalism that require the projection of the individual or collective subject against both space and time" (37). In other words, we can characterize cultural modernity as how individuals or collectives experience the processes of modernizations and develop ways of being in the world that effect and are affected by such processes. Trouillot's dialectical approach to modernity seamlessly allows for, if not demands, the creation and existence of multiple, varied, and alternative modernities.

Despite Trouillot's eloquent argument illustrating the five century time depth of global processes of modernization, the literature on alternative modernities has thus far failed to come to grips with the significance of this historicity. A central trope of globalization studies argues that global interconnectedness and the effects of modernity are more strongly felt in the contemporary than any time in the past. While this may be the case, it in no way diminishes the significance of these processes in the past or their influence on the present. It is therefore crucial that we address the nature of modernities in the past and how they are perceived, portrayed, denied, or repressed in the present. For if modernity or social modernizing forces have their roots in European expansion with the onset of colonialism and capitalism, alternative modernities have similar roots. Just as contemporary individuals or groups can choose to respond to, resist, or alter the modernizing forces they encounter, so too did historical actors react to the circumstances they confronted, particularly in unfamiliar locales with unfamiliar people. These reactions constitute the alternative modernities, to be discussed below, observed in Below Cliff. At present, however, I address the challenges associated with unearthing the alternative.

Reverting back to the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (Fischer 2004; Buck-Morss 2009; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Trouillot 1995), we see that the denial of particular pasts in favor of the metanarratives of modernity serve as the crux for recognizing how and why particular alternatives emerged and were subsequently suppressed. Again turning to the Haitian Revolution, Fischer (2004) suggests that in addition to the radical resistance that became manifest in the violent rebellion, the aftermath of the Revolution spawned a cultural, creole modernity that burst at the seams and sought to spread across

the plantation landscape of the New World. In turn, the nature of this alternative modernity, its philosophical underpinnings, associated ideologies, and politicoeconomics were vociferously denied on a global scale through an international denial of the state's sovereignty, a refusal to believe that a black state could properly function, and an overall closed mindedness to Afro-Caribbean cultural sophistication. Therefore, not only was the event of the Haitian Revolution "unthinkable" even as it transpired (Trouillot 1995:Chapter 3), but the ensuing alternative modernity that emerged was quickly, quietly, and purposely disavowed (Fischer 2004), making the event and its aftermath a "non-event" and reclaiming plantation slavery as the metanarrative of Caribbean modernity.

In a similar fashion, although not couched in the rhetoric of modernity or its alternatives, Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) present the hidden revolutionary Atlantic history that once was and could have been in their *The Many-Headed Hydra*. The volume destabilizes teleological metanarratives of Atlantic World historiography and presents instances where capitalism faltered due to individuals and groups who sought more egalitarian modes of subsistence, where racial divisions collapsed as individuals recognized mutual suffering and oppression across racial lines, and where colonial and capitalist power was continuously contested across the oceanic realm by motley hydra which sought to alleviate its own suppression. In one sense the authors are suggesting the "hewers of wood and drawers of water", or, the working classes of the Atlantic World, were responsible for amassing modes of resistance based on their particular experiences which led to particular expectations of futures outside of the modalities and negative instantiations of modernization. In other words, their expectations are representative of Koselleck's (1985) "futures past", realities that failed to come to fruition that cause

obstacles in how we perceive and comprehend histories that never were or occupy a different “problem space” (Scott 2004) than our contemporary scholarly purview allows.

Slated in terms of resistance or subordination, such conflict and struggles limit the ways in which local entanglements of people, structures, ideologies, and landscapes can be dissected and interpreted. Therefore, while not being dismissive of instances of direct resistance we need to be cognizant of less violent and more nuanced reactions to modernity and modernization on the part of those affected by such processes and how these reactions reconstituted these processes. These processes are also indicative of a dynamic dialogue between those that are responsible for imposing the forces of modernization as well as those called to be subordinates within its schematics.

Additionally, I recognize that the binary model of dominant and dominated implied above is an infinitely complex power structure based on individual racial, class, gender, and age identity. These dynamic, nuanced, and power laden relationships are immersed within processes of modernization which provided the necessary conditions for their alternatives.

Those living below the cliff, in addition to the entirety of the Barbadian population, were invariably affected by processes of modernization as well as cultural modernity in a number of ways. In this sense, following Asad, David Scott (2004: particularly Chapter 3) argues that those living in the Caribbean, particularly the enslaved, were conscripts of modernity. Whether planters, merchants, administrators, slaves, or small farmers, those living within plantation society were enveloped within processes of modernization but nonetheless, essential to the development of localized incarnations of modernity. If, however, as Trouillot (2003) posits, modernity and its

global sprawl have their roots in late-fifteenth century European expansion then the development its alternatives have similar ontologies. Despite the successes of particular metanarratives of modernity receiving salience whilst concomitantly silencing others (Trouillot 1995), unfurling the nature of these alternatives reveals much in terms of how historical actors responded to imposed conditions and forces and thus transformed their very character.

With this in mind, the question upon which this final chapter rests is what constituted the alternative modernity? As this dissertation has attempted to illustrate, historical, ethnographic, and archaeological data suggests historic and contemporary ways of life below the cliff that call into question traditional interpretations of “poor white” relation to capital and local economic spheres as well as the nature of racial identity and categories. Limited historiography in addition to contemporary perceptions of the “poor whites” seamlessly coincides with broader narratives of Caribbean modernity that have trouble locating the place of “white” labor within the broader framework of sugar and slave societies and fails to interrogate the rigidity or porosity of racial boundaries. In this concluding chapter I engage with these alternative modernities as these emerged and developed in the St. John area of Barbados. Additionally, this research poses serious questions about the nature of historical archaeological inquiry and suggests the need to assess strongly held disciplinary convictions and goals as the discipline moves forward.

Capital Relations and the Politics of Work

In Chapter 5 I presented data suggesting that “poor white” economic systems and means of subsistence were contentious with capitalist modes of production that defined

plantation labor and industry. In short, “poor white” residents of Below Cliff were not ostracized or severed from the capitalist mode of production associated with the sugar agro-industry. Rather, some worked as wage laborers on plantations, some were subsistence farmers, some occupied skilled positions within the community, some were fishermen, and others supported themselves and their families by any means necessary. Therefore, the complicated relationship between Below Cliff residents and capitalist processes demands an approach that views historical actors not as passive subjects to totalizing forces of capitalism or as explicitly resistant insubordinates to such forces. Outlined below is such an approach that carefully articulates the tensions between “poor white” ways of life and capitalism.

The approach taken here owes much to Vinay Gidwani’s (2008) Marxist interpretation of rural labor transformations in western central India as read through Marx’s *Grundrisse* (1973). Gidwani provides trenchant readings of and facilitates critical dialogue between orthodox Marxists such as David Harvey (1982) as well as more culturally informed Marxisms stemming from postcolonial theory and subaltern studies such as that of Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992; 2000). These readings inform his observations of changes in local labor patterns at the hands of the multiple shifts and forms of capital. His geographical and ethnographic methodologies present informants that illustrate the ability of laborers to cause interruptions to or barriers for the fluid motion of capital. In a jarring similar fashion to the way in which “poor whites” are described, Gidwani presents one interlocutor in particular, Ajibhai, who is a small farmer, part time laborer, distiller of local liquor, and is known to have a penchant alcohol (which he freely admitted). Despite his local reputation as an idle drunkard, Ajibhai interestingly retorts, “Yes, I

drink...I enjoy myself. If people don't like it, it's their problem. I am not anybody's servant. I work when I want to and rest when I want to. We don't hurt anyone"

(Gidwani 2008:208).

Gidwani utilizes Ajibhai's particular position within local socioeconomics to be representative of how laborers choose to relate to changing terrains of capitalist production while simultaneously providing changing forces to such production schemes and processes.

He [Ajibhai] arranges to use his labor and his activities of consumption in time and space at *his* pleasure. Of course, this is not always possible because he is *not* outside the gravitational pull of capital. But he seems to be trying to put together a mode of existence that is not readily conducive for the circulation of value, and so earns the ire of an agrarian elite that wants to conscript his land and labor (213, emphasis in original).

As Gidwani points out, such modes of existence don't necessarily have to take the form of explicit resistance to capitalist processes but can in fact be partially so. "Ajibhai is not mounting a frontal assault against capital – an individual in any case does not have that kind of capacity – but he is producing a crisis in one molecular point through which capital as value must pass. Call it a counterforce. It is resistance in *that* sense" (213, emphasis in original). Rather than being viewed in terms of conscription or resistance, Gidwani views instances of these counterforces to be representative of his distinction between the politics of labor and the politics of work.

Using Marx's interpretation of the use value of labor as a point of departure, Gidwani suggests that a politics of work involves individual or group acts of labor that aren't harnessed by capitalist modes of production (2008:212-216). In other words, labor that hasn't been conscripted by capital for the purposes of utilizing the use value of labor for the purposes of accumulating profit but labor that is nonetheless productive for

alternative purposes. In this formulation work can be viewed as “non-objectified labor” and be conceived of “positively...as the possibility of multiple actualizations and or becomings” (196). As such, capital can react in a number of ways. Most suitable from the vantage point of capital, capitalists may develop any number of strategies to appropriate such labor for its own benefit. Alternately, the failure of capitalist processes to harness labor power may be projected as the failures of such individuals or groups due to personal inadequacy, poor work ethic, or other perceived deficiencies harbored by the working classes; what Gidwani terms “waste” from the perspective of those committed to capitalist production (2008:Chapter 1). This, somewhat combative, dialogue between ways of being that constitute the politics of work and capitalist forces and their associated discourses renders the interpretation of localized ways of life crucial in unpacking how the conscripts of modernity carve their own unique alternative operations within modernizing forces.

The archaeological evidence in conjunction with a reading of the now-forested landscape provides evidence that Below Cliff residents developed modes of subsistence and economic systems that parallel Gidwani’s “politics of work”. While weary of succumbing to the pitfalls and perils of the archaeological analogy, I briefly turn to the contemporary “poor white” community in observing contemporary inflections of the politics of work that very likely mirrored similar economic relations in the past. The Fentys live in two-story walled house along the windy road in Newcastle leading down to Martin’s Bay. Now an elderly couple with a son who lives in a house next door and scattered relatives around the island and the world, Mavis and Alvin recall “simpler” times (at the time when select families still occupied Below Cliff) when informal and

moral economies were the dominant means by which local residents made a living. Despite their nostalgia, their contemporary means of subsistence reflect the persistence of such economies in the wake of substantial transformations in the broader capitalist economy.

I frequently visited with the Fentys after I had concluded excavations for the day as their home was close to where I parked my rental car. More times than not, I found Mavis (Aunt Mae) in the kitchen preparing fish or vegetables or conducting other household chores. Alvin, who was losing a bit of his memory in his old age, was still active in the yard areas and was seldom in the house when I approached. On various visits I arrived as Alvin was painting the house, pruning the fruit trees, retrieving ripened breadfruit from their tree, picking ackees, and picking bananas. These fruits were consumed by the Fentys and shared with family and neighbors. Additionally, given their small stock of banana trees, every Tuesday Alvin and Mavis would climb into their worn Volkswagon hatchback and sell a batch of bananas at a local market. On one occasion, their niece walked into their home as we sat chatting and dropped off a small batch of yams and peppers that had recently been harvested from her own provision ground. These subsistence and market activities consumed much of their time and, in general, had provided them with what they felt was a comfortable life.

In conjunction with these subsistence and informal economic activities, the Fentys, along with their friends and relatives, took part in various forms of wage labor from work on the plantation to various unskilled and semi-skilled jobs they acquired in Bridgetown. These various economic activities are the methods and matrices through which “poor whites” lived their daily lives. As tangential or temporary participants

within the plantation economy, however, their labor habits were perceived to be lackadaisical or nonexistent and they were inscribed within the historical record as such. It is therefore imperative that we recognize not only the inadequacy of such historical renderings of labor, but the realities of the alternatives that were manifest in the forces of modernity.

This discussion of the politics of work smoothly lends itself to the discussion of the proposed archaeology of alternative modernities. Residents of Below Cliff developed particular strategies within a regional capitalist system that allowed them to survive and subsist, despite impoverished conditions and a harsh landscape, on their own terms. These terms didn't necessarily adhere to abject resistance to or passive compliance with capitalist production, an unfortunate trap that has plagued some Marxist archaeological interpretations of the past.⁵⁶ While the forces of capitalism and its influence on the lives of working class individuals are ubiquitous within the archaeological record, particularly following the changes associated with the industrial era of the mid nineteenth century (see for example Shackel 2009), interpretations of resistance often assume a particular intentionality on the part of individuals or groups that runs the risk of turning a blind eye to more nuanced reactions to capitalist processes and transformations. Rather, the alternatives observed in Below Cliff involved modes of work that benefitted those undertaking the work, their families, and community members in addition to forms of

⁵⁶ For the sake of brevity I won't engage in an extended discussion of the particulars of this particular brand of Marxist archaeology (see chapter 2) but Randall McGuire's (1992) dialectical Marxism utilizes power as the pivot upon which dialectical relations change. As such, interpretations are grounded in power struggles and run the risk of being reduced to compliance or resistance (see also Spriggs 1984; Paynter 1989; McGuire and Paynter 1991; McGuire 1992; for a case study on a Caribbean plantation see Delle 1998). It is necessary to point out, however, that while Marxist critique is significant in generating politically charged, socially relevant scholarship, a praxis oriented archaeology runs the risk of projecting a particular consciousness upon actors in the past for political purposes in the present and future (see for example Wurst and Mrozowski 2014).

employment in which they sold their labor on the plantation. Despite unrelenting discourses that have projected the “poor whites” as homogeneously idle for several centuries, archaeological, archival, and ethnographic evidence suggests that the socioeconomic structures established and engaged in by tenantry residents were at odds with capitalist notions of labor and industriousness.

The ongoing dialogue between “poor white” modes of work and elite conceptions of proper labor reveals itself in the vestry minutes that condemn and punish perceived idleness, the parish registries that identify and mark individuals with particular occupations of acceptable labor, the volatile landscape that had been deemed “rab” land but produced the necessary foodstuffs to sustain a population, and the very real and tangible materials consumed, used, reused, and discarded by Below Cliff residents. Dismantling inept stereotypes that cast the “Redlegs” as lazy does little analytical work in establishing how and why such discourses were produced and how such discourses effect and are affected by the realities of “poor white” socioeconomic schemes and ways of being in their world. Their world was one dominated by sugar and slavery, a modernity within which they were conscripted to reside, survive, and interact with other individuals and groups on the landscape. Despite a degree of shared phenotypic character with plantation management, parish officials, island administrators, and planters, the everyday lives of “poor whites” marked a distinctly and alternatively modern manner of living on the plantation landscape. In addition to how they coped with the realities of poverty and ways of life that constituted counterforces to capitalist processes, the “poor whites” developed and sustained unique relationships with an Afro-Barbadian population from

whom they were portrayed as being genetically, physically, socially, and legally isolated and distinct.

Race: In and Out of Black and White

Incorporating race and racial identity into our consideration of alternative modernities requires a subtle and imaginative engagement with culture as well as ideology in interpreting the data presented in the previous chapter. Additionally, given that race, class, and gender are inextricably linked, the previous discussion of class and relations to capital will be folded within our consideration of racial relations, identities, and genealogies below the cliff. A dialectic involving elite ideologies about racial identity and distinction operated in conjunction with cultural encounters and nuances amongst impoverished plantation residents across the color line. The transformations that occurred as a consequence of these relations represented the emergence of an alternative racial modernity. Data suggests that Below Cliff residents, and potentially “poor whites” in general, weren’t entirely or purely “white”, not quite “black”, but uniquely and alternatively modern in terms of racial identity.

The previous chapter illustrates that relations between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians were (and still are) complex, to say the least. The establishment of an agro-industrial plantation system inflicted unparalleled constraints on interracial relations in the form of legislation restricting the movement of the enslaved on and off the plantation, parish vestry policies that set behavioral and moral standards for the receipt of poor relief, a labor system in which (in general) black bodies were owned and white bodies were legally free to sell their labor, and the development of ideologies that viewed blacks and whites as being racially separate, distinct, and socioeconomically unequal. The latter

is certainly not unique to Barbados and despite spatial/temporal heterogeneity there are underlying similarities in the broader imperial power structures and processes of Othering (Stoler 1995 and 2002; Said 1978).

Within the Caribbean, archaeological scholarship has largely subscribed to a view that reifies these boundaries. In spite of concerted efforts on the part of planters to control the enslaved (see Delle 1998; Singleton 2001), case studies have been exemplary in illustrating the agency of enslaved Africans and their descendants in forging their own ways of life through the arrangement of their villages and spatial relations (Armstrong 1990; Armstrong and Kelly 2000), burial practices and associated rituals (Handler and Lange 1978; Handler et al. 1989), craft production (Heath 1999; Loftfield 2001), consumption practices (Wilkie 1999 and 2001), economic activity (Hauser 2008 and 2011; Singleton 2005), and acts of resistance (Smith 2008; Agorsah 1993; Goucher and Agorsah 2011). Despite this substantial body of literature in terms of quality and quantity, archaeologists have yet to investigate the nature of relationships across the color line of similarly classed individuals or questioned the stability of that very line. Furthermore, with far less archaeological research conducted on the post-emancipation era, it is critical to examine how the transformations associated with emancipation affected inter and intraracial dynamics across the Caribbean landscape.

Informed by the work of Hartigan (2005), Tyler (2012), and Monahan (2011), as discussed in Chapter 2, the data presented in this dissertation has suggested that ideologies surrounding race have drastically constricted the ways in which race and racial identities are perceived, produced, reproduced, and transformed in the past and present. Rather, evidence suggests that “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians encountered and

interacted with one another on a daily basis. The landscape of Clifton Hall plantation facilitated comingling between the enslaved above and “poor white” tenants below the cliff. Data from baptismal registries suggests that these relationships forged during the era of slavery may have provided the impetus for formerly enslaved Afro-Barbadians to reside in the “poor white” tenantry. Cultural exchanges are visible in the material record as we see similarities in domestic architecture, usage of household and yard space, consumption patterns, and markers of socioeconomic status. In short, despite modern ideologies of racial distinctiveness and social isolation along lines of color, evidence from Below Cliff reveals that within this peripheral space (in terms of agricultural production) not only was interracial interaction possible, it was common.

While the available evidence only allows us brief glimpses into the nature of these complex relationships, it is essential to emphasize that Below Cliff and island regions of interracial interaction were far from interracial utopias. At the close of the apprenticeship period in 1838 Thome and Kimball familiarly commented on the degraded, degenerate, alcoholic, and idle state of the “poor white” population (1834:57):

They [the “poor whites”] will beg of blacks more provident and industrious than themselves, or they will steal their poultry and rob their provision grounds at night; but they would disdain to associate with them. Doubtless these sans culottes⁵⁷ swell in their dangling rags with the haughty consciousness that they possess white skins. What proud reflection they must have, as they pursue their barefoot way, thinking on their high lineage, and running back through the long line of their illustrious ancestry, whose notable badge was a white skin.

The passage bears significance in not only describing hostile relations of “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian but also in illustrating how, in some cases, modern ideologies associated with racial hierarchies explicitly affected these relations. The authors express

⁵⁷ This term originated during the French Revolution to refer to radical left-wing members of the working class. Within this context, however, it is likely void of political connotations and probably refers to the poor quality or appearance of their garments.

a sense of distance from the subjects they are describing. As outside observers they appear to be describing relations between two distinct racial groups, distinct from each other as well as from themselves. Despite a shared phenotype with the “poor whites” who are apparently proud of their white skins, Hartigan argues that such a portrayal of the “Redlegs” reflects a self-reflexive anxiety on the part of the authors who are implying that appropriate moral attitudes towards industriousness, hygiene, and etiquette, all whites are in danger of degenerating and joining the ranks of the “poor white” race (2005:38-39).

In addition to the processes of Othering that distance the authors from the degenerate “poor whites”, they explicitly draw racialized and class distinctions between the “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians to ensure they are identified as racially pure and distinct demographics. Furthermore, by depicting “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian relations as hostile, the authors reify the disparity between the groups. If, as this passage suggests, “poor white” and Afro-Barbadian relations were characterized by racial conflict and distain it would suggest the success of modern ideologies of racial hierarchies in being determinate of racial relations. As Hartigan suggests (2005), however, these ideologies often essentialize and reduce more complex cultural phenomena to reflections and reifications of these ideologies. Therefore, I turn to ethnographic examples that provide insight into these complex racial relations.

On one of the occasion when I walked through the woods of Below Cliff with Ainsley Norris, Wilson’s younger cousin, he described his relationships with Afro-Barbadians while he was growing up in the tenantry. He explained that he socialized, went to church, and attended school with Afro-Barbadians and that, for the most part,

they got along. He did, however, comment that “they had names for me and I had names for them” before summing that “it didn’t really matter, we all got on as friends.” His comments are significant on multiple levels. First, he openly acknowledged the daily social encounters between “poor whites” and Afro-Barbadians. Additionally, we see the influence of ideologies that projected an island society that was entirely divided. It isn’t surprising that racial animosities would foment within such an environment and given the island’s history. While significant, however, such ideologies weren’t necessarily entirely constitutive of racial relations.

The third participant in my conversation with Ainsley was his nineteen year old grandson, Jonathan (see Figure 7.3). Jonathan regularly joined his grandfather on trips “into the woods” as well as on visits to Wilson’s home. He explained that he was interested in learning more about his family’s history and felt a strong connection to his grandfather’s childhood home. Jonathan’s ancestry lies on both sides of the racial divide described above by Thome and Kimball. Jonathan’s father is Ainsley’s son, Mark, while his mother, Diane, is an Afro-Barbadian. Jonathan’s interracial identity is not uncommon within the area and, using Wilson’s terminology, it became evident that within most families there were various shades of “dark” and “light” complexions. The examination of Wilson’s family genealogy presented at the start of this chapter in conjunction with historical data from Chapter 6 illustrates that Jonathan’s generation is the most recent in a long lineage of interracial families and kinship networks that resided in Below Cliff and surrounding areas.



Figure 7.3: Members of the extended Norris family, from left to right: Wilson, Ansol, Ainsley, and Jonathan. Wilson and Ansol are brothers and Ainsley is their cousin. Jonathan is Ainsley's grandson. Photo by author and taken outside of Wilson's chattel house in the village of Church View.

These assertions about the prominence and persistence of racial intermixing are based on qualitative data. Ethnographic encounters with “poor white” families revealed the degree to which individuals were aware of and openly acknowledged their diverse racial genealogies. Of the many families that I came to know over the course of my fieldwork and encountered nearly on a daily basis including the Norris, Fenty, Marshall, Gibson, King, Watson, Goddard, and Downey families, each kinship network including interracial or Afro-Barbadian individuals. Within the middle and upper classes of island society Barbadians are starting to come to grips within their diverse racial ancestries. Andrea Stuart’s (2012) recent semi-autobiographical *Sugar in the Blood* traces her dual family lineage from an early English small farmer whose descendants eventually rise to

prominence as planters to enslaved Afro-Barbadians as a result of planter exploitation of enslaved women (see also Morrison 2010). Her work takes several creative liberties in developing a tale of seventeenth century adventure in a jungle wilderness but simultaneously generates thought provoking questions about family genealogies in the postcolonial Caribbean.

Stuart presents an honest account of her personal identity crisis in discovering her ancestry among the enslaved and the enslavers. Tyler (2012) introduces similar co-conversationists in her ethnographic study of middle class whiteness in England. She interviews diverse interracial families each with Afro-Caribbean ties who view this lineage as being essential to their own racial identities. She confronts and contests binary notions of black and white through an interpretation of the dynamic relationship between biological and cultural notions of race. For instance, one of her interviewees, Emily, is presented as “a White [sic.] woman who is the mother of five children who self-identified as Black [sic.]” (2012:184). Interestingly, Tyler privileges the biological/phenotypic racial marker by stating that Emily *is* white as opposed to her self-identification as black through her marriage to an Afro-Caribbean man. These complex dynamics are essential in providing a framework through which to “disrupt the binary folk racial categories of ‘Black’ and ‘White’ [sic.]” (195). Additionally, the dialect between biological and cultural conceptions of race inform racial identities at multiple scales including the colonial, the national, and the local individual level.

In acknowledging that race is a relational object (M’Charek 2013), I also recognize that these complex racial identities and relations have been produced, reproduced, and transformed for centuries within the Caribbean region. As such, people

living in spaces like Below Cliff were required to negotiate within a hostile and complex plantation society to individually grapple with their own feelings about race and their own racial identities based on their unique genealogies. Uncovering direct evidence of these complex racial identities in the past is a difficult task. As illustrated in the previous chapter, such instances are rare but information, as in the case of Ann Shepherd who proudly proclaimed her interracial kinship network in an affidavit before she died in the early nineteenth century. In considering the fact that interracial unions and miscegenation were discouraged during and after the period of slavery (as evidenced in the last chapter), it becomes apparent why such examples of interracial individuals and kinship networks are difficult to find within the historical record.

Despite purposeful silences within the historical record, qualitative ethnographic and genealogical evidence coupled with select historical examples illustrates that Below Cliff and other spaces of “poor white” inhabitation have been and are home to racially diverse individuals whose interracial ancestries destabilize binary models of white or black identity. In some ways, these realizations make this dissertation less about a specific Barbadian subpopulation than the complex historical and contemporary relationships that gave rise to how this group is understood in relation to other seemingly disparate groups. In referring back to David Scott’s (2004) arguments surrounding the circumstances of modernity, we see that the plantation landscape provided the setting for historical actors to formulate their own versions of modernity. In this case, processes of modernization associated with the plantation infrastructure engendered a socioeconomic setting in which diverse cultural groups confronted each other on a daily basis. Despite the significance of racial ideologies that distinctly separated “poor whites” and Afro-

Barbadians, in certain instances these ideologies proved ineffective in policing and maintaining racial boundaries. Instead, these circumstances gave rise to an alternative modernity in which racial identities weren't based on pure categories of black and white but were instead complex interracial genealogies with which individuals had to negotiate within the power structures of plantation society.

All “Things” Considered

To situate this broader conversation of alternative modernities, I take one final and brief look at the “things” that constituted the archaeological assemblage for this dissertation. Such archaeological materials are imbued with meaning and reveal the networks of relationships between people and the world around them, including things, other people, the environment, and various structures (Hodder 1986 and 2012; Beaudry et al. 1996). The items recovered from Below Cliff are no exception and are indicative of the complex relationships between residents, their possessions, immediate environment, families and neighbors, other plantation inhabitants, the plantocracy, power structures, broader island society, and world markets. Unfortunately, how the individuals who procured, used, reused, and discarded these items internally perceived these relationships remains unclear. We do, however, have some semblance of how individuals negotiated these relationships through interpretations of the material record.

Excavations uncovered a diverse range of material possessions ranging from the mundane to the intimate to the peculiar. The latter is likely due to the site's preservation given its fairly recent occupation. Just outside of the northeast house foundation of Wilson Norris' childhood home the remnants of the plastic packaging for a set of men's underwear was recovered directly below the forest brush. Within the structure's

foundation the worn rubber sole of a shoe appeared at a shallow depth below the surface. Given the unrelenting tropical climate, harsh environment, and hard work necessary to subsist, such personal adornment items were likely in need of constant maintenance or replacement. The quantity and diversity of buttons recovered was determined to be detached from particular gendered occupations. Even though women may have been the primary menders of clothing, they reflect an attempt to maintain clothing items rather than being associated with employment as seamstresses. The presence of alcohol bottles can be reasonably associated with the social and political functions of alcohol consumption (Smith 2008) but within the context of Below Cliff it can also be argued that such vessels were essential for the collecting of rain water that had been filtered through dripstones.

The residents of Below Cliff struggled with poverty. Therefore, as illustrated in the examples provided above, recovering meaning within this archaeological assemblage required constant filtration through a lens that recognized the realities of impoverishment. This was equally the case in interpreting the stratigraphy observed in Wilson Norris' childhood home. In Chapter 4 I described the challenges faced in excavating deep excavation units filled with loose limestone. The unstable side walls not only provided methodological challenges but caused disturbance within the stratigraphic layers. Despite limited amounts of pearlware uncovered between depths of 30 and 80 cm, sherds of sponge decorated whiteware (of the English and Scottish variety) were recovered from depths of 200 cm. It is therefore difficult, if not impossible, to relate particular items to discrete occupational periods. In proper perspective, however, these frustrations are miniscule in comparison to those experienced by residents who had to deal with the

consequences of living in an unstable environment. The absence of straightforward stratigraphy or an abundance of material culture is a reminder of the ever-present effects of limited access to capital.

Despite the poverty with which residents coped, the materials recovered illustrate “poor white” inclusion within broader networks of market consumption. Given that Barbados was an English colony, the preponderance of English (or, more aptly, British) made ceramics isn’t surprising. The range of wares present within the assemblage illustrates that Below Cliff residents were actively consuming imported ceramics from the mid-to-late-eighteenth century until the abandonment of the tenantry in the mid twentieth century. Additionally, the high proportion of Scottish-made spongewares demonstrates that affordability was a heavy determinant in consumption practices despite market availability. While imported wares were available and affordable, locally produced earthenwares composed a considerable proportion of the overall ceramic assemblage. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, this demonstrates that “poor whites” were actively participating in local markets. The vessels represented by sherds recovered from Below Cliff suggest that residents were primarily utilizing hollowwares. This likely relates to the function of such vessels including for the storage of liquids and preparation and consumption of food. Therefore, residents carefully weighed their options and, when making particular purchases, considered item function, reuse value, availability, and affordability.

These broad interpretations of material types recovered during excavation provide significant insight into how Below Cliff residents coped with poverty and interacted with the world of people and things around them. But is this assemblage unique to this

particular tenantry, the “poor whites”, or all working class Barbadians? These are important questions that can be addressed through research that produces comparative assemblages, a goal of future research projects. Within this section I have synthesized my overall findings and argued that impoverishment necessitates an alternative approach to interpreting material culture. Additionally, when considering the complicated racial identities of those living below the cliff it raises poignant questions about the process of archaeological interpretation and how race and racial politics have clouded how materials have been interpreted by archaeologists.

Archaeological Frustrations and Futures

The negotiations of personal and relational identity described above took place within intimately local settings including an individual’s body and mind as well as within the household. Expanding outward, these negotiations also took place on intra- and inter-community levels. Therefore, archaeological methodologies are ideal for exploring these negotiations and the nature of alternative modernities. At the same time, however, such an approach raises serious questions about the fundamental research agendas of historical archaeology. In this final section I discuss how this dissertation both builds upon and challenges archaeological methodology and theory. I provide a synopsis of what I have attempted to argue throughout this dissertation while proposing future research and disciplinary directions.

As described in the introductory chapter as well as Chapter 4, this project, like most, faced many methodological and theoretical challenges and underwent significant transformations. As the project started to take shape and excavations progressed below the cliff I became increasingly frustrated as I attempted to interpret the data that was

being collected. Excavations were proving fruitful in uncovering material culture and I had the good fortune of having local “poor white” informants who provided crucial oral histories and traditions about their own families and everyday life in Below Cliff. Problems emerged, however, when I attempted to interpret material culture from households that I could no longer definitively say were inhabited by “poor whites” or “Redlegs”.

When Wilson became more comfortable speaking to me about his family I began to chart his genealogy to better understand the individuals that inhabited the house I had spent so much time excavating. Utilizing information provided by Wilson as well as that of his uncle, Fred Watson, I recognized the diverse racial genealogies of those that had lived in Wilson’s childhood home. While I could only speculate about the genealogies of those that had lived there prior to Wilson’s parents, as well as those of neighboring households, it was clear that I wasn’t necessarily dealing with an archaeological assemblage representative solely of the “poor whites”. Through his mother’s line (and potentially his father’s as well) Wilson is of European as well as African descent. This became a point of frustration as I considered historical archaeological literature for inspiration to interpret the complex material record from Below Cliff.

Archaeological interpretation can be strongly linked to the “pots to people” analogy. Its anthropological grounding necessitates that we utilize the archaeological record of material culture as a tool to draw interpretations about the people that produced, consumed, used, reused, and discarded them. Across archaeological paradigms has been a desire to associate material culture to particular groups of people. While this is not the forum to discuss the specifics of this phenomenon within culture history, processual, and

post-processual archaeology, it is worthwhile to place this assertion in dialogue with more contemporary historical archaeological literature.

Since the growth of the historical archaeological subdiscipline in the late 1960s there has been a commitment to the archaeological study of specific cultural groups. Charles Fairbanks' (1974 and 1984) work at the Kingsley Plantation sparked the growth of plantation and African diaspora archaeology. The significance of this early work can't be overstated given the prominence of archaeologies currently committed to the study of African Americans and other underrepresented peoples of African descent, the result of which is a body of literature too immense to site here. One particular outgrowth of these foundational studies was a Herskovitsian (1990[1941]) attempt to illustrate the presence of African culture traits amongst enslaved individuals (see for instance Ferguson 1992; Handler and Lange 1978; Brown and Cooper 1990; Emerson 1999; Stine et al. 1996). Simply put, "A major line of research in African-American archaeology is the search for material items of African origins, items presumed to mark the color line" (Perry and Paynter 1999:300). The latter part of this statement is of particular interest as archaeologists move forward in terms of theoretical development and political engagement. First, however, we explore the critiques of this body of literature and where they have taken the discipline.

The critique of archaeological literature that sought to uncover "Africanisms" within the archaeological record has been diverse but I focus on two particular routes of criticism that pertain to the more general point I am attempting to make. The first has come from historical archaeological work in Africa where it has been suggested that studies focused on "Africanisms" "lack an appreciation of the complexity of the African

cultural milieu” (DeCorse 1999:132; see also Reid and Lane 2004; Kelly 2004; Schmidt 2006). In other words, cultural heterogeneity is often grossly reduced to monolithic and essential conceptions of a single “African” cultural tradition within New World contexts. Taking a different tact, consciously or unconsciously echoing the work of Sidney Mintz (1974; Mintz and Price 1992), others have argued that cultural contact and plantation life in the New World led to cultural transformations that were materially manifest in everyday ways of life (see for instance Armstrong 1990 and 2003; Fennell 2003 and 2009; Heath 2009; Finch 2013). Such studies illustrate the dynamic cultural transformations that occurred as a result of cultural contact between Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans in addition to how the enslaved responded to their inhumane treatment on New World plantations.

At the risk of being obtuse, this brief review of African-American archaeology has attempted to illustrate the diversity of the field but also illustrate a start commonality that still persists largely uncontested. Archaeologists have rightly recognized the infinite diversity of human cultures across space and time they have still been largely committed to the idea of collective cultural groups. This may be due to an innate characteristic whereby “humans typologize the world in order to understand it” (Singleton and Bograd 2000:3) but it is necessary to understand the implications for archaeological interpretation. Regardless of cognitive predispositions there is an underlying danger in the practice of assuming group cohesiveness and collective identity. In associated particular material assemblages to specific ethnic or racial groups archaeologists run the risk of reifying cultural differences that served as the basis for practices of discrimination or oppression. As Chris Matthews warns, “there is a fine line between recognizing and

reifying difference” (2001:72). In his critique of anthropology’s past and suggestions for its future, Michel-Rolph Trouillot raises a similar point, arguing “The physical and symbolic violence exerted to create and enforce these categories [those that delineate Others as seen in his concept of the ‘savage slot’] in specific times and places, and the identities tied to them, were always and remain both different and incommensurable. The needs and the means to redress the inequalities so produced cannot be the same” (2003:72).

Trouillot is making a critical point about the study of marginalized or Other groups that have traditionally been the focus of anthropological study. It is certainly the case that anthropology and archaeology continues to come to grips with its colonial past and its own role in the overarching projects of modernity (see Thomas 2004) but Trouillot warns that good intentioned scholarly attempts to rectify these disciplinary past unconsciously do the work of reproducing the categories that were essential for Othering and discrimination in the first place. He contends that the result is the persistence of restrictive identities “that give most Others few choices in defining themselves or in changing the terms of their relations with the unmarked” (2003:74). I take issue with the latter part of this statement in which Trouillot largely refers to whites as the unmarked given, as argued above, that scholarship has convincingly argued for its loss of its unmarked status. He does, however, raise a poignant critique that speaks to underlying archaeological practices.

There are ample grounds for the adherence to practices of grouping and I am sympathetic in cases in which they have served significant political purposes. After all, a cornerstone of historical archaeology is to provide voice to the voiceless (Little 1994), to

counter dominant narratives (Shackel 2013), and empower those that had and continue to be stigmatized and discriminated against (Leone 2005; Mullins 2008). Through such means marginalized identities become empowered and are assigned new levels of cultural distinction and pride. With specific reference to African-American historical archaeology, much of this approach is indebted to W.E.B. DuBois' notion of vindicationist history as well as scholarship that has highlighted and theorized the significance of the black intellectual tradition (see for example Gilroy 1993). Additionally, while DuBois' (2013[1903]) notion of double consciousness has challenged scholars to come to terms with internal and psychological challenges posed by research subjects with multiple and complex identities who historically and contemporarily face discrimination, marginalization, and inequality, scholarship that continues to accept and reify group boundaries may facilitate the maintenance of cultural, political, and socioeconomic fissures between individuals and groups. Therefore, I agree with Armstrong's understanding of the "importance of developing group identity and the utility of this mode of argument to rally solidarity in consciousness and to provoke change", but his frustrations in the reductive nature of archaeological analyses that fail to recognize cultural plurality (2008:125).

This discussion is intended to push archaeological methods and theory to more critically engage with the breadth of relationships (between people, structures, institutions, ideologies, and material things) that facilitate the production, reproduction, and transformation of individual and/or group identity. I am certainly not suggesting that we abandon specific analyses of particular nationalistic, racial, class, gender, religious, or political groups. Rather, it is essential to engage with the heterogeneous people,

structures, ideologies, and things that individuals confront on a daily basis in order to interpret their place in the world. In relation to my discussion of African American or African diaspora archaeology, despite institutional and ideological segregation on multiple levels of society it is essential to acknowledge the implications of the fact that Africans and people of African descent weren't alone on the streets of Annapolis, in the public markets of New York City, on the plantations of Jamaica, or in the Maroon communities of Brazil. Rather, their relationships with those that were considered to be insiders and outsiders to their groups positively and negatively affected their own personal identities and position within socioeconomic power structures.

Similarly, "poor whites" were not alone in their tenantry below the cliff. Their relationships with planters, management, enslaved and free Afro-Barbadians, local merchants, parochial officials, and their own community members were crucial factors in how they fit within local economic processes and how they identified themselves, which including their own thoughts on their complex racial identity and genealogy. This interpretation, however, stands in marked contrast to the dominant narrative of Barbadian history. The "poor whites" were portrayed as being a people set apart from society and history. Represented within the metanarrative of Caribbean modernity, they were physically situated on the margins of the plantation and irrelevant in terms of plantation production processes and as racially pure white they were ostracized from black socioeconomic realms. The alternative being proposed here is that explicitly modern circumstances in which the "poor whites" of Below Cliff lived influenced and gave rise to their own formulation of modernity based on dynamic relationships with other diverse

plantation residents and the economic systems that they molded and in which they participated.

In future research I plan to further address the nuances of these complex but formative relationships. The full extent of Below Cliff has yet to be explored and by mapping its boundaries and piecing together a comprehensive picture of the families that lived there I hope to approach the depth of interracial relationships and genealogies amongst those that lived in this area. Additionally, future excavations will focus on other households in the Below Cliff tenantry for comparative purposes to investigate the diverse ways in which residents made their livings. It still remains to be seen how household assemblages may differ based on occupations undertaken by inhabitants. Finally, the island is home to an untold number of tenancies, slave villages, and free villages. One in particular, Irish Town, is said to have been established by former Irish indentured servants in the seventeenth century before it became a freehold village inhabited predominately by “poor whites” until it was abandoned at the close of the nineteenth century. Research proposals have been submitted to survey this now forested area in the hopes of locating former house sites. Data from this site will be useful in comparing household assemblages from a freehold village and a tenantry to explore socioeconomic position in relation to land owning practices. Crucial to this proposed research is a continued commitment to community engagement to understand how local residents view their own class and racial identities and those of their ancestors.

As this dissertation has attempted to illustrate, archaeological assemblages are the result of complex and dynamic negotiations between people and things as they confront the heterogeneous individuals around them in addition to the material conditions in which

they are situated. While particular ideologies provide notions of prescribed roles and positions for individuals and groups, evidence suggests that there were alternatives. Rather than the racially arrogant and idle degenerates that they were portrayed as being, “poor whites” living in Below Cliff adhered to a politics of work whereby they participated in informal and moral economies in which their labor wasn’t necessarily harnessed by capitalist processes. Additionally, despite stereotypes casting them as racially pure and isolated, they had complex relationships with the Afro-Barbadian neighbors, friends, and family members with whom they worked, traded, socialized, procreated, married, battled, disassociated from, and identified with. Like most Barbadians, if not most Caribbean peoples, these relations forged their personal identities in the past and present. Those living on Clifton Hall plantation were inextricably affected by the processes of modernity but how they responded to encounters with those around them and the forces upon them constituted an alternative all their own.

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Archival Resources

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SMR	St. Margaret's Registries, St. John's Church, St. John, Barbados
HCPP	House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, ProQuest
NM	Newton Manuscripts, MS 523, London University Library, UK
USPGA	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, London

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2012 Poor Whites in Barbadian History. In *Narratives of the Occluded Irish Diaspora*, edited by Mícheál Ó hAodha and John O’Callaghan. Peter Lang Press, Oxford, UK.

2013 Family Structures/Living in Sin. Lecture presented as part of *The Emancipation Project, 1838-1937* lecture series. April 25th, 2013, Barbados Museum and Historical Society, Barbados.

Wilkie, Laurie A.

- 1999 Evidence of African Continuities in the Material Culture of Clifton Plantation, Bahamas. In *African Sites: Archaeology in the Caribbean*, edited by Jay B. Haviser. Markus Wiener Press, Princeton, NJ.
- 2001 Methodist Intentions and African Sensibilities: The Victory of African Consumerism over Planter Paternalism at a Bahamian Plantation. In *Island Lives: Historical Archaeologies of the Caribbean*, edited by Paul Farnsworth, 272-300. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, AL.
- Wilkie, Laurie A. and Paul Farnsworth
- 2005 *Sampling Many Pots: An Archaeology of Memory and Tradition at a Bahamian Plantation*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL.
- Williams, Eric
- 1984 *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean*. Vintage, New York, NY.
- 1994 *Capitalism and Slavery*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC.
- Wolf, Eric
- 1982 *Europe and the People without History*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Woodward, Robyn P.
- 2011 Feudalism or Agrarian Capitalism? The Archaeology of the Early Sixteenth-Century Spanish Sugar Industry. In *Out of Many, One People: The Historical Archaeology of Colonial Jamaica*, edited by James A. Delle, Mark W. Hauser, and Douglas V. Armstrong, 23-40. The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, AL.
- Wray, Matt
- 2006 *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Wray, Matt and Annalee Newitz (eds.)
- 2013 *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. Routledge Press, New York, NY.
- Wurst, LouAnn and Robert K. Fitts
- 1999 Introduction: Why Confront Class? *Historical Archaeology*. 33(1):1-6.
- Wurst, LouAnn and Stephen A. Mrozowski
- 2014 Toward an Archaeology of the Future. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*. 18(1):1-14.

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Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World
Brown University
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Higher Education

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Ph.D., Distinction: Anthropology
 Syracuse University
 Dissertation title: <i>At the Margins of the Plantation: Alternative Modernities and an Archaeology of the “Poor Whites” of Barbados</i></p> | <p>Aug. 2014
 Syracuse, NY</p> |
| <p>MA: Social Sciences/Anthropology
 University of Chicago
 Thesis title: <i>Mobile Subjects, Mobile Ideologies, and the Industrial Community: The Archaeology of Irish Famine Migrants in Texas, Maryland</i></p> | <p>Aug. 2009
 Chicago, IL</p> |
| <p>BS: Anthropology and American Studies
 University of Maryland</p> | <p>Dec. 2007
 College Park, MD</p> |

Publications

- N.D. “An Archaeology of ‘Poor White’ and Afro-Barbadian Interaction”. In *Roots of Empire: Archaeologies of Freedom and Slavery in the Caribbean* by Lynsey Bates, James Delle, and John Chenoweth (eds.).
- N.D. “The Politics of Work, ‘Poor Whites’, and Plantation Capitalism in Barbados”. In *Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism* by Mark P. Leone and Jocelyn E. Knauf (eds.).
- N.D. “Recovering Evidence of Initial Settler Farms and Early Plantation Life in Barbados”, with Douglas V. Armstrong. *Slavery and Abolition*.
- N.D. “The Irish in Barbados: Labour, Landscapes, and Legacies” in *Caribbean Irish Connections* by Alison Donnell, Maria McGarrity, and Evelyn O’Callaghan (eds.), Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.
- N.D. “Father Antoine Biet’s Account Revisited: Perspectives on Irish Catholics in Mid-Seventeenth Century Barbados” with Jerome S. Handler in *Caribbean Irish Connections* by Alison Donnell, Maria McGarrity, and Evelyn O’Callaghan (eds.), Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.
- 2013 “Archaeological Approaches to the ‘Poor Whites’ of Barbados: Tired Stereotypes and New Directions.” *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*. Vol. LVIV: 1-27.

- 2012 “The 1646 Hapcott Map, Fort – (Trent) Plantation, St. James, Barbados: A Significant Resource for Research on Early Colonial Settlement in Barbados,” with Douglas V. Armstrong and Karl S. Watson. *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*. Vol. LVIII: 137-154.
- 2008 “The Irish in Nineteenth-Century Baltimore: A Comparative Study.” *Focus Anthropology*: Issue VI

Book Reviews

- 2013 *The Creolizing Subject: Race, Reason, and the Politics of Purity* by Michael J. Monahan. *Caribbean Quarterly*. 59(3): 180-182.
- 2013 *Conquest and Land in Ireland: The Transplantation to Connacht, 1649-1680* by John Cunningham. *e-Keltoi*.

Certificates

Syracuse University
Certificate of University Teaching Fall 2013

Teaching Experience

- Brown University**
Instructor
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Scalawags, Sailors, and Slaves Fall 2014
- University of Maryland**
Co-Instructor (with Mark Leone)
- Frederick Douglass and Landscapes of Slavery Winter 2014
- Syracuse University**
Teaching Assistant
- Introduction to Archaeology and Prehistory (head TA) Fall 2011
 - Introduction to Archaeology and Prehistory Fall 2010
 - Introduction to Historical Archaeology Spring 2011
 - Introduction to Biological Anthropology Spring 2012
- Workshop Organizer
- Postcolonial Archaeology Spring 2012
- DePaul University**
Teaching Assistant June – July
2009
- Teaching assistant for archaeological field school
 - Lecturer on archaeological theory and field research
 - Supervised and educated students in archaeological field methodology

Grants and Awards

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| • Fulbright IIE – U.S. State Department | May 2012 |
| • Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award – Syracuse | May 2012 |
| • Mae O’Driscoll Scholarship – Hofstra | March 2012 |
| • Maxwell Teaching Fellowship (declined) – Syracuse | April 2012 |
| • Roscoe Martin Travel Grant Award - Syracuse and 11 | December 2010 |
| • Maxwell Dean’s Research Grant - Syracuse and 12 | Summer 2011 |

Lectures, Papers Presented, and Interviews

“Alternative and Caribbean Modernities: Race and Class in an Archaeological Study of the ‘Poor Whites’ of Barbados.” University of Maryland. January 13, 2014. College Park, MD.

“At the Margins of the Plantation: An Archaeology of the ‘Poor Whites’ of Barbados.” Society for Historical Archaeology conference. January 8-12, 2014. Quebec City, Quebec.

Interview for radio documentary “To Hell or Barbados.” Produced by Maud Hand. Aired on Newstalk Radio Ireland on November 9th, 2013.

“Indentured and Enslaved: Irish and Africans in Seventeenth-Century Barbados” with Jerome S. Handler. Ireland, Slavery, Anti-Slavery, and Empire conference. October 24-25, 2013. University College Dublin, Ireland.

“Labor Systems and New Worlds of Race and Class in Seventeenth Century Barbados.” Invited lecture and State University of New York, Oswego. October 15th, 2013.

“Archaeology Below the Cliff: Historical Archaeology of ‘Poor Whites’ in Barbados.” International Association of Caribbean Archaeologists. July 15-21, 2013. Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

“The School of Female Industry: Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Barbados.” The Barbados Museum and Historical Society History Group. May 28, 2013. The Garrison: Barbados.

“Archaeology Below the Cliff: Archaeology of ‘Poor Whites’ in Pre and Post Emancipation Barbados.” Archaeology Symposium of Jamaica. April 9-10, 2013. University of the West Indies, Mona: Jamaica.

“Exploring the Stereotype: History and Archaeology of the ‘Poor Whites’ of Barbados.” The Barbados National Trust. March 27, 2013. The Garrison: Barbados.

“Drawing Lines ‘Beyond the Line’: Establishing a Slave Society in Seventeenth-Century Barbados,” with Douglas V. Armstrong. OIEAHC Africans in the Americas. March 14-17, 2013: Barbados.

“Seventeenth Century Barbados.” Holetown Festival. February 13, 2013. St. James Methodist Church: Barbados.

“The Archaeology of Trents Plantation, St. James, Barbados,” with Douglas V. Armstrong. University of the West Indies History Forum. October 22, 2012: Barbados. “Fr. Antoine Biet’s Account Revisited: Perspectives on Irish Catholicism in Mid-Seventeenth Century Barbados,” with Jerome S. Handler. Caribbean Irish Connections Conference. November 16-17, 2012: Barbados.

“‘Barbadosed’ and Bridging Colonialisms: Colonial Discourse and Practice and Irish Transplants in Seventeenth-Century Barbados.” Theoretical Archaeology Group. May 18-20, 2012: Buffalo, NY

Educational and Professional Experience

Research Assistant April-Sep 2013

Caribbean Irish Connections volume

- Editor of select volume chapters
- Author of historical timeline, notes for volume introduction, and bibliography

University of Chicago Chicago, IL
Lab Supervisor and Teaching Assistant Sep 2009-Aug 2010

- Managerial position for all matters relating to archaeology laboratory
- Provided training in artifact analysis to undergraduate students
- Lead classroom discussions on archaeological method and theory

Anthropology Research Assistant Mar. 2009 – Aug. 2010

- Sorting, analyzing, interpreting, and cataloguing of historic artifacts
- Co-author of technical report chapters
- Assisted in the curation process of historical artifacts

St. Antoine’s Garden Archaeology Project New Orleans, LA
Field Technician Sept. – Oct. 2009

- Performed archaeological excavations in the French Quarter of New Orleans
- Assisted with site mapping, flotation samples, and unit excavation

Ceramic Analysis Jan – Mar 2009

- Training in prehistoric and historic ceramic analysis
- Conducted analysis on sample ceramics

Field Museum of Chicago

Chicago, IL

Anthropology Intern

Summer 2010

- Urban anthropology fieldwork examining Hispanic neighborhoods in Chicago
- Conducted field interviews and conducted fieldwork throughout the city
- Assisted in developing an ongoing material culture project at the Museum
- Co-organized a symposium on material culture studies at the Museum

URS Corporation

Gaithersburg, MD

Field Technician

Jan. 2008 – Aug. 2008

- Performed field work on Phase I, II, and III archaeological projects
- Conducted field work on historic and prehistoric Mid-Atlantic and Mid-West sites
- Conducted background research on field projects

Lab Technician

- Performed general lab duties including artifact analysis and cataloguing
- Performed general office duties

Kings River Field Project

Co. Wicklow, Ireland

University College Dublin Summer Field School

Summer 2007

- Initial training in archaeological field methodology

Student Associations**Syracuse University**

Anthropology Graduate Student Organization

Sept. 2010 – 2012

- Speaker Series Coordinator

Future Professoriate Program

Aug. 2011 – 2012

- Participant and event organizer

Professional Society Memberships**American Anthropological Association**

Since

2011

Society for Historical Archaeology

2011

Barbados Museum and Historical Society

2011

Barbados National Trust

2012

International Association of Caribbean Archaeologists

2013