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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL IDENTITY, SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, AND PREMATURE SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL IN A RURAL APPALACHIAN SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

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Anthony P. Cavender

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the ascription of pariah student identity and how this possibly relates to the low level of education attainment in rural Appalachia. The informal social organization and educational ethos of a rural school in eastern Tennessee, Rock Hill (k-7), is examined with respect to the school's influence on premature student withdrawal.

Data were collected over an eight month period during which the author employed participant observation and other ethnographic research techniques. In comparison to previous inquiries on educational problems in rural Appalachia, this investigation represents one of the few which have utilized the research methodology of cultural anthropology.

A major finding of this study is that a congruency exists between the informal social organization of the school and the stratified, caste-like social structure of its surrounding communities. Evidence is presented to demonstrate that students who come from indigent families, particularly those that historically have suffered from the social phenomenon known as "inherited stigma," are ascribed a pariah social identity in the school.

It is suggested that those students who are ascribed a pariah social identity eventually internalize this identity, thus establishing a debilitating consistency between the way others view them and the way they view themselves. Moreover, once a student has internalized pariah

identity he is likely to withdraw from the social world of the school due to feelings of alienation, resentment, and low self-esteem.

This study also shows how the educational ethos of Roch Hill School, as manifested in the instructors' philosophy of teaching and the basic assumptions they hold about educating children from indigent families, appears to exacerbate the problem of premature school withdrawal.

On the basis of this research a series of recommendations are advanced. Hopefully these will be of use to educators concerned with ameliorating the problems of pariah identity and low educational attainment.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Historically, premature school withdrawal has been a serious problem in Appalachia. Though the level of educational attainment has increased remarkably over the last four decades, the region nevertheless continues to lag behind the nation at large. In 1970, for example, 56% of those in this region aged 25 years or more had not completed high school, as compared with 47% in this age group for the nation at large. The situation is much worse in the central subregion, which includes parts of eastern Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, southwest Virginia, and southern West Virginia. In 1970, 72% of those aged 25 years or more in the central subregion had not completed high school. Furthermore, 22.7% of the central subregion's 16 and 17 year old age group was not enrolled in school, as compared to 10.7% in this age group for the rest of the nation (Appalachian Regional Commission 1979: 70).

Explanations offered by social scientists as to why the region lags behind the rest of the nation in educational attainment vary in scope and emphasis, but they can generally be grouped into two theoretical models: (1) those which view the culture of the rural, undereducated Appalachian as the independent variable, the "blame the undereducated"

model, and (2) those which view the rural school as the independent variable, the "blame the school" model.

The "blame the undereducated" model focuses on the maladaptive attitudes that characterize the traditional culture of rural Appalachian people. Since these maladaptive attitudes are assumed to be transmitted from one generation to the next, the implication often drawn is that the undereducated themselves are at fault for being undereducated. For example, social scientists and other observers of rural Appalachian culture have commented on the so-called "mountaineer's" aversion to formal education. Weller (1965) makes reference to a resistance to "book larnin'." Pearsall (1959:147) talks of a strong dislike of reading in her ethnographic study of a rural community in Tennessee. Kimball (1974:12) believes that rural Appalachian people "were egalitarian, even to the extent of rejecting schooling because it fostered inequalities among men." A relatively recent ethnographic study of a rural community in Tennessee suggests that an egalitarian ethic may still be prevalent (Matthews 1965).

The "blame the undereducated" model, however, goes far beyond a singular emphasis on a negative attitude toward learning and formal education. Influenced by the culture of poverty concept developed in the 1960's (Lewis 1966), sociologists working with the poor located in the more isolated rural areas of the region identified a cluster of maladaptive attitudes, such as fatalism, individualism, familism, and a present-time orientation (Pearsall 1966; Knipe and Lewis 1971), which ostensibly function to impede the formal education process. Studies

have been conducted which validate the presence of some of these attitudes among the more indigent students in rural schools. Polansky (1978:161-165), for example, found that indigent students have a stronger sense of "felt powerlessness" (i.e. a fatalistic outlook on life) than students from more economically secure families. Similarly, Southworth, Albert, and Gravatt (1973:35-43) report finding high levels of anxiety among a group of indigent students in eastern Tennessee who were given the Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale.

Can such attitudes as fatalism, individualism, familism, and a present-time orientation be viewed as adaptive instead of maladaptive? Ball (1971) argues that such attitudes are actually adaptive in that they enable an individual to cope with the frustration of living in poverty. However, Valentine (1968) criticizes the culture of poverty concept on the grounds that such maladaptive attitudes persist in the cultural tradition of the poor because the exploitative economic situation which causes them initially persists from one generation to the next. If the exploitative economic situation were changed, Valentine argues, then the maladaptive attitudes would not be evident.

Though there is disagreement as to whether these attitudes are adaptative, and as to whether or not the poor are locked into a cultural syndrome which prevents them from breaking out of poverty, there is a general consensus that such attitudes are nevertheless present. The implications of such attitudes in terms of formal education are significant.

Clearly, a child who comes to school with a negative attitude toward learning will probably not remain in school long. Also, a

child who is fatalistic and abnormally anxious about his situation in life will have difficulty in adapting to the formal educational setting and will frequently withdraw from it. But what about the formal educational setting, the rural school? Does it contribute to or mitigate the problem of premature school withdrawal?

Observations by Ogletree (1978) and Schragg (1966) are representative of the "blame the school" model. Ogletree, for example, states that some of the schools in rural Appalachia are characteristically "closed" social systems, which means that they are preoccupied with meeting day-to-day demands and maintaining the socio-political status quo. The school, therefore, is reluctant to experiment with innovative educational programs because they are perceived by school personnel as possibly disruptive to the school's organizational structure. Furthermore, the closed organizational structure of the school is maintained through a nepotistic hiring policy. Schragg (1966:6) is in agreement with Ogletree. "The average mountaineer," he says, "is fully committed to the idea of education for his children, but most of the individuals and agencies have left the prevailing educational-political structures untouched." Like Ogletree, Schragg believes that "new programs tend to become enmired in the sump of old political styles," which, in turn, explains why "mountain schools are generations behind the rest of the nation (1966:8)." Thus, many rural Appalachian schools are more committed to maintaining and perpetuating the closed organizational structure of the school and local community than they are with educating the young.

Obviously, the two models described above are useful in explaining early school withdrawal in that both generate testable hypotheses. Currently, however, the "blame the undereducated" model has more advocates simply because more empirically designed studies—few though they be—have been conducted. Much more work, especially in the area of indigent student cognition patterns, remains to be done. In reference to the "blame the school" model, more information is needed on how rural Appalachian schools operate as cultural systems.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

This dissertation represents a contribution concerning how rural Appalachian schools function as cultural systems.[1] Analytically, this study is concerned with determing if the school contributes to or mitigates the problem of premature school withdrawal. In the following pages, the cultural system of one rural Appalachian school, Rock Hill[2] (k-7), is described and analyzed in reference to its educational ethos and informal social organization. This study utilizes neither the "blame the undereducated" nor the "blame the school" models. Instead, it seeks to demonstrate how the educational ethos and informal

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[1]Walter Precourt's (1975) investigation of Mountain Creek School in eastern Kentucky is the only case study of a rural Appalachian school done to date. As in this investigation, Precourt demonstrates how the informal social organization of the school reflects that of its surrounding communities. This research, however, goes a step beyond Precourt's by relating the congruency in social organization of school and surrounding community to early school withdrawal.

[2]All placenames in this study are pseudonyms.

organization of Rock Hill reflect its surrounding cultural context. By focusing on the "cultural congruency" (Kimball 1974) between the school and its surrounding cultural context, overly generalized explanations for early school withdrawal can be avoided. If, for example, the educational ethos of the school contributes in any way to early school withdrawal, then the school cannot be held singularly responsible. This is so because the school's ethos is, to a considerable extent, defined and shaped by its local cultural context.

Rock Hill School, which is located in the mountainous terrain of upper east Tennessee, was chosen for investigation because the county population it serves (Baldwin County) historically has exhibited a low level of educational attainment compared to the national average. Prior to initiating the fieldwork, it was hypothesized that premature school withdrawal was causally related to a congruency between the informal social organization of the school and the social organization of the school's surrounding communities. Various studies concerning the social organization of rural Appalachian communities led to the formulation of this hypothesis, particularly those done by Stephenson (1968), Schwarzweller, Brown and Mangalam (1971), and Hicks (1976). These studies present convincing evidence which demonstrates that the social organization of rural Appalachian communities is not structurally analogous to the egalitarian organization of a peasant community, as some observers erroneously portray them to be (e.g. Matthews 1965; Knipe and Lewis 1971; Vogeler 1973). Rather, Appalachian communities are socially stratified in terms of economic and kinship criteria.

Since people in rural Appalachia interact differentially with one another in accordance with an individual's economic status and kinship affiliation, it was assumed that a corresponding pattern of social interaction would be evident in the informal social organization of the school. Furthermore, if the pattern of social stratification involved differential access to authoritative roles and higher paying jobs, then one might expect that the school would function, albeit covertly, as a "gate-keeping"[3] institution which effectively prepared certain students for either a life of economic failure or success.

A major conclusion of the case study of Rock Hill is that the informal social organization of the school does mirror the stratified social order of its surrounding communities. This finding is consistent with Ogletree's (1977) observation that the school functions to maintain the political and economic status quo of rural counties. More importantly, however, this investigation elaborates on the social processes involved in how the school maintains the local socio-political status quo. Specifically, the focus is concerned with how a student from a pariah family, pariah defined in terms of both economic and kinship criteria, learns of his pariah or "outcaste" identity through

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[3]The term "gate keeper" was coined by Kurt Lewin (1943). In his analysis of the channels through which food must pass before reaching the consumer, Lewin uses the term "gate keeper" in reference to those individuals who determine who has or does not have access to food. In this study the term "gate keeper" is used in reference to teachers who indirectly influence who will or will not finish school. The school, therefore, can be perceived as a "gate keeping" institution which selectively denies certain students access to high socio-economic status in local society.

the process of social interaction in the school. In terms of assessing Rock Hill's influence on contributing to or ameliorating the problem of early school withdrawal, the present findings support the position that the school may be partially, though significantly, responsible for the problem.

This study makes an important contribution to the field of Appalachian studies in two significant ways. First, the analysis of the informal social organization of Rock Hill School and its surrounding communities provides valuable information on social stratification in rural America. Of particular interest is the phenomenon known as "inherited stigma" as it relates to a student's social identity. Inherited stigma as a feature of rural Appalachia's caste-like social structure is discussed in Chapter II.

Secondly, this research provides insight into how the school buttresses the local social structure by elucidating the informal rules of conduct that underly the social interaction between pariah and non-pariah students. Studies concerning the social processes associated with the maintenance of social stratification are warranted if Walls and Billings (1977:136) are correct in stating that "we know little about the rule governed interactions—in the school, the work place, the welfare office, the voting place—which condition the performances of those defined as 'the poor' in the mountains. Nor do we know much about the group with whom they have the most direct contact, the mountain middle class . . ."

C. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Educational reserach has, with few exceptions, followed the deductive, hypothesis testing paradigm. As such, the research techniques used have been those which are designed to obtain quantitative data which can be submitted to various kinds of statistical analysis. The research tradition in the field of education, as Van Fleet (1980:iii) and Harrington (1979:20) observe, was greatly influenced by psychology. Over the past two decades, however, educational reserachers have been, as Van Fleet expresses it, "freeing themselves from the stranglehold that psychology has had on educational thought and reserach (1980:iii)."

Due to an increased interest in the social processes associated with education in schools, and partially a result of a dissatisfaction with the research methods and techniques of psychology, educators have been drawn to the research tradition of cultural anthropology in recent years. Over the last two decades, anthropologists have conducted a number of case studies, or ethnographies, of schools which reflect differing cultural contexts.[4] A major assumption underlying these case studies is that a school can be viewed and analyzed as a cultural system. A school can be analyzed in terms of its basic cultural components: its socio-political structure, ethos, and technology (i.e. methods of instruction). The idea that a school can be analyzed as such is not a novel approach to educators, but the research

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[4]For examples of the case study approach to the analysis of schools as cultural systems see Singleton (1967), Wolcott (1967), and King (1968).

techniques used by cultural anthropologists in their investigation of schools as cultural systems, participant-observation in particular, is relatively foreign to the educator.

In the following section, participant-observation and other research techniques used while conducting fieldwork at Rock Hill School will be discussed.

Participant Observation

What is it like to be a teacher or a student in a small school in rural Appalachia? One means of answering this question is for the researcher to assume the role of participant-observer. Through becoming an active participant in the daily affairs of school life, the researcher is in a position to gain some understanding of what it is like to be a teacher or student in the school being investigated. More importantly, after a prolonged period of assuming the role of participant-observer, the researcher is able to observe behavior in a naturalistic context.

In contrast to using a structured questionnaire, a conventional research technique used by educators, psychologists, and sociologists to identify and measure various attitudes, values, or beliefs, the participant-observer investigates similar phenomena, but through the observation of actual behavior. While critics have pointed out that such inferences are unreliable in an empirical sense due mainly to the subjective bias of the participant-observer (Pelto 1978:67-71), others have noted the value of using participant-observation as a means of

distinguishing between ideal and real behavior, or what people say and how they actually behave.[5] An informant, for example, may respond to a questionnaire in a manner consistent with the way he thinks he should respond (i.e. in terms of normative culture), or in a way which he thinks the researcher wants him to respond. Such responses, however, may not be in accordance with the way he actually behaves in real life.

As Pelto (1978:69) notes, participant-observation involves more than the random observation of behavior. Since it was intended that the social identity of the potential dropout would be investigated prior to the inception of fieldwork, the author contoured most of his observation work at Rock Hill School with this research objective in mind. Furthermore, since the author was initially interested in acquiring information on the social processes associated with early school withdrawal, notably the ascription and internalization of a pariah social identity, it was apparent that participant-observation would be a particularly advantageous research technique due to its nonobtrusive nature. This will become readily apparent in Chapter IV.

The author conducted fieldwork at Rock Hill School from January to June 1980. Two additional months were spent in Baldwin County interviewing informants and examining through school records after fieldwork was completed. These visits proved to be useful in obtaining

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[5]For a more detailed discussion of the positive and negative aspects of participant-observation as a research technique, particularly as it relates to the study of formal educational settings, see Bruyn (1976), Singleton (1976), and Wolcott (1976).

further information on various topics or new information relevant to questions that arose while interpreting the data at hand.

Observational work at Rock Hill School was limited to the sixth and seventh grades, which consisted of 127 students. The initial phase of fieldwork, lasting approximately two months, involved the observation of classroom behavior. After three weeks of sitting in the classroom, both teachers and students became adjusted to the author's presence at the school. The author became an active participant in the social life of Rock Hill in a number of ways. In an effort to gain some understanding of the teacher's perspective, the author served as a substitute teacher on numerous occasions and developed a series of talks which introduced the sixth and seventh graders to the field of cultural anthropology. The most successful technique for establishing a rapport with students and teachers, as well as with many residents of Baldwin County, was the establishment of a "Folklore of Baldwin County" research project, where sixth and seventh grade students participated enthusiastically in the collection and compilation of folkloristic materials.

Approximately 450 hours were devoted to the observation of classroom behavior. Several additional hours were devoted to assisting the teachers in the implementation of various school events, such as basketball games, carnivals, dances, and so forth. Observations of behavior and information gathered through numerous informal conversations were recorded daily in a journal. After the completion of fieldwork, the journals were cross-indexed according to such topics as "philosophy of teaching," "teaching techniques," "attitude toward the poor,"

"preferential treatment of students," "significant classroom social events," etc. The cross-indexing of the journals expedited the integration and interpretation of fieldwork observations.

Formal Interviews

Prior to beginning fieldwork, interviewing schedules were prepared for both teachers and students. After several interviews had been conducted, the schedules were reworked several times when it became evident that certain questions were neither relevant nor productive. Also, as fieldwork progressed, new questions had to be added to the schedules as new insights into the cultural system of the school were made.

Fourteen students and eight teachers were interviewed intensively. Seven of the fourteen students were chosen for interview after it became apparent to the researcher (through the observation of student social interaction patterns and through the use of a student identity test) that they belonged in the category of pariah student. The other seven students were chosen at random and belonged to the broadly defined category of non-pariah student. Of the eight teachers interviewed, five were "upper grade" teachers i.e. they taught in grades six and seven. Even though fieldwork was restricted to working with students and teachers in the sixth and seventh grades, three lower grade teachers were interviewed to obtain pertinent information on pariah student identity in the lower grades.

The interviews lasted on average approximately three hours. Though a structured interviewing schedule was used, all informants were

allowed to digress on experiences and opinions which they deemed to be particularly meaningful. All the interviewing sessions were tape recorded. The tapes, which total nearly 62 hours of recorded conversation, were transcribed and then coded according to subject matter and cross-indexed.

Student Identity Test

This technique was helpful in identifying pariah students. Sixth and seventh grade students were asked first to write the names of three students they admired, trusted, and enjoyed associating with. Next, they were asked to write the names of three students they did not admire, trust, or enjoy associating with. The names of those students who appeared on the name lists of "least admired and respected students" with the greatest frequency were initially identified at the beginning of fieldwork as "possible pariah students." Next the names mentioned most frequently were analyzed in terms of definitional criteria, i.e. the social characteristics they had in common. Lastly, once the pariah students had been isolated, their friendship network was identified by comparing names of the most admired and trusted students as listed by the pariah students. This technique, as well as observation of social interaction patterns in the school, enabled the author to identify five subgroups among pariah students. The student identity test is discussed further in Chapter IV.

Student Essays

At the request of the author, the sixth and seventh grade teachers required their students to write an essay entitled "Life in Baldwin

County" in which they were to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of living in a rural setting. These essays were subjected to content analysis in order to gain an impression of the students' perception of living in rural Appalachia.

School Records

Statistical records concerning Rock Hill School's enrollment figures over the past seven years were consulted to obtain an impression of the rate of early school departure in Baldwin County. The method used in the computation of the dropout rate is discussed more fully in Chapter IV.

Ethnohistorical Materials

Interviews with eight members of Baldwin County's older generation (aged 60 and above) provided valuable information on what formal schooling was like prior to the Second World War. Interviews with the older folk also were of benefit in constructing the socio-economic history of Baldwin County which is presented in Chapter II.

D. A FINAL INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The reader should keep in mind that this is a case study of one rural school at one point in time. One should not conclude that the cultural system of Rock Hill is typical of all other rural Appalachian schools. Certainly many more case studies of rural Appalachian schools should be conducted before generalizations can be made about the "typical" rural school in Appalachia and its influence on the problem

of early school withdrawal. Also, because of the problem under investigation, this study concentrates on what appears to be wrong with Rock Hill rather than what is right about it. Lest the reader be misled, it should be stressed that many of Rock Hill's teachers are dedicated, hard working, and highly capable professionals. Furthermore, the majority of Rock Hill School's student body consists of intelligent, well adjusted, and sensitive young people who are concerned with making the world around them a better place to live.

CHAPTER II

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

A. BALDWIN COUNTY, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

To comprehend the extent and significance of the cultural congruency between Rock Hill School and its surrounding communities, it is necessary to know something about the local cultural setting as it exists today and as it existed in the past. In the following chapter a brief culture history of Baldwin County is presented. Chronologically, the history is divided into two parts, pre-1930 and post-1930. The year 1930 is chosen as a reference point because it is roughly around this time that pronounced changes occurred in the county's economic structure; changes which had a profound effect on breaking down the isolation of Baldwin County from America's mainstream, urban cultural tradition. Though the culture history of the county is temporally divided on objective, economic criteria, it is of interest to note that the older generation in the county also view the 1930's as a time when significant changes occurred in their lifeways.

Baldwin County is located in the mountainous region of northeastern Tennessee. Situated completely within the ridge and valley physiographic province, the county is transected from northeast to southwest by two mountains, four ridges, and two rivers (Figure 1). Historically, Jack's Ridge has been and continues to be the most significant feature of the county's landscape. At one time, Jack's Ridge served to effectively

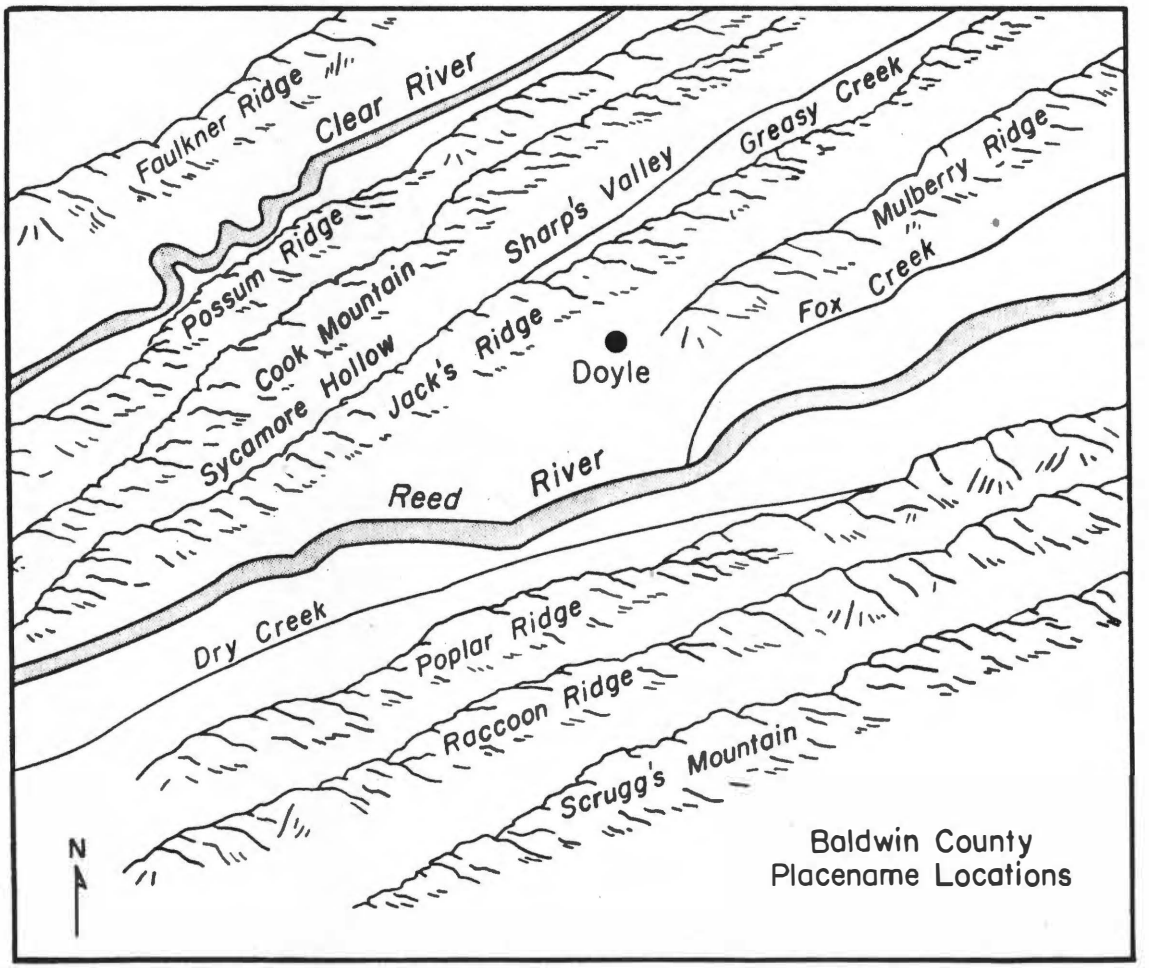

Figure 1. Map of Baldwin County.

divide the county into two socio-political sections. Approximately one third of the county lies to the north of the ridge; the remaining two thirds lies to the south.

It is believed by some historians that the first settlers, who would legally be classified as squatters, established themselves in the county as early as 1780. At that time the land that comprises Baldwin County, which was under the legal jurisdiction of the state of North Carolina, was forbidden territory for white settlement. The first legal settlers were the recipients of land grants by North Carolina for their service in the Revolutionary War. The earliest homesteads were established in the northern section of the county atop Jack's Ridge, along Greasy Creek, and in Sharp's Hollow.

The county remained relatively unpopulated until the early 1800's. The majority of those who settled in Baldwin County at this time followed the migratory stream down the Great Valley from Pennsylvania. Others came from North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. The early settlers were, in the main, of English and Scotch-Irish ancestry.

The early inhabitants followed a settlement pattern that was typical throughout most of the southern Appalachian region. Initially, small farms were established on the fertile tracts of land located in the valleys and along the rivers and creeks. Due to an increase in the settlement population and/or continued in-migration, the more productive land became unavailable. As a result, families began establishing homesteads in narrow hollows and along the escarpment of ridges where flat, fertile expanses of land were scarce.

Prior to the 1930's the economy of the county was based primarily on subsistence agriculture. A family grew its own food and raised its own livestock. Except for such essential items as salt, sugar, coffee, the things they could not produce themselves, a family was economically self-sufficient. Money, according to some of the old folks who were interviewed, was not generally available. The exchange of goods was based on the barter system. Cash could be obtained, however, through selling eggs, walnuts, and such medicinal plants as ginseng, catnip, and pennyroyal to the local general store.

Largely due to geographical isolation, subsistence farming continued to be the basis of Baldwin County's economy until the 1930's. Some farmers, of course, had the initiative and means to engage in cash crop farming, but the poor condition of the roads across the ridges and mountains was a major obstacle to gaining access to markets in nearby towns. Also, many farmers lacked the means to transport their crops. Mr. B., a 72 year old farmer, recalled some of the problems he and a friend encountered when they attempted to take a load of sweet potatoes to Dover, a market town located approximately 80 miles from his home. The time is around 1922.

> Why, nobody hardly had a truck and very few had a wagon or the horses to pull it. I remember one time we tried to haul some sweet potatoes to market. The wagon got stuck in these big ruts that had filled up with water, you know, three or four times before we even got out of the county. Sometimes it'd take an hour to get it out, you know. And we finally broke a wheel and we got flustered and said to hell with it.

As the population grew it became difficult for some families to subsist at a basic level. Some once productive farms were divided, and

subsequently redivided through succeeding generations, among the heirs of a family. Some individuals augmented their meager income through moonshining, but for some this was the only way to make a living. During the days of Prohibition, Baldwin County moonshiners provided "corn licker" for speakeasys in nearby towns and cities, as well as the local "blind tigers."

Many of the old folks resent the fact that the county never became industrialized like other counties located nearby. They remember survey crews of a railroad firm plotting the course for a branchline through the southern part of the county some time in the 1920's, but it was never built. It was never built because there were no commodities or raw materials to transport out of the county, and there were no large population centers to serve as a market for the importation of industrial products.

Beginning around the turn of the century, many of the young men found employment in the coal fields of southwest Virginia and eastern Kentucky. It was not uncommon for a boy to begin working in the mines at the early age of twelve. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Mr. S., age 77, who began working in coal mines in southwestern Virginia at the age of 14.

CAVENDER: Did many young men from Baldwin County work in the coal mines when you did?

MR. B.: Oh, yeah! They was a world of people around here that packed in when I did. That was the only quick money you could get hold of back then. You could go to the mines and stay a few months and get a hold of some money. I was loading coal about six weeks when I started, and that's the

hardest job in the mines. I found that out (laughs). I went from there to workin' on machinery—cut coal. And I went from there to a drill, drillin' the coal.

CAVENDER: How much did you make as a coal loader?

MR. B.: Why, I guess I made three dollars a day.

CAVENDER: How long was your work day?

MR. B.: Ten hours a day. I made pretty good money when I was on the drill. They paid you by the ton on that. But when I paid my board and bought my clothes, I didn't have much left.

The desire to improve one's economic lot induced many to uproot and move to South Carolina for work in the cotton mills, or to such cities as Baltimore, Indianapolis, and Detroit for work in factories. The pattern of migration was typical of other rural, indigent areas of southern Appalachia.[1] First, a man would move to a city and after locating employment his wife and children would follow. Soon thereafter other relatives, a brother, sister, or cousin, would follow, usually establishing residence in or near their relative's home. This pattern of migration was evident in Baltimore where a community on the outskirts of the city came to be known as "Little Doyle," (see Figure 2) the name Doyle being that of Baldwin County's county seat and only town. There were exceptions to this migratory pattern. For example, some men would work in a distant city, but their family would remain in Baldwin County. Informants reported that it was not uncommon for a man to work in Baltimore and drive home every weekend to be with his family. Some men would work a

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[1]See Brown (1970) for more information on this out-migration settlement pattern.

Figure 2. Main Street, Doyle, Tennessee, 1914.

"stretch" in a distant city, lasting from six months to a year, and after accumulating a sufficient amount of money they would quit their job and return home for a while. After their money had run out, they would leave to work another stretch. This pattern of periodic employment is still characteristic of a portion of Baldwin County's population.

Other observers (Hicks 1976; Stephenson 1968) have commented on the strong attachment rural Appalachian people have for their kinfolk and their native physical environment. The attachment to home is evident in the fact that many of those who leave their native areas for the cities to find gainful employment return after being away for several years. One informant, a 67 year old man who worked in Baltimore for twenty years, said: "I never did consider Baltimore to be my home. This (Baldwin County) is my home. These are my kind of people; they think like I do. The only reason I left this place was to get a little money. I never figured on staying away so long."

If a man chose not work in the mines, mills, or factories, if he did not want to tenant farm or risk going to jail for making or "running" moonshine, he could always join the military service. " "They's worlds of 'em that joined the army," one older informant said.

The shortage of good farm land, the inability to engage in cash crop farming, and the lack of a local, diversified, industrial economy, all contributed to Baldwin County's historically high rate of out-migration. The county experienced its first decline in population in 1910. The population continued to decline until 1975 when, for the first time in 65 years, more people were migrating in than out. The

peak of out-migration occurred between 1940 and 1950 when 2,397 people left the county. The current population of the county is 6,719.

The older generation in Baldwin County remembers the Depression years as being a particularly hard time. One might think that living in an agrarian environment during the Depression would have been advantageous. This is true to a certain extent. "We didn't have much, but we always had something to eat," one old woman said. But the truth of the matter is that some families, those who owned or were tenants on small, scrub tracts on the ridges and in the narrow hollows, had a difficult time subsisting. The older generation tells many stories about people going door to door for handouts and how some people almost starved to death. Mrs. C., age 74, said "I heared one woman say, who come from a big family, that they went to the woods and skinned what they call slippery 'elam' (elm) bark and eat that!" Reflecting on these hard times, Mrs. C.'s husband, age 76, said "some men would say, 'if I had enough to get a hundred pound of beans and a can of lard, I'd have enough to winter my family.'" The impact of the Depression on the county's economy, however, appears not to have been as devastating as elsewhere in the country. Since the majority of Baldwin County's farmers were engaged in subsistence farming prior to the Depression, the collapse of the national economy affected them only in the sense that the few luxuries (i.e. store bought material goods) they purchased were less accessible. For the lower class, the landless and those who worked marginally productive land, the Depression was no more difficult than any other time.

As mentioned earlier, the 1930's mark a point in time when significant changes occurred in the lifeways of Baldwin County's populace, notably in the economic sector. These changes, which most of the local inhabitants perceive as being positive, were a direct result of the Depression. Because the national economy was in shambles, the federal government interceded in an unprecedented fashion. The public works projects of the Roosevelt administration, which were created to provide jobs for the unemployed, had a beneficial impact on Baldwin County. For example, the Works Project Administration (WPA) not only provided jobs for the local populace, but it improved the county's road and bridge system which, as much as anything else, made the "outside" world more easily accessible to the local populace and, in turn, stimulated cash crop farming. The WPA and the NYA (National Youth Association) also constructed a new courthouse and the first "modern" school building which had multiple classrooms and a gymnasium.

Today, the mainstay of Baldwin County's agricultural economy is tobacco. "Now that (tobacco, specifically burley tobacco) is what saved the small farmer," as one elderly informant expressed it. Positive results of the Depression resulting from the mitigation efforts of Roosevelt's New Deal programs can be seen in the realm of agriculture. The tobacco market was not immune to the devastating effects of the Depression, even though tobacco growers had established protective associations to control fluctuating market prices. In 1933 the Emergency Agricultural Adjustment Act (EAAA) was passed in an attempt to encourage voluntary production controls to stabilize prices. Compliance

rewards in the form of benefit payments and acreage rental were provided by the federal government to curb production. The EAAA was later federally constituted with the passage of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act in 1936. This and subsequent legislation in the 1930's was successful in reducing crop acreage and raising the market price (Mizelle and Given 1979:3-4). The intervention of the federal government in the tobacco market had a profound, beneficial effect on the small farmer. The allotment program not only raised the market price of tobacco, but it guaranteed the small farmer his share of the tobacco market. In fact, the allotment program created a tobacco growing monopoly for the small farmer.

Other than tobacco, Baldwin County farmers today depend upon beef cattle and the production of corn. Specialty crops, such as strawberries and tomatoes, were once produced, but they have long since been abandoned, a result of being unable to compete with large, capital intensive, agribusiness concerns. As is true in other parts of the nation, the full-time small scale farmer is vanishing in Baldwin County. The number of farms in operation in the county decreased from 1466 in 1959 to 857 in 1974. There has, however, been an increase in the number of individuals who farm part-time and work in the industrial sector full-time. Between 1964 and 1969 the number of part-time farmers increased from 38% to 50%. However, the majority of the county's labor force (1,409 out of 1,679, or 78%) is employed outside the farming sector.

In an effort to obtain an impressionistic profile of the labor pool in the county, a questionnaire was administered to 86 sixth and

seventh grade students at Rock Hill. Tabulated results confirm the above mentioned trends. Only 14% (9 of 63) of the fathers who are employed are engaged in farming. Most (35 of 63, or 55.5%) are employed in the manufacturing sector. The remaining 19 (28.5%) are employed in the trade and service sector, i.e. sales, clerical work, teaching, and so forth. Twenty-three of the working fathers, or 36%, commute daily to work outside the county. The average roundtrip commuting distance is 60 miles. Three fathers maintain a household in Baldwin County, but work on construction sites located in Ohio, Illinois, and Wyoming. The national trend of mother and father both working is evident in Baldwin County. Thirty-three (38.3%) of the 86 mothers work full-time, the majority (19 of 33, or 57.5%) in the trade and service sector. Twelve (39%) commute to work daily outside the county.

The comparatively high percentage of those who commute to work outside the county is testimony to an historically stagnant local economy. There are only two small manufacturing firms located in the county which together employ around 200 people. A comment often heard from the college educated young people was "if you want to live in Baldwin County, there are only two things you can do: work for welfare or teach." While somewhat of an exaggeration, there is some truth to this observation. In the 1960's members of the county elite, which includes various merchants, public officials, teachers, and at that time, the county's only doctor, formed the Economic Development Organization. Its purpose was to promote the county to various businesses in an effort to encourage them to establish factories there.

The organization's efforts were not successful, however, because corporate industry apparently views the mountainous terrain, the curving roads, and the isolation from a major highway or railroad as a major deterrent to capital investment. For example, a zinc mine was in operation during the 1950's and 60's in the southern part of the county, but mining officials reported that the low price of zinc and the extremely high cost of transporting the product out of the county forced the mine to close.

Despite improvements in the local economic infrastructure, which are primarily a result of improving economic conditions in adjoining counties, Baldwin County continues to lag behind national and state averages in per capita income and mean effective buying income per household. The county received some not appreciated national recognition in the 1960's after being classified as the third most impoverished county in the nation (based on per capita income). In 1976 the county ranked ninety-first out of Tennessee's 95 counties in per capita income ($2,967); in terms of mean effective buying income per household, it ranked last in the state ($5,453) (Tennessee Education Association 1978).

In conclusion, Baldwin County, as with many other counties in the southern Appalachian region, has made the transition from an economy based primarily on subsistence farming to one based on cash crop farming, cattle production, and employment in the manufacturing sector. Changes in the county's economic infrastructure and the introduction of the telephone, automobile, and television have contributed to a breakdown

in the county's isolation from America's mainstream urban cultural tradition. Though certain folkways have vanished, vestiges of the "old way of living," however, remain. This is particularly true in reference to the county's social organization, a topic treated more fully in Chapter IV.

B. PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN RURAL APPALACHIA

As noted in the Introduction, ascription of pariah student identity at Rock Hill reflects a congruency between the informal social organization of the school and the social organization of county society at large. Criteria used to define pariah identity within the school are the same used to define pariah identity in the surrounding communities.

In this section various observations concerning the social organization of rural Appalachian communities, particularly social stratification, are critically reviewed. Next, a brief description of the social organization of Baldwin County is presented. Pertinent data relevant to confirming or negating the hypothesis will be discussed in subsequent chapters, but information presented in this chapter places this study in its proper theoretical context.

Historically, Appalachia has been viewed as a culturally distinct region, a world apart from the rest of America. As Henry Shapiro observes in his book Appalachia on Our Mind (1978), the notion that Appalachia is "a strange land inhabited by peculiar people" has been prevalent in American consciousness since the turn of the century. This

notion of "Appalachian otherness," as Shapiro phrases it, was created initially by local color writers who portrayed the region as an "arrested frontier." Social scientists, too, have promulgated the idea that the region is culturally unique in comparison to middle class, urban America. They are not, however, in agreement as to what cultural features of the Appalachian region, be it values, beliefs, or attitudes, make it uniquely different. The confusion appears to be the result of social scientists utilizing subcultural and regional development models, which apply to one segment of the region's population or one particular cultural context and then generalizing about the region as a whole. An example of this tendency is Jack Weller's (1965) work in eastern Kentucky where he explains the area's underdevelopment by using the culture of poverty model developed by sociologists and anthropologists in the 1960's (see Lewis 1966). Though Weller's work is concerned primarily with the extremely indigent peoples of the Kentucky mountains, he lapses into a uniformistic portrayal of the region's culture as a whole when he uses such terminology as the mountaineer. The implications of this uniformistic bias are important because the reader who is uninformed about the region's cultural diversity is left with an image of the region being one, vast poverty pocket. Another example, one involving the application of the internal colonialism model, is the work of Harry Caudill (1962) or that of Lewis and Knipe (1978) who explain the region's underdevelopment in terms of economic exploitation. Their work portrays rural Appalachian peoples, who are said to participate in a traditional, peasant-like subculture that emphasizes

kinship, noncompetitiveness, and egalitarianism, as being politically and economically exploited by the coal and timber industries. While it is true that Appalachian people have been exploited, Lewis and Caudill, like Weller, ignore the region's cultural diversity by presenting a stereotype of the mountaineer. The situation becomes terribly confusing when one compares the peasant-like mountaineer of Lewis and Knipe, who clings tenaciously to traditional institutions, such as the family and church, to resist cultural assimilation and exploitation, with the pathetic mountaineer of Weller who is locked into a "maladaptive" cultural syndrome.

The internal colonialism model explains problems of underdevelopment, such as poverty, malnutrition, and a low level of educational attainment, by focusing on external cultural factors, namely exploitative capitalistic forces. The subculture of poverty model focuses on internal cultural factors, specifically the transmission of a maladaptive world view (Pearsall 1966:8).[2] However, as Walls and Billings (1977:135) note, these models are limited in their application to the Appalachian region since they "fix attention on 'rich Appalachia and poor Appalachia,' on 'traditional Appalachia' and 'modern Appalachia'" and, in consequence, "obscure the region's complex pattern of social stratification." In other words, the problems of underdevelopment in Appalachia, of which

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[2]The subcultural values and/or perspectives which characterize this world view include fatalism, individualism, present time orientation, and traditionalism. See Pearsall (1966), Ball (1971), Knipe and Lewis (1971), and Weller (1965) for a detailed discussion of these values.

premature school withdrawal is one, are possibly a result of local (i.e. internal) differential access to political power and resources.

The paucity of information on social stratification in rural Appalachian communities reflects not only an overemphasis on the application of the culture of poverty and internal colonialism models, but also the tendency of various observers to see the rural folk as rustic peasants who live in an egalitarian, "primus inter pares" social world. Sociologist Elmora Matthews (1965), for example, analyzes the social structure of a community in rural Tennessee and concludes that stratification is not in evidence.[3] Despite her conclusions, there is ample evidence for the existence of social stratification in rural Appalachia. From the observations of John C. Campbell, who worked in the Appalachian region at the turn of the century, it can be inferred that rural Appalachia has been socially stratified for at least 100 years. In his book The Southern Highlander and His Homeland (1969), he makes reference to three social groups/classes. His distinctions among classes are somewhat vague, but they are nevertheless worth consideration. He lumps together what he refers to as urban and near-urban people and apparently views them as the upper class. He describes the middle class as including those families "which have always been, if one may trust report, what a mountain economist (local inhabitant) termed 'corn sellers' as opposed to 'corn buyers.'" He goes on to say that "on the basis of their ownings and their more generous manner of living,

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[3]As Walls and Billings note (1977:142), Matthews' research is biased because "she probably didn't ask the right question."

they belong clearly to the second class and must be so considered (pp. 81-82)." The lower class is described as follows:

> The third class is small compared with the first and with the second. In it are those with small and usually poor holdings, in distant coves, at the heads of streams, and on the mountains and hillsides, tenants, and all who have found it impossible to adapt themselves to the changes taking place. In general the members of this group may be designated as the most inaccessible, but individuals belonging to it are found scattered through areas and communities occupied by the other two (classes) (p. 82).

More recent evidence of social stratification in rural Appalachian communities is provided by Stephenson (1968) and Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam (1971). Stephenson's (1968:43-70) case study of Shiloh, a rural community located in eastern Kentucky includes a descriptive analysis of four family types, each distinguished from the other on the basis of occupational and value orientation criteria. These four family types also reflect a socially stratified community structure. Schwarzweller, Brown and Mangalam's (1971) study of Beech Creek, a community in eastern Kentucky consisting of three socially distinct neighborhoods, provides the best evidence to date on the patterns of social interaction in rural Appalachia. The Beech Creek study, conducted in the early 1960's, was based on previous research on the social organization of the community that was done in the 1940's. Therefore, it has a longitudinal time perspective that is lacking in many case studies of Appalachian communities. Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam (1971:48-58) characterize Beech Creek as exhibiting a tri-level class structure. Higher class families are described as being "more economically secure . . . they owned their homes and lands, their income

and the value of their properties were higher, and they usually had better and larger houses (p. 48)." Also, higher class families "considered it important 'to improve oneself'" and they believed that a person "'ought to amount to something (p. 49).'" In contrast, lower class families are described as follows:

> Only about half of the low-class families were landowners; what land they owned was poor and hilly. They had poorer houses, smaller farms, less and cheaper quality furniture, clothing and equipment than other families, and savings were almost non-existent. Low-class people seemed to care little for the "economic virtues" which were held in such high esteem by the high class. (They were) in general less industrious, less thrifty, and less steadfast in their resolve to acquire the ammenities of life than their more economically secure neighbors, the high class people (pp. 50-51).

More importantly, the Beech Creek study demonstrates that the people themselves perceive a class structure in their community. Beech Creekers, for example, determine social status primarily on the basis of family reputation. Perhaps the most significant contribution of the Beech Creek study, in reference to social stratification in rural Appalachia, concerns the finding that social status is strongly related to kinship (i.e. family reputation).[4] Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam come to the following conclusion:

> Beech Creekers . . . were inclined to lump the members of a wider kinship group into one class and to rank equally the members of such a group even though some conjugal families within that group might, on the basis of their own achievements alone, seem to have deserved higher or lower ranking.

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[4]The importance of kinship as a determining factor in social relations in rural Appalachia is well known. See, for example, Pearsall (1959), Stephenson (1968) and Hicks (1976).

> Contributing to this tendency was the fact that the history and background of all the families were well known in the community. It was in many respects true that the sins of the fathers were visited upon their sons; thus some Beech Creek people inherited the stigma of their parents' past. Some of the low-class families had made considerable achievements, in wealth for example, and were held in some esteem by the upper classes; they nevertheless were still considered low-class people by the latter (p. 56).

The authors conclude that Beech Creek exhibits a caste-like social order which is buttressed by a traditional emphasis on kinship. Data collected on the social organization of Baldwin County corroborate the findings of the Beech Creek study and, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the replication of such social order within the cultural context of Rock Hill School has significant implications with respect to pariah identity and premature school withdrawal.

C. BALDWIN COUNTY COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

Rock Hill School is located in Doyle (pop. 986), the only incorporated town and the governmental seat of the county. The town is situated on a wide expanse of flat land in an otherwise narrow valley between two ridges. The Reed River, which winds its way to the southwest through this narrow valley, serves as a natural boundary for the town to the south. Jack's Ridge, which looms above the town, serves as a natural boundary to the north.

The layout of Doyle is similar to that of many other towns throughout rural America. The center of the town's social activity is the courthouse square, a favorite gathering spot for men, particularly the older set, who pass the time of day talking and observing everyday

social life. The courthouse square, however, is not the center of the town in a physical sense. The town's streets were laid out parallel to the front (south) of the courthouse so as to avoid the incipient incline of Jack's Ridge to the north. The physical development of Doyle follows the contour of the narrow valley in which it's located, which means that the town has expanded, and continues to expand, in length rather than width. The front of the courthouse faces Main Street, the major throughfare and the scene of most of the town's business activity. Oak Street, which runs parallel to Main Street, is also the location of much business, but beyond this point (to the south) one encounters a cluster of dwellings, most of them of the shotgun and bungalow type.

Much in Doyle reflects the low tax base of the county. The county jail is located in a dilapidated, two story house that was built in 1860. The county library, which comprises less than 500 books, is housed in a small room once used as a business office. The county hospital, a comparatively small, rectangular, one story brick building has added trailers to meet an increase in patient load. Rock Hill School, which is in need of extensive renovation, has also made use of portable units to meet an increase in student load. It would be wrong, however, to conclude that Doyle is, as one local informant expressed it, "a rural ghetto." On the outskirts of the town there is a residential area which looks like any middle class suburb in America and, to some local inhabitants, it is symbolic of the county's established middle class and "nouveau riche."

Scattered throughout the county are a number of socially distinct neighborhoods, all of which are politically and economically connected to Doyle. These neighborhoods consist of a number of small farms which are located in close proximity to some locational feature of the physical landscape. When an individual says that he is from Briar Gap, Walker's Ford, Dry Branch, Sycamore Hollow, or Poplin's Crossroad, he is not only referring to his place of residence, but is also providing information on his social rank in the society at large. Certain neighborhoods are perceived by Baldwin County people as being highly decadent places where immoral behavior is the norm.[5] For example, the Sycamore Hollow, Greasy Creek, and Jack's Ridge neighborhoods, all of which are populated by indigent people, are viewed with particular disdain by middle and upper class people. According to members of the middle and upper classes, incest, murder, and stealing are a common occurrence in these neighborhoods. Visitors to the county are told not to venture into these neighborhoods because, as one informant said, "they'd just as soon kill you as look at you." Residents of Sycamore Hollow, Greasy Creek, and Jack's Ridge are aware of the social stigma attached to their neighborhoods. In defense of themselves, they argue that their neighborhoods are made up of good, Christian people. They view the residents of Doyle, who they blame for giving their neighborhoods bad reputations, as "a bunch of snobs" or "hypocrites." In a sense, this social conflict between Doyle and some of its surrounding

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[5]Hick's (1976) comments on a similar situation in the Little Laurel Valley in western North Carolina. See pp. 63-77.

neighborhoods is typical of the city/country duality that is characteristic of rural America in general, but in the case of Baldwin County the conflict is much deeper in that it reflects a marked distinction in social class.

As mentioned earlier, the county has historically been viewed by the local populace as comprising two socio-political sections, a northern and southern section, the symbolic line of demarcation between the two being Jack's Ridge. While this local conceptualization of socio-geographical separation is perhaps not as prevalent as it was in the past, it is still in evidence today. For example, all three of the previously mentioned "out-caste" neighborhoods lie in the northern section. In the course of several conversations with the residents of Doyle, such comments as "those people over there (north of Jack's Ridge) use to live like animals; some of 'em still do," or "when you cross 'the ridge' you're entering the outer side of life," were recorded. On one occasion the author was walking along the top of Jack's Ridge with two of of Roch Hill's teachers, both of them male and in their early twenties. While looking north across a vista of ridges, one of the teachers said "Well, here it is. Over there (to the north) is where the bad people live, and over here is where the good people live." To which the other teacher added: "Yeah, there's some places (there) that I wouldn't be after dark."

Certain extended family groups were once associated exclusively with specific neighborhoods in the county. The Henshaw and Cox families, for example, were once exclusively associated with Jack's

Ridge; the Cummings with Greasy Creek; the Pattersons with Fox Branch, and so forth. Intermarriage with other families, in and out-migration, and other factors have disrupted this settlement pattern considerably, but vestiges of it remain. The Henshaws, for example, can still be found on Jack's Ridge living on land that has been transmitted through their family for well over 150 years, but they also live at other locales in the county as well.

D. INHERITED STIGMA

> Ain't nobody here no better than nobody else.
> Everybody puts on their pants the same way.
> God made all people equal.
> People here treat everybody the same; nobody's treated special around here.
> Nobody puts on airs around here; all of us is equal.

The proverbial sayings listed above are common in the everyday discourse of Baldwin County people. There is no doubt that the people profess an egalitarian ethic, as these sayings indicate, but in Baldwin County one is again confronted with the ever present contrast between what people say and what people do. The people in Baldwin County, for example, perceive no logical inconsistency between saying "God made all people equal" or "ain't nobody here better than nobody else" and then discriminating against certain individuals because of their race, economic status, or family background.

In Baldwin County, as in the Beech Creek (Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam 1971), Shiloh (Stephenson 1968), and the Little Laurel communities (Hicks 1976), kinship criteria significantly affect patterns of social interaction. Some Baldwin Countians, for example, vote for a

particular candidate, not on the basis of platform, but on the basis of whether or not he is a relative, be he distant or close, consanguine or affinal. Certain jobs, such as school teacher, are filled, again, not solely on merit or ability, but on whether or not the applicant is a relative. More importantly, kinship is a primary criterion for determining an individual's social identity and, concomittantly, the individual's social rank in local society.

There are families in Baldwin County who historically have suffered from being ascribed a low social rank. These families make up the aforementioned "bad" people, the outcastes, who live in the "dangerous" neighborhoods. An individual born into one of these families is expected by other members of the community to behave in the so-called profligate manner of his ancestors. As Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam (1971:56) observe, it is difficult, if not impossible, for a member of a pariah family to improve his social standing even though he may behave in a socially approved manner. Individual achievement, such as the acquisition of a college education or attaining a respectable job with high income, both of which are conventional means of obtaining high social standing in middle class America, are not enough to counteract the condemnation effect of inherited stigma. This is clearly demonstrated in the Beech Creek study by the visitation patterns of the "better" families and their practice of endogamy based on kin group affiliation.

The extended kin groups in Baldwin County that suffer from inherited stigma include the Henshaws, Cummings, Claxtons, Pattersons,

Blevins, and Caldwells. The first three kin groups can trace their ancestry back nearly two hundred years to the initial settlement of Baldwin County. Over the years a considerable body of folktales and "memorates"[6] have evolved concerning the aberant behavior of infamous Henshaw and Cummings personages, both living and dead. These narratives can be heard in the barber shop, grocery store, courthouse, church, filling station, and in the home. They are told for purpose of amusement and to affirm the commonly held belief that members of these families are indecent, irrascible, and untrustworthy. For example, many tales circulate about Josiah Henshaw of Jack's Ridge, the patriarch of the Henshaw kin group who died fifteen years ago. These tales concern such events as Josiah's making and running of moonshine and his murder of a man. Tales about Josiah are known by people who live both on and off the ridge. When told by one of the residents of "the ridge," Josiah is portrayed as a noble "folk hero." However, when told by a resident of Doyle, Josiah is portrayed as an unsavory character, an impredictably violent and indecent man.

Members of Baldwin County's middle and upper classes believe that little can be done to uplift the "trash" who live in the outcaste neighborhoods. "I'll tell you," one informant said, "it's the way they rear their kids. All they care about is drinkin' and screwin' and

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[6]The term "memorate" was coined by Swedish folklorist C. W. von Sydow. It refers to a kind of pre-legend that is defined as a "narrative of personal happening" (Brunvand 1968:89-91). As used here, "memorate" refers to those stories which people tell that involve a personal encounter with a member of one of the outcaste families.

livin' on welfare. Their kids grow up not knowin' that there's a better way of life." The belief that outcaste families are behaviorally immutable is reinforced by the more iniquitous belief of some people that members of the outcaste families behave as they do because of "bad blood."[7] One day, for example, the author was talking informally with an elderly informant about Ben Henshaw, a descendant of the notorious Josiah Henshaw. Ben, who was a teacher in the local high school at the time, had been indicted by a grand jury for the theft of a truck. The informant, like many other people, assumed that he was guilty, even though a trial had not been held. The following is a rough construction of the informant's assessment of Ben's situation as taken from notes recorded shortly after the conversation:

> It's hard to believe that a man with the education he's got would do something like that. But I'm not really surprised. He's a Henshaw and the Henshaws have been acting like that for as far back as I can remember and even beyond that. They're a sorry lot. You know, I think it's in their blood. Why else would they act like they do?

Even when an individual from a pariah family improves his economic status this does not mean, as Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam (1971) note, that his social status will necessarily improve with it. Jim Patterson is a case in point. Jim, who works hard in a factory and leads a Christian life, is nevertheless viewed by others as being a member of "that set of people." The expression, "that set of people," is commonly used by those in Baldwin County's middle and upper classes

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[7]The belief in "bad blood" appears to be more commonly advocated by the older generation in the county.

reference to the pariah families who, more often than not, are economically deprived. "I'm real glad," one 72 year old woman said, "that none of my kids married into that set of people."

In conclusion, the social organization of Baldwin County exhibits a marked degree of social stratification. The system of stratification is reinforced by an historically strong familistic orientation and, to a lesser extent, by local belief that the deviant behavior of the so-called "bad families" is caused by "bad blood." Because pariah social identity and low social rank are, for some individuals, ascribed at birth, their socioeconomic mobility appears to be considerably constrained. As such, Baldwin County's social stratification exhibits traits of both a class and caste system of social organization, one which is mirrored in the informal social organization of Rock Hill School.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

A. FORMAL EDUCATION IN BALDWIN COUNTY: THE EARLY YEARS

There were no public or private schools in Baldwin County prior to the Civil War. Children were taught how to read and write by their parents, or by a tutor who would board with a family for a month or two each year. Sometimes "tutoring sessions," as they were called, were conducted in a home or chapel with several children in attendance. A tutoring session would last for around three months and was held during the winter so that children would be available to help on the farm during the planting and harvesting seasons.

Public schools were established throughout the county in 1873. They were staffed with "home grown" teachers who had little or no formal education. The first educational institution offering a college preparatory curriculum was established by the Baptists in Doyle in 1876. This school, named Doyle Academy, was later purchased and operated by the Presbyterian Church in 1905. In that year the academy had an enrollment of 135 pupils and a staff of 3 teachers. The Presbyterians were apparently sensitive to the fact that the northern part of the county did not have a school that could adequately prepare a person for successful participation in the world outside the mountains. In 1910, the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions sent Miss R., a missionary, to Sharp's Valley. According to some of the older individuals

who remember her, she was the first "real" teacher (i.e. college educated) in the northern part of the county. Miss R. worked out an agreement with the Baldwin County Board of Education to teach a regular school term, which at that time lasted for five months, for $25.00 a month. Those students who wanted and were able to continue their schooling beyond the regular school term paid Miss R. 25¢ for each additional month.

With the assistance of the local people, the Presbyterians constructed a large, three story school building in Sharp's Valley in 1929. The local residents provided the land, labor, and some 60,000 board feet of lumber. It was a modern facility for its time. There was a cafeteria on the first floor (basement); classrooms and an auditorium were on the second floor; and the teachers' offices, a library, and a small museum were located on the third floor. This school, which came to be known as Sharp's Community School, was a source of pride for the people in the northern section of the county.

Unlike some of the other settlement or mission schools in southern Appalachia, Sharp's Community School (1-12) had a dual educational program (Campbell 1921:274-277; Vance 1932:254-255). Courses were offered in homemaking for girls and agricultural methods and techniques for boys. In this respect, the school was adapted to the local cultural setting. But the school also offered courses which prepared a student for college and, in turn, mainstream, urban society.

Sharp's Community School was not only concerned with educating the young, but adults as well. Shortly after Miss R. arrived she

initiated an adult literacy program. In the following excerpt from one of her letters written in 1961, she describes the first night she met with her adult reading class. The year is 1903 or 1904.

> It was expected that five men would come. The first night sixteen came and the men carried in planks and laid them on the chairs. We had few books. Those who could read a little helped the others. We studied together for two hours each night. We laughed together at the mistakes and soon overcame the feeling of being ashamed. As their ability to read improved we read articles from Progressive Farmer and discussed what we read. Eleven men stayed with it through the winter. It was a wonderful experience for the teacher.

Former students of Sharp's Community School remember their experience there as being a rewarding one. "The teachers there," one former student said, "really cared about you. They wanted you to learn and they saw to it that you did. A person who went as far as the eighth grade there learned a lot more than somebody who went as far as the eighth grade in the public schools." There appears to be an element of truth to this statement if one compares the context of learning at Sharp's Community School with that of the one room schools which were prevalent throughout the county prior to the 1930's.

Information obtained from interviews with some of the older informants who attended one room schools appears to contradict the commonly held romantic conceptualization of one room schools being "cherished symbols of a lifestyle gone by (Schroeder 1979:4)." According to many in Baldwin County, the one room school, as one informant expressed it, "wasn't a good place for learnin'."

Mr. and Mrs. B., ages 74 and 72, discussed their experiences attending a one room school located in the Greasy Creek neighborhood

sometime between 1911 and 1922. The school building was a small, rectangular structure (ca. 18' × 30') which was also used as a chapel (Figure 3). Inside there were two sections of benches, eight rows to each section. Boys sat in the right section, girls in the left section. The front wall (on the short axis opposing the entrance) was painted black and used as a blackboard. Forty or fifty students attended the school, but attendance varied considerably. Ages of the students ranged from six to twenty-two. Mr. and Mrs. B. recalled what the school routine was like:

> MRS. B.: Yeah, I remember quite a lot about that. At nine o'clock they called it taking up books. Then the first class they had they called it chart class, making letters and things on the board and learnin' the little kids, you know, the ABC's. Then the next class was the first reader, them little ol' bitty books, you know, readin' 'em, farmer Brown's cow and all such as that. Then they had second reader, then third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and so on. Well, one teacher done that. She took us through ever' one of them. If they's nine of us in a class (grade), all nine of us when they called our grade we was in we went up and got on the benches and sit there. They kept two benches open sitting across (side by side) together at the front for us to sit on, boys on the right and girls on the left.
>
> MR. B.: Then came time for arithmetic. When it came to workin' arithmetic, we'd all get up there and she'd put them (math problems) on the board and we'd get up there and work on 'em.

Mr. and Mrs. B., as with other informants, do not recall these school days with much fondness. "They (students) got it a lot better (today) than we did back then," Mrs. B. said. "The teachers are better educated (today) and they try to help you more. If a child didn't want

to study and learn (in the odd days), it didn't have a chance at all. They (the teachers) didn't fool with us."

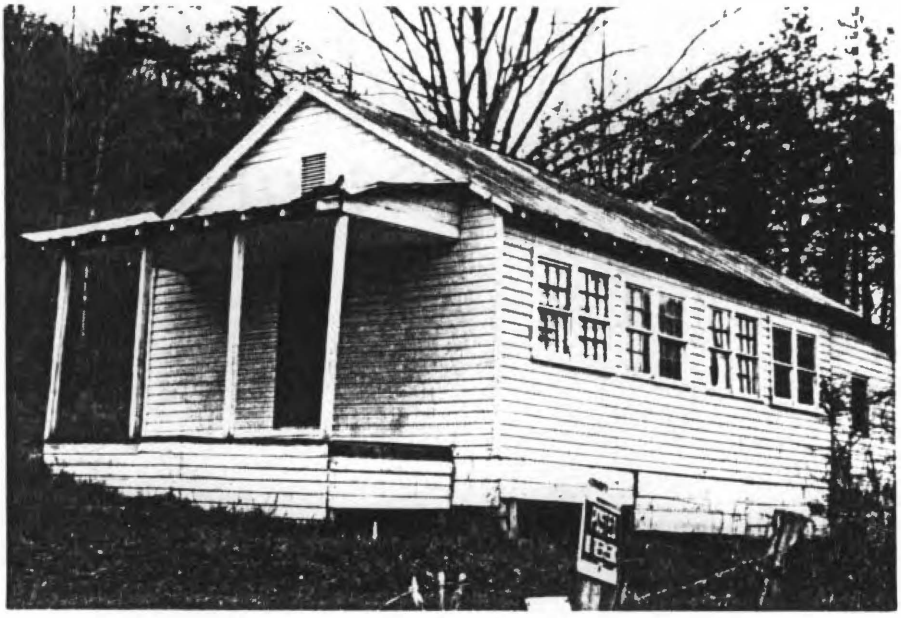

Figure 3. The last one-room school house in operation in Baldwin County. The doors were closed permanently in 1964.

In 1950 there were 52 schools in Baldwin County. Fifty were elementary schools, 30 of which were staffed with one teacher. It should be noted that the "elementary" school at that time usually included grades one through eight. There were also 8 elementary schools staffed with 2 teachers; 6 with 3 teachers; and 1 staffed with 4 teachers for grades one through ten. One school was staffed with 18 teachers and served as the county's only "public" high shcool; Sharp's Community School, which offered a high school curriculum, was still in operation in 1950.

As with other school systems in the nation, Baldwin County's has been undergoing the process of school consolidation, presumably to save money. In 1960 the number of schools was reduced to 28; in 1970 it decreased to 14; at present there are 7 schools, which include one high school (grades 8-12) and six elementary schools (for grades 1-7 or 8). For the record, the last one room school closed its doors in 1964.

The county populace is split in their attitude toward the school consolidation program. Hardly anyone wants to return to the one room school days, but many regret the closing of the small elementary school that was staffed with three or four teachers. People who live in neighborhoods located in the outer reaches of the county dislike the fact that their children are bused to school in Doyle, a bus ride that in some cases involves two hours. They also believe they have less involvement, less control, over the education of their children. Advocates of school consolidation point out the economizing factor. "It must be advantageous," one school administrator said, "otherwise, why would every school system in the nation be doing it"? Advocates also point out that school consolidation has improved the county high school basketball program. Lest this argument be taken too lightly, it should be noted that the high school basketball program is viewed by many people as a means of "letting the rest of the world know we exist."

B. RESEARCH SETTING: ROCK HILL SCHOOL

The School Plant

Rock Hill School, as the name indicates, is located on a hill that overlooks Doyle. Actually, the hill is part of the escarpment of Jack's

Ridge. The original part of the building, a split-level brick structure, was constructed in 1936. A wing of classrooms was added to the gymnasium, which is part of the lower level, in 1954. The "Main Building," as this structure is referred to by staff and students, has eighteen classrooms, a principal's office, a teacher's lounge, a cafeteria, and a library. The "Main Building" houses grades 1-5. Across a street to the left (west) side of the main building is the "Rock Building." The Rock Building, constructed in 1939, is a two-story structure with three classrooms and a storage room on the first floor and one classroom and a large office on the second floor. The Rock Building houses grades 6 and 7. In front of the Main Building are two portable units, one used for a special education program and the other for remedial reading. To the rear (south) of the Main Building is a spacious playground which includes a baseball field, swingsets, seesaws, and a merry-go-round.

The Teaching Staff

Rock Hill's teaching staff numbers twenty-four persons. Five males and nineteen females. The average age of the staff is thirty-six. Such a young age might suggest that there is a problem with teacher turnover, but this is not the case. The young age of the teaching staff is partially explained by the fact that six teachers retired in the past five years after giving twenty-five or more years of service. Three more are intending to retire after the 1979/80 school years. Also, teaching positions are very much in demand due to the previously

mentioned limited employment opportunity within the county. This situation has tended to reduce the turnover rate.

Every teacher on Rock Hill's staff has a bachelor's degree, and most all have their teaching certificates.

Student Population

Rock Hill serves 496 students, most of whom are white.[1] Prior to the implementation of school consolidation, Rock Hill students were primarily from Doyle and neighborhoods located nearby. Consolidation, however, brought about the incorporation of students from neighborhoods located relatively far from the school. One result of the consolidation program was the inclusion of students from some of the pariah neighborhoods located in the northern section of the county. Thus, Rock Hill, which at one time was viewed by the people in the northern section as the "city" school that served exclusively the "snobs" of Doyle, is now viewed more as a true public school. It would be wrong, however, to think that Rock Hill was ever a school for only the middle and upper class people of Doyle. Historically, the lower class has always been represented in Rock Hill's student body; but it is probably correct to conclude that the number of indigent students enrolled at the school increased significantly as a result of consolidation.

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[1]There were only two black students enrolled at Rock Hill during the period of fieldwork.

School as "Ceremonial Center"[2]

Rock Hill is the location of many nonacademic celebrations which are conducted to raise funds for the school. Halloween, for example, is a major fund-raising event. At this time the teachers and parents work together in converting the school into an amusement center that offers a haunted house, a cake walk, bingo games, an auction, fortune telling, and a dance. Dances for the young people are held in Rock Hill's gymnasium three or four times a year to raise funds for the school.

Basketball plays a major role in the nonacademic activity of Rock Hill. Rock Hill, which fields both boy's and girl's teams, consisting of sixth and seventh grade students only, is viewed as a major training program for the one and only high school in the county. High school basketball games in Baldwin County are major social events, not only because the county youth are involved in athletic competition, and not only because a basketball game provides the opportunity for people to socialize, but also because the basketball team is a symbol of the county itself. Excellence in basketball, as one teacher expressed it, is viewed as a means of "putting the county on the map."

The Daily Academic Routine

School commences at Rock Hill at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. Each sixth and seventh grade student begins his day with his homeroom teacher who is responsible for teaching reading and spelling as well as

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[2]The term "ceremonial center" was borrowed from Hicks (1976:72).

his special subject, which includes either health and science, English, social studies, or math. After receiving instruction in reading, spelling, and the homeroom teacher's special subject, a student makes his rotation with the other sixth and seventh grade teachers who instruct him in their special subjects. The students have a thirty minute lunch break, two fifteen minute rest breaks, and thirty minutes for physical education. A thirty minute period at the end of the day (from 3:00-3:30 p.m.) is used for cleaning the homeroom.

The daily academic routine for sixth and seventh grade students is altered on certain occasions, such as when the school basketball team plays at home, or when the local 4-H representative visits the school, or when the so-called "Bible Women" pay a visit. The "Bible Women," who represent the Gideon Foundation, visit the school once a month. When they arrive a teacher will turn over his class to them for approximately one hour. During this time the "Bible Women" tell biblical stories and instruct the students on Christian virtues. Students are not required to attend the classes of the "Bible Women," but it is of interest to note that all the students enjoyed the Bible classes and not one student requested to be dismissed from them during the course of fieldwork.

C. THE EDUCATIONAL ETHOS OF ROCK HILL SCHOOL

Recruitment of Teachers

Various observers have commented on how the school systems in rural Appalachia generally recruit teachers who are indigenous to or

live near the counties which a given system serves (Seay 1934:16-18; Ogletree 1970). A survey conducted in 1977 demonstrates clearly that this recruitment pattern is present in the Baldwin County school system. According to the survey, 84% of the school system's personnel (including teachers and administrative staff) was born in the county. Moreover, 87.5% of the personnel graduated from Baldwin County High School (Mimeographed Report, Department of Educational Administration and Supervision, The University of Tennessee 1977:5-6). The statistics for Rock Hill's teaching staff reflect those of the county at large: 88% were born in Baldwin County and 85% graduated from Baldwin County High School.

Nepotism historically has been a problem in rural Appalachian schools (Seay 1934:16-18). As Ogletree (1978:188) observes, teachers are recruited more on the basis of who they are related to than merit or ability. Incompetent teachers, in some situations, are retained because of their kinship and/or political connection to school administrators. Interviews with some of Rock Hill's teachers revealed an entrenched pattern of nepotism. One seventh grade teacher said, in a joking manner, that the fact that his father had taught in the county school system over fifteen years "probably didn't hurt my chances in getting a job." It probably did not hurt his brother's chances either; he teaches at the local high school. Another seventh grade teacher reported that his aunt, who had taught with the Baldwin County system for over 30 years, was instrumental in his getting a teaching position <u>before</u> he had completed his last two years of college. One sixth grade teacher was the

wife of the former superintendent of schools. Another sixth grade teacher said "my Daddy knew somebody on the board. You've got to know somebody before you can get any job in this county."

A question of immediate importance regarding nepotism is whether or not anybody from outside the county or state applies for a teaching position in Baldwin County. The superintendent of schools was asked whether unsolicited applications for teaching positions by people from other areas are received and he reported that many such applications come across his desk. "But I don't pay any attention to them," he said. "Look," he continued, "this is a poor county and I'm going to help out somebody in this county rather than somebody I don't know. Besides, I'd rather not have some crusader come in here and tell all of us that we've been doing everything wrong and we got to start all over. We have enough people giving us advice, like the people from Tennessee (University of). We don't need anymore outside help."

Attitude Toward the Teaching Profession

Most of the teachers interviewed at Rock Hill enjoyed their work. They also believed that their role as agents of socialization was vitally important. Nevertheless, the degree of commitment toward this role by some of the teachers at Rock Hill seems to be, at best, both marginal and temporary.

While most of the lower grade teachers interviewed said that they had made a decision early in life to become a teacher, three of the four upper grade teachers made their decision to enter the teaching profession relatively late in life. Mr. R., for example, said that when

he was in college he "wanted to be anything but a teacher." "I was working in a factory at the time," he added, "putting floors in trailers, when my father told me about a position open here at Rock Hill. He suggested that I apply for it. Well, I was tired of the work I was doing and wasn't making any money. So I applied for the job." Mr. J., a seventh grade teacher, said that he entered the teaching profession "out of necessity" in the beginning because "there wasn't much else to do." He also added that "it (teaching) goes very well with farming." Mr. M., a sixth grade teacher noted that when he was in college that he never had an occupational goal. "I never thought that I'd end up being a teacher," he said, "but it was the only option available to me." Mrs. L., a sixth grade teacher and the remaining member of the upper grade teaching corp, decided to become a teacher when she was ten or eleven years of age. "I love children and I love teaching," she said. It is noteworthy that three of the four upper grade teachers never planned on a teaching career. They entered the profession primarily because they wanted to remain in the county and teaching was a means of fulfilling this desire. All of them said they enjoyed teaching, but, interestingly, each of them reported that they would not like to be a teacher for a long period of time. Mr. R., for example, was looking for another job at the time of this study. "It (teaching) is literally killing me. I don't think my nerves can take it much longer," he said. Mr. J. and Mr. M. also said that they did not intend to remain in teaching very long. Mr. J. has aspirations for entering the field of educational administration. Mr. M. reported that he would remain in

teaching until "something better comes along." To conclude, it appears that the upper grade teachers, with one exception, have a perfunctory attitude toward their profession. Teaching does not appear to be valued in and of itself. Rather, it is viewed as a means of support, one that allows a teacher to remain in the county. As previously noted, the employment opportunities within Baldwin County for a person with a college education are extremely limited.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching at Rock Hill: The Teachers' Perspective

The most common complaint voiced about teaching at Rock Hill concerns the "fishbowl effect." Because they work in a small, predominantly rural county where "everybody knows everybody," many teachers believe they are under constant scrutiny. They are well aware of the fact that parents believe teachers should set a good example of moral behavior for their children. From their perspective, they cannot behave as "normal" people do; they must, in the words of Mr. R., "put up a front." Mr. R., for example spoke about how he had to conceal the fact that he enjoys drinking beer in moderate amounts because the "do-gooders" in the county would think badly of him. Mr. M. expressed the same opinion:

> That (the fishbowl effect) is my main problem with teaching. It seems like you have to put on a show for a lot of people. Like if you're not doing anything wrong but you're talking to the wrong people or something, they're gonna associate you with them and say "he's up to no good" when really there's nothing going on. Like me, I go to the package store and get a beer and here comes a student in buying a package of crackers and he looks at you and goes "uh-huh" and the next day you hear about it at school.

Another common complaint concerns the apparent lack of community support for Rock Hill. Nearly all the teachers commented on the poor attendance at P.T.O. (Parent/Teacher Organization) meetings. "This tells you," one teacher said, "just how low education ranks in terms of priorities in this county." It should be noted here, however, that the public exhibited enthusiastic support for some of the school's fund raising activities.

On more than one occasion some of the teachers made such comments as "We're just a bunch of hillbillies here" and "Rock Hill is just a small, country school that can't give a kid what the city school can." Comments such as these suggest that the faculty of Rock Hill does not perceive their school as being as "progressive" as some schools located in an urban setting. "We could be much better than we are," one teacher reported, "if the Board of Education was more aware of how times have changed."

Though many of the teachers at Rock Hill express a sense of inferiority when they compare their school with their image of the typical city school, they nevertheless believe that the working situation at Rock Hill has definite positive aspects. "We don't have a dope (drug) problem like other schools (city schools) have," Mr. R. remarked. Mr. J. commented on the respect he receives from his students: "I was brought up in a very rigid home, 'yes sir, no sir,' that kind of thing. I expect it out of these students. And that's what I find refreshing about Baldwin County. You <u>have</u> that respect." According to the teachers the discipline problem of some of the city schools, which they

read about and see depicted on television, is not present at Rock Hill. "We have a fight between students now and then," Mr. R. said, "but I don't think we've ever had a teacher hit or stabbed by a student. We wouldn't put up with that kind of crap."

It is of importance to note that not all of the teachers at Rock Hill think that their school is less progressive than the urban school. Some like to brag about the fact that most of the schools in the nation today are returning to the basics when, from their perspective, their school has been always oriented toward the instruction of fundamentals. "We never had the money to have all those innovative programs and courses," Mr. R. Said. "But now it seems like everybody is going back to the three R's. We have a lot of those special (emphasis his) programs, you know: special math, special reading, special this, and special that. I'd like to see us do away with all these special programs because the way it is now a student doesn't spend enough time with his teacher." Mr. R. went on further to say that he alone could work with the students who need special help if he had a student aid to assist him. He firmly believes that a student must form a strong working relationship with one teacher alone. That is why he and the other upper grade teachers are quite displeased with the departmentalization structure that was introduced three years ago. Prior to the departmentalization of the upper grades, one teacher was responsible for teaching all subjects: math, English, social studies, science, and health. Now a teacher is responsible for one subject (either English, social studies, science, or math), as well as teaching reading and

spelling to their home class. Students are rotated from one teacher to the next through the course of the day. "The way it is now, it's like turning a channel on the television set," Mr. R. said. "My students don't get enough math and science," said Mrs. L., "and Mr. R.'s, Mr. M.'s, and Mr. J.'s students (their homeroom classes) don't get enough English." Mr. R. said, "It's a problem of scheduling. You don't get the chance to integrate information from one subject to another. You could show how things in social studies relate to certain things you read about in English or science before departmentalization. If this is progress, I don't want any part of it and I've told them (the administrators) that."

Teaching Philosophy

"They don't have a philosophy or theory of teaching." This remark was made in a casual, sarcastic manner by the principal of Rock Hill when the author told him he intended to obtain information from the teachers on the basic assumptions which underly their teaching methods and techniques. Contrary to the principal's opinion, the teachers at Rock Hill do indeed have a philosophy of teaching. In this section the philosophy of teaching at Rock Hill will be discussed in reference to educational goals and instructional techniques.

Educational Goals: The Ideal Perspective. In an ethnographic study of two schools located in the Midwest, Metz (1978:35-53) determined that the educational goals of the teachers could be categorized as belonging to one of two approaches: the incorporative or

the developmental. Some teachers, of course, cannot be categorized as following only one or the other approach. Some teachers exhibit traits of both.

A teacher who adheres to the incorporative approach believes there is a body of knowledge and analytical skills which a student must absorb through the course of an academic year. The student is perceived by the teacher as a vacuous being who must be programmed with a finite amount of knowledge and skills. Once programmed, the student is then ready to move to the next level to receive another body of knowledge and skills. As Metz points out, the teacher who follows this approach usually adheres to a rigid, "by the book" method of instruction. Since it is assumed by the incorporatively oriented teacher that a student knows nothing and has little desire for learning what they need to know, there is little interaction between teacher and student in terms of the learning process. Creative learning projects, especially those which tap the student's own interests, are perceived as a frivolous waste of time.

The developmental approach places emphasis on the interaction between student and teacher in the learning process by working within the experential frame of reference of the student. Students are taught how to learn rather than absorbing a body of knowledge and skills. This is accomplished by keying in on what the student finds interesting and then extending the student's frame of reference to what he needs to know. A major assumption of the developmental approach is that students are curious and certainly not vacuous.

Of the four upper grade teachers at Rock Hill, three were strong advocates of the developmental approach. It is noteworthy that these three teachers are male and young (25 years of age or younger), while the only teacher emphasizing the incorporative approach is a woman 62 years of age with 37 years of teaching experience.

When asked about what kind of instructional techniques they believed to be most effective, all the developmentally oriented teachers said they believed in maintaining a "loosely structured" classroom. The following comments are illustrative of what they mean by the term "loosely structured":

> MR. R.: I let the kids ask questions and sometimes I'll get way off track of what we're talking about in the first place. I don't stick to a real strict order of anything. I don't give hardly as much busy work as some of the other teachers do.
>
> MR. J.: The way it's set up now, it's practically like throwing corn out to chickens: the ones that get it do, and the ones that don't, don't. The classroom is really not the ideal place for learning. Education involves seeing, feeling, hearing. I try to take the kids on fieldtrips as much as possible. But since I'm in the classroom most of the time, I try to bring in a lot of outside material. We used the book maybe twice throughout the last year. I think you get more involved in a loosely structured classroom. When you mention the word "loosely structured" to a lot of people around here it means too much freedom or independence. To me, loosely structured means allowing students to ask questions that may be off the subject. I try not to supress that for, to me, if you don't ask, how are you going to know? A loosely structured classroom, I think, stimulates more thinking.
>
> Mr. M.: I think you have to maintain a relaxed room so that it's not like they (the students) are in prison. We sometimes get off the subject, but I think it's good to do that. I don't get into a race with the other teachers to get through a textbook.

A loosely structured classroom to these teachers means allowing students to ask questions about things that are important to the students. Digressions from the subject matter at hand are considered to be a significant part of the learning experience.

As Metz (1978) points out, there are risks involved in operating a loosely structured classroom in terms of maintaining the authority relationship between the student and the teacher. It takes a teacher with a special kind of personality to maintain control over the students in this kind of learning environment, for inevitably there will be those students who misconstrue "loosely structured" to mean "anything goes." Mr. Mr., for example, tells about how his position of authority was usurped by the students in his attempt to create the loosely structured learning environment:

> I think you should kind of get down on their level so you can relate to them, but still yet let them know that you've got all the angles and stuff. Let them know who's boss so they don't run over you. I found that out last year. I started out trying to be "Mr. Nice Guy" and that didn't last too long. Students would not talk in turns and they wouldn't listen to what either I or another student was trying to say. Things got out of control. I lost control of the class.

Mrs. L., the sole advocate of the incorporative approach, stands in stark contrast to the other teachers. The following excerpt from an interview encapsulates her perspective:

> My goal is to teach the child, to the best of my ability, the things he should know. I take the child where it is at that point in time and give it what it needs to know. I don't believe a teacher should put himself on the level of the child, but don't get above his level. But still retain his respect. Let him know you're the authority, but be able to communicate with him on his level. I think

> some of the other teachers are much too lax with the children. They neglect what they should be doing by trying to be a friend of the student. That's one of the reasons (why) some of our students can't read or write.

From Mrs. L.'s point of view, those teachers who follow the developmental approach cannot teach effectively because they have undermined their position of authority by "giving in" to the students' desires. She is of the opinion that the average student is not mature enough to handle the individual freedom that is built into the developmental approach. She also thinks that a teacher of the developmental persuasion is more or less shrugging his duties and, in her words, "creating a lot of good thinkers who can neither read nor write."

Educational Goals: Ideal vs. Real Behavior. Observation of classroom behavior demonstrated that the developmental teachers did not activate or implement their espoused approach to education. There were no creative learning projects in which a student could build upon his own experience and extend his frame of reference; there were no efforts to work with any student on an individualized level; there were very few efforts made to bring in reading or lecture material outside that which was contained in the textbook. Instead, instructional techniques were usually of the incorporative sort. Each teacher, for example, was responsible for teaching reading and each teacher, regardless of the educational approach they espoused, used the same instructional technique. This consisted of having students take turns reading aloud a passage from a story in their reader. After finishing the story, the students were required to answer the corresponding exercises in their books. The same

method was used in the social studies classes taught by Mr. J., the most articulate advocate of the developmental approach. Again, students would take turns in reading passages aloud from a chapter in the book, after which they would work on their exercises. Mr. J. made no effort to relate what was happening, for example, in France or Canada to what was happening in Baldwin County, Tennessee. Places like France and Canada were treated more as places in a textbook or on a map than actual realities. Science class, more often than not, followed the same pattern: read aloud, answer the exercises. It became apparent after several hours of classroom observation that one of the teachers, Mr. R., actually tried to implement the developmental approach, but he lacked the ability to stimulate and control student interest. Occasionally he allowed students to ask questions, to stray from the subject at hand. The students, however, viewed question asking time as a "stall tactic." From the students' point of view it was to their advantage to stray from the subject as long as possible because this meant they would have less material to be responsible for on the next test, or a fewer number of tests. Mr. R., however, was aware of this tactic. He, like the author, could hear one student say to another: "ask him another question, quick!" When it became apparent that students were using the "stall tactic," Mr. R. would abruptly call an end to question asking and request a student to begin reading aloud from the book; or he would assign exercises from the book.

Incorporative and developmental approaches aside, one of the teachers, Mr. J., had reached the point of near complete abdication of

his teaching duties. On a typical day, Mr. J. was often 15 to 30 minutes late for his first class. When he eventually arrived the students were usually in a state of chaos: throwing wads of paper, playing the radio, hitting and pushing, and so forth. To put the class in order he would choose two or three among the many guilty students and give them three licks each with a wooden paddle. He would then require the class to outline a chapter or work on exercises from the book, for which they would receive a grade, and then he would leave. When Mr. J. was in the classroom his loosely structured approach was often nothing more than engaging in badinage with students. The point is that Mr. J. did very little teaching. He seldom lectured because he seldom had anything prepared, and he conducted few discussions about the reading material. Nevertheless, Mr. J. was one of the more popular teachers among the students.

Mrs. L., in contrast, was the least popular teacher among the students. She was a stern disciplinarian and academically demanding. She always came to class prepared and she expected her students to do the same. The students did not like her, but they did respect her. When students were asked who they liked most as a teacher, the majority of them mentioned Mr. J. But when they were asked who they thought the best teacher was,[3] the majority mentioned Mrs. L. Mrs. L. was aware of her unpopular image, and she was aware of Mr. J.'s behavior in the classroom. One day in the teacher's lounge she overheard another

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[3]During the student interviews, "best teacher" was defined for them as the teacher from whom they learned the most.

teacher commenting on how much the kids liked Mr. J., how he could relate to students on their level. She intruded upon the conversation saying: "Yes, Mr. J. is well liked by the children, but he isn't teaching them anything! We're not running a popularity contest around here, you know!"

Social Groups among Teachers

Ethnographic studies of schools have shown that social groups among teachers form themselves in accordance with a number of criteria, such as age, sex, grade level of instruction, and philosophy of teaching. For example, Metz (1978) shows how the teachers at one high school were grouped into opposing factions based on their allegiance to either the developmental or incorporative approaches to education. Age was another distinguishing characteristic, since those who believed in the incorporative approach were usually older in age than those favoring the developmental approach. A similar kind of factionalism is described by King (1967:65-71) in his study of one Indian reservation school located in the Yukon.

The teachers at Rock Hill are factionalized primarily in terms of level of grade instruction. Teachers talk about issues in reference to how they will affect the "lower grade teachers" (k-5) and "upper grade teachers (6 and 7)." Upper grade teachers, for example, often complained about how the lower grade teachers were favored in terms of the expenditure of funds for teaching materials. The upper grade teachers also believed the lower grade teachers were jealous of them

because upper grade teachers had more free time during the working day. Later in the text, the animosity that exists between lower and upper grade teachers will be discussed in reference to each group blaming the other for the high rate of early school departure in Baldwin County.

Factionalism was evident among the lower grade teaching group as well. Two lower grade teachers said there was a clique (which included three other lower grade teachers) that was given preferential treatment by the principal. The clique supposedly received more teaching materials and they were also consulted for their opinion more than other teachers when a change in school policy was being considered. "They go to Mr. K. (the principal) and tell him about some project they've cooked up and the next day the project is ramrodded through whether we like it or not," one disgruntled lower grade teacher complained. An example of "ramrodding" ocuurred three years ago. According to some of the lower grade teachers, the principal and his coterie decided that Rock Hill would no longer continue the unofficial policy of social promotion in the lower grades. As a result, 23 first and 18 second grade students were not promoted. This action aroused considerable controversy among teachers and parents alike. "It's not that I disagreed completely with Mr. K.'s decision," one teacher said. "I disagreed more with the way the decision was carried out. I find out one day that some of my students are not going on to the next grade without ever being consulted about it at all. I mean, some of them should have been held back, but not all of them. But my opinion was not important to Mr. K."

A View from the Outside

It has already been noted that most of the teachers are native to the county. What is it like for a teacher who comes in from outside the county? How do they perceive Rock Hill School? How do the natives on the staff perceive the outsider? Does the outsider have any problems in adjustment? These questions were directed to Mrs. O., a 32 year old lower grade teacher who moved to Doyle eight years ago after marrying a native of Baldwin County.

Mrs. O. grew up and attended school in an urban site located in another part of the state. Her native city is nationally known for its scientific research facilities and the comparatively high level of education of its populace. Mrs. O. stated that she enjoyed living in her native city, especially the impersonal, "mind-your-own-business" attitude of its inhabitants. In contrast, she views Doyle as a "small world with small minds." "I don't know anybody's business but my families," she said, "but I bet you ten bucks the people here know more about me than I know about me. And if they don't know it, they'll make up something!"

Though Mrs. O. has been living in Baldwin County for eight years, she still does not think she has been accepted by local residents. "People knock where I come from," she said, but she thinks they behave as they do because "they're actually jealous of my background; where I grew up and everything." She added that the only way one can really be a part of the social lofe of Baldwin County is "to be born in and grow up in Baldwin County."

Because of her feelings of social alienation, and because of the unfounded rumors about her and her family, she purposefully avoids social contact with the staff of Rock Hill. "I go to school and do my job to the best of my ability and that's it," she said. "There's maybe one person at the school that I can trust and call a friend."

Mrs. O.'s experience as an outsider has important implications in consideration of some observers who believe that one way to break down the cultural isloation of Appalachian mountain communities is to import outsiders who can serve as "cultural brokers" between the mountain community and mainstream, American society. Plunkett and Bowman (1973), for example, maintain that teachers who are natives of the mountain communities cannot serve as effective "interstitial persons" (i.e. cultural brokers). In their study of elite social organization of three mountain communities in eastern Kentucky, Plunkett and Bowman state that "very little resistance was expressed (by elite members of the small towns, including teachers and school administrators) to importation of out-of-state teachers for mountain schools—a tolerance that contrasted sharply with attitudes toward outsiders residing in the mountains (1973:90-91)." Yet, the experience of Mrs. O., a non-native of Baldwin County, and the previously mentioned recruitment policy of the Baldwin County school system, indicates that Plunkett and Bowman's position does not apply in this case.

The Leveling Effect: A Barrier to Educational Innovation and Effective Teaching

There are two major obstacles to the implementation of innovation and the establishment of effective teaching in the educational program

of Rock Hill: (1) a strong resentment among some members of the teaching staff to creative or superior teaching and (2) the lack of an operative reward or merit system for creative or superior work. These two obstacles combine to form what is termed the "leveling effect."

Institutionalized Resentment. Many teachers at Rock Hill blame the conservative "don't rock the boat" orientation of the general public and the Board of Education for being unwilling to experiment with new programs and techniques of instruction. They like to point out, for example, that only one of the four members of the Board of Education has a college degree and that a great number of the Baldwin County populace has not finished high school. Their claim is legitimate to a certain extent, but the resistance to change and the establishment of an effective teaching program is as much internal (within the school) as it is external (outside the school). This is clearly evident when a teacher assumes the role of innovator. After assuming the role of innovator, he is perceived by some of the others as a threat since his actions expose what the less productive and less creative teacher believes he should do, or, perhaps, what he is unable to do. Should the innovative teacher be successful and begin reaping the praise that comes from his efforts, the threatened teachers may become resentful and jealous. Motivated by a fear of exposure of incompetence, the threatened teachers unite together and make a conscious effort to find fault in the more innovative and dedicated teacher's methods and educational philosophy. Their carping remarks, which eventually enter the informal communication circuit of the school, serve to protect their

professional image and to "level" the victimized teacher to an acceptable standard of normative mediocrity. The innovative, dedicated teacher, is, of course, aware of these efforts to "level" his behavior, which explains why he eventually decides to either assume a more neutral, less threatening role (i.e. become less productive), or even to resign from teaching altogether.

The leveling of innovative teaching is well illustrated in the case of Mrs. T., a lower grade teacher. Mrs. T. believed in getting the students involved in learning by, for example, taking them on several fieldtrips where they could, in her words, "experience things firsthand." Mrs. T. believed such fieldtrips were invaluable ixperiences for some of her more culturally isolated students who had never been outside Baldwin County. Many of the parents greatly appreciated Mrs. T.'s efforts and told her so. Yet, when it became apparent to some of the teachers that Mrs. T. was receiving more recognition than they were, they began making sarcastic comments about her "getting away from basics" and "spending more time out of the classroom than in it." Mrs. T. has not been leveled to mediocrity yet, but there is every possibility that she will be in the coming years. One of the upper grade teachers expressed the leveling effect as motivated by jealous emotion quite well in the following remark: "It (jealousy) is something that's been a hindrance to this county all along. It's a small county, everyone knows everyone, and when someone seems to be stepping into the limelight, just a little bit, the others will go right against them. A <u>lot</u> of jealousy (exists), a tremendous amount of jealousy!"

The Ethnic of Indifference. The lack of an operative reward or merit system for outstanding teaching definitely works against the development of a maximally effective teaching staff at Rock Hill. At present, increases in the salary of a teacher are awarded solely on the basis of years of experience and not on ability. Furthermore, raises in salary are made "across the board," which means that all teachers receive an increase at the same time. Those teachers at Rock Hill who expend more time for either classroom preparation or extracurricular activities express resentment over the fact that some of their less productive colleagues received the same amount of pay as they did. They were especially resentful toward those teachers who, in their opinion, had abdicated teaching. The lack of a reward system that differentiates between those who do teach from those who do not teach has resulted in an ethnic of indifference. Such remarks as "why should I bust my ass when nobody else is" or "nobody around here gives a damn, so why should I?" are testimony to the existence of an attitude of indifference toward teaching at Rock Hill. As one teacher expressed it: "I could very easily resolve myself to the fact that I'm going to sit around and not teach like everybody else." It is important to note, however, that only one of the upper grade teachers had not become a victim of this form of institutionalized resignation. For this individual the rewards of the profession are largely intrinsic.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANTECEDENTS OF EARLY SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

A. THE PROBLEM OF EARLY SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

Baldwin County, as with the central and southern subregions of Appalachia, historically has lagged behind the nation in educational attainment. In 1950 the median school years completed by the Baldwin County population was 6.3; in 1960 it rose to 7.2 years; and in 1970 it rose again to 8.0 years. In 1970 the median school years completed by the nation as a whole was 12.1. Thus, in spite of improvement in the level of educational attainment over the last two decades, the county continues to lag behind the rest of the nation.

The Baldwin County school system does not maintain statistical records concerning the identity or number of individuals who withdrew from school before obtaining a high school diploma. Nor are the teachers required to maintain class attendance records. Nevertheless, an approximate rate of withdrawal can be determined by comparing the number of students entering the ninth grade with the number of students who graduate four years later. In Table 1 the number of students in the graduating classes from 1973 to 1980 is compared with corresponding enrollments for the same years in the ninth grade. Data presented in this table show that over a seven year period roughly 70% of those enrolled in the ninth grade graduated from high school. The suggested premature withdrawal rate ranges between 25% and 30%.

TABLE 1

School Enrollment and Graduation Figures from 1973 to 1980

Year of Graduation	Total Graduates	Number of Pupils Entering Ninth Grade	Percentage of Ninth Grade Completing High School	Withdrawal Percentage
1973	92	121	76.0	24.0
1974	78	125	62.4	37.6
1975	79	116	68.1	31.9
1976	80	110	72.7	27.3
1977	92	140	65.7	34.3
1978	88	128	68.5	31.5
1979	87	112	75.8	24.2
1980	75	106	77.5	22.5

Table 2 presents information on enrollment patterns in reference to the graduating class of 1980. The largest drop in male enrollment occurs between the tenth and eleventh grades. The largest drop in female enrollment occurs between the eleventh and twelfth grades. It appears that boys withdraw from school earlier than girls in Baldwin County, but a more in-depth analysis of the records is required before it can be said that this pattern has any historical depth to it.

B. IDENTIFYING THE POTENTIAL DROPOUT

Several criteria were used to identify the potential dropout at Rock Hill School. First, it was assumed that a negative attitude toward formal education would be more prevalent among students from low income families. This assumption was based on previous studies of premature school withdrawal in rural Appalachia by Youmans (1963) and

TABLE 2

Enrollment Patterns for the Class of 1980 Over A Five Year Period

Grade/Year	Number and Percent of Boys Enrolled		Number and Percent of Girls Enrolled		Total Enrollment
eighth, 75/76	69	(55)	55	(45)	124
ninth, 76/77	60	(53)	52	(47)	112
tenth, 77/78	56	(53)	50	(47)	106
eleventh, 78/79	39	(44)	49	(56)	88
twelfth, 79/80	39	(52)	36	(48)	75

Mink and Barker (1968). Other criteria used to identify potential dropouts in this study included absenteeism from school, noninvolvement in extracurricular activities, and family surname. A social identity test, as described in Chapter I, supported the assumption that sixth and seventh graders perceived the existence of a pariah group which included 15 students. Approximately 90% (13 of 15) of these students were from low income families who suffered from inherited stigma. Interviews with selected students, including those from "acceptable" and "outcaste" families, indicate that the pariah student has a more negative attitude toward school. This negative attitude toward school appears to be not so much a rejection of formal education as it is a rejection of the social situation at Rock Hill School. This point will

be discussed at considerable length later in the text, but it is of importance to note here that social criteria (e.g., family name) at Rock Hill appear to be significant indicators of dropout proneness.[1]

C. THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE CAUSES OF EARLY SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

Rock Hill's teachers are not mute about the problem of premature school withdrawal. All of them are aware of it and some are quite outspoken about what causes it. Their theories about what causes the problem are worth considering at some length because their perspective could, depending on the theory advocated, serve to exacerbate the problem or possibly block any efforts toward mitigation.

The Welfare Theory

This theory has two major tenets. First, it is believed that welfare programs subvert the incentive for an individual to improve his economic status. Secondly, it is assumed that the lack of a self-improvement incentive, a welfare ethic, is transmitted from one generation to the next.[2] Thus, an exponent of this theory would explain school failure and school withdrawal as being a result of the

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[1]This proposition, of course, remains to be tested by conducting a follow-up study to determine if those identified as potential dropouts at Rock Hill actually do withdraw from school prematurely at a significantly higher rate than other students.

[2]The welfare theory is similar to the culture of poverty theory mentioned earlier in the sense that it blames the welfare people for being on welfare. The theory has many advocates throughout the county, young and old alike.

child's family not instilling within him the value of self-improvement through obtaining a formal education. The following excerpt from an interview with an upper grade teacher is illustrative of the welfare theory:

> I would say that 45 to 50% of this county is on some form of economic aid from the federal government or state. And, well, the kids grow up seeing their parents sit back on their cans doing whatever, doing nothing, going to the mailbox to pick up their check from month to month, with no ambition, no goals . . . They (the children) don't have the environment in the home that says "don't you want something better?" Instead, they have the kind of environment in the home that says "well, what the hell are you wasting your time in school for when you could be home with me doing nothing!" (For example), there's a family that lives near me, mother only, and she has about nine children. She receives close to nine hundred dollars a month, plus electricity free, housing free, things like that, simply because she's a breeding machine for the illiterate!

The Getting-By Theory[3]

The basic assumption of the "getting-by" theory, which many of Rock Hill's teachers ascribe to, is that there are some families who are not advocates of the "get ahead" ethic which is an integral part of middle class American culture. "There are some people in this county," one teacher said, "who don't make much money and don't really care about making a lot of money. They are content to just get by and nothing more." "Getting an education doesn't mean much to some of the people here," another teacher said. "As long as they're making a little money they're satisfied."

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[3]The term "getting-by" is a common colloquialism in the speech of Baldwin County people. It is used often as a response to a statement of salutation. For example: "How are you?" "Well, I'm gettin'-by."

Rock Hill teachers are not as negative in their attitude toward the "getting by people," if they may be termed as such, as they are toward the "welfare people." "Welfare people are viewed as being incorrigibly lazy and worthless, whereas the "getting by" people are at least given credit for working. Nevertheless, some teachers express disdain about the apathetic attitude toward education which they believe characterizes the value orientation of the "getting by" people. The following excerpt from an interview with a upper grade teacher illustrates this point:

> A lot of the dropouts are, I mean, their parents didn't go to school and they say "there ain't no use in you going." And the kids look at it and say that we're not ever going to college, so, they get to looking at school as a waste of time. They say "why don't I ride across the mountain with Daddy and make some money in some factory." But they're only going to make minimum wage. It's shit work. When you condider that you have to drive 60 or 70 miles roundtrip and you're making only minimum wage, I'd say you're not doing well. But we've got a lot of people in this county who live like that. You can't tell them that if they stayed in school or got some other kind of schooling that they'd be better off.
>
> I think the thing of it is, like I said, this is a very different place, but this place, due to the low income here, many parents are sort of dumb. They've never had the education to make something of themselves. Therefore, they don't think it's important. "I can go over here to Meadville or High Point and work at a plant and maybe make more than somebody who went to college," they'll say. That may be true, but a lot of the time it's backbreaking work and they're worn out before thirty. Or, they could get laid off, which happens a lot.

The "getting-by" ethic is similar to "the philosophy of doing without" discussed by Stephenson (1968:164) in his previously mentioned study of Shiloh, Kentucky. Stephenson rightly points out that from the perspective of the working poor in Shiloh they are a success. They have

been enculturated into a lifestyle that places greater emphasis on the family and religion, two institutions which help them adapt to a situation of relative economic deprivation. Though only speculative, it could be further argued that the "getting by" ethic, which probably resulted as an adaptive response to subsistence agriculture, is being sustained and perpetuated today by subsistence factory work.

The welfare and getting by theories more or less encapsulate how the teachers explain the high rate of premature school withdrawal at Rock Hill. As one can see, the teachers do not blame themselves or their schools; rather, they find fault in the value orientation of the lower class peoples. The welfare theory, of course, has limited explanatory power. It fails to account for those children who come from welfare families who do not leave school prematurely. The getting by theory appears to be more applicable, but it, too, has its limitations, the most important being that it fails to distinguish between those members of the lower working class who do not care to get ahead and those who desire to get ahead but cannot due to economic deprivation, or social stigma, or lack of necessary skills.

D. CONFLICT WITH THE FARMING SECTOR

Though Rock Hill teachers generally blame the uneducated for being uneducated, they are aware of other factors which are causally related to premature school withdrawal. One factor which the teachers are aware of is the absenteeism that results from a child having to stay out of school to work on the family farm.

Jeff Scruggs, a thirteen year old seventh grader, is a case in point. The Scruggs family makes a living through raising tobacco. They not only plant their own tobacco allotment, but the allotments of five or six other people as well. They do this by paying a fee to the individual who owns the allotment, or they give him a percentage of the crop produced under his allotment. Tobacco production, which lasts from February to November, involves considerable time and labor. Jeff assists his family in all phases of production: preparation of the seed beds, transplanting the seedlings to patch, suckering, cutting, curing, grading, and packing. As a result, Jeff is out of school more than he is is in school.

Since he has been absent from school so much, he is academically far behind other students his age. Though he has been socially promoted to the seventh grade, Jeff reads at the fourth grade level. Although this is of concern to many of his teachers, they do not believe they can do anything to improve his academic situation. "There's nothing we can do," an upper grade teacher said. "If his Dad says to stay out (of school), he stays out." Jeff could easily follow the pattern of Mr. W., a 74 year old farmer who dropped out of school in the sixth grade at the age of sixteen. Mr. W. recalls circumstances similar to Jeff's in the following excerpt from an interview:

CAVENDER: How long did you go to school, Mr. W.?

MR. W.: About the sixth grade. No, I just got to the place . . . My Daddy kept me out a whole lot to work and to . . . He'd take me to fodder, topping to pull, you know, to put up feed, you know, and things like that. He'd get out in the

> morning before we'd go to school and have a great big tree he'd want cut down, saw so many board cuts off that, you know. When we'd get in, classes would be over with and I got behind and got disgusted and just quit.

Jeff has been "socially" promoted thus far in his academic career, but he is falling further and further behind his age mates academically as each year passes. He could very well "get disgusted and just quit" like Mr. W.

E. THERE IS NO SOLUTION

Most of the teachers at Rock Hill feel impotent about solving the problem of early school withdrawal. From their perspective, the school is unable to mitigate the socializing influence of the lower class family which they believe inculcates the child with a negative attitude toward formal education. The teachers' attitude concerning the education of poor in Baldwin County clearly affects their relationship with the student they label as culturally deprived. As with teachers in other parts of the nation who work with minority students, some of Rock Hill's teachers assume that the child from an impoverished family dislikes school and that he is also incapable of performing as well academically as the child from a middle class family (cf. Spindler 1974: 70). Such an attitude, as will be discussed later, has detrimental consequences in that the impoverished student may perform poorly in class because his teachers expect only a poor performance.

Another misconception Rock Hill teachers have about the poor is that they are "dangerous people." As one upper grade teacher expressed it: "Uneducated people can be dangerous. If you start messing with the

lives of their children, they think 'well, you're starting to mess with my life.'" One lower grade teacher (Mrs. K.) related the following story which illustrates this attitude and the concomitant belief that social interaction with the poor, particularly those suffering from inherited stigma, must be limited.

Mrs. K. remembered a dispute involving members of a Claxton household who lived near here. One day an 18 year old girl, Susie Claxton, came to Mrs. K.'s home asking for refuge. Susie said her sisters were drunk and "after her." Mrs. K. was afraid of becoming involved in the dispute, but she allowed Susie to hide in her house. After a while, Susie left Mrs. K.'s home, thanking her profusely for her help. Mrs. K said, "you're welcome, but don't let me see you on this property again." After finishing the story, Mrs. K. added: "I didn't want to mistreat the girl, but I didn't want to get in with them (the Claxtons). I don't want to get too friendly with them because you never know the way they are, especially when they get drunk. I mean, they'll burn your house down. That's how bad they can be."

One cannot blame Mrs. K. for wanting to avoid becoming involved in a family squabble, but note how Mrs. K. in this story generalizes about the Claxton's behavior being uncommonly dangerous. Her reference to the Claxton's being arsonists simply has no basis in fact. Arson, incidentally, is viewed by high status families as a distinctive behavior of the Cummings, the Henshaws, the Claxtons, and the other so-called "bad families."

The belief that indigent, uneducated people are dangerous and apathetic about formal education may explain why the teachers at Rock Hill do not visit the homes of indigent students; why teachers do not solicit help from indigent parents in encouraging their children to learn; why the attendance officer seldom makes an effort to find out why a student from a poor family is absent from school for a long period of time; or why teachers do not provide the indigent child with the extra help he needs.

F. THE ASCRIPTION AND INTERNALIZATION OF PARIAH STUDENT IDENTITY

Traditionally, anthropologists have found the cultural conflict model useful for explaining why educational problems exist among minority groups in the United States. The conflict model focuses on the adversary relationship between minority subculture and the middle class cultural orientation of public schools. The incongruency, or conflict, between these cultures explains why the formal education process tends to break down and, in turn, why public schools are not totally successful in their efforts to assimilate minority peoples into mainstream American society. Studies by Wax (1976) and Sindell (1974), for example, document how the values and attitudes of many Native Americans make it difficult for them to adjust to the Anglo-American cultural orientation of reservation schools. A similar approach is evident in studies concerned with the educational problems of other minority groups, such as Blacks (Valentine 1971), Hawaiian Americans (Gallimore, Whitehorn and Jordan 1974), and Mexican Americans (Swartz 1971; Madsen and Kagan 1973).

In recent years the theoretical focus in the study of problems associated with minority group education has shifted from an emphasis on cultural conflict to the investigation of minority identity within the socio-cultural context of the school. As Clement, Eisenhart, and Harding point out (1979:16), the change in theoretical focus is premised on the assumption that "the organization of interaction among people classified by socially significant characteristics such as race (or class, sex, and ethnicity) reflect the structural position of these groups in society and, in turn, constrains the education they receive." Expressed another way, anthropologists have begun to look at how minority student identity is defined in the socio-cultural context of the school and how, through the investigation of the formal and informal social organization of the school, minority social status within the school corresponds to the social status of the minority group outside the school. In this respect, institutions of formal education are viewed as failing in their efforts to assimilate minority peoples into the American cultural mainstream not because of communication breakdowns resulting from cultural conflict, but because schools are overtly and covertly structured toward maintaining the status quo. Studies by Rist (1975) and Rosenfeld (1976), for example, show how Black students in inner city schools acquire a negative sense of self as a result of being ascribed a negative social identity and social status by their teachers. In other words, the negative social identity and low social status of Blacks in American society is sustained and perpetuated by some of the inner city schools.

A major finding of the Rock Hill study is that the informal social organization of the school is congruent with the social organization of its surrounding community. The nexus of the congruency lies in the correlation between the socially ascribed pariah identity of some of the students within the school and the students' negative family identity outside the school. As discussed earlier, negative social identity and low social status in Baldwin County is defined both in terms of family background and economic status. Observation of social interaction patterns among students and teachers, a topic which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, clearly shows that some of the pariah students at Rock Hill learn to perceive themselves as social failures, or outcastes, while attending school. In this respect, Rock Hill serves a function similar to the above mentioned inner city schools: it sustains and perpetuates the local caste-like social structure of the surrounding community.

Pariah Identity Construction at Rock Hill

Every individual has a personal identity, which is defined as one's perception of what makes him like and unlike all other people (Miller 1963:573) and a social identity, which refers to a person's perception of the way he believes others perceive/define him. Social identity, as Goodenough (1963:176) notes, also involves the manner in which an individual views his rights and duties in respect to others. An individual learns his social identity, his perception of the way others view him and his respective rights and duties, through interacting with

others. There is often conflict between an individual's personal and social identities. Through the process of social interaction, an individual is constantly changing his perception of how he views himself and how he thinks others perceive him. As Burton and Whiting (1965:612) observe, an individual strives to achieve a consistency between one's personal and social identities. The inability to achieve such a consistency can, depending on the circumstances, cause an individual to experience tremendous anxiety.

Certain students at Rock Hill, notably those coming from the lowest socioeconomic level, internalize a negative sense of self, a negative personal identity as a result of discovering that they are viewed in a negative way by other students and teachers in the school. Through the course of social interaction in the school a student experiences significant social events that relate to the construction of his personal identity. These experiences have been termed "symbolic encounters" (Clement, Eisenhart, and Harding 1979:33), and are defined as those occasions when two or more individuals exchange information about how they perceive their relationship with each other. It is assumed that an individual who experiences a series of symbolic encounters in his school career, encounters which involve his learning that others perceive him in a negative manner will eventually come to view himself in a negative way. Thus, a detrimental consistency between personal and social identities is established in his mind.

After reviewing grade records, and after becoming acquainted with the informal social organization of the school, it became apparent to

the author that students from families occupying the lowest social stratum (nonworking welfare families and families suffering from inherited stigma) were, more often than not, failing students. It also became apparent that these students were socially ostracized in somes times very explicit ways by other students, and in much more subtle ways by the teachers. During the course of fieldwork, numerous symbolic encounters were observed, four of which dealt specifically with pariah identity as a manifestation of inherited stigma. These symbolic encounters support the assumption that certain students are ascribed a pariah identity in the school that corresponds to their pariah identity outside the school. Three of these symbolic encounters were observed firsthand; the remaining one (Encounter 4) was told to the author by one of the upper grade teachers who experienced it firsthand. It might be argued that the low frequency of firsthand accounts of symbolic encounters dealing with pariah student identity means that the few presented here are relatively insignificant. Such is not the case, however, for, as one will note after reading the following examples, these encounters are emotionally powerful experiences that have a tremendous impact on a student's sense of self.

Encounter 1

Setting: The school yard.

Participants: Two seventh grade boys, Jeff and Tommy.

Scene: Mr. R.'s and Mr. J.'s seventh grade classes are walking from Rock Building to the Main Building. Students are taking their

1:00 p.m. rest break. Jeff Smith and Tommy Blackburn are squabbling between themselves while walking to the side entrance of the Main Building. Tommy is accusing Jeff of cheating him on a trade they had made earlier in the week. Tommy had talked with some of his friends who told him that Jeff got the better of him in the trade. The following conversation occurred:

Tommy: I want my knife back.

Jeff: A trade is a trade.

Tommy: I want my knife BACK! (pushes Jeff)

Jeff: We already made a deal!

Tommy: You're a dirty, stinking nigger!

Jeff: YOU'RE a dirty, stinking nigger!

Tommy: YOU'RE A CUMMINGS! (pushes Jeff again)

Jeff: YOU'RE A CUMMINGS! (They begin to wrestle. The scene ends with a teacher separating them.)

Interpretation: It is quite apparent in this scene that Jeff's definition of self is being challenged by Tommy. Tommy first calls Jeff a "nigger," thereby proclaiming that, like all "niggers," Jeff is dishonest. Tommy then calls Jeff a "Cummings," indicating that Blacks and families like the Cummings are equally dishonest. Such surnames as Cummings, Henshaw, Claxton, and others are used frequently by students as certain profane terms. One upper grade teacher stated that "(If) you call someone a 'Cummings,' well, that's cussin' them. It's been that way as long as I can remember. You know, (if) you call somebody a 'Cummings,' it's the same thing as calling them a son-of-a-bitch."

It is of interest to note that both upper and lower grade teachers reported hearing the pariah surnames "Cummings" and "Henshaw" used as terms of insult.

This encounter is significant in that it clearly shows, through the use of pariah family surnames as derogatory epithets, that the pariah family identities of Baldwin County are reflected in the communication patterns among students. In the next two encounters, which involve students who come from families that suffer from inherited stigma, the process of learning a negative sense of self becomes more apparent.

Encounter 2

Setting: A sixth grade classroom in the Rock Building.

Participants: Four sixth grade students.

Scene: It is 8:30 a.m. and students are filing into the classroom. The teacher is not yet present. There is a lot of commotion. One student is chasing another student around the room. Three boys are amusing themselves stoking the fire in the coal burning stove. Near the back of the room sits Henry Cummings with empty desks all around him. Henry has not been to school in over three weeks. He does not realize that his choice of desks has disrupted an informal seating arrangement in the classroom. Two of the students who normally sit in Henry's area of the classroom move to another part of the classroom. When these two students sit at desks on the other side of the room, the following conversation occurs:

Student A: (to students B and C) Why are ya'll sittin' here? (snickers)

Student B: Because we want to sit here.

Student A: What's the matter, does he (looking in the direction of Henry Cummings) stink or something? (said in a loud voice)

Student C: Why don't you mind your own business.

Student A: You can sit together over there. (Points to where Henry Cummings is sitting) There's desks over there.

Student B: We don't want to sit there. (Tries to ignore student A)

Student A: Hey, Henry, do you stink?! (Student A laughs at his own comment, but nobody else finds it funny. Henry ignores the comment. Receiving no reinforcement from Henry or other students, student A ends his verbal assault.)

Interpretation: The fact that students B and C selectively choose not to sit next to Henry indicates the limits of Henry's social interaction network and the social isolation he experiences when he comes to school. It is through experiences such as this that Henry learns his pariah status in school. The comment about Henry "stinking" was definitely heard by Henry (student A wanted Henry to hear it), but instead of trying to defend himself he sat silently acting as though nothing had happened.

Encounter 3

Setting: A seventh grade classroom.

Participants: Cavender, substituting for Mr. R., and two seventh grade students, James Cummings and Clyde Henshaw.

Scene: It is 10:00 a.m. The students in the class were asked by Cavender to record on a sheet of paper the names of three people they

considered to be their best and most trusted friends. James raises his hand, requesting Cavender to come to his desk. James asks Cavender how to spell the name of one of his best friends. Cavender takes his pen and writes the name for him after James whispered the name in Cavender's ear. After writing the name of his best friend, Cavender notices that James' name is not written on the top of his paper. Not knowing the student's surname at the time, Cavender asks what it is. Clyde Henshaw, who was sitting directly behind James and listening to what was being said, says "James Claxton." Cavender begins to write "James Claxton" on James' paper when James shouts, defiantly, "That ain't my name!" He then then turns around and strikes Clyde Henshaw on the arm. Clyde laughs and throws up his elbow in self-defense as James tries to hit him again. Cavender tells James to "straighten up." James turns around in his seat and says, "I ain't no Claxton! My name's James Cummings!"

Interpretation: This encounter is important because it shows that students who are generally viewed by middle class students as outcastes perceive a kind of stratification among themselves. In this encounter, Clyde, an outcaste, refers to James, another outcaste, with another stigmatized surname (Claxton). Apparently, the Henshaws and the Cummings view themselves as being better than the Claxtons, and vice versa.

Encounter 4

Setting: Basketball practice in the school gymnasium.

Participants: Fourteen sixth and seventh grade boys and Coach J.

Scene: It is 9:00 a.m. and the boys are taking turns shooting foul shots. Coach J. is standing on the sideline giving instructions. Clyde Henshaw walks into the gymnasium. He stands next to Coach J. and watches the boys on the court. After a few minutes Clyde asks Coach J. if he can play on the basketball team. Coach J. replies that it is too late in the season for him to be on the team, but that he can practice with the team if he would like. Coach J. tells Clyde to join the others on the court. Clyde walks onto the court and takes a position in the foul shooting line. None of the boys says anything to Clyde, but many of them make quick glances at him. Some of the boys are looking at him, chuckling, and whispering comments to each other. Clyde, feeling uncomfortable shuffles his feet while looking down at the floor. One student, Bill, leaves the foul shooting line and runs over to where Coach J. is standing. The following conversation, loud enough to be heard by the students on the court, ensues:

Bill: What's he doin' out there playing?

Coach J: What do you mean?

Bill: That's Clyde Henshaw!

Coach J: So? Your name is Bill Smith! Get back out there!

Interpretation: Students from pariah families tend to participate in extracurricular activities less than other students. This encounter suggests that some of the pariah students want to engage in extracurricular activities, but they are prevented from doing so because of intense feelings of social isolation. Clyde wanted to be a member of the basketball team, but some of the other students did not want him on

the team because he is poor,and, more importantly, because he is a "Henshaw." Coach J. was asked what he thought about the encounter. His reply: "The Henshaws, the Cummings, Claxtons, all those people are like Blacks to the so-called middle class of this county." It is of interest to note that Clyde practiced with the basketball team twice before quitting.

G. TEACHER AWARENESS OF PARIAH STUDENT IDENTITY: THE "SET-ASIDES"

Teachers at Rock Hill are well aware that certain students are socially ostracized by other students because of their low socio-economic status and/or family reputation. When interviewed about how they defined their role as teacher, all of them stated that one of their primary responsibilities was to instruct students in proper social relations. In reference to this perceived responsibility and the problem of pariah identity ascription to certain students, all of the teachers said that they tried to impart to their students the idea that a person should be judged on the basis of individual character and not on economic status or family reputation. "If there's one thing I can't stand," one upper grade teacher said, "it's one student picking on another because he comes from a poor family." Another upper grade teacher said that she has been prompted to instruct her students on more than one occasion about discrimination. When asked what she told her students, she said: "No one is better than anybody else, only how they behave themselves. It's not the way they (the discriminated student) dress, how they look, or whether they have patches on their

clothing, or whatnot. It doesn't matter who your father is or who your mother is, it's you. You're the one who's building your own ch character, your own reputation."

Mrs. L., an upper grade teacher with the most years of service at Rock Hill, recalled some experiences that relate to the problem a pariah identity construction. She remembered, for example, the day a student from a poor family was embarrassed when his lunch, a biscuit wrapped in a funny book, fell out of his desk onto the floor. The other students in the class laughed, in her opinion, because of what he was having for lunch. This biscuit wrapped in a funny book symbolized his low socio-economic status. She remembered another incident when some children from a poor family were sharing a can of sardines for lunch and the teacher of the class, offended by the smell of the sardines, asked them to leave the classroom and eat their lunch somewhere else. "You shouldn't remove a student from class because of what they eat," she said. Events such as these, which have an impact on the development of a student's image of self, apparently have been occurring for a long time.

Do the teachers at Rock Hill discriminate against certain students because of their economic status and/or family reputation? The upper grade teachers emphatically insist that they do not. "If anything," one upper grade teacher said, "I discriminate in favor of the student who has so much going against him. It's up to us (the teachers) to tell him his chance is here (at school). He can't get it any other palce." The upper grade teachers are of the opinion that the lower grade teachers

are guilty of discrimination and that by the time the pariah student reaches their grades, most of the psychological damage (i.e. the internalization of pariah identity) has been done. Furthermore, they believe this psychological damage cannot be remedied by the time the student reaches their grade level. One upper grade teacher expressed the opinion of all the upper grade teachers in the following comment: "It boils down to a little bit of prejudice in this county. Here's this clean, nice smelling child; over there sits the Henshaw, the Claxton, or the Cummings. He's got a running nose. He smells. And, the kid's neglected; he's set aside. It begins in the first grade."

Since no observations were made of teacher/student interaction in lower grade classrooms, the upper grade teachers' indictment of lower grade teachers cannot be confirmed or refuted. Upper grade teachers, however, are themselves guilty of discrimination, in an albeit inadvertant fashion. The upper grade teachers' discrimination against the pariah student manifests itself in the form of an apathetic attitude toward the pariah student's regressive academic situation. "There's not much we can do," one upper grade teacher reported, "if a student comes to us without having learned the fundamentals." The teachers' apathy rests on two assumptions: (1) that the discriminated child is, as previously noted, psychologically damaged beyond help once they enter the upper grades and (2) that children from the lowest socio-economic stratum, particularly those from welfare families, have a negative attitude toward formal education.

Discrimination against pariah students is evident in upper grade classrooms. For example, pariah students are intentionally skipped over

when a teacher goes down the rows of desks requesting students to read aloud from their texts. Of course, skipping over a pariah student is no doubt done in some instances to prevent the student from experiencing feelings of embarrassment as a result of exposing the student's inability to read in front of others. But this is not always the case. One day when the author substituted for one of the upper grade teachers he conducted the reading class in the same fashion as the regular teacher: requesting each student to read aloud a paragraph from the text. The author, however, did not skip over three of the pariah students, James Cummings, Sheila Claxton, and Walter Cummings, as the regular teacher customarily did. The pariah students exhibited great difficulty in reading, and certainly they read far below their grade level, but, interestingly, their reading ability was no worse than three other nonpariah students who were always called upon to read aloud in class. After the reading session, one student came up to the author and said that Mr. R. always excluded James, Sheila, and Walter from reading aloud and he wondered why the author did not follow the same pattern. "They're slow. Everybody knows that," he said. The author pointed out to this child that the three students, in his opinion, could read as well as some of the others in the class who were called upon all the time. This discrepancy, however, did not register in the student's mind.

A simple pattern of classroom behavior such as the one described above has significant implications. The pariah students do not exhibit any resentment toward the teacher for excluding them in reading sessions. It is as though the teacher and pariah students have made a tacit

agreement, something like "I (the student) do not care to become involved in learning because I can't learn, so you (the teacher) should exclude me from all learning events." But the situation has deeper and more deleterious implications. It appears as though the teachers and the nonpariah students in the classroom have an understanding that the pariah student does not want to learn or is incapable of learning. Pariah students, through probably several years of being "set aside," to use the teachers' terminology, apparently accept the low expectations others have of them. In other words, they are being insidiously socialized into becoming school failures and, consequently, school dropouts.[4]

In many respects the pariah student is perceived as an invisible being in the classroom. When he is in class it is as though he is there, but not there at the same time. He seldom participates in classroom discussions; he never does his homework; and his response to an examination is usually a blank sheet of papar. Such behavior on the part of middle class students provokes lectures of reprovement by the teachers, but not so with the pariah students. Reprovement of the pariah student is apparently viewed as a waste of time.

In fairness to the teachers, there are a few pariah students who are severely limited in terms of communication skills. These students, who come from extremely impoverished families, have been reared in homes

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[4]The pariah students at Rock Hill are succumbing to the teachers' self-fulfilling prophecy of them. Rist (1975:411-451) describes a similar process operating with kindergarten students in an urban ghetto school.

where, as psychiatrist David Loof (1971) characterizes it, a "verbal vacuum" exists. Reared in homes where emotions are often constrained, and where bonds of affection between parent and child are abruptly severed after approximately 18 months, the extremely impoverished child withdraws deeply into himself and thus never develops the communication skills of the average child from a middle class family.

Establishing rapport with a student who has been reared in a "verbal vacuum" is a truly awesome, time consuming task. These students do seem to live in "a world of their own," as one upper grade teacher described it. This was surely the case with Gary Cummings, who presented abnormally laconic behavior. The author tried breaking through to Gary in a number of ways, but without success. While attending school, Gary never opened up to share his world with the author or any of his teachers. In an interview with Gary conducted near the end of the fieldwork experience, the author was left with twenty minutes of almost complete silence on his cassette tape.

The behavior of Gary, however, is not typical of the pariah student at Rock Hill. Other pariah students who normally say little in class and seldom, if ever disrupt the classroom by misbehaving, could on occasion be quite loquacious. Their silent behavior and attitude of noninvolvement in academic life appears to be, as previously mentioned, partially caused by the teachers who have such low expectations of them. Yet, it could also result, at least partially, from their realization that they are not really part of Rock Hill. It could be that they have learned to view themselves as outcastes as a result of being labeled and

treated as outcastes in the school. Such a situation, as McDermott (1974:82-118) observes, could lead to a student tuning-in his peer group (fellow pariah students), which involves the mutual reinforcement of a negative attitude toward school, and tuning-out the school, a place that rejects them socially in the first place.

H. PARIAH SOCIAL GROUPS

In an effort to determine the number of student social groups and the social criteria that distinguish one group from another at Rock Hill, students in two sixth grade and two seventh grade classes were asked to provide information on their social relationships. Students were asked to write on a sheet of paper the names of three students they enjoyed being with and trusted the most and the names of three students they disliked being around and trusted the least. These lists of names were then analyzed to assess the frequency of appearance of certain names included in the latter category to assist in the identification of pariah groups. Determined as such, the students most frequently assigned to the pariah category included (1) those from the lowest economic stratum, (2) those from families with bad reputations, nnd (3) those students who are perceived as "troublemakers." It appears that the majority of students in the sixth and seventh grades clearly perceives the existence of a pariah group that includes approximately fifteen students. That pariah students listed other pariah members more frequently as those they enjoyed being with and trusted the most indicates the existence of an in-group cohesiveness. However, analysis of the pariah group

friendship network indicates that the pariah group at large is divided internally into subgroups based on sex (e.g. two all girl and three all male pariah groups). Lastly, analysis of the friendship network shows that some members of the pariah group at large are "loners" i.e., they claim membership but are not accepted by any members of the five pariah groups.

Members of the pariah groups congregate together in school whenever the opportunity presents itself. Social interaction among them is constrained in some instances because members of a subgroup are in different home classrooms. During recreation time, however, they tend to congregate together in the gymnasium or on the playground. When they do have the same home classroom they sit next to each other, unless, as in one home classroom, the teacher separates them.

In discussing symbolic encounters earlier in this chapter, it was noted that pariah families in the county perceive an in-group hierarchy among themselves. The Cummings, for example, think the Claxtons are socially inferior in comparison to themselves. This in-group hierarchy is reflected in the social relations between the pariah subgroups as well. One subgroup, for example, consists of a Claxton boy, one of his cousins, and two other boys from low invome families. The other group consists of a Cummings boy, his half-brother, and another boy from a low income family. Relations between these two groups, or "gangs" as the students refer to them, are sometimes fractious. During the course of fieldwork, two fights occurred between members of these two groups. No fight, however, occurred between members of any of the five male pariah groups and nonpariah students during the period of fieldwork.

As mentioned earlier, it appears that pariah students at Rock Hill may engage in what McDermott (1974) calls "selective attention" i.e., they tune-out the school and tune-in their peer group. Interviews with pariah students about school life revealed, in most instances, a burning dislike of school. Typical responses of pariah students to the question "What is it that you like about going to school?" were "nuttin'," "not a thing," and "I hate it here and can't wait to get out." When asked how they would define a "good" student and a "bad" student, they had no idea how to respond to the question. Nevertheless, when asked whether they considered themselves to be a "bad" or "good" student, all 15 considered themselves to be "bad" students. Apparently, they have internalized their ascribed pariah identity.

I. THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON LIVING IN BALDWIN COUNTY

At the request of the author, the seventh grade teachers and one sixth grade teacher required their students to write an essay entitled "Life in Baldwin County." The students were told that the essays would help the author to learn something about how they viewed living in the county. The students were given incentive to write the essay after being told that it would count toward their final term grade in reading. It was suggested that they orient their essay around three themes: (1) the advantages of living in Baldwin County, (2) the disadvantages of living in Baldwin County, and (3) what changes in the living conditions they would make if they had the chance to do so. Forty essays were turned in and each was analyzed in terms of the content of

the three thematic categories mentioned above. Each thematic category was broken down into the topics most frequently mentioned; next, topics in each category were ranked numerically in terms of frequency of occurrence. The perspectives of these students living in Baldwin County, as reflected in their essays, are presented below in reference to the three thematic categories. A word of caution, however, should preface the following discussion. The perspectives presented here are representative of, in the main, Baldwin County's middle and upper class students. The opinions of pariah students are not adequately represented because the majority of these students either neglected to write the essay or were not present when the assignment was given.

Advantages of Living in Baldwin County

In terms of advantages, the overwhelming majority of students (37 out of 40, or 92%) views the physical environment as the major advantage to living in Baldwin County. In describing the physical environment, such adjectives as "peaceful," "quiet," "pretty," and "beautiful" appear regularly. Also, the students are proud that the land and air around them is not noticeably polluted. Next, in order of rank, is Baldwin County's small population (16 out of 40, or 40%), followed by "friendly atmosphere" (15 out of 40, or 37%). Frequent reference is made to the fact that the county population is small enough to enable "everybody to know everybody." "Everybody knows there (sic) neighbors and everybody helps out everybody else," one student wrote. Lastly, the low crime rate is mentioned (14 out of 40, or 30%)

as one of the county's major attributes. "You can walk around without being afraid of getting beat up or shot," one student said.

In writing about the advantages of living in Baldwin County, students make both an implicit and explicit comparison between rural and urban living. The students clearly prefer living in a rural area, but they also desire some of the things that urban life can offer.

The Disadvantages of Living in Baldwin County

"There is nothing for young people to do." "This place is boring." "You have to travel out of the county to have a good time because there is nothing here to do."

As the comments above indicate, the students believe that a lack of recreation activities and facilities is a drawback to living in Baldwin County. This, in fact, ranked as the major disadvantage (19 out of 40, 47%). In order to see a movie, go roller skating, attend a rock and roll concert, or eat in a "nice" place, students must depend on their parents to drive them at least 35 miles, sometimes more, to the nearest city.

Other disadvantages, ranked in descending order, include the lack of employment opportunity (12 out of 40, or 40%), the shortage of physicians (8 out of 40, or 20%), and the poor condition of the roads (7 out of 40, or 17%).

Desired Changes in the Living Conditions

As one would expect, changes desired by students are directly related to their perception of the disadvantages. Ranked first in their

list of priorities is improvement in recreation activities (15 out of 40, or 37%). Next on the list is the creation of more jobs (10 out of 40, or 25%), which is followed in descending order by improvement in health services, i.e., the addition of more physicians (8 out of 40, or 20%), improvement of the road system (7 out of 40, or 17%), improvement in the schools i.e., the school buildings (6 out of 40, or 10%), and reform of the welfare program (3 out of 40, or 7%).

Though ranked last in terms of priorities, it is significant that reform of the welfare program is mentioned because it demonstrates that the negative attitude that some adults have toward people on welfare, as well as other attitudes has been transmitted to the young. Some student comments on welfare sound remarkably like those made by many adults, as the following verbatim excerpts from the essays show.

> I would like to change the welfare system, there just to many people drawling them welfare checks and stamps who don't need to get them because they are able body people. (7th grader)

> Baldwin County is like it is because of the people. The people just sit around and chew tobacco and whiddle while they could be out farming and working to make them some money and grow vegetables for there families and others. (7th grader)

> If I could change one thing it would probably be I wouldn't give people that was able to work food stamps and social checks. Because I believe the people that don't need them is the ones that get them. (7th grader)

To conclude this section, two essays will be presented in their entirety. The first essay was written by a typical middle class student; the second one by a pariah student. The difference in their perception

of living in Baldwin County, as revealed in these essays, is starkly apparent. The difference in spelling and grammar in these two essays is also revealing in terms of academic level.

Essay I

I have lived in Baldwin County all my life. It is a nice quiet place to live. I know all of my neighbors by name and they all know me. Everyone is very friendly. The schools are small enough for everyone to know each other and be friends.

There is very little crime. I can walk places alone and feel safe. I can play with my friends and neighbors and feel safe. I can stay alone in my home and feel safe. These are things that one cannot co in the cities.

I like living here because of this, but there are disadvantages. There are very few activities for young people to take part in. I would like to see the teachers in the county take more interest in the young. I would like to have a place to go skating, to see a movie and etc. without having to travel several miles over mountainous roads. I would like to see the schools offer more activities for those who are interested.

I think Baldwin County is like it is because most of the people are satisfied with the way of life here. Very few people move here from other places because there are no jobs available and Baldwin County is made up of people who are born and raised here. The people who are not satisfied with this way of life move out of the county when they grow up.

Baldwin County does not change very much because it is isolated. We have no railroads and the roads are not very good. One must drive over mountainous, so curvy, roads to get in and out of the county. This is the main reason very few indistries are located here.

I like Baldwin County, and I like to live here, but it could be improved a lot. I feel sure that when I grow up and start looking for a job, I will have to go out of the county to get one.

Essay II

I don't know of any advantage to live here. They are no jobs to get. They isn't enough activities to do. People think they are better than you. They aren't friendly. It's a dull place to live. They isn't enough things to do. It's a very boring place. The only way you can get a job or anything you have to be friends with the right people or you

might as well forget it. Baldwin County is the way it is because the people are to good to join the others in trying to make it a better place to live. They just look out for them self and don't care about the other peoples feeling.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MITIGATION OF PREMATURE SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

A. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the informal social organization and educational ethos of a rural Appalachian school. Though many research objectives were pursued, the primary goal was to assess the school's role in mitigating or contributing to the problem of premature school withdrawal. On the basis of data collected during an eight month period of fieldword, the following conclusions are advanced.

Social Stratification and Pariah Identity in Baldwin County

The community structure of Baldwin County reflects a marked degree of social stratification. For example, low income neighborhoods in the county are viewed with disdain by members of higher social class. The so-called "welfare people" are judged in a particularly contemptuous manner. Low income, however, is not strictly correlated with low social status. Some families who exist on a meager income but who work hard for a living are viewed as respectable citizens.

Further evidence of social stratification is revealed through the tendency of Baldwin County residents to ascribe a pariah social identity to members of certain extended families. The surnames of these extended

families, such as Claxton, Cummings, and Henshaw, signify such negative traits as suspiciousness, untrustworthiness, hostility, and laziness in the minds of many in Baldwin County. The ascription of a pariah identity to an individual born into one of the pariah families, a social process termed "inherited stigma," appears to have a long history. It is noteworthy that most of the families who suffer from inherited stigma are living in poverty. There are, however, certain members of pariah families who earn a relatively high income and lead, as a respected Baldwin Countian would express it, "a Christian life." Nevertheless, these individuals are typically incapable of escaping the stigma associated with their ancestry. Baldwin County's social structure, therefore, is hierarchically ordered in terms of social class, but it is also caste-like in reference to an emphasis on kinship criteria (i.e. inherited stigma) for determining social status.

Pariah Student Identity at Rock Hill School

The social stratification of Baldwin County is mirrored in the informal social organization of the school. The use of pariah surnames as derogatory epithets by students in verbal condemnation of one another is one indicator of the congruency in social organization between Rock Hill and its surrounding communities. More importantly, however, students interact differentially with one another in accordance with economic and kinship criteria, just as their parents do in the social world outside of school. A student from a pariah family is ascribed a negative social identity by students from locally respected families.

Pariah students are limited, therefore, in reference to their social interaction sphere, i.e. they are avoided by nonpariah students. Pariah students sometimes suffer blatant displays of ostracism directed at them by nonpariah students. Pariah students participated in extracurricular activities less than other students. Due to feelings of alienation and resentment, pariah students interacted primarily with other pariah students both in and out of school, thus forming a distinct social group.

In the context of the school a student from a pariah family learns his negative social identity through experiencing a series of critical social events, termed symbolic encounters. It is suggested that the pariah student internalizes this identity through such encounters, thereby establishing a detrimental consistency between the way he views himself and the way others view him. Once this consistency is established in the student's mind, he must learn to cope with intense feelings of low self-esteem. It is further argued that since pariah students interact primarily with one another that they reinforce each other's feelings of alienation. In consideration of this situation, it appears that premature school withdrawal at Rock Hill is perhaps more related to a rejection of the social world of the school by the pariah student than a rejection of formal education per se.

School Social Organization and Educational Ethos

Not only is the informal social organization at Rock Hill closed, but the formal organizational structure is closed as well. Teacher

recruitment policy, for example, is based firmly on nepotism. This is done primarily to maintain the organizational status quo and to establish or preserve political alliances. As a result, incompetent teachers are largely protected from dismissal, and innovative educational programs are viewed by some as possibly being disruptive to the organizational structure. Because most teachers are indigenous to the county, it appears that a local cultural orientation is strongly apparent, one aspect of which is a traditional prejudice toward the poor.

This prejudice is evident in the teachers' theories for premature school withdrawal. Many teachers, including those in both the upper and lower grades, believe that the "welfare people" have little incentive for self-improvement, which involves obtaining a formal education. These teachers blame the welfare system. Some also believe that welfare families, especially those suffering from inherited stigma, are innately lazy and shiftless, or that they are locked blindly into a pathogenic cultural syndrome. The teachers also express a quiet disdain for the working poor, who they view as having a basically apathetic attitude toward formal education. Consequently, many of Rock Hill's instructors feel that any efforts toward mitigating premature school withdrawal would be in vain because they, as with other teachers throughout the nation, share in the misconception that the poor student is beyond remedial assistance. Since some of Rock Hill's teachers believe the student from an impoverished family is beyond remedial help, they make little or no effort to provide these students with individualized instruction. Similarly, this misconception explains why some of the

teachers expect so little from the pariah student in terms of academic achievement. More than likely these students are aware of the low academic expectations teachers have of them and they, in turn, mentally lock themselves into their teachers' self-fulfilling prophecy. The pariah student, therefore, not only learns that he is a pariah in the social world of the school, but he also learns to fail academically.

Certain aspects of Rock Hill's educational ethos no doubt exacerbate the problem of premature school withdrawal. The retention of incompetent teachers, an outcome of the maintenance of the school's closed organizational structure, has resulted in what has been termed the "leveling effect." The incompetent teacher exhibits a strong resentment toward the more effective and creative teacher. Motivated by a need to protect his self-image, the incompetent teacher frequently makes a conscious effort to reduce the effective or creative teacher to his level of mediocrity.

The lack of an operative reward system for superior and/or creative effort also tends to preclude the establishment of a maximally effective teaching program at Rock Hill. The hard working, dedicated teacher is disconcerted over the fact that incompetent teachers are not only retained year after year, but he is also upset because the incompetent teacher makes the same salary for doing much less work. This situation has resulted in an ethic of indifference which appears to pervade the educational ethos of Rock Hill. Still another problem concerns factionalism. Only a select few of the teaching staff are consulted by the principal when a policy change is being considered. This has produced a sentiment of alienation among many teachers.

Rock Hill's Gate Keeping Function

Schwarzweller and Brown (1970:129-145) in their discussion of the problems associated with integrating the rural subculture of eastern Kentucky with mainstream, urban American society, conclude that the rural school, more than any other social institution, serves as a "cultural bridge." The term "cultural bridge," as they define it, refers to "an institutional complex which, through communication, linkage, and cultural diffusion, spans the gap between the two cultural systems (1970:129)." These authors perceive eastern Kentucky as "a subcultural area of American society that is predominantly rural and familistic and relatively isolated from the mainstream of national culture but still a part of that culture (1970:132). They view the diffusion of national culture traits into Appalachian Kentucky as involving a "three-step flow of influence," outlined as follows: "(1) the Great Society's influence upon the local school system, (2) the local school system's influence upon the general orientations of the students, and (3) the influence of general orientations on the evaluative thought processes and specific orientations of the students (1970:139)."

The findings of the Rock Hill study, which are particularly relevant to the observations of Schwarzweller and Brown (since the cultural setting of eastern Tennessee is similar to eastern Kentucky), suggest that their conclusions about rural schools serving as effective cultural bridges need to be carefully reconsidered. Rock Hill is culturally congruent with mainstream, urban American society in terms of its curriculum and instructional materials, as well as in terms of

the values some of its teachers emphasize in the classroom i.e. competition, productivity, punctuality, and so forth. Rock Hill, however, is selective in terms of who it prepares for successful participation in mainstream America, or even for successful participation in local society if one defines success as having access to decent paying jobs and high status roles. Rock Hill's indigent students, the students who need the most help in being integrated in mainstream America, are being neglected. In this respect, Rock Hill functions more as a gate-keeping institution for the local community than it does as a cultural bridge to mainstream America. The implications of this function are profound in consideration of the federal monies now being allocated to rural Appalachian school systems for the explicit purpose of uplifting those individuals who are economically deprived.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MITIGATION OF PREMATURE SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

In reference to the conclusions presented above, the following recommendations for the mitigation of premature school withdrawal are suggested.

Teacher Workshop on Appalachian Lifeways

Certainly nothing can be done in Baldwin County to uplift the poor through educational means as long as some teachers maintain the belief that impoverished people are culturally immutable, i.e. impoverished people are locked into a maladaptive cultural syndrome. One possible means, however, of solving this problem would be to hold workshops for

county teachers and administrators in which the economic, social, and psychological problems of adaptation encountered by the poor are discussed from both a humanistic and scientific perspective. The workshops, which should be directed by a social scientist familiar with Appalachian lifeways, should concentrate on vitiating the misconception that impoverished peoples are culturally immutable. Furthermore, the teachers should be confronted with another misconception which is indirectly related to the first one: that all people living in poverty are culturally deprived. Obviously, some children from extremely impoverished homes are not, for whatever reasons, abnormally fatalistic, familistic, anxiety-ridden, and so forth. Teachers should be made aware of this variation in cultural patterning among the poor in order to reduce the possibility of them prejudging how an impoverished student thinks and behaves before learning how he actually thinks and behaves. Similarly, the workshops openly should deal with the prejudice that those in Baldwin County have toward indigent people. This is of particular importance since most of the teachers at Rock Hill are from Baldwin County and, consequently, they may be more prejudiced than they believe themselves to be.

In the workshops the participants should be encouraged to join together in a united effort to identify and work with pariah students. To do this the channels of communication between upper and lower grade teachers will have to be improved. As the situation currently exists at Rock Hill, upper grade teachers blame lower grade teachers for not working more with the "set asides," a label upper grade teachers use in

reference to pariah students. Lower grade teachers, in turn, fault the parents of the pariah student for being apathetic about their child's education. This "chain of blame" that links upper grade teachers, lower grade teachers, and parents of pariah students must be broken. A cooperative effort between all three groups is necessary for the amelioration of premature school withdrawal.

Teachers should also be better informed regarding the sense of alienation pariah students experience at Rock Hill. Methods of penetrating this alienation should be discussed, such as strongly encouraging pariah students to participate in classroom discussions and extracurricular activities.

These workshops on Appalachian lifeways could be implemented through the off-campus workshop programs currently in operation at two nearby state universities. Baldwin County's teachers, who must obtain a certain amount of credit hours to maintain their teaching certificate, would likely enroll in the workshops if course credit were given for participation. Since The University of Tennessee at Knoxville has already conducted a number of off-campus workshops in the Baldwin County High School, this recommendation could be easily initiated.

Home Visiting Program

Though most of Rock Hill's teachers have a deeply ingrained image of what poor people in Baldwin County are like, few teachers have visited the homes of the impoverished child. Since the parents of impoverished children make little, if any, effort to meet with teachers, the teachers should visit with them. Periodic visits would benefit both

teachers and parents in a number of ways. By witnessing firsthand the physical and cultural environment associated with economic deprivation, educators may acquire more empathy for the indigent child, thereby reducing their prejudice and/or apathy toward the poor. Similarly, teachers may learn that poor people are not as "dangerous" as they have been made out ot be. Home visits may work toward creating more amiable relations between the poor and the school particularly by demonstrating that the school really does care about students from impoverished homes. It is also possible that through a series of home visits teachers may be able to get parents involved in their children's education by devising programs where the parents not only monitor their children's educational progress, but they actually become involved in learning with their children. Currently, home visiting is done to a limited degree in the Head Start Program, but home visits should extend throughout the elementary school years and, if possible, even through the first year of high school.

Logistically, a home visiting program could be implemented today without adding greatly to the school system's budget. There are currently five federally sponsored teaching assistants at Rock Hill who perform a variety of tasks, such as locating and making teaching aids and assisting teachers in recreational activities. It seems psssible that these teaching assistants could be used to conduct a teacher's class for two to three hours a day, one day a week, to enable the teacher to be free for home visiting.

Adult Education Program

Functionally illiterate parents should be identified and encouraged to participate in an adult literacy program. However, no such program exists in Baldwin County today. The Board of Education should make every effort to locate federal and state monies for the establishment of one. Once parents become sufficiently literate, they should be encouraged to enroll in a program preparing them for the General Education Diploma test. Such programs are currently in operation in neighboring towns. The county could easily solve any transportation problem by providing one of the shcool system's small buses.

Youman's (1963) longitudinal study of 307 young men in eastern Kentucky, half of which had left school prematurely, shows that dropouts are less achievement oriented, more fatalistic, and participated less in community affairs. Interestingly, however, Youman's data demonstrate that many of the dropouts reported that if they could start their lives over they would try to get more formal education. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that if properly approached many of the county's undereducated would be inclined toward participating in a literacy and General Education Diploma program. After completing such programs the attitudes of these adults would possibly improve to the extent that they would become less fatalistic, more achievement oriented, and so forth. Likewise, they would be in a better position to assist with their childrens' schoolwork and may become more active in local school affairs.

Operative Reward Program for Effective Teaching

An objective evaluation program needs to be instituted at Rock Hill to differentiate between those who teach well, and those who teach poorly and/or those who have abdicated from teaching yet remain in the classroom. Once identified, the more effective teacher should be given a monetary reward together with some kind of public acknowledgment for his efforts. This program may work toward diminishing the "leveling effect" that is currently undermining teacher morale.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been shown that pariah identity at Rock Hill is closely linked to one's family name and economic level. It has also been shown that pariah students at Rock Hill suffer greatly from low self-esteem resulting from alienation and sometimes blatant forms of ostracism. Low self-esteem, as other researchers have demonstrated, is closely related to premature school withdrawal (Youmans 1963; Wax 1976; Rosenfeld 1976). But, is the ascription of pariah identity, an identity defined on the basis of economic and kinship criteria, correlated with premature school withdrawal at Rock Hill? To answer this question empirically, a longitudinal study must be conducted which, first, identifies the pariah group and, second, traces the academic careers of these students to determine if they withdraw at a significantly higher rate than nonpariah students. On the basis of the research reported here, it seems very likely that this will be the case.

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