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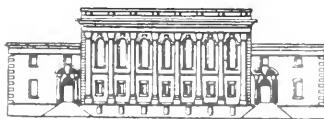
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Presented by  
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Class of 1973

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The Amherst County Issues: Factors of Development,  
Existence, and Persistence of a Rural Tri-Racial Group

by

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The United States has been called a "melting pot" of races and ethnic groups. Historically this was a result of the large number of immigrant groups' arrival in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Blacks, a racial group which arrived earlier than other ethnic groups, came to the southern part of the United States to work as indentured servants as early as the 1600's. They were used on farms which had not yet grown into the big plantation systems of the pre-civil war south. The Black servants, like other indentured servants, were often able to free themselves. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1794, the economy of the south was revolutionized by enabling mass production of cotton on a scale that had never before been possible. Mass production required many more laborers, and the system of indentured servants was available for modification to fit the needs of the new economy. In conjunction with the invention of the cotton gin, a number of ideological systems developed which provided legitimation for a change in the system from indentured servants to slavery, e.g., Social Darwinism, the Enlightenment (dichotomy of men and submen), and the White man's burden.

Thus Blacks were initially differentiated from Whites and considered as members of a subhuman category. Around them ideologies grew which emphasized the separateness of the Blacks from the larger whole.

The American Indians were used initially by the White man for their knowledge of the territory and their ability to survive in the wilderness. As the settlers continued to arrive, growing in numbers and needing more space, they were able to survive without the Indians and in fact, found them a problem--they were not only a source of competition for resources but they were of a different culture and life style. Conflict arose between the two



groups, and the Indians were pushed off their land to new areas which later became needed by the settlers, until eventually extermination of the Indians became the rule. Yet through this time, small bands of Indians escaped the long arm of the U. S. Army and remained in the mountains of the east where their descendants remain today.

Other groups arriving later in the history of America also experienced discrimination. One finds the development of ghettos for the immigrants who were pouring into the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coming to the "land of milk and honey". The Irish for example were socially and physically isolated in the ghettos of large American cities and were limited to lowly occupations such as domestics for the rich families of the area. They were also the subject of discriminatory practices because of their cultural separation from the majority of Americans.

The "melting pot" theory of America consists of the conception that a process occurs in America in which distinct groups, in terms of culture and/or race, are accepted for those differences and in fact, blend into a unified whole. As the above brief history relates, this is not the case. The process actually is one in which groups are differentiated from each other, and around some of these ideologies develop that emphasize the separateness of those groups from the larger whole. Such ideologies and group distinctions are based on recency of arrival, color, language, and customs. One finds in the United States the idea that America "will accept the hungry masses yearning to be free" when what in fact happens is not the related "melting pot" of equals, but various groups experiencing discrimination both economic and social, such that their access to power, property, and prestige is severely limited.

In Amherst County, Virginia, one finds in microcosm the process which



occurred in the society as a whole; that is in Amherst there was a differentiation of three groups, Indian, White, and Black, and a distinction was made between the groups exemplified by the fact that they were named. A partial result of that differentiation was the development of a group distinct from all three of the original groups, called "Issues" referring to the products of Indian, White, and Black biological intermixture. The "Issues" are a group because they are separate from the rest of the community having their own name (Issue), identity, social structure, and past. They, as a mixture of three races, are discriminated against and viewed as a separate race. Thus in the county one finds in miniature the process that occurs in the larger society, with one complication of that process. The group that developed in Amherst was the result of tri-racial intermixture in that county and in fact, one of the original groups, the Indians, no longer exist. Other racial and ethnic groups of the United States arrived or were initially differentiated as different upon coming to America. This complication adds a complexity and uniqueness to the group--for in Amherst, one finds in total the entire process of group formation and distinction; in other words unlike the Indians or Blacks, who arrived with their own culture and to an extent their own social structure, the Issues in a sense, begin from scratch in Amherst County. It is from this unique quality that the importance of groups of this nature derive; there is the ability to ascertain information about basic ingroup-outgroup development, race relations, group perpetuation, and processes of change.

This paper is a study of the position of the Issue in the county, the primary question being what variables both external and internal to the group have influenced the development and more importantly the persistence of



group identity. The result of this analysis is a realization of the mechanisms that have led to the existence and persistence of the group. However, because this approach takes the position of the Issue at one point in time, in a sense in the absolute, what must be added to this are the alterations, if any, in the mechanisms of persistence and the question of the effect on the group as a result of the changing variables. Will the group be perpetuated through time or will the group be assimilated into the social structure? Here, the term assimilation will be used as the situation in which social participation is not based on criteria such as ethnicity or race, or, in other words, where there are no distinctions in social relations in regard to ethnicity or race.<sup>1</sup> Assimilation is indicated (by that situation in which) when diverse groups are distributed according to their numerical proportion throughout the occupation, political, and prestige hierarchies--that is, 'institutional dispersion'.<sup>2</sup> This is to be distinguished from the historical definition of assimilation which included acculturation--the dichotomy is structure vs. culture or the opposite of assimilation, structural pluralism. Structural pluralism, then, is the division of societies, in this study community, into corporate groups. This division also includes a division of the social structure into analogous, parallel institutions for the separate groups.<sup>3</sup> We are speaking of structural pluralism as a result of racial cleavages, not cultural pluralism which results from ethnic group differentiation and can also involve structural pluralism. Thus, in applying this rubric to the analysis of the Issues the point is the determination of the position of the Issue in terms of assimilation with the realization that the determination is one of degree only.





In summary then the analysis includes the following questions:

1. What factors led to the development and existence of the group?
2. What mechanisms have operated to perpetuate the existence of the group, and what position is being perpetuated?
3. What is the effect of an alteration on the variables on the perpetuation of the Issues existence as a group and their position in the social structure?
4. What is the position of the Issue Community in terms of the concepts of structural pluralism and assimilation? Are the changing factors having any effect on this position?



## Hypothesis

on the basis of the work of Berry, Schwartz, and others, a number of general characteristics can be drawn about groups of a tri-racial mixture. It is upon these works that I propose a number of hypotheses:

1. The development of groups of this type is the result of the differentiation made between three races and the offspring of the biological intermixture of these races with an accompanying social and physical isolation and discrimination.
2. The perpetuation of tri-racial groups in their inferior position in relation to the Whites, and to some extent, Blacks, is a result of the institutional arrangement where there is racial discrimination, economic subsistence and a minimal level of educational achievement.
3. A number of the changing variables such as income level and schooling are improving for the younger members of these groups. Yet, as this occurs, more of the young members move to other types of work in the nearby area or further afield. However, the key variable, that of racial distinction, continues and so does their low position in the social structure. Thus, as long as some group members remain in their area of origin and fill the positions as members of the tri-racial group, so long will that distinctive status continue.
4. In terms of the concept of structural pluralism the expectation is that tri-racial groups generally and the Issues specifically will



not be assimilated in the social structure of the surrounding community. The racial distinction made has circumscribed these groups and has resulted in social pluralism. Although some barriers such as occupation and education are beginning to fall in the communities where this distinction is made, the area of kinship and marriage remains resistant toward assimilation.



## The Study

Information about the Issues comes from an eight week research project conducted in the summer of 1972. In an attempt to compile as much information as possible on the Issues in terms of group boundaries, history, position, and mobility, every source available was utilized.

By the end of the eight-week period, approximately 70 people were interviewed, each of which represented and gave information on a wide network of other relatives, the result being that although not all members were reached, information on group members who were not interviewed came through those who were. The conduction of the interviews followed a free form in that there were certain basic questions used to guide discussion but each interview followed the interests and areas that the interviewee would discuss. Others in the area, namely county officials, e.g. Commonwealth Attorney, Sheriff, and merchants were interviewed, and any printed material concerning the Issues or tri-racial groups was read for further information and comparable material. Extensive genealogies were made for each family and courthouse records were researched for data on marriage certificates, military service, car and general property ownership, and civil and criminal cases.





## Group Formation

In Amherst County, a racial group known as Issue developed as the result of a mixture of three groups. Yet it required more than mere biological intermixture to create a distinct racial category. The Issues are unlike other racial and ethnic groups in America simply because they did not arrive as a distinct group but developed totally in Amherst. This is one of the unique features of the Issue group and is something which makes the understanding of the process of this group's formation and racial distinction so important for the study of race relations--here one finds in microcosm a process which is universal, and it is here that a factoring out of the variables in group development might one day be possible.

But to return to a more basic consideration: What were some of the factors which led to the formation of the group known as Issue, and what factors help maintain group boundaries?

The formation of groups of this nature arises from two primary sources: first, to account for the origin of the group, there is the necessity for multiple racial mixing such that subsequent offspring are regarded as different from all parent groups, and second, it is necessary that inbreeding of the offspring continue over a considerable period of time for persistence of the group. Isolation either social, physical, or both is implied by the second factor.<sup>1</sup> This isolation arises from an imposed separation by the dominant group from all of the various mixing groups due to the alleged inferiority of the products of the racial mixture. Thus, a third factor arises: the discrimination against the social isolate by other groups because of the alleged inferior heritage of the social isolate. As a result of



this discrimination a peculiar third group status is assigned to the isolate, a status which is dubious and otherwise inferior to any other "pure" racial group.

Maintenance of group identity involves a number of factors. First, there must be at least one characteristic distinctive of the group to insure recognition of group members. The Issues, in general, have distinctive physical features; however, where this is not applicable, their distinctive surnames place them in the group, e.g. the names Branham, Johns, Adcock, and Terry are, for the most part, names in the county that only Issues hold. This is common among groups of this type as with the Redbones who have a limited number of surnames which can be used as a means of identification and control.

Second, members of the group must associate together in order that their identity as a whole is furthered. This is true of the Issues who will not associate with Blacks and who are not allowed by the Whites to associate with them. Size of the group becomes an important dimension in this case since endogamous marriage is the norm. Third, a group name insures the social isolates delineation from all others. In Amherst County, the term Issue effectively circumscribes one from the larger community and its avenues to mobility and success. Other names for groups of this sort include: Redbones, Cajuns, and Jackson Whites.<sup>2</sup> Ideological and economic mechanisms work as well to insure control of group boundaries. Economically the majority of Issues are limited either to orchard work or to semiskilled labor which tends to be identified with the group. The economic position of the Issues has been a stable one over their history. Around this group has grown a body of etiquette, myth, emotion, and value judgement that has controlled their thoughts and actions in the county.



Moreover, in the past one means of unity for tri-racial groups was through the tripartite school system. In Amherst, the school was an outgrowth of the mission, because Issues refused to attend the public dual system, the mission provided a separate school which was paid for through public funds. This situation promoted unity in both the Issue and the White community (as each racial community had to work for their respective goals, i.e. the exclusion of racial groups they considered inferior). The importance of the mission church as a social force in maintaining group identity has grown as the Issue children no longer go to a separate school, but instead, go to the integrated county school.<sup>3</sup> Pervasive kin ties also act as a source of unity in the group. Due to the endogamous marriage pattern qualified only by a few marriages outside the group, kinship ties have expanded to the extent that everyone is related to everyone else to some degree.

Now that it has been established that the group exists and some factors of formation have been indicated, the next question becomes: what factors lead to the perpetuation of the Issue group? In determining the answer, we must consider the economic position of the Issues and certain other social variables which together might relate and reinforce the perpetuation of the group.



## Economics

From the antebellum plantation to the small farms of today, Virginia has been an agricultural state. Yet the majority of the inhabitants of this agricultural area have historically been of moderate means. In 1860, approximately 40% of white Virginia families were slave owners; of this number 53.3% owned less than five slaves, while only 11.7% owned twenty or more slaves. Most Virginians, therefore, were small farmers and tenant laborers who could not afford slaves on their small land holdings. Following the Civil War, similar small farms continued through the 19th and into the 20th centuries.<sup>1</sup> In the thirties, Virginia ranked 36th in per capita wealth and 44th in educational standing among the states.<sup>2</sup> Amherst County as a part of the state has reflected the conditions and history of Virginia as a whole.

Amherst, in 1970, had a total population of 26,021 people living on 467 sq. miles of land. Some 90% of this land is rural--orchards, woodlands, and the like, yet many of the people of Amherst do not make their living as farmers. Of the 7,916 residents of Amherst County gainfully employed in 1967, 26% were employed in white collar occupations and 32.2% in manufacturing. The median school years completed by the population was 7.6%; 27.8% of the population completed less than five years of schooling. The median annual income which was \$4,444.00 in 1967, was partially a result of the low level of education in the county. Of the households in Amherst in 1970, 21.6% received under \$3,000.00 per year and only 23.9% over \$10,000.00 per year, with the largest percentage in the \$5-8,000.00 range. The picture created thus far is that of a generally poor, rural county. As might be expected from national trends, the number of farms in the county is decreasing. In 1959, there were 925 farms





while in 1964 the number had decreased to 799; 9.3% of these were operated by tenants. Of the 324 commercial farms, 51.2% had sales under \$2,500.00, while only 8.6% had sales over \$10,000.00 per year. The average farm sales were \$2,263.00.<sup>2</sup> Such low income farms require low income laborers to operate the farms, as either owners or as tenants. For many years there has been such a group of local farm laborers known as Issues by the community. It is this group who is the subject of this study. While there are variations from individual to individual in the group as well as through time, this discussion will refer to two differing groups: those referred to as core who have remained relatively static in terms of occupation and residence, and those who are mobile in terms of these factors.

The Issues have worked and lived principally on Bear Mountain, five miles northwest of Sweet Briar College, living in dwellings concentrated in an area approximately eight miles long and four miles wide. In this area and further into Madison Heights and Lynchburg there were, in 1972, approximately 500 group members. During the early 1900's, the Issues worked on the farms and orchards in the county, raising corn, tobacco, and apples. A smaller number worked on local dairies and a few operated their own farms while others worked as tenants on farms owned by the Whites in the county. Many experienced the difficulties of farming such as bad weather and over-production for the market.

In the summer of 1972, little had changed. The economic situation, as far as is known, remains relatively stable with few Issue families owning their own farms and being thereby self-sufficient. There are no farmers' associations among the Issues to improve their economic position through political means. The stable core group mentioned previously is employed, for the most part, in the apple orchards, generally located at the base of Bear Mountain.



The work in the apple orchards is that of a modified tenant type: that is, the Issues do not rent the land, rather they work for the White orchard owners and receive in return housing on the orchards, hourly wages of \$1.30 per hour, and from some owners, wood or land for small gardens. In the early 1900's, many of these houses were log cabins. Today, many of the dwellings which the orchard owners provide are little better. Most are one story buildings with 2-4 rooms which sometimes house as many as fifteen children. Plumbing facilities are rare while heating is often provided by a wood stove and lighting is poor. Furniture is often sparse, old, and infested with bugs. Generally the homes are equipped with some appliances such as old refrigerators or stoves, and some homes have televisions and radios. They eat whatever is at hand mostly vegetables and things they are able to raise such as chickens. Few, if any, of the families have reading matter such as magazines or newspapers although many have a Bible.

Work on the orchards is hard, outdoor, manual labor. It is also dangerous. For example, it is not uncommon for men to die due to tractor accidents. Orchard work involves pruning, spraying, weeding, picking the fruit, and so on. It is a full time, around the year, job requiring a permanent, and to an extent stable labor force. Typically, the workers live together. The work although it does not require highly skilled laborers does require a degree of specialization and knowledge of orchard work--that is the workers must know how and when to trim trees, pick apples, pack them and so on. Therefore, the need for specialization is complementary to a stable labor supply and exacerbates this factor.

But it is hard work whose benefits are small. Although as stated above certain benefits do accrue to the laborer, i.e. wood and garden produce, the salary is minimal and the position does not provide room for advancement.



Moreover, orchard work tends to involve a greater use of labor relative to capital such that profits to the owner must be squeezed out of the pay to the laborers.

Women work when able, although usually not directly in the field. One woman of 80 is still picking apples and working in the orchards. However, they more often work as domestics, in nursing homes, in motels, or at the Lynchburg Training School. When women do work in the orchards, they usually have jobs in the packing sheds rather than directly in the field.

Property ownership among the group is limited: courthouse records indicate that they are taxed on very few possessions, the most coming to about \$200.00. An exception to this is an Issue man who is known to have a bank account of \$5,000.00, which he has saved diligently. In managing this account, however, he asked help from a White merchant in the area because he cannot read or write.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this does not appear to be the norm; most core members are merely subsisting, barely providing themselves with shelter and clothing. Issue women and children have been seen by Whites walking outdoors in their bare feet in winter. However, many Issues have some means of transportation, usually a pickup truck, useful in their work and sometimes a car.

Not all of the Issues in the county live on Bear Mountain as the core group does. Instead, many have moved into Madison Heights and further into the Lynchburg Area. The homes of those Issues who have moved, and yet remain in the general area are not much better than those they left on the orchards. One set of brothers and their families has taken up residence in a motel in Madison Heights, a small commercial area on the fringe of Lynchburg; another family lives across the street from the motel in a small two-room house. Of the Issues who moved into Lynchburg, many live in the Black section of the city.



Those families that leave the orchard often find work in area factories. The men find employment as manual or semi-skilled laborers for companies such as Coca-Cola or Ready-Mix Concrete. The women work at Lynchburg Training school, as maids in the Holiday Inn or in stores in Lynchburg. Thus, although the Issues leave the orchards, the work they are able to find in the county remains that of low income labor.

Leaving the orchards is a big step and when it occurs the Issues often attempt to keep their past behind them. This however, is difficult as their surnames indicate group membership as well as their coloring in some instances. It could be asked if they move and disassociate themselves, are they still members of the group? For purposes of this study, those individuals socially recognized as members will be considered as such.

The occupational position of the Issues, like the Cajuns of Alabama who grow cotton and the Redbones who grown corn, has been necessary in an agricultural state. However, conditions have been such that small farming is not among the most lucrative professions. Agricultural work throughout the entire United States is in the process of change, today only a small portion of the population is employed in agricultural work. Some economic factors contributing to the rural farmers' difficulties in Virginia include: low returns to the agricultural industry as a whole (any money the Issues are able to invest does not pay itself back); poor land and small holdings (especially true of the Issues living on the mountain sides where the terrain is not the best for agriculture and the amount of land is too small for mechanization); unfavorable credit (the Issues do not have collateral nor are they in a position to receive credit when most do not have bank accounts at all).<sup>4</sup> These factors weigh particularly on the Issues because they in general





do not own the land they operate; yet, at the same time, they do not have the means to change their occupation.

The Issues are functional in the community for two reasons: first, they do a job which needs to be done although it is probably not the most sought after of positions. Secondly, they are a cheap labor supply at a \$1.30 per hour for those who require their services. In short, the Issues' position is economically beneficial to the White orchard owners.



### Racism and Stratification

The Issues are illustrative of a phenomenon known as tri-racial groups; groups which comprise, for the most part, descendants of Indian, White, and Black ancestors. Race thus becomes an important social variable influencing the existence of the Issues because of their mixed racial background. The Black ancestry, which is firmly and emphatically denied by the members of the Issue community, was found after careful examination of their genealogies to be minimal at best. Even when Blacks and Issues live on the same street, they remain unknown to each other, as discovered when a Black family was unable to give directions to an Issue home located on their street. In general, tri-racial groups deny any relations with Blacks. However, Mr. Flecker of the Census Bureau of Virginia, in the mid-1900's, listed the Issues as Black, and as a result of this, the Issues continue to fight over their racial classification on legal documents and certificates. This becomes especially important in the American "paper culture" where the files on any individual or group become enormous and beyond their control. It then becomes necessary to try to control the content if not the number of files on any one or group. The Issues would prefer to be classified as White, or failing this, as Indian.

The term Issue which is used by the local community to denote group members is a derogatory name dating back to the 19th century, if not further. It is said to be the shortened form of "Free Issue", a term used to designate those Blacks who were free for various reasons prior to the Civil War. The Free Negro population in America was not the poor class imagined by most; they often were mulattos, a result of mixture of Whites, Indians, or Latins,



which occurred in Virginia, Massachusettes, Florida, and elsewhere. This group was not always poor as illustrated by New Orleans in 1860, where property of the free colored amounted to \$15,000,000.00. Thus, although association with Free Negro or Issue is not desirable to the Issues of Amherst in terms of race, their ancestors, if they did come from "Free Issue", were not necessarily poor, although living in the Piedmont with its generally lower economic level would tend to lower their position. Other stories connect the origin of the term with the offspring of Negro slave women and White owners. Children of these unions were set free (Free Issue) and taken to the mountains where they were brought up by the Indians. In time the term "Free Issue" came to apply to the entire group, but research in the 1920's concluded that the tribe evolved from four fountain heads: a White man named Johns, and three Indians--Redcross, Evans, and Branham.<sup>2</sup> According to the legend the Indians were moving up from the Carolinas and stopped in Amherst. The initial mixture of White and Indian caused those offspring to be socially separated from the rest of the community. This feeling continued resulting in further segregation and thus the Issues identity as a separate group. The fact that they acquired a name is indicative of their distinctive position and group status.

One of the many problems encountered in the study of such groups concerns the term applied in describing them. They have been called "quasi-Indians", "marginal Indians", "tri-racial isolates", "little races", "mixed bloods", and so on. The number of names adds to the confusion and reflects the difficulties involved in such studies. This paper will refer to such groups as social isolates, although this term has certain drawbacks of its own. For example, although the group forms a social marriage isolate, some mating and



marriage does occur with members of the White and Black groups.

In Amherst County, then, there are three socially defined races: Black, White, and Issue. The community is stratified such that Whites are on the top and the Blacks and Issues are left to fight over who gets the bottom. Indicative of this racial stratification are the three community cemeteries comparable to the three races and the now banned tripartite school system.

Racism occurs when physical differences between groups are socially significant such that physical traits are thought to be indicative of moral and intellectual qualities.<sup>3</sup> The Issues of Amherst are then a race which experiences discrimination. Indicative of this situation and sentiment are the opinions of the Commonwealth Attorney of Amherst who thinks that the Issues have the worst of all races mixed up in them. "Your whole Black is the best citizen you've got" and when the races are mixed they become meaner and are "amoral, not immoral". The Issues are thought by the White community to enjoy dancing, since they have rhythm like the Blacks; yet they have trouble holding their liquor because of the Indian blood in them. Thus the Issues are typed with the bad features of both races. Other stereotypes include the beliefs that the Issues are stupid, not trustworthy, like the color red, and are sexually attractive. This combines with other factors such as: etiquette in the form of social distance rather than physical distance resulting in an exaggerated politeness on the part of the Issue towards the Whites, and social control by the White community through classifying Issues as Blacks on legal documents such as birth certificates and marriage licenses. These factors help to maintain and enforce the stratification system leading to an almost impermeable caste system represented by social immobility and ascribed status.





Although two hundred such communities have been located in the United States, the existence of these groups is a phenomenon about which little is known giving rise to much confusion. Berry describes them as "not an organized group, like the Masons, Elks, Methodists, or labor unions, having rules, officers, dues, symbols, and membership rolls. It is not a group one chooses to join, nor to which one takes pride in belonging. It is a caste, into which one is born and from which one escapes only surreptitiously!"<sup>5</sup> The conceptualization that this is a caste-like position aides in the understanding of this phenomenon. Caste positions are indicative of a rigid stratification system involving a degree of sociocultural pluralism as well as a distinctive pattern of interaction.<sup>6</sup> In regard to these points, it must be kept in mind that the situation of the Issues is more caste-like and will not totally follow the concept of a caste system in it's ideal sense. However, there are similarities between castes and social isolates in their ascription at birth to a particular position and the lack of ease of mobility. The existence of these characteristics among the Issues could easily be seen in membership which was acquired at birth on the certificates marked Issue. Recent protest over this problem of birth certificates, with the help of the Bishop of this diocese, and recent civil rights laws, have resulted in the elimination of racial classification on certificates. Yet the distinctive surnames and knowledge of kinship lines continue to circumscribe the group member at birth. Attempts to leave the group can occur only in a sense, outside the system by "passing" for White either within the community or by moving to another area. As Thompson points out, "passing" refers to individuals, not to groups. Among the Issues only individuals or families attempt to pass, they do not attempt a transformation of the groups' status in toto except in terms of the recent legal changes of documents mentioned previously. Thus passing results in a



position that is not achieved through individual merit; rather, passing is a trick one can play on the system.

Because Issues are conceived of as a group, they are also thought, as are castes, to be homogeneous. Their traditional occupational position has been in the orchard or surrounding farms working for the White owners. Sociocultural pluralism does not exist among the Issues to the extent or in the sense it is found in India. The logic behind sociocultural pluralism is that the caste member is forced to interact almost exclusively among the others of similar caste; hence, they develop independently and therefore socioculturally distinct from others. The Issues because of their caste-like position resulting from their racial background do exhibit certain characteristics which inhibit their movement out of their position for example education or job training.

Yet a totally distinct culture does not appear to exist among the Issues . One woman was heard to chant all day long while doing her work and this was interpreted by the White girl who heard her as a characteristic of Indian heritage.<sup>7</sup> However, these instances are few and do not appear to indicate a retention on the part of the Issues of any remnants of their Indian culture. One apparent difference among the groups is that the stigma of illegitimacy is not found among the Issues, whereas it is found generally throughout society. It is the prejudice felt towards the Issues as a result of their racial background, rather than a cultural difference, which seems to exacerbate the dichotomy between the Issues and the rest of the community.

Boundaries between groups are maintained by patterns of social interaction and group symbols, i.e. name and physical characteristics. There is a particular etiquette in force between Whites and Issues in terms of address as well as in the client-patron relationship which exists in their work situation.



The etiquette between Whites and Issues is condescending as it involves unequal status contact where Issues must exhibit exaggerated politeness to Whites. This can be seen quite clearly in the relationship between the Issue orchard workers and the owner. While I was talking to a White man in his orchard, he dropped his handkerchief at the same time a truck was driving by, and a little Issue boy jumped out of the truck and ran over and picked up the handkerchief giving it to it's owner. The little boy was thanked but as if this was expected behavior, although it appeared quite unusual.

The conception the orchard owners have of the Issues is related to this incident. They tend to see them as good workers, simple people, who although they at times try to leave the hills, find that their homes are really in the orchards. Therefore, though the Issues venture away from the orchards, they tend to return to the sheltered life of orchard work. Many whites see the Issues as childlike, with such generalizations and stereotypes as they like bright colors especially red, or they like to sing.

One orchard owner allows his men to borrow money on their next pay check; thus in effect, he keeps his workers in debt and assures himself of a supply of orchard workers, who work at the rate of \$1.30 per hour. The position of the Issue man in the occupational structure is functional for the Whites and maintains the low status of the Issue group. It is a paternalistic relationship in which roles are sharply defined and status is ascribed. It is a situation of benevolent despotism where everyone knows his place, where etiquette is elaborate and there is little mobility.<sup>8</sup> Social mobility is indicative of the degree of fluidity and flexibility of the stratification system in a community. For the Issues, the means to upward mobility have been minimized by their structural position; the stratification of the community into caste-like positions is a method of institutionalized



inequality, and helps maintain the status quo where the only means of escape is through "passing". Therefore, Issues continue to work in the orchards with the accompanying paucity of political and economic power.

It would appear that the Issue does not so much accept his position as become resigned to it. Proof of this lies in the number of Issues who move to other areas when able and in that way change racial or social positions. Once the Issue moves to a new area, such as Washington, D. C. or Baltimore, their racial classification can change since they, for the most part, look white. If a relative comes to the city who does not look white and is seeking help from an established relative, the city relatives will shut the door in their face and deny they know them; to recognize someone of darker complexion as a relative would threaten their position.

There are a number of directions of social mobility as well as various means of movement. Downward mobility occurs with increased association with the Black community; and marriage of an Issue to a Black is the quickest means down for the Issue. One woman after the death of her husband took up residence with a Black man in the Black area of Amherst. She has disassociated herself and has been disassociated from the Issue group; her children, who are Issue, are marrying into the Black community. The Issue group does not recognize her except as part of the Black community and thus, as something to be avoided. This concurs with the White view verbalized by the Commonwealth Attorney that mixing the races leads to the worst possible results. The opposite direction or upward mobility is sought by individuals in the community. The principle means of upward mobility is movement from the area to another where the tri-racial classification is not known. Marriage to a White person by an Issue in Amherst does not mean upward mobility for the Issue; rather, the result is downward mobility of the White person. One White man who married an Issue girl was disowned by his family and, therefore, effectively





cut off from the White group. Upward mobility in the area can occur to a limited extent through education and thus through better employment opportunities. This would involve a slight change in the life style of the individual as well as changes in the life chances of the family of procreation. Changes in social position include: variations in occupation, prestige, income, wealth, power, and social class. However, upward mobility through education will not appreciably alter the prestige, power, or even the class of the Issues, as the determinant factor of their original position, racial classification, remains intact.



## Kinship

"Marriage, as the linking of two families, is the most complete expression of class equality," and the family is the social mechanism that controls and maintains the system of stratification.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in Amherst County. The importance of this was brought home to one White boy who married an Issue girl, and has since been disowned by his family. Their marriage implied an equality between the families of the union which could not be allowed by the boy's family. Thus, in order to avoid the implication that the two families were of equal status, the boy had to be declared a non-member of his own family. More important, the marriage, in equating the two groups, was a threat to the organization of the stratification system as a whole. Therefore, if left unpunished, or positively sanctioned, might have led to other marriages and the eventual undermining of the entire stratification system.

Moreover, offspring from such a "mixed" union tend to blur both those phenotypic traits that make Issues identifiable, and the kinship lines that allow Issues to be identified by surname. One Sweet Briar student was sometimes mistaken for an Issue because her skin was so dark. Her friends teased her continually about being mistaken for an Issue, and one Issue man thought she was a Johns (an Indian with one of the Issue surnames). Thus, intermarriage would confuse the systems used to delineate group members, and the pressures against intermarriage tend to result in intramarriage within the Issue group itself. The marriage license requiring Issues to be classified racially as "colored", and state laws against miscegenation were used in earlier years to discourage intermarriage. Such laws required Issues to register as "colored" and also successfully limited the number of legal Issue marriages, for to



avoid being so classified, many Issues did not obtain marriage licenses. This did not leave them very well-off either, however, for such marriages were termed (and still are) not "common-law", but "lewd and lascivious cohabitation".<sup>2</sup> Because of the racial status forced upon them by marriage certificates, Issues were forced to remain outside the law to avoid classification as colored, and continue a relationship seen by the larger community as sinful. While the legal aspect of marriage is changing in the face of Civil Rights legislation, such pressures as exhibited in the old laws still exist in the county.

The marriage system of the Issues is much like that found in Jamaica, where common-law marriage is the pattern among the less wealthy. However, the reasons for common-law marriage are different in Jamaica; whereas many Jamaicans simply cannot afford a legal church wedding, the Issues do not legally marry because they do not and will not accept the classification of "colored". In Jamaica, there are three forms of common-law marriage: permanent concubinage, temporary concubinage, and the fatherless family.<sup>3</sup> The first type most closely corresponds to what can be found in the Issue community.

Marriage is further complicated by the racial status of Issues in terms of upward mobility. It is thought by some Whites that many Issue women have illegitimate children by White men because they realize that these children will be lighter in color and thereby more able to "pass" as White both within the county and outside of it. The Issue community has in fact gained a reputation as a center of prostitution. The sheriff of Amherst County complained of having trouble with one of his men who was chasing an Indian woman. Another man called the Issue women "nymphomaniacs" and many referred to them as "attractive, beautiful, and aluring". The fact that White men are fathering



Issue children further complicates the tension in the area, as one Amherst resident said, "some of the best blood in the county flows in those hills". White families are anxious to keep their kin ties with the Issues under cover, so to speak, and one of the best means to accomplish this is to keep the Issue in the mountains by means of racial discrimination.

Among the Issues illegitimacy does not appear to carry the same stigma that it does in the larger society. Those women who marry after having illegitimate children bring those children into the family where they are usually accepted. If illegitimacy is a conscious mechanism used by the community for mobility, then it is also indicative of the extent of internalization of the values and judgements made by the larger society on the Issues-- in other words they have internalized their negative stereotype.

Most households contain conjugal families except for those instances of joint families occurring where the members became too old to function independently. However, the system of conjugal families also had the air of an extended family system. Many times children, once married themselves, would live next door to parents or siblings. The residential patterning is quite functional for group members as there are always some close kin on hand to give assistance and support. This becomes especially important when the mothers work to contribute to the family income as many Issue mothers do. When this happens, mothers are able to leave their children in the hands of kin insuring good care as well as inexpensive babysitters. Children grow up with their relatives and the reciprocal kin relationships that children see established at an early age continue throughout their lives. Even when members of the group move away, whether it is to Madison Heights or Baltimore, they tend to turn to other members of that unit in times of trouble. When the father of a family of four children was killed recently in a tractor accident, the





mother was prepared to place all of the burden of his absence upon the eldest son, although her parents lived on one side of her and her brothers family on the other. The boy was a senior in high school and was to be the first Issue from Amherst to go to college; yet, the mother wanted him to stay home despite all the efforts of her kin to emphasize her foolishness. Eventually, she realized what she was asking, and today the boy is in college in Pennsylvania on a scholarship. Thus, in the Issue community, kinship is the basic foundation of their social organization which unifies and insulates group members from the experiences of life.

The result of racial discrimination, which is manifested in residence patterns (limited generally to the mountains or poor sections of the city), occupation (limited to orchard or semi-skilled labor), and associations (limited to group members), can and does affect relationships between spouses. Because of the restrictions placed on the Issue, the community of the Issue becomes a close knit network. The connectedness of the social network appears to have influenced the conjugal bond; that is the bond is superimposed onto the already existing social network. Each spouse turns to those in the network for support and companionship; rather than to their partner resulting in segregated conjugal roles.<sup>4</sup>

It was possible while doing field research to talk to one person and learn the history of most of the families in the core community as well as what they were doing at the time.

During the interviews, the wife acted as the spokesman for the family, and the husband, where present, listened in an adjacent room making his presence felt. The meals were prepared by the wife, and on the table when the husband came home from work. Sometimes the women worked especially if their children were old enough to leave home alone or if a babysitter was available. Thus,



the wife was left to the housework and the husband to providing the living--the normal division of labor by sex. The wife was in charge of the children, disciplining them when necessary and trying to teach them manners, however in some cases, without much success. Activities within the group were limited, the women working on handicrafts like sewing either at home or in the church group with other women. Women tended to associate exclusively. A number of women, for entertainment during the day would watch soap operas as they would have only children in the house with them and no one else to talk to. The men seemed to drink for recreation with other men, at times being arrested for drunken driving. At work in the orchards, when it was particularly rainy or before the day begins, the men sit around in the packing sheds talking and playing cards. There was only one instance where this dichotomy between male and female did not appear to hold, that of Dessie Duff. On coming to her house, she was found out by a shed working on the engine of an old car with her husband, her father, and one of her children. In general, the roles appeared to be segregated although more research is required. This agrees with Bott's theory as the Issue network is also close knit.

There are a number of factors that influence the connectedness of the social network; these include: economic ties within the network, type of neighborhood, opportunities for relationships outside the network, physical and social mobility, and personality. Economics is important to a group especially when there is common property or an inheritance or an ability to assist the younger members in obtaining jobs. Among the Issues, economic ties are strong in the sense that almost everyone works in the orchards doing about the same work with kin of some degree, and although there is little property to inherit, the common economic situation is strong among the group. The



degree of neighborhood localization, in this group as with the Cajuns, Redbones, and others, is tight and compact as the group lives in one general area leading to a greater familiarity among neighborhood members, since contact is frequent. Chances of making friendships outside of the Issue community are slight as they refuse to associate with Blacks, and Whites will not associate with them, they are in effect reduced to associating largely within their core group. Two local middle class girls, now sophomores in college, were asked how their parents would have reacted if they had brought home an Issue while they were in high school. Both were certain that the effect would have been the same as if they had brought home a Black. The degree of mobility either physical or social, where minimal, promotes connectedness of networks as there is greater familiarity and stability in the relationships. This variable applies to the core Issues as they have old, long established relationships with their neighbors, many people having lived on the mountains all their lives.<sup>5</sup> In summary, the close knit network of the core Issue community is partially a result of economic and social variables operating on the group; that is, the type of jobs available, their ability to move, their ability to associate with others all relate to their orchard work and their racial classification .

To Bott's geographical mobility, B. N. Adams adds a new dimension by including the concept that distance effects not only the degree but the types of interaction. Greater distance between relatives or friends increases the likelihood that interaction will be related to vacations or special occasions. The importance of this is reduced by the existence of phones, mails and other means of transportation; however, for the Issues many of those conveniences are non-existent. Thus, distance does effect the type of interaction within the network. For example, the Issue family that moved to Madison Heights was



essentially removed from the group except during special occasions, i.e. funerals. Hence, the core group of Issues tend to interact on a day to day basis. Furthermore, this supports the theory that the social network of the group is close knit.

As mentioned above, the economic position and racial classification of the Issue relate and are reinforced by the conjugal system of the Issue community. Who one marries, the type of marriage bond, and where one will live all correlate directly with the economic and racial spheres of the Issues in relation to the larger community. Moreover, the conjugal system in turn reinforces those spheres.





## Residence

Residentially the group is located along a number of roads leading into the mountains. Their community pattern can be classified in relation to the typology of rural communities. Of the types, the Issue community is a mixture of line village and plantation. It is like the line village because the residential houses occur in rows, although not regularly spaced, along a highway, giving the appearance of an extended street. Interspersed among the houses are the stores and churches and orchards of the area. There are similarities to the plantation type as a result of the stratification system of the area which results in workers in a tenent position living on the land they work. Within this residential and social framework, the Issues live together, work together and often travel together in their work, thus encouraging cooperation and sociability in the Issue community as a result of their spatial position and circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

The Cajuns of Alabama, a group like the Issues in terms of status, exhibit a residential patterning similar to the Issues. Although the Cajuns are a much larger group living in a larger land area, they, like the Issues, have lived in one compact area. Their homes are rented cabins which dot the hillside as do the Issue's, and it is here that they have been forced to "eke out a miserable existence" growing cotton and sweet potatoes.<sup>2</sup> The Redbones of Southwest Louisiana also live in rural areas as small corn growers in simply constructed homes located off from the road, sometimes paved, sometimes dirt.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of consequences which follow from the spatial position of the social isolates. When the geographical location of the social isolate is restricted, as it usually is, to the undesirable land, i.e. hilly, the result is a low standard of living of the isolates comparable to others. They



are economically restricted and put on the outside of the competitive struggle such that it takes most of their energy to survive. However, a few groups in Ohio, New Jersey, and North Carolina began with rich soil and were able to achieve a relatively high standard of living. The geographical location of the social isolates has also contributed to the isolation of the group which reinforces the identity and unity of the group as separate from others. Spatial location, as well as others forces, have generally contributed to the poorly developed institutions of the social isolates; moreover, where this underdevelopment is not the case, the social isolate such as those in Ohio, and New Jersey are much ahead of groups of this nature.<sup>4</sup> In short, the social isolates generally do not have a full complement of institutions but instead, are organized around one or two institutions such as kinship and religion.<sup>5</sup>

The economic position of the Issues as tenants, whose families tend to work for one orchard further reinforces the modified extended family pattern discussed in the section on kinship as a result of the occupational structure. That is, because children tend to work for the same orchard as did others of their family, they thus live close together as a result of the occupational structure which thereby influences both the kinship system and residence.



## Education

Education and the lack of it has been an important variable contributing to the life style of the Issue community. Historically, formal education first came to Bear Mountain through the mission school established in the early 1900's; although the Issues could go to the Black schools they rejected this option preferring no education to a forced mixture with Blacks. Choosing no education vs. integration was a decision which negated one of the means to social mobility, education; however, if the Issues had integrated with Blacks, it is possible that what they might have gained in education would have been lost as a result of that association.

The mission school was a one room school house where education was not elaborate. The entire system of education changed in the 60's with the civil rights legislation. According to Mr. Wycoff, the Commonwealth Attorney of Amherst, the first reaction in Virginia to the idea of integration was massive resistance which the courts overturned. The Brown decision of May, 1954, states that separate schools could not be established on the basis of race. In answer to this problem, the method of "freedom of choice" was developed-- it involved a system in which every parent was sent a form asking them to designate which school they would prefer their children to attend. The county government then made arrangements to comply with the parent's wishes. This also provided for grants to be made for private families to send their children to other schools. This system, however, was repelled in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in the Green vs. The County School Board of New Kent, which stipulated that the "freedom of choice" scheme still left a dual school system because the Whites would not go to Black schools and the burden of choice was



placed on the Blacks; the result being the abolition of "freedom of choice" and the introduction of full integration. Today, Whites, Issues, and Blacks all attend the same county schools.<sup>1</sup> One effect of school integration is greater contact between racial groups and therefore greater need to discover a working relationship satisfactory to all racial groups. The administration of the high school finds the relationship among the racial groups much improved and relaxed since the beginnings of full integration; however, two Sweet Briar students who two years ago went to the high school found the situation to be somewhat different. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Moore, two vice-principals of the high school, saw the Issues fitting in and being integrated into the school system, and both men were certain that the Issues were not conscious of their position as Indians. They saw students moving outside their own circle of friends, and associating with members of racial groups other than their own. Indicative of this changing attitude and decline of racial conflict is the activity in the hall before and between classes, where students of all races walk down the hall together with no difficulties. The interpretation of the racial situation by two former students is much different. They said that a number of times they almost had riots at the high school; they stressed the fact that the principals favor the Black students; and they feel that the Issues tend to stick together. Color is an important dimension for the White students as witnessed by the phrase "always dated nigger boys". And when asked which would be most forbidden to bring home as a guest, an Issue or a Black?, the answer was that both were equally forbidden. A possible explanation in the contradictory views lies in the range of view of the principals vs. the students. When the principals spoke of the Issues or tried to illustrate one of their examples, they always used one boy, Kenny Branham. He was a star on





the wrestling and football teams, an honor student as well as the first Issue to go directly from Amherst into college. Kenny as the most gifted stood out and his situation was generalized to the whole group, as he was well liked partially due to his athletic abilities. This perception of the group through one member might result in the mismatched accounts, as well as from the prejudices in the students' view. The truth is likely to lie somewhere between the two extremes.

Only one Issue was heard to speak about their color, Delores Branham, who does not like it, but tries to laugh it off. She has friends and interests outside the Issue group.

In terms of their academic abilities and achievements, the vice-principals found them to take the general track of courses, with about the average amount of motivation in regard to school work and not presenting any disciplinary problems or complaints. This was considered quite commendable considering their homes and background. Parents of the students now in school did not go further in their education than that available at the mission which reached to approximately the junior high level, if they got that far at all. In their homes there are no books, magazines, newspapers, and so on. In short, their early background put them at a disadvantage in comparison to White students. When they leave school, the vice-principals said that the Issues get low income jobs, and if they stay in the area, they work up in the orchards.

The fact that they are poor rural farmers makes their home life non-conducive to learning; that they are discriminated against has made receiving an education more difficult as well as making moving outside orchard work more difficult; and their lack of education has made it difficult to be employed as anything other than a manual laborer. The improved educational opportunities have already begun to effect the community, one boy is in



college, two girls hope to become nurses-one in the Army, the other in a local hospital, if they will take her. However, the improved opportunities of the Issue community cannot negate the education lost before the 60's.



## Religion

Bear Mountain Mission established by the Episcopal church and run through the auspices of the Southwestern Diocese is the most apparent organization within the group. The mission comes from outside the Issue community and serves as its only formal organization. This fact has certain consequences for the community. The mission, in its institutional capacity, acts as a definer of personal goals, integrator of group values and as the evaluator and critic of group performance and society.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the mission brings to the Issue community the values that are dominant in the larger society. It serves as a direct link between the people of the mission and the rest of the community. Yet the values that it stresses are difficult to achieve for the means are blocked by the larger community, setting up a frustrating situation for those who ascribe to its values. Mrs. Wailes, an old friend of many Issues, reports one youngster saying "why should I try, no one will ever call me mister". At the same time however, the mission works as a buffer to these blocked values. Religious behavior in fact may be motivated by frustration.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the mission is in a sense insulating its members from frustration through unity and cohesion, and at the same time, it is acting as one of the agents of frustration.

The mission provides the only source of formal activity in the community, thus, although members can see each other informally while working, or visiting, it is only at church functions that people interact en masse, that is everyone is in the same place at the same time. It becomes then a perfect opportunity to see those people you might not normally see, to talk together, catch up, and reaffirm the ties that bind them together.



Those who attend church, generally the women and children, spend every moment while the service is not in progress talking to as many people as possible. Usually conversation is in small groups with people rotating from group to group. Women commented on each other's clothing, the service, and incidents during the week. One woman whose husband had died the previous spring told how she was almost killed by a flood in Amherst that past week. Everyone was quite interested in her scare and said she was lucky, and to thank the Lord.

The following Saturday, the church was going to have a Fourth of July picnic to which the minister lectured the congregation about coming to picnics and things of the like but not coming to the regular service. They were going to have lots of food, a softball game (the baseball diamond was new and a particular pride) and other games. The other big event of the Issue community is the fall bazaar, which they have annually to raise funds. The women form a handicrafts circle over the year and meet every week to make articles to be sold in the fall. The articles include: quilts (one of their most popular) preserves, plants, candle stick holders made from chestnuts, and some old trunks. Everyone in the church was very pleased by the number of articles sold, especially the quilts. The women were eager to tell how they had made the articles they were selling, and talked very readily to anyone who was interested. Those who were selling the articles were the regular church goers who were easily identified from the research conducted in the summer.

An indication of the Issues economic and social position is illustrated in another church ceremony, the funeral. During the summer of 1972, an adult member of the group died. In the funeral parlor, the Issues were given a small upstairs room whereas others were in big chapel-like areas downstairs, indicative





of their economic and social position. The funeral home was in the city of Lynchburg on the outskirts of the oldest and nicest White area of the city. The daughter of the man who had died was at the funeral home with her husband, paying her last respects. She, unlike her father, looked almost White, with reddish colored hair, pale white skin, and blue eyes. Her father was darker in skin tone, with dark wavy hair and high cheek bones. The man with the daughter, her husband, was dark and looked to be a member of the group. On their front door at home they had placed a wreath to indicate that there was a death in the family. Many flowers were sent to the funeral home, a good number of which were plastic. The room was so small and cramped that to relieve the heat there was a small rotating fan. During the funeral service, the church filled with kinsmen and neighbors, some of whom had walked miles down the mountain to attend. People who had also moved away to places like Baltimore returned if they were close kin. At the end of the service, the missionary said that because of the rain that day, only the members of the immediate family would go to the grave. However, everyone went, in the pouring rain, who had been at the service.

The afternoon before the funeral on the road in front of the cemetery, there was a group of Issue men drinking beer. One of the men was just back from Vietnam on leave and was dressed in his uniform. They all were kin to some degree to the dead man, although they were not of the immediate family. They planned to go out drinking that night. Their discussion centered on girls and the differences between foreign girls in terms of sex. Although there was a female standing with them, the conversation was directed towards the male researcher. She was totally ignored, not only was she not looked at, but the conversation continued on the discussion of sex as if she did not exist.



The situation was indicative of the esteem with which the female is regarded-- that of a sexual object, and the types of activity enjoyed by younger members of the group, although they had moved away from the core group and were in a sense more worldly than those who had never left.



### Conclusion

This paper has attempted to present a general picture of the Issue condition by viewing first their economic situation, and relating social variables to this position. It was found that: the Issues are a poor rural farm group, almost a caste in terms of ascription and degree of mobility, that their family structure has been affected by the economic structure of the county and by racism, and that limited schooling, another manifestation of the racial problem, has in fact exacerbated their position by forcing them to remain illiterate and largely separate from others of their generation who do attend school.

The group's development can be at least partially explained in terms of the tri-racial characteristics of its members and in terms of the resultant pattern of racial discrimination. Such discrimination, in conjunction with other factors, leads to the group's perpetuation over time. Because of their caste-like position, lack of education, extended family structure, and established neighborhoods, as well as because of their lack of formal organization or political power, the Issues have proven to be an ideal group of low-income workers, satisfying an economic need in the county. Because they lack the rewards of the society's stratification system, power, property, and prestige, and because they have been prevented from obtaining them by their economic and social position, the Issues have been unable to achieve the ends of the larger society, that is power, property, and prestige. In short, the Issues are structurally blocked from the attainment of the rewards of the system, for they lack the means with which to achieve such ends. Thus, the answers to the first two original questions involve the factors of racial



classification, economic class, kinship, and education as our hypotheses indicated. The mechanisms for the persistence of the group operate in a circular manner each reinforcing the other and this cycle has continued over the group's history. The Issues have their own marriage patterns, occupation, race, and previously, their own legal classification.

However, a number of the above economic and social variables are beginning to alter, and thus, so are the opportunities of the Issue group. By law, education is now available and mandatory for Issue children. Such education increases the possibility for successful movement out and establishment elsewhere. A recent graduate of Amherst County High School attempted to enter the Waves, while another is applying for a nursing scholarship. One Issue is now a heart surgeon in New England, another is getting her master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania.

Such factors of communication as television, radio, better roads, and cars have made new opportunities for change and movement available to the Issues. Another important development involves increasing urbanization, in the works is a suburb planned for citizens of Lynchburg, close to where the majority of the Issues now live. As this suburbanization occurs, there may appear a tendency for the Issues to become more dispersed in terms of residence, possibly fostering a breakdown of group cohesion and solidarity. Other forms of urban life, such as stores will be moving into the Issue area as the "suburbanization" continues. As this occurs, there will be other changes in the Issue community as well. Already, a Lynchburg church is attracting members of the congregation that had once belonged exclusively to the mission.

The changing economic system of the county and nation will also have an impact upon the Issue. As the nation moves toward a reduction in agricultural employment, so will Amherst County. Moreover, the Lynchburg area in the past





few years has been the witness to migrations of industry into the area and with it, some of the employees of those industries. As more people arrive who are unaware of the history of the area-- the kin ties -- and who are unaware of the racial distinctions, the ability for Issue movement to other social statuses increases. Issues also might find themselves out of work. Unless the new stores and other commercial enterprises provide jobs, the way of life of many Issues may change. As is seen in the Choctaw, a group similar to the Issues, occupational opportunity plays a part in the mobility of the group; that is, where jobs are lacking, there is a migration to other areas. However, occupational factors do not determine the race relations; whether there is assimilation or segregation depends on the openness of the community,<sup>1</sup> and changes in Amherst in terms of more open race relations are open to question.

Thus, the combination of increased education, knowledge of opportunities, and the reduction in agricultural work in general, will further exacerbate the movement out of those Issues who are young and who have marketable skills. Already, this increased knowledge concerning what lies beyond Amherst has had results in the number of people who are either contemplating a move or who are actually being educated to or are working elsewhere.

The above deals basically with the question of the existence of the Issue group in the past and present. Yet, we also noted that a number of factors are changing in the present. What effect will such changing factors have on the persistence of the group or its possible assimilation? One way to deal with this question is to consider it in terms of the previously mentioned continuum of structural pluralism to assimilation. Will the Issues become assimilated or will they remain a distinct group?



In looking at the position of the Issues in terms of the concept of assimilation and structural pluralism, Gordon's model of assimilation analysis (including to a degree acculturation) is of help in analyzing this question.

Gordon delineates seven variables:

1. change of cultural patterns to those of the host society
2. large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on the primary group level
3. large scale intermarriage
4. development of a sense of peoplehood based exclusively on the host society
5. absence of prejudice
6. absence of discrimination
7. absence of value and power conflict<sup>1</sup>

It would first be helpful however, to apply these criteria to the Issue condition in the present. The first variable concerning acculturation is of little aid here for the Issues do not seem greatly culturally distinct from the overall "American" culture. As regards certain of the other variables however, the following can be said. It has been demonstrated that Issues are not members of cliques, clubs, or institutions in proportion to their number nor is there an acceptance of intermarriage or an absence of prejudice or discrimination. There is some civic assimilation, although there is not a total absence of value and power conflict.

Thus is the condition as involves assimilation in the present. Now, what of the possibilities for the future? Large scale entrance into cliques and clubs--because they involve primary relationships and because primary group interaction between Issues and Whites will probably continue to be low, will most likely not occur in the near future. Large-scale intermarriage may occur



with incoming workers and as the area becomes more "urban", but the prevalence of kinship emphasis and ties will probably limit intermarriage among the older Amherst families and the Issues.

As concerns prejudice and discrimination, such, it seems, will continue in the near future, at least among Amherst dwellers by birth. The racial discrimination and distinctions made in the county, in fact, show no signs of alteration. And without a change in the race relations in the community, the Issue will never be assimilated and will continue to be subject to one of the most rigid forms of stratification, i.e. racial stratification. In summary, the racial classification of the Issue is a basic factor in understanding the position and perpetuation of the group. It can be said that the Issues are not assimilated and that the chances of it occurring in the near future are reduced because of the racial stratification. In applying the rubric of the continuum, the county and the position of the Issue indicates a situation of structural pluralism, where the Issues are not distributed in proportion to their numbers on the occupational, political, and prestige hierarchies, rather than assimilation of the group.

The concept of assimilation can also be applied to those Issues who move to other areas and are able to assimilate; however, the use of the term assimilation does not in this instance carry the same meaning as when it was applied to the Amherst area. Here, assimilation is the result of "passing"; that is, possibly if the racial classification of the Issue were known they would not be accepted into the White community. It could be countered that they are not distributed in proportion to their numbers in the hierarchies of the system when they do pass. Yet this would not be the result of racial discrimination but of class factors such as education and occupation. In moving the possibility increases that the next generation in the new area will



be able to achieve more than those who stayed in Amherst. Thus mobility does not lead to assimilation, for it is the assimilation of an individual who is passing as White and not the assimilation of the Issues as a group into Amherst County social structure.

The future of the Issue community is not clear. Many of the mechanisms that have perpetuated the group continue to operate to some extent such things as: caste-like position, lack of formal education, and pull of the family. The threat to the continuity of the community is the mobility of the young members. Some of these members who are in elementary school will undoubtedly go elsewhere to live. Even those who have within the past three years graduated from the high school are working at places other than the orchard. For the present, many of the people there are too old to move and be retrained. Some of those people who have moved will probably return to the area for retirement especially as kin ties exert such a strong influence on the members. However, the effect of the changes in the area in terms of economy, industry, residence and so on is difficult to measure especially in terms of the future. But for the present as long as some Issues remain in the county, so long will there be the position of Issue distinct from all others.





### Further Study

One of the difficulties with a study of this nature is the need to establish a foundation before more detailed questions can be pursued. Because of this necessity, an attempt was made to establish a foundation and a broad understanding of the processes involved in the Issue group. The approach has been structural with the addition of comparative and historical material where it was of help for clarification of concepts.

Because of this need to deal with general concepts and processes and because the research conducted on the group tended toward a qualitative vs. quantitative analysis, the result was a general picture of the group. From this basic understanding other questions can be pursued. There is the whole field of race relations to which groups of this nature can offer further study, and considerable understanding. One could study the development of tri-racial groups which would entail a more detailed look at historical material, and would add to the knowledge of this process which occurs in race relations. Moreover, the question and definitions of assimilation and structural pluralism could be refined in terms of factors used in measurement, as well as documented further so that a greater understanding of how groups become assimilated, and the most important factors of assimilation are delineated. The subject of "passing" is important as more information could be gained concerning who moves and what influenced one individual's moving over another, and exactly what occurs after they do move.

More emphasis should be placed on a comparative approach so that similarities and differences among tri-racial groups in general can be abstracted in an effort to construct theories about the phenomena of tri-racial groups especially in terms of the field of race and race relations.



In fact, any one aspect of this paper can be studied further so that definition and clarification of ideas as well as a greater knowledge of the processes at work can occur.







## Footnotes

### Introduction

- <sup>1</sup>Norman Schwartz, "Assimilation and Acculturation: Aspects of Ethnicity in a Guatemalan Town", Ethnology, Vol. X, No. 3, (July, 1971), p.292
- <sup>2</sup>Milton Gordon, Assimilation in American Life, (New York, 1964), p. 67
- <sup>3</sup>van der Burghe, Race and Racism, (New York, 1967), p. 34

### Group Formation

- <sup>1</sup>Edward Price, Mixed-Blood Populations of Eastern United States as to Origins, Localizations, and Persistence, unpublished dissertation, p. 18
- <sup>2</sup>-Ibid., p. 26
- <sup>3</sup>Dane and Griessman, "The Collective Identity of Marginal Peoples: the North Carolina Experience", American Anthropologist (June, 1972) p. 699-700

### Economics

- <sup>1</sup>Garnett and Edwards, Virginia's Marginal Population--A Study in Rural Poverty, V. P. I. (July, 1941), p. 29
- <sup>2</sup>Garnett and Seymour, Virginia County Conditions and Trends of Social Significance, V. P. I., (August, 1933), p. 32
- <sup>3</sup>Figures from 1970 come from the Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce Census. Those from 1967 and later come from the County and City Data Book, 1967.
- <sup>4</sup>Mr. Faulconer, Amherst Resident and owner of Faulconer's Store, July, 1972.
- <sup>5</sup>Garnett and Edwards, p. 43

### Residence

- <sup>5</sup>Edgar Thompson, "Little Races", American Anthropologist, (October, 1972), p. 1297





## Racism and Stratification

- <sup>1</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, The Free Negro Family, p. 19
- <sup>2</sup>Estabrook and McDougale, Mongrel Virginians, (U.S.A., 1926) p. 16
- <sup>3</sup>van den Burgh, p. 11
- <sup>4</sup>Brewton Berry, Almost White, (U.S.A., 1963) p. 16
- <sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 40
- <sup>6</sup>Berriman, "Caste", Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, (U.S.A., 1968) p. 333
- <sup>7</sup>Monica Cash, resident of Amherst and student at Sweet Briar, February, 1973
- <sup>8</sup>The discription of agricultural paternalism described by van den Burghe, p. 27-28

## Kinship

- <sup>1</sup>Wm. Goode, The Family,(New Jersey, 1964) p. 80-81
- <sup>2</sup>Mr. Wycoff, Commonwealth Attorney of Amherst, (June, 1972)
- <sup>3</sup>Wm. Stephens, The Family in Cross-Cultural Perspective, (U.S.A., 1963) p. 26-27
- <sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Bott, Family and Social Network, (Great Britain, 1968) p. 59-60
- <sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 102-109
- <sup>6</sup>B. N. Adams, "The Social Significance of Kinship", Sociology of the Family, ed. M. Anderson, (Great Britain, 1971), p. 132



Education

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Wycoff, Commonwealth Attorney of Amherst County, June, 1972.

Religion

<sup>1</sup>Moburg, Church as a Social Institution, (New Jersey, 1962), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>Argyle, Religious Behavior, (Illinois, 1959), p. 145.

Conclusion

<sup>1</sup>John Peterson, "Assimilation, Separation, and Out Migration in an American Indian Group", American Anthropologist, (October, 1972) p. 1293.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon, p. 71.



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