

Selection of the Problem

Beyond exclusively scientific-heuristic goals, the selection of this inquiry is precipitated by interests of the writers in its possible implications for a personal philosophy of social responsibility in planned change and a technology of social action. The centrality of these concerns among our own values impels us to work out some integrated point of view on the impact of the rapid and extreme social changes on the process of human fulfillment in the community of our Kentucky mountain friends and an answer to the schoolteacher's question to us, "What can I do to change the people?"

Our explicit problem is to answer the question "What has been the process and effect of social change in Decoy, Kentucky?" The possible contribution of that insight to our concern with social ethics and social planning motivates the study substantially but should remain analytically distinct in the mind of the reader (and writers) from the specific problem on which our research is based.

We have been struck, as have many before us, with what we subjectively judge to be "intrinsic human values" in the mountain way of life and personality. Although difficult to isolate objectively and operationally, some of these may be "neighborliness" (outside the circumscriptions of class and kinship sanctions), personal "warmth and friendliness" (toward those who are unthreatening in the cultural context), a sense of "rightness and belonging" (in the familiar rural milieu), and "non-competitiveness and cooperation" (among minimally stimulated children). We recognize these values as functions of a conservative, particularistic, traditionalistic mountain way of life which is significantly in opposition to our own prime value, the development of what we think of as "human potential". We wonder what possibility exists for the replacement of the static and conservative structural base of the mountain community with a dynamic, individual-centered as well as cooperation-oriented diffusion from the industrial society - to enhance rather than destroy or belittle what we judge to be "good" in the rural mountain life. We wonder particularly in view of the similar and rapidly increasing spread of Western culture to agricultural peoples throughout the world.

An Exploratory Orientation and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to investigate the processes of social change in the Decoy community and to develop hypotheses concerning the sequence of changes, the relationship between changing elements in the culture and social structure, and the actual influence of the various instigators (agents) of change. A specific theoretical framework is provided by Brown and Schwarzweller, University of Kentucky, Education as a Cultural Bridge Between Rural and Urban Society. We will use their paper to formulate working hypotheses in view of other library work on social change and our own largely intuitive insights from experience in the community to date.

Two particularly unprofessional limitations should be noted. The field work in the community must be limited to a single week (vacation between academic quarters) and literally to the amount of ground which can be covered by two interviewers in the face of primitive transportation conditions. The second restriction is the necessity to base the theoretical framework on which the interviews will be grounded in the amount of library work and consultation that can be accomplished before the end of the present quarter and the beginning of the field work.

Sketch of the Community

Decoy is located in Knott County off the north branch of the Kentucky River, where Laurel and Middle Branch meet to form Quicksand Creek. Like many other pockets in the Southern Appalachians it was settled in the first decades of the 19th century by men and women on their way west. The only attractive sites were bottom lands which

opened out at the mouths of creek and river valleys. The settlers who moved farther up the valleys to settle between the mountain ridges did so because of the press of population at the choicer sites or some unwillingness or inability to go farther west - illness, childbirth, discouragement or accident.

Farming was primitive and laborious in the hills and until the beginning of this century a "soil mining" subsistence agriculture prevailed in which hillsides were cleared and planted until depleted of topsoil and fertility. As the ever-increasing kinship groups expanded farther up the "hollows" overpopulation became a mounting problem on an ever-decreasing agricultural base. "By 1924 (Knott County) the gain by clearing land had already reached the point of diminishing returns". Few new settlers were attracted to Decoy after its initial settlement and the present community is descended almost entirely from its founding families.

In 1927 a two-year lumbering operation was established in the Decoy area, and a railroad went through the community along the stream bed, stopping at Evanston, about ten miles away. The logging company built a schoolhouse (apparently for the families of the temporary laborers living on flatcar "houses") and staffed it with "outlanders" sent from the Hindman Settlement School at the county seat, originally a W.C.T.U. project.

New Deal legislation brought new innovations after 1933, Social Security, Public Welfare, Aid to Dependent Children, etc. These benefits are today a sizeable (perhaps major) portion of the community income. About 1938 a W.P.A. road was blasted along the hillside to connect Decoy with the gravel road between Jackson (Breathitt County seat and "market" for Decoy) and Evanston. Barely graveled, Decoy's "road" is poorly drained and minimally supported or reinforced. It was closed for twenty-eight days last year because of mud or snow. Until last summer there was nothing but a footbridge across Laurel Branch, isolating the Middle Fork community whenever the water rose to high to ford safely.

In 1936 Lionel and Frankie Duff, a young married couple born and raised in the area (Frankie in Decoy and Lionel "over-the-hill") finished their education at Hindman Settlement School (high school) and Caney Jr. College and came to teach school. Frankie is kin to about seventy (three fourths) of the Decoy community. Her great grandmother established the first homestead in the valley a century and a half ago. The Duffs are Decoy's outstanding advocates of "progress" and have considerable insight into their community and contact with the larger society.

Electricity arrived Christmas Eve, 1960, a hookup with the Big Sandy I&A to the north and presently all but a few families have electric power in their homes. Several homes have running water, but there are no flush toilets in Decoy. Typhoid has not (apparently) been a problem for some years, whether a result of more careful sanitation methods or availability of inoculation is not clear.

The Duffs note a change in community attitudes dating primarily from "when they came back after the war" both from factory jobs and military service. Rapid outmigration and abandonment of intensive farming efforts, even for subsistence, has left a community of children and old people in a state of marginal deprivation. Children are often in need of basic necessities in order to walk the several miles to school - shoes, warm clothes, vitamins, and motivation or support from the family.

Two years ago the Duffs brought back folk-dancing from a summer school session at the University of Kentucky. This innovation has seemingly promoted a new era in community development - broadening the contact with outsiders coming to visit and dance, precipitating new interest among parents in the school and children, and providing a vehicle for the children to visit the larger society (State Fair at Louisville, National Folk Festival at Washington, D.C., etc.). The children's dancing has been written up in The Country Dancer:

An AFSC project during the summer of 1960 built a concrete low-water bridge across Laurel Branch and brought Gretchen Engle into contact with the Duffs, making this study possible.

Brown and Schwarzweller: A Theoretical Framework

Dr. James S. Brown of the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Kentucky has been enormously helpful in providing us with several published studies on Eastern Kentucky social structure and culture in addition to a "working paper" on social change which we have adopted as the base of our tentative hypotheses about the Decoy community. The thesis of the "working paper" is that "education functions as a cultural bridge between rural and urban society". Despite local uniqueness in some dimensions (the community and regional reflections) "each school is, in certain other respects, a reflection of the Great Society of which it is an instrumental part, reflecting national norms, teaching more universal patterns of behavior, and diffusing national and even international cultural values." As such, education plays a part "in bringing about the great sociocultural changes occurring in the relatively isolated rural areas of the United States, such as Eastern Kentucky".

Brown and Schwarzweller focus on the "differences which are a consequence of the degree of communicative isolation of rural people from the national culture". (1) This psychosociological isolation is reflected by differences in values, modes of thinking, and basic cultural patterns of behavior between rural people and their urban counterparts."

The school constitutes a cultural bridge as an "institutional complex which, through contact, communication, linkage⁽²⁾ and cultural diffusion, spans the gap between" relatively isolated rural communities of Eastern Kentucky and the Great Society. In the contact situation the school is a major cultural entree by the Great Society into the institutional framework of the region, other institutions being more insulated from direct integrative communication and linkage with the outside. It is a further view of Brown and Schwarzweller that mass media by their nature effect a "contact that is specialized, impersonal, concerned more with things than with ideas, more with ends than means, and only indirectly with the normative structures of the insular family system, its communicative meaning first strained through the sieve of the valued interests of the familistic society." (3)

Research is cited indicating that outmigrants to urban areas do not "become integrated into the urban culture and therefore are not likely to be carriers of urban culture to their home communities and families".

Religion in the mountains is extremely insulated as an institution. There is almost total congregational autonomy. Local government is permeated with particularistic norms and rational government, as commonly conceived in the urban society is, as Robin Williams has suggested, "a sort of film on the surface of the society failing to penetrate directly to the mass of the individuals".

Economic contact is mainly through the social mechanism of the market place and its supportive agencies. But individual farm family units are a barrier to central or mass communication. "...lost in the interest-world of a familistically oriented agricultural community... Eastern Kentucky folk, in their day to day decisions concerning the production and distribution of commodities, tend to operate in conformance to the traditional normative patterns prevailing".

Welfare payments as a form of economic cultural linkage do not penetrate deeply to the sociocultural core of rural community life. Like similar programs they provide people with the "means necessary for pursuing traditional goals". (our emphasis)

As an institution, the school is structurally central in the sociocultural fabric of rural community life, acting within, as well as upon, the local milieu. "Inter-school rivalry has taken on an aura of great symbolic value and provided a means for reinforcing community identification. "Education, as a thing to get, is sanctioned favorably by the mores and folkways of rural society"⁽⁴⁾ The educational value is, in turn, self-perpetuating via the educational system. (our emphasis)

High school is the big step. In a framework of universalistic-achievement standards, social skills are learned and practiced through school organizations, classroom procedures, and everyday contact with peers, teachers, and administrators. Through the process of assimilation and substitution the youngster becomes a cultural link with the Great Society, and agent of change in his community and more susceptible to adjustment as an outmigrant. Even local teachers are influenced by colleges that emphasize urban-contractual norms and fairly standardized curricula. In addition, the

"insider" status awarded local teachers lends strategic advantage as an advocate of change.

The mechanism of sociocultural integration through education is a "three step flow of influence: (1) the Great Society's influence upon the local school system, (2) the local school system's influence upon the general orientation of the students, and (3) the influence of the general orientations on the evaluative thought processes and specific orientations of the students." (b)

Notes and Perspectives

- 1) The problem of isolation seems to lead in two directions of analysis. On the one hand, we feel it may be significant to an understanding of the change process that the mountain people came originally from common cultural roots shared by their urban neighbors. These common reference points may be threads of communication critical to the reintegration of the cultures isolated for a century. A second point is that isolation, per se, has sociological and psychological effects and should be viewed as an insitution of the culture.
- 2) Looking at Linton's definitions for this terminology (The Study of Man) we question "why" certain elements have been susceptible to cultural transfer; what has constituted the "inherent communicability" of those elements which have been accepted? It seems unclear in what manner the school can be demonstrated to be effective as an institutional complex rather than a symbol for culture items of the Greater Society inherently desirable by the mountain people. Our misgivings about the ascribed "value" of education in the mountains is noted below.
- 3) Linton, (op. cit. p. 338) states that "those culture elements which can be most readily and completely expressed will be those which are most readily available for acceptance." We accept the proposition suggested that "means" are more readily transmitted than "ends" but sense that in the decoy context a qualification must be formulated to allow for the values implied by accepting new means. A contractual, wage-economy "means" is generally subscribed to ("there aren't any jobs around here") and the goals implied are in conflict with traditional goals (providing for the children) in the sense that there are no wages to be had. Wage-earning becomes an implied goal. No means are available. "Setting on the porch" results.
- 4) There appears to be a problem in defining the "education" which is a value. We do not yet have documentation that it was always a value in the mountain communities and it could not have been so in the contemporary sense since it was not known to the more isolated communities. Irregular school attendance and high "drop-out" rates dispose to hypothesize that education does not rate highly in the hierarchy of mountain values even today. The overwhelming response of mountain mothers that they desire their sons to go to college may reflect a perception of what is prestigious to say but not (apparently) a serious motivation for behavior. This may be a direct function of the amount of contact the community has with the mass media.
Education as a "means" is certainly in conflict with the mountain traditions in terms of the competitiveness, intergenerational mobility, etc. which it promotes. We must attempt in our study to further refine the meaning of the educational "value" in the mountain community.
- 5) The process of moving from general to specific orientations seems opposed to Linton's notion of the communicability of specifics (means) first. Perhaps the

behavior learned and sanctioned in school is a "specific" through which the values it implies are assimilated. It appears that we must look further into the question of socializing the school child.

Our qualification of the Brown and Schwarzwallor theory is that the initial significant impingement upon the Decoy community by the Great Society was in the form of desired material improvements, things inherently communicable and valued in the abstract by mountain mores.

The second step, in time, includes several factors: 1) Communication increase bore an intrinsic value within the context of mountain society because of the pressure of isolation, therefore a susceptibility to the new, the interesting, the tedium-interrupting. An example in other communities is the movement down to the new road away from better farmland. 2) Acquisition of material goods as a goal forced a partial contact and participation in the urban-industrial milieu in terms of wage jobs, non-farm endeavors. 3) Ever increasing contact with the Greater Society established the prestige of the outside world and the low status of mountain culture and society. Some factors in creating this image among the mountain people may have been numerical superiority of the Great Society, its identification with the desirable, material goods and interesting life, power manifested in technology, railroads, mines, electricity and the capacity to produce material goods.

Two results of this sequence to prestige for the Great Society and low status for the mountain people are 1) anomie in terms of loss of value to old means of living while old ends are retained (family life, independence). No integrated view is left or impulse to action since the traditional and the innovation values are coexistent and in conflict; 2) education gets prestige via its identification with high status aspects of the Greater Society. It is a value as a symbol, not a method. Whether it then achieves cultural integration of the urban and rural world appear to be a question of what values are taught using its status. Education seems potentially capable of destroying or undermining sufficiently critical elements of mountain culture, that no integration is possible and all those who are educated through high school must leave the community to avoid the conflict.

In interviewing to determine what the current values are among different families in the community it may be possible to place them descriptively on the "sequence of change" process.

Interview Plan

See Revision Attached

Formal agents of change have been selected by their accessibility and defined by an explicit intention and role as innovators.

- 1) Joseph Moley, Dept. of Ed., University of Kentucky and Director of Youth Services, Kentucky Regional Development Program at Quicksand.
- 2) Agnes Dinsmore, Dept. of Home Economics, University of Kentucky, and District Supervisor of Home Demonstration Agents in the mountain area.
- 3) S.C. Bohanan, Director of Extension Services, University of Kentucky.
- 4) Albert Stompler, County Agricultural Agent, Knott County
- 5) Edna Kitchie, recreation worker at the Hindman Settlement School and a native of the region.
- 6) Dr. W.D. Weatherford, Executive Director, Southern Appalachian Studies, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky

We shall attempt to determine from these respondents their objective knowledge about the agents and processes of change in Decoy and the historical sequences. We will also try to find out their own image of themselves and others as innovators and what attitudes or fact and value premises determine their behavior as innovators.

We will try to secure the same sort of information from Lancel and Frankie Duff and additionally a more detailed history of the changes in the community. We will attempt to cover the following areas concerning the Duffs themselves:

A. Their own values.

Sample question: What things about Decoy would you like to have unchanged? What things would you like to do in your own family and day-to-day living that you can't do now?

B. The sources of their values.

Sample question: Can you think of new ideas about life or what's "good" that have come to you over the years? When and where?

C. Their image of the Greater Society values?

Sample question: How do you think city teachers would feel about teaching in your school?

D. Current values in the community?

Sample question: Which families are most alike in the community? In what way?

Interviewing of community members will have to be very unstructured in order not to "challenge" people. The study will be presented as a "thing we have to write for our school so we can graduate. We have to write up a history about a small community and since we got to know so many of the children during the summer we thought we'd just come back and write all about Decoy."

Sample question: "Can you remember back to what things were different in Decoy in your Grand-daddy's time? When do you figure they changed?"

We plan to interview seven key informants:

1) Milt Joseph - Age 45; wife age 26, seven children younger than 12. Economic base for family is 20 acres of corn and field peas, approximately \$140 income. Milt is an "oldtimer" and hunts Gensing for shipment to New York, approximately \$500 worth annually. Man and wife read and write. They own a mule and two pigs. The Josephs are a "social problem" in the community because of their poor treatment of the children.

2) Hoke Smith - Age 39; wife age 36, two children at home, one at Hindon High School. Living on 300 acres belonging to a brother, keep only a garden. Annual income from carpentry and managing the post office amounts to approximately \$1200 (Mrs. Smith is postmistress - \$60/mo.). Elementary school education.

3) Dan Combs - Age 45; wife age 38, 10 children, seven at home. Decoy's "progressive" farmer, farms thirty acres (hybrid corn, milk cows, etc.). He works full time for the highway department in the County. Combs are the farthest family up Laurel Fork whose children attend school, approximately three miles, no school.

4) Hill Smith - Frankie Duff's brother, Hoke's father. Farms 156 acres, 5 cows, chickens, a mule and horse. (receives a pension; sixth grade education.

5) Vanie Smith - Frankie Duff's sister, not married; has lived in the family homestead, a log cabin, all her life.

6) "Whiskey" Jack Bailey - Five children at home. They do not go to school. He has no formal education, makes corn whiskey for sale (not legal), is caretaker for undeveloped coal company property on which he lives. Homesite is past Combs up the fork, no electricity, 8 cows, 2 mules.

7) J.B. Smith - Twelve children at home (including "J.B. Junior") including a four month old baby still unnamed. He has no formal education and children attend school irregularly, are considered "bright". J.B. earns \$8/day in a small coal mine, rides his mule to the mine over a trail he has hewn over the mountain.