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THE EFFECT OF EARLY EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTION  
ON THE BELIEF SYSTEMS AND EDUCATIONAL  
PRACTICES OF ADULTS  
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MARGARET ELIZABETH HALE-SMITH

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**THE EFFECT OF EARLY EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTION  
ON THE BELIEF SYSTEMS AND EDUCATIONAL  
PRACTICES OF ADULTS**

**By**

**Margaret Elizabeth Hale-Smith**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE EFFECT OF EARLY EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTION ON THE BELIEF SYSTEMS AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF ADULTS**

**By**

**Margaret Elizabeth Hale-Smith**

This study was designed to describe the effects of the five year public school closing in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on African American students who were of school age during that time. Two groups were compared: students who were placed in homes outside the state of Virginia by the American Friends Service Committee (In School Group), and students who stayed in the county during the school closing (Out of School Group). Some of the variables were occupational level, educational attainment, and participation in post-high school endeavors. Survey research and personal interviews were the methodologies employed.

Questionnaires were mailed to a randomly selected sample of students who were listed on school enrollment records in 1958. One hundred-fifteen usable questionnaires were returned. Of this number, twenty-one were students placed by the American Friends, and ninety-four were students who

remained in Prince Edward County when the public schools closed in 1959.

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each questionnaire item having a fixed response category. Where open-ended responses were permitted, all such responses were recorded and categorized so that frequencies and percentages could be calculated. The Mann-Whitney U was performed on questions measured at the ordinal level. Contents of personal and face-to-face interviews were categorized into themes.

There were significant differences at the .05 level between the two groups on educational attainment, occupation, income, and post-high school endeavors. Students who participated in the American Friends program had higher incomes, reached higher educational levels, and generally held higher ranking jobs. Participants in the American Friends program also reported more learning activity as adults.

There were mixed results on the subjects of community involvement and attitudes and beliefs about race relations. For example, attitudes and beliefs about race relations from a more general perspective appeared to be very similar for both groups. However, from a more personal perspective, it appeared that members of the American Friends program tended to feel more positive about race relations.

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## DEDICATION

*Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.*

*Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.*

**\*Zora Neal Hurston**

This effort is dedicated to my parents, Carl F. and Margaret E. Hale, who in another time and under different circumstances could have had doctorates of their own.

It is also dedicated to my son, David Lynn Smith, Jr., who I hope will gain encouragement from it to reboard his own educational ship.

I love you.

\* Hurston, Zora Neal, Their Eyes Were Watching God. 1990, HarperPerennial, HarperCollins Publisher, Inc.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many who stayed by me as I traveled this particular path. First, to God, who finally got my attention and cooperation, and to my father and mother, who provided emotional, spiritual and financial support. A special thanks to Aunt Betty, who always expected this of me, and of course to my son, David, whose close scrutiny was a motivator.

My committee under the leadership of Dr. Cas Heilman had a very difficult task - working with me from a distance. Yet, they were fully supportive and interested, and without their guidance this dissertation would not have been completed. So, to Dr. Heilman, Chair, and committee members, Dr. Mary Jim Josephs, Dr. Lee June, and Dr. Leighton Price, thank you very much.

I must also acknowledge my Virginia "family", for without them I would not have had the inner strength nor the right connections to achieve this goal. Therefore, to Mrs. Odessa Branch, Mr. James Ghee, Mr. Chucky Reid, Dr. Sarah Young, Mrs. Connie Rawlins, Mrs. Peggy Ward and Ms. Marlene Walton, Ms. Edna Allen-Bledsoe, and Mr. Phillip Walker, thank you and God bless you. \*Special thanks to Dr. Wilbur Brookover for his on-going interest, input and support of this project.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades institutions of higher education have seen a constant stream of adults returning to the classroom. Many researchers have given us insight into this increasing phenomenon. For example, discussing the importance of flexibility as the key to survival in our "information society," Burstryn (1986) suggests that the constant changes now demanded by society cause adults to question constantly the marketability of their skills. In their investigation of events that trigger life changes as reasons for adult learning, Aslanian and Brickell (1980) discovered that transitions related to career ranked first. This finding would seem to be in line with Brustryn's assumptions.

Other researchers, such as Weathersby (1977) and Ross (1985), look to adult developmental processes for answers to why adults participate in formal education. Their research suggests that when adults return to college at particular ages linked to times of life reassessment, then education is linked to process of growth, developmental change and transformation, and is therefore utilized as a developmental intervention in

their lives.

Students who have "stopped out," or delayed the pursuit of their higher education goals have done so for a variety of reasons. This population can, in the larger sense, be said to have experienced "educational disruption"; that is, an interruption in the continuous pursuit of educational opportunities leading to certification and/or completion of a predetermined educational goal.

Although their reasons for attending or returning to college make adult learners an especially heterogeneous cohort, their return to the classroom gives them a common bond. They also share the fact that during their "stopping out" period they were engaged in other important activities, playing important roles, learning new skills. These experiences are often helpful when adults return to the classroom.

### **The Present Study**

The focus of this study is on a group of students who experienced "educational disruption" unique in the history of education in the United States. That disruption came, for many of them, during their most formative years and without their consent. This interruption lasted for five years.

One of the purposes of this study is to investigate whether that disruption has had an impact on how this group now perceives and interacts with the educational opportunities

available to them as adult learners at the present time. It is of particular interest if that "stopping out" period created, or helped to create beliefs and attitudes which now help or hinder these adults in pursuing formal schooling. The study will attempt to determine if this group follows the patterns of adult learners as described by Aslanian and Brickell (1980).

Also of interest is the vocational level of these individuals and their feelings about their community. These issues are of interest because they may be indicators of future growth potential for the community. Vocational interests and choices are often stimulated early in the educational cycle. Teachers are often key factors in helping students to identify strengths and talents that lead to career decisions. Teachers also act as mentors, advisors and role models--and transmit the value of education to students.

Community, for this study, becomes an important current factor. Dewey (1969) wrote that the prerequisites for a democratic community were education, social inquiry and the development of a competent citizenry. Minar and Greer (1969) believe that "The mere fact that [people] live together gives rise to common problems that push them toward common perspectives and induce them to develop organizational vehicles for joint action."

If there is substantial community membership which distrusts "public officials" because of their unique school

experience, then that group may be less likely to be actively involved in community decisions, would probably be less likely to encourage their children to plan for futures in the community, and may, in general, feel disenfranchised.

Overall, this particular group might then be less satisfied with decisions made for the community, would probably not be involved with efforts which might help them improve their personal lifestyles (i.e. educational or vocational opportunities), and might be more suspicious of public institutions such as the school system. Could they have a sense of community, what Minar and Greer describe as "a state of mind...a sense of interdependence and loyalty."?

### History

In 1951, dismayed by the intolerable conditions at their segregated school and frustrated by their parents' inability to obtain remedies from local school officials, the African American children of Moton High School in Prince Edward County, Virginia, went on strike (Smith, 1965; Williams, 1987). The students, led by 17 year old Barbara Johns (niece of the eminent Vernon Johns), hoped to call public attention to the sad conditions that existed at Moton High School. The school, located in Farmville, Virginia, was grossly overcrowded; one professor from the local college had reported that when he accepted an invitation to give a lecture at Moton he "could barely get to the platform to deliver the lecture because every square inch of space was taken up by students"

(Schuler and Green, 1974).

The fact that the African American children did not have adequate facilities for learning was not a new phenomenon in Prince Edward county. When Moton High was built in 1939, it had a capacity of 180. By 1947 records show that 377 students were enrolled and attending the school (Smith, 1965).

In 1948 the County Board of Supervisors decided that it would not invest in a larger school to relieve the already overcrowded conditions in Moton High school. Instead, it financed the construction of tar paper shacks for use as a "temporary" remedy of the problem. These shacks were often mistaken for chicken coops (Smith, 1965; Green, 1964), and while they did provide more space, the shacks did not solve the overcrowding problem. The shacks were also inadequate in terms of simple housing requirements. In describing the tar paper shacks, one student, John Stokes, said they "...were drafty and...cold. If you sat around the stove you were too warm and if you sat away from it you were too cold. It was no way to be taught..." (Smith, 1965).

This point of view was not shared by school officials. County Superintendent T. J. McIlwayne stated that the outbuildings were in line with school requirements, and that there was "no crowding in classrooms beyond measures found necessary throughout the system."<sup>1</sup> Moton students disagreed and pointed to the fact that over 400 students were enrolled

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<sup>1</sup>Farmville Herald, April 27, 1951

at Moton, and that the school's deficiencies (which included the lack of lockers and stationary seating in the auditorium as well as inadequate transportation), added up to a school that was not the equal of its White counterpart. According to what Barbara Johns had heard, the Farmville High School had an "inviting auditorium with seats in rows attached to the floor, the locker rooms just outside the gymnasium and [an] infirmary where a feverish child could be rubbed down with alcohol while resting on a cool cot."<sup>2</sup>

When the students of Moton High School agreed to strike in April of 1951, it was their way of asking for a better school, a way to communicate to the White community that they, too, desired a good education. But the community at large would have to wait to learn what all the excitement was about. Their source of information, the Farmville Herald, was published on Wednesdays and Fridays. There was no mention of the strike in the April 25, 1951 edition of the Herald. The Richmond Times-Dispatch carried a story about the strike on Wednesday, April 25, but it was Friday, April 27, before the Herald published news of the strike. In the Times-Dispatch article Superintendent McIllwaine stated that an \$800,000 school for Black students was in the planning stages, and he strongly denied that the strike was related to a recent school bus/train accident which took the lives of five Moton

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<sup>2</sup>Barbara Johns Powell recalls her experiences as a student in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, July 7, 1988 page 1.

students.<sup>3</sup>

The initial article about the student strike printed in the Farmville Herald on April 27 also pointed out that "negotiations for a site for [a] proposed new high school" were underway, and continued by dismissing the students' complaints as unfounded. The same edition carried an editorial which described the strike as "student-inspired mass hookie" and wondered if the strike were a product of "the present system of education [or] the lack of discipline so obvious in the home, the church...and in everyday philosophy of living".<sup>4</sup>

Moton High School students never dreamed that their actions would light the fuse on what would eventually explode into the closing of all public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, for a five year period. Caught up in the wave of the Civil Rights movement that was gaining momentum and sweeping over the country, their original entreaty for a better school became a cry for integrated facilities in the country.

A few weeks before the lawsuit was initiated, J. Barrye Wall, publisher and editor of the Farmville Herald wrote, "News reports published in the daily press during the past week have suggested that the move at the R.R. Moton High School...is one to eliminate segregation in the school system.

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<sup>3</sup>Richmond-Times Dispatch, April 25, 1951.

<sup>4</sup>Farmville Herald, April 27, 1951



We do not believe this has any foundation in fact. However, the so called 'student strike' appears to have outside stimulus." Mr. Wall may have been referring to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, for under the auspices of the NAACP, a lawsuit (*Davis v. Prince Edward County*) on behalf of the Moton High School children was filed with the Commonwealth of Virginia one month after the strike had begun. When the Federal District Court ruled against Moton High School in 1952, the NAACP immediately appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court where it was added to those cases which fell under the title *Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (Williams, 1987; Wolters, 1984; Steck, 1960).

It would appear that members of the County Board of Supervisors were startled by the court action; money for a new segregated school for African Americans mysteriously appeared two months after the school strike--a month after the lawsuit was filed (Wolters, 1984; Smith, 1964). In 1953 the new Moton High School was completed at a reported cost of \$850,000 (Steck, 1960), but this gesture was not the solution to the educational dilemma in Prince Edward County.

By 1954 the situation for Moton High students had improved but conditions in the community had changed drastically. Relations between the Whites and African Americans had become cool and resentful. When the United States Supreme Court announced its decision in the landmark

*Brown vs. Board of Education* case, the lawsuit for the Moton High School students was included with other "separate but equal" cases heard by the high court.

In Farmville, J. Barrye Wall wrote, "We therefore conclude that public education as it is presently constituted has been undermined and toppled to fragments by the general decision of the Supreme Court."<sup>5</sup>

Virginia's response to the Supreme Court ruling was to implement an effort called "Massive Resistance." This political policy called for the continuation of segregated schools statewide and was based on the premise that Virginia could be a beacon of "state sovereignty" for all the South (Dabney, 1989). With the blessings of the legislature, the Whites of Farmville and the rest of Prince Edward County discussed options that would allow them to maintain the status quo with schools. The Board of Supervisors in Prince Edward County decided to appropriate funds for the operation of the schools for only thirty days at a time. This strategy effectively eliminated long-term planning on the part of the School Board, and gave the Board of Supervisors unrestrained control over the fate of the public schools.

Although the School Board was restricted from any long-term planning, another local group was actively involved in that very endeavor. In 1954, fearing that integration might well be forced upon the Commonwealth, the Prince Edward School

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<sup>5</sup>Farmville Herald, June 25, 1954.

Corporation had formed to design private schools for White children. When Virginia's Massive Resistance laws were struck down in 1959, the Corporation (which was renamed the Prince Edward School Foundation) announced that all-White private schools would be in full operation in September, 1959 (Smith, 1965; Pearson, 1961).

On June 2, 1959, two events of notice took place in Farmville. On the Longwood College campus, commencement speaker, Virginia Governor J. Lindsay Almond, Jr., stated that if public schools were closed federal domination would be the consequence. Once central government controlled education, the Governor said, "You have to look only to what happened in Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and what is happening in Soviet Russia to see the final result...."<sup>6</sup>

Although the Governor's speech seemed to make an effort to promote the same argument used by segregationists (state sovereignty) for keeping the public schools open, his view was not valued in Prince Edward County. The second event of significance that took place on June 2, 1959, was an earlier announcement by the Board of Supervisors that no funds for the operation of public school would be appropriated.

Word of this decision swept through the country. The Richmond News Leader announced it was "solidly behind" the policy makers in Prince Edward County, and the Richmond Times-Dispatch "...understood and support[ed]" the decision. Later

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<sup>6</sup>Farmville Herald, June 2, 1959.

in June reporters from the magazine U. S. News & World Report (1959) visited the county and wrote that although there was solid support in the White community to avoid integration at any costs, racial bitterness was nonexistent.

Perhaps the members of the African American community were too stunned by the closing to be bitter. Or perhaps many shared the feelings expressed by a parent in the September 26 issue of the Richmond Afro-American. A housewife is quoted as saying, "It's just a matter of time before they learn that they can't raise \$300,000 a year for private schools in Prince Edward County. They may do it for one or two years, but not much longer" (1959).

Whatever the prevalent beliefs about the closing of public schools in the county, one looming factor remained. There were approximately 1700 African American children who should have been enrolled in the fall of 1959. The public officials charged with providing education for all children in Prince Edward County had abdicated that responsibility for those 1700 children, and the African American parents and civic leaders recognized that it was now their responsibility to see to the education of their children.

Under the leadership of Reverend L. Francis Griffin, minister in Farmville and president of the local NAACP chapter, and with the assistance of Rev. Dunlap, minister of the local African Methodist Episcopal Church, arrangements for some of the students were made with Kittrell Junior College.

Kittrell, an institution sponsored by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, was located approximately 120 miles south of Farmville, near Henderson, North Carolina. Although Kittrell was a college, it also offered a high school branch.<sup>7</sup>

Kittrell would charge students from Prince Edward County half tuition; any who could not afford that fee would also be welcome. Approximately 60 students (sophomores, juniors and seniors) from Moton High School eventually took advantage of the open door at Kittrell.

One of the greatest fears for the children was that those in the senior class of 1960 would be lost if schools were closed for at least one academic year. They were older, with more skills, and therefore more likely to be lured away to jobs. Once the juniors and seniors were off to Kittrell, Reverend Griffin turned his attention to students in the lower grades.

By February, 1960, training centers in churches, lodges and other public facilities throughout the county were ready for the African American children. These centers were not in any fashion designed to be "schools", but they offered reading and arithmetic to county children. Records from these centers are unavailable, but it appears that the number of children served by these centers was minimal when compared to the potential enrollment for the county. A memo dated February 11, 1960, from Barbara Moffett, representative of the American

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<sup>7</sup>Richmond Afro-American, Spetmeber 26, 1959.

Friends Service Committee, states:

I came away with the impression that more children have left the County than the earlier statistics would indicate. Families have been making private arrangements for their children and some of the older boys particularly have been trying to find jobs. Because of the fact that children have left and that transportation is a real problem, I believe that any program of activities would actually involve a much smaller number than 1700.<sup>1</sup>

Involvement by the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, was considerable. The Committee located homes around the country that would welcome those Prince Edward children who were willing to move away with their parents' blessings and hopes. These homes were located in integrated school districts in the North, and most were White homes. At least sixty students accepted invitations extended through the American Friends Service Committee.

By the summer of 1961, members of the Virginia Teachers Association (an African American association) arrived in Farmville to provide a remedial program with an emphasis in reading. In 1962 they returned with graduate students from northern colleges and a similar summer reading program. Graduate students from Queens College in New York joined members of the American Federation of Teachers in 1963 for a third summer program.

Also present in Prince Edward County in 1963 was a representative from another Northern school. Under the

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<sup>1</sup>Confidential memo from Barbara W. Moffett, February 11, 1960: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

auspices of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Dr. Robert L. Green from Michigan State University arrived to study the educational status of the African American students. The federal sponsorship of this study was due largely to the personal interest and concern of President John F. Kennedy (Smith, 1965).

Dr. Green wanted to determine "...the general effects of closed public schools on the sociological environment of Prince Edward County's Negro population" (Green, 1964, p.6). It was believed that the data generated from the study could have positive long-range benefits. More specifically, Dr. Green believed that formal education's role in society could be addressed by studying a group who had been denied education for a period of years.

This seems a legitimate line of inquiry; one of the fundamental beliefs in this country asserts that the school is an essential agency. Schools are said to perform valuable functions for society - such as transferring the values of the culture, preparing children for leadership, citizenship, and vocations (Dewey, 1916; Whitehead, 1929). According to Parsons (1959), the school class trains individuals to be "motivationally and technically adequate [in] the performance of adult roles"; or, as he restates, it develops "commitments and capacities which are essential prerequisites [for] future role-performance" (pp 297-298). If, in fact, the education of children has such far-reaching and serious ramifications, then

the withholding or denial of education should, as Dr. Green supposed, incur measurable results.

In his attempt to provide this information, Green interviewed and tested a sample of children in Prince Edward County in 1963. The major findings were reported as follows:

- (1) The school closing caused severe retardation in the academic achievement of the children.
- (2) The disruption in schooling was directly related to depressed intelligence scores of the children (low by 15 to 30 points).
- (3) There was minimal communication between African Americans and White community members.
- (4) The short-term remedial programs had some effect but were inadequate as substitutes for school.
- (5) There was a direct relationship between interim schooling and a child's occupational and educational aspiration level.

While the findings from Green's study were alarming, they provided valuable data and information for the next stage of intervention in Prince Edward County.

In June of 1963, William J. Vanden Heuvel, special assistant to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, contacted the Governor of Virginia to express the Kennedy Administration's concern about and interest in the Prince Edward situation. With the help of then Virginia governor, Albertis Harrison, former Virginia Governor (and former President of the University of Virginia), Colgate W. Darden, Jr., was convinced to head the board of trustees for a Free School Association in Prince Edward County (Holland, 1964; Smith, 1965).

The other members of the six-person, biracial board were



Dr. Fred Cole, President of Washington and Lee University; Dr. Robert Daniel, President of Virginia State College; Dr. Thomas H. Henderson, President of Virginia Union University; Dr. Earl McClenny, President of St. Paul's college, and Dr. F. D. Ribble, retired dean of the University of Virginia Law School (Holland, 1964). A leader for this unprecedented effort was needed; Dr. Neil Sullivan, who was currently heading the Long Island, New York, school system, agreed to take on the role of Superintendent for one year (Holland, 1964; Smith, 1965).

With leadership positions filled there remained another serious problem. How would the Free Schools be funded? This question was answered when donations from foundations, organizations and individuals began to arrive. Approximately one million dollars was contributed to the Free School Association. According to Holland (1964), foundations contributed 67 percent, individuals 10 percent, and organizations 23 percent of all funds.

With the assurance of operational funds for at least one year, Dr. Sullivan began his duties as Superintendent of the Free Schools. With the assistance of United States Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel and the National Education Association he began recruiting teachers for what would be a challenging student population. Many of the former Prince Edward County African American teachers returned. Other specialists and young teachers throughout the county also joined Dr. Sullivan to work with the children of Prince

Edward County.

Next, Dr. Sullivan established a non-graded teaching system. It was here that the results of Green's tests were extremely helpful in determining where students should be placed. When the Free School Association opened on September 16, 1963, it was with an air of hope and pride. Three White children enrolled with the approximately 1600 African American children from Prince Edward County; in September, 1964, the public school reopened with about this same enrollment (Holland, 1964; Sullivan, 1965). However, reports about the public school system up to nearly three years later indicated that enrollment of White children remained at a minimum (Blank, 1966; Starr, 1967).

#### Prince Edward County Today

Prince Edward County covers 357 square miles in what is known as the Piedmont area of Southside Virginia and has a population of 17,600. The town of Farmville has a population of 6100 on 4.5 square miles. In Farmville, there are five banks, one hospital, one college (Hampden-Sydney, a private, all male college is often cited in literature about Farmville, but is actually located in Prince Edward County approximately 10 miles from Farmville proper), three radio stations (one owned and operated by African Americans), and at least 40 churches of various denominations. The area is served by fire department and rescue squad volunteers. The county's population is roughly half African American, half White.

According to the local Chamber of Commerce, Farmville is considered the retail center for the seven counties of "Southside" Virginia. The downtown area, located on four blocks of Main Street, does a thriving business. There are not malls, but four open air "shopping centers" house variety stores, groceries, and other retail stores. During the Spring of 1990, a Walmart Discount store opened its doors in Farmville. This was a major event for the town, and along with the opening of a new motel and news that a turkey processing plant might locate in the county there was much excitement among area land-owners and developers.

Information from the local Office of Economic Development reports that the service sector, retail trade, government and manufacturing provide over 80% of the employment for the town and county. Services account for 27.0%, retail trade carries 24.0%, government holds 20.0%, and manufacturing has 16.0% of the labor market. The same publication lists the following as the top five employers in the region: Longwood College, Prince Edward County School System, Southside Community Hospital each employ 300 or more; Craddock-Terry (shoe manufacturing) and Carbone of America (carbon brushes) employ between 200 and 299 people.

A seven member Town Council, Mayor and Town Manager form the local town government. As it was in 1959, the county is governed by an eight member Board of Supervisors and a County Administrator. The School Board is not elected, but appointed

by the Board of Supervisors. Currently, two African Americans serve as members of the Town Council, three sit on the Board of supervisors, and three are members of the School Board.

The Prince Edward Academy still functions as the private school for the county and sits on 53 acres near the heart of Farmville. Tuition at the Academy is \$2495 per year. Enrollment is said to be 630, and while school officials have refused to discuss the Academy directly with the researcher, it appears that at least four African American students may be enrolled there.

Although Prince Edward Academy remains an academic force in the county, its symbolic significance has not escaped individuals outside of Prince Edward County. On February 24, 1981, the Virginia-Pilot printed an article which announced the end of the federal tax exemption status enjoyed by the Academy. The school had appealed, but the Supreme Court refused to overturn the original decision made by the Internal Revenue Service.

This issue again gained attention when, in August, 1985, the Virginia-Pilot reported that the IRS had restored tax exemption status to the Academy. The House Ways and Means oversight subcommittee called IRS commissioner, Roscoe L. Egger Jr., to explain the process used in making this determination. The attorney for Prince Edward Academy argued that the school had a non-discriminatory policy, even though it had no Black pupils or teachers. He also stated that in

compliance with IRS requirements, advertisements had been published earlier in 1985 which clearly explained the school's open admissions policies.

Columnist Carl T. Rowan also testified during the hearing and quoted a 1979 statement made by Robert T. Reed, the Academy's administrator. Mr. Reed attributed the rise in school crime and decline in education on the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation decree. He also believed that the races should be educated separately. Mr. Rowan argued that Prince Edward Academy was not a charitable institution, and that it had not changed [its racist stance].

The 1989-90 enrollment figures for public schools is reported at 2,437. Prince Edward County High School's student body is 62% African American and 38% White. While these figures are encouraging, it is interesting to note that in 1989 the local chapter of the NAACP began investigating several complaints about the public school system; hiring discrimination, tracking of students along racial lines, and differences in disciplinary actions based on race are among the issues of concern.

A firestorm of sorts broke out in the community when, in May, 1990, the School Board announced that it had decided to change the name of the elementary school to that of the current Superintendent. Their justification of this act was that he should be rewarded for the good job he was doing. The local radio "call-in" show was flooded by individuals voicing

their support or disapproval of this action for days after the announcement. A mass meeting was called by the NAACP to discuss the issue, and two weeks later it was announced that the Superintendent had asked the Board to rescind its decision; it did so. The issue of public schools is still a very sensitive one in Prince Edward County, Virginia.

Longwood College, located in the center of Farmville, is a state supported public institution, and is one of the major employers for the town and nearby counties. Its current enrollment hovers around 3000, and its low faculty to student ratio is an important marketing tool. The African American community has a love-hate relationship with the college. During the school closings the college, then a public, female, teachers' college, refused to take a stand. Only Dr. C.D. Moss, Academic Dean of the College, spoke out in favor of public education. Longwood closed its on-campus "lab" school (a school used by most faculty and provided as a laboratory for the aspiring teachers) in the late 1960s; although the shut-down may have been inevitable due to complaints of discrimination at many state college "lab" schools, some felt that the Longwood action was taken to avoid enrollments by African American children. Longwood College does not have a reputation of concerned neighbor, but is perceived as an adversary or at best an agency with an attitude of "benign

neglect" towards the African American community.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1970s Longwood began an expansion project that continues today. Hundreds of African Americans have been forced to leave their homes, and a significant portion of that community was scattered. Many of the people uprooted were elderly, and expected to live out their lives in homes owned by generations of the same family; well established and respected businesses were torn down; homes of historic value were demolished. As the college continues to grow, more homes are taken under eminent domain laws. Some members of the African American community state that many promises have been broken; the college had claimed more than once that it would venture no further, but came back again and again for more homes. Some people suggested that rezoning laws allowing the expansion seemed to be drawn on racial lines. Individuals in the once thriving African American community continue to ask why it is only their neighborhood that is marked for destruction in the name of progress. Longwood employs a significant number of local African Americans in service positions (i.e. painters, custodians, cooks), and complaining too loudly about the college's encroachment is sometimes viewed as "biting the hand that feeds you."

There are now more African Americans living outside of the threatened community than in it, and generally among

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<sup>9</sup>Vera Allen, former principal of Moton High School and owner of Allen Funeral Home. Personal interview on 7/12/90.

members of the larger African American population the attitude about fighting Longwood College is one that expresses the futility of taking on a powerful political machine. Yet, the African American community will rally on the subject of the public schools.

In June, 1990, the Prince Edward NAACP Education Committee approached the Prince Edward County School Board to voice their concerns about the public school system. Although several issues were raised in the initial petition of the NAACP, (i.e. administration of discipline, recruitment of Black faculty, curriculum and guidance), the NAACP concluded that "the concerns we have raised with the Division Superintendent regarding discipline, curriculum, extra-curricular participation, guidance, and perhaps even the decline of black faculty in our classrooms are manifestations of across-the-board 'homogeneous grouping' in the Prince Edward County Public Schools".<sup>10</sup>

Practices utilized by the schools to group students were perceived by the NAACP as being unusually rigid and harmful to students in academic and emotional ways. Their paper stated that, "To group a child at age five is to make decisions about that child's educational experience for the next thirteen years. Fast groups move faster, slow groups move slower, and

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<sup>10</sup>Prince Edward County Branch National Association For The Advancement of Colored People-Education Committee, Position paper to Prince Edward County School Board, June 6, 1990.



a gap originally born of lack of experience or privilege, not necessarily of ability, becomes cast in stone". It was clear that although the term was never used by the NAACP, what they were referring to was commonly known as "tracking".

In explaining her view of the charges about tracking students, one member of the Board of Supervisors stated, "There are two school systems running in the public schools now. All the White children are gifted, and all the Black children are not. That has been how he (Division Superintendent, Dr. James Anderson) has convinced more White parents, especially the college types, to enroll their kids in the public school. You see, they are in public school, but they are not really exposed to our (Black) children".<sup>11</sup>

The above allegation appears to have more than one supporter; within their position paper the NAACP wondered if the system of "homogeneous grouping" utilized within the public school system of Prince Edward County was the result of attempts to recruit "...families, white families in particular, to public education following the re-opening of the county schools".

In September, 1990, a sub-committee of the school board (the Academic-Personnel-Student Affairs Committee) invited a number of community members to participate in an investigation of the grouping allegations. Those individuals who accepted

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<sup>11</sup> A. Carrington, member PE County Board of Supervisors, Personal interviews, June 23, August 15, 1990 and May 6, 1991.

the invitation met with the board, where Carrol Bruce, member and academic affairs chairperson, first instructed the group not to talk to the press. She also stated that the project would not be used by anyone seeking an opportunity to "get [her] name in the paper". Many of the individuals present, this researcher included, were taken aback by the nature of Mrs. Bruce's instructions, which were delivered in a somewhat defensive, almost hostile manner.

Mrs. Bruce placed volunteers into three sub-committees: a Research group was instructed to review available educational research on the topic of grouping; an Interview group was asked to question teachers and administrators about their perceptions of grouping practices within the system. (Note: anonymity guaranteed); a Comparison group was asked to contact school districts with similar profiles to ascertain what practices they followed in regard to grouping.

On October 2, 1991, the Academic-Personnel-Student Affairs Committee submitted the findings of the grouping study. Their final report stated that although there was no one correct method for assigning students to classes, tracking or "lock[ing]" students into one particular group should not be practiced. Furthermore, achievement level instructional grouping should be flexible and allow for frequent assessment of skills and an opportunity for movement to different levels. The report also supported the investigation of strategies such

as cooperative learning and parallel scheduling as alternatives to achievement grouping.<sup>12</sup>

Although some African American citizens may have perceived this report as a step in a more positive direction for their school-aged children, other community members seemed somewhat distressed about potential changes within the school system.

In a letter to Carrol Bruce, adults from nine White families expressed their concerns about changes in the high school college preparatory program, in general, and the Honors (called the "Civilization") program, specifically. In their letter they wrote that if placement into the program was to be based on student and parent choice as opposed to achievement testing, then, "...the new placement procedures for the Civilization program will significantly increase the range of academic preparation and achievement and perhaps motivation among students in those classes. This in turn will inevitably put pressure on teachers to change the curriculum, writing requirements, and grading standards...In sum, we have serious questions about the long-range prospects for maintaining a genuine "Honors" program..."

Clearly, the public school system in Prince Edward County must struggle with many of the same issues as other public schools systems in this country, (e.g. providing quality

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<sup>12</sup>Memorandum for the Prince Edward County School Board.  
Report of the 1990-1991 Academic-Personnel-Student  
Affairs Committee study on Grouping, October 2, 1991

education to a diverse student population; acknowledging parental concerns). However, in Prince Edward County, Virginia, questions about equitable treatment and opportunities for all students in the public school system are influenced by the history of the school closings. The unique apprehensions and suspicions born of that experience will continue to be the lens through which many African Americans view school decisions.

This study will attempt to determine the impact of the five year closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on African American students who were of school age during the years 1959 through 1964. Six research questions will be investigated. They are:

- 1) Do the students who did not leave Prince Edward County during the shut-down of public schools show lower levels of educational attainment when compared to students who participated in the American Friends program?
- 2) Are there lower occupational and income levels for students who did not participate in the American Friends program when public schools closed when compared to students who did?
- 3) Was the decision to reside in Prince Edward County as an adult higher for individuals who were deprived of a formal public schooling for 5 years than for individuals who did not share that experience?
- 4) Do the students who were deprived of public education for 5 years hold less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations than students who did not experience a 5 year disruption in their education?

- 5) Are participation rates in community activities lower for individuals who did not have public education for 5 years than for individuals who had continuous education?
- 6) Are there lower rates of post-high school educational endeavors for the students who remained in Prince Edward County during the shut-down of public schools when compared to students who left the county to attend school elsewhere?

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Although Prince Edward County gained national and world-wide attention because of its decision to close public schools rather than to integrate them, interest in the impact of this event has been mainly from a historical, judicial, or "human interest" perspective (Branch, 1988; Williams, 1988; Wolters, 1984; Kluger, 1975; Smith, 1965). This study will attempt to determine if students were affected by the five year school closing in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and, if so, how the educational needs they present as adults might be addressed.

#### Research on Prince Edward County School Closings

Research that focuses specifically on Prince Edward County and its inhabitants includes that by Green (1964) and Ortner (1984). Scholarly research which examined the ramifications of the school closing on those most affected by it---the children ---is almost non-existent. When attempting to locate a data base for his study, Green (1964) discovered that no empirical evidence was available on the effects of extended periods of non-schooling. He believed that the lack of such research was "...probably a result of the national

trend of universal school attendance." (p.9).

Green (1964) reports that his study was divided into two phases. Phase 1 involved the administration of questionnaires to parents and/or guardians to ascertain demographic and other relevant information about school-aged children; Phase 2 involved the direct testing (i.e. Stanford Achievement, Iowa Silent Reading, Stanford-Binet) of a sample composed of area children and the administration of a questionnaire designed to obtain information about the activities and attitudes of both parents and children. (Green pointed out that tests were provided to all African American Prince Edward children who could be located and were willing to be tested).

Comparison groups for the study included elementary and secondary pupils from an unnamed county nearby. Green points out that these children were "...similar in family socio-economic conditions and school characteristics" (p. 90). The second comparison group included Prince Edward County children who had attended school elsewhere between 1959-1963). Differences in achievement and motivational levels for these students, according to Green, may have been reflections of "...the aspiration level of their parents toward school..." (p. 90).

On the Stanford Achievement Test, Green discovered that

for the Prince Edward children achievement in all areas (i.e. spelling, reading, arithmetic) was depressed. Spelling, paragraph meaning, and word meaning were especially affected by the lack of formal schooling, although students who would have been at grades seven and nine showed more severe damage.

Reading skills of fifty-two children from Prince Edward County were measured with the Iowa Silent Reading test. When compared with the results of the 14 to 16 year old children in the comparison samples, the Prince Edward group's scores were significantly below those children in the other two samples.

Another study suggested that African Americans in Prince Edward County generally had higher levels of aspiration than their White counterparts. Ortner (1984) attempted to "...study the broad effects of the phenomenon of closed schools by examining the question of citizens' aspirations in this setting to determine whether...the level of aspiration of black citizens generally exceeds that of the white residents in their community" (p. 51).

Using categories developed by W.E.B. DuBois during his 1897 comparison study of African Americans in Philadelphia and Farmville (1978), Ortner (a professor at Hampden-Sydney College located in Prince Edward County) devised a questionnaire that asked residents their feelings about jobs and housing. He concluded that overall the African American residents of Prince Edward County felt better about their futures, or held higher aspirations than the White citizens.



While Ortner is to be congratulated for his attempt, his approach to the stated question stands open to several criticisms and flaws in how the study was carried out.

1. The four categories he uses are potentially offensive and subjective (For example, one of the categories was described as "The lowest class of criminals, prostitutes and loafers; the submerged tenth").
2. Ortner's questions were limited to two areas only, jobs and housing, and failed to ask questions more pertinent to his stated goal - the relationship of the school closing to citizens' aspirations.
3. Students from his class acted as interviewers. Since the college is primarily White, it is doubtful if any of the interviewers were African American. Having this particular set of questions asked by students (well-to-do White males) from what is often perceived to be an "elitist" college that was in fact the employer of many local African Americans, may have biased the kinds of answers interviewers received.
4. The White sample is not stratified in the same manner as the African American sample.
5. There is little discussion as to why the significant differences (between classes and groups) appeared. Furthermore, questions that specifically relate the school closing to feelings about current and future situations in terms of housing and jobs are not asked of either group.

#### Cognitive Development and Schooling

There is a substantial collection of research which involves two areas that may provide some insights for the current investigation: (1) the relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement, and (2) academic losses over summer vacation.

Research provided from the two areas is contradictory. Some investigators report findings that show a significant

relationship between absenteeism and grades (Hersov, 1960; Anikeff, 1960). Other studies, such as the one done by Rozell (1968), find relatively low correlations between student's absenteeism and grades. The reasons for the absenteeism may be crucial...that is, students from upper middle-class homes who are absent due to European vacations with parents are likely to be actively involved in learning, albeit outside of the classroom.

Easton and Engelhard (1982) collected longitudinal data on attendance, enrollment, and reading achievement and then performed a multivariate analysis of variance. Their analysis indicates that student absenteeism is significantly related to both teacher-assigned reading grades and standardized test scores. Their results also seem to indicate that comprehension skills at the seventh and eighth grades are particularly sensitive to poor school attendance. According to these authors, the higher comprehension skills required in the seventh and eighth grades are more strongly influenced by school attendance. Based on their findings, they state that absenteeism can act as a significant predictor for reading achievement.

Their findings also have implications for research results that report negligible loss in reading skills at lower grades. As Easton and Engelhard state, the level of comprehension needed at higher grades requires more practice and instruction than less complex skills used in early grades.

Students in early grades therefore have "less" to lose than students in upper grades. In regard to the Prince Edward population, it would appear that a five year disruption in education would have severe consequences in terms of reading achievement across all grades, but especially for those students who had reached the seventh and eighth grades in 1959.

Questioning the assumption that academic skills deteriorate during summer vacation, Wintre (1981) suggests that students may, in fact, make some progress during the summer. Her research is limited, as she points out, by the fact that a single school, a single test, and a small sample were utilized.

More importantly, Wintre's population was composed of middle-class students. Her failure to collect detailed information about the kinds of activities in which her sample participated during summer vacation is another factor that causes her results to be suspect. Students from a higher socioeconomic level who had learning opportunities made available during summer, or more significantly, who had parents or caregivers who recognized what activities constitute learning opportunities and could afford to provide them, may have tested higher in the fall. While it is agreed that children are actively involved in the process of discovery in and out of school (Neisser, 1967; Wittrock, 1979), the resources, guidance and motivation inherent in the

non-school environment are critical to the "learning" that the child does.

Other researchers report that students, particularly those from minority and/or disadvantaged groups, consistently show losses related to summer vacations (Murnane, 1975; David & Pelavin, 1978). In her review of literature on summer school programs, Heyns (1987) found that some of the research which concluded that students did not suffer academic loss over the summer was flawed by research design. Her conclusion was that, in general, research indicates that children learn at a slower rate during the summer and students, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, generally benefit from summer programs aimed at decreasing the impact of academic loss over the summer.

### Adult Learners

Hodgkinson (1985) alerted us to the fact that after the year 2000 one third of the United States population would be sixty years of age or older, and one third would be members of minority groups. Based on these facts, a significant portion of the population may then be looking for ways to fill leisure time (early retirement) or to enhance their skills in order to work longer, while another group will need higher educational and skills levels in order to meet the demands of newly created jobs.

As the necessity to prepare for life in a post-industrial society grows, the number of adults enrolling in college programs has steadily increased. Yet enrollment figures show disparity in terms of demographic facts. Statistics reported by the U.S. Department of Education (1986) indicated that 80% of all part-time students were White, 8% were Black and 6% were Hispanic. In their landmark study on returning adult students, Aslanian and Brickell (1988) found that White adults were "overrepresented in college classrooms in proportion to their numbers in the [overall] population, and all other adults are underrepresented" (p. 22). It would appear then, that nationwide, African American adults in general are not returning to the classrooms. A recent survey designed by an ad hoc committee of the Association of Continuing Higher Education (ACHE) attempted to "determine how continuing education is preparing for the challenges and changes the 21st Century will demand" (Huebner, 1990, p. 9). Their findings in the area of recruitment go hand in hand with those of Aslanian and Brickell; that was that "86% of the responding institutions in this study have efforts to recruit adult students, but the institutions are much less apt to recruit specific underrepresented populations" (p.11). Huebner believes this finding is a clear indication that institutions are failing to recognize the value and purpose of specific recruitment efforts in light of changing demographic patterns and future students.

Recruitment, i.e. inducement, may therefore be added to the lists of barriers to learning for certain adults. K. Patricia Cross (1979, 1981) and the national survey for the commission on Non-traditional Study (Carp, Peterson, & Roelfs, 1974) identified three principal barriers that adults face when returning to college: situational, institutional, and dispositional. Non-recruitment of specific populations would be added to institutional barriers, along with fees and entrance policies.

Other continuing education administrators cite financial aid as the biggest obstacle for minority students interested in continuing their education. Alex Sharpe, associate dean of continuing education at the University of Kansas, stated in a recent article (O'Brien, 1990) that minority students "are disenfranchised by the lack of funding from the federal government." Other administrators believe that some minorities may not qualify for employer tuition support plans, may be unaware of such programs, or may not be at job levels which would allow them to take time off for classes. Another major barrier may be perceptions about the institution held by the minority community. One administrator interviewed in the O'Brien article stated that her institution's reputation as a predominantly White, middle-class institution was probably a major factor in the low enrollment of minority students. She stated that "Historically, minority students from the local community did not feel comfortable here," and that "...there's

a lot of work we have to do to make people think of us as a resource."

It may be a combination of such factors as listed earlier, rather than any one specific "barrier" that accounts for the low enrollment of African American adults in part-time and full time college programs nationwide. Colleges and universities with vision would be moving to address factors which frustrate adults who seek postsecondary education, particularly for those who are underrepresented in their classrooms but not in the general population.

For some of the adults in this particular study, barriers such as financial aid, institutional recruitment efforts and reputation of most accessible institution are likely to be important factors. Persons on the lower socio-economic scale whose concerns center on food, housing and transportation and whose feelings of "security" are more easily disrupted must be able to comprehend and appreciate the practical benefits of further education before they risk meager resources and/or ego to obtain it (Maslow, 1954). Simply stated, people will engage in activities that they believe will satisfy their needs (McMillan, 1980; Vroom, 1964).

Dispositional barriers may play a significant role as well, due to this group's unique educational past. For example, in many instances persons who returned for education once the public schools reopened often found their classmates several years younger than themselves. In the school setting

such age differences are often perceived as a stigma--an indication of lower intellectual ability or lack thereof. As adults, these individuals may be less willing to return to the classroom (where they would again find younger classmates), especially if their earlier experiences were painful. They might perceive that such an action would create a *déjà vu* episode better avoided.

In summary, research that sought answers to the effects of extensive absences from early educational experiences was basically non-existent. The work done by Green (1964) provided some hypotheses regarding expected outcomes for the children of Prince Edward County. Other research that examined more limited school absences provided mixed results in terms of whether such absences affected learning achievement.

A review of the literature regarding adult learning indicates that African Americans, in general, are underrepresented in adult learning activities. The population of this study may face a combination of "barriers" due to their uncommon experience with the educational system.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of the five year public school closing in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on African Americans students who were of school age during that time. Two groups were compared: students who were placed in homes outside the state of Virginia by the American Friends Service Committee (In School Group) and students who stayed in the county during the school closings (Out of School Group).

Descriptive statistics were used to describe any differences in such variables as occupational levels, perceptions of race relations, and educational attainment in Prince Edward County students who left the county during the school closing and those who stayed behind. Other variables of interest include migration rates out of the county, participation rates in community activities, and participation rates in post-high school educational endeavors.

This chapter will describe the structural dimension of data collection, sample identification and contact, and the process of data collection and analysis.

### Research Questions

Answers to several questions were sought in this study.

They were:

- 1) Do the students who did not leave Prince Edward county during the shut-down of public schools show lower levels of educational attainment when compared to students who participated in the American Friends program?
- 2) Are there lower occupational and income levels for students who did not participate in the American Friends program when public schools closed when compared to students who did?
- 3) Was the decision to reside in Prince Edward County as an adult higher for individuals who were deprived of a formal public schooling for 5 years than for individuals who did not share that experience?
- 4) Do the students who were deprived of public education for 5 years hold less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations than students who did not experience a 5 year disruption in their education?
- 5) Are participation rates in community activities lower for individuals who did not have public education for five years than for individuals who had continuous education?
- 6) Are there lower rates of post-high school educational endeavors for the students who remained in Prince Edward County during the shut-down of public schools when compared to students who left the county to attend school elsewhere?

## Population

The sample for this study was obtained from school enrollment lists from all African American schools in Prince Edward County during the school year 1958-59. This included twelve elementary schools (Mercy Seat; Peaks; First Rock; Mt. Leigh; Worsham; High Rock; Five Forks; Virso; Felden; New Bethel; Pamplin; Mary E. Branch) and the high school (R.R. Moton). Each enrollment list included the child's name, age, grade and parent's name and address.

Students listed as twelfth graders were not included in the sample because they were graduates in June, 1959, just prior to the school closings. No kindergarten existed during this time period, therefore the enrollment lists provided a total of eleven grades from which the sample could be drawn.

In order to provide a wider range of responses, two grades were collapsed into one group for sampling procedures; that is, students from the first and second grades were considered as one group, students in grades three and four were considered one group, and so on. The eleventh grade was considered a single group. (See Table 1) Once the six groups were established, each student listed in a combined grade group was given a number, beginning with the number 1. Each group was assigned a color to aid in numbering and record keeping. (The color coding system proved to be very helpful in light of the substantial size of the population, over 1700 students. It was particularly helpful in identifying the

different grades on the lists from the smaller schools. While

TABLE 1

Study Sample of Students  
Clustered by Grades

Grade	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Group V	Group VI
1	N=15					
2	N=15					
3		N=15				
4		N=15				
5			N=15			
6			N=15			
7				N=15		
8				N=15		
9					N=15	
10					N=15	
11						N=30

the larger schools listed students in distinct grades on separate sheets, enrollment lists from smaller schools tended to reflect their smaller student numbers, and two or three grades might be listed on one enrollment sheet. The devised color coding system proved to be useful throughout the sampling process).

One thousand, seven hundred and three students (grades one through eleven) were listed on the enrollment sheets for 1958-59. After all students were numbered in a specific

group, (i.e. grades one and two), a table of random numbers was utilized to identify students from that group for the sample. Thirty students from each group was used to comprise the sample. This would produce a total of 180 students, an appropriate representative number in respect to the total school enrollment figures for 1958-59.

The next step, locating the sample participants, was the most difficult. The primary sources of information were family members and friends who still resided in Prince Edward County. Collecting information involved many hours of telephone calls and personal visits. Retired teachers living in the area also proved to be extremely helpful as contact persons during the search process.

Two retired teachers were able to identify a significant number of students who resided in the county, and knew the correct names for most female students in the sample who had married. They were also able to tell the researcher about family connections-a cousin or aunt who might know where a particular student could be reached.

A Farmville funeral director provided invaluable assistance by sharing her records which often included addresses for many students who resided out of the area. A community leader gave his list of alumni from Moton High, which included many students in the sample, and contributed his personal knowledge about the whereabouts of certain individuals.

A local attorney, the beneficiary of intervention by the American Friends Service Committee, produced a list of students involved in the placement program sponsored by the American Friends. Comparisons of lists indicated that some students who were randomly selected in the original sample were participants in the American Friends project. In such situations, the student was removed from the "Out of School" group and placed in a separate group which composed the American Friends (or "In School") group.

With the support of individuals such as those mentioned above, addresses for all one hundred eighty students in the "Out of School" sample were obtained two and one half months after the initiation of the search.

Thirty students from each group comprised a total of 180 students in grades one through eleven (groups 1 through 6) for the random sample labeled "Out of School". The number of students identified on the American Friends Service Committee list (labeled "In School") was sixty-six. Fifteen students in the randomly selected sample were recognized as American Friends students and were expunged from the "Out of School" group. This decreased the total number in the "Out of School" group to 165.

Addresses for all 165 students in the "Out of School" group were located, but addresses for 21 of the "In School" group were unavailable. The final total of the sample was therefore 165 "Out of School", 45 "In School".

### Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was designed to test the research questions. Babie (1986) identified several strengths in this research method, including reduced interviewer bias, standardization of data, and privacy for respondents. The school closing remains a sensitive issue for many people who were involved in it, and it was believed that participation in a study via questionnaire would be less threatening.

In light of weaknesses inherent in survey research (Babie, 1986), such as the inability to explore complex topics, respondents were provided an opportunity to talk directly with the researcher if they so chose. The telephone or face-to-face interview, initiated by the respondent on the returned questionnaire, provided an opportunity to discuss in more depth items on the questionnaire and other related issues.

The questionnaire included both questions and statements in order to provide more flexibility and interest (Dillman, 1978). The total number of items was forty-three. Of this number, thirty-eight items were multiple-choice, and five items were open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were viewed not only as valuable sources of information, but responses (or lack of response) to them would act as a prelude during the personal interview.

In order to access current demographic information, questions about age, gender, income level, marital status and highest educational level attained were included in the questionnaire. Occupation was coded using a standardized classification scheme based on the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification. Information that focused more on attitudinal leanings was presented in a four point bi-polar scale designed to determine if respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement. (Table 2 provides an overview of the general categories covered in the questionnaire and related survey items. A complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix C). Research Question 1 (survey question 6) sought to determine if the level of educational attainment was the same for the two groups (In School vs Out of School) in this study. Educational attainment (furnished by the respondent), was measured on a scale that began with a low rating (eighth grade or less) and ended with a high rating (college graduate). Responses of the two groups were compared and percentages calculated.

Research Question 2 (survey questions 32 and 36) sought information on income and occupations. Income was coded on a five point scale that ranged from a low of under \$20,00 to a high of over \$50,000. Responses to the question about work role were coded using a standardized occupational classification scheme where several occupational areas (i.e.



Table 2  
General Categories on Questionnaire and  
Related Items

Categories	Items
Demographics	Age, gender, marital..... 6, 8, 23, 24, status, income, # of 25, 33, 36 children, etc.
Attitudes about	Prince Edward County..... 11, 14, 17, 22 the 1959 school closing.... 7, 12 the value of education ... 9, 10, 18, 31, 41, 42
Personal Involvement with	Educational activities.... 13, 15, 19, 20, 37, 38 Community &/or political...26, 27, 28, 29 organizations
Experiences during closing	What happened, who..... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, helped, etc. 34, 35, 39, 40
Optimism	16, 21, 30

postmaster, lawyer, social worker) are grouped under their appropriate occupational title (i.e. Professional and Managerial). For example, "Professional and Managerial" was the title that included jobs which generally required a higher level of preparation and provided higher levels of income. In general, it is agreed that higher levels of educational

attainment lead to more options in career and lifestyle (Wegmann, Chapman, & Johnson, 1989; Stolzenberg, 1978), but beyond that provides individuals with the necessary tools to make significant contributions to society.

Research Question 3 (survey questions 8, 11, 14, 17 and 22) attempted to discover if there was a relationship between the school closing and the decision to leave Prince Edward County. Answers to questions that assessed attitudes toward the county (in terms of racial climate and the current educational system) were cross-tabulated to determine if there was any difference between respondents who reported that they had chosen to live elsewhere and respondents who stayed in the county.

Research Question 4 (survey questions 16, 26, and 27) sought information on how members of both groups felt about current race relations. This was tested by comparing the answers of the two groups on questions about racial issues. Only African American students were denied schooling in Prince Edward County for the period described earlier. Their optimism, in terms of race relations, could promote or decrease their activities as community members and/or adult learners.

Research Question 5 (survey questions 28 and 29) focused on participation in community based activities. Involvement in church, civic, and volunteer organizations as well as any public office service was of interest. Citizens participation

is often viewed as a means for bringing about social changes or as a method of "giving back" to the community.

Research Question 6 (survey questions 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 30, and 37) was designed to look at adult learning patterns. The national study conducted by Aslanian and Brickell (1983) reported that adults with higher incomes, with better educations, and those employed in professional and technical occupations were more likely to participate in learning activities. Both groups were compared on their involvement in learning activities.

#### Data collection

Addresses for all 165 students in the "Out of School" group were located, but addresses for 21 of the "In School" group were unavailable. The final total of the sample was therefore 210; 165 "Out of School", 45 "In School".

A letter from the researcher, a letter of support signed by two retired teachers who had been active in the system for many years prior to the school closings (Appendix B), the questionnaire (Appendix C), a pencil which was stenciled "I helped Margaret get a Ph.D.", and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to all 210 subjects. The need for follow-up precluded assurances of anonymity to the subject; however, the lack of anonymity does not ordinarily present a serious research problem (Borg & Gall, 1971; Moser & Kalton,

1974). However, confidentiality was assured in the letter from the researcher.

Two weeks after the initial mailing a total of 64 completed questionnaires had been returned. At this point, a follow-up letter, a questionnaire and another self-addressed, stamped envelope was mailed to one hundred forty-six individuals who had not responded.

A total of twelve packets were returned as undeliverable. Ten of this number were for subjects in the "Out of School" group, and two were for subjects in the "In School" group. The final number of usable questionnaires that were returned was one hundred and fifteen (94 "Out of School", 21 "In School"). This represents a return rate of 55%.

Telephone calls were made to individuals who had agreed to a personal interview. The agreement was confirmed by completion of a sheet included with the questionnaire. This sheet asked for complete name (including maiden name if married), address, phone number, and best time to call. It also included a statement of understanding that would permit the researcher to include information or quotations from this conversation. Respondents signed and dated this sheet to verify their understanding and agreement. (Appendix D).

Personal and telephone interviews were unstructured and were designed to provide further insight into the impact of the school closing on the individual being interviewed. Fill-in answers or questions left blank on the questionnaire were

generally excellent lead-ins (i.e. "I was very interested in your answer to..." or "I noticed that you skipped question \_\_ about \_\_, "). Individuals were eager to talk, and many offered touching expressions of appreciation at an opportunity to discuss the school closings. (Interview Summaries Appendix E).

### Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X) was used to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each questionnaire item having a fixed response category. Where open-ended responses were permitted, all such responses were recorded and categorized so that frequencies and percentages could be calculated.

A significant amount of the data collected on the questionnaire was measured at the ordinal level, that is, values of variables could be logically rank ordered. With ordinal scaling, nonparametric statistical tests are most appropriate for testing the hypotheses (Siegel, 1956).

Nonparametrics also provide a number of other appropriate characteristics in light of this study: they provide a method for testing small sample sizes; may be used with ordinal data; do not require the same conditions of the population parameters as do parametric statistical tests.

The Mann-Whitney test (which identifies differences in central tendency) was utilized in this study because it is effective with small samples and its statistic - U - is transformed into a normally distributed statistic z for larger

samples. The U statistic is a measure of the difference between the ranked observations of the two samples. The computed z score is corrected for ties within ranks.

The level of significance for rejection of the null hypotheses was set at .05. Therefore, if the observed value of U has an associated probability equal to or less than .05, the null hypothesis would be rejected.

Information gathered from the personal interviews was qualitative and could not be reduced to numerical data. Therefore transcripts were scrutinized for similar issues that were raised or discussed at length during the interview, and categories or "themes" were identified. Detailed findings regarding the interviews will be presented in Chapter IV and Appendix E.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The intent of this study is to investigate the impact of the five year closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on African American students who would have been enrolled during the period of 1959 through 1964. Two groups of students were identified: students who were placed in out of state schools by the American Friends Service Committee (a Quaker organization) and students who were left in the county when the schools closed.

Students who did not participate in the American Friends Service Committee placement program had few options: some who remained in the county may have provided what schooling they could for themselves and younger siblings, worked for parents or other family members, or simply found ways to occupy their time; others attended the Centers established by Reverend Griffin and community leaders and/or took part in the summer programs provided (see Chapter 1); many non-American Friends Service committee students were able eventually to leave the county to live with relatives in other states or in other Virginia counties.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of respondent's grade levels when the public schools closed. "In School" represents participants in the American Friends program, "Out of School" signifies students who remained in Prince Edward County.

Table 3  
Respondents by Group

Group	Out of School	In School
I (Grades 1 & 2)	18	0
II (Grades 3 & 4)	11	1
III (Grades 5 & 6)	22	2
IV (Grades 7 & 8)	20	6
V (Grades 9 & 10)	16	8
VI (Grade 11)	7	4
	N=94	N=21

A review of the general demographics of the sample reveal the following data (See Table 3): In the "In School" group (21 respondents), 10 were women and 11 were men. Gender breakdown in the "Out of School" group (94 respondents) was 53 women and 41 men. The age range was greater in the Out of School group, with 19 respondents between 36-40 years of age, 46 between 41



and 45, and 29 between 46 and 50. In the American Friends group no respondents were in the 36-40 age group, 7 were in the 41-45 age range, 14 placed in the 46-50 category.

The lack of students in the youngest age range for the American friends group is not surprising. The American Friends were looking for more mature students who would adapt to new surroundings; parents were probably less willing to allow younger children to leave home to live with strangers; younger students may have been less willing to leave home.

Table 4  
Demographics by percentages

	Gender	Age	Marital Status
Out of School (N=94)	F=56% M=44%	36-40=20% 41-45=49% 46-50=31%	Married 72% Single 28%
In School (N=21)	F=48% M=52%	36-40= 0% 41-45=33% 46-50=67%	Married 71% Single 29%

#### Research Question #1

Do the students who did not leave Prince Edward County during the shut-down of public schools show lower levels of educational attainment when compared to students who participated in the American Friends program?

Data obtained on the questionnaire (See Appendix C) indicates that students who were placed by the American Friends have higher levels of academic preparation than students listed as "Out of School". Table 5 shows the results of the self-reported information.

**Table 5**  
**Highest Grade Attained Group Comparisons**

	Out of School (N = 94)	In School (N = 21)
12 or less	51%	24%
Some college	20%	19%
Four year college grad	29%	57%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Slightly over one half of the Out of School group reported obtaining twelve years or less of formal education. Only 24% of students who were placed by the American Friends fall in the "12 years or less" category. When the categories of "Some college" and "College graduate" are combined, the Out of School group totals 49% as compared to the American Friends group's combined total of 76%. Not only were the American Friends group more likely to go to college, they were much more likely to complete a degree.

In order to collect information that would provide deeper insight into the experience of the former students, respondents were asked questions directly related to their experiences during and feelings about the school closing. A majority of those individuals who answered and returned the questionnaire appear to have received formal schooling (elsewhere) at some time during the five years that public schools were closed in Prince Edward County (See Tables 6 & 7).

Table 6

## What did you do when the schools closed?

	Out of school	In school
Public school another county	20%	0%
Public school another state	19%	32%
Private school in Virginia	0%	10%
Private school another state	03%	48%
Center &/or summer programs	19%	
Combination outside county	15%	10%
Not in school during closings	24%	
	N=93	N=21

The characteristics of the education that the groups participated in during the school closings in Prince Edward is worthy of attention. Many members of the In School group entered schools (and households) that were integrated. As participants in the American Friends program, over half of the

In School students were placed in private schools, thereby gaining exposure to excellent resources and opportunities not available in Prince Edward County.

In School students reported that they were in school for longer periods of time during the Prince Edward closings. When the statistical test was applied to years in school, the difference was significant at .05.

Table 7

How many years in school after public schools closed in Prince Edward County?

	Out of school	In school
Did not attend school	34%	0%
In school 1 year or less	13%	19%
In school 2 years	20%	33%
In school 3 years	15%	38%
In school 4 years	18%	10%
	N = 91	N = 21
Mean Rank	53.5	69.1
Mann-Whitney U =	689	p = .02

Former students were asked directly for their opinions about the personal impact of the school closing. Question 7 asked "...how do you think it affected your life?" and question 39 asked "...how did you feel when the schools closed in 1959?". Answers to question 7 were grouped generally as

positive effect, negative effect, no effect, both positive and negative effect (See Table 8).

Table 8  
As you look back on the school closing, how do  
you think it affected your life?

Effect	Out of School N=94	In School N=20
No Effect	1%	5%
Both Positive & Negative	22%	20%
Negative	37%	10%
Positive	40%	65%
Mean Rank    56.1                      63.9 Mann Whitey U = 810      p = .14		

Answers reported as both positive and negative effects included statements that could not be clearly weighted in one direction or the other (i.e. It probably reduced my opportunity for a better life [and] It probably increased my determination to fight segregation; or It made me bitter towards society in general [and] It probably enhanced my determination to succeed).

Results of the statistical test indicate that there is no significant difference in how the two groups perceive the effect of the school closings on their lives. However, the higher mean rank for the In School group reflects more positive responses from them than the Out of School group.

Question 39 asked former students, "In general, how did you feel when the schools closed in 1959?" (Table 9). The emotion reported most often by the In School group was "hurt". Disappointment was the leading emotion reported by the Out of School group. It is interesting to note that the Out of School respondents reported some feelings that were not mentioned by the In School respondents. Disappointment, feeling ashamed, being happy at first when the schools closed, and being too young to understand were feelings described by the Out of Schoolers but not by the In School group.

A majority of the In School students were in higher grades when the public schools were closed in 1959. The age differences may therefore reflect the differences in feelings expressed when the two groups are compared. Older students were accustomed to attending school, and recognized what role education could play in determining one's future. Younger students may not have reached a level of maturity and understanding to grasp just what it was they were losing.

An attempt was made to measure the range of emotions in more quantitative terms. Anger was considered the strongest emotion on the scale which was constructed. Too young to understand, don't recall, and other were grouped together and placed at the lowest end of the scale.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U showed no significant difference in the emotions reported by both groups. The trend, however, as reflected in the mean ranks, indicates that

members of the In School group listed stronger emotions more often than Out of School students. These results support information provided in Table 9.

Table 9

In general, how did you feel when the schools closed in 1959?

Emotion	Out of School N = 82	In School N = 19
Other	14%	15%
Don't recall feelings	1%	11%
Too young to understand	13%	0%
Happy at first	6%	0%
Disbelief	10%	5%
Confused	6%	16%
Disappointed	26%	0%
Hurt	9%	32%
Angry	15%	21%
	N = 82	N = 19
Mean Rank	49.4	57.6
Mann-Whitney U =	652	p = .12

A comparison of Tables 8 and 9 reveals that members of the In School group feel more positive about how the school closing affected their lives, however, they report feeling angry and hurt more often than Out of School group members.

**Research Question #2**

**Are the occupational and income levels lower for students who did not participate in the American Friends program when compared to students who did?**

Table 10 reflects percentages of the population in each of six occupational categories: Managers and Professionals; Technicians, Sales, and Administrative Support; Service; Farm; Production, Craft and Repairers; Operators and Laborers.

Table 10  
Occupations held by percentages

	Managers Profess.	Tech., Sales Adm support	Service	Farm	Prod. C&R	Operators Laborers
Out of School (N = 84)	24%	26%	12%	2%	8%	27%
In School (N = 19)	37%	42%	5%	0%	0%	16%

A majority of respondents in the In School group work in occupations that fall under the "Manager and Professionals" and "Technical, Sales and Administrative Support" categories. Jobs under this heading cover a broad range of skill requirements, and include such careers as office supervisors, secretaries, computer operators, sales persons, technicians in the engineering, health and science fields, as well as postal clerks, telephone operators and receptionists. A higher percentage of the In School group report occupations in the



**Managerial and Professional category.** Occupations under this heading include such careers as administrators, physicians and dentists, teachers, lawyers, engineers and professors.

Former students in the Out of School group appear to work in a broader range of occupations and report work in lower ranked occupations in higher numbers than members of the In School group.

Closely related to occupational level is the issue of income. Table 11 reflects the individual income for former students in both groups. A comparison of income levels for the two groups indicates that a higher percentage of the Out of School group falls in the lower income ranges than do the American Friends students.

Table 11  
Individual Income Levels by Percentages

		Out of School (N=90)	In School (N=19)
Income	Below \$ 20,000	41%	16%
	\$21,000 - 30,000	28%	32%
Levels	31,000 - 40,000	23%	10%
	41,000 - 50,000	03%	10%
	Over \$ 50,000	05%	32%

The In School group were older and at a high grade level when the schools closed and they moved to participate in the American Friends education program. Comparing the total

population could confound the data. Therefore, only students in grades seven and above were subjected to statistical tests on three items. These items, (level of educational attainment, occupational level, and income), and the results of the Mann-Whitney U are reported in Table 12.

Table 12  
Mann-Whitney U applied to  
Research Questions 1, 2, & 3  
Grades 7 and Above  
Both Groups

Question	Item	Group	*Mean Rank	*U	<sup>b</sup> p
#1	Highest grade attained	In = 19	40.2	242	.004
		Out= 43	27.6		
#2	Occupational level	In = 17	22.1	224	.041
		Out= 37	29.9		
	Income level	In = 17	36.7	242	.02
		Out =42	27.2		

\*Mann-Whitney

<sup>b</sup>p=.05 level of significance

\*Low to high (or high to low) ranking of variables determines direction of difference.

The resulting probabilities indicate a significant difference in level of education and income level when the In School and Out of School groups are compared. There is also a significant difference between the two groups in occupational levels. Related means indicate that the Out of School group was lower than the In School group on the three variables.

It is important to note that when the statistical test was run on each question for the total population, there were

significant differences at the .05 level. Therefore, there is no particular evidence of bias due to the differences in age/grade levels of the two groups.

### Research Question #3

**Is the decision to reside in Prince Edward County as an adult higher for individuals who were deprived of an formal public schooling for five years than for individuals who did not share the experience?**

Table 13 shows that former students in the Out of School group remained in Prince Edward County at a higher percentage than did the students placed by the American Friends. Over half (52%) of the students in the In School group have resided out of the state of Virginia for the last twenty years. This is nearly a mirror image of the Out of School group who report living in Prince Edward County at a 59% rate.

**Table 13**  
**Percentages of Migration Out of County**  
**by Group**

	Out of School N = 94	In School N = 21
Out of VA	21%	52%
In Virginia	20%	29%
Out of VA	59%	19%

Total	100%	100%
Mean Rank	53.3	78.6
Mann-Whitney U=	553	p=.003

Results of the Mann-Whitney U indicate that the difference between the two groups on choice of residence is significant at the .05 level.

Other items included in this research question assessed current attitudes toward Prince Edward County (Tables 14 through 17). When asked about the current public school system in Prince Edward County, a majority in both groups agreed that children currently could obtain a good education there. (See Table 14). While about one fifth of the Out of School respondents were not confident about the quality of education provided by the Prince Edward County public schools today, there was no significant difference between the groups when the statistical test was applied.

Table 14

Children can get a good education in  
the public schools of Prince Edward County today.  
Percentages of agree or disagree

	Out of School N = 91	In School N = 19
% Agree	82%	100%
% Disagree	18%	0%
Mean Rank	51.4	54.8
Mann-Whitney U = 714		p = .30

Respondents in both groups appear to believe that memories of the school closings still exist in Prince Edward County. According to data as reported in Table 15, over three

quarters of the former students in the In School and Out of School groups disagreed with a statement that said most county residents had forgotten about the school closing. The statistical test indicates that there was no significant difference in how the groups answered this question.

Table 15

Most of the people now in Prince Edward County  
have forgotten about the school closings.

	Out of School (N = 85)	In School (N = 18)
% Agree	24%	16%
% Disagree	76%	84%
Mean Rank	55.7	54.1
Mann-Whitney U = 839	p = .41	

Questions that asked about the political climate and racism in Prince Edward County drew a smaller response rate from both groups (Table 16). For those respondents in the American Friends group, (who report a higher rate of living out of the state), this may reflect a lack of more recent personal experience within the county. Overall results interestingly are nearly the same for both groups with the majority of those answering reporting a negative view of the current political climate in Prince Edward County. The Mann-

Whitney U indicates that there is no significant difference in how the two groups answered questions about racism and political climate in Prince Edward County today.

Table 16  
The political climate in Prince Edward County  
is now positive for Black American  
Percentages who agree or disagree

	Out of School N = 88	In School N = 12
% Agree	28%	25%
% Disagree	72%	75%
Mean Rank	50.3	51.3
Mann-Whitney U =	517	p = .45

The question about racism in the county drew a nearly 100% response rate from the Out of School sample, and more former students in the American Friends group answered this question. In Table 17 it appears that both groups believe that racism is active in the county today.

Table 17  
There is little racism in Prince Edward County today.  
Percentages of agree or disagree

	Out of School N = 91	In School N = 15
% Agree	23%	7%
% Disagree	77%	93%
Mean Rank	54.0	50.0
Mann-Whitney U =	631	p = .30

**Research Question #4**

**Do students who were deprived of public education for five years hold less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations than students who did not experience a five year disruption in their education?**

Two questions were designed to investigate feelings about race relations. Tables 18 through 19 give results of answers to each question.

Table 18 reveals that the Out of School group is nearly equally divided on the question of opportunities for success. The responses of the American Friends group reflect a clear majority who are more positive about opportunities for success.

Table 18

**At the present time there are as many opportunities for success available to me as there are for anyone else.**  
Percentages of agree or disagree

	Out of School (N = 91)	In School (N = 21)
% Agree	51%	81%
% Disagree	49%	19%
Mean Rank	53.6	68.9
Mann-Whitney U =	695	p = .02

Table 19 reports the responses of both groups to the question about the effect of desegregated schools on Black Americans. Slightly over 10% of the Out of School group and the American Friends group chose not to answer this particular

question. A comparison of the results indicate that former American Friends students appear to feel better about desegregated schools than do their counterparts who were without public education for five years. There is, however, no significant difference at the .05 level.

Table 19

Have desegregated schools helped or hindered the education of Black Americans?  
Percentages

	Out of School N = 84	In School N = 19
Helped	40%	63%
Hindered	24%	11%
Not Sure	36%	26%
Mean Rank	53.9	43.3
Mann-Whitney U = 634		p = .06

#### Research Question #5

**Are participation rates in community activities lower for individuals who did not have public education for five years than for individuals who had continuous education?**

Responses to the two questions which assessed community involvement asked about particular activities, such as participation in church, volunteer and civic organizations, and attendance at community meetings are recorded in Tables 20 and 21. Table 20 indicates the level of involvement in multiple community activities.



Table 20

**Involved in community activities  
Percentages**

	Out of School N = 84	In School N = 19
Church only	32%	11%
Volunteer, Civic and Church	49%	58%
Civic or Volunteer	14%	31%
Run for office	05%	0%
Mean Rank	50.6	57.8
Mann-Whitney U = 686		p = .14

There may be some differences in how respondents interpreted involvement. Some may have interpreted involvement as membership versus actual participation. Table 21 indicates that nearly half of the respondents to a question about attendance at community meetings report that they attend "sometimes" as opposed to attending on a regular basis.

Table 21

**Percentages of attendance at  
community meetings**

	Out of School N = 84	In School N = 20
Regular attend	20%	40%
Sometimes attend	49%	45%
Never attend	29%	20%
Mean Rank	59.8	46.5
Mann-Whitney U = 721		p = .03

Politics and resulting policies help shape a community. The voting practices of this population were therefore of interest in this study. Table 22 provides information on registration and participation in last election. Voting appears to be important for both groups.

Table 22

Registered voters and voted  
in last election by Group

Registered voter	Out of School N = 94	In School N = 21
Yes	93%	100%
No	7%	0%
Mean Rank	57.2	61.5
Mann-Whitney U = 913		p = .10
Vote in last election	N=93	N=21
Yes	90%	100%
No	10%	0%
Mean Rank	56.4	62.0
Mann Whitney U = 882		p = .06

Research Question #6

**Are there lower rates of post-high school endeavors for individuals who did not have public education for five years as compared to those who did?**

Actual behaviors as well as attitudes about higher education were investigated. Table 23 provides an overview of responses about education. All the former students in the American Friends sample believe that education is the key to progress and all but a small percentage of the Out of School

group concurred. A majority of both groups also agree that most people should have an education beyond high school. Almost half of the Out of School group agreed that uneducated people work harder than people with an education, but only 19% of the In School group agreed with that statement. Both groups appear to have positive feelings about their abilities and/or benefits of schooling at this point in their lives.

Table 23

## Attitudes toward education

	Out of School		In School	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Obtaining education is the way to progress...	(n = 96% 92)	4%	(n = 100% 21)	0%
Educated people don't work as hard as uneducated people.	(n = 48% 91)	52%	(n = 19% 21)	81%
Most people should have education beyond high school.	(n = 91% 91)	09%	(n = 90% 21)	10%
Would do well in school now	(n=93) 31%		(n=20) 65%	
Would do well w/hard work	53%		35%	
School too difficult now	11%		0%	
Past point where school helpful	5%		0%	

However, over half of the Out of School group believe they would have to work hard to achieve that success as compared to about one third of the In School students. A few people in the Out of School group appear to have negative feelings about their abilities and/or benefits of schooling at this point in their lives.

Table 24-A reveals that over half of both groups have been involved in some kind of formal educational endeavors since they left school. Members of the In School group report higher rates of participation in post high school educational activities. Results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate that the differences between the two groups on rates of participation in formal educational activities are significant at the .05 level.

When asked about the nature of that education (Table 24-B), the respondents in the In School sample appeared to have more work related training and college courses (85%). Sixty percent of the Out of School group report taking college courses and involvement in work related training. The Out of School respondents listed more GED and vocational/trades training (35%) than did the In School group (10%). In the Out of School sample, 5% reported that they were currently in a degree program.

**Table 24-A**  
**Percentages involved in formal educational activities**

	Out of School (n=87)	In School (n=20)
<sup>a</sup> Involved in formal educational activity in last year	59%	81%
<sup>b</sup> Involved in formal educational activity in last 2 years	59%	81%
<sup>a</sup> Mean Rank Mann-Whitney U = 640	51.3	65.5 <b>p = .02</b>
<sup>b</sup> Mean Rank Mann-Whitney U = 670	51.7	64.0 <b>p = .04</b>

**Table 24-B**  
**Type of educational activity**

Type of Activity	Out of School (n=21)	In School (n=55)
GED	13%	05%
Improve reading skills	0%	05%
Job specific training	27%	65%
College courses	33%	20%
Enrolled in degree program	05%	0%
Trade/technical program	22%	05%

Table 25 provides a summary of findings on research questions 3 through 6. A detailed discussion is presented in Chapter V.

Table 25

Mann-Whitney U applied to  
Research Questions 3 through 6

Research Question	Item	Group	Mean Rank	U	p
# 3	Migration rates	In = 21 Out= 94	78.6 53.3	553	.00
# 4	Opportunities	In = 21 Out= 91	68.9 53.6	695	.02
	Political climate	In = 12 Out= 88	51.3 50.3	517	.45
	Racism in PEC	In = 15 Out= 91	50.0 54.0	631	.30
	Desegregation	In = 19 Out =84	43.3 53.9	634	.06
# 5	Community activities	In = 19 Out= 84	57.8 50.6	686	.14
	Attend meetings	In = 20 Out= 94	46.5 59.8	721	.03
	Registered voter	In = 21 Out= 94	61.5 57.2	913	.10
	Vote last election	In = 21 Out= 93	62.0 56.4	882	.06
# 6	Education past year	In = 20 Out= 87	65.5 51.3	640	.02
	Education past 2 years	In = 20 Out =87	64.0 51.7	670	.04

The above table reveals the following:

- In School students left Prince Edward County at higher rates than did Out of School students. The difference was significant at .05.
- on the question of attitudes and beliefs, the two groups differ significantly on only one issue. In School students were more optimistic than Out of School students about their opportunities for success;
- the two groups do not differ significantly on the issue of community involvement, except in their rate of

- attendance at meetings. In School students attend meetings more regularly than do Out of School students.
- the In School students have higher rates of post-high school educational activities than do Out of School students. The difference was significant at .05.

### Interviews

Several themes were identified as interview contents were reviewed. Themes were: (1) Dreams - hopes and goals that were changed or affected by the school closing; (2) Relationships - with family and friends; (3) Experiences in the Centers - facilities operated by the African American community in an attempt to provide educational experiences for children who remained in the county; (4) Opinions about Farmville today; (5) Prince Edward Academy - the private school which was opened to serve White children when public schools closed; (6) Attitudes - general expressions of emotions; and (7) Historical insights - memories about the county and town during the school closing era.

Following are excerpts from the collection of interviews which allow a comparison of what members of the two groups discussed. Appendix E provides an unabridged report of the interviews.

DREAMSOut of School

"I went into shock, I was the next to the oldest so I went to work to help support the family. I couldn't stand it, seeing my dreams going. So, I started making excuses, or I should say I changed the direction in my thoughts about what the value of school was. I decided that school wasn't all that important in life, that marriage was the way to go. I just changed direction in my dreams and thoughts. I never graduated. I got married too soon, I know that. If the schools had stayed open this wouldn't have happened. I know it changed my life for the worse."

"I had wanted to go to college but lost interest."

"The closing threw me back. I stayed out for a year and helped with my Dad, who was injured. I didn't graduate. When the schools reopened things were different. I got married."

"It ruined my life, period. The choices I might have made I didn't have any more. I went to work on a farm. I always talk to my kids about the closing. I tell them how important it is to take advantage of every opportunity available. I can't help my kids and it bothers me a lot."

In School



RELATIONSHIPSOut of School

"I attended the Center at First Baptist. My sister was sent to New York. My parents were not making a lot of money, so they couldn't afford to send all the children away. There were twelve kids in the family. When the schools closed we played school in our playhouse. But the closing broke a special bond I had with my sister. When she left I lost my best friend. I wondered how could this have happened."

"Mother was a teacher in the county and when school closed we moved to Maryland. Dad stayed in the county. It broke the continuity of friendships and the whole concept of having a home town. I haven't stayed in one place for more than three years, and I believe that this started the pattern. Even though I stayed in school, there was a disruption in something much more permanent."

"During the time right after the closing there was chaos, no sense of structure. Some families couldn't move. I was sneaked into the adjoining county (Cumberland) to live with my grandparents. In about a year I would sneak home overnight or on the weekends. We were a very close family. Hadn't anticipated anything like this. At the time I was a sophomore-looking forward to walking down the aisle of that new school at graduation. Wanted to go to Kittrell, but Mom said no, I wasn't mature enough. So I was sent to grandparents. I didn't make the adjustment. Too far in the country, no electricity, no indoor bathroom. No help with lessons."

"I was able to stay in school, but I had to leave my friends and family. I had to leave behind my plans, the football team, graduating from Moton. People forget that we had connections. We were kids, but we had connections."

In School

"First of all, I had to make the choice of whether to go with the American Friends or not. I went to Ohio. My grandparents didn't want me to leave, but my aunts and uncles were of the mind that I should complete my education. After a year out of school and working the farm I was ready to go back to school. It was very difficult for me. The first family I lived with was Black but they were vegetarians. There were other differences that made things difficult. I called home many times asking to come back, but I was told that I needed to be strong and to tough it out. After two years in Ohio there was no sponsor and I was sent to Cambridge [MA]. I lived with a White family there. It was difficult building trust, value systems not the same, but I did form a relationship with that family. After graduation I went home to work before going to college. I wanted to be with family, my family. I fell in love and got married. In a hurry to rebuild family after being away so long. It was a mistake."

THE CENTERSOut of School

"[I] stayed at home two years. Went to First Baptist for class. It wasn't school-like. We did some class work, but more entertainment. Games, some board work like arithmetic, not a lot of reading. [I] think all were volunteers-not teachers."

"The Center was good, but we had to sit in chairs that were uncomfortable. No desks. There wasn't enough learning. We got out early. We didn't have proper schooling. We didn't have a teacher, but Mrs. Reid did the best she could. She fussed because we didn't have supplies. It was a happy time because we had something better than nothing."

"I picked up a few things when attending the Centers. Area people taught. About twenty-five to thirty kids met at a school. Didn't notice much difference between school and the Center. I attended a Center in Meherrin. It was like a day care center some times."

"I attended one of the Centers in Prospect and it was not like school, that's for sure. We were taught a little, but it was mostly play. There was one adult for about twenty-five to thirty kids in the same age group. It was mostly supervised play."

In School

OPINIONS ABOUT TODAY'S FARMVILLEOut of School

"Things are not much different now. Job opportunities are limited. The Whites get the best opportunities. I rely on my family to learn new skills. Take problems to my spouse, or someone I know and trust."

"I was hurt to think White people were so mean. Still that way now, to some extent. Uneducated Blacks here bend over for Whites. It is just ignorant. They will do anything to stay in good with Whites. The school closing has had an effect on this I think."

"I don't like to think about it. Had to leave home to go to school. I think a lot of people here wish things were still like that. You know, us in our place, afraid to think on our own."

"I feel like this. Even though they talk to you they still have hate in them. Just in talking to one lady about a year ago I asked her, just kidding around with her, I said what would you say to the fact if one of her sons married a Black woman. She said and I quote, 'Not while I'm alive.' This is what I mean. Just because they smile with you doesn't mean they're not smiling at you also. I clean house for one lady now that doesn't let one hour go by without saying something about the Black race even the famous ones like basketball players, actors, football players, if they're Black she has something bad to say about them."

"Farmville is still in the dark ages, it is no place to raise a family".

"I saw to what extent people's hatred can go. I can't live in Farmville, too limited. People still live in the past. Don't want to progress."

In School

"I was home in July ('91) for the reunion. On the surface people are friendly, but there is a separation between the people that finished their education and those that didn't. The ones that did have the cars and homes, and sort of look down on the others. There isn't the sense of closeness-family-that used to exist when I was growing up."

"Some people in the county have not moved past this event. Some have a 'they're coming to take over our school' mentality. I think more Whites than Blacks have moved ahead to integration."

"I feel that the renaming of most of the schools that were named for Black Americans took away some of the Black identity as well as some of the role models who were instrumental in shaping the history of America."

PRINCE EDWARD ACADEMYOut of School

"They still have the private school here so there are still those around who would shut the schools down again if they could."

"I don't hate anyone, but this is a part of me, and it is a nightmare. I also believe that the educational system here will always be tainted as long as the Academy is around."

"The Academy is still separate and it puts a diversion in the races. More so because it keeps us separate. They think by being separate they have something better."

"The Whites still support the Academy. They are only in the public school because they can't afford to send their kids to the Academy."

"When you went through what we did you are on guard. You can't trust them. Give them the chance and they would shut the school down again. The Academy is there just to keep Whites away from us. They built it to avoid education with us and today it is the same. My girls played basketball against them and you could just see it. One of the Academy girls told my daughter, 'Don't touch me!'"

"For me, I think they ought to close that Academy. It just helps to keep people apart. I wonder if the kids in public school really think they are getting a poorer education because the Academy is here--and if the Academy kids think they are better. I bet they do."

In School

"I can't believe the Academy is still functioning. Talk about your die-hard racists."

**ATTITUDES****Out of School**

"I didn't go anywhere and I want to say I was a miserable soul. I went to the Center for a while, but that wasn't for me. I just felt like something was wrong with me, with us, that they would close our schools down rather than go with us. I mean, how can you trust people that would do that to children?"

"I left the county to go to school but came back when the Free School opened. This is home. I realized that education was a must, and I just finished a BA degree (5/91). I could see that I needed to do that, but I was a little worried about my skills. I know that some of that lack of confidence was due to the closing, even though I got away for most of it. So many didn't. I see them all the time. I don't think they encourage their kids much."

"I stayed to help on the farm. It was difficult for my parents to send their children away. They resented it. But our family was split up. I went to a Center in Green Bay [VA]. Adults from the community and college students from up north came to teach there. I remember a White male student asked us if we were angry about the school closing and I couldn't answer then or now. I was never angry. People in power thought that integration was wrong. Waste of time to be angry."

**In School**

"When they closed the schools they did me the biggest damn favor anyone ever did."

"Personally it might have been a good thing because it made me realize just how suppressed we were. My father was a self-employed business person and we didn't have to rely on a White employer. However, this was not something we could control and made us realize that we were still vulnerable."

HISTORICAL INSIGHTSOut of School

"On August 18, 1959, I was told that the schools were closed, officially. Grandma said that there would be no school, and that same day I caught the bus to Washington, D.C. According to Allen Scott, a neighbor, the White people in Farmville had a run on the bank. What they were doing was getting tax dollars back, getting ready for the voucher system."

"Longwood didn't have the kind of influence it should have. Hampden-Sydney was more progressive. They did some things for Blacks in their area. They made sure that discarded sports equipment got to Black kids. They sent food. We would use their athletic areas when students were gone."

"The Klan was here. They were at the A & P store. Maybe one of the workers there was a member. But anyway, there they were, in full dress, marching back and forth. I was astonished to see them. I will never forget, I was petrified. I remember their black shiny shoes. Just the appearance was intimidating. They didn't bother us, but those black shiny shoes..."

In School

"In the height of it if you would walk down Main Street you would think it was a model town for racial issues. People talking, expressions of concern. All was well if you knew your place."

"I played on the high school football team and we had the entire team returning for my senior year, except two players graduating. Football was everything to most of the boys at R.R. Moton High School. We looked out for each other, shared meal tickets, used peer-pressure to keep a player in school and his grades up. We were influenced by nearby Hampden-Sydney College. We would go there on Saturday afternoons and watch them play football. We liked going to Hampden-Sydney because we could go down on the field and stand under the goal post with the grounds keepers and cooks (all Black). The coach at Hampden-Sydney would give some of our players used special equipment, extra large helmets, shoes, etc. If we went to Farmville High School Friday night games, we had to go behind the school, stand on the sidewalk, and peek through the hedge. You had better not walk on the grass."

"I recall that right before the schools were closed a Black man in Pamplin had words with some Whites at a store, and they caught him by the train tracks and mangled his body. People were really afraid. Nothing in the paper, all word of mouth. Everyone tried to keep it from the kids, but we heard. There was a lot of fear."

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, could be cited as just one more example of the social turmoil that existed during the "Civil Rights Era". Yet, unlike the cities of Selma, Little Rock, or Birmingham, no fire hoses or vicious dogs were unleashed in Farmville; no burly man blocked the doors of the schools; no hate-filled mobs hurled obscenities and missiles at those gathered in the name of passive resistance. The turmoil in Farmville and the rest of Prince Edward County involved no outward displays of violence or televised images of terror and hate.

However, some would argue that a more cunning type of violence took place in Prince Edward. A violence made more treacherous because it was couched in terms of "individual rights", "freedom of choice", and "justice", and because its target was innocent children.

Under the 1956 "Massive Resistance" laws passed in Virginia, the governor was authorized to close any school ordered by the courts to desegregate. The first test of this

came when Governor J. Lindsay Almond contacted Warren County Superintendent of Schools Q. D. Gasque in September, 1958, with orders to close the doors of Warren County High School. This event gave a green light to the Foundation private school movement in Front Royal, Virginia (Warren County), and similar reactions followed in Norfolk, Charlottesville, and Prince Edward County (Gates, 1964; Dabney, 1971).

Norfolk, Virginia, was the first to open the doors of its Foundation school. A few days later the Front Royal Academy in Warren County was ready for students. Public schools were closed in the Fall of 1958 in Norfolk, Charlottesville, and Warren County. But all of these communities re-opened public schools in the Spring of 1959. It appears that staunch segregationists in these communities accepted that the integration of public schools was inevitable. The Foundation schools would, however, be there for the "best people" in Virginia who had always sent their children to private schools. Foundation private schools would be there to fight against the damage caused by "progressive education", "subversive ideas", and to promote "individual liberty" and the "purity" of the race.<sup>13</sup>

In Prince Edward County, however, the political power structure and Foundation leaders (generally one and the same)

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<sup>13</sup>Goodman, Mary Ellen "Why Private Schools". Position paper submitted to the American Friends Service Committee, 1960. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.



remained uncompromising and adamant on the question of integrated public schools. Unlike the rest of Virginia, Prince Edward held the distinction of being included in the original *Brown vs Board of Education* suit, and was therefore fighting at the Federal rather than heeding State level doctrine. When the decision to close public schools was made in Prince Edward, it was with the intent of never seeing White and Black children in school together. For five years White leaders were able to maintain their position. From the Fall of 1959 to the Fall of 1964 no school-aged child in Prince Edward County, Virginia had access to a public education system. White children in the county were educated in the privately financed Prince Edward Academy. African American children were essentially left without any options in the county.

### Findings

The intent of the study was to investigate the impact of the five year public school closing on the African American children who were school-aged during the years 1959 through 1964. A total of 115 former students responded to the mailed questionnaire. Of this number, 21 were students who were placed in out of state homes by the American Friends Service Committee, and 94 were students who remained in the county.

Six research questions were presented and the resulting data were analyzed.

1. The students who did not leave Prince Edward County during the shut-down of public schools showed lower levels of educational attainment when compared to students who participated in the

**American Friends program.  
(Difference significant at .05)**

On the question of educational attainment students who were placed by the American Friends Service Committee (In School group) reached higher levels of education. More of them attended college and completed a four year college degree program. More students in the Out of School group were likely to have only a high school diploma or to have never completed high school. This may mean that students found work after the schools closed, or could not make the adjustment once the schools reopened. After taking on the responsibility of bread-winner or financial contributor to the family some young people may have changed their ideas about the value of continuing their education in light of a tangible reward for hard work.

The issue of age also is an important factor. Former students may have felt that they were too old to return to the classroom, or would be embarrassed to be surrounded by younger classmates who were scholastically their equals.

The students who were placed by the American Friends were distanced, physically, from the general tone and events within the county. The opportunity for them to become psychologically demoralized about their futures, at least in terms of educational benefits, was less a possibility than for those students who remained in the county. Whereas in the county, students daily experienced the fact that the public

schools were closed, including the emotions and politics associated with that act.

**2. Occupational and income levels were lower for students who did not participate in the American Friends program when public schools closed when compared to students who did.**

**(Results for both occupation and income were significant at .05)**

Research question two assumed that members of the Out of School group would hold occupations and incomes of lower levels than did former students in the In School group.

Former students in the Out of School group show lower percentages in the higher status occupational groups. They also report work in two lower ranking occupational groups (Farm and Production, Craft & Repairers) that none of the In School group report. There is also a higher percentage of the Out of School students who work as Operator/Laborers than for the In School students.

The fact that additional earnings in the labor market are generally associated with additional amounts of formal schooling is widely documented (Hanoach, 1967; Beaton, 1975; Juster, 1975). Respondents from the Out of School group tend to work in occupations that provide less income. Their reported educational levels indicate that opportunities for promotion into higher ranking (and higher paying) positions are more limited.

The information gathered about occupations and incomes seems credible in light of the fact that Prince Edward County provides few opportunities for highly ranked occupations, such as executives, physicians, architects. The two local colleges and the public schools system tend to provide the majority of positions for the upwardly mobile. Such positions, however, also require a high level of education.

3. The decision to reside in Prince Edward County as an adult was higher for individuals who were deprived of formal public schooling for five years than for individuals who did not share the experience. (Significant at .05) However, there was no significant difference in attitudes toward the county.

Migration out of the county was the basis of research question three. It was expected that students who were placed by the American Friends Service Committee would chose to live, (for a variety of reasons) someplace other than Prince Edward County.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents from the Out of School group report that they have resided in Prince Edward County for the last twenty years. Over half of the In School group have lived outside of Virginia for this same period of time.

That members of the In School group chose to live away from Prince Edward County may not be a surprising finding when one looks at the past economic base and industrial history of the county. Prince Edward had traditionally been recognized

as a tobacco and lumber production area. Wages and required educational levels for workers in these two industries are at the lower end of the economic and educational scale. These factors may have been more appealing (or less threatening) to individuals with little formal education.

According to some records, Prince Edward lost opportunities to attract new industries because of the school closing (Smith, 1965), although some leaders attempted to dismiss any relationship between the two.<sup>14</sup> Students who completed their education under the auspices of the American Friends may have found themselves overqualified for a majority of jobs available in the county. Their exposure to other opportunities and possibilities in terms of jobs and careers may also have been a deciding factor in their choice of residence.

Four questions were included to assess attitudes toward the county (in terms of racial climate and the current educational system). Students who participated in the American Friends program were expected to hold less positive views of Prince Edward County which could influence their decision to reside elsewhere.

- A) Children can get a good education in the public schools of Prince Edward County today.  
(No significance at .05)

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid

The public school system in Prince Edward County received a vote of confidence from a majority of former students in both groups. A few, (about one fifth), of the Out of School respondents did not agree that the public schools in Prince Edward County were doing a good job. Their answers may reflect concerns about recent allegations of tracking (and other issues) in the public school system (p 23).

However, respondents from the In School group (American Friends participants), all agreed with the majority of Out of School students that children are being well served by the public school system now.

There might be some question as to the candor of these positive responses. Some respondents may be unwilling to express displeasure with the public school system because they may believe complaints provide ammunition to supporters of the private school. They might also perceive that any criticism of the public school system is a criticism of the children who comprise the majority of public school enrollment -- their children -- African American children.

- B) Most of the people now in Prince Edward County  
have forgotten about the school closings.  
(No significance at .05)

Over 75% of the former students in both groups report that they believe memories of the school closings still exist in Prince Edward County residents. Respondents may expect that memories of the school closings live because those most affected by the closings, the former students, live. The

event which so permeated their lives and insured for themselves and their home county a unique place in history is evidently not easily forgotten.

Furthermore, buildings that housed Mary E. Branch, R. R. Moton High School, Prince Edward Academy, and Farmville High School still stand, and while some have been renamed, in many cases they continue to function in their original capacities. These physical monuments to the closings may play a role in why most respondents believe the school closings are remembered.

- C) The political climate in Prince Edward County is now positive for Black Americans.  
(No significance .05 and trend in expected direction).

Five percent of the Out of School students did not answer this question, and nearly half of the In School students skipped it as well.

It is understandable for those people who live away from Prince Edward could not respond to this question. The number of Out of School respondents who did not answer this particular question may also represent individuals who do not live in the county.

The answers to the question about political climate in Prince Edward were nearly identical for both groups. Only 28% of the Out of School students and 25% of the In School group felt that the political climate in Prince Edward is now positive for African Americans.

- D) There is little racism in Prince Edward County today.  
(No significance .05 and trend in expected direction).

When respondents were asked about contemporary racism in Prince Edward County, nearly one third of the In School students declined to answer. This more than likely is an indication that those individuals did not reside in the county, and therefore felt that they were unqualified to discuss the issue. All but three members of the Out of School group did answer this question. This may indicate that they believed they could accurately address this particular issue.

Individuals who did answer this question, in both groups, clearly do not believe that racism is dead in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Interestingly, a higher percentage of the In School (93%) than Out of School respondents (77%) believe that racism is alive and well in the county.

This finding may be the result of "hearing" about the county as opposed to actually "experiencing" it. For individuals who must daily live in Prince Edward, that living is less frustrating (and less threatening) if one can see factors other than racism when community and/or interpersonal problems and challenges arise.

This is in contrast to individuals who have nothing to lose by retaining more antagonistic feelings about Prince Edward. Their families, friends, and livelihoods are not effected if they maintain that Prince Edward County is a



hotbed of racism. They do not shop at the stores, attend meetings, or utilize services in the county, and therefore have no personal investment in "getting along".

Former students who do not live in Prince Edward County may also be relying on their memories, and therefore could be basing their opinions on the environment that existed when they were actually residents in Prince Edward.

Some respondents indicated that students who left the county were often looked upon almost as traitors, or at least that some barriers seemed to exist between members of the two groups. These feelings of alienation may have played a larger role in the decision to live elsewhere than is immediately observable.

4. There is mixed evidence that students who were deprived of public education for five years held less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations than students who did not experience a five year disruption in their education.

(For the question that looked at more general perceptions there was no significant difference. For the question that addressed subject's personal attitude, there was a significant difference at .05)

Attitudes and beliefs about race relations were the focus of research question four. It was supposed that former students who remained in the county (Out of School) would have less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations than their In School counterparts.

The motive for the closing of public schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia, was, in fact, the desire to keep the

racism separate. Racism, under the guise of freedom of choice and state's rights, guided the actions of the political power machine in the county.

The expectation that students who remained in Prince Edward would hold less positive attitudes and beliefs about race relations was developed because: (1) the county continues to experience anxiety about African American children in the public school system; (2) the Prince Edward Academy still functions in the county as a reminder of the school closing; and (3) the division of races in the county is a still very much a reality.

There were two questions asked that were designed to investigate feelings about race relations:

- A) At the present time there are as many opportunities available to me as there are for anyone else.  
(Significant at .05)

Over three-fourths of the students placed by the American Friends, (In School group) agreed that opportunities for success were the same for them as anyone. In comparison, just slightly over one half of the Out of School respondents were optimistic about opportunities for success.

- B) In your opinion, have desegregated schools helped or hindered the education of Black Americans?  
(No significance .05 and trend in expected direction).

The second question included in the research question about race relations sought information about the effect of

desegregated schools. More In School students believe that desegregated schools have helped African Americans than do Out of School students. Twice as many Out of School students indicated that desegregated schools have hindered African Americans.

When members of the In School group were placed in Quaker homes, they generally found themselves living in White communities, with White "foster parents", and attending predominately or all White schools. During these kinds of experiences, they discovered that people of differing races could and did live and learn together. Desegregation was a reality for them.

The attitude toward desegregated schools as expressed by students who remained in Prince Edward is probably due to the fact that Whites in the county did not embrace integration once the public schools reopened. Although the county still remains about half White, the public school enrollment does not reflect this fact.

The fact that the Academy remains open may be interpreted by members of the Out of School students who reside in Prince Edward County that many people there still support separation of the races. Added to this are their concerns that administrators and teachers in the public school system often do not treat African American students fairly. Desegregation for them has, in a manner of speaking, caused more problems than it solved.

5. There are mixed results that participation rates in community activities lower for individuals who did not have public education for five years than for individuals who had continuous education.

(On question of membership, no significance .05; On question of attendance, significant .05; On question of voting, no significance .05).

Research question five presumed that Out of School students would show lower rates of involvement in community activities. It was expected that individuals who had been out of school during the closing would be less confident about their abilities to participate in decision-making or leadership roles.

While more Out of School than In School respondents report that they work with church only (32% vs 11%), about half of both groups are more likely to be involved in multiple community activities.

When asked about attending community meetings, some of the numbers were similar. Most of the respondents reported that they sometimes attend meetings, (45% In School, 49% Out of School). Members of the In School group, however, reported higher rates of regular attendance at community meetings (40% as opposed to 20% for Out of School).

Politics is a very potent ingredient in the flavor of a community. Respondents were asked if they were registered voters and if they voted in the last election. All of the In School respondents are registered and voted in the last election. Ninety-three percent of the Out of School

respondents report that they are registered, and 90% voted in the last election.

6. There are lower rates of post-high school endeavors for individuals who did not have public education for five years as compared to those who did.

(Significant .05).

Research question six was an inquiry into rates of post-high school endeavors for the two groups. The In School group was expected to have higher rates of educational activity past high school.

The justification for this stance was based on Green's (1964) assertion that the students who were left in the county would probably remain academically stunted, and the research from adult learner literature which indicates that more highly educated adults are the ones most likely to seek more education (Aslanian & Brickel, 1980).

When percentages were calculated for the former students who answered the first question, ("During the past year I have participated in some kind of class or structured learning experience"), it appeared that the assumption about the groups was accurate.

Eighty-five percent of In School group as compared to fifty-six percent of the Out of School group report participating in a class or structured learning experience within the past year. These percentages stayed exactly the same when the time frame was extended to include the past two years.

**Summary**

The findings indicate that the two groups of students differ significantly in several ways. Members of the In School group (students placed by the American Friends) have higher incomes, have completed higher levels of education, and hold better jobs than members of the Out of School (students who remained in the county) group.

There is also a significant difference between the groups on the issue of residence. Out of School students tended to remain in Prince Edward County while In School students did not. However attitudes about Prince Edward County do not appear to be a factor in why students chose to live elsewhere.

Members from both groups tended to share similar points of views about contemporary Prince Edward County. They agreed that the public school system there provides a good education, and that current residents of the county remember when the public schools were closed.

When asked about the political climate in Prince Edward County, former students in both groups agreed that the climate was not positive for Black citizens. They also agreed that racism continues to exist in Prince Edward County.

Two issues received mixed results. The first focused on race relations, and responses indicated that from a more general perspective the two groups hold similar viewpoints. However, when the respondents answered the one question that addressed personal feelings about racism, members of the In

School group were more positive. The difference on more personal perspective was significant at .05.

The second issue with mixed results was that of community involvement. Both groups report that they are members in various community organizations, however, when questioned about attendance, the In School group appears to be more active than the Out of School group. The difference between the two was significant at .05. Voting, however, seems to be very important to both groups. There was no significant difference in registration and/or reported voting behavior.

### Limitations

1. This study is limited to students affected by school closings during the period 1959 through 1964 in Prince Edward County, Virginia.

2. It is a survey of perceptions.

3. Respondents were asked to recall an event that took place over thirty years ago.

4. This study focuses on a unique event in American history, and therefore results cannot be generalized to other populations or localities.

Slightly related could be the not so uncommon events of school disruption caused by war. In countries like Ireland, Palestine, and Iraq, war is often the natural state of things. Although an extensive literature search was performed,

research which examined how the educational systems in these countries cope with war or the impact of educational disruption on the children from those countries was not located. When war is involved, children may be more affected by the impact of violence.

If early research presented by Burton (1991) is proved to be the herald of a nation-wide trend, then findings from the Prince Edward study may be related to the school disruption experienced by some inner city children today. Burton has discovered that where drug addiction is a familial issue, some children have taken on the role of care-giver for younger siblings, (and sometimes for debilitated parents), and therefore may not attend school for extended periods of time.

Further investigations into this phenomenon are required before any relationship between the Prince Edward experience and the experiences of these young nurturers can be determined.

5. The difficulty in locating a sizable sample was a limitation.

Almost all of the sample was found through direct contact with family and/or friends. This was a very time consuming and somewhat expensive task, as often a face-to-face visit was required with county residents who "might" know where a sample member could be found. Frequently, a trip into the country, a detailed explanation of who the researcher was, and why she wanted to get in touch with the sample member was required.



Although over two hundred individuals were located, a larger sample would have helped with attrition due to out of date addresses and lack of interest in participating.

6. Prior to beginning official research, the researcher (who had lived in the county for two years), had opportunities to talk informally with many people who were involved in the school closing. During these discussions another potential limitation was discovered. Former teachers and students often did not encourage study. Statements which inferred that the study would create "bad feelings" were not uncommon. Some former students said they didn't like to think about the closing because it made them recall what they lost, what White people did to them, and what deficiencies they had.

It is difficult to know just what impact this particular issue had on the number of questionnaires that were not returned.

7. Another limitation was identified after considering predictions made by Green (1964). If, in fact, many of the students who had stayed in the county remained at very low reading levels, then completing a written questionnaire might prove to be a somewhat intimidating endeavor.

In the best possible scenario, a larger sample would be drawn, and the questionnaires would be completed during a personal interview. This method of data collection would eliminate possible discomfort with a written instrument.

8. A final potential limitation is that it was not possible to obtain access to the academic records or test scores of the sample. Thus one might argue that the differences in academic ability account for the significant difference in educational attainment and occupational levels of the two groups. However, such an explanation is unlikely given the sampling procedure used in this study.

### Implications

Although the individuals who form the core of this study were unwilling participants in a singular phenomenon, their experiences may provide a unique opportunity to understand the importance of early educational access.

It is important for the reader to remember that the findings reveal that a majority of the Out of School students were able to attend school, somewhere, during the five year period of the school closings in Prince Edward County, Virginia. About two-thirds of the Out of School respondents report one year or more of formal schooling during the period of the school closing.

However, the results of the study also provide data that indicate that a one or two year interruption in their educational activities did make a difference. Implications from this study can be summarized as follows:

1. Results from the Prince Edward study are very much in line with the findings provided by others in the area of adult learning. As in the research of Johnstone and Rivera (1965), there is a positive relationship between income level and learning. That is, individuals with higher incomes tend to participate more in learning activities than do individuals with lower incomes.

2. A similar kind of relationship exists between occupational levels and adult learning activities. Aslanian and Brickell (1980) found that learning "in order to acquire, to advance in, or simply keep up with one's job" were motivating factors most often for professionals and managers, while sales/clerical workers, craftspersons, and service workers cite career issues second most often.

In the Prince Edward study, students who were included in the Out of School group were less likely to have entered or completed college, were often in lower ranking jobs, and generally had lower incomes. Students in the In School group generally had higher ranking occupations and reported learning activities at a higher percentage than did Out of School students.

3. However, in this study, unlike the findings of Aslanian and Brickell (1980), it would appear that socioeconomic factors rather than race are the stronger indicators of adult learning participation. More research on

the learning patterns of adult African Americans may provide further enlightenment into this issue.

4. Based on their reported circumstances and characteristics, the Out of School respondents who still reside in Prince Edward County would be excellent subjects for testing Cross' assumptions about "barriers" to adult learning.

Situationally, they earn lower incomes and therefore are less likely to hold educational dollars. Generally they work in occupations where the need for job related learning is less frequent.

Institutional barriers may include their attitudes about and towards the local co-educational four year institution. Although Longwood College was a state teacher's college during the school closings, all but one of its representatives remained silent throughout the crisis. The institution took no stance. While the contemporary Longwood College recently took action to ease entrance requirements for adults (1988-89), efforts to identify, assess, and/or respond to the educational needs of the Prince Edward school closing population have not been made.

Dispositional barriers include self-confidence levels in the structured educational setting. Although a majority of the Out of School students report that they would do well if they took classes, there remains the fact that most of them are not involved in formal learning activities. It would be interesting to discover why this condition exists.

5. A sense of community is built upon feelings of inclusion and trust. It would appear that many of the respondents do not believe that Farmville promotes a receptive and progressive environment. If former students do not believe that their efforts to improve their circumstances through learning will have any tangible pay-off, than they are less likely to become involved in such activities.

Dean and Dowling (1987) believe that adult educators could assist groups learn, grow, and control their own futures by utilizing the community development model. They see the community development process as one means for solving social problems, and feel that a model focused on the "learning outcomes from increased knowledge of society and participatory aspects" would provide an action guide for adult educators.

Based on the findings of the Prince Edward study, the community development model suggested by Dean and Dowling might be helpful in improving community relationships and thereby providing a means to identify learning needs of the school closing students who live in the county.

### Recommendations

Possible avenues for future investigation with this population might include:

1. What they learn: Obtaining more detailed information about the current learning activities of the Prince Edward students is one possible avenue of inquiry. Research from the

adult learning area has primarily focused on the White middle class (Brookfield, 1984), and while the Prince Edward students represent a unique population, it would be interesting to compare their experiences with African Americans from other locales.

2. How they learn: A verification study on self-directed learning might prove enlightening. Some research about self-directed learning activities among "hard to reach" groups is available for base-line data (Kratz, 1978; Leean & Sisco, 1981). Shackelford's (1983) study which deals just with African American subjects could also prove useful. He found that his subjects tended to participate in self-directed learning activities which focused on home and family life, (i.e. "do-it-yourself" home repairs books; church sponsored seminars/workshops such as marriage encounter) rather than activities geared to improving professional competencies. One criticism of Shackelford's research was that his population was drawn from lists of church-going African Americans. The findings of this study indicate that a majority of the Prince Edward respondents participate in church. Therefore, Shackelford's work might prove especially useful.

3. Children: The scope of the present study could not include an in depth investigation into the effect of the parent's educational experience on their children. It would be interesting to know more about parental attitudes towards

education in general, and the impact that these attitudes might have had on their children.

4. The impact of race: This study focused only on African Americans in Prince Edward County, Virginia, because the educational system that served them was eliminated in 1959. The closing of their schools was based on racist motives, and many of this study's respondents appear to believe that Prince Edward County has not moved far in terms of race relations in the last 33 years.

The decision of the Supreme Court in 1954 brought forth the realization of Myrdal's (1944) assertion that "The whole system of discrimination in education in the South is not only tremendously harmful to the Negroes, but it is flagrantly illegal, and can easily be so proven in the courts."

However, Myrdal also believed that African Americans would continue to start out at a disadvantage because discrimination against them was rooted in their past roles as slaves. Their economic exploitation was the purpose for which they were brought to America. "When slavery disappeared," Myrdal wrote, "caste remained."

According to Hacker (1992), the caste system in America continues to keep African Americans at a disadvantage. In his book, Two Nations, he provides a wealth of data to support his argument that African Americans continued to be viewed by White Americans as "an inferior species...unsuited for equality".

This perception, Hacker says, is in part due to the rationalizations promoted to make slavery palatable. Today, descendants of African slaves continue to suffer from what Myrdal described as an assigned "badge of inferiority", and what Hacker reports nearly fifty years later as an imposed stigma.

African Americans have traditionally perceived education as the vehicle that would transport them into higher economic and social stations. The education of African Americans however, as Dollard (1937) pointed out, threatened the very foundations of the caste system.

The caste system in Prince Edward County was alleged to have been particularly strong. According to C. G. Gordon Moss, Dean of Longwood College in 1963, Whites in Prince Edward County maintained an extreme paternalistic attitude toward the African American residents. "This attitude," Moss stated, "is an attitude of love for the Negro, if the Negro will accept everything from the white rulers-if he will, to use common southern language, "stay in his place." But I would say that this paternalistic attitude toward the Negro is probably stronger in this particular locality than generally throughout Virginia." Moss, who was born fifty miles away from Farmville in Lynchburg, Virginia, based his observations on his nearly forty year association with Prince Edward County.



If we are, in fact, talking about extremes--in how important the caste system was for Whites Prince Edward County; in how important education was perceived to be by African Americans in Prince Edward County--then the willingness to close public schools becomes less of a mystery, and on-going suspicions more understandable.

A study which would investigate the impact of race on all residents of Prince Edward County could provide knowledge about how to improve the total environment for all county citizens, thereby diminishing existing barriers that block healthy co-existence. Local educational institutions and adult educators could contribute valuable resources and expertise in the planning and execution of such "community cohesion" projects.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Correspondence**

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
AND DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1046

November 26, 1990

Margaret E. Smith  
P.O. Box 217  
Farmville, VA 23901

RE: THE EFFECT OF EARLY EDUCATIONAL DISRUPTION ON THE BELIEF SYSTEMS AND  
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF ADULTS: WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR ADULT AND  
CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS, IRB# 90-489

Dear Ms. Smith:

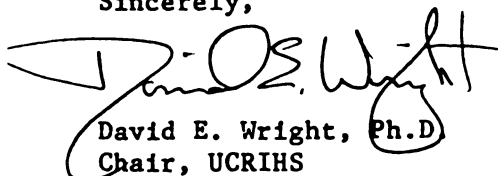
The above project is exempt from full UCRIHS review. I have reviewed the proposed research protocol and find that the rights and welfare of human subjects appear to be protected. You have approval to conduct the research.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to November 16, 1991.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



David E. Wright, Ph.D.  
Chair, UCRIHS

DEW/ deo

cc: Dr. Cas Heilman

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Letter of Support and Cover Letter**

May 1, 1991

Dear Friend,

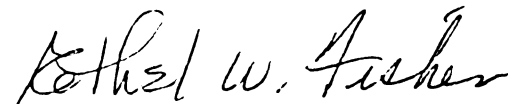
This letter is sent in support of the research in progress by Mrs. Margaret Hale-Smith. We, the undersigned, wish to encourage you to participate in this study by completing and returning the questionnaire you will find enclosed in this packet.

Although it has been over thirty years since the public schools were closed in Prince Edward County, that event is still something that we can all recall with great feelings. This study is an opportunity to express what the school closing has meant in your life.

Please take the few moments required to answer the questionnaire. Contact Mrs. Hale-Smith if you have any questions or difficulties with anything you find on it. We thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

  
Mrs. Connie Rawlins  
PEC Teacher/Retired

  
Mrs. Ethel Wilson Fisher  
PEC Teacher/Retired

May 1, 1991

Dear Former Prince Edward County student,

In 1959 you were a participant in an event that made history. You were one of the students denied a public education in your home county, Prince Edward County, Virginia. I am asking your support as I conduct a follow-up study that will look at the impact of the five year public school closing on the Black American students.

I am conducting this research in connection with my graduate studies at Michigan State University. As a participant in the study, you are assured complete confidentiality. This means that your answers will be treated with strict confidence, and that your identity will remain unknown in any report of the research findings.

Included with this letter is a questionnaire. It will take about 15 minutes to answer. When completed, please return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelop. Your participation in the study is voluntary, therefore you do not have to complete the questionnaire, or you may choose not to answer certain questions in the questionnaire. Please indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire.

There is a separate page at the back of the questionnaire where you share your name, address, and phone number if you are willing to offer further information in a telephone or face-to-face interview. This interview would allow us to talk about the issue of the public school closing in a more personal manner not allowed by the questionnaire. Your identity will be protected if any of the conversation is used in the research study.

Please feel free to contact me by phone at (804) 395-2226 or at P. O. Box 217, Farmville, VA 23901 if you have questions or concerns about the questionnaire or the study. Thank you for your willingness to share your opinions and feelings about how the school closing affected your life.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Margaret Hale-Smith

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Questionnaire**

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**QUESTIONNAIRE - Prince Edward County School Closing  
1959 - 1963**

1. Were you enrolled in a Prince Edward County school before the schools were closed in 1959? (Please circle the letter of the correct response).
  - a. Yes
  - b. No, I was too young.
2. If yes to #1 above, what grade were you in when the schools closed? (Please circle the letter of the correct response).
  - a. Kindergarten
  - b. 1st grade
  - c. 2nd grade
  - d. 3rd grade
  - e. 4th grade
  - f. 5th grade
  - g. 6th - 7th - 8th grade
  - h. 9th or 10th grade
  - i. 11th or 12th grade
3. What did you do after the public school closed? (Please circle the letter of the appropriate response).
  - a. Attended public school in another county
  - b. Attended public school in another state
  - c. Attended private school in Virginia
  - d. Attended private school in another state
  - e. attended one of the centers in Prince Edward County
  - f. Attended the summer programs in Farmville
  - g. I was not in school during the school closings
  - h. Other (Please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you attend the Free School in 1963? (Please circle letter of correct response).
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Did you attend the Prince Edward County Public Schools after they reopened in 1964? (Please circle letter of correct response).
  - a. Yes



b. No

6. What was the highest grade you completed in school?  
(Please circle letter of appropriate response).

- a. 8th grade or less
- b. 9th grade
- c. 10th grade
- d. 11th grade
- e. 12th grade
- f. Some college or other schooling after high school
- g. College graduate

7. As you look back on the school closing, how do you think it affected your life? (Answer more than one if you wish).

- a. No effect
- b. It probably reduced my opportunity for a better life.
- c. It probably enhanced my determination to succeed.
- d. It made me bitter towards society in general.
- e. It made me distrust school board officials.
- f. It increased my determination to fight segregation.
- g. I probably became more discouraged about changing discrimination and segregation.
- h. Other (please indicate; use other side of this sheet if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where have you lived most of the time since 1970?

- a. Prince Edward County
- b. Other Virginia County
- c. Large city in Virginia
- d. Small town out of Virginia
- e. rural area out of Virginia
- f. Large city out of Virginia

PLEASE READ EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AND INDICATE IF YOU 4-STRONGLY AGREE 3-AGREE 2-DISAGREE 1-STRONGLY DISAGREE BY DRAWING A CIRCLE AROUND THE MATCHING NUMBER.

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Obtaining an education is the way to progress in this country.            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. Educated people don't work as hard as people without an education.       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11. Children can get a good education in the public schools of Prince Edward | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

County today.

12. The school closing had no impact on my current level of educational completion. 4 3 2 1

PLEASE READ EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AND INDICATE IF YOU 4-STRONGLY AGREE 3-AGREE 2-DISAGREE 1-STRONGLY AGREE BY DRAWING A CIRCLE AROUND THE MATCHING NUMBER.

13. I am more involved in my child(ren)'s education than my parent's were in mine. 4 3 2 1
14. Most of the people now in Prince Edward County have forgotten about the school closings. 4 3 2 1
15. I help my children often with their homework. 4 3 2 1
16. At the present time there are as many opportunities for success available to me as there are for anyone else. 4 3 2 1
17. The political climate in Prince Edward County is now positive for Black Americans. 4 3 2 1
18. Most people should have education beyond the high school level. 4 3 2 1
19. During the **past year** I have participated in some kind of class (or structured) learning experience. 4 3 2 1
20. During the **past two years** I have participated in some kind of class (or structured learning experience). 4 3 2 1
21. My reading skills prevent me from participating in some jobs or activities. 4 3 2 1
22. There is little racism in Prince Edward County today. 4 3 2 1
23. What is your current age? (Please circle the appropriate letter).
- a. 30-35
  - b. 36-40
  - c. 41-45
  - d. 46-50

24. What is your marital status? (Please circle the appropriate letter).
- a. Married
  - b. Single
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Widowed
25. If you have children, how many? (Please circle the appropriate letter).
- a. None
  - b. 1 - 2
  - c. 3 - 4
  - d. 5 or more
26. Are you a registered voter? (Please circle the appropriate letter).
- a. Yes
  - b. No
27. If Yes in #26 above, did you vote in the last election? (Please circle the appropriate letter).
- a. Yes
  - b. No
28. Please circle the letter for all of the following that apply to you.
- a. I have served as an elected or appointed public official.
  - b. I have run for public office.
  - c. I have served as a church officer or member of a church organization.
  - d. I have participated in civic organizations (i.e. Masons, Eastern Star, Elks, Voter's League).
  - e. I have held some office or been an active participant in some volunteer and/or community organization.
29. How often do you attend community meetings, such as PTA, school board, city or town meetings? (Please circle the letter of the most appropriate response).
- a. Regularly
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Never
30. Please circle the letter of the answer that best reflects

your feelings.

- a. If I went to school now I would do very well.
  - b. If I went to school now I would do well, but I would have to work hard.
  - c. Doing school work now would be too difficult because of my age.
  - d. I am past the point in my life where going to school would be helpful.
31. If you have children, what level of education do you expect them to achieve? (Please circle the letter of the most appropriate response).
- a. I have no children
  - b. Some high school
  - c. High school graduate
  - d. Some college
  - e. College graduate
  - f. Graduate or professional school
32. What is your income level? (Please circle the letter of the most appropriate response).
- a. Under \$20,000
  - b. \$21,000 - \$30,000
  - c. \$31,000 - \$40,000
  - d. \$41,000 - \$50,000
  - e. Over \$50,000
33. Are you male or female? (Please circle the letter of the correct response).
- a. Female
  - b. Male
34. If you were able to attend school while the public schools were closed, how many years did you do so? (Please circle the letter of most accurate response).
- a. I was in school 1 year or less
  - b. I was in school 2 years
  - c. I was in school 3 years
  - d. I was in school all 4 years
  - e. I did not attend school
35. If you did not go to a regular school during the four years, did you have any informal schooling during this period? (Please circle letter of most accurate response).
- a. Yes, my family taught me some school subjects

like reading and arithmetic.

- b. Yes, some other people, like neighbors, other relatives, or church members taught me for short periods during the four years.
- c. I received no school instruction.

36. What type of work have you done most of the time since you finished school?

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37. Have you taken any further education since you finished your regular schooling? (Please circle letter of correct response).

- a. Yes
- b. No

38. If you answered Yes to #37 above, what was the nature of the education? (Please use back of this page if more space needed).

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39. In general, how did you feel when the schools closed in 1959? (Please use back of this page if more space needed).

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40. In your opinion, who was to blame for the school closing? (Please use back of this page if more space needed).

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41. In your opinion, have desegregated schools helped or

hindered the education of Black Americans? (Please circle letter of most accurate response).

- a. Helped
- b. Hindered
- c. Not sure

42. Please explain your answer to #41 above. (Please use the back of this page if more space needed).

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43. If you wish, please tell me any observations or reactions you have to the Prince Edward County school closing that have not been addressed by any of the above questions.

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## **APPENDIX D**

### **Information Sheet/Agreement to Participate in Interview**

**INFORMATION SHEET-Prince Edward School Closing Study**

**Instructions:** Please complete this sheet **ONLY** if you wish to talk directly with the researcher. Your identity shall remain secret if any information you share is used in the research study.

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**Maiden Name (if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Zip code** \_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Area Code (    )** \_\_\_\_\_

**BEST TIMES TO CALL** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher and understand that quotations from our discussions may be included in the research study. I am aware that my identity will be protected if such quotations are utilized.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**



## **APPENDIX E**

### **Interviews**

bothers me a lot." (Out of School).

Another major theme that appear during the course of interviews was the impact that the school closing had on relationships.

"I attended the center at First Baptist. My sister was sent to New York. My parents were not making a lot of money, so they couldn't afford to send all the children away. There were twelve kids in the family. When the schools closed we played school in our playhouse. But the closing broke a special bond I had with my sister. When she left I lost my best friend. I wondered how could this have happened." (Out of School).

"During the time right after the closing there was chaos, no sense of structure. Some families couldn't move. I was sneaked into the adjoining county (Cumberland) to live with my grandparents. In about a year I would sneak home overnight or on the weekends. We were a very close family. Hadn't anticipated anything like this. At the time I was a sophomore - looking forward to walking down the aisle of that new school at graduation. Wanted to go Kittrell, but Mom said no, I wasn't mature enough. So I was sent to grandparents. I didn't make the adjustment. Too far in the country, no electricity, no indoor bathroom. No help with lessons." (Out of School).

"Mother was a teacher in the county and when school closed we moved to Maryland. Dad stayed in the county. It broke the continuity of friendships and the whole concept of having a home town. I haven't stayed in one place for more than three years and I believe that this started the pattern. Even though I stayed in school, there was a disruption in something much more permanent." (Out of School).

"I was able to stay in school, but I had to leave my friends and family. I had to leave behind my plans, the football team, graduating from Moton. People forget that we had connections. We were kids, but we had connections." (In School-American Friends).

"I feel that the closing of the schools stole my childhood of any hope of having anything close to a normal one. It denied me of the relationships that kids all over America enjoyed with other kids, teachers, principals. Experiences that are normal were only

dreams to me. They took something from me that could never be replaced by anything but disgust and at times hate." (Out of School).

"First of all I had to make the choice of whether to go with the American Friends or not. I went to Ohio. My grandparents didn't want me to leave, but my aunts and uncles were of the mind that I should complete my education. After a year out of school and working the farm I was ready to go back to school. It was very difficult for me. The first family I lived with was Black but they were vegetarians. There were other differences that made things difficult. I called home many times asking to come back, but I was told that I needed to be strong and to tough it out. After two years in Ohio there was no sponsor and I was sent to Cambridge [MA]. I lived with a white family there. It was difficult building trust, value systems not the same, but I did form a relationship with that family. After graduation I went home to work before going to college. I wanted to be with family, my family. I fell in love and got married. In a hurry to rebuild family after being away so long. It was a mistake". (In School-American Friends).

Many of the former students who agreed to be interviewed talked about their experiences in the Centers provided when public schools closed.

"[I] stayed at home two years. Went to First Baptist for class. It wasn't school-like. We did some class work, but more entertainment. Games, some board work like arithmetic, not a lot of reading. [I] think all were volunteers - not teachers." (Out of School).

"The Center was good, but we had to sit in chairs that were uncomfortable. No desks. There wasn't enough learning. We got out early. We didn't have proper schooling. We didn't have a teacher, but Mrs. Reid did the best she could. She fussed because we didn't have supplies. It was a happy time because we had something better than nothing." (Out of School).

"I picked up a few things when attending the Centers. Area people taught. About twenty-five to thirty kids met at a school. Didn't notice much difference between school and the Center. I attended a Center in Meherrin. It was like a day care center some times." (Out of School).

"I attended one of the Centers in Prospect and it was not like school, that's for sure. We were taught a little, but it was mostly play. There was one adult for about twenty-five to thirty kids in the same age group. It was mostly supervised play." (Out of School).

During the course of the interviews, many former Prince Edward students discussed their attitudes about Farmville now. Often, they saw Farmville in a negative light.

"I was home in July ('91) for the reunion. On the surface people are friendly, but there is a separation between the people that finished their education and those that didn't. The ones that did have the cars and homes, and sort of look down on the others. There isn't the sense of closeness - family - that used to exist when I was growing up." (In School-American Friends).

"Farmville is still in the dark ages, it is no place to raise a family." (Out of School).

"I saw to what extent people's hatred can go. I can't live in Farmville, too limited. People still live in the past. Don't want to progress." (Out of School).

"Things are not much different now. Job opportunities are limited. The whites get the best opportunities. I rely on my family to learn new skills. Take problems to my spouse, or someone I know and trust." (Out of School).

"I was hurt to think white people were so mean. Still that way now, to some extent. Uneducated Blacks here bend over for whites. It is just ignorant. They will do anything to stay in good with whites. The school closing has had an effect on this I think." (Out of School).

"I don't like to think about it. Had to leave home to go to school. I think a lot of people here wish things were still like that. You know, us in our place, afraid to think on our own." (Out of School).

"I feel like this. Even though they talk to you they still have hate in them. Just in talking to one lady about a year ago I asked her, just kidding around with her, I said what would you say to the fact if one of her sons married a Black woman. She said and I quote, "Not while I'm alive." This is what I mean. Just because they smile with you doesn't mean they're not smiling at you also. I clean house for one lady now that doesn't let one hour go by without saying something about the

Black race even the famous ones like basketball players, actors, football players, if they're Black she has something bad to say about them." (Out of School).

The public school system in Farmville also raised questions.

"Though I do not reside in Prince Edward County now, I regret that the names of our schools were changed. Mary E. Branch and Robert R. Moton were outstanding Black Americans and I feel that the schools named for them should have remained that way even after desegregation. They were Americans worthy of recognition. The white student who attends those schools should be allowed to know and recognize the contributions these Black Americans have made, and celebrate, with Blacks, what these Americans have done and who they are." (In School-American Friends).

"I feel that the renaming of most of the schools that were named for Black Americans took away some of the Black identity as well as some of the role models who were instrumental in shaping the history of America." (In School-American Friends).

"The closing of the schools show the power of white over us. I don't think Farmville has yet recovered. I heard a couple of years ago that there are still problems in the school. The Blacks aren't treated fairly." (In School-American Friends).

Other former students didn't see the White populace of

Farmville as villainous as some of their peers appear to,

"Some people in the county have not moved past this event. Some have a "they're coming to take over our school" mentality. I think more whites than Blacks have moved ahead to integration." (In School-American Friends).

and at least two former students were hopeful.

"With more people moving in the die hard attitudes will disappear. Every year more new faces, and also those who controlled things are dying out." (Out of School).

"I guess we have to wait for more time for the things to change here. New people coming into the county should help." (Out of School).

The presence of the Prince Edward Academy also drew the

attention of several interviewees.

"They still have the private school here so there are still those around who would shut the schools down again if they could." (Out of School).

"I don't hate anyone, but this is a part of me, and it is a nightmare. I also believe that the educational system here will always be tainted as long as the Academy is around." (Out of School).

"The Academy is still separate and it puts a diversion in the races. More so because it keeps us separate. They think by being separate they have something better." (Out of School).

"The whites still support the Academy. They are only in the public school because they can't afford to send their kids to the Academy." (Out of School).

"When you went through what we did you are on guard. You can't trust them. Give them the chance and they would shut the school down again. The Academy is there just to keep whites away from us. They built it to avoid education with us and today it is the same. My girls played basketball against them and you could just see it. One of the Academy girls told my daughter, "Don't touch me!" (Out of School).

"For me, I think they ought to close that Academy. It just helps to keep people apart. I wonder if the kids in public school really think they are getting a poorer education because the Academy is here - and if the Academy kids think they are better. I bet they do." (Out of School).

"I can't believe the Academy is still functioning. Talk about your die-hard racists." (In School-American Friends).

Grouped under the heading of Attitudes are those issues which include general expressions of feelings (and emotions) that former students discussed.

"I didn't go anywhere and I want to say I was a miserable soul. I went to the Center for a while, but that wasn't for me. I just felt like something was wrong with me, with us, that they would close our schools down rather than go with us. I mean, how can you trust people that

would do that to children?" (Out of School).

"I left the county to go to school but came back when the Free School opened. This is home. I realized that education was a must, and I just finished a BA degree (5/91). I could see that I needed to do that, but I was a little worried about my skills. I know that some of that lack of confidence was due to the closing, even though I got away for most of it. So many didn't. I see them all the time. I don't think they encourage their kids much." (Out of School).

"It was tragic. It still bothers me. I was so blessed to be able to go off but many didn't." (In School-American Friends).

"When school closed that was it. I didn't do anything-stayed home, tried to help, but mainly tried to be the best I could be. When I went back I was so angry that I decided that nothing would stop me. I got to college, and I teach. It troubles me that so many don't know or remember the Prince Edward story." (Out of School).

"I stayed to help on the farm. It was difficult for my parents to send their children away. They resented it. But our family was split up. I went to a Center in Green Bay. Adults from the community and college students from up North came to teach there. I remember a white male student asked us if we were angry about the school closing and I couldn't answer then or now. I was never angry. People in power thought that integration was wrong. Waste of time to be angry." (Out of School).

"It was a while before I realized that schools wouldn't reopen. I attended the summer programs, and my family did what they could to teach me. I think this is what made the difference for me. The value of education was the issue. And even though the schools were closed they were making an effort to do something for us. That really made an impression on me." (Out of School).

"After the shock wore off I was left bitter, resentful. My parents didn't agree to my leaving the area to attend other schools. I found out later why this attitude was taken by my parents, especially my father who at this time had a terminal illness, which we knew nothing of until [the] previous two weeks before his death, approximately one and one half years later. The impact of the school closing was so great that in order for me to cope with the situation I had to reverse thoughts and dreams about education in other directions because life did not

look so bright ahead." (Out of School).

"Many people feel because the school was closed so many years ago that it's in the past and should stay in the past. But that is further from the truth. As long as people like me that experienced it live, it will never be forgotten in their hearts and minds. Many children in school today are the children of parents who were denied their education. Therefore bitterness and anger have been imbedded in them intentionally or unintentionally by the parent. The parents are unable to help them with their homework because they never had the opportunity to learn it themselves. I myself never discuss the closing of the schools to my child for at least until they were about twelve years old because I didn't want to transfer the bitterness, anger and hurt and I always was careful of what I said - no name calling - and how I said it around them concerning the closing of the schools. I resent even today the fact I never could help my children with algebra and geometry, because I never had a school year of it taught to me." (Out of School).

Three interviewees though, had different opinions about the school closing.

"When they closed the schools they did me the biggest damn favor anyone ever did." (In School-American Friends).

"For a few of Prince Edward students the closing was a blessing in disguise. My sister was one of the students that went out West, lived with Quakers, finished high school, went on to college, and became an outstanding citizen. If the schools had not closed her chances of going to college were very remote." (Out of School).

"Personally it might have been a good thing because it made me realize just how suppressed we were. My father was a self-employed business person and we didn't have to rely on a white employer. However, this was not something we could control and made us realize that we were still vulnerable." (In School-American Friends).

Some of the former students provided information about events and activities that provide historical insight into the environment of their childhoods.



"On August 18, 1959, I was told that the schools were closed, officially. Grandma said that there would be no school, and that same day I caught the bus to Washington, D.C. According to Allen Scott, a neighbor, the white people in Farmville had a run on the bank. What they were doing was getting tax dollars back, getting ready for the voucher system." (Out of School).

"My parents traveled to five counties to ask about putting us kids in school. My parents got the idea that other counties (at least principals) had been told not to help us (Prince Edward County). It seemed that the idea was if we make it difficult for them to go any place else than they'll be forced to go back. My father brought up the fact that the school board kept taxing at the same level even after the schools closed. No accounting was given for why taxes weren't decreased. My father was very vocal about the school closing, he even wrote to the State Board of Education. No response. I remember that the bank tried to put a lot of pressure on him, but this drew my family closer. He worked three jobs and Mom took on domestic work." (In School-American Friends).

"In the height of it if you would walk down Main Street you would think it was a model town for racial issues. People talking, expressions of concern. All was well if you knew your place." (In School-American Friends).

The two local colleges in the county were also mentioned.

"Longwood didn't have the kind of influence it should have. Hampden-Sydney was more progressive. They did some things for Blacks in their area. They made sure that discarded sports equipment got to Black kids. They sent food. We would use their athletic areas when students were gone." (In School-American Friends).

"I played on the high school football team and we had the entire team returning for my senior year, except two players graduating. Football was everything to most of the boys at R. R. Moton High School. We looked out for each other, shared meal tickets, used peer-pressure to keep a player in school and his grades up. We were influenced by nearby Hampden-Sydney College. We would go there on Saturday afternoons and watch them play football. We liked going to Hampden-Sydney because we could go down on the field and stand under the goal post with the grounds keepers and cooks (all Black). The coach at Hampden-Sydney would give some of our players used special equipment, extra large helmets, shoes, etc.

If we went to Farmville High School Friday night games, we had to go behind the school, stand on the sidewalk, and peek through the hedge. You had better not walk on the grass." (Out of School).

It is ironic that Hampden-Sydney assumed a more progressive posture in the face of this crisis. Ironic because when it was founded in 1776, Hampden-Sydney was originally named Prince Edward Academy (Buck, 1952).

Other students recalled more frightening events during this period.

"The Klan was here. They were at the A & P store. Maybe one of the workers there was a member. But anyway, there they were, in full dress, marching back and forth. I was astonished to see them. I will never forget, I was petrified. I remember their black shiny shoes. Just the appearance was intimidating. They didn't bother us, but those black shiny shoes....." (Out of School).

"I recall that right before the schools were closed a Black man in Pamplin had words with some whites at a store, and they caught him by the train tracks and mangled his body. People were really afraid. Nothing in the paper, all word of mouth. Everyone tried to keep it from the kids, but we heard. There was a lot of fear." (In School-American Friends).