1973

The Handicapped Person in Colonarie

Susan C. Linsey

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/anthro_res_rpt12

Part of the Anthropology Commons

Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/anthro_res_rpt12/14

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology Department Research Reports series at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Report 12: Winward Road: Contributions to the Anthropology of St. Vincent by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
The way someone responds to his handicap is a function of the individual's self-image and the cognitive orientations of that particular culture toward such an affliction. The attitude of the community conditioning the environment of the disabled is thus a critical factor in determining the self-image of the handicapped individual. It is a main contention of this study that the treatment of the community toward the handicapped is directly correlated with the degree of solidarity which is present within the given community.

It is established that the body compensates for a sense which does not function. Thus the hearing of a blind individual may be more keen than normal; the deaf may have a particularly sharp sense of touch, and so on. But what, if any, are the psychological compensations and adjustments granted by the mind in a handicapped individual? Perhaps some may develop an especially sharp wit, or tolerant nature, while another may be inclined to be suspicious or quick-tempered. What kinds of compensations result when an individual is congenitally deaf and has never had the gift of language? What sorts of adjustments are made in the processes of enculturation and socialization? The link between language and culture is an integral one and, as Mischa Titiev points out:

symbolic values can best be expressed through linguistic utterances and no better medium is known for teaching children to accept and follow a particular form of culture. It is only when they are put into words that abstractions and imaginary or non-sensory concepts of any kind acquire reality. Without the use of language therefore it would be practically impossible to teach the essentials of any system of supernatural beliefs (1963: 537).

Language is not necessarily restricted to the spoken language although it is certainly the primary form of human communication. While language may not be necessary for all thinking, it is integral to thought, and particularly in making abstractions and fine distinctions and shades of meaning, while also involved in communicating thought. The deaf and dumb, as a result of their handicaps, are substantially hindered in their "opportunity for asking questions, for developing certain learning sets, for becoming acquainted with social traditions and recorded histories, and for adjustment to adult attitudes (particularly the knowledge that adults are a potential source of information)" (Rosenstein 1961: 357). While it is not within the scope of this study to deal with the topic of deafness and cognition, this is still a relevant aspect to be considered when reading the data presented here.
It is understandable that societies differ in the treatment of their handicapped. Some cultures must abandon their crippled. This is generally done out of necessity, as such a group -- usually a nomadic band or tribe -- having a subsistence standard of living cannot afford to support an unproductive member of the group. In other instances natural selection may be responsible for a group having a markedly small number of handicapped. Infanticide is another possibility in dealing with potential cripples.

The reverse may also occur, whereby the disabled not only are cared for by their family and friends, but are tightly integrated as contributing members of the group. There are numerous possible combinations of conceptualization and treatment of the handicapped. Thus while a group, such as the Wageo in Oceania, might bury deformed infants alive, they honor and revere those who become crippled later in life (Hogbin 1941: 291).

The purpose of this paper is to look at the integration of a small "group" of handicapped individuals in one village in St. Vincent. After a brief description of the village, case histories of each of the individuals will follow. The data in each of the cases is presented with emphasis on the following five aspects:

1. The position of the individual in the village and the role assigned to him.

2. The attitude and outlook of the individual toward the community and vice versa.

3. The conditions of the joking relationship: the issuance of the "license to joke," and the "joking frame."

4. Attitude toward formal institutions: the Church, the Red Cross, the school.

5. The significance of a dyadic relationship between the subject and a specific member of the community.

The research for this paper was done in Colonarie (pronounced káhneriy), a village on the Windward coast of St. Vincent. Located approximately four miles south of Georgetown and 18 miles north of Kingstown, Colonarie is predominantly a Portuguese and Black community, with only a small number of East Indians. While it is located on the coast, the waters are rough and unfriendly most of the year. The villages do not exploit the sea for fun or profit; they are extremely fearful of it and most inhabitants do not even know how to swim. (This attitude is in fact common for the whole Windward side of the island. As the waters are more calm on the leeward side, the Vincentians are more willing to venture in to swim and to fish.)
Colonarie is divided both physically and socially by the Colonarie River. The north side of the village is composed predominantly of a government housing project built in 1964. The homes, painted in pastel shades, are built close together, each having three small rooms. As there is no indoor plumbing, there are communal outhouses and water pumps throughout the "complex."

The south side of the village contains both large two-story homes and small, individually built, one- and two-room shacks. Here are also located the courthouse, infirmary, police station, post office, and the banana station. The drygoods and rum shops are all, with the exception of one, found on this side of the village. As might be expected in a village of this size (approximately 70 households), and given the economic differentiation between the two sides, cliques and social pressures develop among the villagers.

There are several large estates in the neighborhood, where both men and women find employment. In addition, some families own land in the mountains, which is often tended with the help of boys from the village. Due to the sizeable amount of emigration to larger islands in the Caribbean, to the United States, and to parts of the British Commonwealth, and to a disinclination and hostility of the youth towards agricultural pursuits, many families are forced to seek outside help in working their lands.

On "banana day" (when the Geest boat pulls into Kingstown harbor) virtually the whole village is mobilized. The banana station is a hub of activity. The bananas are inspected, washed, packed, loaded onto the buses, and sent to "Town." Another economic pursuit popular with the poorer folk of Colonarie is "headin' stone." The beaches are covered with a volcanic black sand and myriads of rocks of all sizes. In the evening or early morning, when the sun is not so hot, the stones are collected and loaded into baskets, and larger stones may be stacked directly on the head and carried to one's yard or stone pile. The stones are later broken with a pick into small pieces and sold to the government for use in road construction. The villagers claim that it is possible to make more money "headin' stone" than working for wages on the land.

Case Study I: Pauline

Pauline, affectionately called "Dummy," is one of the most colorful figures in Colonarie. A native of Colonarie and of Portuguese descent, Pauline is congenitally deaf. She is a member of one of the wealthier families in the area. Today, at age 40, Pauline lives with her sister Am, who is also congenitally deaf, in a small two-room house near the center of the village. Both women are illiterate, and although they can produce vocalizations, they cannot speak. They have devised their own sign language (see Appendix I) and with this can communicate with the rest of the village.
Within their little household, there is an obvious division of labor. Am cooks and cleans, always keeping within a careful 40 yards of the house. As a result of this seclusion, Am has few friends. She is adept at terrifying little children who come by to peep in the window or to play a joke. Pauline is a full-time employee of one of their older sisters, Mistress Cabral, who has a large house in the neighboring village of Park Hill. Pauline performs all kinds of household tasks and odd jobs there, working often ten hours a day, six days a week. Although she takes her meals at Mistress Cabral's, she does not eat with the rest of the family in the main house. There is a small outdoor kitchen behind the main house, and she seems content to eat in privacy always feeding bits to the begging cats and chickens. In return for services rendered, Pauline receives food and small amount of cash and clothes.

It is clear to all that Pauline is exploited by Mistress Cabral. Her friends beg her not to work so much, but she refuses to be swayed from her loyalty. Although work is scarce on the island, many speculate that if she tried, with her reputation of being a good and industrious worker, she probably could find other employment. Such an idea is completely out of the question for her. Such devotion strikes many as being unwarranted, for all the siblings in Pauline's family are hostile towards each other and constantly bickering.

The villagers are well-acquainted with Pauline's sign language, and her close friends and relatives are fluent in using it when communicating with her. Virtually no one ever complained at not being able to "converse" with either Pauline or Am. In fact, Pauline is very "outspoken" and uninhibited in letting all know if she is displeased about something. She is temperamental and often holds grudges against people with whom she is vexed. Those who happen to be in her favor she showers with attention, care, and gifts.

The people of Colonarie have great respect for her, as she is independent and comes from a "good family." They agree that "she is a good woman... does not drink... and likes to work hard... and she don't keep bad company." Her close friends describe her as having "a large heart... always givin'." Whenever possible the villagers are most willing to help her out, and the local drygoods shops give her "breaks" whenever possible. As her family is wealthy, it is expected that they take care of her and Am.

Attention is called to the joking relationship because it is revealing in terms of the attitude and the relationship between the individual and the community. In reference to this, Mandelbaum and Kapferer (1972) have set up the categories of the "license to joke" and the "joking frame." The first is significant as to when and to whom the subject is willing to issue the license. The "joking frame" is the consensus of rules which determines conditions as to who may participate in the activity and the content of the verbal and non-verbal behavior.
Pauline is severely selective in her issuance of her "joking license." She is quick-tempered and is unreceptive to the practical jokes which the children are wont to play. As might be expected in this instance, the jokes are non-verbal in nature. When at Mistress Cabral's and at the home of special friends, Pauline is more tolerant and much less hostile to the incessant teasing and joking.

Racial prejudice against the Blacks by the Portuguese is prevalent throughout the island. Pauline is no exception and displays a blatant distrust and dislike of the Blacks. To indicate someone of the Negroid race, she twists and pulls at her hair, mouthing the words "picky-picky." She chases Black children from her yard and even the homes of friends whom she may be visiting, explaining that they are "tiefs." Although "dark skin color is itself a status factor in all Caribbean societies" (Smith 1971: 467), for Pauline the color of the skin is less significant than the establishment of the race itself. For if she likes someone, and he happens to be Black, she just ignores the racial barrier previously established, and insists that they are not "Black," but "brown"; between the two lies a world of difference. While the former are "tiefs" and not to be trusted, the latter she considers as a deeply tanned Portuguese, and thus "okay."

Each one of the disabled subjects in this study maintained a special relationship with another person. In some instances this was a "best friend" relationship, while in others it was more that of a godparent. Pauline maintains close ties with the Gonzolves family, in particular with Miss Francis, the mother of the household. The Gonzolves are second cousins to Pauline and live three houses away from her. While Am hardly ever sets foot in the Gonzolves' house, it is Pauline's second home. Each morning and evening, before and after work, Pauline stops off at Miss Francis'. She might help with the dishes or with some extra washing. If she happens by when the family is eating, she is always offered something from the table. She never actually sits down at the table with the rest, yet this is still a marked contrast to the treatment she receives at the Cabral's. Pauline only accepts food if she is hungry, although she might request something to be wrapped up so that she may bring it home to Am.

Once a week, Pauline takes a bath upstairs in the Gonzolves' home. She refuses to bathe in the river when washing clothes as the other women of the village do. Inhibited by modesty, she explains that people may be looking, and thus she washes her clothes in the river and herself in the house. Washing in the river is a jovial time for women. They wash in cliques, singing and joking and gossiping among themselves. Pauline insists on doing her washing on a large rock in a secluded spot along the river bank and thus does not participate in the festivities of the others.

Pauline never comes home from a day at Park Hill empty-handed. She usually has a bottle of milk and an assortment of fruit depending on the season. The milk is for Am, and the mangoes, sugar apples, oranges, etc., are given to the Gonzolves children, who playfully scramble to meet her
each evening to see what surprises she bears. These daily visits may last from a half hour to two hours; all the while, Pauline chatters incessantly of her dreams, daily adventures, or the favorite Vincentian topic of "chat," her ailments and aches.

Pauline is one of seven children. As a child even as today, she was quarrelsome and not well-loved by her siblings and peers. Mistress Periera, one of her older sisters, lives in a large house next door to Mistress Cabral. The former is blatantly critical of Pauline and calls her a "little devil."

To explain her deafness, Pauline gives the following account. When she was two days old, her mother left her by the river. It rained furiously and little Pauline cried for hours, but no one came to get her. After this time, she has always been deaf. The folk belief to explain deafness is that God put a stick in the individual's ear which caused the loss of hearing. Jeffery, a small deaf child in the village, delights in teasing Pauline about this folk belief. It inevitably makes her furious and leads to a wild chase through the fields, to the amusement of the on-looking villagers.

While a formal medical diagnosis has never been conducted, Pauline's deafness seems to be a hereditary affliction. Out of a family of seven children, three were born deaf. The fact that her parents were first cousins may or may not have been significant. One of her great-uncles on her mother's side, a fellow called "man-o-wood" was said to have been deaf.

As Pauline's family is fairly wealthy, they feel little inclination to ask help from the Red Cross. They are proud and can take care of themselves. The Red Cross, as far as they are concerned, is for the poor folk who cannot take care of themselves or who have no family. They believe that they have the situation under control. There is nothing more to be done.

Case Study II: Jeffery

Pauline's eight-year-old cousin, who delights in teasing her about her deafness, is Jeffery. He too is congenitally deaf. Jeffery's mother lives and works in Town; his father is a bus conductor and lives and works in Georgetown. Both visit him only on rare occasions. Typical of this extra-residential union, one quite common in the Caribbean, Jeffery's family is based not on the nuclear family, but rather on a flexible extended-family household. This household is run by his grandparents, who in 1972, after 15 years of co-residence, were married in local church.

Jeffery has always been a problem for his grandmother. She explains that he is a wild child, subject to frequent temper tantrums, crying whenever he feels the least bit stymied or bothered. A hard child to love, he refuses to let himself be touched, caressed or cuddled by anyone. He is supposed to share a bed with two smaller cousins, but declines
to, preferring to sleep on a mat on the floor. His grandmother finds it virtually impossible to discipline him, and frequently she has no idea of his whereabouts. For this she is subject to criticism by many of the villagers.

Until age four, Jeffery was considered a normal child. He was breast-fed until he was six months old, and walked at one and a half years. The family did notice that he was not talking like the other children. When he was three, they took him to a doctor who found "nothing to be wrong with this tongue." Finally, one year later, another doctor diagnosed his deafness.

All contacts between Jeffery and formal institutions on the island have been a disappointment to his family. He goes to school only when sweet biscuits are given out (twice, sometimes three times a week). He is not given any special attention or instruction, but sits and fidgets until his patience gives out. He can barely write his name, a feat which he mastered more as a "trick" to perform before the crowds at the rum shop than as a classroom exercise. He cannot read at all. The teachers feel stymied in their attempts to work with him, for "he does not listen and will not sit still." His notebook, of which he is enormously proud, contains his abortive attempts at doing lessons like the other children. It contains only failing grades. Much of the time that Jeffery does spend in school, he is kept busy running errands for the teachers. The school is an old stone structure, which serves weekdays as a school, and on Sundays as the church. It is a two-story building, each floor constituting one large room. Running errands between the two floors makes Jeffery feel important. At home too, his grandmother frequently singles him out to perform errands, which he accomplishes most diligently. The school's principal sorrowfully admits that while Jeffery obviously needs special attention in school, the teachers are too busy to give it to him. Some attempts have been made to help him, usually at the beginning of the school term, but then they fizzle out after the first week or two.

Jeffery's grandmother is beside herself as to where to turn for help. For just as she feels let down by the school, her attempts to solicit aid from the Red Cross also proved unsuccessful. The main office of the Red Cross is in Town, where one must go for any consultation or attention. The members of Jeffery's household have little occasion to go to Town, so that there is much excitement concerning the journey. (Actually there are many in Colonarie who commute daily on the local buses to work or to go to school in Town.) On two occasions Jeffery's grandmother took him to Town for the purpose of visiting the Red Cross, but on both occasions, although the specific reason is unclear, after waiting several hours in line, there were no positive results to compensate for their time or trouble. Now the family is used to Jeffery's handicap and are reconciled that he will not be literate, or learn a trade. They have no inclination to see the Red Cross again.
Jeffery's approach to money is revealing of his inner affections and sympathies. He would frequently receive small amounts of cash either as gifts or as recompense for a favor, errand, or a service rendered. Jeffery refuses to trust anyone in his immediate household to keep or even to touch his money. The one person in the village whom he does trust in such matters is Miss Francis, who owns the largest drygoods shop in the village. (This is the same woman with whom Pauline maintains such close friendship.) As soon as Jeffery gets even a penny, he runs to the shop to purchase sweeties. Miss Francis is careful not to sell him too many, insisting that they are not good for him. He sometimes has come by larger amounts of money, such as 50 cents or a dollar. He allows himself to be convinced to let Miss Francis keep it for him, so that eventually when he has accumulated enough, he may purchase a shirt or pair of pants. A piece of clothing thus procured gives him tremendous joy. There is a very special relationship between Jeffery and Miss Francis. In this case she acts almost as a godmother to him, in all but the religious connotation of the word. He may be seen hanging around her shop any time from five in the morning until eleven in the evening. He is the only youth of his age who dares to join in rum shop festivities in the evenings. Keeping a watchful eye always on Jeffery, Miss Francis gives him food when she has extra or small gifts. Often in the afternoons he will go with some of the older boys to work on her land in the mountains. Small and fairly weak, Jeffery serves more to amuse the group with his jokes and antics rather than with help in the fields.

Jeffery loves to play the clown and the tease; he will do anything for a laugh. He offers an open "license to joke" to anyone and everyone. The "joking frame" is once again non-verbal, and in this case often involves much physical contact. Jeffery has no real friends, and prefers the company of the older boys. Many of the jokes take the form of dares or challenges. Someone will perform a trick such as inhaling a cigarette and making the smoke come out one's ear, and then all will watch and wait as Jeffery does a perfect imitation of the trick. He is a good sport in being the brunt of practical jokes unless he is exceptionally tired; then he may just burst into tears and run off into the banana fields.

Case Study III: Paltavia

Paltavia, a 31-year-old Black woman, is the village expert on "jumbies" (ghosts). Three years ago she had her leg amputated above the knee. Since she was 12, as a result of a bicycle accident, she has been a hunchback. She lives in the government housing project in a household composed of her mother, step-father, three sisters, two brothers, a fluctuating assortment of nieces and nephews, and her own son. As an authority on "jumbies" she delights many a Colonarie child, filling their heads with terrible and hair-raising tales of "jumbies" and "jack-o-lanterns" (mysterious flashes of light at night).

They say that she was beautiful once, and that the man who fathered her child had died some four years earlier. During the numerous interviews held with her, she was always in high spirits, cheery, and talkative. The necessity of the amputation was indisputable. She had been lame and in
pain for several years, and the actual amputation came as a great relief
to all who saw her suffering. Now, she feels and looks much better. Al­
though restricted in many respects, she is healthy for the first time in
years, and is remarkably well-adjusted.

While her mobility is drastically hindered, Paltavia can and does per­
form regular household tasks, and thus is very much a contributing member
of the household. Every Monday she is down at the mouth of the river wash­
ing clothes with her mother and sister. Of the three, Paltavia is the
most efficient and quickest washer. In order to wash, she has to stand
from three to five hours in two feet of water without crutches, propping
her "bad" leg up on a rock. She insists that it is more comfortable to
stand in this position than to sit. Other mornings Paltavia may be seen
sitting on the front steps of her house, braiding the hair of her young
nieces. She also does some of the cooking and ironing, when other mem­
bers of the household are off in the fields or at the banana station.
Every evening her family "heads stone," and Paltavia goes with them. She
sits by the sea, keeping a watchful and protective eye on their pile of
stones. Pallering from a neighbor's stone pile is one of the most common
sources of feuds among the poorer folk in Colonarie. Unless someone is
caught in the act, it is almost impossible to prove to whom the stones
actually belong.

The people of Colonarie have mixed feelings concerning Paltavia.
She has a tendency to have quarrels with some of the neighbors and to
rigidly maintain grudges. During the summer of 1971, Paltavia had eight
outstanding feuds within the village. She is very close with and loyal to
her mother and sisters. Thus, if one of these women has a fight with
someone, the others become incensed and immediately involved. The family
is often described by others as being jealous and demanding. Here is an
example of how one of the feuds developed. Paltavia has always been
friends with Annise, a girl of 17, who lives across the street from her.
One week during the summer, Annise was hostess to a friend from Bridgetown
(Barbados). As the friend was from a higher social class than she, as
hostess, Annise had her hands full trying to entertain and even feed her
friend "properly." Annise somehow managed to accomplish the former,
making a match with one of the local policemen. In so doing, she made
herself and her friend the topic of commens (gossip) in Colonarie for
months to come. Usually whenever Annise passed Paltavia's house, she
would stop for a chat. But that week, Annise just passed on, shouting a
greeting from the street. Paltavia and her mother were offended. They
vowed that "they would no longer love Annise." The hostility thus begun
is still maintained one year later.

It is understandable that while many in Colonarie do respect Paltavia's
industriousness despite her disabilities, at the same time they are cautious
in their interaction with her. Some try to avoid her, and the hostility
between them remains, long after the initial incident which triggered the
dispute. This may be related to the fact that her family is relatively
new in Colonarie, having moved there six years ago from Mangrove, the
next village north on the Windward Highway towards Georgetown. She always
speaks nostalgically of Mangrove. Paltavia points out that sometimes people from Mangrove, when passing through Colonarie, would give her money, something which never occurred with those from Colonarie. She says that in Colonarie the people are not good, and are quarrelsome. She believes that "poor people are bad, they fight a lot . . . they may give you something, then they change their mind and ask for it back . . . they speak lies and tell nasty things about others . . ."

Evidence of Paltavia's distrustful nature may be seen in her reaction to a film on family planning and birth control which was shown in Colonarie by the St. Vincent Planned Parenthood Association. Paltavia expressed a blatant disgust for the film. She refused to believe in the pill or the loop as they were presented. Anyway, she felt it was better to have "many, many" children, a reaction which is now fairly rare on the island. Paltavia's contempt for birth control was mild compared to her criticism of "men." "Men are bad, they beat their wives." The man who fathered Paltavia's child never had intentions of marrying her and she insists that the feeling was mutual on her part. Even today she expresses a negative attitude towards marriage, saying: "I have no house, no foot, nothing, no reason to be married and to raise a family." This was one of the few times that Paltavia allowed herself to hint at any inner dissatisfaction she may have felt at being poor and lame.

Her family is very religious. Their conversation is filled with references to God, and they frequently sing hymns as they "head stone." Paltavia explains her amputation by the fact that God frowns upon a part of the body which is sick or diseased and will not accept an afflicted person in heaven. The diseased organ or limb must be removed. Thus for both medical and spiritual reasons, Paltavia is content with her amputation.

Paltavia is involved in a "best-friend" relationship with the wife of the local police sergeant. Between the two women there is a slight difference in economic status, but not actually in class. The police sergeant's family lives in perhaps the finest house in the village. It was built by the government for whoever holds that position on the police force. It is located on the outskirts of the village, set apart from any other houses. As if this were not sufficient, there is a six-foot wire fence surrounding it.

Almost every afternoon, Paltavia drops by for a friendly chat. On occasion she may help with some of the ironing. The two women sit for several hours cheerfully discussing local gossip and thus pass the afternoon. Paltavia contrasts her friend to herself, saying that "she does have everything, a nice home, a good husband, and she have children." The ideal family, according to Paltavia, would have four children. This seemed to be a sharp contrast to her insistence on "many, many children" in reference to the birth control film. When confronted with this inconsistency, she just laughed. (It was usual, when talking with many Vincentians, that they contradict themselves several times. It seemed to be some sort of a game, and they expected their listener to be able.
to know the correct statement. While this was a natural and instinctive way of "talk" or "chat" among the villagers, it was particularly frustrating to the researcher who was not so adept at, nor familiar with the "game."

Paltavia felt no need or inclination to ask help of the Red Cross. She had once considered procuring her crutches from the organization, but decided that it was too involved. She received her first pair of crutches as a gift, and purchased the second pair. The Red Cross may be for others but it is not for Paltavia.

As might be expected, given the foregoing description of Paltavia, she is very selective in issuing a "license to joke." The "joking frame" is "contained" in respect to the participants, cues, and content.

Case Study IV: Elude

Elude is the pride of Colonarie. Congenitally blind, he is acclaimed as the best fisherman on the Windward coast of St. Vincent. He has superb control of his handicap, so that he is almost completely self-sufficient. At age 38, he lives alone in a small two-room house, where he does his own cooking and cleaning. The house is simply and plainly furnished. The most outstanding aspect of the decor is a full-length mirror in the bedroom. Completely mobile, Elude walks all over by himself, without cane or companion. With a brisk pace, he often walks to Georgetown on a Sunday to visit his sisters there.

His skill at fishing never ceases to amaze the villagers. He goes two or three times a week to the river and in about two hours returns with an average catch of 15 fish and 20 river lobsters. To get to the mouth of the river where he begins, he must walk approximately three hundred yards along a rocky path of brush and grape plants. Walking erect, he knows the way by heart, never faltering or groping.

They say that he knows every stone in the Colonarie River. This is no mean task as the river is full of huge rocks and boulders all the way from where it meets the sea in Colonarie to its inland source, deep in the mountains. As he fishes, he works his way upstream, reaching under rocks, sometimes diving completely under water. He almost always comes up with a fish in each hand. While he is going through his routine, there are others in the river fishing also, not bare-handed as Elude, but with spear gun and perhaps goggles. By the time they get one fish, Elude has caught 15.

He tries to avoid fishing on a Monday or Tuesday morning, when the majority of the women do their washing, spreading the clothes out on the banks of the river to dry. Yet inevitably there is a single woman out washing or starching when he makes his "fishing rounds." Elude seems to know where such women would be and adeptly avoids that area. When he once misjudged and stepped on an old woman's outstretched sheets, he chaste­tised himself severely. The woman, busily thrashing her clothes on the rocks, never noticed, or if she did, she did not let on.
Elude provides his friends and neighbors with fish and river lobster, charging 50 cents a pound for the fish, and one dollar a pound for the lobster. This is slightly higher than the going market price, but all consider themselves lucky to be able to buy from him as they are sure of the freshness and quality of the fish as it is caught by Elude and it is from their own river. Otherwise fish is sold frozen in the village shop, or may be occasionally bought from a passing car, loaded with fish from the Leeward side of the island.

The people of Colonarie are proud and exceptionally fond of Elude. He has many friends, and frequently spends a full afternoon in the rum shop chattering and joking with the men. When he enters the rum shop, all welcome him into their conversation, asking for his comments or opinion. Elude is tolerant of the teasing and incessant jokes of the men and boys. Rarely can he walk down the street without people calling to him, sometimes just as a salute; other times, to initiate a joking sequence. His contacts with the community are almost always bound up in the context of a joke of some sort. As he passes, people may tickle him from a distance with a stick, which is just long enough so that Elude cannot reach them and does not know who it is. He then does the only thing which he can do in such a situation; he laughs and walks on. By now he is on to most of these pranks and knows who is doing the teasing. A favorite rum shop antic is to wait until Elude orders a strong rum (which is clear, colorless). They then divert his attention and switch the glass of rum to one of water, or to one which is empty. The "trick" is more of a ritual, for Elude catches on immediately. He just throws the water on his laughing friends and waits for someone to give him back his rum. On one occasion Elude became fed up with these pranks and smashed the glass on the floor in a frustrated fury. Everyone remained stunned and silent.

The content of many "joking frames" is to tease Elude about his charm with women. He good-naturedly denies all the tall tales, saying, "I am a Christian, I have nothing to do with girls."

It is not completely certain that Elude is totally blind. It is to his advantage to keep the villagers in doubt, so that they may think twice before pulling a hoax or a prank. They are evenly divided as to the consensus of the "true" condition of his eyesight. The village nurse, although she has never examined him, believes that he does have a small amount of vision; that is, he is sensitive to light. This would explain why on overcast days he "does not feel like fishin'."

While he seems to be a pillar of patience, skill and good will, Elude is wary of his fellow men. He does not fear jumbies because "they can do nothing, but it is the living of who I afraid for they can do harm." Yet in spite of this realistic outer shell, Elude is actually quite sensitive on the topic of jumbies and spirits. Another favorite topic of jest for the villagers is to subject him to endless interrogation as to the whereabouts of his deceased landlady, who is rumored to have returned to visit him.

The folk belief explaining why Elude is blind is that when his mother was pregnant, she saw a jumbie owl. It is interesting to note that Levi-Strauss (1969: 164) refers to the Chickasaw Indians who attribute eye diseases (and somnolence) to owls.
As in the other case studies, Elude has a best-friend type of relationship with a young Portuguese couple, Rosa and Romeo Dabriel. Rosa is a teacher in the local school, while her husband is a construction foreman for the government. The Dabriels are themselves a controversial couple. They are in their mid-thirties and have no children. Romeo is known for drinking heavily and for beating Rosa. She has left him several times, but has always been willing to reconcile. Romeo has a car and they frequently take Elude for evening rides. Elude would also eat one meal a day with them. This was said to be a purely friendly gesture. The Dabriels were comfortable enough so that it was in no way an economic burden. Elude, on his part, would reciprocate with gifts of fish and river lobster.

Elude has a tremendous amount of self-confidence. He dislikes being told what to do, even if it is supposedly in his best interests. For example, on one of the evening rides, Elude insisted on leaning out of the open window of the car, so that his arm and head hung completely out of the vehicle. The Dabriels repeatedly warned him of the danger of being side-swiped by an on-coming car, but Elude stubbornly refused to take warning.

Whenever the three were together there was always an abundance of jokes and teasing. Elude good-naturedly responded to each joke with a snappy reply. It is a game in which they were all proficient; the use of a fast wit and sometimes even a fast fist (although no one was ever hurt). Only when Romeo was very drunk would the jesting turn slightly sour and result in a serious quarrel. Elude became increasingly suspicious of Romeo, and he was determined not to be played the fool.

The relationship climaxed as a result of the following incident: One evening the Dabriels drove Elude to the inland village of Mesopotamia. Elude wanted to join a "friendly society" there, so that when he died, he would be assured of a proper burial. On arriving in "Mespo" they had some difficulty in finding the proper place to register. When they finally did, it was closed. It was getting late, and Romeo decided to go home. The following day revealed that Elude was vexed at Romeo. He was sure that something was amiss, that Romeo had taken advantage of him, and had somehow tricked him. As a result of this incident, Elude never went to visit or eat with the Dabriels again. He became obsessed by his hostilities and suspicious of their advances toward him.

Many say that Elude "changed" in the weeks following that journey to "Mespo." He became irritable and one informant described him as "having got off his nerves." It was obvious that he was ill and so he was sent to the hospital in Georgetown. The doctors found nothing wrong and felt that it was "just nerves." A week passed and Elude was released from the hospital. A few days later he was walking along the road in Colonarie and "he had an accident with a car ... died right on the spot. It was terrible, poor fellow ... was so upset about that incident in 'Mespo.'" Some say it was not an accident. They say that Elude heard the car coming and threw himself in front of it. People from all over the island came
to his funeral for "he was loved by everyone." Now, most believe that he committed suicide, for they have no doubt as to his skill in walking in the road and hearing on-coming cars.

Elude was exceptionally proud of his ability to care for himself. He refused to ask for anything, and particularly wanted nothing from the Red Cross or the Church. The Friendly Society was different; for that he paid dues.

Conclusion

A focal point of this study has been to describe the interaction between a particular group and the community in which that and other groups live. I was especially concerned with the integration at the local, community level of the society. Yet it is also apparent that many factors conditioning behavior function in the context of belonging to a particular national group, living in a particular environment, and at a particular socioeconomic level.

The integration of the handicapped in this village study very much reflects more general characteristics of Vincentian culture. One such trait is the mutual interdependence within the household and among members of the community. This can be attributed in part to the abundance of food in the environment. As long as one is willing to expend a small amount of energy, food will be available. It is not necessary for each member of the household to be productive, and therefore it is possible to support a disabled member with a minimum of inconvenience. In spite of this there is a positive sanction for all members to contribute in some way. The interdependence within the household is also evidenced by a mutual exchange of surplus food and luxury items. The households are extended and "open" in the sense that there is much mobility between the members. People "cover" for each other, caring for and sharing children of kin and friends. A similar tolerance is characteristic in the treatment of the youth. Having finished elementary school many refuse to work the land, although they cannot find other employment and the possibility of emigration is limited. They linger about the household and village waiting for an opportunity. During this period, which may last up to several years, they depend on and receive support from their extended kin group. I do not mean to imply a state of harmony and brotherly love characterizes social relations in Vincentian villages. I do mean to suggest that within kin-groups and other sub-groups there seems to be a strong degree of mutual support and tolerance, and that this was made particularly evident to me in the integration of the disabled.

Appendix II summarizes the six variables emphasized in this study as they apply to each of the subjects. As my sample was so small I do not feel justified in drawing correlations or conclusions. I do feel confident that I may now point out what seem to be important relationships which merit future investigation.
The "special" relationship which existed between each of the subjects and some other residents of Colonarie is a critical one in the integration of that particular individual. There is nothing which would lead one to believe that the particular person serving as the best friend or sponsor is the single, specific individual for that position. It is surmised that if that particular individual would not fill the role, another would be found to replace him. The point is that the role does exist, and as such, fulfills needs of both individuals involved.

In several ways this relationship is similar to the dyadic contract described by George Foster. The Vincentians, like the Tzintzuntzanos, are:

- enormously preoccupied with their relationship with each other within the formal structures of the family and "compadragzo" and within the informal structures of friendship and "neighborship."... Everyone from an early age begins to organize his societal contacts outside the nuclear family and even to some extent within it, by means of a special form of contractual relationships, and as he approaches and reaches adulthood, these relationships grow in importance until they dominate all other types of ties (1967: 213-15).

Reciprocity is a significant characteristic in all of the Colonarie dyads. This was not always an equal and tangible exchange of goods and services, but frequently involved intangible items such as friendship, companionship, attention, small favors, etc. Foster suggested that the quantity of food exchanged is directly correlated to the intensity of the dyadic contract. This did not seem to apply to the dyads in Colonarie, particularly in the case of Elude, where there was a large amount of food exchanged, yet the relationship crumbled.

The day-to-day existence of the handicapped may be approached from many angles. For the purposes of this study, the theme of environmental perception is a useful one for approaching the data. I separated the cultural from the physical environment only for diagnostic purposes. In reality the two are directly interrelated. The cultural environment refers here to the social milieu in which the individual was raised, and in which he carries on daily activities. By physical environment I mean the physical attributes and spatial aspect of the surroundings. Within this framework, the spatial behavior of the individual within and outside of the community was particularly interesting.

In the situation of a handicapped person, the perception of the environment will be significantly altered. The nature of the disability structures the perception of the physical surroundings, as well as behavior in social networks. The exact nature of the relationship would of course vary with the particular handicap, the case history of the individual, and the environment in which he is interacting.

The attitude of trust or mistrust of the environment was significant in studying the behavior of the disabled. For example, Elude exhibited trust and confidence in his interactions with his physical and cultural
environment. This was evidenced in his spatial mobility, fishing activities, and in his control of rum shop jesting. His behavior was to a large extent dominated by his own decision-making processes. In contrast, Pauline's attitude of trust in the environment was more circumscribed than Elude's. There were clear demarcations in her social and spatial behavior: her fear and avoidance of Blacks, 'tiefs,' and Portuguese whom she disliked. Her mobility was well-restricted to a set pattern, although this pattern did extend outside of Colonarie. Her sister Am was even more distrustful of both the physical and cultural environments, as she had few friends and rarely ventured from the house. Jeffery on the other hand was extremely confident in his perception and behavior, and would have gone anywhere, anytime -- given the opportunity. At the same time he was distrustful of those within his own household.

There was a positive correlation (on the chart) between the subject's perception of the community, and the existence of a joking relationship. Thus if I may dare to generalize from such a small sample, it seems that the handicapped are accepted by the community in exchange for the issuance of a "joking license," and the fulfillment of an individualized, yet structured role in the community.

Perception of the environment is determined by the cultural and physical context of the surroundings and the individual's self-perception, as well as the conditioning aspect of the community's perception of the individual. On a flow chart there would be feedback loops from each of these aspects. Individuals who are deprived of one or more of their tools of perception make some sort of physiological or psychological compensation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with this, although the cases presented do offer some insights into specific adjustments made by a small group. It would be most interesting to consider whether a handicap serves to stimulate or to repress "need-achievement" in an individual. Instead of considering the disabled as restricted in their perception of the environment, it would be better to say that their perception is structured differently. Their behavior and relationships with members of the community are conditioned and maintained based on this level of perception.
## APPENDIX I

Sign Language Used by Pauline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTION</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross on forehead</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing</td>
<td>Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starching</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chopping bananas</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironing</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injection in his (day that infirmary is open)</td>
<td>Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slitting throat (day that meat is butchered)</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points to her dress or bosom</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points to a pair of pants</td>
<td>Boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugs herself</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sucks in cheeks</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twists an imaginary mustache</td>
<td>Grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirring coffee</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms outstretched, eyes closed</td>
<td>Dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiskers</td>
<td>Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ring on fourth finger</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds up appropriate number of fingers</td>
<td>Numerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can say</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Mango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Breadfruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Guava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elude</th>
<th>Paltavia</th>
<th>Jeffery</th>
<th>Pauline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community's attitude</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>toward subject</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject's attitude</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>toward community</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(cultural environment)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude toward joking</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude toward physical</strong></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude toward insular</strong></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dyadic relationship</strong></td>
<td>Male/friend</td>
<td>Female/friend</td>
<td>Female/sponsor</td>
<td>Female/kin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>