INTERCULTURAL DISRUPTION IN RURAL APPALACHIA

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate and understand rural Southern Appalachians’ experiences with other cultures and how they articulated and understood those experiences. Research indicates that rural Appalachian culture has a long history of geographic and social isolation, resulting in cultural barriers that may hinder this population’s social and economic mobility. Research also indicates that intercultural experiences have emotional, intellectual, and social benefits for those who engage other cultures. However, there is little research on the outcomes of intercultural experiences such as study abroad, service learning, or long-term international internships specifically focused on rural Appalachians. The study employs a qualitative methodology based in the narrative tradition to focus on the meaning of the participant’s stories. Two rural Appalachian men were interviewed, and they articulated in depth their experiences outside their rural mountain culture. The primary significance of this study is that it provides a meaningful and practical perspective to view how rural Appalachians face limitations of cultural capital which can be transferred from generation to generation. This study also highlights issues related to rural education, cultural understanding, and rural social and health work.

Keywords: Appalachia, rural culture, self-efficacy, social reproduction, intercultural
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Dedicated to my disruptive forces
CHAPTER ONE
Intercultural Disruption in Rural Appalachia

As you travel through the 12-mile circle of the Smokey Mountains called Cades Cove, you pass rustic log homes from the turn of the century and older. You might pull off to the side of the narrow one-way road to visit the old church buildings filled with dust and smelling of mold and scratch your name on a bench or pulpit alongside many other random works of art. As you continue around “the Loop,” as it is called by locals, you come to a place where you can take a five-mile hike to a waterfall and a swimming hole. Tourists come through the Cove every year to have a mountain experience. They will talk to locals, buy local honey, jams, and sweet-tater pie, hike some trails, and ride down the river on a tube, not seeing or sensing the poverty and illiteracy around them. For some, mountain people in Appalachia are “interesting” or a throwback to more innocent times. However, this is not the perception of the majority of the United States. In general, the Appalachian people have been stereotyped and identified as a people who are out of touch with modernity. This perception has affected many Appalachians in their place of work and in their social lives (Seufert & Corozza, 2004). Wallace and Diekroger (2000) wrote of this general attitude towards Appalachian people: “The assumption seems to be that slow-paced lifestyles reflect slow-witted or backward individuals” (Wallace & Diekroger, 2000, p. 3). Hayes (2004) called the population the “invisible minority” (as cited in Russ, 2006).

“Appalachia” is a term including diverse urban, rural, and mountain areas (ARC, 2012; Banker, 2010; Batteau, 1983). However, urban and suburban areas of Appalachia may not be exactly what people outside the culture think about when the term, Appalachia, is used.
There is a shared culture and history in the fiber of all Appalachians, there are also differences among urban, rural, and mountain Appalachians (Drake, 2001; Rehder, 2004). The one thing they do share to one degree or another is a culture of poverty in need of transformation.

This study will describe the social conditions and cultural characteristics of rural Appalachia and navigate through the stories of rural Appalachians who had intercultural experiences, seeking to understand their self-articulation about the impact of those experiences on their past, present, and future lives.

**Statement of Problem**

Much of the educational and sociological literature about rural Appalachians has explored their socio-cultural and contextual affordances, learning styles, and self-efficacy factors. The literature seems to seek out understanding and opportunities to improve the education and socio-economic status of the region’s peoples. However, there is little literature on the ways in which cultural disruption specifically impacts the knowledge base of the rural Appalachian. These disruptions, educational or experiential, may influence the decisions of rural Appalachians in their lives upon return to the community. Intercultural experiences may be important in expanding the rural Appalachians’ knowledge base in a way that creates a disruption in their worldview and may provide insight about how that disruption might be employed to change their future if needed. This study seeks to explore the stories of rural Appalachians as it relates to their intercultural experiences to uncover their cultural disruption and the ways they self-articulate its role in their decisions following.

**Research Problem**

Inquiry into adult rural Appalachian’s self-articulation of their cultural disruptions is limited.
Literature has shown that, throughout the history of the defined area of Appalachia, rural Appalachians have had many limitations that impacted their daily lives and their potential futures. Some of these limitations are internal, such as cultural and contextual affordances (Bennet, 2008; Russ, 2006) and learning styles (Helton, 2009). On the other hand, the geography, local economy, and unemployment also place limitations on the rural Appalachian (Seufert & Carrozza, 2004). These internal and external pressures seem to limit the rural Appalachians’ ability to increase their knowledge base and may also contribute to the deterioration of rural Appalachians’ identity with their culture and communal way of life (Billings & Blee, 2000; Tang, & Russ, 2007; Wallace & Diekroger, 2000).

**Justification of Research**

Literature has shown that throughout the history of the defined area of Appalachia rural Appalachians still have many limitations that affect their daily lives and their potential futures. Some of these limitations are internal such as cultural and contextual affordances (Bennet, 2008; Russ, 2006), and learning styles (Helton, 2010). On the other hand the geography, local economy and unemployment also place limitations on the rural Appalachian (Seufert & Carrozza, 2004). These internal and external pressures seem to limit the rural Appalachian’s ability to increase their knowledge base and may also contribute to the deterioration of rural Appalachian’s identity with their culture and communal way of life (Billings and Kathleen, 2000; Tang, M. and Russ, K. 2007; Wallace, L. A., Diekroger, D. K. (2000).

**Deficiencies in the Research**

There is little research on the outcomes of intercultural experiences—such as study abroad, service learning, or long-term international internships—specifically focused on rural Appalachians.
This may be because rural Appalachians may find it difficult to leave the natural surroundings for very long periods of time (Bennet, 2008). Also, the literature does not show that intercultural experiences translate into positive experiences or lead to a cultural disruption or increased knowledge base, and does not address how intercultural experiences might be harnessed into transformation in local community.

**Relevant Audiences**

High school counselors, adult learning educators, and higher education communities who serve high populations of rural Appalachians may be particularly interested in this research. The findings of this research may lead to further understanding of how educators, counselors and social workers may best inform, educate, and socialize a specific rural culture. It may provide better understanding of the unique interplay and influence of intercultural experiences with cultural characteristics, cultural identity, and the internalization of these intercultural exchanges in relation to rural Appalachian identities. Lastly, this study may provide more understanding of the role of cultural disruption in the story of personal advancement in the lives of rural Appalachians.

**Significance of Research Problem**

Historically, the mountain areas in Appalachia had a unique geography which tended to isolate its residents from other cultures. Montgomery (2000) argued geography and isolation explained part of the problem. Appalachian cultural characteristics in combination with geographic isolation may more fully explain the limitations on rural Appalachian people’s knowledge base (Wallace & Diekroger, 2000). Banker (2010) and Bennet (2008) suggested that isolation in Appalachia was significant to sustaining and embedding the specific culture of rural mountain people.
The isolation has affected the language, speech patterns, and learning styles of rural Appalachians (Helton, 2010). Lack of urbanization and geographic isolation allowed for the values and beliefs of the culture to remain in many ways unchanged even today (Rehder, 2004, Banker, 2010; Bauch, 2006). Their beliefs are also shaped by stereotypes and other contextual factors that may have an impact on the types of career choices Appalachians make and to the degree to which they seek to achieve those goals (Ali & Saunders, 2009). Therein lays the significance of the study; that is, rural Appalachia is faced with limitations of cultural capital that is transferred from generation to generation (Bourdieu, 1977). It therefore becomes important to understand the self-articulation of rural Appalachians who experienced cultural disruptions that empowered them to change the social reproduction of their family line.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

As researchers, it may be humanly impossible to escape our personal biases completely, but it is critical to understand our inner-self, cultural heritage, and social systems that help govern our present knowledge. As Takacs (2003) stated, “Few things are more difficult than to see outside the bounds of your own perspective” He continued that, for this reason, researchers must be able to “identify assumptions that you take as universal truths but which, instead have been crafted by your own unique identity and experiences in the world” (p. 27). This process of identification begins as we look back to the beginning of ourselves.

In approaching my study of Appalachian people and intercultural disruptions, I entered in as a fellow Appalachian with a personal experience of intercultural disruption. However, as a researcher, I am well aware that my personal experiences may lean on my ability to tell the complex story of others’ beliefs and experiences.
I grew up in Southern Appalachia in the valley lands just north of the Smokey Mountains. My brother, sister, and I were raised by our mother. The late 1970’s through the early 1980’s were some of my most memorable times, but for my mother it was a terrible financial difficulty. We lived in trailers and government housing complexes most of my elementary life. Child care took more than half of her minimum wage income. I know the thrill of playing with ten or twenty of kids at a time in the woods, the fear of drug busts and fights, the poverty of my friends and me, the taste of sugar and butter sandwiches, and the smell of the mountains in the early summer mornings. I know the thrill of playing with ten or twenty kids at a time in the woods, the taste of sugar and butter sandwiches, and the smell of the mountains in the early mornings. These are treasures to me now. However, I also know the poverty of my friends and me, as well as the fear of drug busts and fights.

My first inclination of going somewhere beyond all that I knew came from my mother, who had a desire to get us out of that region because we were fully aware that it might be the only way to give us a chance at a better life than we had known. And so we moved to where she still resides in 1985. It was a different place than what I had experienced the previous ten years. More importantly, it was the representation of the spirit of my mother who wanted me to experience more than what we had known.

Her influence was helpful in my decision to move to Boston and work with Christian Arabs. I served as the English Pastor at the Arabic Evangelical Baptist Church in West Roxbury, Massachusetts for three years. During this time, my previous knowledge base was challenged. I studied their culture and language and became one with a dear community.

In 2009, I moved back to Tennessee. It was then I struggled with my own culture. I had changed.
My son was born in Boston. All that my daughter knew of school, church, and community happened among Arabs. My wife and I came to know and interact with diverse couples with complex and colorful stories from other lands. But now we are in the midst of rural-white mountain people. I felt different, as if I were not one of them. For the first year, I was rather judgmental. I stood in the middle of a department store observing the people’s interactions, listening in on their conversations, and all the while wondering how much they know about life outside their valley. However, I have come to learn that Appalachians are quite diverse and understanding in spite of their cultural stereotypes.

I not only approached this study as an Appalachian and a researcher but as one who is a trained expositor. My religious training may have worked well with the qualitative approach to research. My exegetical and homiletic training has led me to a deep appreciation of allowing a text to speak and dictate the narrative flow of how I communicate the story. At the same time, I have spent 15 years in the Christian ministry context. Over those 15 years, I have learned the value of not only listening to the Text but to people as well. It is my firm belief that relationships are remembered more than sermons. Therefore, my academic and practical training in textual and pastoral studies may have enhanced my ability to encounter, interpret, and share the participants’ experiences.

As a researcher, it is incumbent on me to work diligently at allowing the participants’ uniqueness and diversity to seep through the pages. While we may share some cultural similarities, they have their own stories to share. They have their own perspectives and voice. My job, as it has been for most of the last 15 years, is to hear accurately and communicate truthfully the story of the text.
Through reflection on my own experiences, I came upon the topic of the social reproduction of Appalachian people and their intercultural experiences. My experience had led me to believe that intercultural experiences were important in expanding the rural Appalachians’ knowledge base in a way that created a disruption in their worldview that might empower them to change their future if needed. I had to be diligent in not allowing my personal experiences to influence the data gathered from the interviews. I also had to be careful not to exaggerate the importance of intercultural experiences to the Appalachian people.

In this endeavor, it was important to view my beliefs and assumptions from a distance. For that reason, the use of analytical memos was a valuable tool for regular reflection. This allowed the researcher to better understand himself and thus hear more clearly the beliefs of the participants. To ensure a more objective clarification of the information, a support group consisting of my advisor and colleagues outside the content area of my study provided feedback of the collected and summarized data.

**Research Questions**

The central question is as follows: How do adult rural Appalachians make sense of their intercultural experiences?

The sub questions:

1. What are the rural Appalachian participants’ stories of social reproduction?
2. What do rural Appalachians say about their intercultural experiences?
3. How do rural Appalachians describe their rural Appalachian experience after their intercultural experience?
Theoretical Framework

Social reproduction theory was chosen as the basis of this study’s framework because of its ability to explain how inequality is transmitted and reproduced from one generation to another (Doob, 2013; Wetherell, 1999). In rural Appalachia, there remains a segment of people who have inherited inequality that many times results in poverty. Clifton and Romero-Barrutietta (2006) wrote, “Traditionally, poverty in Appalachia has been ascribed to a number of factors, including geographic isolation, external control resources, land tenure policies, and cultural or historical constraints” (p. 14). While these factors may contribute to the inequality experienced by many rural Appalachians, their existence alone does not explain the social reproduction patterns of these Appalachians—that is, why and how one generation accepts a previous generation’s inheritance of inequality. Nor do they explain how cultural disruptions might impact the knowledge base of rural Appalachians. For this reason, the cultural reproduction theory of Bourdieu (1977) was selected to refine the lens with which the study examines the processes and factors that contribute to the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. This theory engages the relationship between cultural origin and personal potentiality.

Bourdieu’s theory can be broken down into three relevant domains: capital, field, and habitus. It starts with the idea of capital. For Bourdieu, capital was simply any material or symbolic resource that could be used or converted to attain a dominant position in comparison to other competitors (Lee, Ozanne, & Hill, 1999). Examples include money, language, social networks, or symbolic tools like educational training. The field is the social arena where individuals compete for types of capital (Lee, Ozanne, & Hill, 1999). For example, in the medical field, nurses, doctors, and administrators compete for types of resources that allow a group or individual to be more powerful or influential.
Lastly, habitus is the major set of cultural patterns, values, and dispositions that are passed down from one generation to another (Lee, Ozanne, & Hill, 1999, Nash, 1990). The Bourdieuan lens was applied to the rural Appalachians’ experiences to shed light on the cultural interplay, resistance, acceptance, and assimilation of their original and potential existence.

Forms of capital.

Bourdieu highlights various forms of capital resources that people use to influence other power structures and relationships. Lee, Ozzanne, & Hill (1999) emphasized that Bourdieu’s definition of capital was “any valued resource worth fighting for and conceptualized three forms of capital employed by individuals: economic, cultural, and social” (p. 231). In Bourdieu’s theory, economic capital refers to economic resources; cultural capital refers to legitimate or valid knowledge; and social capital refers to valued social networks (Ritzer, 2007). However Bourdieu also developed the idea of symbolic capital (Siisiäinen, 2000). Symbolic capital refers to social honor, position, or prestige (Ritzer, 2007). Siisiäinen (2000) wrote, “Bourdieu’s idea is that economic, cultural, and social capital becomes meaningful and socially effective only through the process of symbolic translation” (p. 14). How these forms of capital are distributed and balanced determines the influencing power of the individual (Bourdieu, 1986).

However, Bourdieu was conscious of the reality that the conversions of one capital form to another were not quite exact (Nash, 1990). While all forms of capital may interact and overlap in practice, this study will focus on the role of cultural capital and the habitus to explore the context of rural Appalachians.
Cultural capital.

As mentioned above, cultural capital refers to legitimate or valid knowledge that has been acquired from the individual’s lived experiences through family, schooling, and other social networks which are expressed by cultural habits and dispositions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu regarded cultural capital as “a basis for power and defines it broadly to include educational credentials, cultural goods, verbal proficiency, consumption patterns, taste, and even mannerisms” (Lee, Ozzanne, & Hill, 1999, p. 232). At the same time, Bourdieu believed that culture was more than just shared values and cultural traits. Bourdieu believed that cultural capital and economic capital were similar in that they produced a profit, could be controlled and manipulated by individuals or groups, and could be passed from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). For that reason, cultural capital can be seen as an innate competence or skill that can be mastered and improved on (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Like money, cultural competencies could be appropriated to create advantages (Macris, 2011; Weininger, 2005). Bourdieu argued that the student assessment processes in schools favored children from a certain class and propagated their advantages from one generation to the next (Bourdieu 1977). For example, an individual who learned more than one language from his or her parents or in school and took time to develop competency may have a cultural capital that is valued in the business world. Therefore, this capital may be converted into an economic capital because of increased job opportunities.

Cultural capital must also be understood in the light of an individual’s social capital because he or she is a member of a certain family, has a certain group of friends, and has a certain network of acquaintances. This then influences the scope of cultural competences available to the individual.
It may be difficult to exchange social capital for economic capital; nonetheless, it may influence cultural capital, which then can be more easily converted into economic resources (Harker, 1990; Lee, Ozzanne, & Hill, 1999).

**Fields.**

Bourdieu envisioned a place in which the competition for capital between individuals and groups would take place. He called it the field of force (Bourdieu, 1977). The instrumental ideas are struggle and power, not necessarily areas of specialization (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990). Therefore, business, medicine, law, and entertainment are the “fields” where struggle and domination are played out for the rare capital resources within the particular system. His concept stresses how conflict and relationships are instrumental to attaining power in social life. Bourdieu equates field of force with the Marxist view of field of power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1996) wrote, “The field of power is a field of forces defined by the structure of the existing balance of forced between forms of power, or between different species of capital” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996 p. 76). Fields of force are, in essence, the playground where legitimate modes of reproduction take place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996).

In this light, Appalachians may have a smaller field of force to engage in competition because of their geographic isolation, and lack of symbolic, cultural or linguistic capital. The concept of fields of force sheds light on the innate disadvantages rural Appalachians have inherited. For example, they may have less access to the fields of force, and therefore less access to competition and capital return. Bourdieu believed those with more capital were able to outcompete other and dominate the fields of force (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Rural Appalachians, on the other hand, may not only lack capital but the fields of force to compete on. Accessibility and capital are essential for competition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996).
Habitus.

Early in his theory, Bourdieu focused on modern education because he believed that modern institutionalized education was used to reproduce a dominant culture’s grip on social control and power (Bourdieu, 1977; Colman, 1994; Jenks, 1993; Nash, 1990). One of Bourdieu’s theoretical elements was called “habitus,” which may resemble Althusser’s idea of ideological state apparatus (Jenks, 1993). Althusser posited:

It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he is acted by the following system set out in the order of its real determination: ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, describing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief (Althusser, 1971, p. 136)

Similarly Bourdieu defined habitus as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (1977, pp. 82-83). Both ideas express a concern for how a dominant culture’s norms and traditions interact and influence individual norms and traditions. Bourdieu perceived that this cultural interplay affected social relations across class stratifications (Jenks, 1993).

Bourdieu applied the idea of habitus to inequalities resulting from cultural and structural reproduction in his work with Passeron (1990). They concluded that social inequalities are reproduced in the educational system and other socializing institutions. From the perspective of education, individuals with more economic resources became the actual cultural capital; that is to say, individuals with higher social class could more easily attain cultural capital and education that would yield credentials that produced prosperity (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).
His general theory on social reproduction predicts that the education a younger generation receives is affected by the constrained but fluid influence of social, economic, and cultural capital (Sullivan, 2002).

Whereas Marxist social reproduction theorists like Bowles and Gintis (2001) focused on the forces of production in relation to cultural domination and thus social reproduction of class relations, Bourdieu “extends the interested nature of economic behavior to all forms forces of action, including material and symbolic behavior” (Lee, Ozzanne, & Hill, 1999, p. 231). For Bourdieu, all material and symbolic acts are competitive in nature because individuals want to increase their material and symbolic production. The habitus is the thrust of this competition because it generates the practice of these acts in social life (Nash, 1990). The habitus is simply the attitudes, customs, social norms, “and the unelaborated relations of homology which gives access to another level of order and meaning” (Nash, 1990, p. 433). Lizardo (2004) recorded one of Bourdieu’s most definitive definitions of habitus in this way:

Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to functions structuring structures, that is, as principles that generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them. Objectively regulated and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor (Lizardo, 2004, p. 7)
Steinmetz (2011) paraphrased this idea thusly: “The habitus, Bourdieu suggested, is like language: it regulates the range of possible practices without actually selecting specific practices, just as linguistic forms may limit individual utterances without in any way determining which of the infinite number possible sentences or combinations of words are actually spoken at any given moment” (p. 51). In essence, the fluidity of grammar makes it possible for a culture to generate new words, forms, and expressions that may influence the original structure of the dominant culture’s grammar, which could in turn result in cultural change (Nash, 2002). What is represented by the analogy above is the life cycle of a culture whereby a produced culture (the dominant culture) is internalized and accepted (through socialization) and then produces its own culture that has recycled its social norms, attitudes, beliefs, but provides the fluidity of change (Nash, 1990).

Bourdieu’s theory applied to rural Appalachia.

Habitus is made up of the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of the subjective individual as well as objective others in their social network. Together, the subjective and objective create interplay between social probability and personal aspiration (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). It can be represented in three ways: “collective habitus (the unifying cultural code), dispositional habitus (the internalized cultural code), and manifest habitus (the practice of characteristic style)” (Nash, 1990, p. 434). The idea of habitus may be instrumental in understanding how a group of people actually interact with the types of capital and the fields of force in which they compete. Habitus may foster attitudes and actions that empower objective social structures to reproduce. For example, individuals with lower economic and cultural resources may find it more difficult to secure a professional job. That potential outcome increases for minority or disenfranchised groups (MacCloud, 2009).
Rural Appalachians are raised in a culture that struggles with poverty, illiteracy, and economic distress (Chenoweth, 2004; Dunn, 2010; Elam, 2002). Education, job, and healthcare disparities still plague the rural areas of Appalachia (Black, Pollard & Sander, 2007; Halverson & Bischak, 2008). The social reproduction in the rural areas may have contributed to the poor physical and mental health of many rural Appalachians. Crabtree (2011) found that many in rural Appalachia had higher depression rates, sick days, and less initiative to get work done.

**Theoretical summary.**

The Bourdieuian framework of social reproduction in light of the Crabtree’s (2011) findings paints a picture of a group of people born into physical, emotional, and economic distress. Over time, these realities influence their attitudes, beliefs, and lived experiences and have a high probability of being passed onto the next generation through cultural transmission and socialization (Bisin & Verdier, 2010). Like other disenfranchised groups, the rural Appalachians may lack the cultural capital to compete for better jobs. Their distrust of outsiders and cultural values of staying close to home demonstrate cultural capital that may have a negative effect on their mobility (Russ, 2006). Year after year, the interplay of rural Appalachian cultural transmission with physical and mental health disparities seem to help create a cycle of distress that is simply not necessary.

However, the Bourdieuian framework is not completely deterministic (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lee, Ozzanne, & Hill, 1999; Nash, 1990). It makes room for disruptions through the idea of the habitus. Lee, Ozzanne, and Hill (1999) explained, “it is not deterministic; it develops over time and can be revised and used not only to support social structures, but also to change them” (p. 233).
Therefore, as one looks at the context of rural Appalachian people through the lens of Bourdieu, it could be said that there is a cultural transmission of distress, but there is always an opportunity for an inner disruption that can improve the conditions of the individual as well as the larger community.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Rural Appalachians still struggle with poverty, lack of good healthcare, educational access, unemployment, and some geographic isolation that compounds the other problems. For this reason, Rural Appalachia has been to focus of many governmental rehabilitation programs over the past 75 years. During this time, the region has also experienced its fair share of stereotyping and bias. At the same time, individuals from rural Appalachia improve their lives every day. This review of literature will cover six important themes that navigate the story of the experience of growing up in rural Appalachia. The six themes are as follows: The present condition of rural Appalachia, the cultural characteristics of rural Appalachians, the external pressures on rural Appalachians, the learning style of rural Appalachians, disruption theory, and intercultural experiences. Although the literature covers these themes in diverse contexts, the specific concern in this review is to reveal a possible connection between the rural Appalachians’ life experience and how intercultural experiences might disrupt their status quo toward transformation.

Appalachia: The Condition

In the early 1960’s, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was established to help address Appalachia’s culture of poverty through urbanization. It was to provide the necessities: Roads, healthcare, and vocational training with proper education and transportation to follow (Drake, 2001; Ingof, 1973; Isserman, 1996; Walls, 1977). Despite the economic development efforts of the Appalachian Regional Commission to the infrastructure of the region over many years, rural mountain people are still overlooked (Bauch, 2006; Bennet, 2008; Drake, 2001; Russ, 2006).
Poverty, high unemployment, and isolation still exist (ARC, 2011; Banker, 2010; Bennet, 2006).

Bennet (2008) mentioned that West Virginia had the highest unemployment rate and fewest college graduates. ARC (2011) suggested little has changed in central Appalachia since 2008 with a 10.9 percent unemployment rate (p. 1). Rural West Virginia is a model of the type of poverty and unemployment that represents today’s mountainous areas of rural Appalachia (Bennet, 2008).

At the same time, the Appalachian Regional Commission’s 2012 summary illustrates an environment with similar conditions found in the Appalachia of the 1960’s. Ninety-six counties within the Appalachian territory economies are distressed, and ninety counties are at risk of being distressed. To be considered a distressed county is to be one of the most economically depressed counties, ranking in the worst ten percent of the nation’s counties (p. 1). The unemployment rate of southern Appalachia was at 9.9 percent in 2010. Only central Appalachia had a higher rate at 10.9 percent (ARC, 2011, p. 1). Southern Appalachia is not as distressed as central Appalachia, but this might be due to the Southern Valley industry and economy where there are more urban factors. Still, in the rural pockets of the Appalachia, there is severe poverty and lack of future mobility (Bennet, 2008).

**Appalachia: The Cultural Barriers**

Weller’s (1965) work contrasted the value orientations of Southern Appalachia with those of upper-middle class professionals. He summarized the core values reproduced from generation to generation as follows: 1) They see man as subjugated to nature and God with little control over human destiny, and thus they are very fatalistic;
2) they have a slow natural rhythm and are mostly concerned with the present moment; 3) they tend to be oriented to concrete places and particular things; 4) they tend to believe that human nature is basically evil and unalterable without the help of divine intervention; 5) they are focused on being instead of doing; 6) they are personable, kinship based and mostly non-trusting of outsiders (Weller, 1965, p. 6). Contemporary scholars built on Weller’s (1965) work and concluded that much of the cultural characteristics remain the same (Banker, 2010, Bennet, 2008, Eller, 2008, Isserman, 1996, Russ, 2006). Therefore, these values may still be viable and embedded in the culture, and may cause a natural conflict with the nature and dynamics of contemporary globalization, other cultures, and change.

Lack of urbanization and geographic isolation allowed for the values and beliefs of the culture to remain in many ways unchanged even today (Rehder, 2004, Banker, 2010; Bauch, 2006). Tang and Russ (2007) found that Appalachian culture had remained relatively the same in urban areas where Appalachians had migrated (as cited in Bennet, 2008). Bisin and Verdier (2010) approached this issue of sustaining culture through an economic lens. They surveyed theoretical and empirical literature that emphasized the role of parents in the socialization process and their role in cultural transmission. They discovered that parents choose how and why they socialize their children by an imperfect empathy “that is a form of altruism biased towards the parents’ own cultural traits” (p. 7).

Bisin and Verdier (2010) pointed out that the socialization and cultural transmission from parents to children “requires parental resources, e.g., time spent with children, private school tuition, church contribution, and so on” (p. 7). Parents and the family system are important in Appalachian culture (Banker, 2010; Bauch, 2006; Bennet, 2008; Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004).
Likewise, then, in light of Bisin and Verdier (2010), parental resources would also be required and uniquely important to the cultural transmission of Appalachian culture.

For example, the family system is instrumental in an Appalachian’s vocational choice (Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000; Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Because students in the mountain areas of rural Appalachia are still somewhat isolated geographically, it seems reasonable to believe they may be more dependent on the family system than other cosmopolitan or suburban Appalachians. Russ’s (2006) research added to the understanding of family dynamics as she explored the effects of Appalachian culture on career choice. Her findings suggested that the cultural characteristics of southern Appalachia magnify the problem of a social reproduction of isolation and lack of social and economic mobility. She also found that the core values embedded through the parents and family system of rural Appalachians may not have changed too much over the past 50 years in spite of the influence of technology, internet, cable, and social media (Russ, 2006). Russ posited that cultural factors like levels of trust, family and community ties, and distrust of outsiders might interfere with their potential economic futures. Bennet (2008) mentioned fatalism, communication style, and “value placed on relaxed personal talk” as characteristics that conflict with the majority of cultures in America (Bennet, 2008, p. 245).

The long process of cultural transmission may include the transmission of a self-efficacy that negatively affects the next generation’s upward mobility potential. This is term is different from confidence or self-esteem which describes one’s general trust in their abilities and their self-worth. It is also different from the term efficacy in that it is more than a power to create an effect. It is the real or perceived belief in one’s ability to produce something which in turn affirms their capabilities and the level of strength of that belief (Bandura, 1995).
Self-efficacy is initiated in the adolescent years through corporate or familial-efficacy and is strengthened as they successfully engage analytical and emotional problems (Bandura, 1995). The culture as well as the self-efficacy of rural Appalachian families has been passed down since the 1700’s.

The literature seems to reveal little cultural change since Weller’s 1965 work with regards to the specific population of mountain or rural Appalachians. As such, Weller’s conclusions may also be of contemporary value. His impression was that the greatest challenge to the reconstruction and improvement of the culture was “its people” because it didn’t seem that they wanted to change in order to improve their lives (p. 37). This was a time when half of central Appalachia’s families were below the poverty line. In support of Weller’s view, sociologist Rupert Vance (1965) acknowledged that mountain people had experienced a shift from geographic isolation to an emotional and behavioral isolation. Vance wrote:

Thus mountain isolation, which began as physical isolation enforced by rugged topography, became mental and cultural isolation, holding people in disadvantaged areas, resisting those changes that would bring them into contact with the outside world. The effect of conditions thus becomes a new cause of conditions, but the cause is now an attitude, not a mountain. (As cited in Weller, 1965, p. vii)

The practical implications of this assessment are still clear: "to change the mountains," Vance asserted, was “to change the mountain personality” (Weller, 1965, p. xi). Geographic and cultural isolation had turned into an attitude that is less open to change (Gore, Wilburn, Treadway, & Plaut, 2011).
Appalachia: External Pressures

Apart from geographic and cultural isolation, the effects of globalization, immigration, and urbanization have contributed to the disparity of the Southern Appalachian context (Commission on Religion in Appalachia, 2012; Banker, 2010; Bennett, 2006; Dunn, 2010; Rehder, 2004). For example Dunn (2010) described how the combination of the new market economy, progressivism, and eminent domain laws contributed to the death of the Cades Cove community located in the Smokey Mountains of lower East Tennessee. The mountain economy with the surrounding counties changed from mills and logging to entertainment and tourism (Banker, 2010). With farming and logging being replaced, the rural Appalachian must either choose to seek employment miles away in urban areas where there are more manufacturing and industrial trade jobs, or migrate to another area altogether (Bennet, 2008; Jensen 2006).

Immigration highlights the complexity of the new market changes. Jensen (2006) discovered that tourism-based economies in the rural southeast attracted new immigrants from outside the United States, which created competition for jobs in a jobless market which already was not sufficient to support a family. Southeastern Appalachia in general has seen substantial gains in immigration numbers. For example, as Jensen (2006) pointed out, Duplin County, North Carolina experienced a “nearly tenfold increase of immigrant population from 500 to 5000 over the 1990’s, and only 11 percent of its current foreign-born population are citizens” (18). Jensen went on to suggest that immigration had also created competition for the more viable agricultural and manufacturing jobs in the suburban and urban areas of Appalachia. This would leave the mountain or more rural Appalachian contending for jobs in all three terrains of Appalachia.
Future generations of rural Appalachians will need to be prepared to work and live with a more diverse workforce in order to move upward economically and socially (Shaftel, Shaftel, & Ahluwalia, 2007). As the world becomes smaller for the rural Appalachian and the traditional blue collar jobs become more competitive, the need for expanded and innovative intercultural experiences may be more significant than ever for this population.

**The Appalachian Learner**

Banker (2010) and Bennet (2008) suggested that the existing geographic and cultural isolation in Appalachia was significant to sustaining and embedding the specific culture of rural mountain people. These embedded cultural characteristics, learning styles, and general attitudes towards education influence the socialization of the Appalachian people (Bennet, 2008; Helton, 2010; Wallace & Diekroger, 2000). The family system and the external pressures of globalization and immigration may influence the cultural characteristics and learning styles of rural Appalachians.

Helton (2010) studied teachers who taught rural Appalachian and urban college students. He discovered from their interviews that rural Appalachian students, especially first generation college students shared the following characteristics: lacked good writing skills; were not as prepared for college in math and writing; and were challenged in written organization, with grammatical errors common (Helton, 2010). In addition, there were differences between first- and second-generation Appalachians. According to Helton (2010) second-generation college students were better prepared and tended to not demonstrate a close identity with their culture due to possible stereotyping. In contrast to urban students, rural Appalachians seemed to be more motivated and had richer verbal expression. They were good story-tellers and were thought to be more reflective and inquisitive than their urban counterparts.
Moreover, Appalachian students in the rural areas of East Tennessee, Kentucky, and Western North Carolina demonstrate highly collectivistic attitudes which affect their academic success (Gore, Wilburn, Treadway, & Plaut, 2011). Gore et al.’s (2011) study of 605 Appalachian and non-Appalachian college students found that these students preferred a close geographic attachment to their region and a desire to keep strangers at a distance. This may highlight the need for more exposure to other cultures and diverse learning experiences. In light of the cultural values and learning style of rural Appalachians, a transformational learning model in tandem with a process of change model like innovative disruption theory may be a suitable strategy to view or understand how disruption may be introduced to the culture. Ukpokudo (2010) clearly defined this relationship between transformational learning and innovation theory in the context of multicultural education:

I define transformative pedagogy as activist and agency pedagogy that combines the elements of constructivism [experiential learning, Dewey, 1998, Kolb, 1975] and critical pedagogy [reflective learning, McLaren, 2000] that challenge the status quo and promotes a democratic and emancipatory learning context where students and professors engage in dialogic relationships as co-learners, valuing each other’s knowledge, empowering each other for transformative intellectualism (meaningful knowledge construction) and change agency. (p. 3).

Ukpokudo’s definition highlights a concern for educational experiences that empowers the student through relationship, reflection, and experimentation. These type of experiences may be vital to the rural Appalachian with regards to introducing lasting change and personal efficacy. However, their values also make it difficult to enter into this learning environment as it relates to leaving their culture (Gore, Wilburn, Treadway, & Plaut, 2011).
Still, activities outside of their environment may serve as an important catalyst in their decision-making processes and how they interpret and articulate their personal narrative.

Part of that personal narrative may include the influence of religion. Weller (1965) mentioned that the idea of God and his control over destiny was a value common to rural Appalachia. Religion and the role of the church in general is a part of the fabric of the culture (Helton, 2010, Rehder, 2004). There has been recent research in the area of religion and its influence, specifically on student’s perception and engagement in intercultural experiences. For example, Beyerlein, Adler, and Trinitapoli (2011) studied the effect of religious short-term mission trips had on youth civic engagement. This is relevant because it demonstrates the point that experiences outside one’s culture can shape the individual’s inward personality and likelihood of participation in activities they were not emotionally open to before.

While they did not focus their study on rural Appalachians, there are some gleanings from their research that might be applicable. With regards to participation of adults on mission trips, they found that church size, diversity, regular attendance, and peer influence increased the chances of participation. They acknowledged that most of the data about young adults and adolescents’ participation in mission trips were small and based on samples within educational settings, but from their perspective, the study provided a “more rigorous evaluation of the role of religious short-term mission trips in promoting civic engagement” (Beyerlein, Adler, &Trinitapoli, 2011, p. 791). Neither civic nor religious engagement is the focus here but rather the change the students experienced from their intercultural activity.

Three applicable thoughts can be evoked from Beyerlein, Adler, and Trinitapoli’s (2011) conclusion: 1) Religion plays a role in shaping a young adults engagement in other cultures,
2) Intercultural experiences provide a pathway for students to integrate into a larger human narrative, 3) global responsibility and concern became more important to the participants (Beyerlein, Adler, & Trinitapoli, 2011, p. 791-793).

Therefore, religious values may encourage intercultural activities, which may in turn help facilitate innovative transformation in the life of the rural Appalachian. Transformation does not happen until the learner is engaged and innovative disruption enables that engagement (Hess, 2006; McLaren, 2000).

**Disrupting the Cycle**

Christensen and Eyring (2011) mentioned that there are two parts to the theory of disruptive innovation. Sustaining innovation “makes something bigger and better” while disruptive innovation “disrupts the bigger and better cycle by bringing to market a product or service . . . more affordable and easier to use” (p. xxiv). Peter Drucker (1985) called innovation a specific tool of entrepreneurship that creates resources with the capacity to create capital. His words add weight to this idea:

> Innovation, indeed, creates a resource. There is no such thing as a resource until man finds a use for something in nature and thus endows it with economic value. Until then, every plant is a weed, and every mineral just another rock. (p. 30)

Consider intercultural experiences like study abroad or service learning as the innovative idea. The nature of these learning experiences contain elements of transformational learning, and the process of innovative change previously mentioned may be ideal for the rural Appalachian. In this respect, study abroad could be seen as sustaining and disruptive to the rural Appalachian. For example, in the context of education, Hess (2006) supports the use of entrepreneurial innovation in education where the status quo is not addressing the needs of a student population.
He called educational entrepreneurs people who want to instigate change that will “disrupt, transform, or radically alter the way education is provided” (p. 46). The key point here is that innovation and disruption can bring about personal transformation.

The task here is to understand how the innovations of intercultural experiences are introduced to rural Appalachians, how they accept them, and how they articulate that process. The theory of diffusion of innovation may give insight as to how innovations and ideas are accepted by a culture and community.

Rogers (2003) defined diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over a period of time among the members of a social system” (p. 11). This process focuses on how communication of specific information is perceived as new entrepreneurial innovation. According to Rogers, an innovation can be an idea, product, practice, object, or technology, and the innovation’s characteristics may predict the speed of its adoption. Diffusion of innovation theory contributes to the idea of intercultural experiences as innovative for the following reasons: 1) It makes it feasible to discover the steps of the process of adoption of the idea; 2) it is relational in nature, which appeals to the values of Appalachians; 3) it focuses on the direct needs of a population (Rogers, 2003, pp. 11-27). The diffusion model may be an ideal process for understanding the mind of rural Appalachians who tend to be person-oriented, concerned more about personal feelings than the interests of other groups, and have a general ambivalence toward education (Drake, 2001; Weller, 1965).

Rogers listed five explanations for the adoption of an innovation (Rogers, 2003, p. 15-16). Innovations that contain more of these characteristics are more likely to be accepted and implemented by the population, with the benefits and simplicity of the innovation as the two
most important characteristics (Rogers, 2003). These five qualities determine between 49 and 87 percent of the variation in the adoption of new products (Rogers, 2003, p. 221).

In summary, the practical benefits of the diffusion of innovation processes may be able to explain rural Appalachians’ acceptance and engagement of intercultural activities in rural Appalachia. For example, innovative disruption theory was applied to study abroad research. Spiering and Erickson (2006) found that “relative advantage and trialability were most important in deciding to participate in study abroad. The results indicated complexity and compatibility were most important in not participating” (p. 314).

The rural Appalachians may also be affected by the complexity and compatibility of the idea of studying in another culture (Dees, 2006). For this reason, diffusion theory may shed light on how to approach the culture of Appalachia by considering the practical nature of the innovation and the values of the target population before implementing the innovation. It would most likely take planning, relationship building, and networking over a period of time in order for rural Appalachian families to trust and adopt the innovation of study abroad in their thinking and practice. To better ensure the adoption, Christensen and Eyring (2011) suggested approaching the most influential people in the population to gain their support of the innovative idea: Examples include rural Appalachian college students that may be parents, professors, the institution’s administration, coaches, peers, youth ministers, and churches. Encouragement from respected and trusted individuals to engage in activities like study abroad may empower the student to participate. Can intercultural experiences serve as an innovative disruption for the rural Appalachian student as to promote a paradigm shift in their thinking about their future socio-economic futures?
It may if it is perceived as practical, beneficial, relational and simple in nature. It may also allow others a framework to understand interpret the decision-making process and the story of the rural Appalachian with regards to their intercultural engagement.

**Study Abroad as a Transformative Innovation**

The term, “intercultural experience,” is broad. We can deduce from the phrase that it includes more than one culture and some sort of organized experience. To clarify a definition that includes both sides of the term, the characterization of study abroad painted by Reilly and Senders (2009) was selected to describe the type of intercultural experience that may benefit the rural Appalachians. They approach their description of study abroad from a historical and rhetorical perspective. They discuss three frameworks “that still shape the rhetoric used to describe contemporary study abroad programs” (p. 242). The first is called Class Reproduction. This describes study abroad as a grand tour that seeks cultural acquisitions and the increase of social capital. According to Reilly and Sender (2009) this frame still remains strong in the U. S. because of its pursuit of class status, prestige, professional security, and competiveness. The second is called Idealistic Internationalization. This post-war frame of study abroad was inspired to change it into programs that promoted “peaceful international affairs and even a step towards international understanding and peace building” (p. 244). The idealists were convinced that study abroad and cultural exchange in general could achieve what politicians could not. The last frame is called Political Internationalism. This view seeks cross cultural knowledge as leverage in global politics. However, they promote a fourth way to frame study abroad. It is called Critical Study Abroad. This frame may be most relevant and applicable to the intent of intercultural experiences in the context of rural Appalachia. For that reason, Reilly and Senders’ words are important:
In this paper we argue that our goals and the ways we articulate them are material, not simply rhetorical. The field needs to re-imagine its place in geopolitics actively or risk being co-opted by nationalistic discourses. To that end, we reframe our work in terms of an ethos of global responsibility and citizenship (p. 247).

The essence of this proposed framework is global concern and global thinking with global benefits. It moves the idea of study abroad, and the innate intercultural experience, beyond political ambition and personal growth to global citizenship, which makes it innovative. Study abroad may offer an experience that can open the door to a perspective that may break the cycle of poverty and isolation that has remained in the Appalachian culture. However, the rural Appalachian will need more practical and economic reasons to participate in an activity that would take him or her so far from home and their culture (Bennet, 2008). What are some of the benefits that may facilitate transformation through study abroad?

Edmonds (2010) observed nurses who studied abroad. He found the students benefitted from study abroad in specific areas: Personal growth and global perspective; achievement in adaptation skills even when outside their culture; and increased self-efficacy (Edmonds, 2010; Dessoff, 2006). Appalachian culture may glean from these nurses’ experiences because, like the nursing career, many careers demand the skills to work with various cultures (The Sullivan Commission, 2004, as cited in Edmonds, 2010). Also the nursing students’ confidence increased as their competence increased (Edmonds, 2010). This is relevant because practical hands on learning experiences are valuable to the personality of the rural mountain Appalachian (Helton, 2010; Dirkx, 1998). Their participation, aspirations, and motivations are in fact tied to their self-efficacy beliefs (Ali & Saunders, 2009; Doyle, Gendall, Meyer, Hoek, Tait, McKenzie &
While study abroad cannot guarantee a job, it has been found to impact career development. For example, Wanaseck (2005) focused on intercultural activity of service learning and its impact on career choices. She reported in regards to Tonkin, Deeley, Pusch, Quiroga, Siegel, Whiteley, and Bringle’s (2004) research of seventeen alumni focus groups from International Partnership for Service Learning:

Several common themes emerged from the study. International service learning is a more radical educational experience for and tends to have a long term impact on its participant. . . . The ISPL [International Partnership for Service Learning] experience has been so powerful for some students that it has re-shaped their career aspirations and goals after their return to the U.S. or other home country. (As cited in Tillman, 2005, p. 33)

It is not known if the sample group was as culturally contained as rural Appalachian culture, but it is still important to know the potential impact of intercultural activities on participants. At the same time, the focus of service learning on community and volunteerism coincides with the religious values of the rural Appalachian. This suggests that study abroad experiences, including service learning, have the ability to transform the future career of its participants and illuminate a global perspective or concern (Wanaseck, 2005, as cited in Tillman, 2005).

Since study abroad experiences, even in the short term, have been found to have lasting benefits (Allen, 2009), rural southern Appalachian students may benefit from this type of social disruption, that is to say, an action or process that takes them out of their culture and enables them to see the world anew.
It may offer a unique and stable intercultural experience that may improve personal growth, cultural understanding, and language competency (Tarrant, 2010).

For example, Allen’s (2009) qualitative study explored two students’ motivations for participating in study abroad which expressed two important desires. One student was motivated by cultural understanding and the other by job mobility (Allen, 2009). Further, Adler, Loughrin-Sacco, and Moffat (2005) referred to a study by Bickson and Law (1994) that demonstrated study abroad interns developed more learning outcomes than a typical internship (Bickson, 1994). Adler et al. (2005) concluded that international education experiences had a transformative effect on the student’s career aspirations and motivations.

These are key skills in the twenty-first century global context (Allen, 2009). Through intercultural experiences like study abroad, rural Appalachians may become more cosmopolitan and less parochial, more open, and less prejudiced (Reilly & Senders, 2009). From this perspective, “study abroad produces a mobile social class, one that views the world as opportunity and resource” (Reilly & Senders, 2009, p. 241). Study abroad may provide better opportunities for job mobility for the professional, more self-confidence for the student, and more political leverage for a country (Dwyer, 2004, Reilly & Senders, 2009, Tillman, 2005), However, for the rural Appalachian, helping the family comes first—this is where their identity is found (Bennet, 2008, Russ, 2006).

The Appalachians must feel and believe in themselves, and that the activity benefits the family (Bennet, 2008). When the rural Appalachian achieves this confidence, the door may be open to an activity that can impact their closed system of thinking. This, in fact, is the goal. Ali and Saunders’ (2009) research supported this notion.
They studied rural Central Appalachia with regard to the role of self-efficacy and discovered that those who obtained higher education tended to leave the area. They suggested that “targeted interventions that are designed to increase their confidence and expectations about their future” might be valuable to those without higher education and from lower socio-economic statuses (Ali & Saunders, 2009, p. 172).

Likewise, study abroad may also serve as an agent of change in the personality of the rural mountain Appalachian. Experiencing another culture may be a key to the door of economic mobility. The innate hands-on-learning approach of being in another culture may help solidify change. It is not far reaching to imply that intercultural activities may serve as an intervention or doorway for mountain Appalachians.

**The Forgotten Force: Cultural Reentry**

Going abroad to other cultures or experiencing other cultures on the homeland in urban settings may assist in adding to the individual’s life experiences, skills, and competencies that forever change his or her view of the world (Deardorff, 2006). However, going and experiencing other cultures is only part of the transformation process. Coming back into one’s culture can be just as shocking to an individual’s worldview, depending on the duration of the experience (Adler, 1975; Callahan, 2010; Oberg, 1960). Reentry may be perceived as less difficult than leaving (Callahan 2010). However, it may be difficult because: 1) The individual has changed or adapted another culture’s language, customs, and worldview; and 2) the original cultural context and responses from others may have changed while they were gone (Callahan, 2010). The experiences of those who experience reentry were summarized by Jansson (1975):

In most cases, there is a shift in values, a portion of “history” that is not mutually shared, and behaviors which differ from those expected within the social system.
The re-entrant is in the minority and is, in a sense, defined by those who remained in the group. (As cited in Callahan, 2010, p. 2)

Time may indicate the degree of the difficulty of culture shock reentry and the depth of the transformational disruption of the experience on the worldview of the individual (Kramer, 2002). Callahan (2010), referencing Kramer (2002), wrote that he “used hermeneutics to argue that our intercultural experiences fuse within previous experiences, perhaps even combining into something altogether different from each culture. Cultural experiences are never lost; they are only buried deep in our social functioning” (p. 8).

The adaptation cycle includes four socialization phases: 1) Enculturation—learning other cultures; 2) Acculturation—or re-socialization; 3) Deculturation—unlearning of indigenous culture; 4) Assimilation—acceptance of re-socialization (Callahan, 2010). To some lesser or greater degrees, these cycles may be repeated as one reenters one’s original cultural context. This process may in fact constitute the intercultural experience’s transformative nature.

Therefore, the rural Appalachian’s intercultural experience may only begin with leaving, but the full magnitude of the transformative power of the experience may only occur as the rural Appalachian returns to grapple intellectually and emotionally with his or her culture in light of the experience. It may then become full circle in that the sojourner left and changed in order to return and change.

**Unintended Consequences**

Unintended consequences almost always include good or well-intended ideas that sometimes have negative or no effects. The Appalachian region is not immune or unfamiliar with good intentions.
Eller (2008) mentioned that government programs and legislation like the War on Poverty and the Appalachian Regional Development Act were all well intended to address the culture’s poverty and lack of education. He wrote, “To often . . . we have mistaken growth for development, change for progress” (Eller, 2008, p. 5).

In contrast to the American ideas of progress through job creation and market expansion, when the jobs created do not pay well or provide good health care, the unintended consequence “may reinforce conditions of dependence and powerlessness” (p. 5).

Intercultural experiences may have unintended consequences for the rural Appalachian as well—for example, cultural tension in the family system and in gender roles, as well as greater economic dysfunction. The culture is still very paternal and man-centered, and family loyalty runs deep (Russ, 2006). Individuals who choose another culture over their own may feel like they have abandoned their own and the transformative process become frozen in time. Also, individuals may have formed another perspective about the world in comparison to their parents, spouse, and peers, and this may drive a relational wedge between themselves and their relational systems. Related to that is an economic wedge that may be formed if individuals decide to leave their culture for better opportunities, which results in more economic disparity in the region than before. At the same time, if they stay to compete with existing jobs or as a new professional, they may create a wider social gap between them and those in the community that are still unemployed.

Intercultural experiences do not guarantee a job, a better job, or an international job, even though Weirs-Jenssen’s (2003) Norwegian student study found that students who went abroad for their entire education were more likely to find jobs internationally and nationally versus those who chose to get their education domestically.
Still, there was evidence for “horizontal” impacts, but not vertical impacts on their careers (Wier-Jenssen, 2003, p. 120). The rural mountain Appalachian would have an emotional mountain to climb just to make it abroad. For it not to pay off economically and socially may indeed reinforce previous conditions of dependency, hopelessness, and powerlessness.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design

Research Questions

The central question was as follows: How do adult rural Appalachians make sense of their intercultural experiences?

There were three sub-questions:

1. What are the rural Appalachian participants’ stories of social reproduction?
2. What do rural Appalachians say about their intercultural experiences?
3. How do rural Appalachians describe their rural Appalachian experience after their intercultural experience?

Bourdieu’s (1977) social reproduction theory suggested that cultural capital and economic capital were similar in that they produced a profit and could be utilized by individuals or groups, and passed from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Social reproduction theory considers how cultural capital can be seen as an innate competence or skill that can be mastered and improved on (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). The abundance or scarcity of social capital may influence the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of an individual or group (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the abundance or scarcity of social or cultural capital would then also influence an individual or group’s perception of self, environment, and potential future. The central research question focused primarily on the way a rural Appalachian internalizes and perceives themselves in relation to their intercultural experiences. It sought to process, connect, and make sense of those experiences in relation to where they are in their existential life.
Sub questions 1, 2, and 3 attempted to achieve the goal of the central question by seeking to understand the participant’s intellectual articulation, external environment, and emotional experiences in relation to their past encounters, present realities, and future potential.

**Methodology**

This investigation employed a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research may be used when there is a need to “study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). It may also be an effective methodology because the data collection can take place in people’s natural environments, which may lead to complex layers of cultural information, such as behaviors, opinions, social norms and status, ethnicity, religion and gender roles (Creswell, 2007, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005),

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. . . . Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them. (As cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 36).

Qualitative research has certain characteristics. Creswell (2009) lists eight specific characteristics: the researcher is the key instrument, multiple sources of data may be employed, inductive or thematic data analysis is used, there is a focus on meaning, the design may be emergent rather than tightly prescribed, interpretive and personal influence on the data may come from the researcher, it may use theoretical lenses to view the study, and it is a holistic approach to complex issues (p. 38-39).
The combination of these characteristics may highlight the need for researchers to understand the level of their personal influence on the participant their natural setting. Qualitative research assumes that researchers will address their preconceived notions and assumptions in order to collect the most accurate data (Ely, 1991; Denzin, 1989). In many cases, the data will be the narrative, or story, of the participant which represents a voice to be heard (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Qualitative research may also be ideal for cultural and social questions, such as how rural Appalachians articulate their encounters with other cultures. This study considered this question and attempted to allow the voice of the participants to be heard through storytelling and narrative analysis (Saldana, 2009; Riessman, 2008).

**Research Tradition**

An individual’s existential experience, that is, his or her actions, thoughts, socio-cultural and institutional contexts were observed and organized in a narrative framework in order to truly understand their meaning. The narrative tradition utilized the practice of creating thick descriptions in tandem with in-depth interview texts to provide a richer story (Riessman, 2008; Van Maanen, 2011). The work of the researcher in this context was to record life experiences as told by the participant into meaningful episodes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Among the list of qualitative approaches to research, the narrative tradition may be the best way to give a voice to otherwise voiceless stories (Creswell, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Stories allow readers and tellers to connect through the discovery of shared characteristics and values (Creswell, 2007). It is therefore incumbent upon the researcher to provide verified procedures and frameworks to ensure the stories accuracy, believability, and ultimately transformational potential (Creswell, 2007; Freeman, 2002; Riessman, 2008; Denzin, 1989).
Riessman (2008) lists seven observations of the narrative tradition that explains the functionality of stories in the context of qualitative research. First, stories are usually for a specific audience and must be understood in their context. Second, it allows for the narrator to argue with the stories as they tell them, that is, to grapple and make sense of their memories. Third, the storyteller may use the story to persuade others. Fourth, the story provides a mechanism by which the audience can enter into the experience of the storyteller. Fifth, it can be used to entertain. Sixth, stories can be used to mislead others. Lastly, stories can mobilize others to act or change. Riessman (2008) expands on these observations:

Jerome Bruner goes further: Narratives actually structure perceptual experience, organize memory, and segment and purpose-build the very events of life. Individuals, he argues, become the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives. . . . Connecting biography and society becomes possible through close analysis of stories. (p. 10).

This kind of connection may come to fruition in the research process as the researcher and the participant collaborate together. Russ (2010) points out a couple of unique characteristics that may support the use of the narrative approach to this study. Rural Appalachians tend to be distrusting of outsiders, prefer indirect communication styles, but have an oral culture. Therefore, trust and respect may need to be established before information can be transferred. Russ’s work with professionals who counsel rural Appalachian patients advised them as follows:

To be successful in exploring these very personal issues, counselors need to be circumspect and use indirect speech techniques.
Don’t press; let it unfold. Narrative Therapy, allowing the client to tell his/her own story, may be very helpful and is in line with the oral traditions of Appalachian culture (Russ, 2010, p. 6).

In summary, the narrative tradition seeks to discover information about a phenomenon through researcher and participant collaboration, listing, and writing the participant’s stories into meaningful episodes of experience to analyze (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2008; Riessman, 2009). This approach was beneficial to this study because it supported the Appalachian’s natural communication style and the study’s overarching purpose of seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

**Setting and Participants**

The setting of the research took place in a neutral location of the participant’s choice or his or her natural setting. However, the general area was the rural geography of south-east Tennessee. Many of these rural Appalachian counties are considered distressed areas by the U.S. government (ARC, 2012). This study seeks to understand specifically rural Appalachians who have had meaningful intercultural experiences in order to discover their perceptions about how those experiences may have influenced them. This study targeted three to four participants because its intent was “not to generalize the information . . . but to elucidate the particular, the specific” (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). This study needed more than one or two because it sought to develop an understanding of the lived experience of the collective as well as of the individual.

The researcher was from the Appalachian culture, but a gatekeeper was needed to gain audience with potential participants, depending on the specific community (Erikson, 1976). This was a male gatekeeper, because the rural Appalachians are still very patriarchal in their culture (Tang & Russ, 2008).
Since the target audience was characterized as ones who have had meaningful intercultural experiences, the age range focused on working professionals, college graduates, military service people, those over 21 years old that have lived in a diverse setting, and others over the age of 24 who would most likely had the time to actually engage in meaningful intercultural experiences.

**Recruitment and Access**

Snowball sampling was utilized to access the context and recruit participants. Creswell (2008) described this strategy’s purpose as “to identify cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (p. 127). The snowballing strategy will provide the right types of participants for this study’s research questions because the culture is usually small and tight-knit. Therefore, in most cases everyone knows a little about everyone. This was an advantage for the researcher because one gatekeeper led the researcher to others more efficiently. In practice, one gatekeeper translated into many connected gatekeepers for the researcher to utilize.

**Data Collection**

The participants were asked to tell their life story through a guided and recorded in-depth interview. Long-term observation of the participants was not necessary because the researcher was trying to understand what to participants perceive about their experiences through the telling of their stories and not their everyday practices. The researcher was aware of the participant’s general culture and immediate context, ensuring confidence and credibility with the participant.

Fetterman (2010) suggested that there are two primary elements common to interview protocol that supports this approach: Respect for the participant’s culture and respect for the personhood of the participant. He wrote, “Thus, the interview is not an excuse to interrogate an individual or criticize cultural practices” (p. 47).
This benefited the researcher because the participants were more open and comfortable sharing, which led to thicker field notes and descriptions. Field notes were taken during the recording and journaling was utilized afterwards in order record immediate thoughts and perceptions of the interview (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The use of video recording was employed when the participant is willing.

The participants that the researcher was connected with came through a chain of other contacts. The ideal of trust seemed to have traveled along with the snowballing process. The gatekeepers who passed along names to the researcher were credible because they were insiders. At the same time, the researcher was from rural Appalachia, which helped ensure credibility and trust. This is important when considering the motivation of the interviewee’s participation. The snowball process started the data collection process efficiently by introducing the candidate to the purpose of the researcher through a gatekeeper. The researcher invested time and conversation with the gatekeeper so that he provided a sense of the researcher’s agenda. As the researcher acquired potential participant names, the researcher was assured that they were expecting to be contacted. At this point, the researcher made a preliminary phone call to introduce the work and extended the invitation to meet further.

**Data Storage**

To ensure participant confidentiality, this interview was audio taped and pseudonyms were used. The recording and any other identifiable information of the participants was secured under lock and key in a fireproof filing cabinet. The recording and other related material will be discarded two years after the study is complete.
Data Analysis

During the analysis of rural Appalachian participants’ stories, the researcher worked to interpret and uncover knowledge through active listening to the participants. The primary tool employed by this study was the in-depth interview, which allowed the researcher to reconstruct the events of the participants to gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. Rubin and Rubin (2012) wrote, “Through such interviews, researchers explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others than their own” and “extend their intellectual and emotional reach across a variety of barriers” (p. 3). The interview will be semi-structured in order to better guide the conversation, reduce off topic discussion, and allow for follow-up questioning (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The interview transcripts, field notes and personal summaries will be compiled into a research log. Riessman (2008) explained that interview transcripts may serve as the primary text from which life events are “preserved and treated analytically as units” (p. 12). She adds, however, that field notes and summaries may be the means by which the researcher can “think beyond the surface of a text” and allow the text’s “particulars and context come to the fore” (p. 13). The research log as a whole may be where the objective content interacts with the subjective interpreter. Ely (1991) wrote, “This is the place where the researcher faces the self as instrument through a personal dialogue about moments of victory and disheartenment, hunches, feelings, insights, assumptions, biases, and ongoing ideas about method” (p. 69).

Trustworthiness

The researcher is responsible for establishing confidence and credibility with the participant in order to engage in a “joint activity based on respect” (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 2010; Riessman, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 36).
The researcher used thick descriptions, peer review, and participant checking as the strategies to ensure the best validation of the research. The use of rich and thick descriptions assisted the researcher in making decisions about transferable information (Creswell, 2007). Creswell explained, “...with such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). The first reader was a peer reviewer. Creswell argued that the peer reviewer’s task is that he or she keeps

“...the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher for the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher’s feelings (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).

The final accountability readers were those who participated in the study” (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The member-checking process allowed the researcher to examine critically the observations and interpretations (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this final examination, the researcher asked the participants to reflect on the accuracy of the recorded account, interpretations, or themes the researcher concluded and invited the participants to mention anything that the researcher may have not included (Creswell, 2007).
CHAPTER 4

Biographical Vignettes: A Portrait of Two Rural Appalachian Men

This chapter records the essence of the lived experiences of two rural Appalachian men through biographical vignettes that deal with the interaction between their personal and cultural complexities and the complexities of other cultures. These complex cultural interactions provide a framework to discuss the role of intercultural experiences in life disruption. The idea of intercultural interaction and its relationship with life disruption emerges as a hermeneutical tool in understanding the life experiences of these two rural Appalachian men.

This chapter is also where the broader cultural story becomes personified and a story of the rural mountain Appalachian is told from the perspective of two who made the exodus out of the mountains to sounds, sights, smells, and landscapes they had not known before. Many people have exodus experiences that help them understand the courage and will common to all who choose such journeys. Some may leave a desert and bondage; some may leave spousal abuse; some may leave the pavement of the inner-city; and some leave the mountains.

The following summarizes my record and interpretations of these two men’s mountain exodus and their post interview reflections. The idea of being reflective is mentioned here to highlight the participant’s unrealized experiences before and during the interview which may have influenced the way they told their stories. During the interview the essence of their experiences seemed unrealized but as Mishler (1999) stated, “As we access and make sense of events and experiences in our pasts and how they are related to our current selves, we change their meanings” (p. 5). Therefore, the post interview reflections seemed to help them build a stable bridge of understanding their historical selves in relation to their current selves.
Riessman (2001) suggested that many times participants “negotiate how they want to be known by the stories they develop collaboratively with their audiences. Informants do not reveal an essential self as much as they perform a preferred selected from the multiplicity of selves or personas that individuals switch among as they go about their lives” (pgs. 10-11). My interpretations took into consideration the development of meaning by the participants in the moment of the interview, their post interview reflections and that influence on the participant’s performance.

**Sam: The Early Years Living On Starr Mountain**

Sam was born in 1946 near Starr Mountain in Tennessee. Starr Mountain sets north of the Hiwassee River and across from Oswald’s Dome. The Gee Creek wilderness lies in its southwest corner. US highway 411 winds along the western side, while TN highway 315 creeps along the eastern. It sets in between Monroe and Polk County, but this is Cherokee National Forest area and it consumes the western hills of the Appalachians in East Tennessee. The roads are mostly gravel and dirt and even the paved roads can be still rough and steep.

His father he had some “college (technical school training) after he came back from WWII but preferred running moonshine. Sam said of his dad that he, “Just didn’t have what it took to be a family man”. He was eight, his sister was four and it was, “me and mother and my sister from there on out”. Sam recorded two main stories about his early years growing up near Starr Mountain.

**Scene one.**

I’ve lived on and off in these hills all my life with the exception of about ten year and that was the ten years that I moved to Jacksonville,
Florida for employment and I guess you would say […] to better myself. But you could say I’d never left. [^]I’ll always be a mountain boy. Was an’ is. It just sticks with ya.

**Analytical commentary.**

The Geographic landscape and the culture seem to be important to Sam’s identity. This is more specific than just rural identity. He is a “mountain boy” not just a country boy or a farm boy. Sam’s choice of words in this scene previews the struggle to leave the mountains during financially difficult times and his desire to maintain his identity with the geography and culture. It seems as if he gives credit to the mountains and mountain culture for their influence by choosing the phrase “It just sticks with ya”. During the follow up questioning by telephone Sam was asked: What did you mean by “it just sticks with ya”? Sam’s answer was matter of fact, “You probably heard about ole mountain witches, well I never gave much thought to em growing up but the woods have a voice all their own. He chuckled and continued, “Or it could be a witch.” It seems clear that the land Sam grew up in and around had a powerful influence on his identity. In essence to be Sam was to be from Starr Mountain.

**Scene two.**

It was sad to think about, leaving […] I wish I could have stayed around longer when I was younger but I had to go […]v there was just no life at that time, no livin’, no money, and I wasn’t about livin’ the same as everyone else. So like I said I lived in these hills on and off all my life, even when I weren’t here […] you know?

**Analytical commentary.**

The lack of financial security was a reoccurring theme in Sam’s story. His answer here is almost poetic when he speaks of the situation surrounding why he believed he had to go:
“There was just no life…no livin’, no money and I wasn’t about livin’ the same as everyone else.” In that statement Sam also seemed to reveal that he had something inside him that had disrupted the status-quo, he was not “the same” as everyone else. The internal difference Sam felt may be due to the influence his mother’s self-efficacy for or in some sense toward him. Parental self-efficacy influences a family system’s collective self-efficacy especially in the adolescent years (Pajaras & Urden, 2005). Pajaras wrote, “unless young people believe that their actions can produce the results they desire, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of the difficulties that inevitably ensue” (Pajaras, 2005, p. 339). Sam’s mother’s personal efficacy may have influenced Sam as he developed into a young adult, because, at least in retrospect, he was different and staying meant that he would be the same, that is, someone with no life, no future. He closes this scene with another reoccurring theme that though he left the mountains never left him. Sam continued the following narrative later in our conversation as he reflected back on what he enjoyed about his early years.

**Scene three.**

[...^] Where can you be a mountain boy?[... ^]You tell me {^}!This is what I did for fun[... ^] I ran the mountains; down Star Mountain[^]; I've been down Gimsy Mountain lately[^], and I went back to the old home places[^]. They're all Cherokee National Forest. All the Smokies and Cherokee National Forest, all the way up to Greenville is Cherokee National Forest. [In a follow up question I asked Sam “Is it important to you to be known as a “mountain boy”?]… “I don’t care if people know that’s who I am, they will probably figure it out, it’s who I am, who my people are…Some get it and some don’t, either way that’s who I am”.

Analytical commentary.

It was as if Sam just realized where he was in this scene. He came alive when he asked this rhetorical question. His tone seemed to get higher on ever line as if he was concluding his homily on what it means to have fun, what it means to be a mountain boy. In scene four his face and tone changed to reflect the residue of distain that remained in his psyche.

Scene four.

Those mountain people were forced to move 50 years ago [v]. Ever thing out of Townsend, out of Elkmont, Gatlinburg, Piedmont, Cherokee National Forest ....Well, you can say that's not changing. But, the beginning was 50 years ago. That was the dead line when they had to get out. Fifty years ago the grandkids were forced by law to go to school. They had to get educated [v]. Mountain people had very little or no use for the education because their daily life was based in the mountains [v].

Analytical commentary.

Weller (1965) highlighted the general attitude of the “mountaineer” toward education, “To be educated means to be uppity or snobbish, or to feel that one is better than the rest (p. 109). He also points out that parents realized it was a necessity more than a privilege and the necessity outweighed their fear of losing their children to better jobs and dreams after education (Weller 1965). Sam choice and order of the words “forced by law” and “had to get educated” seems to add a paralleled emphasis about his feelings toward this time period. It was a time of change, and disorder, and an interruption to the tradition that he had known as a child. In scene five Sam acknowledges the depth of this change.
Scene five.

Now, when I walk down the old paths I see a big difference in the people that live there now. They have a lot more than we did growin’ up but they ain’t any better off in a lot of ways. In some ways yes and no...but technology and the like changes you. There is no more mountain people, in my eyes. There might be people who live near the mountains or even in the mountains but that there ain’t the same as being mountain people.

Analytical commentary.

Here Sam reflects on the role technology has played on the culture of rural Appalachia. In follow I asked Sam “has technology been a bad thing for rural Appalachian culture”? He responded, “Nah, it’s just like anything else... technology has always been there changing things. But I have to tell ya’ll not many know how to live off the land or build an engine anymore”. Sam seems to be speaking about individualism and self-sufficiency of the old mountain folks in comparison to contemporary “mountain folks”. His perception is that technology assisted in the disappearance of these self-sufficient ways. He added, “…you got to have it [technology] ...it’s one of the ways to better yourself [^]. Sam seems to hold on to the nostalgia of the “old ways” of self-sufficiency but realized that one needed to change to survive and that change whether through education or technology may lead to a better life. This acceptance by Sam may be in contrast to the normal attitude of the rural Appalachian of his generation.

For example, Weller (1965) wrote of the Appalachian and the general attitude toward work, “Because work’s only purpose is earning a living, the mountaineer when unemployed has a different attitude toward unemployment insurance from what middle class leaders envisioned when they set up such payments in law...
the mountaineer sees this insurance as a legal substitute for work for the entire period that it
comes to him (p. 104). The thematic contrast is of one who uses an opportunity to a purely
existential end and one who by way of self-sufficiency utilizes the opportunity to create a new
pathway.

Here Sam records a scene that values change and not settling for the status-quo; a scene
that moves one forward in spite of the difficulties. In summary this scene briefly exemplifies
Sam’s narrative of his years before his intercultural disruption: Change comes into a man’s world
demanding difficult decisions and a man has a choice to exist or evolve. In scene six we see Sam
moving the narrative of his early years toward the conclusion. As he reflected on growing up on
the mountain he revealed his own difficult decision.

Scene six.

It's a sad world to me because that's what I grew up in. I knew when we gathered, when
me and my grandfather in a Chevrolet pickup truck, I was six, that was on top of Tellico
tradin’ with people that didn't speak English hardly. We traded for Ginseng and meat and
we were trading them cloth, needles, coffee, sugar and flour. What they had to trade was
ginseng and moonshine. Now, moonshine, they drove ‘em out. You see what I'm getting
at. It was their number one income. Number two was ginseng. The government stopped
it. When you stop it they come out for another way of life. When they moved, they're like
me, they went from one culture issue to another, you learn how to adapt or die. That's
what I did.

Analytical commentary.

As he spoke Sam was a little sad in his tone and body language. However, it may have
been more disappointment than sadness.
A disappointment that he could not turn back time and enjoy it again. He returned to the theme of government disruption. Here he depicts a group of people who had to come out and “adapt or die”. When asked about what he meant about going from “one culture to another” he said, “Well one don’t come out of the mountains speaking half Cherokee and find a place in the city…it takes time.” By the time Sam was old enough to leave on his own he was well aware that his future; his “better life” was outside his own culture.

Sam: The Jacksonville Journey

In his classic book, Yesterday’s people, Jack Weller (1965) wrote: “Just as the rubbing shoe, unknown to the wearer, begins to put calluses on the foot, changing its contour, so the mountaineer has had calluses rubbed on his mind and soul, worn there by the constant brushes of his life against a tight environment and an economy that denied him room to develop freely” (p. 29). Rural Appalachians may value family ties up to the fourth generation and when they do leave their culture they may tend to build strong connections with the outside native cultures as a replacement family (Bennet, 2008). These strong family ties, general fatalism and present tense orientation may make it difficult for the rural Appalachian to entertain the many variables of making the decision to leave their culture (Tang and Russ, 2007). However, rural Appalachians are not just fatalistic; they are adaptive action seekers who are creative problem solvers (Tang and Russ, 2007; Wallace and Diekroger, 2000; & Weller, 1965). The following narrative introduced a priori motivations that informed Sam’s decision making to leave his culture. As he reflected his eyes stared off to the side as if day dreaming but his face was somewhat stern as if he was reliving the challenge to leave in his mind’s eye.
Scene seven.

Well there was just not a lot of opportunities in the sixties to go into business for yourself, and that was my goal. I did not like working logs, rail-work or mill-work or anything like that. I pretty much wanted to do my own thing. I was born and raised near Etowah, TN, southern Appalachian town, foot of the mountain and mountain people and the L&N railroad was all you had for work and of course as the century progressed ah they went from steam to coal and then opportunities they just faded away at the railroad so we moved to Greenback when I was young and I finished my schooling, [^]didn't like it, [^]just didn't care anything about schooling at all and my mother and dad divorced at that time.

Analytical commentary.

He spoke these words as if he had said this a thousand times before. The tone was frustration. However, in the midst of the frustration there was sense clarity about what he did not want to do and what he did not like: working in the trades closest in his context and traditional schooling. He seemed sure of himself. It appeared that this was not a matter of outward influence or pressure so I asked him later in the follow-up interview, “Why do you think you did not like that kind of work or schooling”? “It just wasn’t me[^]. I had no time for that stuff…don’t git me wrong people did and still does it and are fine, I’m not saying they ain’t, it just wasn’t me.” To some degree one of the motivations for leaving came from within Sam, his personality and character which had been nurtured through his mother and family system rather than a cultural artifact.
Scene eight.

Dad was a little more educated, mother was a mountain lady and my dad was raised right
dare in Greenback which is still in the Appalachia but dad had some college. He had
graduated high school but dad just didn't have what it took to be a family man. He and
mom divorce and dad would rather haul moonshine and he did so, and very lucky he
stayed out of trouble but when he and mother divorced [v] it was me and mother and my
sister. I had a four year younger sister. After I graduated from Loudon High School there
just wasn't any opportunities in Loudon, Greenback, Etowah or the surrounding area that
I guess I felt I could go with and I had married, and that that was a bad scene too. I
just could not make the way that I wanted to get so I divorced in four years.

Analytical commentary.

Those words, “it was me and my mother and my sister” were somber and he still seemed
to feel that moment. It is interesting the way he chose to state the weakness of his father. He did
not say he was a loser or worthless and not did he say he was a man who had many challenges to
overcome. It is somewhere in the middle. He did not fully condemn him but did not excuse him.
Sam appeared that he was understanding but realized his father did not choose him over the
material things in his dad’s life. He felt that weight fall on his mother’s shoulders. He felt the
weight of his own failing early marriage. I asked, “Were you afraid of becoming your father”? ...
[Quickly …v] “Yes”. He did not think long about that answer but I wandered if he was still
afraid. The immediacy of this scene required action.

It seems to reveal the need to survey his situation and make a decision. There was an
inner unsettling that was compounded by an outward pressure to open a new door, to make a new plan, make it better, life better, and on his terms.
Scene nine.

Probably, family. That, that....that would be.... family first I'm gonna say is what made me emotional but what kept me upset is I couldn't do any better. There was no way. I mean...you got to look at through my eyes and not some educated outsider....through my eyes I had tried ah to make a life working from 63-69. The only two places I was successful was though short jobs in New Jersey and New York makin good money. I mean, there was enough money there to start and pay down on a place but I chose to take that money and go to Florida to see what was there and I did that cause another friend of mine did. He didn't stay. He stayed six weeks. If I was gonna work for somebody else ah so I stayed till I opened by first chopper shop and...but that was the emotional part for me was leaving my mom and my sister and our family was right there. I didn't have any kids at that time and did not really want any. I didn't want to be emotionally tied down to a family but I was and the fact that what tore me up I guess worse than anything is if I had stayed there I would have been in trouble. I just knew it, ah, because there was just nothin’ but I guess with mountain people to do here in 63-69. I wanted to grow, I wanted to advance. I mean if we played football I wanted to be better than half. That was my goal to always be better than the half of what I'm working with, ah, anything less wasn't normal to me, so, yeah, the....having to leave itself was the emotional part, leaving the family and just could not...I just felt like I couldn't do any better if I didn't get out of here. Had to, or like I said I'd probably been in trouble like the guys I graduated with here. I mean they were just...drugs were just coming in...in the middle of it I never did...never did care for it. Never had no need for it.
So, I had nothin’ to hold me here really. I did not pay a lot of attention to what transpired from 69-79 while I was gone, but when I came back there was a difference of daylight and dark.

Analytical commentary.

Sam was reflecting on what was going to be hard about leaving but quickly returns to a seemingly greater emotional reality, that, if he stayed he would do no better. He did not seem to want to even deal with a drug culture and where that might lead him. He had some work, a failing marriage and no children yet. It is interesting that he articulated that he rejected things that could in some way control him emotionally or physically. Rather, he did not want to be “tied down” emotionally or physically, he wanted to focus all his energy on his perceived success plan.

Scene ten.

What you just asked me is not going to be the answer that you're gonna git but the turning point for me was sittin’ on a rock...I sat down daily and I looked and I’d seen… I'm 24 years old, I don't have any money saved up, it's already gone. I don't have any prospect of making a livin’ doing anything I like. It was all about me. That was what it was, it was all about me and...like I said, I felt like I would be in trouble if I stayed. I was already getting in with the wrong crowd. But if I could think back, I'm sittin’ here thinkin’ I'm going nowhere. I'm 24, should have a job, should have a home, should have a career, should have somethin’ that I want to do, but I don't. I'm a nobody and that's not where I came from in my upbringing, like I said, I always wanted to excel above 50% above my surroundings. So, I just felt like I had to go. If I hadn't I think I’d ended up in jail, poor or dead.
Analytical commentary.

On a rock near a pond Sam came to the conclusion that he must leave. He said what I had been thinking for a while, “It was all about me”. Somewhere in Sam there was a self-efficacy and self-image that was contrary to his perceived reality that he was a “nobody”. Nothing at this point was going to stop him. Interestingly Sam tells the story as if he was aware of the inner and outward pressures that seemed to compel him. Even here in this scene he portrays himself as one who saw into the future and compared his options for remediating his present realities. I asked where he got this self-confidence. “My mother. I can tell ya. My mother was the backbone of the family. My dad...he drank ever day of his life almost and..ah..his money came from moonshine, ah, I used to drive with him when I was a kid...mother on the other hand was a mother...a good mother.

She actually seen to it whether I liked it or not I was in church and when I hit 13 it didn't matter whether I liked it or not if it was under her house ever Sunday morning I went to church… and mom always said I would never be like him.”. His mother’s upbringing, observations, and experiences seemed to be the major catalyst for Sam’s self-confidence. He may have understood through his mother the general human condition from rural Appalachian eyes according to Loyal Jones. Jones (1999) wrote of the Southern Appalachian’s view on the human condition:

We Upland people, like those in the processions before us, wonder about our nature, purpose, and eventual destiny. We observe others and ourselves to try to understand our erratic nature. We in this particular place hold a view close to Reinhold Niebuhr’s that the essential human tragedy is that we see clearly what we should be and do and yet we fail consistently to bring that about” (p. 13).
Deep within Sam there seemed to be a drive to be something greater than his father and his father’s ways. He does not attribute this drive as coming from God or the Christian Church or a mystical sensation. He only attributes this to his “upbringing” by his mother that may or may not assume the role of religion or faith in God. However, the culture itself is never far away from God. Loyal Jones continued, “Meaning for us [Upland people] starts with Genesis, where God the Creator emerges, as does His nemesis, Satan, and human kind” (Jones, 1999, p. 51). I am reminded of a story in Jones (1999) about a North Georgia Baptist preacher who was lost in the woods that may help explain the presence of this drive in Sam. Life is like getting lost in the woods:

“If you get lost in the woods, don’t just keep going. Set down again a tree, put your face in your hands, between your knees, and just set there and think slow. Don’t keep on walkin’ if you don’t know where you are going. But it’ll come to you after while and you can find your way. In unfamiliar territory there must be some object, the sun, a mountain peak, a tree, that can be seen, now and again to guide you straight” (p. 52).

Sam was not lost in the woods. He was lost on a rock near a pond. He was lost in the sense that he was not sure what to do next, where to go next, should he even try? He did not bring God or faith up much throughout this interview but within the culture a type of faith may have been present in Sam. That may also contribute to his internal drive to leave.

Scene eleven.

In 1969 I moved to Jacksonville, Florida. Moving to Jacksonville, Florida I immediately fit right in the automotive and motorcycle industry. I worked first for a dealer and then I became a dealer. You see, worked hard, done what I had to do, and then I opened up to Harley shops, two Harley Davidson shops.
At that point, you had to deal with all kinds of peoples. You had black people, you had Spanish people, you had Mexicans, you had people from all walks of life that you had to deal with and learn to talk to. I fit right in. I didn't have a bit of problem with that and I done real well. I immediately just stepped right into dealing with the public and...to be honest, I don't think I’m too racial. Blacks and others, that’s never been a concern of mine but I had one culture that I had a real problem with. I still deal with it today. I don't and I cannot to save my life understand how the… not the Asian culture… the Iranians...Iraqis, and we, I say we, I mean we as a city of Jacksonville had a problem there was so many of them. And, every one of them that came through the door won't to beat you out of...I don't care if it was just 10%...I don't understand them. Ah, can I deal with em? I'm better off now than I was...I don't walk around thinkin about em’ or hatn’ em’ and I know there's some good ones and I know there's bad ones and that's everywhere, but it’s just that if you look at me and say "you're being racial", yes, I am. I mean that’s just it. A black man, Asian, Indian, it doesn't matter...and most of them I can do alright. But, every one of em Mid Easterners that I've ever met in my life, and I exclude none, ah, is gonna make you see things his way. Or, he will not leave you alone if he's wanting an engine put in his car (I'm using this as an example), you can use any example though that they want, they want it done cheaper for them. They want it done better for them, they want it done quicker and will spare no expense to make it known.

**Analytical commentary.**

Sam portrayed himself as one who could get along with anyone, and didn’t see himself as one too concerned with one’s race. For Sam it seemed to be about economic mobility and individual autonomy.
This is interesting because Weller (1965) observed that rural Appalachians of this time as a people, especially men, “did not plan to enter a particular kind of occupation because he liked it-he worked at whatever there was…choosing a vocation…was largely foreign to the mountain boy” (p. 103). His drive for economic and vocational freedom superseded most racial barriers. However, as Sam pointed out he did have some cultural difficulties. Even still, race did not seem to be the issue for Sam as much as the cultural differences that he called “making you see things his way”. Even as he told this story I could feel the nervousness and anxiety that I would feel in a potential negotiation with someone from the Middle East culture. Sam may have seen their attitudes as lacking humility which is a mountain characteristic that is very important to the Appalachian mindset (Drake, 2001, Jones, 1999, & Weller, 1965). Even still, Sam remained.

**Sam: The Return to the Mountains**

**Scene twelve.**

Then I wanted to head back to my roots, I guess.[v] I married there, had a daughter, and we moved to Charleston, South Carolina which I went to work for another dealer and at that time it was the Southeast’s largest MG, Jaguar, Rover dealership owned by the Yarboroughs, the race car drivers. It was owned by those folks and David Yarborough and myself opened up Charleston Riley Motors which was right back into what I wanted to do and I did that for two years, we sold, **made a little money and ended up with another divorce in that move.[v]** She didn't....I was still headed home! [^]But, I was making money and trying to put it back and did so. So, when I moved back to Tennessee I did not go **into that business that I always wanted** but I got pretty close, I was service manager at Rice Chrysler and then on into the Ford dealerships for a combination of twenty years of service management.
I was actually able to retire at about 55 but without benefits. At that point when I got through it our home, well homes, we had two, ah our homes were paid for, I had remarried to the same women for twenty some years, ah, my daughters, three grandkids and I had achieved the ultimate goal but having to go through to git there I never could see how anyone else, I guess everybody has to make their own way and its all different, but for me it was a long chore, long ride, ah to be what I call independent.

**Analytical comments.**

Even though Sam wanted in fact needed to leave his culture he still longed to be there. It is as if he knew all along that his absence from the Appalachians were just an extended pause in the narrative and when the page turned it was matter of fact. As steady as he made the decision to leave he began the journey home even if it cost him another marriage. In Sam’s view it was only after moving back that the success part of his narrative started to become a reality and even then it was a ‘long, long, chore!’ ” A long chore for independence! For Sam, independence seemed to be equated with success and happiness.

**Scene thirteen.**

I didn't achieve any...any goals through handouts. I actually had to work but the biggest jump that I got is...the jumpstart was actually leaving Tennessee to see that there are other things out there and other people and other cultures and other things you have to deal with...and when you git that all fed into place I had a better way to go when I came back. I...I...I'm proud of the mountain boy but ah hillbilly. You can use that term with me...liberal if you want to...I'm a hillbilly, but I had set myself down to go to New York City, which I worked there for two years ah Riggins Steel before I went to Florida ah and New Jersey ah all kinds of people different from me and I fit right in.
But you got to do it... you got to accept what life had throwing at you before you can[^]... I guess before you can ever become what you want to be... you got to![^] ... you got to deal with what's out there.[^] I guess that's what I'm trying to say. I don’t think I thought that way but you have to... I node it would change me, and ah it was a long road but I am somewhat different you see, I’m not my Daddy![^]

**Analytical commentary.**

Sam is consistent in highlighting the necessity for hard work in hard times and a personal need for respect. He is also consistent in distinguishing between cultural stereotypes. This may demonstrate his personal awareness of other cultures and this interaction may have influenced his perceptions of success and respect. You can hear how his reflection on moving out of his culture and interacting with other a people foreign to him through his repetitive, “you got to accept...you got to...you got to deal. Sam ultimately believed you “had to” change in order to “become what you want to be”. This was his idea of success. It was not only taking the risk to change location but the risk of interacting with others but the risk of becoming, that is, transformation. He concluded with comparing himself, whom he sees as successful, and his father who represented all those in his culture who were not “successful”. The next scene reveals some of Sam’s reflections on the changes in the area after moving back to the Smokey Mountains.

**Scene fourteen.**

East Tennessee was pretty predominant Native American, Irish scot, you know the makeup from years ago and we didn't have a Mexican culture an Asian culture like we do now where whole subdivisions are Asian or Mexican or Black or whatever.
When I came back there was several in many of the cultures around us and they had contributed to Tennessee's changin’. [^] Now, if you want to know when I say they contributed...what do you mean? They just come, they work and they stay…they open up stores, restaurants, businesses and they offer things that Florida had. Now, when I came back and I was looking for what I had grown to know in Jacksonville[^]...like with me the Arabic culture. I was looking for a camel rider sandwich.[^] Liked them in Florida. Loved that food. I loved to eat their food. Their food is excellent. I came back and it wasn't available.[v] But there were more Chinese restaurants and Japanese restaurants and the culture was deeply embedded in areas. I found that types of food tell you a lot about the changes.[^] And so I felt like I'm bringing a far advanced culture back...a very advanced...if I've never made that clear, Florida is an advanced culture, in its own right. Florida is well rounded with its people. I mean you wanna talk Asian, you might find a place or a community or something you can find. But, if you go where I was at and I stayed pretty much in Jacksonville or Daytona these people were never looked down upon. You know how...you've heard racial slurs here in Tennessee even today ah you didn't hear in Florida. You didn't hear so much ....taking a camel ride and hide or go somewhere else...it didn't happen. If it did, you were in trouble. Somebody would have a problem.[^] It was what we are..that's what it looked like to me anyway when I went in...and the main thing that I found different in Florida in a culture of people....was that we had to get along better with each other to make life work. That wasn’t the way on Starr Mountain. Extending this reflection Sam’s return comes full circle with an emotional realization.
Analytical commentary.

Sam was more excited in this scene. It was a refreshing break from his more serious tone. He characterized himself as “advanced”, that is, learned and experienced upon his return. Some might even say cultured. He lamented the absence of his favorite ethnic food but he is empathetic because he too once lacked “advancement”. An important line in this scene reflects Sam’s dual self-identification, “It was what we are”. In Sam’s eye’s an advanced community had more than one culture, had diverse food choices and practices, and tolerance or even more so, respect for one another.

Scene fifteen.

At the age of 68 I was when I came back. When I come back, how do I say this without sounding harsh...I didn't care for what I had left. The mountain ways I didn't care for. It took me twenty-five years of being back here before I really looked down and said what have I lost[V] and where I'm gonna base this on is something that I hadn't said during this whole interview is[v]...I told you my mother’s people were all mountain. Alright, my mother came from a family of nine. No electricity, no running water and no bathrooms. At least till 1955. On my granddaddy and grandma's side. Alright, now I had thirteen first cousins but one...He passed away at an early age so my grand-daddy and grand-mama went back into the same old house with no power and everything to raise their kin. I didn't want to be like that although here's what I'm gonna tell ya. I spent every available hour with those thirteen. Loved my grand-mamma's cooking but she had chores for us to do, there was thirteen of them and whose gonna do the washin’ at the spring house and carry all the water up, you gotta render lard, you have to do mountain chores, cut the wood, there was a stove in the livin room and a big wood cook stove in the kitchen and
I'm talkin’ about in the fifties. Oh, I hated it! [^
It was hard work.[V What we wanted to do, us four boys, was stay in Starr Mountain. We were allowed to go on Thursday with a pillar case full of food, biscuits, jelly, whatever she had fixed up for us. If we got our chores done by Thursday we could go to that mountain and hunt.

**Analytical commentary.**

This scene presents two sides of one coin it appears. On the one hand Sam did not want to be a part of his culture from an operational point of view and on the side he endeared it from an emotional point of view. He hated it but he missed it. It was hard work but it was fun and free. It may be hard to identify his emotions from this scene but he provided a type of parenthetical thought that is continued in the next scene. He qualified this thought with the phrase, “I told you my mother’s people were all mountain”. He then emotionally reveals the power of those words in the words, “I spent every available hour with those thirteen”. Sam was working these emotions out in his head and as the words rolled off his lips I could feel the deep calling of his mind’s eye, “It took me twenty-five years of being back here before I really looked down and saw what I have lost”.

**Scene sixteen.**

When I left there I didn't see any cousins for ten years. I didn't want to go back but today just like I told ya the past two weekends I've walked ever foot trail we ever walked. I know where the old home places were, so I guess what I'm sayin’ is I didn't lose a thing when I moved but I found more of me just a few years ago and I don't want to ever lose it again. Can I live like we did back then, absolutely. And, it's not goin’ to bother me at my age none. But, today, I wouldn't swap my ...you couldn't talk me out of my childhood.

**Think about what sets you apart**, what do you think sets you apart boy?
You’re from the mountains too right? Didn’t you lose something when you left in a sense...maybe we just sorta put it on the back burner? That's exactly what happened. I just didn't think of it.

**Analytical commentary.**

Sam seems to contradict himself in this scene. He said, “I didn’t lose a thing….I don’t want to lose it again. However “it” in the second part of the sentence changes the interpretation. In context of the larger narrative Sam has come to the conclusion that he took his values, heritage, and culture with him when he moved, but there were consequences to his decision to leave and a sense of loss. Once he returned he discovered a deeper appreciation for his culture. It may be that his appreciation for his culture was enhanced partly due to his experience with other cultures. The “it” may be a whole Sam or the new “more of me” that he does not want to lose. At this point Sam appeared to be one who values his heritage and culture with the wisdom of intercultural experiences but the individuality and distinctness of who you are was still important. He questioned me, “What do you think sets you apart boy”? I took his question seriously. “What sets me apart is that I know where I come from and I know that I am not the only one out there. I am a mountain boy too, but sometimes we have to leave”, I answered. “Yes you do”, Sam said nodding his head in agreement. “Leaving changes everything”, he added. This last scene presents himself as the new wise sage in command of his story and reading to live out the next chapter.

**Scene seventeen.**

When I came back I could go with any walk of life, I had the mountain down pact when I went down but when I went to Florida and I came back it just didn't make much difference what you were or who you were. I could relate to you in some respect. You
couldn't....you couldn't set down if you've not noticed me just in this time if you mention somethin’, I can talk about it. I've been through it, I've done it and I've enjoyed. I've lived life three times longer than you ever will in richness. And remember you asked me how I changed ah that twenty five year period…I think I changed for the better, it opened me up socially. I left a mountain boy and came back a little more advanced, but like I said I came back, it took twenty five years for me to realize some things.[V]  I wanted my grandkids to experience how it was for me. I know I can tell them, I can educate them the best I can right now and say no, no, no. This is not the way; you have to get out to be the best you can be. And then you can return and appreciate who you are with some respect and good livin. If I had not came back they might have missed it. In that respect, they would have missed it. And they know it.

**Analytical commentary.**

Sam seemed surer of himself that he was a man who at one time may not have been as open to others but now could get along with many cultures. This is quite a realization for a rural mountain boy from his generation, because as Elam (2002) wrote, “When commerce, industry, and education were growing and developing in much of the country, little change or progress found its way into the Appalachian Mountains” (p. 10). With regards to public education much of the rural Appalachian culture viewed it negatively and believed in to be a private choice (Elam, 2002). Sam showed evidence of a negative attitude toward public education and was also subject to the cultural pressure of making a daily living to help the family, but even still he found the will to leave and accomplish what many from his context could not; self-sufficiency beyond the social and physical isolation of the mountains. Appalachian cultural characteristics and environmental isolation are intrinsically linked (Elam, 2002).
“A, culture evolved from both the physical and social isolation of the people, which led to such cultural characteristics as strong family ties, reluctance to change, distrust for outsiders, acceptance of poverty, and little need for schooling (Elam, 2002, p. 13). In essence, there is a cycle of social and physical isolation reproducing cultural characteristics that nurture that isolation. Sam’s disruption started with his mother’s innovative and idea to leave and seemed to be sustained has he engaged other cultures. Sam believed that leaving advancement him socially, economically, and personally. At this point in his life he wants to share his experiences with his grandkids because the mountain still has the power to isolate in peculiar ways. Sam does not want them to miss it. To miss a chance to be set apart, different, free, independent in mind and body.

**Walter: Punkin’ Center Livin’**

Walter was actually born in his parents’ homeland of Vancouver Washington. They moved to the Tallassee area of south Blount County Tennessee in 1944 when he was one year old. From 1950 to 1957 their military family moved to Germany to Massachusetts back to Germany and resting in an area as Walter puts it “about 16 miles down-next-ta Tallassee and Chilhowie Tennessee”. Tallassee seemed to be part of a collection of Cherokee Indian villages in the 18-19th centuries (Burns, 1957). Most of the original Tallassee site was covered partly by the Chilhowie Lake which was a result of the creation of the Chilhowie Dam in 1957. This is also known as the Calderwood area which has another small dam located two miles above the original Tallassee village site (Burns, 1957). This site which Walter also called “Punkin’ Center” is essentially a small valley surrounded by the Great Smoky Mountains on the north and east sides and the Unicoi Mountains on the south and west sides. In Punkin’ center is where Walter’s Appalachian roots began. Walter grew up about an hour and a half northeast of Sam.
He was physically deeper into the Smoky Mountains. Another hour and half further east and you would arrive near Cherokee North Carolina. Today the place the old Cherokee called “Yellow Hill” is part of the “Qualla Boundary” which is a little over 57,000 acres of mountain reservation allocated to the eastern band of Cherokee Indians (Bryant, 2008). Walter lived near a route that had been used for many years before his arrival as a trade route for early pioneers and the Cherokee.

Scene one.

Our community was a good sized community at that time. Backin’ the forties and fifties ah down around the area there, it’s in an area... they called it Punkin’ Center[^], where Tennessee highway 72 comes into 129 and all the way down to Tallassee and it was a very rural area, ah, the biggest farms (primarily farming, lumber, some of the men worked at Alcoa) ah, you had...there was an old sayin’ "if you had three sons, one was a preacher, one was a bootlegger and one went in the army" so, but the biggest farms in that area were maybe ah a hundred acres was a big farm. It's primarily valley farms and river bottom farms. Ah, very backward at that time. Ah, my mother was probably one of the better educated people[^]. The lady next door to us was well educated[^] but most of the other people had maybe a fourth or fifth grade education. Ah, it was the old Scotch/Irish type people, very clannish ah I don't know...it was justa it was still the eighteen hundreds[^], I mean, ya know, it was still ah...ya know it was amazing because a lot of the practices at that time looking back on it now after I... you know I have got out and got my own education looking back on it, ah, these people were still Victorian ah their beliefs were similar to that…
Analytical commentary.

It seemed as if Walter had given this story much thought over the years. His comment about “if you had three sons…” I have heard before from other rural Appalachians. He seemed clear in his descriptions of the farm lands as if he was repeating history to me matter-of-factly. The pitch of his voice increased when he mentioned his mother’s and his neighbor’s education level. He seemed proud it. In his reflection of the time period he seemed less rehearsed sounding and seemed to discover an illumination that excited him a little in that he figured out something that they were still a Victorian period people in the 40-50’s. In the next scene Walter reasons how he thinks they were a Victorian period people.

Scene two.

...I can remember ah telling the story "you place your feet ah your shoes in a certain way under the bed so that you would ward off evil." Ah, you always faced the east for the morning when you place your bed to the east so you wouldn't have a headache when you got up." Ah, the medicines at that time, a lot of the medicine practice in that area, ah, because we didn't have any physicians down in there, ah was primarily folk medicine[^]. You, I can remember seeing an acifidity[^] bag which was a bag full of stinky stuff, I don't know what was in it but it sure stunk [V]. Ah, my mother was sorta [V], she was Ah…Ah practical nurse for 61 years and my mother did a lot of...took care of the people[^], ya know the sick people in that area and my grandfather was a medicine man[^]. His grandmother had been a Creek shaman's daughter so he knew the Indian medicines and stuff and he helped the sick a down in that area. [^] Ah, the sanitation, we were probably some of the better off people in the community. We had an outside toilet[^].
Other people didn't even have toilets, I mean; they went out behind the barn or in the woods and stuff. Very few windows had a screen on them. I can remember going to people's houses to eat and the younger children would go out and maybe pull a limb off of a bush to keep the flies off the food. That was the little kid's job, you know, to keep the flies away. I can remember when we got electricity[^] in our house was in maybe 1948 cause I was maybe four or five, ah, we got electricity and my mother got one of the first refrigerators in the community[^] and it was, ya know, she cooked on a wood cook stove. The only heat we had in the house was the wood cook stove and a fireplace. And, like I said, we had more than other people did at that time.

**Analytical commentary.**

In his reflection Walter introduced the idea of “folk medicine” but also a way of thinking, a “folk thinking”. He introduced a recurring theme in his greater narrative, that is, old time medicine work or a type of caring for people. He also sets the stage to demonstrate the differences he and his family had with the neighbors by using phrases like: “probably some of the better off people” and “we had more than other people at that time”. This is not to say he thought less of his neighbors, but as we see here and in the coming scene Walter had a little more: technology, education, and parents who were present in his life.

**Scene three.**

They did their own canning, ah, my mother and my aunt used pressure cookers, most of the people, women, in that area didn't even have pressure cookers. They had what they called cold, cold cooking or cold, called a cold cooker. It was just a large, it was a large round porcelain covered pan or pot with just a cap on it and they would bring it to a boil and that was basically it, then they would sit up and then when the pressure cookers come
in, like I said, my mother had one of the first ones in the area and people would come to
the house to see this thing and a, like I said we were probably more of the more modern
people in town, in the area[^
] Ya know, our clothing and stuff, my aunt was a seamstress
and my dad bought here a sewing machine so she made all of our own clothes and my
mother would, I would get maybe two or three pair of blue jeans in September before I
started to school and with my shirts and everything else was made by my aunt and what
my mother and aunt would do was get with a peddler that would come around once a
month and it was called a rolling store, it was a big moving van that had been converted
to a store on wheels, and my mother and my aunt raised black rock n speckled rock
chickens[^
] We had large eggs, and they would save certain eggs for him and when he
would come around they would trade those eggs for...be part of the price for the cornmeal
and the flour. Well, he discovered my aunt and my mother liked checks and stripes and
the chicken feed, the meal, the cornmeal and the flour had prints on them, so that's how
they got their cloth and he would save it for them because he knew that they liked certain
patterns. So, we always ah our clothing was a little better than most of the kids around
there because we had a seamstress in the family and you know it sounds like I'm being
arrogant about it but I'm not[^ It's just that I was fortunate. I had a mother who had a
pretty good education and she taught us extra. You know, most kids didn't, most kid's
didn't you know, around there, didn't git help with reading and writing. Mother had a
better understanding of sanitation, ah, she would wash the dishes, she would have the
soapy water and two rinses, one would be with Clorox in it, she would put a cap full of
Clorox in it, and then the last one would be just straight water. Ah, if in her clothes and
stuff she always insisted that everything had to be hung outside in the sunshine. She
never hung it in the house, even in the winter time. It was always hung outside so the sun, you know, the ultraviolet rays kills the bacteria and stuff. Ah, just little things like that and she tried to teach the people around her about this but most time it didn't happen.

In 19... in 1950 51 or 52 my cousin and I got hepatitis A and we got it at school because one of the cooks in school come to school with hepatitis and the first thing you know the whole school had it. That's one example of how something would spread so fast because the people just knew they had...they would call it yeller jaundice. They just called it yeller jaundice, they had no idea what caused it or that it was an infectious disease. And, so, at that time, in the forties and fifties like that, there was a lot of measles in that area and a you when one person got the measles I mean it would go through school like everything and especially in the winter time. Ah, used to have outbreaks of head lice. In all this, it was just...sighs...it was a terrible time in a way like that, ya know for sickness and stuff[v].

Analytical commentary.

In this long scene we see a continuation of Walter’s articulation of his life narrative in comparison to his neighbors. He was conscious of his “fortune” and over and over again situates his Mother, Aunt and Father as the primary catalyst for that fortune. The pronoun “my” occurs seven times: My mother, My mother and Aunt, My Father. These led up to the plural “we had”...”a little better than most”. It may demonstrate his clear conviction and appreciation for what his Mother, Aunt and Father did for him in educating him and serving the community. It is also interesting that in this scene the title mother and aunt are mentioned more than father or dad. It may speak to the respect and honor he had for the both women. The pitch of Walter’s voice was reminiscent of times when someone speaks proudly of someone else.
Walter seemed to look up to his mother and aunt for educating him and trying to educate the locals. The last line provided the enlightenment of the scene. Walter said it was “a terrible time in a way like that”. He was speaking of the spread of sickness and disease but I was compelled to get his insight on another question. I asked him, what was worse in your mind, as you reflect back, lack of education or sickness? He produced a little smile which turned into a sort of frown and deep gaze as if searching for a lost memory. He said, “I know what you are gittin’ at, sickness in those times could kill you just as much as ignorance! That’s true but you don’t feel ignorance, you feel pneumonia. I was fortunate to have my mother”! It seems Walter’s family system helped set him apart from his local community in health, education and a worldview that saw beyond the typical rural Appalachians’ natural pessimistic existentialism (Drake, 2001; Jones, 1999; Kephart, 1976; Russ, 2006; Weller, 1965)

**Scene four.**

As a kid, as a kid in that area in the Appalachia then, school, I can remember we would take rims off of wheels and took a stick and took a rim and you run it around the yard. We still did that! In the fifties, the forties and fifties. Ah, in the spring time when the young animals would be born it was nothin’ to see some kid bring a young coon or a young fox to school. In the forest around our school there was a lot of flying squirrels. The bigger boys would get up in a tree and chase a flying squirrel out. They would land on the ball field, they would throw a coat over it, run their hand up under it and catch it and capture it. One teacher was named Mary Gibbons; I got her name written down here in one of my old school books, Mary Gibbons. *Mrs. Gibbons was an exception.* She would take us on field trips in the fields and woods around our school and she would teach us things...
I mean, we knew what pollywogs were but she taught us what each individual one was and how it fit in our area, ah, how it fit in the environment now. We didn't know it then but she was teaching us in the fifties to us kids, [us country kids out in the middle of nowhere, most of the time when you put your shoes on you wore, you didn't wear your shoes until the end of September, then you put your shoes on and you wore them till April, first day of April, you took your shoes off. Your shoes and your long-john underwear come off the first day of April] and this lady was teaching a bunch of little kids like this and she was amazing and I can still remember things that I learned from this woman [^
One example, she read a story to us, I think the title of it was "through the eye of the needle" and it was written by Jesse Stuart who taught school in Appalachia up in Kentucky, in the coal fields and coal mines in the area, I think. And, he was sixteen years old. Jesse Stuart is one of my heroes today because I can remember even in the second or third grade her teaching us about this man. It stuck in my mind [^
That these people, to us the people in the coal fields were poor, here we are, we were just as poor as they were, but they were poorer than we were and to know, she explained that this young man at 16 years old went in and started teaching these young people in school, something about that woman stuck in my head, and pushed me a little bit more than my mother did.

Her attitude. She was a very confident person, very confident. Now, this little woman was a middle-aged lady, a little short. A little short lady[laughing] In this room that she had she...I was in the third grade, my sister and my cousin Sue were in the fourth grade, my other sister was in the fifth, my uncle Ted was also in the room, he was in the eighth grade. So, this woman had from third grade to eighth grade in one room. And, some of those boys in eighth grade were sixteen and seventeen years old. But, she controlled that
And, it was just, she had this zeal to teach (pause) and she made the learning active instead of just sittin’ there sayin’ this is a snake. Well she brought in a black snake or another kind of snake, this is what it does, this is what it eats, ah, this is a frog. Or we would go outside and find them. Ok, everybody knows what a frog is, now, but this is a bullfrog or this is a certain kind of frog, a tree frog and it’s only found on a certain kind of a pine tree. I can remember doing things like that. When the boys caught the flying squirrel and brought it in well, she had a whole days’ lesson on the Flyin’ squirrel. And, and she’d make everything so interesting. She made you want to learn more about it. (Long pause).

Analytical commentary.

“Mrs. [first teacher] was an exception”! As much as anyone Mrs. Gibbons left an amazing impression on Walter’s life and love for learning. It seems she helped lay the foundation for seeing life as a journey and the world a classroom. Walter’s descriptive word choices say it all- amazing, interesting, zealous, confident, and exceptional! Mrs. Gibbons demonstrates the importance a healthy involvement in a child’s personal efficacy and achievement (Huang & Mikulecky, 1999).

Scene five.

Mom always insisted that we learn. She pushed a little bit more than my dad and that stuck with us. Ah, going back, I can remember sittin’ in the house in the evenings, mother from my earliest memories, is sittin’ with my mother or my grandmother reading to us in the evening. My grandmother would come down from Knoxville on holidays and she always brought books with her.
My mother always had books and she would always read to us. As each of us got to be a certain age, say around ten years old, she stopped buying toys and we got books. So, this is somethin’... we were the exceptional family in the area where I grew up because other people, most of them couldn't read or write either one. But, here my mother was ah she was self-educated and she was just exceptional for the area. She felt it was important to self-educate[^]. She come from a family of educators. My mother was a Beal and a Jones. The Beals and the Jones in Knox County. The come over here in the sixteen hundreds ah the original Jones was a magistrate for the English crown and through the years they were teachers or lawyers, educators. Ah, and the Beal, the original Beal was a physician, a French physician, who was kicked out of France for being a snockerd [a drunk], then kicked out of Ireland for the same thing, so, when he got here the Beals had always been educators, doctors, lawyers. My grandmother's father was a teacher and he, I guess he instilled in his children, and my grandmother did the same thing to my mother. She, all three of my mother's brothers and her were well educated but they were all self-educated.

At that time, most kid's (if you lived in town went to high school) but most just went to school through eighth grade, then went to work. Well, my grandmother insisted that her children keep their education upkeep on learning and so they were all self-educated. Ah, all three of my mother's brothers had trades. My mother like I said was a practical nurse for 61 years.

**Analytical commentary.**

Walter’s mother and grandmother were the primary examples of being a self-educated and the “exception” in the Punkin’ Center community.
According to Walter most could not read and write and did not have either the opportunity or desire to continue to” self-educate” after the eighth grade. Walter reviewed a legacy of education in his family line that he was physically proud of. His eyes were bright when he reminded me that his mother was a self-educated practical nurse. Walter placed himself as the beneficiary of a line of educators. It clear in this narrative that Walter equated being an exceptional family and person with being an educated person. However, it was not a positional or class exception but a privileged exception. He spoke as if he was still benefitting from his family’s focus and mother’s “pushing’ to self-educate.

**Walter: Journey to Germany**

**Scene six.**

With us, it wasn't a difficulty. Why? Cause we were excited to be able to go. Ah, my mother, when my dad you know told mom that he was being transferred, that he was being sent to Germany, this was after World War II and this is during the Korean War. Dad was sent to Germany. Well, he told my mother he was goin’ to Germany. Mom, she goes to Marvulle to the library, checks out a bunch of books on Germany and comes home and for about two or three weeks we're learning about Germany. We don't know where we're goin’ in Germany, but we are learning about Germany. So, when the time comes we were lookin’ forward to goin Germany. Yeah, I can remember I was[^]. I didn't (pause) I would have liked for uncle Roger to have gone with us[V]. I mean he was sort of my other father figure. But, you know, as far as leaving school and going to, you know, goin’ to Germany, goin’ to school over there, there was no fear. Ah, my youngest sister, we were really looking forward to it.
My older sister was the only one that had any problems getting’ ready to go but she was sort of the fair-haired child of the family with the grandparents and stuff. So, she was leaving her comfort zone where my younger sister and I, to us, it was a big experience and it was goin’ to be a grand exciting thing for us[^]! And, that was the way we looked at it.

Analytical commentary.

Walter fondly reflected on this time in his life. The theme of learning is still prevailing in the midst of change. It seems as the process of learning was a catalyst for change or adapting of the unknown. Walter’s worldview had been established and he looked at this change as an exciting journey. His mother was the central figure that formed his worldview which may have assisted in their positive outlook and personal power to accept and adapt to change.

Scene seven.

I would like to say one thing about this, when we got to Germany, the first day we were there my father set us down and we had a family conference and he said now you're a guest in this country[^]! He said, we defeated Germans but still we are living in this country and we are the guests of these people and you will not do anything[^], and that is the way he put it, there was no yes ands or buts, he said you will not do anything[^] to bring embarrassment to your mother or I or to yourself or to our country. And, he said, learn all you can about these people, this is their country so respect it like you would a neighbors house and respect what they do and my father had two or three German friends, people he made friends with, one was an engineer who had been an engineer in the World War II. Mr. Shaver and my father had been in the same village at one time on opposite ends.
Analytical commentary.

This narrative provided the first real insight to Walter’s father. Until this moment it was his mother, aunt, and grandmother. His father said respect what they do and respect their country, that is, where they are form. In essence he seemed to be saying respect them as a people and as individuals. Even more, respect them as a neighbor. Walter’s father was essentially suggesting neighborly communities exist beyond Punkin’ Center, and an Appalachian trait that people should be treated as individuals not nameless members of a group. When asked about this thought, Walter said, Ah, I don’t know if he was making a point to us about that but we just knew it. If you don’t know that families are families anywhere you are then you might as well not know how to read, cause you're not going to get anywhere.” It seems that there was a sense of global community in their family system which would have been a stark contrast for many in Punkin’ Center. It may have been due to his father’s military background but also his father’s plea to “learn all you can about these people”. The importance of learning and self-education not only seemed to have contributed to Walter’s initial ability to change but also his ability to sustain transformation.

Scene eight.

And [name of German neighbor] was a wonderful person. He and his wife would take us into their house; I mean we would go have dinner at their house. They treated us like we were their grandchildren. So, we got to, we got to meet, ya know, people on their...ya know, in their home. And, by what my father demanded from us, the respect of these people and the respect of their society and their norms and this stayed with me a long time and then when I fortunate enough to go back to Germany during the Gulf War I went to where my family come from. Our family was originally from [town name] in
Germany which is next to Wittenberg? It's an old walled city in Germany and that is where our family is from. Our original name was [family name]? It was changed during the Revolutionary War but it’s neat when you go to the city where your family come from, and it gives you (how do you spell [family name]?). It's [family name] with two little dots over the o. That changes the name from [family name] to [family name],... (to continue) but it gave us an insight of who we were... you know the Spanish have an old saying. They say that a man...they have a sayin’ about their fighting bulls that the bull gets his strength from his father the sire, but, he gets his courage from their dame or the mother. I think that’s the same way [^]. Looking back on it growing up, now, my father was a very strong, he was a professional soldier for most of my life. And, dad was a very strong character but the courage and the strength and understanding I've got in my life I got from my mother. Looking back at my grandmothers ah my dad's mother her husband was a minister, Appalachian minister, a farmer and a minister. They never had much but that lady ... she had twelve kids, the raised ten. And, she was a strong powerful lady. A very intelligent powerful lady, and, looking back at the families that I know the men had successful lives where I grew up and ended up being successful had strong mothers. You know some of these ladies could barely pass...they maybe could count to ten...might be able to sign their name or print their name, could not read but something about them was strong. You know, they were good Irish, Scotch-Irish and German stock. You know, if you look back, the people who settled the Appalachians they were the throw away people. They come out of the highlands of Germany, Scotland and Ireland and they were the people that nobody wanted. And they come here and they dug in these rocks and ridges and they made something of themselves. These women showed that a lot more
than the men did. The men might be strong but the strength of the family and the power in the family and the success of the family come through the mother. I mean I firmly believe that! [^] In looking back in my family on both sides that was it. Cause, those ladies were somethin’! [^]

**Analytical commentary.**

In this scene Walter describes a mutual respect for his mother and father with regards to change and learning. However, he provides a type of epiphany of inward and outward strength. He respected the outward strength of his father and admired the inward strength of his mother and other women in his life. The physical presence of a father and the nurturing strength of a mother may be an advantage as the next scene reflects Walter’s thoughts on the differences between his family and others from Punkin’ Center when he was a child.

**Scene nine.**

No, a lot of them wouldn't have gone because....they were very clannish. Ah, one.. for instance there was this one family, the Kirkland family, and only one of their children broke out of the mold. Just one. And, I think there was three girls, three or four girls and two boys. None of them...just one of them out of the whole family broke out of the mold. And they all ended up living in that...within ten square mile area. Ah, you go back now, if you go back now down into there a lot of the same families still live there. The ones that didn't leave are still there. It's...they were afraid to leave, they were afraid to step out...and a lot of these people that were afraid to leave. Some left the area in the fifties because they needed work and they couldn't find it, so they left. The ones that stayed a lot of them was the ones where the family, didn’t have family men. And, so they were afraid to leave the mountains.
They were afraid to leave their little area and I think I'm sure if you go up into up and around Hazard, Kentucky and through there you'd see the same thing. My mother would always read us stories of places and people. Dad was in WWII so we heard a lot about that too. Thinkin’ back many of those families that I think would not have gone were the ones whose dads did not go to the war. I think you have to be pushed out of these mountains. These people have to be pushed out cause it’s too easy to stay. I just had enough push.

**Analytical analysis.**

I asked Walter why he thought it was so difficult for people from Punkin’ Center to leave. He said, “I think it goes back to their heritage. It goes all the way back to the people who originally come in here. I think it goes back to the Scotch-Irish and the German descent.” Whether that is the case or not it is true that Walter had a different experience in spite of his German and Scotch-Irish roots. He had some “push” that others did not. His articulation included “family men” who had other intercultural experiences, in this case, WWII. This may be a contributing factor to understanding Walter’s view of getting a “push”. In the next scene Walter takes a look back at what he specifically believes was the one thing that made all the difference to him with regards to his love for learning about other places.

**Scene ten.**

You know I said my mother read to us a lot? Ah, even as a small child when I read somethin’ myself or when I heard somethin’ (my mother would be reading to me) to me it was like a movie in my head, it was like I could see these places, I could see these things and so when it came time for us to you know we were moving I was excited, I was ready to do it.
I wanted to see these places that I had heard about, that my mother had read to us about. Ah, you know, the books, Heidi, the Heidi series there was four or five books in that series, mother read those to us. So, I wanted to see the mountains, I wanted to see the mountains of Europe, of Austria and Germany. I wanted to see Frankfort, Germany, and I got to see it. But, I could see it in my mind, a lot of what I saw I had seen in my mind because I don't know with me it was just I had an urge, I wanted to learn, I wanted to move, I wanted go out and see. And, I think I got this from my mother. Because mama was always that type. She was always, there was always somethin’ over the hill, there is always something to see, there was always something to learn. And, when it come time I had no fear at all. I can remember it distinctly; I mean I was ready for us to be packed up and goin’. The experience of we'd caught a train and we were on a train from Knoxville to New York, got on a taxi in New York. It was an adventure from the first day until we got there. And, I'm 70 years old now and I was...I was 8 or 9 years old then. I can still remember it today as if it were yesterday. I can remember the day we went through the English Channel and you...we were close enough to England that you could see the cliffs of Dover. As just after you pass the cliffs of Dover there was a big ship graveyard there where a lot of ships had been sunk during World War II and I can see that today just like it was yesterday because Mom had given us this gift of reading, and so the whole thing...I was ready to go. Even now, if I had the chance now I load up and go agin’. [Laughs out loud]. And I’ll tell you this [pause] money can get you a lot of things in life, but it can’t give you the gift of wanting to learn[^]!
Analytical commentary.

Walter uses compelling and emotional phrases to describe what his mother gave to him: a “gift” of reading and wanting to learn. Even in the retelling of this scene he laughed out loud when he thought of reliving the journey to Germany over again. He concludes with an interesting thought: money does not always guarantee mobility. It seems that Walter is articulating an understanding of cultural capital which may be exchanged for other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Walter, the military man, added to his cultural capital on his second trip to Germany in the early Nineties.

Scene eleven.

So I first went to Germany Ah, in 1953-1955 and the second time was during the Gulf War in 1991 or 92? Whatever time the Gulf War was. See I went in the Navy when I was 17. The reason I chose the Navy I don't know it just seemed like the best place to go and I went...I was always up for a new place as I told you before. I was a welder and a metal smith. I was aboard the U.S. Coral Sea and we shipped out of California. And, for the next...from 60...from 70...let me think now ...from 1962, February of 62 until Dec 64 I was around the Pacific rims three times. But, really it was a great time to grow up. And, I was fortunate with the things my mother taught me stuff every time I went in for rating I made rate. Every time I went up I made high scores. And, I attribute that back to my mother's teachings and I loved that time in the Navy. How many 20 year old kids git to literally see the sun rise over a volcanic island out in the middle of the Pacific where there is nothing else there. The closest land I was standing on top of the bridge, and I said Chief where is the closest land to us. He said six miles and I looked around and he said "straight down." Now, this was in 1963 and I was 20 years old...19 or 20.
We were on our way to Sidney, Australia. Something clicked in my mind that hey, how many guys your age can say that they were out in the middle of the Pacific ocean and saw a volcanic island on the horizon. That stuck in my mind and I've been blessed. And, part of that blessing was because I looked, I dug, and that little lady that I grew up with told me, always look, always dig, there is always somethin’ new to learn.

Analytical commentary.

Walter’s reflection in this scene centered on a sunrise in the Pacific Ocean. His memory is followed by a sense of gratitude and blessing. Gratitude for the opportunity the he seemed to believe that other men his age were probably not going to get. He was thinking about the men/boys in Punkin’ Center, those who were afraid. The blessing he describes does not necessarily seem to be the same as the opportunity but rather the blessing was the ability to “look and dig” for something new to learn. Walter’s need and desire to learn allowed him to approach other cultures in perhaps a different way than many of his peers. In the next scene Walter gives a glimpse of his motivation for learning about other cultures.

Scene twelve.

Anytime that I went into a new country, for instance, when I went to Japan, I was 17 or 18 years old when I went to Japan. Going into Japan that is big time change for us. One thing I learned, and it’s just somethin’ I...I don't know what caused me to do it, it's just somethin’ I wanted to do. When I would go into a different place like, for instance Japan, or the Philippines or Hong Kong, and, every one of those places I would go out of town. I would not stay in the city. I would find some way to get out of town and go to maybe a village or something. Ah, in Japan and Hong Kong I got acquainted with the Baptist missionaries. And, so, through them I was able to do that.
To get to... I explained to ‘em what I wanted to do. That was the greatest thing in the world for them cause you know that gave them a chance to meet somebody from home and show them where they were working and such. They were wonderful people. And, in Germany, the last time I was in Germany. Like I said, the first time we were kids and we were just like the German kids. We got along great. The second time I went to Germany, in Germany they have what is called folks marches or family marches and it started back when the running craze started and I would walk around getting to know families eating bratwurst and beer(laughs). It was just a wonderful way to meet people and I really thoroughly enjoyed it. I was away to get away...I don't like cities. And, I was able to meet... I always called them the real people. Real people are everywhere. No matter where you go you can always find them, yeah you have to go and find them cause they ain’t goin’ to find you, you're a stranger. If you sit on the boat you will never learn[^]! I loved learning German language and German cookin’. It’s the only thing worse on your heart than smoking (laughs).

**Analytical commentary.**

It seems as if Walter’s approach to adapting to new environments was to immerse his self into “real” or authentic contexts. Connecting to everyday people and life seemed to allow him to feel a sense of normality. “Real” people meant that they were just like himself and the people he grew up with. His articulation described this as getting out of the city into a more rural area. For Walter, rural was still more authentic than city life and its urban dynamics. Interestingly he felt you had to work or labor at getting into this authentic context. One could not stand by and expect an experience. One must place himself into a learning context in order to grow and ultimately be transformed.
Scene thirteen.

I left the Navy in 1967 and in 1968 I started some schooling in Illinois but what I learned in the navy kept the food on the table...when I left Illinois in 1969 I was a journeyman welder. I was making top pay for journeyman welder which was $4.85/hour, but that was good money then. I left there and moved to west Tennessee. We bought a little house down there and we moved back because our daughter was having trouble with skin problems. We moved to west Tennessee and her skin problems cleared up. But, I went from $4.85/hr to $6.75/hr working in a blacksmith shop. But, we lived. Our groceries cost $15.00/wk but we had a big garden, I went fishing with my neighbor. I helped him kill hogs. We had food in the freezer. So...and then, I started nursing school and got into that in 1971. I got out of practical nursing school, let's see, I went to school in 72, the whole year of 1972. In 72, in February.... I got out of school in January. I started to college in February, took my state boards for LPN in March. Ah, like I said I started to college as soon as I got out of LPN school. I worked for it....(pause) it took me five years to get my RN degree[^]...an associate degree is all it is, but I worked every day and at the end of five years I was in school I missed six days of work, the whole five years[^]. Ah, I would go to school in the morning, I'd be at school at 8 o'clock, I'd get home at 2 o'clock, take a quick shower, put my uniform on and go to work at the hospital and through the whole time.... I was for fortunate....I had my GI bill, that helped some you know on the bills and stuff. And I went back into the reserve national guard as a nurse in 1980 until 1998. I was fortunate[^]...I was fortunate! Fortunate to have all those experiences!
Analytical commentary.

Leaving the Navy pushed Walter into another period of transition. He chose to enter a vocation that he had seen his mother do for many years. From folk medicine women to a Registered Nurse was the plot of this scene. It seems that Walter could not escape his upbringing with regards to helping people. That is what his mother and grandmother did. It may be that Walter’s self-identity is connected to the value of helping people from a health perspective. He remembered how important good sanitation and general health practices were to the people of Punkin’ Center. Walter goes out of his way to emphasize the value of hard work and again attaches the idea of good fortune with hard work and general empathy toward people. This scene culminates with a very positive reflection about transitions. Walter ascribes the word fortunate to a stressful period of time in his life. This may highlight the depth of the influence of his family’s cooperate self-efficacy.

Walter: Punkin’ Center Revival and Mother

Scene fourteen.

While I lived in west Tennessee I worked in a little rural hospital in [West Tennessee]. Ah, and then in 1996 [another west Tennessee County Hospital] started buying up small hospitals. Us people who had seniority and everything we were making a lot of money and so they started hiring younger people to replace us. You know, they didn't have to pay them as much. So, my job started going away and I come up here [East Tennessee] to visit my sister and she said, well my sister in (or somebody from my) grandson's mother-in-law just gave up her job at [an East Tennessee Hospital]. I called [the east Tennessee Hospital] and got a job. In two weeks we moved back over here.
That was in 1996. And, then, I worked at [the East Tennessee hospital] for about two years, then I went to UT and I retired from the University of Tennessee hospital in 2008. Now (small pause) [\^], I live in [a county in East Tennessee] because I choose to live in [this county in East Tennessee [\^]! I don't have to, I still have skills that I could go anywhere in the country, anywhere in the world and get a job, but I choose to live here because I want... this is home. You know when Jacob left and when...you know, when we got the blessing...when the angels came down out of heaven on a ladder, he got the blessing...when he was given the blessing, that was at Bethel, Jacob left and went other places, but Jacob come back to Bethel, he said I come back to Bethel to renew my strength. That is me ![\^] When, when I left Punkin’ Center and then come back to east Tennessee, when we come down off that plateau over there and I looked east and I saw Chilhowie Mountain over here, I knew that I had returned to Bethel and that I could renew my strength. Any time that I have ever been away from here, no matter where I have been in the world, I knew that I had to come back.

**Analytical commentary.**

As Walter’s life opportunities allowed him to come full circle he articulated a “coming home” narrative in which the culmination of his life experiences led him back to the mountains with a fuller understanding of that place and culture in light of a larger human narrative. His religion seemed to be an important element for his understanding what his life story meant. He equated returning to Punkin’ Center with Jacob’s Bethel experience because he thought it represented a place where God was one with the land and spoke through nature. It seems that Walter’s idea of rest is associated with being in right relationship with himself, his mountains,
and God. In the coming scene Walter’s story comes to a close and he reflected on himself in relation to his experiences and upbringing.

**Scene fifteen.**

I’ve thought of this before and I just thought it again. I am now what I was then because I am now what...I am now what my dad was, what my mother was, what my grandparents were, what my great grandparents were, all the way back to the ones who originally come here on my mother's side in the 1600's and my dad's side just before the Revolutionary War and during the Revolutionary War. I am today is what they were then. In my family there has been preachers, there's been doctors, lawyers, teachers, bootleggers, cow-thieves, horse-thieves, gamblers and today *I'm a mixture of all of those*. And, I am trying to pass that on to that one in there, that young man that was in here, *I want him to know where he is from and where he can go*. I am trying to pass on what my mother taught me. There are a few things I want to tell you that you need to remember. My mother taught me this and you need to remember them too.

(sighs) Number 1, *that God is the Father, Christ is his son, and his blood was shed for our sins*. That's number 1; Number 2, *respect other people and respect their beliefs, their society, their norms*; Number 3, *respect your elders cause you can learn from them*; Number 4, *respect yourself and believe in yourself*; Number 5, *there is always something new to learn[^]*. That makes me, ah, I'm a complete person. That sounds like a cliché but I am, *I'm a complete person*. The hunt was exciting, a little of it now... sometimes I get to feeling that just to go somewhere...back to Germany (laughs). If I had the same mother I'd be in the same place as I am today.
Analytical commentary.

Walter introduces this scene with an ongoing reflection of his self-identity. Like most people he is proud of his heritage. However, he seemed different in his tone. He did not seem to be experiencing nostalgia. It was apparent that he had spent many hours over his lifetime contemplating his early childhood experiences. His past experiences and heritage was important and he wanted to pass those learned values, beliefs, and ethic on to his descendants. He summarized these values with a list from his mother: Belief in something bigger than yourself; respect other people’s beliefs; respect those who come before you; respect yourself; and always be learning something new. Faith, respect, and learning made Walter a complete and whole man. This was Walter’s pathway to the idea of “Shalom”. The last scene reveals Walter’s final thoughts on family, mountain culture and the future.

Scene sixteen.

Well, I still work a little bit. I work with a fellow at the airport. I do his office work for him. (laughs). They tell me it’s my volunteer job. It's just something I like to do. I like to see the airplanes coming in and out. My family is the most important thing now. I nearly lost my family due to my own stupidity and five years ago, (excuse me, it tightens me up a bit), five years ago ah my granddaughter ...well, my babies are the most important thing in my life is my children and my wife. Our children, we're blessed with two fine children. We've been blessed with three wonderful grandchildren and we have a wonderful great granddaughter and another one on the way. We’ve been able to teach them, to pass on to them what was given to me. I've been able to...God has given me...blessed me enough that I could pass it on to them. This is one thing I think was the problem with the people you know that stayed in the mountains and never got out.
They didn't realize that it's no longer that little community. There's a big world out there and in that big world there are a lot of people and a lot of different things. There's a lot of different societies and each of them adds something to this world and it’s important that these young people know that they're out there, that they are not the center of the universe. We are just a speck on this planet. Why? It goes back to... in my case it goes back to somebody telling you "you don't stop", you know that sayin’ "if one door closes another one opens up". You...you've have to look for it. The man sits on his couch...oh Lord, help me find a job. Oh, Lord help find this job. God says, "get up and go look, git up and go look." ...Yeah, it’s not so much about the intercultural experiences that you get, its more about the desire to learn, that's more important and getting to know other cultures may benefit you in some ways but it’s more important that you have a desire to learn. Teach them how to read it, teach’em how to do their letters, do their numbers, teach’em how to do that then they can take care of themselves. But their parents have to do it more than the schools. You have to start early and let them explore and be creative. Well, then...then they might be willing to leave...they might want to leave and dig and find that great big world out there!"

**Analytical analysis.**

Walter concludes his story with an appeal to families to spend time with their kids. He found it important in developing the desire to learn. He spoke as if it was a duty of parents and that schooling enhanced the learning that was to take place in the home. For Walter it seems that the most important characteristic which separated himself from many others in Punkin’ Center was a desire for learning. A desire for learning led to discovery and discovery led to other experiences including intercultural experiences.
These learning experiences led to knowledge that the world is complex and vast and only known as one has the confidence and curiosity to discover it. That is what Walter wants to pass on.

**Summary of Vignettes**

Two men from the rural Southern Appalachia shared their lived experiences to tell a story about how their journey out of the rural mountains led them to different cultures only to return to the mountains as transformed men. Sam and Walter grew up on different mountains in the Great Smoky Mountains only about two hours apart. Those two hours by car could have been 24 hours apart back in the 1950’s, but the general landscape and demographics were fairly similar. Both men described specific motivations and influences for leaving the mountains but had two different roads. Their journeys are similar in that they both left their geographic area for several years and that they had to learn to adapt to new cultures. Sam and Walter’s stories revealed some similar themes: Exodus and return, strong matriarchal influence, and desire to learn new things. Both returned enriched by their experiences. Lastly, Sam and Walter returned with the hopes of connecting with their culture and passing on a respect of other cultures to their families.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the stories of two rural Appalachians as it relates to their intercultural experiences that may explain cultural disruptions and the ways they self-articulated its role in their life decisions following. This study also described the social condition and cultural characteristics of rural Appalachia. One central question supports the other three fundamental questions which framed this research.

Central Question: How do adult rural Appalachians make sense of their intercultural experiences?

1. How does their self-articulation relate to their social-reproduction?
2. What are the factors that support the social-reproduction of rural Appalachian people?
3. How do intercultural experiences contribute to the cultural disruption of rural Appalachians?

As this study navigated through the literature and the stories of the two rural Appalachian men who had intercultural experiences it sought to understand how those experiences impacted their past, present and future articulations. Research was conducted through guided and recorded in-depth interviews in which the participants were asked to tell their life story. This chapter analyzes and discusses the major themes that emerged from the two interviews and reviews how they relate to the theoretical framework and seminal literature. This chapter also outlines the implications of the findings for rural Appalachian practitioners and me. It concludes with suggestions for further research and my final thoughts on what I have learned about myself as a scholar in practice.
The Mountain Narratives: Geographic and Social isolation

The social problems in Appalachia are the result of many overlapping factors that historically included geographic isolation, outsider control of natural resources, and government land policies (ARC, 2012). The more rural or distressed the area the more it seems that geographic barriers affects the social conditions of the population (ARC, 2012). That is to say the rural mountain areas may limit the population’s access to services, quality education, and other forms of cultural capital. One common value seemed to remain in the two men interviewed in their formative years growing up in the mountains experiences- the value of independence. In spite of their economic status they share a common need for freedom to choose their own outcomes. The general poverty of the area and the geographic nature of the highlands made choices difficult but not impossible. While both men saw their situation realistically, they also saw themselves and in some ways their families different in comparison to the rest of their immediate community. They articulated in their stories an awareness of social reproduction that continued a culture of poverty but they both seemed to lack an articulation that this reproduction was determined. They realized there was a choice. Their articulation is reflected in Walls and Billings (2002) work on the sociology in Southern Appalachia. Walls and Billing (2002) rejected the subculture of rural Appalachia as it related the type of poverty characterized by Oscar Lewis in 1969.

The traditional subculture of the Southern Appalachians should not be characterized as either a poverty subculture or as a peasant culture. The preindustrial, pioneer way of life cannot be equated with a subculture of poverty as described by Oscar Lewis; there is no evidence that traditional mountain families felt helpless, dependent, or inferior.
In sharp contrast to the Gemeinschaft solidarity of traditional peasant society, the Appalachian mountaineer was already the quintessential modern individualist” (pg.7)

Still yet the geography seemed to enhance the realities of poverty and deeply impact the psyche of Sam and Walter. Horace Kephart’s (1976) elegant words about the early pioneers’ mountain education may provide an understanding of the mindset of many rural Appalachians like Sam and Walter up to this day, “As the school of the woods were harsh and stern, so it brought up sons and daughters of lion heart” (p. 379).

In spite of the realities of poverty and a difficult environment many rural Appalachians may not yield to those realities. Sam and Walter were motivated to leave their rural mountain place and culture to discover different fields of force outside of what was offered in the mountains to compete for financial and cultural capital. The terms field of force and cultural capital are used to evoke the lens of Bourdieu’s (1977) social reproduction theory in which he defined fields as a type of playground where legitimate modes of reproduction might take place (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996). Interestingly, Sam was from a broken family and seemed more motivated by his own idea of “success”. In his articulation success was more about financial and individual freedoms. Walter, on the other hand, from a more stable family system, seemed more motivated by cultural capital. His seemed to articulate that his education and intercultural experiences might serve as a cultural capital which may be exchanged for financial capital as he moved through life. Both seemed to articulate their geographic context affected their options for different fields of force. Sam was clear that he did not see himself as one conforming to the options that his context provided. The geography alone brought about challenges to what one could or could not do. He wanted to do something different if for no other reason than that he wanted to, which may reveal how important the concept of individualism was to him.
Walter had more options because his father was in the military and his parents remained married. Where Sam had to earn his options, Walter only needed to accept his. Sam seemed to be more resistant to public education. His family system was not as stable as Walter’s which may made it more difficult for him to accept and adapt. He had to work through his cultural traits more than Walter. Options may actually be equated with access in these narratives. Therefore, Walter had more potential access than Sam to types of capital and fields of force. Sam and Walter were dramatically shaped by their geographic and social isolation in the developmental years of early childhood into their teens. Just as important was the presence of micro-disruptions in the form of parental encouragement that ran congruent with the influences of said isolations. If they had not had this congruent force of influence their outcomes may have been different because geographic and social isolation are real and powerful forces.

The severity of the geography of rural mountain communities contribute to the degree of isolation the community experiences as a whole but as discovered in these narratives individuals interact with and accept their environment in different ways. The physical distress and isolation from the rural mountain environment may potentially shape rural mountain peoples’ worldviews and ability to change (Walls and Billing, 2002). It is these real forces over a long period of time that influence attitudes, beliefs, and lived experiences and has a high probability of being passed onto the next generation through cultural transmission and socialization (Bisin and Verdier, 2010). The presence of cultural characteristics like the general distrust of outsiders and the value of family closeness also made it difficult for rural Appalachians to leave the home for long periods of time (Russ, 2006). However, the rejection or overpowering of geographic and social isolation and cultural characteristics do not explain why these two men left their context for another way of life.
Sam and Walter both experienced early childhood education in multiple age class rooms. Sam was disinterested in school and Walter loved schooling. They both recorded that their mothers were instrumental in their lives as it related to getting an education and leaving the community. Sam’s mother encouraged him to leave in order to get work and escape the environment, but Walter’s leaving came about through intrigue created by his mother’s emphasis on education specifically through reading. Both seem like natural courses to take. One was based more on fear and anxiety of the geographic, social, and economic environment and the other based on education beyond these environments. Walter’s mother read more to him than Sam’s. This reading time influenced Walter’s view of the outside world. Sam’s mother wanted him to learn but she was also a single mother and needed chores to be done.

Sam read at school and Walter read at home. It appears that both were fascinated by the unknown and appreciated hands-on-learning and discovery. However, Sam spent more time hunting and spending time with nature. Walter grew up enjoying learning itself. The study of these two men’s experiences reinforced the importance of the role of parents or parental types of relationships in cultural transmission and personal efficacy (Banker, 2010, Bauch, 2006, Bennet, 2008, Bisin & Verdier, 2010).

Sam and Walter are examples of how the family system is instrumental in a rural Appalachian’s vocational choice (Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000; Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969; Whiston & Keller, 2004). At the same time they had internal desire to leave. They did not want to merely replicate the family pattern. A family’s influence is not merely an outward force. It’s cooperate efficacy works inwardly as a child grows up in that system which influences the child’s personality and character (Pajaras & Urden, 2006; Pajaras, 2005).
As the two men approached the decision to leave the mountains it seems clear that Sam was more fatalistic than Walter, a common trait among rural Appalachians (Bennett, 2008, Weller, 1965, Russ, 2006). Walter’s self-confidence was clearly established earlier on through both his parent’s (specifically his mother) participation in his education and schooling.

**The Journey Narratives: Intercultural influence and disruption**

Jack Weller (1965) summarized major characteristics of rural Appalachians that may contribute to conflict with change and interactions with other cultures. Many scholars since Weller concluded that much of those cultural characteristics still remain in rural mountain Appalachian areas (Barker, 2010, Bennet, 2008, Eller, 2008, Isserman, 1996, Russ, 2006). Weller’s findings may apply to Sam and Walter who grew up in rural Appalachia in the Nineteen-fifties and as Walter articulated, it might as well have been the “Victorian period”. Weller summated that rural Appalachians were very fatalistic, basically existential, oriented to concrete places and particular things, and religious in nature (Weller, 1965). Sam and Walter may have struggled with these types of personal characteristics as they considered leaving their close knit community, but they did not wanted to escape that fatalism more. They left at different times in their lives. Sam left as a young man and Walter first left as a child and then as an adult. However, it seems their self-confidence and efficacy came from the same source of disruption- their mother’s nurturing, encouragement and involvement. Disruption theory may help explain how these two rural Appalachians continued in their self-confidence, acceptance of change, and adaptation to their intercultural context.

If we look at the ideas and encouragements of their mothers as “innovative” we may understand how their cultural disruption was initiated and sustained.
From an educational perspective Hess (2006) encouraged people to instigate change that will “disrupt, transform, or radically alter the way education is provided” specifically for student populations that were not supported by the status quo environment (Hess, 2006, p. 46). In this first phase of disruption Sam and Walter’s mothers functioned as this type of instigator or change agent. Both men articulated that their mothers were specifically instrumental influencing their thinking differently about success in comparison to the status quo of their environment. The mother's’ instigations and initial cultural disruption seemed to override Sam and Walter’s socialization to the degree in which they were self-confident enough to leave their culture. This may be in part due to the confidence they placed in their mothers. Rural Appalachians may not take the introduction to new ideas as easily through public education systems or from outsiders (Banker, 2010; Drake, 2001, Helton, 2010, Weller, 1965). Christensen and Eyring (2011) suggested approaching the most influential people in the population to gain support for an innovative idea. This seems true for Sam and Walter. As rural Appalachians the innovative idea, leaving one’s culture to expand personal knowledge and economic base, needed to be facilitated by an entity that was not just familiar but respected and trusted. In this case it was not teachers, coaches, or even fathers, but uniquely mother’s. However, the mother’s unique relationship with the son in rural Appalachia is not a phenomenon. It is a cultural outcome. Historically, rural southern Appalachian culture has been child-centered with a strong maternal influence and as they grow into adulthood (Drake, 2001; Russ 2006; Weller, 1965).

Sam and Walter’s narratives are interesting because their experiences are uniquely intercultural. Again the principles of innovative disruption can be applied to understand the role of their intercultural experiences.
The literature supports the experiences of Sam and Walter as it applies to their acceptance and adoption of new experiences and ways of thinking though they seemed to view their intercultural experiences differently. Sam saw his intercultural experience as a tool to attain his perception of success. He interacted and tolerated as a means more than an end. Cultural differences were to be understood in light of business transactions. Walter on the other hand saw it as an end more than a means. He viewed his experiences as an extension of his mother’s education and encouragement to learn. Walter sees himself as a global learner and citizen who reflect Reilly and Sender’s (2009) work that encouraged study abroad experiences that valued global responsibility and citizenship as essential outcomes in place of the tradition outcomes of economic and political capital. Sam reflected the more traditional outcomes of contemporary study abroad experiences. The language choices he made clearly framed his intercultural experiences as a tool that led him to economic capital.

With that in mind the retelling of their intercultural experiences allowed each man to articulate how he saw himself in relation to his native environment and understand what that meant for the rest of his family. The connection between their intercultural experiences are important to their grand narrative because at the heart of most rural Appalachian’s identity is helping the family first (Bennet, 2008). In some regards this may be why many stay. They may need to work to help the family. In Sam and Walter’s case they believed in their mother’s encouragements as well as in the long term benefit of the activity for their future family (Bennet, 2008). Ali and Saundar’s (2009) education perspective suggested that “targeted interventions” that are designed to increase rural Appalachians self-confidence and “expectations about their future” might be valuable to those without higher education and from lower socio-economic status (p. 172).
Their “targeted interventions” were activities focused on cognitive variables (educational and career self-efficacy) and contextual variables (family and peer support). While Sam and Walter were not the beneficiaries of an organized “targeted intervention” a similar life intervention, through intercultural experiences, occurred over a period of time that contained much of the same benefits. Therefore, sustained self-efficacy and capital (cultural and economic) for the future family are the two major outcomes of their intercultural disruption.

Return Narratives: Cultural Reentry and Transformation

Sam and Walter’s experiences abroad and on the homeland in urban settings added to their life experiences, skills, and competencies which influenced their view of the world (Deardorff, 2006; Shaftel, Shaftel & Ahuluwalia, 2007). However, transformation is not complete or better understood without a context that appreciates the experiences. As they reentered their own culture Sam and Walter both articulated there was some environmental and generational change but no real shock in spite of the duration of both men’s experiences. This is in contrast to many who experience a shift in values from their indigenous culture which may lead to a difficult re-entry (Callahan, 2010). It may be that these two men’s intercultural experiences fused with their previous life experiences to create an altogether different worldview. That is, a worldview that synthesizes their indigenous culture and worldview with their innovative intercultural worldview (Callahan, 2010). This may explain why they more easily went through the adaptation cycle: 1) enculturation- learning other cultures; 2) acculturation- or re-socialization; 3) deculturation- unlearning of indigenous culture; 4) assimilation- acceptance of re-socialization (Callahan, 2010). The reality of adaptation and re-adaptation to culture may imply the nature of intercultural experiences, that is, they are innately transformative.
However innate they may or may not be Sam and Walter was not just thrown into their intercultural experiences. A sense of urgency or need for change was a catalyst.

Ukpokudo (2010) connects innovation theory and transformational learning experiences in multicultural contexts. He suggested this combination of theory and practice would serve as an “activist and agency pedagogy” that intentionally works for the underrepresented student populations through experiential and reflective learning techniques (p. 3). Ukpokudo posited that this approach would run against the status quo and lead to “meaningful knowledge construction” and ultimately change of agency or self-power (p. 3). As these men reflected upon their return to their indigenous cultures they both articulated that they never intended to stay away. Walter said it was like the biblical patriarch Jacob coming to the place he called Bethel—the place where he walked and talked with God (Genesis 35). Sam’s’ record was more cultural. He recalled his heritage and mountain life as the significant persuasion to return. In both cases there was a deep sense of return. As sense that seemed to never have left them. Meaning they were not surprised to return even if they understood the world differently than many from their mountain culture.

Ukpokodo’s connection of innovation theory and transformational learning theory may have been represented in the intercultural education of these two men. Sam and Walter articulated that there was an innovative idea (to leave their culture) that conflicted with the status quo of their culture (to stay and reproduce the status quo). This innovation was not likely possible without the agency of their family system, especially the mothers (the activist). What turned out to be an intercultural education (experiential and reflective learning) in the end, lead to a change of agency. I am a beneficiary of their meaningfully constructed knowledge just as their own grandchildren are.
However, this educational experience was not in a normal classroom under certain time constraints. This education began in the mountains and covered many thousands of miles and many different cultures from Sam and Walter’s indigenous culture. Their acquisition of knowledge happened in some classrooms with a teacher or professor but also with an Arab customer or a German restaurant owner. Their articulation about their return reflects men who speak with more authority. It would seem there was a change of agency or self-power in them that allows them to speak confidently and encouragingly about their experiences to their grandchildren in hopes that they may also serve as a cultural disruption for them in order to continue the synthesis of a more global minded worldview.

**Implications for Practice**

This study recorded the intercultural narratives of two rural Appalachian men to understand cultural disruption and the ways they self-articulated this disruptions role in their reflections and life choices afterwards. The motivation of independence and freedom seemed to be at the center of these two narratives. Jack E. Weller observed that a fierce sense of independence was an “absolutely essential trait” of the rural Appalachian (Weller, 1965, p. 30). Living in multiple types of isolation may create a necessity for independence. Every mountain-top, hollow, or yonder-hill family lived their own lives because travel was not often and work was a priority over socializing (Drake, 2001, Weller, 1965); “Hence the mountaineer came to admire the man who was most independent, both economically and socially” (Weller, 1965, p. 30). Sam and Walter seemed to represent these types of mountaineers who could not imagine a life outside of their control or at least their perceived control. These two men reflect these two types of independence.
Sam pursued economic independence and Walter pursued social independence. However, in spite of this essential trait of independence there are three relationships evident in the narratives that may guide the implications for practice.

First is their relationship to strategic individuals. These strategic individuals may be parenting adults, teachers, other family members, coaches and more. However, the important aspect of these types of relationships, are that they are developmental in nature. They may be by design or by nature, but it is a relationship that is moving the individual toward a self-efficacy that allows them to develop a positive interpretation of themselves and their potential in relation to their immediate context and futures. This may assist them in managing the depression and anxiety that may come with a low sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1995). Sam and Walter revealed in their narratives that it was a combination of parental adults and teachers that had the most influence on their ability to motivate themselves and cope with difficult situations.

Second is their relationship to the mountains. Sam and Walter told stories that had pre-determined endings. They both believed and wanted to return to their indigenous areas when they achieved their perceived successes. This is a difficult phenomenon to understand. Many who leave do not come back and yet some do. Sam and Walter were conscious of the risks of staying in spite of their strong ties to the area and family. The Southern Appalachian thinker Wendell Berry ascribes a mystical relationship to the land and the farmer. Drake (2001) wrote that for Berry, living and working in the land. “...is essentially a religious act, not a way to pursue profit...he sanctifies the legitimacy of a folk economy based upon the land and its cultivation” (p. 246). For Sam and Walter there is also a mystical or religious element to their land. The intercultural disruption was never the end of the story for them. They intended to create their own ending in their own place.
This relationship to the mountains is spiritual and cognitive. The spiritual relationship to the mountains provides a sense of meaning and the cognitive relationship provides a sense of purpose. Therefore, the land for a rural Appalachian may provide a sense of identity and motivation for upward mobility.

Lastly, is their relationship to knowledge? Sam and Walter thrived in the experiential learning they received in elementary school and in nature. The pragmatic philosophy of the culture may have reinforced this type of relationship to knowledge. Helton (2010) summarized the expectations of young rural Appalachians, “children are expected to enter into a vocation or trade that is practical and has concrete returns, i.e. steady pay and adequate resources to support a family. Children...are also expected to learn to deal with the world at large and cope with present circumstances (p. 68). In Sam and Walter’s case, the positive experiential learning activities seemed to assist their personal self-efficacy. These learning experiences were important because they did not really have role models who could demonstrate the process of how to attain their perceived successful life. Therefore, Sam and Walter’s life choices seemed to include significant episodes of experiential learning activities to attain new skills and knowledge. Along with critical reflection and rational discourse, life experiences are one of the three themes of Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theory. Sam and Walter’s narratives describe their relationship with knowledge through an individual and group process (Baumgartner, 2001; Clark, 1993; Dirkx, 1998). They approached knowledge practically and engaged it experientially, which resulted in the accumulation of cultural capital in four specific forms summarized from Yosso (2005): Aspirational capital (resources that enable hope for the future); Social capital (resources that enable networking with influential people); Linguistic capital
(resources that increase intellectual and social skills); and Familial capital (resources that enable a sense of community and history).

This research may be important to education professionals and health and social-work professionals who interact with rural Appalachians on a daily basis. These fields of practice deal with an individual and by extension a family’s self-efficacy and motivation. This study may provide insight to professionals seeking a better understanding of rural Appalachian articulations about what motivated and sustained their emotional and psychological efficacy (Hendryx, 2008). For example, Pope, Loeffler, and Ferrell (2014) focused their social services perspective to examine the phenomenon of aging in rural Appalachia. One of their discovered themes was the abuse and addiction of prescription drugs among the elderly. As they considered areas of future research they listed “the complexities of familial relationships and aging, including the role that fictive kin may play in the lives of older adults” as the first important area to understand (p. 533).

Sam and Walter’s narratives and the seminal literature distinctly point to the family system as instrumental to understanding the culture and the complexities of individual roles within the rural Appalachian culture. At the same time, many Appalachians have formed subcultures in urban cities which have their own values, orientations and lifestyle that would be unique to the urban context. Maloney (1974) wrote, “Social welfare workers need to develop a “cultural competence” appropriate for working with particular sub-cultural groups...The 3.3 million Appalachian refugees in cities outside the mountain region plus their children and grandchildren comprise one of the nation’s largest sub-cultural minorities” (p. 4).

This study may also assist educators that come from outside the culture to better understand their general learning styles and how to better motivate them as learners.
Helton’s (2010) work focused on teacher perceptions of Appalachian learners that concluded, “Moreover, faculty had more specific and often stereotypic views of Appalachian versus urban students” (p. 71). Sam and Walter had different schooling experiences but both generally appreciated and showed interest in hands on learning approach. Therefore, these two men’s narratives may assist the rural Appalachian educator examine their own biases and perceptions about rural Appalachian learners. “Such reflection can go a long way in creating a less stressful and more culturally competent classroom environment for students from Appalachian cultural backgrounds” (Helton, 2010, p. 72).

**Further Research**

Studies like this may provide insight into deeper aspects of disruptive forces in the rural Appalachian’s experience. Generational and racial inquiries will provide a clearer perspective on the general region’s narratives about social and cultural disruption in relation to economic mobility and expand the knowledge base of practitioners like educators, social workers, and health practitioners.

The narratives in this study are limited to two gentlemen in their Seventies. They are in a broad sense of education first generation students. Helton’s (2010) study on rural Appalachian and urban college students mentions a basic different between first generation Appalachian students and second generation students by faculty members. First generation students, “were described as being more entrenched in Appalachian values and truly considered education to be a privilege…Second generation Appalachian students tended not to identify their cultural heritage…and more liberal and flexible in terms of values and world views” (Helton, 2010, p. 69). Therefore, it is reasonable to expand the research to understand how younger generations of rural Appalachians articulate their lived experiences in relation to intercultural disruptions.
Investigating the different generations, ethnicities, and male and female disruption narratives of the rural Appalachian culture may assist practitioners in understanding how and why different populations of rural Appalachians make decisions about change.

A theme a respect for other cultures and the role of the teacher were present in this study as well. More research on rural Appalachian’s and their acceptance of outside individuals and groups may provide data helpful for economic and educational development. Further research of the stories of those who did not leave may provide another perspective about the influence of school teachers and rural Appalachian self-efficacy development.

Sam and Walter articulated a desire to return. More research into why people in rural Appalachia have gone to great lengths to leave only to return when it is financially possible may give insight to rural Appalachian people’s motivation and aspirations. Related to that internal investigation is the idea of traits. Further research about the interaction of personality traits and culture on self-efficacy development in rural Appalachians may help explain more clearly the external and internal factors of self-efficacy in this large sub-culture.

Lastly, this study recorded disruption narratives that articulated behavioral change, social change, emotional change, and economic change through cultural exchange. It would be important to expand our knowledge about these change narratives from other regions of rural Appalachia.

**Final Thoughts**

Research has demonstrated that cultural characteristics have a complex impact on Appalachian people (Reilly & Senders, 2009; Russ, 2006; Tillman, 2005). The people of rural southern Appalachia have a certain set of cultural characteristics and geography that promote isolation and resistance to outside influence (ARC, 2005; Russ, 2006; Weller, 1965).
Social reproduction theory helps shed light on the dynamics of how cultural capital and personal tastes of rural southern Appalachians work together to help support and possibly reproduce a culture of isolation and resistance. The literature reviewed delineates the positive effects that intercultural disruption can produce for an individual’s economic and social mobility. The reality is that there is a process by which innovative ideas are accepted and implemented. For these two rural Appalachian men that innovative idea was leaving their culture. Everyone in rural Appalachia may not accept intercultural opportunities for various cultural and economic reasons (Bennet, 2008; Billings, 2000; Russ, 2006; Wallace and Diekroger, 2000).

Transformation of their socio-economic status may be assisted through intercultural experiences. However, there are larger unintended consequences that may loom. The increase of social and economic status without inner transformation may continue to broaden the gap between the have and the have-nots; the integrated and the isolated; the richer and the poorer.

The rural Appalachian context might be able to absorb some of these possibilities in spite of the many cultural, geographical and economic barriers. The literature suggests that intercultural experiences may affect an individual’s world view so as to change their course of engagement in the world. The hope then is that more than just a world view is affected but also their economic aspirations. Cultural characteristics, geography, diversity, and rural economics provide challenges for rural Appalachians’ engagement in intercultural experiences. However, in a globalized world intercultural disruptions and intercultural competencies may be the experiences and skills that would be vital for future rural Appalachians, the Appalachian community, and the Appalachian story.
The knowledge base of my culture was expanded through the stories of Sam and Walter. I have hunted and fished in the same mountains, but the next time I do, I will do so with a better appreciation. Their stories were my story. I also know how difficult it was to leave these mountains. When I returned I knew I was a different person. However, I never gave a consideration as to why. At the beginning of this study I presupposed that it was the intercultural disruption that would serve as the initiator of one’s efficacy to leave their culture. If then one could experience another culture they would then also have the self-confidence to change or rise above their context afterwards. I discovered through Sam and Walter’s stories that it was not what initiated the power to leave. As in their stories it was my mother’s encouragement and my family system that established the efficacy to leave. The intercultural experience sustained the disruption’s efficacy capabilities but it did not seem to initiate it. When I reflect on the idea leaving the rural mountain culture I can’t imagine having the inclination, the audacity, or the power to leave without my mother’s simple words, “Don’t be afraid, you can do it, I am proud of you”.

With that in mind I have endeavored to understand my biases and focusing on understanding not only what Sam and Walter said but how they said it. I am aware of the risks and criticisms of narrative research. Ellis and Bochner (2000) wrote, "If you are a storyteller rather than a story analyst then your goal becomes therapeutic rather than analytic" (p.745). In spite of my desire to tell good stories I fought this tendency in order to present an analysis based narrative. As a scholar in practice I plan on continuing to the rural Appalachian narrative in order to shine light where there is misunderstanding, to assist other practitioners understand the culture they work in, and support a people who sometimes lack a voice.
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