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## THE CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY HYPOTHESIS: AN APPALACHIAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

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Dr. Kenneth M. Tyler, Director of Graduate Studies

THE CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY HYPOTHESIS:  
AN APPALACHIAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Psychology  
in the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology in the College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Timothy W. Conner II

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Lynda Brown Wright, Professor of Educational Psychology  
Dr. Kenneth M. Tyler, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology

Lexington, Kentucky

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### THE CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY HYPOTHESIS: AN APPALACHIAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

K.M. Tyler et al. (2008) propose a quantitative method to measure differences between school and home experiences had by students of ethnic minority status and how such differences (cultural discontinuity) may affect psychological factors related to student achievement. Although study of cultural discontinuity has been applied to understanding African American, Asian American, Latino American, and Native American student populations, little attention has been given to the ways in which cultural discontinuity may manifest in the Appalachian American population. This study conceptualizes the socio-cultural conditions that would warrant such an investigation, establishing evidence from ten interview subjects of the presence of cultural values associated with Appalachian Americans from Eastern Kentucky. The interviewee evidence provides a necessary starting point for investigating regional culture and marginalization effects that may occur based on membership within the Appalachian American community.

KEYWORDS: Appalachian American, Socio-cultural Conditions,  
Education, Regional Culture, Marginalization

Timothy W. Conner II

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July 29, 2013

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THE CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY HYPOTHESIS:  
AN APPALACHIAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

By

Timothy W. Conner II

Dr. Lynda Brown Wright

Director of Dissertation

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July 29, 2013

Date

## DEDICATION

First of all, I want to dedicate this work to my family, particularly to my wife Della for her constant support and to my son T.J. for his understanding of his daddy's "need to work two jobs." I also want to dedicate this work to the participants in the dissertation—Appalachian Americans in Eastern Kentucky from whom I have started down a research agenda that should help shape lives in the communities there for the better. Finally, I dedicate this work to my mothers, both of whom passed away while I was working on my Ph.D. I hope they find some comfort in my accomplishment.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **Chapter One: Introduction and Statement of Problem**

### **Background and Statement of the Problem**

The Cultural Discontinuity hypothesis suggests that a contributing factor to the psychological antecedents to learning and subsequent academic differences between racial and ethnic minority students and their mainstream counterparts might be related to the lack of alignment between home and school socializing practices had by those marginalized student populations (Deyhle, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ndura, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Parsons, 2001, 2003; Parsons, Travis, & Simpson, 2005; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003; Webb-Johnson, 2002). In an original conceptual contribution to the study of this hypothesized phenomenon, a research team largely from the University of Kentucky with other institutions, Tyler, Uqdah, Dillihunt, Beatty-Hazelbaker, Gadson & Stevens (2008), proposed a quantitative method used to measure differences between school and home experiences of ethnic minority status in an effort to understand how such differences (i.e., cultural discontinuity) may affect psychological factors related to student achievement. This proposed quantitative next step made sense methodologically as previous studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have supported the cultural discontinuity hypothesis, albeit in various manifestations dependent upon the group of students studied (Tyler et al., 2008).

Although study of cultural discontinuity has been applied to understanding African American, Asian American, Latino American, and Native American student populations, little attention has been given to the ways in which cultural discontinuity may manifest for other student populations that can be viewed as marginalized and for whom educational attainment has been less than for the mainstream population, such as

the Appalachian American student population (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2009; Brown-Ferrigno, & Knoepfel, 2004; Bush, 2003; Tang & Russ, 2007).

This study seeks to conceptualize the socio-cultural conditions that would warrant such an investigation, suggesting not only that Appalachian American students should be seen as a distinct cultural group, but also acknowledging the importance of examining the role of culture in the educational attainment of this particular student population. As this specific line of inquiry has yet to be applied to the Appalachian American student group, there is a need for unbiased scholarly inquiry to verify that Appalachian Americans are a specific cultural group and to understand the role of Appalachian culture in education from the perspective of those studied (Glesne, 2006).

Specifically, because literature conflicts as to whether clashes between mainstream and Appalachian Americans' cultural values should be included in the discussion of disparities that exist in Appalachia (see Eller, 2008 and Jones, 1991, for examples), it is prudent that researchers begin with asking the source of study (Appalachian Americans) about their perspectives—not only concerning cultural identity, but more specifically the degree to which educational experiences were similar or different from the values and practices present within their home environment. Finally, it would seem necessary to ask about the ways in which educational experiences proved helpful in the overall development of the individuals interviewed, particularly when these potential cultural discontinuous experiences may have generated conflicts as individuals worked towards success in mainstream school environments. For example, learners with alignment between home and school (no cultural discontinuity) may report that the emphasis placed on the individual working toward her/his own best outcomes in a class

resonates well with the learner and in turn, the learner may achieve high levels of academic and perhaps subsequent professional success. However, students that experience culturally discontinuous events may, in the same example, not perform well, as their home values endorse a horizontal and communal orientation, resulting in confusion about the best way to get ahead. In this example, one may stay home to take care of the family rather than try to “climb the rope” toward academic and professional success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Although an ever growing body of literature is emerging on this issue of cultural discontinuity, along with a conceptual paper discussing a quantitative investigation (Tyler et al., 2008), one criticism of the hypothesis and associated literature thus far is that researchers have only focused on traditional ethnic minority student populations, thereby ignoring other groups that have recognized cultural customary practices and expressed values. It is with this criticism that I propose a study seeking to examine another historically marginalized group of Americans who (a) have been shown to have a distinct cultural background that does not necessarily align with mainstream cultural values and (b) have experienced a tradition of underachievement as compared to the White, middle-class, suburban dominant group—Appalachian Americans (Brown-Ferrigno & Knoeppel, 2004; Bush, 2003). As the scholarly pursuit of cultural discontinuity between the home and school experience of Appalachian American students has not yet been investigated, the purpose for this initial investigation is to glean Appalachian perspectives concerning cultural values, education, and any relationships that Appalachian Americans believe exist between these two factors. Specifically, this study seeks to provide answers to the

following question: “Do the residents of Appalachia report feelings of cultural discontinuity between those values and practices endorsed at home and those values and practices endorsed at school, and if so, do the students who reside in Appalachia ever express the idea that perceptions of cultural discontinuity, or at least the manner in which schooling takes place, make learning and/or performance difficult for them?” Because the literature concerning cultural values in Appalachia is somewhat dated and full of conflicting views as to the presence of unique cultural values, it is essential that the first step in understanding educational marginalization lies in unearthing, from the viewpoint of Appalachian residents, the unique cultural values that do exist—values different from those of the mainstream in either degree or kind.

As the cultural discontinuity hypothesis has been examined and to various degrees supported in the psychological and educational literature with respect to other marginalized student populations (Deyhle, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ndura, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Parsons, 2001, 2003; Parsons, Travis, & Simpson, 2005; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003; Webb-Johnson, 2003), it is my belief that Appalachian Americans will (a) provide evidence of cultural values that are, taken together, uniquely Appalachian (although some of the values supported in the literature may be different from the mainstream only in degree and not in kind) and (b) provide explanations that help researchers examine ways in which educational institutions, due to endorsing mainstream values exclusively, may disenfranchise Appalachian American students. As an initial investigation then, I turn to those that are historically Appalachian that may or may not be current students. The interviews used throughout the research with this population will guide the researcher in understanding cultural values from home and

school as reported by residents that grew up in the region and attended school there.

Although the larger question will subsequently be the relationship between value clashes at home and school, this initial investigation starts with a variety of members that have had various educational experiences in Appalachia—tying into present generational and prevailing cultural values.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**A glimpse into cultural discontinuity.** Multicultural Education Researchers have challenged the mainstream curricular focus in the American educational system that perpetuates stereotypes of marginalized groups by excluding their contributions to the American educational framework (Banks, 2008a). Indeed, researchers have called for a radical transformation in what we teach that includes the understanding of self and others, embracing the unique cultural characteristics of the diversities of people that exist within the U.S. and throughout the world (Banks, 2008a, 2008b). In an attempt to better understand schools as agents of maintaining the social positionality of oppressed groups in the U.S., academics, particularly those within multicultural education, have posited that schools impart the values of the mainstream U.S. culture upon all students, defining “success” by the ways in which students adhere to those cultural imperatives (Banks, 2008a; Spradlin & Parsons, 2008). Further study has demonstrated that students of marginalized populations in the U.S. often experience clashes in expectations of their home and school environment, a kind of *cultural discontinuity* that may make academic success in American educational settings tantamount to acculturating oneself and giving up important values imparted from social settings and home communities in adherence to the values held by mainstream America (Deyhle, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ndura, 2004; Nieto,

1999; Parsons, 2001, 2003; Parsons, Travis, & Simpson, 2005; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Specifically, Tyler et al. (2008) conceptually define cultural discontinuity as “a school-based behavioral process where the cultural value—based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students—those typically originating from home or parental socialization activities—are discontinued at school” (p. 281; see Appendix A). These same researchers turn to a wealth of research in cultural studies and education to highlight the ways in which cultural characteristics held by ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are not aligned with the values held in mainstream educational settings, calling for a quantitative investigation of the effects of such cultural discontinuity on learning outcomes and educational attainment of ethnic minorities in the United States (Tyler et al., 2008). In order to better understand why researchers in education and psychology turn to the study of cultural influences in education, scholars must return to the theoretical origins of the study of culture and knowing.

### **Theoretical frameworks supporting cultural discontinuity.**

*Socio-historical/Socio-cultural theory.* Emerging most largely from the scholarship of the “Russian troika” (A. R. Luria, Alexander Leontiev, and Lev Vygotsky), this theoretical perspective focuses on the relationships that exist “among individual, interpersonal, and socio-historical influences on human development” (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003, p. 207). Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Luria (1976) further explained that all knowledge acquisition and subsequent learning behaviors are situated within cultural space, influenced by the historical events over time, and socially transmitted from person to person(s) while working together within shared environments. That is to



say, rather than viewing knowledge as information that is merely acquired by a student from the teacher, socio-cultural theorists acknowledge that learning is a process that is co-constructed by the individuals involved and all of the individuals involved are going to bring the customs and traditions they have used for previous learning, along with any unique differences, to the table as the learning situations unfold (Hickey & Granade, 2004; Luria, 1967; Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

The social practices, languages, signs, and routines used by learners throughout their in-school and out-of-school experiences to shape, understand, and function within their everyday lives are viewed as “cultural tools” and are considered vitally important to the enterprise of learning (Tudge & Scrimsher, 2003; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Learners who are able to internalize those messages, activities, and practices taught via co-construction with other, more knowledgeable persons and peers will ultimately, according to this theoretical perspective, be viewed as the “most knowledgeable” in particular contexts (Hickey & Granade, 2004).

The sociohistorical/socio-cultural theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to the study of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis in education most notably because it acknowledges the critically important role of culture and history in the learning process (Tyler et al., 2008). In fact, as stated above, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) was adamant in his belief that all knowledge was socially situated and influenced by the cultural practices shared by the learning community (here I refer to in-school and out-of-school learning). In reviewing the cultural discontinuity hypothesis in education, one can note that the hypothesis suggests that students who are not as familiar with the Eurocentric, mainstream cultural values and values-based behaviors endorsed in U.S. schools, or who

have had home socialization experiences before and during school which are not aligned with those mainstream practices are less likely to fare well in schools as those students who were equipped with the “cultural tools” necessary to effectively navigate school expectations during their home socialization experiences (Tyler et al., 2008). Given this, it is clear that the socio-cultural theory provides a theoretical foundation from which researchers can assert that achievement gaps and other differences in educational performance between mainstream European Americans and other ethnic or cultural minority student groups are related to differences in the “cultural tools” or repertoires of practice brought to schools by various student groups (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

With respect to this particular research focus, the socio-cultural theory provides a strong foundation from which to extend the current cultural discontinuity in education work to consider the Appalachian American student population. First of all, scholars have pursued research agendas which not only acknowledge the role of culture in the cognitive development of students, but also recognize that differences in in-school and out-of school cultural socialization patterns may influence how well such students learn and perform within formal classroom contexts such as the public school classroom (Boykin, 1986; Deyhle, 1995; Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003; Mehan, 1998). Such widespread use of the theory for previous discussion of cultural discontinuity suggests that the theory is viewed by others with expertise in the study of culture, psychology, and education as directly relevant to the cultural discontinuity in education claim.

Secondly, to advance the claim that Appalachian American students may have shared cultural values and value-based practices that are not endorsed in schools and that lack of expression of these values and practices may influence educational outcomes, it

must first be argued that any shared cultural values and practices found among the students of Appalachia actually influence or are at least salient throughout their development, particularly cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

As a foundational theoretical orientation, Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory does much to explain what might be happening with respect to cultural discontinuity and educational outcomes; however, it does not address power issues that emerge in America when middle-class, American values disavow the expression of other cultural ways of knowing and living in the world. As such, this theoretical perspective is necessarily limited and does not quite capture the larger social reasons for the existence of the cultural discontinuity phenomenon.

Therefore, in addition to the work set forth by one of the "giants" of educational psychology, Lev Vygotsky, researchers seeking to understand the cultural discontinuity hypothesis must also have a strong knowledge of theories that bolster Vygotsky's work up through the discussion of power paradigms and how said paradigms perpetually marginalize those whose "cultural ways of knowing" do not align with expectations set forth by mainstream American society. One such example, *Ethnocentric Monoculturalism* (Sue & Sue, 2003), does much to help in that regard, including more discussion of the larger marginalization effects that can occur when those whose cultural values are not fully aligned with mainstream, Eurocentric values attempt to navigate, learn, and live in the U.S.

***Ethnocentric monoculturalism.*** Utilized in Tyler et al. (2008) as the theoretical foundation for studying the cultural discontinuity in education claim, ethnocentric monoculturalism, as proposed by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, occurs when "the

individual, institutional, and cultural expression of the superiority of one group's cultural heritage over another [is] combined with the possession of power to impose those standards broadly on the less powerful group" (Sue & Sue, 2003, p. 71). From this theoretical perspective, public schools are seen as socializing agencies that promote the cultural values of mainstream Americans. Specifically, through the individual practices of personnel, the institutional practices of schools, and the prevailing cultural environment of education, it is argued that students who are not members of the dominant culture feel as if they *must* abandon their home socialization experiences and adopt those of the educational system in order to be successful (Sue & Sue, 2003). It is for this reason that Tyler et al. (2008) argue for the use of this framework in the study of cultural discontinuity in that it (a) acknowledges that schools endorse one particular set of values and practices over all others (i.e., the mainstream values) and (b) clearly articulates a rationale for why students of ethnic minority status might feel compelled to cease the demonstration of behaviors associated with home socialization experiences while in school.

As a theoretical framework, it seems that ethnocentric monoculturalism has mostly been applied to the discussion of the various ways in which ethnic minority groups have been oppressed in U.S. society; however, that does not mean it cannot be applied to the study of other cultural groups that have a history of being exploited and oppressed in the U.S. In fact, ethnocentric monoculturalism serves as a very strong theoretical framework to advance the claim that there may be discontinuities between the home and school socialization experiences of children in Appalachia and that these

differences may influence educational outcomes and lifestyle trajectories for these learners.

In fact, some evidence suggests that there are disproportionalities in educational outcomes and later socio-economic success between Appalachian students and students from the dominant group (Brown-Ferrigno & Knoepfel, 2004; Bush, 2003). With this information to follow in the discussion of Appalachian Americans, ethnocentric monoculturalism seems quite an appropriate theoretical lens from which to advance a research agenda in cultural discontinuity with an Appalachian American student focus.

**Cultural discontinuity and Appalachian Americans.** In order to investigate the existence of cultural discontinuity, Tyler et al. (2008) suggested specific steps to be taken. One of these was to establish the existence of cultural values among an ethnic minority group. Although some empirical work has been conducted concerning barriers to educational attainment and, by extension, economic success in the United States via study of marginalization and cultural discontinuity of some ethnic minority groups (i.e., African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans), little investigation has been conducted with Appalachian American cultural groups to establish the degree to which cultural differences between home and school environments influence educational attainment and economic prosperity for this population (Tang & Russ, 2007). In addition, while some research has articulated the specific cultural values found among this population, little research has corroborated their salience and influence on how Appalachian students come to think, learn, and perform.

Per Tyler et al.'s (2008) discussion of the steps included in assessing cultural discontinuity, there needs to be evidence supporting the existence of cultural

discontinuity between the school and home experiences of Appalachian students. Thus, it would be important to first establish the presence of salient cultural values among the people in Appalachia, followed by the establishment of ways in which said values are not reflective of mainstream American values. In that same body of work, there would have to be evidence to support the idea that the cultural value differences between Appalachia and mainstream America were observed by the people in Appalachia and that demonstration of the cultural value-based behaviors of Appalachian persons could potentially result in further marginalization and exploitation of Appalachians in America, particularly as it relates to educational experiences.

Therefore, the focus of this review is two-fold. First, an overview of Appalachia is provided to establish the cultural characteristics held among people this region. In discussing this, salient Appalachian cultural values will be listed and compared with those established as mainstream cultural imperatives in order to provide context regarding disparities that exist in and among Appalachia when compared to the country as a whole. Secondly, an overview of literature that suggests the presence of culturally discontinuous situations between the lived experiences of people in Appalachia and the mainstream values of the U.S. will be highlighted. Due to the limited investigation of this particular phenomenon in Appalachia, the following review sought to establish the presence of characteristics compatible with culturally discontinuous events—not only in the specific educational experiences of people in Appalachia, but also in more general social structures (including work, participation in daily living, education, and the economy). From this, themes relating to cultural values should emerge.

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## Chapter Two: Comprehensive Literature Review

### Appalachia and Appalachian Americans: Where Is It and Who Are They?

One need only turn to media representations of people that live in Appalachia to begin to understand that people living in the region are stereotyped and looked down upon by mainstream American society (Bauer & Growick, 2003; Bradner, 2008; Davis, 2010; Fraley, 2011). Television shows like the *Beverly Hillbillies*, or *Saturday Night Live's Appalachian Emergency Room* capitalize on regional stereotypes, portraying people that live in Appalachia as ignorant, barefoot, pregnant, and unintelligent (Bauer & Growick, 2003; Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008; Massey, 2007). Movie portrayals often depict the people of Appalachia as violent and perverse (Biggers, 2008; Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008). Even in the halls of the academy, the contributions and realistic historical representations of the people of Appalachia are often strikingly absent from the collegial discourse held in the study of America (Biggers, 2008). Biggers (2008) indicated that “all students, not just Appalachians, lose when part of our past is forgotten. The truth is, we need to know and understand Appalachian history if we wish to understand American history” (p. B 18). This sentiment was echoed by Banks (2008a, 2008b) when he indicated that multicultural education is important to all students, not just students of a particular minority group. In service of this idea, an examination of the people of Appalachia is warranted.

Appalachia has been defined both geo-demographically and culturally (Bauer & Growick, 2003; Lohmann, 1990). Demographically, Appalachia has been defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) as a region in the United States that “follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern

Mississippi” (ARC, 2009, para. 1). The total population of the citizenry of Appalachia has been reported to be “about 25 million people,” 42 percent of whom are rural, living in the following states: West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (ARC, 2009, “Population Estimates”; see Appendix B).

When reviewing the historical economic history of the parts of the United States labeled “Appalachian,” researchers have noted that many of the people of Appalachia have lived and still live in extreme poverty, and a disproportionate number of children from the region do not have access to adequate medical care (ARC, 2009; Bauer & Growick, 2003). There is, however, some variability among the Appalachian region when it comes to generational poverty. For example, the portions of the Appalachian region that do not have above average poverty as of 2011 include the parts in the following states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Georgia (ARC, 2009, “Poverty Rates 2007-2011”). However, the rest of the Appalachian region has struggled with poverty for decades, and as of 2011, the range of poverty as compared to the national average as a percentage of residents in poverty ranges from 110.7% of the national average (New York) to a devastating 173.1% of the national average in Eastern Kentucky (ARC, 2009, “Poverty Rates 2007-2011”).

When one looks at the top five areas struggling economically as measured by the percentage of poverty compared to the U.S. average, one quickly notes a particular region within the Appalachian belt as a whole—including Kentucky (173.1%), Mississippi (160.2%), Virginia (126.8%), West Virginia (122.1%), and Tennessee (122.0%) (ARC, 2009). As can be seen, the region of Eastern Kentucky is the highest, with poverty rates



being 173.1% of the U.S. average (ARC, 2009). It is in this central portion of the Appalachian Mountain chain that most of the poverty is located (ARC, 2009; see Appendix C). Perhaps it is in these areas of generational poverty that we see the greatest amount of marginalization.

However, contrary to the overarching and perhaps stereotypical portrayals of Appalachians mentioned in some of the literature above, other works that have addressed people with Appalachian heritage have indicated that a great deal of ethnic and economic diversity exists among those identified as Appalachian American. Racial and ethnic groups included within the Appalachian region include African Americans, Native Americans, and perhaps most dominantly portrayed, Celtic immigrant heritages (Crotty as cited in Tang & Russ, 2007). Additionally, some people of Appalachian descent who now live in some urban areas of the United States (i.e., Cincinnati) have been reported to be fairly wealthy (Obermiller & Maloney, 2002). Those with more wealth are those who may retain cultural characteristics of Appalachia but now live in settings outside of rural Appalachia (Obermiller & Maloney, 2002; Crotty as cited in Tang & Russ, 2007). Rural Appalachians, however, particularly those from the regions identified above, have had a long history of extreme poverty (Bradner, 2008; “Reducing poverty in the Appalachian region,” 2007; Schwab, 1994).

Along related lines are the trends concerning educational attainment of people from Appalachia. When examining educational attainment trends, it is clear that people living in non-Appalachian areas of the U.S. are far ahead of Appalachians in “high school and college educational attainment” (Shaw, DeYoung, & Rademacher, 2005, p. 328; ARC, 2009; see Appendix D). For example, when comparing the 2010 High school

completion rates of the region of Appalachia investigated in this work (Eastern Kentucky), one notes that although the completion rate for high school diplomas is 80.4%, students living in Eastern Kentucky are graduating with high school diplomas at rates that are 61.2-74.9% of the U.S. average (ARC, 2009). This trend is more abysmal when comparing the graduation rates from four year degree granting institutions, with 24.% of the U.S. population earning Bachelor's degrees compared with Eastern Kentucky students who have only 20.2%-49.9% of the U.S. average in the same year, 2010 (ARC, 2009).

Although some variability exists in terms of ethnic history and economic fortunes of the people from Appalachia, it seems that the literature supports the idea that Appalachians as a group (particularly those that live in the rural settings of Appalachia) have experienced years of significant poverty and lack of educational opportunities as compared to non-Appalachian regions of the U.S. (ARC, 2009; Bauer & Growick, 2003). For the purposes of this study, we turn to the large portion of the Appalachian region that is mostly rural and from which the cultural components necessary for the advancement of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis has been written. This is the portion of the state of Kentucky—East Kentucky, which has not only the highest rates of poverty, but also the lowest rates of educational attainment at both the high school and college level. If evidence for the future exploration of cultural discontinuity exists, this should be a prime region for study due to the large evidence of economic and educational marginalization.

**Cultural characteristics of Appalachia.** In addition to the geographic and demographic makeup of Appalachia, examination of Appalachian Americans has revealed some cultural characteristics salient for the members of the Appalachian group

as a whole. Before reviewing said cultural characteristics, a cautionary note must be made: As articulated by many, cultural characteristics are not fixed, and as such, one can expect some ethnic and cultural differences to emerge among individuals within the examination of any cultural group (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003)—including those living in Appalachia (Keefe, 2005; Shaw, DeYoung, & Rademacher, 2005). Holding to the same analysis of this idea, Tyler et al. (2008) added that finding evidence of cultural discontinuity within an ethnic minority group's (i.e., Appalachian Americans') experiences in mainstream U.S. settings does not automatically discourage the idea of within-group cultural variability. In fact, understanding cultural values and behavioral manifestations of cultural values among individuals within specified cultural groups allows for further understanding of the individual variability that exists within and contrary to salient cultural characteristics of the group as a whole (Tyler et al., 2008).

Although individual differences do exist within Appalachian American groups (as they do within any cultural group), the cultural characteristics that have emerged from the literature for Appalachian Americans as a whole include “egalitarianism, independence, individualism, personalism, a religious world view, neighborliness, love of the land, and the avoidance of conflict” (Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005, p. 10; see also Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991,1994;) as well as a “preference for the concrete, [a sense of] family responsibilities over educational values,” (Tang & Russ, 2007, p. 37) and a strong sense of patriotism (Jones, 1991). As the presence of uniquely Appalachian cultural values is critical for proposing the need to study cultural discontinuity in Appalachia, a brief description of each of these cultural characteristics is warranted.

***Egalitarianism.*** Also known as being modest, Appalachian Americans place a premium upon the idea that all people are equivalently good and that no person is any better or any worse than another person (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). One example of a behavioral manifestation of this cultural value in a school setting would be if a student sat quietly when said student knew quite well that the teacher (or even a peer) had made a mistake. Rather than correct the student, the individual would demonstrate egalitarianism and let the person think they are correct. In addition, the saying “getting ‘above your raisin’” to denote that a person is speaking with professionally based language systems instead of the regional dialect is further evidence of anger that emerges sometimes as parents tell their students that just because they go to college, it does not mean they are better than anyone else.

***Independence/individualism.*** Appalachian Americans value the idea of making do with what they have available so as not to owe others for borrowing anything (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007).

As noted by others, this individualism includes pride of self but is different from the sense of individualism referenced in discussion of mainstream U.S. values in that it does not connote a need for individual recognition or the exclusion and subjugation of others (Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tyler et al., 2008). When separating the ideas of individualism held by people of Appalachia from the mainstream value, it is helpful to remember that Appalachian Americans also value egalitarianism; therefore,

people from the region are less likely to value a form of individualism that essentially assumes the need to compete to be better than others.

***Personalism/avoidance of conflict.*** Appalachian Americans value the importance of relating well with others, and go to great lengths to appear “agreeable” (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). As stated in Jones (1991), “It is more important to us to get along and have a good relationship with other persons than it is to make our true feelings known” (p. 171). For this reason, Appalachian Americans avoid confrontation with others and will even indicate agreement with others with whom they really disagree for the sake of retaining amicability (Jones, 1991).

***Religious world view.*** The people of Appalachia are extremely religious as a group (mostly Christian), often seeking approval from the church before making decisions related to work, family, and other life events (Jones, 1991). For many Appalachian Americans, religious organizations are a sustaining force, helping the inhabitants of the region live with little other resources and opportunities available to them (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007).

***Neighborliness.*** This form of communalism permeates Appalachian culture in that the people of the region are often likely to watch out for one another and offer what little resources they have to others around them (Jones, 1991).

***Love of land.*** People from Appalachia value the land where they were raised (Jones, 1991, Salyers & Ritchie, 2006). Discussed throughout the literature, it is this love of land or sense of native ties that draws people from Appalachia back “home” (Beaver,

1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). This love of the homestead also keeps the people in Appalachia in situ; as a result, Appalachian Americans often choose to follow in the footsteps of family members rather than taking off on their own life paths (Tang & Russ, 2007).

***Preference for the concrete.*** In a review of Appalachian Cultural literature, Tang and Russ (2007) indicated that people from Appalachia prefer to understand via direct interaction with tangible objects in life. In their example, the authors asserted that students from Appalachia prefer learning about careers by actually visiting job sites (as opposed to reading about them). The authors also concluded that assisting individuals within Appalachia meant knowing that there would have to be some time to gain trust and that assisting would require providing tangible resources with which members of the Appalachian community could learn. Unfortunately, there was no empirical work from the authors; nonetheless, the authors speak to this cultural value well.

***Family responsibilities over educational values.*** For many Appalachian Americans, formal educational attainment, while important, takes a secondary role to the obligations felt toward members of the family (Tang & Russ, 2007). Additionally, Bradner (2008) noted that Appalachian Americans tend to value more strongly educational goals that can be directly linked to practical economic goals (i.e., getting a good job) as opposed to other goals that seem less directly important (i.e., pursuing study of a field just because it is interesting).

***Strong sense of patriotism.*** According to Loyal Jones (1991), Appalachian Americans are particularly patriotic, exhibiting strong affiliations with national symbols (such as the flag), participating in great numbers in almost all military conflicts involving

the United States and being “generally supportive of national policies” (p. 173). In other words, as a percentage of the population, it is much more likely that a larger percentage of persons from Appalachia would sign up for armed service in the heat of a war, or even when there is no war when compared to the national averages of various regions (Jones, 1991).

It is worth mentioning that there is not much current literature to support these value sets for the Appalachian region, yet without a great supply of current literature to support as a foundational start for seeking any presence of cultural value sets that might be discontinued in educational settings, the values mentioned by authors from the region or that wrote with research from the region appeared to be a first start for this inquiry. That said, the researcher is open to seeking other values sets (as discussed in sections to follow), and will seek to see if any generational maturation might seek to shift the presence of any of these value sets over time (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). This generational shift, if present, might point to changes in the values sets over time. That not only fits within sociohistorical theory, but also, might explain why such values are not discussed in recent literature of this region of Appalachia (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

### **Cultural Characteristics of Mainstream America**

As indicated previously, before one can establish the potential for cultural discontinuity in Appalachian American social institutions (i.e., schools), one must establish the presence of Appalachian cultural values that differ from the values held within mainstream (suburban, middle to upper middle class Caucasian American populations) America. In service of further advancing this claim, a brief description of mainstream cultural values is necessary. Tyler et al. (2008) noted fundamental values

held within mainstream America when advancing the discussion of cultural discontinuity. As this work is an extension of the same general concept but only with examination of a new population (Appalachian Americans), it seems appropriate to turn to Tyler et al. (2008) for their review of two mainstream cultural values essential in understanding cultural discontinuity—individualism and competition.

**Individualism.** Tyler et al. (2008) contended that although many genres of individualism emerge in the literature of culture studies, Momeka (1998) and Spence's (1985) conceptualization of individualism as "one's disposition toward fundamental autonomy, independence, individual recognition, solitude, and the exclusion of others" tended to capture the essence of this cultural imperative as manifested within mainstream America (Spence, 1985 as cited in Tyler et al., 2008, p. 284). Further, Tyler et al. (2008) distinguished vertical individualism from horizontal individualism, noting that vertical individualists "espouse autonomy and independence, particularly through competition" (p. 284), whereas horizontal individualists are concerned with self expression but are also concerned with "maintaining equal relationships with others" (Komarraju & Cokley, 2008, as cited in Tyler et al., 2008, p. 284). From these distinctions, it would seem that the salient value in mainstream America is that of vertical individualism as it focuses on competition (Tyler et al., 2008).

**Competition.** Researchers have indicated that competitiveness manifests as an important cultural imperative in mainstream America, including individual competition, interpersonal competition, and group competition (Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005). Individual competition focuses on an individual's desire to be better than all others, whereas interpersonal competition occurs when one person tries to be better than one



other person directly (Boykin et al., 2005). Finally, group competition is manifested when one team tries to be better than another (Boykin et al., 2005). Regardless of the specific type of competition that manifests, the value of competitiveness is one that permeates the Western thinking of mainstream America (Boykin et al., 2005). This competitiveness leads to a focus within the U.S. on being superior to others (Boykin et al., 2005).

The cultural values of individualism and competition manifest themselves in American society as a whole; however, it is also appropriate to substantiate the presence of these values in educational contexts if one seeks evidence of cultural discontinuity. For example, in exploring the presence of cultural discontinuity as manifested from African American students' psychology while learning in schools, Wade Boykin, Kenneth Tyler, and Oronde Miller (2005) determined that the values of individualism and competition were much more frequently displayed and endorsed by the European American teachers in the school while cultural values that would clash with individualism (i.e., collectivism) were "student-initiated".

Further, other studies that have addressed the presence of these values among European Americans in educational contexts have shown or at least accepted from the prior literature that behavioral practices stemming from individualistic and competitive orientations are largely displayed or accepted by European American students (or teachers) with the opposite being true nearly all the time for African American students (Boykin et al. 2005; Boykin, Tyler, Watkins-Lewis, & Kizzie, 2006; Komarraju, & Cokley, 2008; Tyler et al., 2008). It would seem apparent then that the values of individualism and competition are not only salient in the educators and educational

practices of schools in the U.S., but also that literature-based evidence exists and supports the notion that marginalized populations suffer due to the presence of these values—values that are antithetical to those socialized within the home communities of racial and ethnic minority students.

### **Cultural Characteristics of Appalachia and Mainstream America—Noticed Clashes and Exploitation**

Now that cultural values of Appalachia and mainstream America have been discussed, it is necessary to turn to an examination of how Appalachian Americans are marginalized within the U.S. by virtue of their unique cultural characteristics. That is, to argue for the presence of cultural discontinuity in Appalachia, one must be able to demonstrate evidence of cultural dissonance—that is, presence of noted clashes between cultural-laden behavioral practices of the mainstream and those of Appalachia. Further, cultural discontinuity would also require evidence of students' ceasing their home cultural practices when in the mainstream cultural environment of the nation's schools. Although this study does not yield evidence to support this claim, it does serve as a first step in identifying what these Appalachian cultural values might be so that future studies will be able to design measures for determining the cessation of the values while in schools. Nonetheless, as the process of cultural discontinuity leads to marginalization effects in education and later life outcomes (e.g. income, health) further examination of present examples of marginalization in Appalachia is warranted.

In his discussion of Appalachian cultural values, Loyal Jones (1991) not only asserted that the Appalachian people have a unique cultural heritage, but more important to the problem being studied here, that Appalachians have watched their values of

hospitality (neighborliness) lead to exploitation of their goods and services by “strangers” (think of the coal industry). Jones (1991) further argued that the Appalachian religious sentiment is fatalistic, and therefore, Appalachian’s often adopt a ““what will be will be” approach to social problems” (p. 173) rather than trying to directly challenge the events of their surrounds. In writing about providing counseling services to Appalachian Americans, Salyers and Ritchie (2006) asserted that the Appalachian sense of pride and self-reliance as a form of individualism may make it particularly difficult for Appalachian Americans to seek assistance or support from others. Jones (1991) further articulated that Appalachian Americans’ sense of modesty can lead to allowing others to conduct business affairs that are not judged to be of the best interests of the people in the region. The value-based behavioral expressions mentioned above might, just as they do in the examples, lead students to feel that success in education means abandoning traditional values and behavioral practices. This practice of acculturation might just influence psychological and educational outcomes for Appalachian Americans, just as the literature extant seems to highlight within the African American population (Boykin et al., 2005); Boykin, Tyler, Watkins-Lewis, & Kizzie, 2006). Educational attainment might be more difficult for Appalachian American students if that attainment means abandoning the values from which home and community behaviors manifest.

As scholarly evidence to demonstrate marginalization and educational difficulty for Appalachian American students indicates, students from rural Appalachia not only struggle to pay for college, but struggle to succeed academically in higher education settings (Davies, Crow, Hamilton, & Salois (2006). Further, students from Appalachia are not well advised on why going to college is important, leaving students to wonder

why formal education is required for the little industrial work available where they live (Davies et al., 2006). In a qualitative study of education and Appalachian Americans, Howley (2006) noted that one family from West Virginia reported conflicting feelings concerning their daughter's going to college. Although the parents wanted her to have a successful career, they felt afraid that she may abandon the values of the Appalachian heritage in which she was raised (Howley, 2006). In this particular case, one can readily see how the student could feel value clashes that could lead to deleterious outcomes; on one hand, she could understand the need to pursue an education even if only for economic reasons, yet on the other hand, she would feel the strain of trying to maintain a tie to the very community that, due to lack of resources within the area, would prevent her from attaining much of an economic future. This is further complicated by the preference for the concrete, as academic instruction is often lecture-based rather than "hands-on" as might be preferred for the Appalachian student population (Tang & Russ, 2007).

Global corporations and industries that operate very much on the mainstream cultural imperatives of competition and individualism further exacerbate the problems faced by Appalachian Americans; often these companies control the lives of the people in the region by compelling them to fight for the few sources of economic opportunity made available where they live (Duncan & Lamborghini, 1994; Eller, 2008; Lohmann, 1990; Weinbaum, 2004). Still others, merely for the sake of remaining "competitive," move profitable industries to other locations around the globe (Buehlmann, Bumgardner, Schuler & Barford, 2007; Weinbaum, 2004). Such competitive and individualistic practices often leave Appalachian Americans with little other resources for survival

(Weinbaum, 2004). Further, cultural values of the people of the region clash with these mainstream values, only making a bad situation worse (Weinbaum, 2004). One can imagine how the Appalachian sense of individualism may make it difficult for them to seek assistance from others, how the tie to the home or place makes moving a possible violation of Appalachian traditions, and how the sense of patriotism exhibited by Appalachians may make it difficult for them to question decisions made by national (or international) organizations that claim to tout the values of the United States of America (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). Intentional examination of the presence of these themes together, along with any noted differences over time, must be examined to determine the presence of generational value sets held within the Eastern Kentucky area of Appalachia.

Appalachian Americans have reported feelings of abandonment and a lack of understanding for why any company would leave workers who have contributed to the organization's success just for even larger profits (Weinbaum, 2004). Such feelings provide even more evidence of the clash between the global corporate vertical individualism touted in the U.S. mainstream and the sense of community ties and horizontal individualism demonstrated by Appalachian Americans (i.e., no one person is better than anyone else, so everyone should be willing to help others while working hard for one's self and family) (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007; Weinbaum, 2004). Again, it would seem that the clash in values exhibited by mainstream U.S. institutions and those reported to be experienced by the people of Appalachia lead yet again to a series of situations in which

Appalachian Americans are marginalized and exploited by the value system that benefits the dominant social structure within the U.S. and, indeed, around the world (Eller, 2008).

It would seem evident that further current examination of Appalachian cultural values is supported in the literature, and, if connected with cultural events that are discontinuous with mainstream American cultural norms, study of that disequilibrium and the potential marginalizing effects of such is warranted.

## **Chapter Three: Method**

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Although an ever growing body of literature is emerging and a conceptual paper for the quantitative investigation of cultural discontinuity has been accepted by the educational research community (Tyler et al., 2008), one criticism of the hypothesis and associated literature thus far is that researchers have only focused on traditional ethnic minority student populations, ignoring other groups that are cultural and have shared customs of practice and values. It is with this criticism that I advance the argument to study another historically marginalized group of Americans who have experienced a tradition of underachievement as compared to the White, middle-class, suburban dominant group—Appalachian Americans (Brown-Ferrigno & Knoepfel, 2004; Bush, 2003). As the scholarly pursuit of cultural discontinuity between the home and school experience of Appalachian American students has not yet been investigated, the research question for this initial investigation is designed to glean Appalachian perspectives concerning cultural values, education, and any relationships that Appalachian Americans may believe exist between the two. Specifically, do members of Appalachia report feelings of cultural discontinuity between the values and practices endorsed at home and those values and practices endorsed in school and other mainstream organizations, and if so, do these members ever express the idea that said misalignment in some way(s) made accessing or understanding learning tasks or expectations in school or social organizations (i.e., work) difficult for them?

Because the cultural discontinuity hypothesis has been examined and to various degrees supported in the psychological and educational literature with respect to other

marginalized student populations, it is my belief that Appalachian Americans (particularly those in Eastern Kentucky) will serve as another population, seemingly devoid of opportunity and historically disenfranchised, worthy of considering through this line of inquiry. That said, to date little has been done in the way of contemporarily establishing the existence of cultural values that, taken together, might not align with the practices often endorsed in mainstream America and within mainstream American institutions (i.e., schools). Therefore, before further work can begin with the above research question, one must first establish whether or not uniquely Appalachian cultural values exist—this, then, has to become the first and primary focus of this study.

### **Methodology**

In the review of literature concerning Appalachian cultural values, the values of mainstream America, and the history of exploitation and marginalization experienced by people of Appalachia, it seems apparent that sufficient evidence exists to warrant the scholarly study of the concept of cultural discontinuity in Appalachia. In advancement of this argument, I proposed a qualitative investigation as a starting point for this inquiry.

Although the quantitative inquiry of Appalachian cultural discontinuity is certainly appropriate at such a time when variables to be measured can be established, Milner (2007) argued that contextualized understandings in the inquiry of culture and race should be considered when studying socio-cultural topics related to education and psychology. More specifically, Milner (2007) cautioned researchers of culture to be ever aware of the ways in which their own experiences may cloud how they seek to study and measure attributes of other cultural groups. In light of this concern, the researcher asserts that qualitative methods such as individual life-history interviews, structured around the



cultural discontinuity hypothesis with freedom to explore additional questions as they arise in conversation with each individual participant are necessary for an initial investigation of cultural discontinuity in Appalachia as they might provide the researcher with the proper lens from which to later interpret the findings concerning reports of cultural discontinuity among persons living in Appalachia (Glesne, 2006). Specifically, this study employed the methods traditionally affiliated with an Oral History Life Interview. From the perspective of those studied, researchers can begin to address improvement for the people of Appalachia in ways approved by the people in Appalachia. This sentiment is well stated in Bradner (2008) when reflecting on teaching college in Appalachia:

“Appalachia often finds itself addressed and theorized from both an external and superior position, so students—who are under tremendous pressure to remain in town with their families, but entertain thoughts of leaving for better opportunities—react poorly to anyone who cannot understand why they might choose nursing over philosophy or why they might choose a job with their siblings over a graduate degree from Ohio State. At the same time, there’s no point in pretending you *really* understand. The Ph.D., your own choices, and your hopes for getting a better job elsewhere mark you otherwise.” (p. 234)

Although quantitative methods do provide the tools necessary for predicting outcomes and generalizing results as appropriate, qualitative methods add the ability to understand the results in the context of the social setting being studied (in this case, Appalachia) (Glesne, 2006). This is particularly important for reasons indicated from the above quote. In Appalachia, just as is the case in other groups organized by cultural

commonalities, researchers whose very identities and academic pedigrees expose them as non-members of the community are not easily going to gain full participation from the residents. This is quite understandable if, as the quote indicates, Appalachian Americans are used to researchers pushing their agendas on them and then writing about them as if there is something wrong, or less, about adhering to the lifestyle or value set associated with the population (Bradner, 2008).

Mixed methodological study of the existence of Appalachian cultural discontinuity might provide educators and social policy makers alike with the evidence necessary to begin improving educational attainment and living conditions for this historically marginalized group of American citizens. Armed with such evidence, advocates for this disenfranchised cultural group can continue their work in ensuring more equitable opportunities for the citizens of Appalachia—both short-term (i.e., changing school structures and curricula to be more culturally inclusive) and long-term (i.e., changing fundamental social practices that lead to alienation of minority groups within the U.S.). However, initially establishing an Appalachian American perspective about culture and education is essential before decisions can be made about the need of further study and scale development; therefore, the aforementioned Life History Interview genre of qualitative methods seems most appropriate as the beginning place for understanding the role of culture and associated values in education among Appalachian American students. Mixed methodological studies would necessarily follow suit, assuming the qualitative work justifies further quantitative examination of this hypothesized phenomenon. To this end, this initial research seeks to establish the presence of shared cultural values within members of Appalachia in Eastern Kentucky of

various generational experiences, but all with experiences of learning and living within home space and school space—both of which are necessary if one seeks to initially begin to study any sociocultural phenomenon that may be occurring between home and school experiences of individuals in a shared space over time (Tyler, 2008; Vygotsky, 1962,1978). (Note: More information provided as to what type of interviews).

**Participants.** The study consisted of 10 adult participants from locations within the Appalachian region of the United States. The Eastern Kentucky section of Appalachia has been selected as the target region within the entirety of Appalachia, as it is the part of the region where the greatest evidence of marginalization effects exists (extremely high poverty, low educational attainment, and low wages) (ARC, 2009; see Appendix E). The research seeks to identify Appalachian perspectives on Appalachian cultural values, educational outcomes/experiences, and the relationships between the two; therefore, the sample to be interviewed should include individuals from Appalachia who come from various levels of educational attainment. As hypothesized that the participants interviewed will affirm the Appalachian cultural values described in the literature as well as account for ways in which the cultural discontinuity phenomenon manifested in their educational experiences, the researcher chose participants from a variety of educational backgrounds. Two participants had not completed a high school level education; two had completed high school only; two had attended but did not graduate from a college or university; two had completed a four-year (Bachelor's) degree from a college or university; and finally, two had earned advanced degrees beyond the undergraduate level.

One male and one female participant from each of these educational categories were recruited because gender differences seemed to be an appropriate division for consideration in this psychological and educational study. After establishing an initial contact by way of a personal reference known to the researcher, other word of mouth and snowball sampling techniques (described below) were employed. That said, the following table illustrates the interviewees for this study: Note the demographic data included in this initial chart.

Table 3.1

*Proposed Interviewees from Appalachia*

Educational Attainment	Male	Female	Ages (M, F in years)
Less than High School	1	1	63, 62
High School Graduate	1	1	40, 24
Some College	1	1	24, 33
Four-Year Degree	1	1	22, 34
Advanced Degree	1	1	81, 31

The researcher employed snowball sampling techniques to garner the participants for this study. Snowball sampling is a process in which the researcher gains participants through other participants' connections or affiliations. In other words, one or more of the subjects the researcher was able to get on his own contacted people that seemed to fit the requirements for participation, and so, the researcher was able to secure the number of participants indicated in the study (Bernard, 2000). This ended up being an appropriate technique for securing Appalachian American interviewees, as snowball sampling relies on associations between members of the community, allowing the researcher access to individuals that fit the needs of the study when, due to being a non-member, he may have never been otherwise able to secure (Bernard, 2000). In all, the researcher directly contacted two participants and the remaining eight were secured via snowball sampling.

The interviews were conducted in locations determined to be convenient by the participants. This included home residences for five participants, a church for one participant, a park for one participant, and the researcher's office at Morehead State University in Morehead, KY, for three participants. All of the participants agreed to the notion that they were safe and secure in the locations selected for the interviews.

**Researcher Biases.** Noted disadvantages to snowball sampling include the researcher knowing some of the participants on a personal level and in ways that may cloud the validity of the findings of the study (Glesne, 2006). Further, prior literature, although somewhat dated, did drive the perceptions of the researcher and try as the researcher might to not allow previous work to cloud the perceptions and interpretation of data for this study, it is always possible that prior belief sets held by the researcher might have clouded the researchers interpretation of the data (Glesne, 2006). Additionally,

although the researcher grew up in generational poverty, he grew up in an urban setting in a portion of Ohio outside the traditional “Appalachian cultural space” and as such, might have brought prior assumptions to the table before the research began.

That said, the researcher did include structures for looking for additional evidence of culturally continuous events between the home and school experiences of the participants as well as included a coding scheme for other categories not yet considered. In addition, member checks in the way of follow-up conversations with the participants after interpretation to seek validity in the interpretation of the work was conducted to attempt to reduce the biases the researcher had entering the study. Finally, in future work, it would be necessary to include an additional validity check by way of adding another colleague, familiar with the region and literature in the region, in the coding and subsequent interpretation of the data provided by participants in the study (Glesne, 2006). All of these additions will serve to further strengthen the meaning taken from this initial framework.

As cultural traditions and ways of learning are passed along through generations of practice within a social group (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), it was necessary for the researcher to interview individuals whose families have been part of the region for at least two generations. This informed the research as it was more likely than with, say, first generation Appalachian Americans, that the participants’ values were related to those values found within the Appalachian region as identified culturally in earlier research, if such values do indeed still exist (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). Finally, as this particular inquiry has heretofore not been investigated, this initial study focused on

participants from the Eastern Kentucky region of Appalachia. This particular population is located centrally within the cultural and geographical space of the targeted population, and as such, participants from this region should be prime sources for generating responses related to the phenomenon being studied.

**Materials.** The materials for this study included a numbered tape recorder (for recording interviewee responses), a laptop computer (to house consent forms and take notes during the interview), the interview protocol, informed consent, and contact cards for participants to keep should they have questions following the study. As stated by Glesne (2006) “the opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry” (p. 81). With this in mind, it should be noted that although the researcher adhered to the interview questions as presented as well as possible, proper investigation of the research questions required some further follow-up questions to glean information from the interview subjects that was truly representative of their thoughts or beliefs. This method, sometimes referred to as an “Oral History Interview,” allows researchers to follow necessary leads in an intuitive sense, in hopes of gathering an interview that is highly representative of the subject’s experiences from the subject’s perspective and on a case-by-case basis (Glesne, 2006). The additional follow-up questioning was somewhat unstructured, but allowed within the scopes of this particular method of interviewing as it allows the researcher to gather information important to the study, but not necessary directly related to the framework used for the study” (Glesne, 2006). At the end of this report, along with the informed consent forms, the researcher



included the list of interview questions. (see Appendices F and G). Additional follow-up questions were related to the key ideas addressed within these included questions.

**Procedures.** Although it would be convenient for the researcher to interview the participants in his university office, qualitative research design experts have asserted that the interview location should be “convenient, available, [and] appropriate” but should above all “defer to your respondents’ needs, because their willingness [to participate in the interview] is primary, limited only by your capacity to conduct an interview in the place that they suggest (Glesne, 2006, p. 86). Using snowball sampling techniques, whereby more and more participants are provided through connections in context (Nardi, 2006), particular participants (those that fit the above table) were interviewed in a mutually agreed upon location and space. However, the protocol for the interview was identical for each interview and followed the following format: greetings, explanation of the study, and informed consent. After informed consent was collected, the tape recorder was started and a new document was opened on a laptop for entering notes collected during the interview. At this time, the researcher asked the interview questions, following-up as needed in order to fully understand the respondent and to be sure the respondent had ample opportunity to answer the question completely. In this sense, the interviewing of each participant was a recursive process in that necessary questions for follow-up should emerge from the analysis of the responses given to the interview protocol by the respondents (Nastasi, Moore, & Varjas, 2004).

It was anticipated that each interview would take from one to two hours, and in fact, all interviews fit within the timeframe proposed. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher reminded the respondent that the interview materials would be

kept in a secure location, and that personally identifiable information would not be included in any reporting of the interview. At this time, I thanked each respondent and gave each a \$20.00 Wal-Mart gift card.

This process was repeated for all interview subjects, and after reviewing the data collected from the ten participants, it was determined that for this initial inquiry, sufficient data were gathered for analysis and reporting purposes.

**Research design.** Maxwell (2005) warned researchers employing qualitative research designs to be aware of the “danger in not carefully formulating your research questions in connection with the other components of your design” and further stated that “your research questions need to take account of why you want to do the study (your goals), your connections to a (or several) research paradigm(s), and what is already known about the things you want to study and your tentative theories about these phenomena (your conceptual framework)” (p. 68). This research study sought to extend a line of inquiry already established and studied within the fields of psychology and education (i.e., the cultural discontinuity hypothesis) by seeking to see if said hypothesis could potentially assist researchers in understanding the role of culture in educational outcomes for students in the Appalachian American student population. As stated above, research concerning the cultural discontinuity phenomenon has occurred with many marginalized student populations—what has yet to be clearly articulated is that much of the previous work in the study of this hypothesis (especially in the initial stages of the study of culture and learning within a particular racial or ethnic minority group) in education began with qualitative investigations (Amerman, 2007; Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Brown, Gibbons, & Smirles, 2007; Bryant & LaFramboise, 2005;

Charleston & King, 1991; Chavajay & Rogoff, 1999; Deyhle, 1995; Garrett et al, 2003; Garrett, 1995; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Hermes, 2005; Lake, 1991; Pewerdy, 2004; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Rogoff, Mistry, Goncu, & Mosier, 1993; Safran & Safran, 1994; Stokes, 1997; Webb-Johnson, 2003; Wortham & Contreras, 2002; Yeh & Huang, 1996). With such a precedent already clearly established in the literature, it only stood to reason that a qualitative approach would, just as was the case in the previous research, make sense as a start in investigating the potential presence of the cultural discontinuity phenomenon among Appalachian Americans.

For the purposes of this study, interviewing techniques were employed and applied to this previously studied hypothesis found in the psychological and educational literature, with the focus being on the unasked questions surrounding the Appalachian American student group that serves as the population of interest for this dissertation study. As this design will be applied to an already studied hypothesis in psychology and education, the research design can be said to be a type of grounded theory approach (Glesne, 2006). The researcher planned to use the results of this study to better understand the psycho-educational phenomena and social contexts in Appalachia in an effort to later develop quantitative measures of the cultural discontinuity phenomenon in Appalachia, and so chose this interviewing technique that Glesne (2006) articulated as not only following a “logical positivist tradition,” but also constituting a type of “life-history interview” design (p. 80). Life-history interviews would seem to be particularly relevant to the particular line of inquiry outlined above in that there is a “focus more on the life experiences of one or several individuals” that compels the researcher to necessarily focus on “the concepts of culture” (Glesne, 2006, p. 80). In oral history

designs, researchers focus on gleaning substantive information from interview subjects by asking the questions designed for the original work, but also, this interviewing type allows for other related questioning as well—all in service of understanding events and perceptions of events from the life experiences of the interviewees (Glesne, 2006).

As initial interviews of this type of phenomenological work most often require follow-up (for ensuring understanding and establishing within-group validity to the themes generated from the data), each participant was interviewed twice; the first interview focused on the home and educational experiences of the participant, and the second interview was used as a member-check of the first interview, allowing the researcher the chance to share the themes generated from the interview with the interviewee and offering a chance for clarification, further comment, and validation of the researcher's findings (Glesne, 2006; Nastasi et al., 2004). Given the nature of the research phenomenon being investigated, it was felt that two interviews (an initial and follow-up) would suffice to generate rich data and check for the trustworthiness needed from the population being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There were no participants for which the researcher felt a third interview was necessary.

On a final note, this particular research methodology served the study well in that there is a social justice component undergirding not only the justification for exploring the line of inquiry (to assist in achieving educational equity for a marginalized population in America), but also in the design of the study (in that information is gathered from those within the Appalachian American population rather than assumed from literature that fails to account for this particular population) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). That said, the researcher discussed his biases and feelings with colleagues while collecting and

analyzing data, in an effort to minimize the infiltration of researcher opinion into the data gleaned by the interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This type of debriefing with other researchers should, along with follow-up interviews with the respondents, assist greatly in ensuring that the data interpretation follows the comments of those interviewed, not any prior beliefs of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, one bias that the researcher began with was that the participants' experiences would be identical, or at least very similar throughout. After all, the participants were from counties within the Eastern Kentucky area, and according to the literature and the maps discovered of the region, this area was filled with individuals with the same limited life experiences. In fact, though he tried to be open-minded from the beginning, the researcher found himself even assuming that participants would not care about the level of education that they had, or perhaps the participants would not understand the reasoning behind the questions being asked. This was a major concern at first, as the researcher was unsure that the participants would understand fully what was being asked. As mentioned above, researcher biases were noted and taken into account during the interviewing and interpretation processes of the study.

As difficult as these biases were to overcome, the researcher's own life experiences in generational poverty, along with comparisons the researcher noted between much of what the participants said (both during the actual interviews and after) and ideas, beliefs, or practices that were present during the researcher's upbringing, allowed the researcher to be frank about his worries and direct about his fears, and in almost every case, the participants at least appeared to be accepting of the researcher during the interview and after.

Even more important than that, it was believed that the researcher's perceptions of what the data should reveal would perhaps taint or skew the researcher's interpretation of what the participants said, but more importantly, what they *meant*. As previously indicated, the researcher stopped after parts of data collection, summarized findings, and asked for clarification or additional feedback. Luckily, very little correction was necessary as the participants, on the whole, agreed with the researcher's capturing of both their words and their ideas.

In reflecting back on the whole process, the researcher has learned about the terrible tricks that come before qualitative researchers in their quest to capture the experiences of the members of a community being studied. It seems that those who engage in the process of qualitative research cognitively believe that it is possible to pull out data and interpret findings with automatic impartiality. However, that is far from the case. It would seem that the more confident one feels about pursuing qualitative lines of inquiry, the more likely one might fall into a trap whereby the perceptions of the subjects are lost to the hazy filter the researcher places over the findings. In the end, it was very important to build in member checks as mentioned in the above research design. Without this additional touching of base between and after interviews, maintaining and interpreting data from the perspective of the studied, rather than the researcher, would indeed, have been a difficult task.

## Chapter Four: Results

### Analysis

Data were analyzed by way of “thematic analysis” (Glesne, 2006). In thematic analysis, data are coded according to themes relevant to the research questions and then analyzed to determine what significance emerges from the information that has been provided by the respondents in the interviews (Glesne, 2006). As suggested by Glesne (2006), one method of early qualitative data analysis that was utilized in this study involved analyzing data as they were collected and storing it according to relevant themes as the researcher proceeded with the study. Prior to the interviewing process, a coding scheme was established whereby particular letters represented each of the cultural values found in the literature for Appalachian Americans, along with a code for cultural alignment between home and school and a code for discontinuity between home and school. There was also a code for an “other” category, in the event that a respondent provided information that was relevant to the research question of the study but not directly linked to the cultural values or cultural discontinuity phenomenon as proposed in the study. As the respondents made statements that appeared to be particularly relevant to one of the themes identified, the researcher typed the numerical code on the tape recorder as well as bolded the statement with the appropriate code on the type-written notes being collected during the interview. This served to assist in the analysis as it provided a mechanism for finding and gleaning the most pertinent information from the interviews (Glesne, 2006).

Understanding that this initial coding was just a means for organizing the voluminous data generally collected during qualitative study, the researcher examined the

coding scheme as the study went on, ensuring that the coding scheme was appropriate for the data collected. In order to do this, the researcher reread each interview, checking the codes and making changes as relevant to make sense of the data provided (Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). This occurred in two-phases: after the first interviews (such that information could be shared with those studied) and after the second interview (again, to ensure the validity from the members of the population) (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After rereading the interviews and determining that no changes were necessary to be made with the coding structure, the data were organized and coded by themes, into sections that allowed for coherent and logical understanding of the relationship between the data, the research question, and the hypotheses (Glesne, 2006). This final arrangement allowed the researcher to glean findings from the information gathered for purposes of interpretation and reporting (Glesne, 2006). The final coding structure from which the thematic analysis was made came in the form of examining the interviewee responses for evidence (or contradictory evidence) of each of the cultural values previously discussed. For the sake of clarity, this too is how the results are being reported.

Although mentioned in the methods sections, this reframing seemed an appropriate beginning to discussing the results. Please note that for the sake of written clarity, noted examples of each value are illustrated, followed by a brief interpretation of the presence of the value. Yes, the values did seem to fit the predetermined cultural values mentioned in early literature, but as it is revealed, other findings were made apparent. Discussion of examples of each value is provided, followed by the necessary



discussion of the presence of each of these values across members of the individuals studied. Remembering that these values were discussed with the members during interpretation, some validity from members studied should be validated from the findings and discussion to follow.

## **Results**

**Evidence of egalitarianism.** The first of the cultural themes discussed in the literature about Appalachian American cultural values was egalitarianism, or the belief in the importance of being humble and modest (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). This particular value was represented to various degrees within most of the interviewees' responses. One example that captured this theme well was in the interview of "David," a twenty-two-year-old male Appalachian American with a Bachelor's degree. When asking him about values taught within home areas in Appalachia as opposed to educational values, David responded as follows:

**David:** You know, maybe there's almost a kind of fatalism to it, a fatalistic element there. What's the saying? Getting above your raisin'.

**Researcher:** Yeah?

**David:** Yeah. A lot of times, you know, I would hear people who had gone off to college and had come back and, you know, they had family members who would say, "They went off to college. They're trying to get above their raising" or whatever.

**Researcher:** Oh. What do you think that means to them when they say that?

**David:** I guess maybe it's trying to get out of what, like if the family's always been in poverty and then all of a sudden you've got this person who they're not satisfied with the way things have always worked. They're trying to do something else, and it butts heads with the family.

**Researcher:** So, not being content with the way things have always worked.

**David:** Yeah, kind of an appeal to traditionalism there. You know what I mean?

**Researcher:** Yeah. OK, that makes sense, too.

As can be seen here, in discussing his own experiences as an Appalachian American with a college-level education, David provided evidence vital to this research. Not only did David discuss the endorsement of egalitarianism (it is not appreciated to be heard as an “educated” person above others in the family), but also, evidence of the clash between home and mainstream values held in educational institutions can be inferred as one outcome of a college education is the ability to speak with professional language that has been internalized for use by the student. In other words, if David’s family’s values were aligned with mainstream values in academe, then one would expect David to discuss how proud his family would be in hearing evidence of David’s intellectual growth. However, David provided the opposite as a claim, discussing how some evidence of a successful college matriculation can be viewed by his family as an attempt to be less egalitarian. This cultural clash might prove problematic for students from Appalachia (or at least, Eastern Kentucky) as they navigate the social space between their professional and personal lifestyles.

**Evidence of independence and individualism.** The second cultural theme that emerged from the literature was really a collapse of two reported values: independence and individualism. Taken together, the statements gathered from the literature spoke to the desire not to rely upon others; to take care of oneself (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). Again, the interviews were full of documented evidence supporting the endorsement of these values within Appalachia. Although several examples were found throughout the interviews (in fact, eight of the ten provided obvious examples), one of the best examples was in the interview of “Kevin,” a sixty-three-year-old Appalachian American male from Eastern

Kentucky with an eighth-grade education. In discussing his life choices concerning going to work or continuing down the path of a traditional high school education, Kevin strongly endorsed these values by repeating how important it was to continue his work instead of pursuing an education:

**Kevin:** No, I could've went on with school education. It was me: I didn't want to 'cause I just, like what I did, I went to work early and got to makin' money, so the money was more important to me than the education.

Further evidence emerged from the interviews when subjects discussed trying to use their education for the purposes of employment. For example, when responding to the conflict of attaining education or seeking employment, "Will," an eighty-one-year-old Appalachian American male with a graduate education stated the following:

**Will:** I would hope that most of them realized how important education is...but they do not; most of them just want money.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Will:** You know?

**Researcher:** Me, too. I hope that, too [that people realize how important education is].  
(Laughs.)

**Will:** Of course, when I was on the GI Bill after I came back, I only got a hundred and thirty-five a month. My wife worked, and you know, you've got to pay rent, you've got to eat, I had a car payment at that time. So, it was not a life of luxury going to college. Many decided to work, especially here.

Although Will went on to finish a graduate education and retire as a school guidance counselor and pastor, his statements illustrated the conflict faced by Appalachian Americans living in the Eastern Kentucky region. Although some may even endorse or value the mainstream cultural imperative in education (that of attainment of earned degrees), their lived experiences made educational advancement secondary to earning money and thereby, becoming better able to care for oneself with perhaps a secondary interest in further advancing one's career in the few jobs that require higher

education. The incomes earned were gift enough, and in the eyes of many of the interviewees, educational goals were secondary and mostly considered for the purposes of job advancement.

**Evidence of avoidance of conflict.** Another value expressed during the interviews was that of avoidance of conflict. Statements that were coded within this value represented a behavior of avoiding or desire to avoid confrontation, even if that avoidance meant opportunities were lost or outcomes were postponed. As asserted by Jones (1991) and others, this value leads to behavioral practices which deny Appalachian Americans opportunities if attaining said opportunities involve argument or conflict with others or other agencies. The presence of this theme can be found throughout the process of conducting the interviews, as many of the interviewees went right along with what the researcher said. It seemed at times that even if the researcher contradicted the statement of the interviewee, rather than correct the researcher, the interviewee agreed. For example, when speaking to “Kathy,” an Appalachian American woman in her 60s with an eighth-grade education about money and work in her childhood, the researcher misunderstood her. Rather than correct the researcher, she agreed and went on with the conversation. Here is part of that exchange:

**Researcher:** Now, was that true for your family, or was it true, do you think, for most families where you lived that whatever anyone brought in went toward what the family...

**Kathy:** You know, I think back when I was young, that is mostly for the family. All families that way.

**Researcher:** Right.

**Kathy:** I don't know that, but that's my feelin'.

**Researcher:** I know. I'm only asking about what you think or feel or remember, that kind of thing. So you kept some money for yourself, right? Just tell me your opinion.

- Kathy:** Mm hmm.
- Researcher:** That's all I'm asking about. So, the focus, like, nowadays, a lot of kids go, "I did this job so I can make this money and I can buy that. I...I...I...I..." But, you're saying that what you remember...
- Kathy:** Well, I know what I made, it mostly went to the family.
- Researcher:** Yeah, OK. OK. I thought you received some also. I must have heard you wrong. Um, so that's an important lesson, that, that when you're in a situation... Would you consider yourselves wealthy or in poverty or in the middle back then?
- Kathy:** I'd say middle at le...or lower at least.
- Researcher:** Low, OK. So, um, that's probably an important lesson, that when you don't have a whole lot of money, everyone has to pull in...
- Kathy:** Right.
- Researcher:** ...to make the whole family function.
- Kathy:** Right.
- Researcher:** So you didn't get much after all? It went toward everyone. I suggested earlier you kept some. Which is it.?
- Kathy:** I didn't keep any of it. I just didn't want to correct you.
- Researcher:** Please feel free to correct me if I mistake what you are trying to say, okay, Kathy? So, would you think that's a lesson that...
- Kathy:** I would think it would be a lesson.

Unbeknownst to Kathy, the cultural value of being agreeable or not correcting for the sake of avoiding conflict was illustrated in this one exchange. Luckily for the researcher, Kathy was one of the earlier interviews, and through that experience, the researcher learned to listen more intently and not infer anything for the interviewee as they were being interviewed. Still, it did raise the concern that should this be a behavioral practice that occurs as part of a cultural norm, getting to a place of real understanding will have to include developing a sense of trust among the population being studied.

**Evidence of neighborliness.** The next cultural theme examined was the emergence of neighborliness. This value is expressed by the need to watch out for one

another, remembering to offer all that can be offered to those in need within the community (Jones, 1991). Again, behaviors that would endorse the cultural value of neighborliness were found in the statements made by several of those interviewed. One subject, named “Cally”, was a thirty-something female Appalachian American with a Bachelor’s degree. In reading the following exchange, there is clear evidence that Cally behaved and endorsed values consistent with the idea of neighborliness:

**Researcher:** . . . but if someone were to say what, what makes coming from Appalachia what is most valuable pieces, do you hold onto that make you say (inaudible).

**Cally:** I think it would be our sense of family and sense of community.

**Researcher:** Umhuh.

**Cally:** Um and I see that’s still here, ya’ know I know M-town isn’t this huge city, but it’s much bigger than S-county is.

**Researcher:** Right.

**Cally:** Uh huh. Um I think in S-county, because where we lived we were out in the country, um we relied on our neighbors to, you know if we were gone somewhere, ya’ know, if we took a, took a trip for the weekend, we relied on them to kind of watch out for us if we weren’t there or if my parents left us at home by ourselves, they kind of watched out for us, ya’ know our neighbors would, if, if there was any body, any vehicle that they didn’t know.

**Researcher:** Uhuh.

**Cally:** They would call and check on us. Um, so it was that close-knit kind of feeling where you felt very safe.

**Researcher:** Umhum.

**Cally:** Um, you didn’t have to lock your doors, you didn’t have to lock your vehicle, you didn’t have to worry about that kind of stuff because everybody that came through there were people that you knew, sometime people that you were related to, so around...

As can be seen, Cally’s admission that it is commonplace to leave one’s home and possessions accessible to others, even while away because of trust of the neighbors definitely exhibited an endorsement of the value of neighborliness. Again, such exchanges emerged throughout the interviews, and when brought up, nearly every

interviewee expressed feelings of safety associated with living within the Appalachian community. What is particularly interesting about this exchange is not only that explanation of safety, but also that the interviewee went on to explain her perceived positive correlation between where one lived in Appalachia and the level of neighborly trust and safety felt by members of an Appalachian community:

**Researcher:** So different from my experience growing up in C-City (large urban city).

**Cally:** (Laughter.)

**Researcher:** But go ahead!

**Cally:** I, I can, well even here, even here in M-town I, I don't feel, it's not that I don't feel safe...

**Researcher:** Umhum.

**Cally:** ...but I don't feel that same sense of security that I had at my mom and dad's.

**Researcher:** So a lot of people would think that R-county is culturally Appalachian, but you think maybe the further, this isn't on here but now that you're talking about it, the further east that you head out toward the state of Kentucky do you think the more greater sense of (inaudible)...greater sense of these Appalachian values?

**Cally:** ABSOLUTELY! I definitely think there's even places in M-town that probably feel this way but there places that are near the city.

**Researcher:** Right downtown...

**Cally:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** I gotcha', I gotcha'. Alright so being really, really tight knit with, with neighbors, almost to the point that their like family, babysitting, watching out for kids.

**Cally:** Yeah...

**Researcher:** Watching out for your things, anything else that you could think of?

**Cally:** Um.

**Researcher:** You said being close, really close to family, I mean...a lot of people...

**Cally:** Definitely...

In this exchange, it would seem that Cally not only understood, practiced, and noticed the behaviors of neighborliness being practiced by others, but she also was sure

to note that there was an association (perceived, of course) between how deeply one lived within East Kentucky (the portion of Appalachia studied here) and the practice of the behaviors outlined above. It would seem from this exchange that those who most endorse the values associated in the literature with Appalachian culture would be those who live most centrally within the Appalachian region.

**Evidence of strong religious (and Christian) values.** Another value that previous scholars have noted exists within Appalachia is a world view shaped most strongly by religious doctrine and ideology (mostly Christian). As referenced in the literature, evidence of this cultural theme is taken from statements made that reinforced the idea that life-changing ideas or events that occurred in life were rooted in church approval over any other source of acceptance (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). In other words, decisions concerning life's choices are made within the frame of what is deemed appropriate by one's church. Again, many of the interviews endorsed the important role of faith in the lives of the families and communities where they lived, and many discussed the tradition of attending church, followed by large dinners with large numbers of family members. This alone is not explicitly Appalachian; however, what might provide better evidence of the degree of Christian-based theology being an integral part of the behaviors and lives of the citizens within Appalachia is what was said by "Steve," a middle-aged male (early forties) and Appalachian American with a high school diploma. When asked about the role of religion in his family, Steve noted not only the importance of church, but he also demonstrated an implied concern for not attending church now:



**Steve:** We went to church when I was young. I remember when my papaw passed away. That was a big loss of mine. I still remember that. My mom's passed away now, so...

**Researcher:** Sorry.

**Steve:** It's...

**Researcher:** My mother's passed, too. Uh, were, church, was that common?

**Steve:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** I know some of my questions are gonna' sound silly, but remember that people reading this potentially might not have had any experience in this region, so I have to ask questions that may seem obvious.

**Steve:** That was pretty common back when I was growing up.

**Researcher:** Do you think it still is now?

**Steve:** I don't think it is as much.

**Researcher:** As much?

**Steve:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** OK, OK. So uh, in the home, then, were Biblical, like did your grandparents or parents use, talk about the Bible or talk about how you should act in reference to the Bible?

**Steve:** My grandparents sort of did more than my parents.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Steve:** They went to church more.

**Researcher:** Oh, I see.

**Steve:** So but...

**Researcher:** So, that was sort of...

**Steve:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** OK. Uh, and what about now, do you all routinely go to church in your house?

**Steve:** No, I've rea... No, not now we don't.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Steve:** It seems like we're so busy, we just...

**Researcher:** Yeah, you want...

**Steve:** We want to, we do, but I have to work three jobs and...

Steve noted the commonality of people in the community attending church, and he also indicated that his inability to attend church with his family, due to having to work

so many jobs to survive, resulted in some level of discomfort for him. If this alone were the only interview that addressed the importance of faith within the home, it might be easy to assume the practice has diminished overtime. However, from the ten interviews used for this research, several noted the presence of behavioral practices held at home related to church. For example, when discussing what was most important for her to do as a child (from the perspective of her mother), “Josephina,” a twenty-something female Appalachian American with a high school diploma noted the following:

**Josephina:** ...from her. Um, it was you’ve gotta’ do the chores, you gotta’ put out the right perspective for the community, you’ve gotta’ go to church all the time every Sunday, you have to be prim and proper and perfect, and...

The exchange was not meant to be a conversation about religion, yet the practice of being sure one attended church every Sunday was emphasized as an expectation for Josephina growing up. In another example, Cally highlighted the difficulty she had in being able to live outside of the influence of her faith. Note how integral faith-based practices were to the behaviors endorsed as acceptable in this statement:

**Cally:** ...we were constrained by our dad because he was very religious, and so we weren’t, since we weren’t allowed to do a lot of things, of course when we were teenagers, we really had a hard time with that because while other people were going to football games and going to dances, we weren’t really allowed to go.

As can be noted, Cally and Josephina also recognized the important power of religion over the behavioral expectations that were had of them, and in that explanation, both appeared to frame the relationship of religion to their behavioral practices as restricting, confining, or at least, part of some show of how to act when around others in the community. These inferences might imply both the salience of the value as expressed in the behaviors of the interviewees, and also the prevalence of the value as an entrenched expectation for being part of an Appalachian American community.

**Evidence of love of the land.** The next value expressed during the interviews and also present in the literature discussing Appalachian values was that of a tie to homeplace, or love of land. Often compelling members of the Appalachian community to return home rather than explore life in other regions or countries, this tie to homeplace serves as something to be proud of, and potentially, something that might prevent said individuals from having external experiences (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). When asked about the importance of family and the relationships that develop amongst family, several of the interviewees endorsed the presence of this cultural value, even if it was not practiced in their individual case. For example, in the case of “Sally,” a thirty-one-year-old woman with two graduate degrees that lived in Appalachia (Eastern Kentucky), when asked about the presence of this value leading to behaviors of keeping individuals within the community, Sally noted the following:

**Sally:** No. Um: “Where there’s jobs, where you want to be... We want you to go to college, but we want you to also choose your life.” So, we were very support, well supported.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm. You kind of were saying that, like, uh... Well, let me ask you this question.

**Sally:** Mm hmm.

**Researcher:** Is that the norm, from your perspective?

**Sally:** No.

**Researcher:** In this region?

**Sally:** I don’t think it is.

**Researcher:** Describe what you think the norm is.

**Sally:** Um, I think that the norm in this region is most families really stress the importance of keeping their kids close to home.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Sally:** There’s not a lot of encouragement about go out and explore and see the world and gain your own life experiences. Um: “I want you to kind of

follow in my footsteps. This is the job I had, so you need to have this kind of a job, too.” Um, you know, it’s under, you know, a lot of people: “You need to get married, stay here, you need to have kids.” Um, I’m all, I was, I always get asked, “So, when are you having more kids?” You know, things like that. I have one child, and I think I’m just going to have one child. But you know, a lot of the norms in this area are get married, the male works, the female is the primary care giver at home, but I didn’t have that pressure put on me, you know, growing up.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm. And you sound thankful for that. (*Laughs.*)

**Sally:** I am. You know, I’m very thankful. I had a great... I was spoiled in a lot of ways, but my parents also taught me the value of working.

Although Sally did not have a lifestyle in which her parents expected her to return home, she definitely noted the strong power of the cultural value to compel others within Appalachian American communities to return to where they were raised, and even to take on the same jobs as their parents. Further, Sally continued that people within her life today still follow the tradition of “male works, the female is the primary care giver at home,” and even though she did not have that “pressure placed upon her growing up,” she did admit that others within the community were always asking her about her role in having more children and tending to home. This extension of the love of land and tie to homeplace could be somewhat problematic for individuals that aspire for careers that are not prevalent or deemed as appropriate within the gendered expectations of the area.

**Evidence of preference for the concrete.** In continuing on with cultural values discussed in the literature, another value held by people from Appalachia is a preference for the concrete, or preference of thinking about and dealing with tangible objects in life, as opposed to thinking about or envisioning abstractions or ideas not yet come to life (Tang & Russ, 2007). Reading the interviews for evidence of this particular cultural value was difficult at first, but upon subsequent readings, a focus on the present and preparation only for what existed was located within the interviews, as was a certain

sense of what has been referred to elsewhere as a sense of cultural fatalism. For example, notice in this conversation with Steve (discussed above) how his thought process concerning past, present, and future did not allow for any suggestion of malleability or any hint of altering the way things have been, are, or will be:

**Researcher:** Do you ever feel like, um... Well, let me ask you this first: do you feel like keeping your family connected is something that was taught to you here as very important?

**Steve:** Yeah. I think yeah.

**Researcher:** Yeah?

**Steve:** That's the way our parents done me. We was all a pretty tight group.

**Researcher:** Yeah. And, do you think that, um, I'm trying to think how I can ask this... Do you, does it, does it ever upset you, I guess, the idea that, that we don't have as much time with our kids and stuff anymore?

**Steve:** Nah, well, a little bit, but that's just the way the world is, I guess.

**Researcher:** Mmm.

**Steve:** It always seems like everybody's busy.

**Researcher:** So, there's just not much you can really do about it?

**Steve:** No.

**Researcher:** Except do it or, you can't, you won't have to pay to feed your kids.

**Steve:** That's right.

As noted above, Steve (the person with three jobs), noted a sense of understanding that is rooted in the concrete and unchanging. He indicated not only that keeping his family "connected" was important in the past and therefore, important in his present, but also that the fact that life is "busy" is some state of being that is unchangeable. Granted, the researcher did not go on to ask if Steve could somehow envision a different possibility or if he thought there could be another set of outcomes in life other than those based on his own experiences growing up, it would appear that the responses from Steve were based on what can be lived as the world exists now, with little exploration of other outcomes.

Having a focus on the “here and now” with little demonstrated ability to think about alternate realities that do not exist may to some degree endorse this notion of Appalachian Americans having a preference for the tangible, the real, the concrete. However, included with the sense of fatalism described above, there were also examples of the value in the connections made between educational goals or educational outcomes and practical, concrete ends. Put simply, when discussing the importance of education or why people should get an education, many of the participants focused on the connection of a degree (measured educational attainment) to attaining a job. The suggestion that educational achievement is important for economic reasons alone shows, arguably, a thought process that does not provide evidence of other, abstract notions of wanting an education, such as for the love of learning or to better one’s ability to understand the world. One clear example of this type of thinking came when interviewing “Caleb,” a thirty-two-year-old male from Eastern Kentucky who started college, finished some trade programs, but never finished with a traditional four-year degree. In speaking about values or practices instilled in him by those in his family who took care of him (father and grandmother), Caleb said the following:

**Researcher:** OK, um, so looking then at your father and your grandmother, um, was there anything they encouraged you to be a part of, to be involved in your life?

**Caleb:** Um.

**Researcher:** They said, “Do this” or “You ought to keep doing that” or “Ought to think about being this” or...

**Caleb:** Uh, never did.

**Researcher:** OK, OK, why not?

**Caleb:** I really have no idea.

**Researcher:** Hm. OK. Was there anything that they said, you know, “We just totally don’t think this is right; you should never do this?”

**Caleb:** I never had any of that either. I mean, there's been, you know, I thought about going into botany at one time when I was in high school, and they was like, "I don't know." Oh there was, not me but my sister wanted to be an artist and they said that she shouldn't be an artist because they don't make any money.

**Researcher:** OK.

**Caleb:** I remember that. It wasn't me, but it was one of my sisters.

**Researcher:** Well, no it wasn't you, but that's good to know because that tells me that in this area there appears to be yet another emphasis, from what you're saying, that they valued practicality.

**Caleb:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** A job that's going to be able to allow you to support yourself...

**Caleb:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** ...um, consistently. Did your sister end up going into art anyway?

**Caleb:** Hm mm.

**Researcher:** No, really?

**Caleb:** No, she's, uh, she works at the construction company with my mom in the office.

**Researcher:** Oh. *(Laughs.)*

**Caleb:** *(Laughs.)*

**Researcher:** That's funny. Um...

**Caleb:** And, my other sister's a manager at, uh, Subway.

**Researcher:** The one down here?

**Caleb:** The one at Wal-Mart.

**Researcher:** The one up at Wal-Mart, OK, OK.

Although Caleb did not conclude that he was guided into an education for economic reasons only, he noted that not only was his sister directly guided away from art because artists "don't make any money," but more importantly, all three of them—Caleb and both of his sisters—achieved enough education to find jobs where they lived. Any thought of pursuing an education for a career because you "enjoy" the work (i.e., art) apparently can take a back seat to the practical realities of living in a region of the country that struggles economically due to lack of employment and lack of opportunities.

This value of preference for the concrete is really more a behavioral manifestation than a value; nonetheless, it does appear to exist within the Appalachian areas of Eastern Kentucky.

**Evidence of strong sense of patriotism.** According to Loyal Jones (1991), Appalachian Americans have an adopted cultural value that presents as a strong sense of patriotism, placing what one perceives as “patriotic” or “not against the country” as crucial to one’s identity and success. In this sense, information which suggests that one might argue against values espoused traditionally in America is, ironically, not really being “American”. When combing the interviews for presence of this cultural value in either the behavioral choices or statements of the interviewees, all the researcher noted was that several of the male interviewees commented on participating in or wanting to participate in some form of the armed services. Female participants noted a sense of patriotism, but usually in from the point of view of men in the military. For example, note the following exchange between the interviewer and Caleb:

**Researcher:** So, are there any behaviors or activities that you think are important or that you think should not be occurring, um, in life right now?

**Caleb:** Oh. War. (*Laughs.*)

**Researcher:** War, what about war?

**Caleb:** Yeah, ah, but, you know, it’s just the war that we’ve been in the past eleven, ten or eleven years. Almost eleven years, it’s not ending, you know. It’s, wow. Even though I am in the military, it’s job security, yeah, but...

**Researcher:** Not if you die.

**Caleb:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** I mean it’s scary.

**Caleb:** Yeah, but it’s, you know, it changes a lot. People don’t think about it, but it does change things here at home as well.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Caleb:** Even people who aren’t in the military see it. They may not see it, but



there's still a lot of changes.

Unfortunately, the interviewer chose to move to another topic, so understanding Caleb's sense of patriotism was somewhat lost. He did note being in the military for economic reasons (preference for the concrete), but how he felt about the country was later revealed in the following exchange:

**Researcher:** OK. Um, what is your opinion about...like, how patriotic are you...

**Caleb:** Very.

**Researcher:** ...in terms of our country. In what way? Describe that for me.

**Caleb:** Um...

**Researcher:** I mean, I figured because you're in the military, but...

**Caleb:** Well, I believe in, you know, everything that our founding fathers brought forth to this country. And, I see a lot of things that happen now that just, even though I am in the military, it sickens me.

**Researcher:** Like what?

**Caleb:** Um, well, have you heard the news about the soldiers that were thrown into a landfill recently?

**Researcher:** Mm mm.

**Caleb:** Yeah, they discovered that from the dates of 2004 to about a year ago that there were a lot of soldiers remains that were brought home, and when the families didn't specify what they wanted to do with them, they would, they cremated them and took them to a landfill. It's whenever they told them they would be disposed of in a, in a respective manner.

**Researcher:** Uh huh. Yeah.

**Caleb:** And, they recently discovered that there were a lot of soldiers...

**Researcher:** I did know that the...

**Caleb:** ...that way.

**Researcher:** ...news had reported that they had mismarked several soldiers' burial spots at the, uh, that national cemetery. I can't think of the name of it right now.

**Caleb:** Hmm, well that's another problem.

**Researcher:** Um.

**Caleb:** Arlington.

**Researcher:** Yeah. But that had been happening for over decades.

**Caleb:** At least they're there.

**Researcher:** So, families had been going to the wrong place.

**Caleb:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** You know, for their loved one or whatnot. Um, that's horrific, isn't it?

**Caleb:** That, that, that doesn't bother me as much....

**Researcher:** Well, the garbage one. That's what I'm talking about.

**Caleb:** ...as having somebody thrown into the trash.

**Researcher:** That's pretty...

**Caleb:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** ...pretty bad. So, do you in your view – and I haven't asked anyone else this but given your particular background – um, do you in your view feel like the United States should serve a role as the leader of the world?

**Caleb:** I don't think we should.

**Researcher:** Why not?

**Caleb:** It's not our place.

**Researcher:** And, why is it not?

**Caleb:** We, as we put ourselves, our name United States of America, we're not the United States of the World.

**Researcher:** Right, OK.

**Caleb:** It's not our place to get in, but in somebody else's business. Just like I was, you know, I don't even know if I said that, "Don't get in anybody's business" my father always taught me because you'll get yourself in trouble that way.

**Researcher:** So, another thing you were taught?

**Caleb:** Yeah. And, we are pretty much doing that all the time now. We're trying to be the world police and we're not.

Note that although Caleb identified himself as “very” patriotic, his later discussion of current events related to America’s image around the world and practices at home was quite critical of the nation. As such, Caleb showed evidence of being patriotic enough to question what happens in the name of the United States. This example is a clear counterexample to the cultural value espoused in the literature in that it demonstrates a willingness to openly disagree with decisions made by the military,

showing a sense of patriotism that does not blindly ignore the actions made by leaders in the United States.

**Evidence of family responsibilities over educational values.** Finally, and most directly connected to the ultimate focus of this research, the relevant literature on cultural values often espouses the notion that for many Appalachian Americans, educational attainment in the formal sense of the word (e.g., going to college) may not occur if it means forsaking family responsibilities. As depicted in the literature, one's responsibilities for caring for other family members is more important than one's own personal or educational growth (Tang & Russ, 2007). Additionally, although educational attainment is valued within Appalachia, degrees or trainings directly related to practical economic goals is of more value than learning for other laudable but less tangible goals (i.e., learning for learning's sake) (Bradner, 2008). Although this cultural value was interwoven into the discussion about the practices associated with "a preference for the concrete," a culture-based value that one should place the needs of others in the family (even at times, extended family) before educational attainment necessarily leads to outcomes which restrict or prevent economic growth or opportunities for personal achievement. Several of the interviewees discussed the notion of staying home and taking care of the family as being a priority in Appalachian communities, especially as it relates to opportunities for women to leave and achieve. As mentioned in previous examples, the respondents offered statements of times when they stopped pursuing education, or when they chose not to pursue a passion of theirs as it was not present within their home community or profitable. One of the best examples among the interviewees was the very last interview. The last participant for this study was a thirty-

six-year-old Appalachian American mother of two who graduated high school and attended two semesters of college. “Nikki” still lives in an Eastern Kentucky community and is currently working as a school paraprofessional. When interviewing Nikki about the presence of cultural values within Appalachia and the degree to which individuals may be marginalized because mainstream organizations, even those in their communities that operate under mainstream values (i.e., schools), do not endorse behaviors compatible with the cultural values of the area, Nikki’s story emerged as a final, best testimony of the marginalization of opportunity due to behaviors stemming from cultural expectations. Although Nikki wanted to attend college, earn a teaching certificate, and pursue a dream of being a public school educator, family matters required her to “put family first” and forsake her career. Her words captured the events of marginalization best:

**Researcher:** What program did you study at MSU?

**Nikki:** I was actually just taking general classes.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Nikki:** At the time, I thought I wanted to grow up and be a social worker.

**Researcher:** Oh, OK.

**Nikki:** But um, things took me in different directions. I got married at an early age. Um, I had my first son at twenty-one, and I, I just kind of lost interest in that. I didn’t, I guess I really didn’t realize what being a social worker was all about.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Nikki:** And, I just don’t think that I could have handled certain situations of letting children go back to certain homes.

**Researcher:** And not being able to do much about it right away.

**Nikki:** It’s hard enough to be a paraprofessional.

**Researcher:** I bet.

**Nikki:** ‘Cause I want to take ‘em home with me.

**Researcher:** Yeah, I hear ya’. Um, so how’d you do in school in general? Were you a good student?

**Nikki:** I was a decent student. Um, I had comprehension issues, so I was in special reading classes in elementary school and got better with it. Um, still as an adult, sometimes I have to read an article or a story more than one time to get the full effect. So...

**Researcher:** Do you talk to your children about that?

**Nikki:** Mm hmm.

**Researcher:** And say, you know, "Mama would read like that?"

**Nikki:** Mm hmm. My youngest son is actually a struggler.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Nikki:** And so, you know, it's, I'm kind of glad that I've lived that life because when your child's struggling, you can say, "It's OK. You know, Mommy..."

**Researcher:** You did that yesterday in the office.

**Nikki:** Yeah. You know, my...

**Researcher:** Is that an example of what you're talking about?

**Nikki:** Yes. You know, "Mommy has a hard time remembering things or figuring out exactly what they're talking about, and I always have." And then, my oldest son, he's a straight-A student. He's one that doesn't have to study.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Nikki:** Always gets his work done at school, and then the baby struggles. So, you know, I'm kind of glad that I struggled and I knew how it felt to be embarrassed and pulled out to different classes and, you know, that sort of thing. Because I can relate to how he's feeling, so...

**Researcher:** Yeah, I bet that helps him.

**Nikki:** Oh, I'm sure. You know, and...

**Researcher:** I'm so glad I said what I said yesterday, then.

**Nikki:** *(Laughs.)*

**Researcher:** Which I always say, but you know, because...do you feel like that gives him some freedom, some flexibility to feel like, you know, "If I make a mistake, it's OK."

**Nikki:** It's OK.

**Researcher:** "As long as I'm trying."

**Nikki:** And, that's what I will tell my kids: "Do your best." My thing every morning when they're walking out to the bus is, "Make good choices."

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Nikki:** And, to me that covers be a great friend, be a good student. You know, and that's what I tell them: "The things you do today affects your

tomorrow. You know everything you do today – you may not realize it. It may be next week or next year, but everything you do, the choices you make.”

**Researcher:** Have you thought about going back to school?

**Nikki:** Actually, I have, but financially, there is just no way I could pull it off. So, um, I have thought about going back to school to become a certified teacher.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Nikki:** But, um, there’s still time. I mean...

**Researcher:** There are scholarships, too. There are non-traditional scholarships out there, you know, where you can get them for people who are technically considered than the general population.

**Nikki:** Mm hmm. It’s just, I don’t know. I just feel like I’m comfortable where I’m at.

**Researcher:** Right.

**Nikki:** Um, I love what I do now, and I don’t have the stress of being an actual teacher to take home with me.

**Researcher:** Right.

**Nikki:** Um, I can be here and I can teach and love these kids and make an impression and hopefully, you know a good impression. And uh, but when I go home, I don’t have to be the school teacher anymore. I get to be a mom.

**Researcher:** Right.

**Nikki:** You know?

**Researcher:** Yeah.

**Nikki:** And, I’m comfortable with that...

**Researcher:** Sure.

**Nikki:** ...‘cause I don’t know how it would be. You know, right now it’s like if my children want to be involved in things, I do my best to make sure that they can be.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Nikki:** And, that kind of leaves Mom no time, but I’ll get my time soon. They’ll all be grown up and I’ll be sad.

**Researcher:** Oh.

**Nikki:** (*Laughs.*)

**Researcher:** But you don’t have to worry about your profession preventing you from being able to take your kids anywhere because you’re an hourly employee.

**Nikki:** Right. My family has to be priority number one, even if it means I do not get to get that degree, or that job.

A great deal of important information can be extrapolated from Nikki's interview. Not only does it seem that Nikki would have made an excellent teacher (she's certainly empathetic, passionate, and demonstrates a love for children), but also, it is obvious that Nikki feels that the time it would take to obtain the teaching degree would be too much time away from her responsibilities as a mother to her children. Unfortunately, the researcher did not ask Nikki if she felt that this situation was gendered, with more women than men running into this situation. However, it did appear that when the reason for not finishing or pursuing higher educational levels was related to doing what is right for the family or taking care of the family, most of those that responded in kind were women. Men tended to comment on earning money as a means of putting family over educational goals. Gendered or not, this testimony portrays an obviously capable woman within Appalachia who unfortunately feels that she cannot have both a family role where Mom is present and a professional role where Mom is afforded another aspect of her identity. Although there are other instances of behaviors extending from putting family over self values, as written about in some of the literature about Appalachian Americans, this example was perhaps the strongest example gathered in the context of this particular study.

In addition to the cultural values that came from early literature on Appalachian cultural values, the researcher also included three additional codes for the following components of study: First, the researcher coded for statements that demonstrated evidence of other important statements that are worth considering in study of cultural influences on psycho-educational processes. Second, the researcher looked for

statements that were reflective of cultural alignment between home and school, as many examples would be a revealing counterweight to the cultural discontinuity claim. Finally, statements that actually represented “cultural discontinuity” as officially defined (the process where a learner, when moving from home to school, discontinues values-based behaviors (as determined from the cultural values discussed above) with outcomes from that acculturation process negatively influencing the psychology of the learner in such a way as to marginalize or otherwise harm the educational outcomes of the learner (Tyler et al., 2008).

All in all, the evidence in these following categories was quite revealing. Each is discussed below.

**Evidence of “other” important statements.** After the first review of the statements, the researcher initially could not find any examples of statements that would aptly qualify for evidence to support this category. However, prior to deleting the category from study, a second review did in fact yield statements from one of the participants that are not traditionally affiliated with the cultural discontinuity claim, yet seemed important enough to code in this category. Read the following statements and the additional comments to follow:

**Researcher:** Do you think that your, you are unique? Maybe not totally unique, but that m... If somebody said, “Most of the women in this area raised when you were raised would be the one to sit and wait for the husband or whoever, and only a few would be like you, willing to go out there and go ahead and haul it.” Would you say that’s probably right, or would you say no, that’s not right?

**Kathy:** Um...

**Researcher:** Just an opinion.

**Kathy:** I just...

**Researcher:** I’m just curious about your opinion.



**Kathy:** Probably. I'd say there's very, most of the, well, I'm just goin' by the wives that I know...

**Researcher:** Right.

**Kathy:** ...my age, you know?

**Researcher:** That's exactly right.

**Kathy:** I would say most of 'em would wait on the men to help 'em, you know.

**Researcher:** OK. OK. At the same time, you know, if somebody said something like, "Men rarely, rarely cook in this area or do those kinds of things. That's usually something that in heterosexual relationships that the women do that kind of stuff." Would that be fair?

**Kathy:** Oh, that's very true. It's like, um, Kevin was raised in the generation that men didn't do housework. They didn't cook. They did outside work.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Kathy:** And, that, he holds true to that today. Now, he helps me, now, with housework, but when the kids were little and he worked out of the home, the most he did was take garbage out, you know.

**Researcher:** Uh huh.

**Kathy:** The rest... Oh, if somethin' tore up in the house...

**Researcher:** He'd fix it.

**Kathy:** ...you know, he'd fix it, but I mean, as far as the cleanin' and the cookin' and the grocery shoppin' or the shoppin' for whatever we need.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Kathy:** He never went in a store until after the kids was grown and gone; then he got to go with me, you know. Uh, but I did all the shopping, and I did all the cooking, all the cleaning. Um, payin' the bills. I mean, he knew. He brought the money, and he knew what I was doin', but I was the one to go and do it. He worked. He wasn't home to do it, you know.

In this exchange, Kathy, an Appalachian American woman in her 60s with an eighth-grade education really focused on the idea that her upbringing taught her that there were very rigid gender roles expected of men and women in heterosexual relationships. In her eyes, men had to work as a first priority and women had to tend to house and family, even before they were married (help Mom) and definitely after. It did not seem out of the ordinary for women to do all of the housework and child rearing while the men did nothing of the kind when at home.

Although the researcher did not directly think to extend that portion of the interview to see if it was related to educational choices in any way, Kathy's husband did not finish school because he preferred to use his hands to work and he needed money to marry and raise a family, and Kathy only finished an eighth-grade education because "she didn't like it and didn't see how she'd need much more than what she had for figurin' and readin'." It would seem that, in the context of all of this information, there might be some gendered expectations that ultimately are not endorsed in schools (schools would probably try to reason that you should go to school and finish your education anyway). If there is one set of value-based behaviors (placing family responsibilities over educational progress) depicted here, then there might be evidence that the cultural value-based behaviors that are ceased in schools function differently as a product of gender. In other words, gender might just be a future variation to explore when studying cultural influences on behaviors and educational outcomes with Appalachian American students.

**Evidence of cultural alignment between home and school.** Although the primary focus of this study was to validate the presence of Appalachian American values, one interview did provide some information that the researcher believed to be supportive of cultural alignment between home and school. When interviewing Kevin, a sixty-three-year-old Appalachian American male from Eastern Kentucky with an eighth-grade education, the following comments were made when he was asked if there was anything that occurred at school that was endorsed at home:

**Researcher:** Alright, I got one more question sorta' about school. It's about school and home. There's some evidence that suggests, when we studied this, that if schools could do a better job at find...figuring out what kids are learning as important and valuable at home and teaching that same kind of values at school that it might actually help the kids learn all of the stuff, not just the dai...not just the concrete stuff. But, it might make them see why the other

stuff's important, uh, might make them better appreciate it, might make them feel like they fit into the school a little bit more. You know, whatever. Was there anything when you were in school, was there anything that you can think about for those – and I know it's been a while and you only went to eighth grade and it's been a while ago – but anything that you remember the schools ever trying to do to get your family to come visit or participate, actually help them with you or with the school? Or, was it sort of you send the kids to school, they do their thing, and then they come home?

**Kevin:** It was that way when I went. You went to school and you come home. What I can remember, I mean, I went to school, I come home. You know, if I got in trouble, my mother would...

**Researcher:** So trouble. Basically, if you were in trouble was...

**Kevin:** If I got in a fight at school or something, she would go find out. Or, [if] she didn't, my mom was the type she didn't just send me to school, she wanted me to learn or whatever.

**Researcher:** Right. Right.

**Kevin:** But it's not like now. I mean, well mostly, when I went to school, if you got in a fight they'd spank you [at school], then my mother would get after me [at home].

**Researcher:** Right.

**Kevin:** She'd punish me for something, you know I mean. But I never would, like I said, I never was in that much trouble at school 'cause I was afraid of what would happen at school and home. I was afraid, you know, sort of till the last year, and that was, I don't know, I just can't explain school. I just really...

**Researcher:** No, you answered my question.

In this example, Kevin highlighted a rather unfortunate set of behaviors exhibited not by the learner, per se, but by the teaching staff at school and his mother at home.

This endorsement of physical punishment, seemingly severe, occurred at school and again at home when he demonstrated misbehavior at school. Although the researcher would like to hope that this is an isolated incident, this kind of alignment in expectations and consequences at school and home might be supportive of a need to explore physical punishment as a consideration in cessation of attending school. After all, if a learner no longer attends school, then the learner cannot be punished for bad behavior at school.

Again, this may not be an issue with future studies, but it was an alignment worth mentioning as it was the only alignment seen by the researcher.

**Evidence of cultural misalignment between home and school.** The present study was primarily about determining the salience of values traditionally associated with Appalachian Americans in order to determine the need to consider the cultural discontinuity process as a possible factor related to student underachievement in schools. Although the present study did not focus on trying to locate evidence of cultural discontinuity as a process, if one believes that the aforementioned values and therefore value-laden behaviors are accurate, then there did appear to be one example of cultural misalignment, or cultural discontinuity. Interestingly, the evidence of cultural misalignment came from Kevin, the same individual who provided some evidence of cultural alignment between home and school.

During Kevin's interview, the researcher and Kevin began talking about his working and hating school. Note what Kevin stated in the following exchange:

**Kevin:** And then, I mean I just, I don't know how to explain it. I hated school. I just, I didn't like school. Then, like I say now, I see back where I should have done a little of both. I mean, or a whole lot of one... But now, when I was growing up, I mean education was good, but you could go, I was just in that time when work was good and you could get jobs in any area. I just hit it just right. It was just luck or hit it just...

**Researcher:** When the economy was maybe not the way...

**Kevin:** It would be hard for me now to get out here and get a job. You know, no more education, I could, uh... And, you get jobs knowing people than you do with education like that. I mean, it's fine to talk about, but I mean, like, say for instance I could work for the city over here.

**Researcher:** Mm hmm.

**Kevin:** I could go get a job and work for them. I could probably go say, "I want a job" and they'd, I already know everybody.

**Researcher:** Right.

- Kevin:** You know, but a lot of people don't know that. I mean I'm not saying they'd put me to work, but there're a lot of people I know would, a lot of people. I believe you get a job from knowin' people and stuff than you do with the education...
- Researcher:** So, it's more about the relationships than the formal training?
- Kevin:** Right. If you got, I mean, I couldn't go up there and get a job running computers or whatever, you do have to have that education just for that one that you're getting a job. And I've always been lucky, too; I can get a job anywhere, and why, I don't know. I mean, I'm not saying anywhere, but I can get a...
- Researcher:** Do you think it has anything to do with how, you know, you're a pretty personable person, I think. People have probably told you that over the years or you know that about yourself if you talk to anybody.
- Kevin:** Well, I, if I wanted a job, I'd ask. You know, just go ask and say, "I can do that" you know or whatever. And, it wouldn't, I mean, it wasn't the best work or anything, but the work I done was hard work.
- Researcher:** Right.
- Kevin:** It's just brute, hard work.
- Researcher:** And, you were willing to do it, and they were willing to pay you to do it.
- Kevin:** Yeah, and like I said, I hit it just right, and I gone and got in the union, iron workers union, and I stayed with it. Still belong to it.

As you can see from the above exchange, not only did Kevin dislike school, he believed that education was not the means by which people secured jobs when he was of school age, as well as today (although he did acknowledge that there were some jobs that required an education). In fact, Kevin attributed securing work to three factors other than securing an education: hard work, luck, and having connections. In this case, it is clear how Kevin's perspective would not be aligned with the perspective provided by educators in schools. Again, this is not evidence of behaviors that cease when leaving home and coming to school, but the statements provided do seemingly support the idea that there are beliefs held by Appalachian Americans that conflict with values shared in educational arenas. It further demonstrates that rather than accepting the values endorsed by schools, Kevin continued his belief in the idea that a formal education was not the way

to gain employment where he grew up and lived. If this is not an example of cultural discontinuity entirely, it is at least indicative of lifestyle choices that, upon further exploration, might in fact be associated with this type of psycho-educational process.

## Chapter Five: Discussions/Conclusions

### Significance of Study

Recent research of cultural influences on learning have found that the educational outcomes of students from marginalized populations might be negatively influenced by the psychological effects of being forced to abandon home-based values and behaviors for those endorsed among mainstream America (Tyler et al., 2008). Even when there is a clash between home-based and mainstream values and behaviors, most American academic institutions expect all students to adhere to the mainstream values and behaviors if they are to be successful at all (Tyler et al., 2008). This mismatch of expectations a phenomenon termed cultural discontinuity, has been used as a means of understanding minority student underachievement in many racial and ethnic student populations, including African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans (Deyhle, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ndura, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Parsons, 2001, 2003; Parsons, Travis, & Simpson, 2005; Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001; Tyler et al., 2008; Webb-Johnson, 2003). Although much attention has been paid to the student groups previously mentioned, little attention had been given to other marginalized groups—not necessarily by virtue of race or ethnic origin, but by regional location in the United States. One such example, Appalachian Americans, can serve to be just the group for exploring regional cultural discontinuity.

The data provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission (2009) indicated the possibility of the presence in Appalachia of those cultural characteristics necessary for cultural discontinuity to take place, including marginalization effects seen by comparing

educational outcomes and economic differences to the mainstream within the U.S. (ARC, 2009). Previous literature fell short as to the salience of particular contemporary cultural values or behaviors in that it was dated and not particularly measured nor collected through scientific inquiry. Therefore, this study sought to determine if particular cultural values do exist in Appalachia and, if they do in fact exist, to provide evidence for the presence of these values as well as for the possibility that they are in opposition to those traditionally endorsed in mainstream America (Tyler et al., 2008). Further, it was the goal of the researcher to determine if the presence of these value sets were home-based, or school-based, or if there was any evidence of the separation of these value sets in home from school. Although the primary goal was to determine any presence of the values, the combination of those values among members studied was also important for this line of inquiry.

Because the researcher felt it imperative to seek current evidence of these cultural values and behaviors, as well as cultural clashes between students from the region, oral life-history interviews were conducted with people who live and learn within Appalachia. As the cultural discontinuity hypothesis seeks to understand marginalization effects that appear related to cultural clashes between a population and the mainstream, the researcher turned this initial investigation toward studying the population of Appalachia with the greatest noted signs of educational underachievement and economic disparity—those Appalachian Americans located within Eastern Kentucky (ARC, 2009).

Before turning to a recap of the findings of this qualitative inquiry, it should be noted that the premise of this research is rooted in efforts to understand the residents of Appalachia and, ultimately, to help improve learning outcomes within the region. In



congruence with that claim, it should be known that Appalachian Americans, or any marginalized population, should not have to abandon their sense of heritage and comply with the ideologies of mainstream America just to survive. Although this investigation did not provide the scholarly evidence that would be necessary to assert that the presence of cultural differences between Appalachia and the mainstream are negatively influencing important educational behaviors or achievement of students in Appalachia, the following evidence of cultural value presence at home, and not displayed in the experiences participants had at school (with the exception of the corporal punishment) does provide a reasonable amount of support for the investigation of such a phenomenon. As stated by Tyler et al. (2008), “Cultural discontinuity has been viewed as a source of the academic and psychological challenges faced by ethnic minority students. However, the research to support such claims has been limited” (p. 292). Although the research of cultural discontinuity in Appalachia has not yet occurred, the data provided by Appalachian Americans from Eastern Kentucky does begin to address the concerns expressed in the Tyler et al. (2008) conceptual paper.

The cultural values that were gleaned from the literature and used for the direction of the questions given during the oral life-history interviews are as follows:

“egalitarianism, independence, individualism, personalism, a religious world view, neighborliness, love of the land, and the avoidance of conflict” (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991,1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005, p. 10) as well as a “preference for the concrete, [a sense of] family responsibilities over educational values,” (Tang & Russ, 2007, p. 37) and a strong sense of patriotism (Jones, 1991). During the interview, several questions were asked in an effort to ascertain the presence of these

values among the residents of Eastern Kentucky today as well as, to the extent possible, to collect evidence of possibly culturally discontinuous events, as such evidence would serve to strengthen the need for further study of Appalachian cultural discontinuity.

**Evidence of egalitarianism.** As indicated above, egalitarianism speaks to the cultural belief that an individual should not believe nor engage in behaviors that would seek to place one individual “above” the rest of the group. In a sense, if a person from the Eastern Kentucky area of Appalachia abandoned egalitarianism in favor of seeking to be better than the rest of their family, that person would be met with criticism—not praise (as may be the case within mainstream American households). As revealed, evidence for this cultural value was most notably present in the comments of David, an Appalachian American male with a Bachelor’s degree who, when pressed on what was fatalistic about the expression “getting above your raisin’,” stated, “It’s trying to get out of what, like if the family’s always been in poverty and then all of a sudden you’ve got this person who they’re not satisfied with the way things have always worked. They’re trying to do something else, and it butts heads with the family.”

David’s statement served not only to show and actually define the idea of egalitarianism in Appalachia, but additionally, David stated that those who violated the cultural norm of not “getting above your raisin’” were met with a lack of acceptance from their family. This additional statement indicates a possible need to study Appalachian cultural discontinuity in that it depicts a value held in the literature while simultaneously providing evidence that abandoning that value and acculturating to a stance of pride for self-achievements in academia would lead to deleterious outcomes such as “butt[ing] heads with the family.”

**Evidence of independence and individualism.** Again, the interviews quite notably depicted evidence of this combination of independence and individualism. Remembering that this is not the same as the mainstream concept of individualism, Appalachian American independence and individualism speaks to not having to owe anyone—to making enough or having enough not to need to rely on someone else (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). This is at all costs, so to speak, meaning one might not borrow money for college if it meant not being able to earn a living and take care of oneself and the family.

The best example of the expression of this value was with a sixty-three-year-old man with an eighth-grade education named Kevin. When Kevin was talking about how he stopped school and went to work, the interviewer asked about the importance of him going to school. Kevin stated, “No, I could’ve went on with school education. It was me: I didn’t want to ‘cause I just, like what I did, I went to work early and got to makin’ money, so the money was more important to me than the education.” Here, Kevin acknowledged that school was something he could have continued, but he apparently did not feel that it was of the same importance as earning money—money which served to discontinue any need for reliance on others.

**Evidence of avoidance of conflict.** This value is easily seen when expressed behaviorally in that individuals from Appalachia (Eastern Kentucky, specifically) choose not to argue back even if they feel affronted or know they are on the correct side of an argument (Jones, 1991). The presence of this value was somewhat harder to locate, but upon review of the entire exchanges between the researcher and the participants, a prime

example emerged in some of the responses like those from Kathy, a sixty-three-year-old Appalachian American from Eastern Kentucky with an eighth-grade education. During the interview, the researcher initially misunderstood her, but once the researcher realized it and asked why she did not note a need for correction, she stated, “I just didn’t want to correct you.” This practice endorsed a presence of “avoidance of conflict” in that she would rather the mistake go uncorrected than simply get her record properly recorded.

**Evidence of neighborliness.** In searching for evidence of the value of neighborliness, or willingness to help those around you by any means possible, even it means the helper suffers without the resource (Jones, 1991), the research turned most prominently to Cally, a thirty-something-year-old Appalachian American woman with a Bachelor’s degree. When discussing a “sense of community” she felt was present amongst her neighbors, she stated the following:

“. . .because where we lived we were out in the country, um we relied on our neighbors to, you know if we were gone somewhere, ya’ know, if we took a took a trip for the weekend, we relied on them to kind of watch out for us if we weren’t there or if my parents left us at home by ourselves, they kind of watched out for us, ya’ know our neighbors would, if, if there was any body, any vehicle that they didn’t know. . . they would call and check on us.”

Cally went on to discuss that this practice was so regularly part of the day-to-day life of Appalachians from Eastern Kentucky that many of her neighbors (and herself included) often left all of their car and house doors unlocked. This sense of neighborliness included this “watching out” for one another—so strongly that people from the area trusted their safety explicitly.

**Evidence of strong religious (and Christian) values.** Again, this value was one of the more frequently noted from the interview data analyzed. For example, Steve, a middle-aged Appalachian American male with a high school diploma indicated not only that church was an expectation had for him by his grandparents during his childhood, but also, Steve later noted that he wanted to still attend church but he had three jobs to work, showing how the need for income compelled Steve from being able to endorse a value he held from childhood. In another example, Josephina, a twenty-something-year-old Appalachian American female with a high school graduation, in telling about expectations had for her during childhood, indicated that completing chores, showing deep respect for family members, and going to church were three of the most important expectations had for her. Finally, Cally demonstrated evidence of this value as well, when she described her “constrained” childhood. According to Cally, her father was extremely religious, and as a result, Cally and her siblings were not allowed to participate in most of the afterschool events or clubs. All of these examples clearly show the presence of the Christian church and the power it has within the communities of these interviewees in the shaping of the behaviors expected by the residents that lived in their communities.

**Evidence of love of the land.** Evidence necessary to show the value of “love of land” or “tie to homeplace” was found in statements made by interviewees that depicted where they came from as the only or most important place for them to spend their lives (Beaver, 1986; Hicks, 1976; Jones, 1991, 1994; Keefe, 1998 as cited in Keefe, 2005; Tang & Russ, 2007). Although there were several instances of statements that endorsed the presence of this value, one example came from Sally, a thirty-one-year-old woman

with two graduate degrees. Sally did not endorse this value nor was it present in her family, but when asked if that was the norm, Sally stated the following:

There's not a lot of encouragement about go out and explore and see the world and gain your own life experiences. Um, "I want you to kind of follow in my footsteps. This is the job I had, so you need to have this kind of a job, too." Um, you know, it's under, you know, a lot of people, "You need to get married, stay here, you need to have kids.

As is evident from the above statement, the expectation held by most people in her community, from Sally's perspective, is to stay where they were raised and do what the previous generation did after they (the older generation) retires. This tie to location would seem to hinder educational and lifestyle options, even though the subjects who endorsed this value did so willingly.

**Evidence of preference for the concrete.** As indicated above, an endorsement of preference for the concrete would include a preference for thinking about and dealing with tangible objects in life, with no real time spent on imaging what might be (Tang & Russ, 2007). A good example of this value emerged within the interview with Steve, the man mentioned previously with three jobs. When asking him about his future and if he had ever imagined another possible outcome, the comments to follow were rooted and fixed—there was no evidence in the interview that Steve spent much time imagining a world that might be different than the life he had at the time. Because his statements so clearly depicted the fixed nature that appears with this value, I have included it below:

**Researcher:** Do you ever feel like, um... Well, let me ask you this first: do you feel like keeping your family connected is something that was taught to you here as very important?

**Steve:** Yeah. I think yeah.

**Researcher:** Yeah?

**Steve:** That's the way our parents done me. We was all a pretty tight group.

**Researcher:** Yeah. And, do you think that, um, I'm trying to think how I can ask this... Do you, does it, does it ever upset you, I guess, the idea that, that we don't have as much time with our kids and stuff anymore?

**Steve:** Nah, well, a little bit, but that's just the way the world is, I guess.

**Researcher:** Mmm.

**Steve:** It always seems like everybody's busy.

**Researcher:** So, there's just not much you can really do about it?

**Steve:** No.

**Researcher:** Except do it or, you can't, you won't have to pay to feed your kids.

**Steve:** That's right.

**Evidence of strong sense of patriotism.** Patriotism, defined as a support of the national agenda so stringently that disagreeing with actions taken on behalf of our country is deemed inappropriate (Jones, 1991), was also present within the interviews for this study. The evidence for this strong sense of patriotism came most notably from the male participants, who almost exclusively made at least one statement about being in or wanting to be in the armed services. This endorsement of patriotism among so many men suggested not only that this cultural value was present but also that it is probably gendered, with men endorsing the value more frequently than women. Larger quantitative inquiries would need to take place before such a statement could truly be supported; nonetheless, it does not detract from the findings gleaned from these interviews.

**Evidence of Family responsibilities over educational values.** This particular value was portrayed when participants chose to take care of family responsibilities rather than complete educational outcomes (Tang & Russ, 2007). This is not to say that the individual is not interested in obtaining an education but rather that the individual feels

culturally compelled to suspend that desire to take care of family members—even distant relations such as cousins, at times.

The best example was that of thirty-six-year-old Nikki, a paraprofessional who worked at an elementary school. Although Nikki desired a college degree, which would allow her to be a teacher, her responsibilities to family prevented her from ever finishing her education. The researcher is admittedly frustrated with this particular value in that the behavioral expressions of the value tend to prevent individuals from finishing their educational pursuits (a goal the researcher holds in the highest of esteem). Nonetheless, the value does appear in the interview data, and for whatever purposes, behavioral expressions of the value were also noted.

In addition to analyzing the interviews for cultural values and associated behaviors, information was coded for three additional topics. One topic included values that seemed “important but not related to the values espoused in earlier literature,” which meant that the comments led the researcher to ask questions that might be worth investigating in the future. Secondly, statements were coded for evidence of “cultural alignment” if the subject’s statements aligned with mainstream values. Finally, there was a code for evidence of actual “cultural discontinuity,” and this code was applied to statements that demonstrated that the subject ceased a culturally imposed, value-based behavior while at school, often with marginalizing effects. All three of these codes yielded interesting findings worth discussing.

When important topics that were unrelated to the cultural values espoused in earlier literature presented themselves, it became obvious that there are areas worthy of further study. For example, future researchers might choose to consider the component



of gender and how it influences the expression or endorsement of values or behaviors at home or in school. As mentioned in the results, one interviewee, a sixty-three-year-old woman with an eighth-grade education, made several statements revealing how the life outcomes in Appalachia were tempered by gender, with men being responsible for working outside of the home and women being responsible for caring for the children and household. The presence and endorsement of these values (they were depicted as the “correct way” to live) raise important questions for future studies of the culture of the Eastern Kentucky or larger Appalachian American community. For example, “Are these values more present among men than women?” or, “Who decides how strongly one must endorse particular behaviors?” or finally, “Among the non-heterosexual population in Eastern Kentucky, who tends to work and who tends to house and home?”

Upon initial review of the interviews, the researcher could not locate evidence of any cultural alignment whereby the subjects openly endorsed the same values at home and school. However, while rereading a particularly difficult section, the researcher found evidence of alignment with regard to the use of physical punishment as a form of modifying student behavior. Although this is not a revelation of alignment with mainstream values to be sure, Kevin, the sixty-something-year-old man with an eighth-grade education did tell of a time when he misbehaved at school and, for that infraction, was spanked both at home and school. Again, this is not evidence of the opposite of the cultural discontinuity hypothesis; however, evidence of alignment are worth noting as the study of cultural discontinuity, in part, hangs critically on the relationship between what happens at home and what happens at school.

Finally, in terms of actual evidence of cultural discontinuity, the statements that came closest to evidencing the presence of culturally discontinuous events were when sixty-something-year-old Kevin discussed how people were able to get jobs. Mainstream educational institutions have largely held that “education is the key to success,” yet Kevin believed otherwise. In Kevin’s experience, securing jobs had nothing to do with education. He expressed this belief strongly, arguing that if he had bought into the idea that education was necessary for success, he would not have done well in life. According to Kevin, success in life is due to other factors, especially hard work, luck, and having connections. These values appear to be directly opposed to the values espoused in mainstream education today. Future scholarly work on Appalachian culture and education might further explore the rationale that undergirds these statements.

In summation, it should be noted that although the researcher did not do the best job separating the evidence of values between home and school (a necessary next step for cultural discontinuity), the overall presence of the values were noted at home in most cases, with the exception noted being that of use of corporal punishment as a value set that occurred at home and at school for Kevin. Although this is certainly not enough to point the research in concluding that cultural discontinuity exists, it does certainly add information in the sense that it shows that most of the endorsement of values expressed in the interviews occurred when discussing events outside of the school environment.

Also, most of the participants endorsed most of the values with an overall range being from seven of nine values endorsed by two participants, to all of the values being endorsed during the interviews by most (see table 2 below). This information demonstrates the powerful combination of these value traits among individuals within a

shared regional space over time—all of which appear to fit the criteria set forth in the literature on Cultural Discontinuity as well as the theoretical foundations of sociohistorical theory (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).

Interestingly, there did not appear to be any generational differences noted in the expression of any of the cultural themes noted, but future work might include any patterns of generational differences if time and change within space in time differentially influences the presence of the values outlined below (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). The following table illustrates the presence of these values by interviewee, noting large endorsements of the values among each participant and no real pattern by generation in the differences of the expression of value endorsement or value based behavioral endorsements of the values previously mentioned in the literature. To be clear, no real separation was initially discovered in this work, but the discussion of the presence of these values tended to be when the researcher asked about life at home (outside of school). Furthermore, the expression of the values or evidence of value-based behaviors was either endorsed as having been true for the individual respondent, or true in his or her opinion about most people in the Appalachian region.

Table 5.1

*Salience of Value Sets among Participants by Educational Attainment*

Educational Attainment	Male	Female	Ages (M, F in years)	<i>Values Expressed in Experiences for Males (N = 9)</i>	<i>Values Expressed in Experiences for Females (N = 9)</i>
Less than High School	Kevin	Kathy	63, 62	All values endorsed from interview (9)	All values endorsed from interview, but some roles gendered between men and women (9)
High School Graduate	Steve	Josephina	40, 24	All but independence/individualism (8)	All values endorsed during interview (9)
Some College	Caleb	Nikki	24, 33	All but love of home place (8); difference in how he showed patriotism	All values endorsed during interview (not patriotism in a heightened sense)
Four-Year Degree	David	Cally	22, 34	All values endorsed during interview (9)	All values but independence/individualism and avoidance of conflict (7)
Advanced Degree	Will	Sally	81, 31	All values endorsed during interview (9)	All values but patriotism (in a heightened sense) and preference for the concrete (7)

Taken together, the results of this study support the notion that certain Appalachian American values are in fact held and do influence the behaviors of individuals from Eastern Kentucky, the portion of Appalachia that has the strongest evidence of massive marginalization (ARC, 2009). Investigations of Appalachian cultural discontinuity must be conducted in service of aiding educational systems in developing a more pluralistic and ultimately beneficial approach to education. Such approaches would allow for the expression and understanding of the unique cultural characteristics in service of collective cooperation (Porter, 2001). If educators and educational systems adopt such a view, perhaps other social systems will follow suit. Porter (2001) articulated this point well when she stated that advocating for cultural pluralism is a “truly formidable task and a morally imperative one” (p. 14).

However, due to the limited information that was collected regarding Appalachian Americans’ own perceptions of cultural discontinuity between home and school specifically, the otherwise well-documented phenomenon cannot be concluded from this study alone. Further study of Appalachian cultural discontinuity, therefore, should occur not only for the purposes of scholarly discovery but, more importantly, to determine its very existence. Nonetheless, this work did start the important process of establishing the presence and salience of values that can now be said are affiliated with the culture of Appalachian Americans from Eastern Kentucky, particularly as it relates to the presence of these values in the lived experiences of participants. Remembering the evidence of the overwhelming quality of life disparities in income, poverty, and educational outcomes, it would seem prudent to pick up where this study started and move forward to see which parts of Appalachia do endorse the studied values and whether they truly are discontinued

at school, resulting in cultural discontinuity. Better questioning techniques from the interviewer in future work will seek to build upon that necessary component of the existence of cultural discontinuity if said phenomenon exists. From that information, true exploration into the cultural discontinuity hypothesis can take place within Appalachia.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study most obviously stemmed from the size of the sample and the method from which the sample was taken from the overall population. Snowball sampling techniques did generate a sufficient sample to interpret the presence of all the mentioned Appalachian American values in the lives of those interviewed and there was some evidence of the marginalization effects that occur among those Appalachian Americans in Eastern Kentucky. The portions of the geographic region known to be associated with the Appalachian mountain range is not the same as the Appalachia defined within the earlier work associated with the culture of the region. That said, cultural Appalachia does not only include Eastern Kentucky, and so this study was limited in reaching the claim that the presence of these stated values was really indicative of the culture of Appalachia as a whole. This is not necessarily a problem for this work, as qualitative methods are not designed for generalization purposes but rather for determining the need for further, quantitative investigations of the presence of the idea being investigated (i.e., Appalachian cultural values and cultural discontinuity claims within the region) (Glesne, 2006). Nonetheless, community biases, lack of random sampling, method of attaining participants, and misinterpretations from the researcher are all inherently problematic when using this method of sampling (Glesne, 2006). Future

work as discussed in the method above would be necessary to garner further, more valid, interpretations of cultural phenomenon.

Additionally, although the researcher asserts that a great wealth of information was gathered through the interviewing process, at times, there were connections lost to the researcher as he was not part of the individual context of the respondent. Interviews do allow for contextualized understanding, however; other research methods like case studies or participant observation might provide researchers with the opportunity for more contextualized data, rooted in the lives of the respondents over time, and corroborated by other data sources, such as pictures, stories, testimonies, or other contextual events.

Along those lines, another concern might exist with respect to the researcher's own biases. For example, the researcher believes education is a vital component of having a good quality of life. Further, the researcher feels educational attainment is a goal that should be more important than many of the examples of choosing "family values over educational attainment" heard during this study. These biases might alter the way in which the researcher views the data, and noting such serves to strengthen the understanding of the interpretation of findings and discussion written in this document. Although researcher biases were noted above, separating those biases is a persistent and problematic task; one which this researcher believes was met most notably through establishing the presence of biases and using the members studied to corroborate interpretation of data (Glesne, 2006). However, future work would benefit from any additional means of bracketing and removing researcher bias held apparent in this work.

Finally, every care was made to ensure that there were individuals from various levels of education and that the sample contained both male and female respondents. Thus, the researcher was able to discover that a great deal of the cultural value-based behaviors contained what appeared to be a gendered component to their salience and to their manifestation among the Appalachian American population in the study. Further investigation of how these gendered values varied among demographic makeup might have improved the accuracy of some of the interpretation associated with the respondents' reports. The researcher did try to consider gender and other variables (such as age) after interpreting the results, but, without initially intending to compare other demographic variables, the scope of accuracy of interpretation was limited. Future research would benefit greatly from intentional consideration of how these demographic components might influence the presence of values among participants in Appalachia.

### **Suggestions for Future Study**

If these values are truly representative of the cultural values of "Appalachian Americans," then future study should include a much larger sample: not only larger in the number of those involved, but more importantly, from a larger area of the regions known within "Appalachia." Further, when conducting interviews, the researcher is limited in that the context within which the respondents report is not understood or known to the researcher as it might be with some other type of qualitative design. Future researchers might consider changing the design of the method to more of an ethnographic, participant-observation approach. Living in and among various regions of individuals within the Appalachian American community may prove more useful in terms of gleaning data from which one can draw abstractions about the cultural values and value-



based behaviors associated with the members of the community (Glesne, 2006). In addition, future work should further explore gendered responses and other differences among demographic lines, as in this initial work, some did appear to emerge from the patterns of the respondents' interviews. Such exploration would provide for a much richer wealth of information that is better situated in the actual experiences of Appalachian Americans. Additionally, future research should be much more intentional about the presence of these values at home or at school, if one wants to see if the values present actually represent evidence of culturally discontinuous events among the residents of Appalachia. Although most of the information was collected from the home experiences of the participants, future work must be much more careful to separate and speak to where the presence of value based behaviors or endorsement of values occurs.

### **Contributions of this Study to the Scholarship**

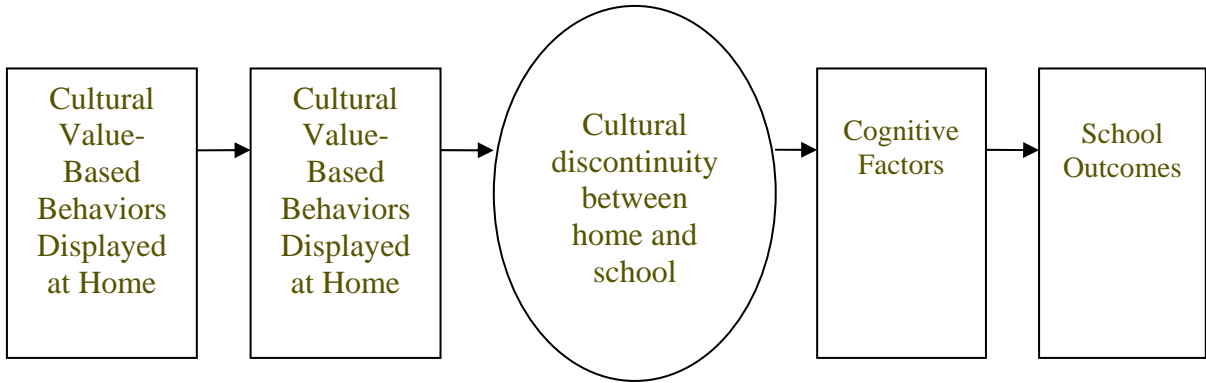
Although there are some noted limitations to this study, the information gathered from the interviewees, as interpreted by the researcher, does in fact endorse the presence of the cultural values previously discussed in earlier literature on cultural values within Appalachia. Finally, although not an intentional component of the study, there does appear to be a gendered component worth investigating in the future work, as well as there may be the need to consider other demographic variables in the data collected and interpreted. The revival of the presence of the values, even with a small sample, necessitates future work; furthermore, this initial investigation into the presence of these values does provide a starting point for later inquiry.

In future work, corroboration of the cessation of these values and associated behaviors in educational contexts is key, and further exploration of noted clashes that

lead members of the Appalachian American community to abandon important cultural beliefs and practices at school and other mainstream social institutions will also have to be examined if one chooses to exert a claim that real cultural discontinuity is in fact taking place in Appalachia. If such evidence exists, then study of the ways in which making that knowledge accessible for the benefit of learners within the Appalachian region in light of the home based values will become of utmost importance. Future researchers would do well to determine the breadth of the presence of these values and to determine the presence, if such presence exists, of noted clashes and how said clashes hinder or limit educational outcomes. Although much work is left to be explored, this initial investigation does appear to support the notion of the presence of values that are most notably endorsed by members that learned within the Appalachian community of Eastern Kentucky, regardless of age, and in many cases, gender. These values seemingly would clash with mainstream values, and thus, researchers in social sciences should be compelled to continue with this line of inquiry.

## Appendix A

### *Graphic of Cultural Discontinuity*

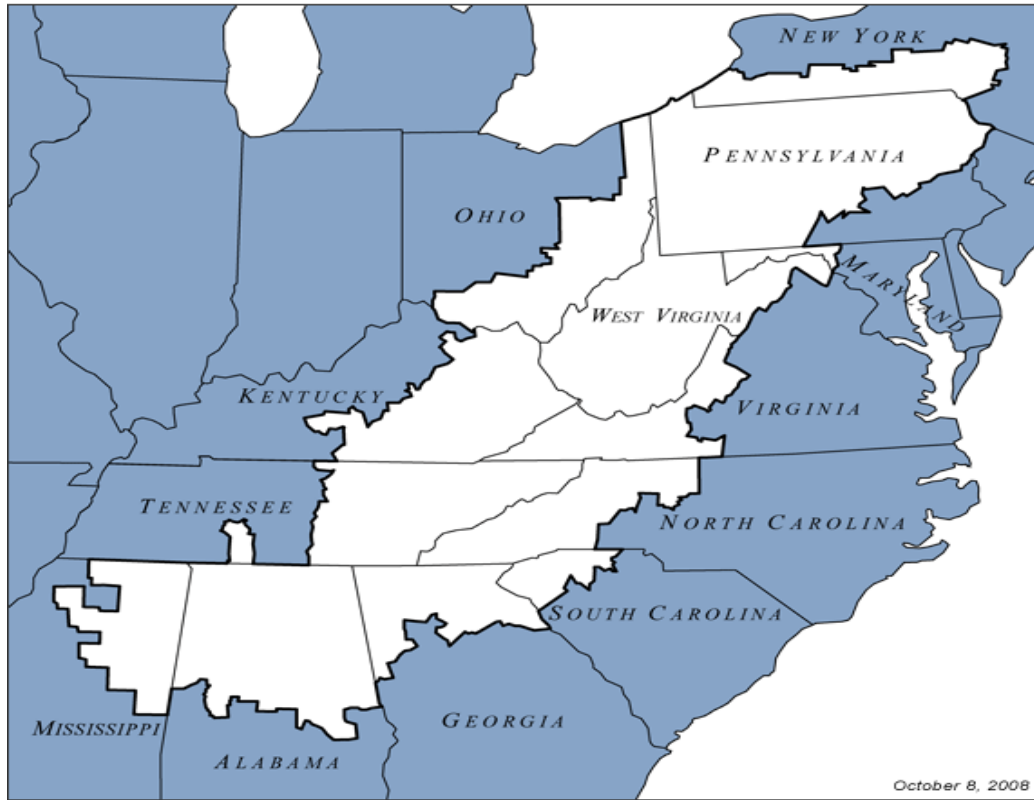


Borrowed from Tyler et al. (2008) with permission.

## Appendix B

### *Map of the Appalachian Region*

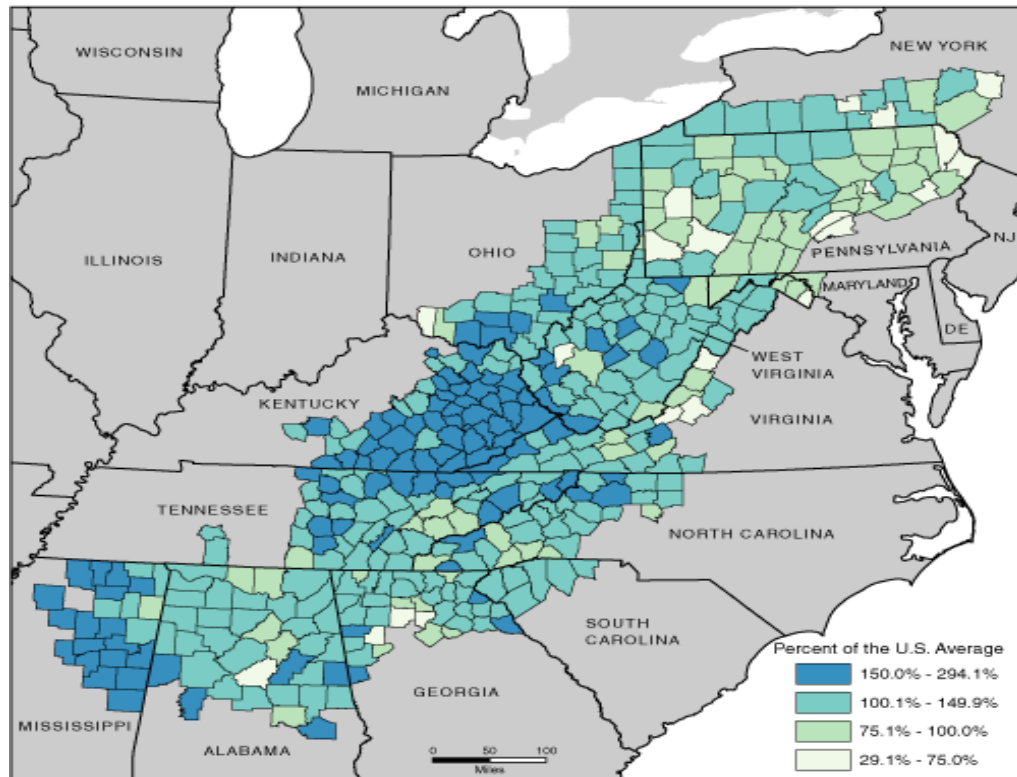
*The Appalachian Region*



Source: Appalachian Regional Commission

## Appendix C

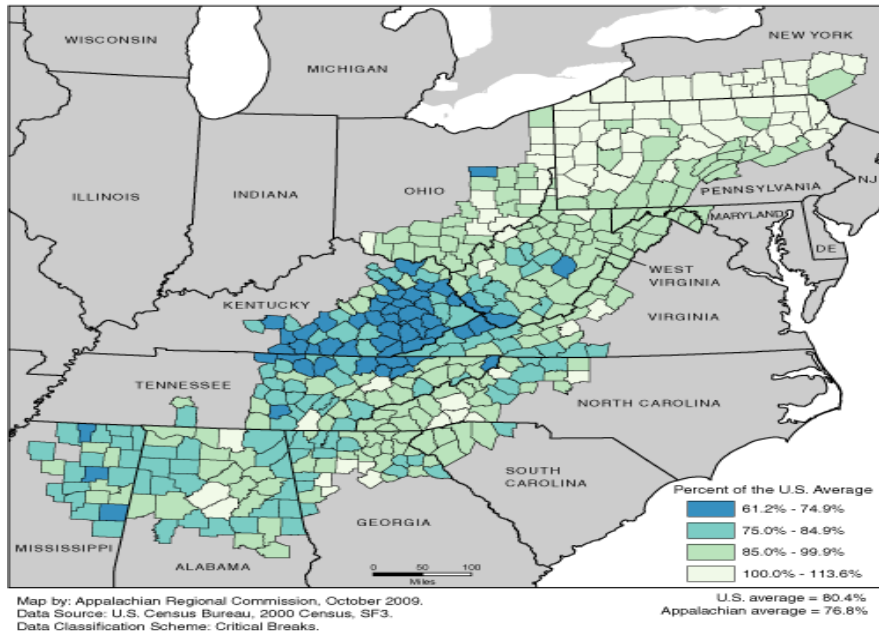
*Map of Appalachian Poverty Rates As Compared To U.S. Average*



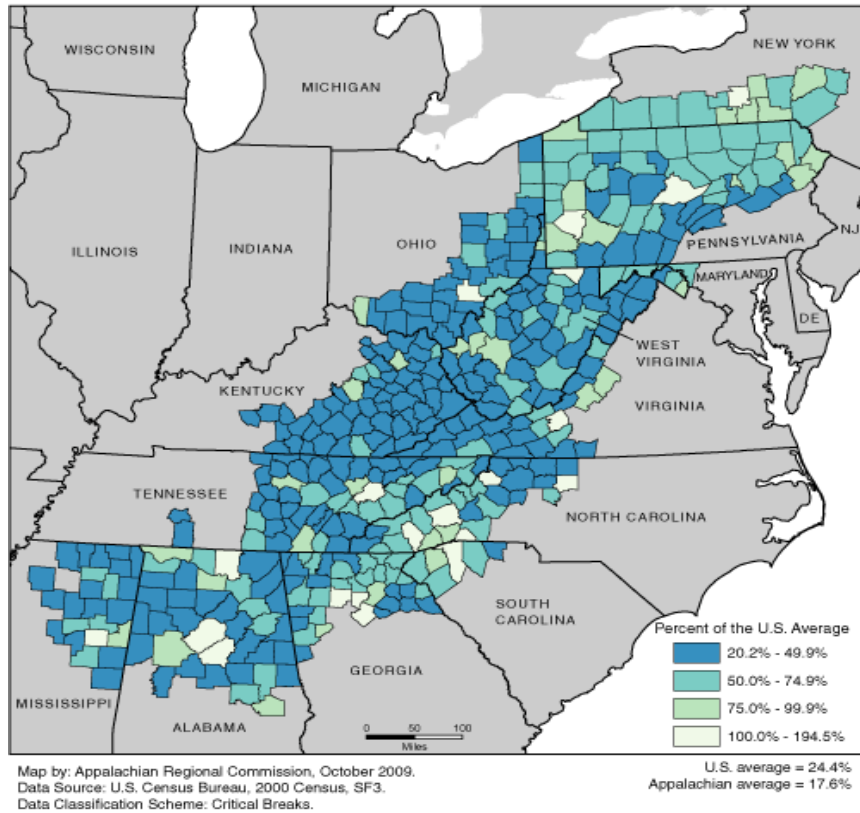
Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, March 2013  
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2011  
Data Classification Scheme: Critical Breaks

## Appendix D

*Map of Relative High School Completion Rates in Appalachia, 2010*

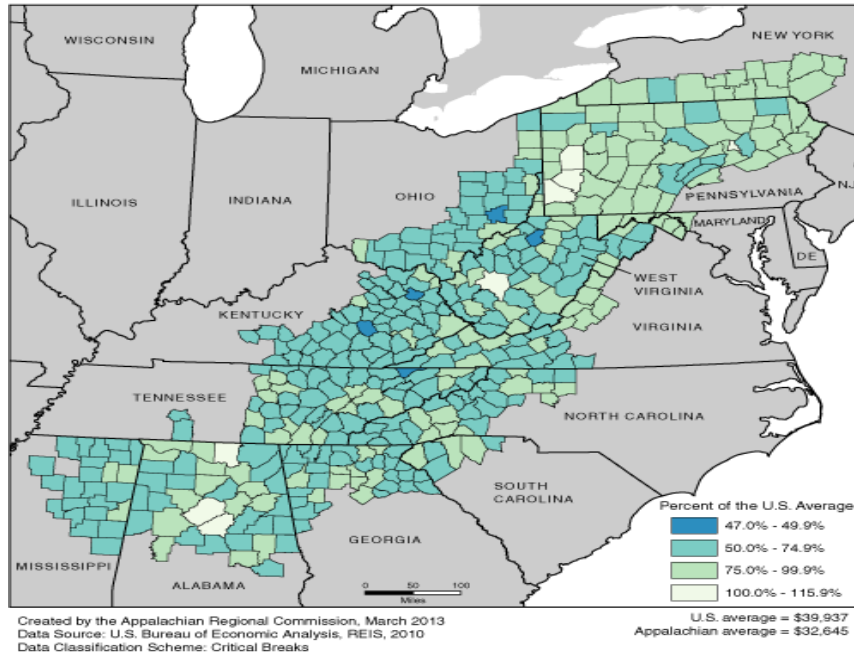


*Map of Relative College Completion Rates in Appalachia, 2010*



## Appendix E

*Map of Relative Per Capita Income Rates in Appalachia, 2010*



## Appendix F

### Interview Questions

#### *Demographic Questions:*

1. What is your name?
2. How do you identify racially/ethnically?
3. What is your gender?
4. How long have you lived in Eastern Kentucky?
5. What is your current city and county of residence?
6. What is your level of education (last grade completed, or if high school graduate, did you complete college)?
7. Where did you go to school?
8. What is your current occupation?

#### *Questions for interview 1: Home and School Experiences in Appalachia*

##### **Topic One: Tell me about your life at home in the Appalachia region of Eastern Kentucky.**

1. Family/home: Who did you live with? What was life like growing up in Eastern Kentucky? What kinds of activities did you do growing up? Why? Is there anything that makes coming from Appalachia unique from being from anywhere else in the U.S.? Please explain.
2. Home Experiences: What kinds of events stick out as important or memorable to you from your life experiences at home? Why were they so important? Did you learn any lessons from them?
3. People: Who were/are the most important people in your home life experiences? Why were/are they so important to you? How have they shaped your life? What kinds of activities did they encourage you to do? Why do you think they encouraged you to engage in those activities? Were there any activities that you were encouraged not to do by these individuals? Why?
4. Current life in the Eastern Kentucky region of Appalachia: Tell me about now. Who do you currently live with? What kinds of activities are important for you now? Are there certain behaviors or activities you think should not be encouraged and if so, what are they? Why? Do you still think the activities and behaviors encouraged by important home figures are still important today? Why?



## **Topic Two: Tell me about your School/Educational Experiences in Appalachia**

1. Tell me about the schools you attended. What were they? Where were they located? How far did you go in school? What degrees did you earn?
2. Academics: How well did you do academically in school (explore each setting discussed by the interview subject as important)? Were there any areas in which you struggled? What were they? Why do you think you struggled?
3. Teachers/other school personnel: Who were your favorite teachers and why? How were they helpful to you? Did you have any teachers you did not like? Why not? What could they have done to be more helpful to you? Were there any other people in school that you remember as important to your education or life? Who were they and what did they do that was so important?
4. Extra-curricular and other life activities: Did you participate in any school related functions that were not academic classes? What were they? Why did you participate? Did you enjoy these activities? Why/why not?
5. Home/school relationships: What did you like about school, overall? Why? In what ways were family involved with the schooling experiences you have discussed (explore relationships between the family members discussed and various school officials, teachers, and events mentioned by the subject). What did your family say about education? Was it important for you to do well in school? Was it important for you to be involved with non-academic school-sponsored activities? Why/why not?
6. School/home relationships: What did your school(s) (those mentioned by the subject) do to bring your home-life to your learning experiences? Did they do anything to encourage family involvement in your activities at school? Explain.

### *Questions for interview 2: Meaning of Experiences*

**Before beginning: During our last interview, we explored your home experiences and your experiences as a learner from Appalachia (specifically, Eastern Kentucky). Before we begin, let me share my overall findings from our first interview (discuss). Do you have anything you wish to add or say based on those findings? Do you find them to be an accurate reflection of our first conversation?**

## **Topic Three: Making sense of the home-school relationships**

1. During our first interview we talked about your home-life and educational experiences while living in Appalachia. Today, I'm interested in exploring if you think there are any relationships that exist or should exist between what was important at home and what was important while you were at school. Could your school have done more to bring what was important to you from home into what

you did as a learner? If so, what? Why would these school-based connections to what you did at home be important to you? How might it have helped you as a learner?

2. Do you think families in the area should do more to be involved with the educational experiences of learners here? If so, what should they do? Why? If not, why not?
3. Ultimately, is educational attainment (doing well in school) important for people living where you live today? Why or why not?
4. Are there any important relationships that exist between home life experiences and educational experiences of learners that are from where you are from? Explain.
5. Is there anything else you would like to say or any other questions you think I should ask others about living in the area, being a learner from the area, or the relationship that might exist between what is valued from home and what is valued at educational institutions?

Thank you for your participation in this important research work.

## **Appendix G**

### **The Cultural Discontinuity Hypothesis: An Appalachian Perspective**

#### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the home and school experiences of individuals from Appalachia. You are being asked to participate in this study because you self-identify as an Appalachian American and because you have had experiences living in Appalachia and attending educational institutions. If you volunteer to take part in this interview, you will be one of several (approximately ten) to do so. Two interviews are required; however, I will contact you after the first interview and after the second to make sure I capture your perspective accurately.

#### **WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?**

The person in charge of this study is Timothy W. Conner II of University of Kentucky Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology. He is being guided in this research by Drs. Lynda Brown-Wright and Kenneth Tyler.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

By doing this study, Timothy W. Conner II hopes to learn more about the values and beliefs held by Appalachian Americans and to better understand the ways in which those values and beliefs might be related to educational outcomes for students from Appalachia. The interviewer intends to use relevant findings to support a line of research aimed at improving educational outcomes and overall success for people from the Appalachian region. This initial work is a validity study and as such, the researcher aims to focus on the East Kentucky region of Appalachia.

#### **ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

If you were not raised in Eastern Kentucky, please do not take part in this interview. If you did not attend school outside of your home, please do not participate in this interview. If you would not wish for your interview information to be shared to others (it would be shared without any identifiable information), please do not participate in this interview.

#### **WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The interview process will take place at a quiet location that is mutually agreed upon (you and I decide together where it will take place). You will need to meet the interviewer at the designated location at the time agreed upon during our initial contact.

The interview should last from one to two hours; however, if it seems that the interview will go longer, the researcher will ask for consent to continue beyond that time. You can choose to continue or stop the interview whenever you would like without any worry of being in trouble or receiving some kind of penalty. The researcher reserves the right to use the information that was gathered during the interview should you choose to stop unless you specifically request that the information not be used. This process will be repeated for the second interview, except the second interview will start with the researcher sharing information with you about what was gained from the first interview, asking you to confirm or make comment on the findings as you understand them. This same sharing of information will occur after the second interview as well.

### **WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?**

During the first interview, you will be asked to provide some basic demographic information about who you are, where you are from, and to indicate that you have had schooling experiences outside of the home. After the brief introductory information, you will be asked a series of open ended questions concerning the life experiences and feelings you have had as a person from Appalachia, with particular focus on schooling experiences and home experiences. The first interview has two areas of focus, but the interviewer will ask several questions to further explore the answers you provide to those two topics.

During the second interview, the interviewer will review the information gleaned from your first interview and address a third topic exploring the relationship between your experiences at home and your experiences as a learner and the meaning you make about any importance between the two topics from the first interview.

During each interview, your responses will be tape-recorded. The tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed only by individuals trained in confidential treatment of data collection. The interviewer will use the tape to transcribe the interview into text. The interviewer and his major professors will have access to the transcribed interview notes, but all personally identifiable information will be removed from the transcribed notes (pseudonyms will be used for your name, hometown, and the schools you attended).

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life; however, you may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

### **WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have reported feelings of empowerment when they talk about their individual life experiences. Your willingness to take part, may, in the future, help

society as a whole better understand the life experiences and educational experiences had by people that are from Appalachia—Eastern Kentucky for this initial pilot work.

### **DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

If you decide to take part in the interview, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the interview and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

### **IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

### **WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

### **WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will receive a \$20.00 gift card to Wal-Mart for your participation in this study.

### **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?**

The interviewer will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

When the interviewer writes about the study to share it with others, he will write about the combined information he has gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. Findings from the interview will be used in the completion and defense of the interviewer's dissertation and subsequently, the findings may be used for later presentations and publications of research.

The researcher will make every effort to prevent anyone other than the interviewer from knowing that you gave information.

The researcher will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which he may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require the researcher to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.

**CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?**

If you decide to take part in the interview you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the interview.

The individual conducting the interview may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions given to you or if the interviewer finds that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

**WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the interview, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the interview, you can contact the investigator, Timothy W. Conner II at (606) 783-2505. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. The researcher will give you a signed copy of this consent form to keep for your personal records.

By signing below, I have understood and agree to participate in the interviewing process for this study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## **Vita**

Timothy W. Conner II

**Place of Birth:** Ohio

### **Education**

December, 2005, Rank I, Special Education  
Morehead State University, Morehead, KY  
Special Education, Learning and Behavior Disorders

July, 2005, M.A., Teaching, Learning and Behavior Disorders  
Morehead State University, Morehead, KY  
Special Education, Learning and Behavior Disorders

December, 2002, Bachelor of Music Education, Cum Laude  
Morehead State University, Morehead, KY  
Music Education

### **Professional Experience**

Assistant Professor  
Morehead State University  
Educational Psychology, Foundational and Graduate Studies in Education  
August 2011-present

Instructor  
Morehead State University  
Initial Rank Assignment  
Fall, 2007 - Spring, 2011

Educator  
Hillsboro Elementary School  
Fleming County Schools  
Students with Learning and Behavioral Disorders  
August 2004 – May 2007

Music Educator  
Menifee County Schools  
K-8 General Music and Choir  
January 2003-July 2004

## **Professional Publications**

### **Publications**

Tyler, K.M., Uqdah, A.L., Dillihunt, M.L., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., **Conner, T.**, Gadson, N., Henchy, A., Stevens, R. (2008). Cultural discontinuity: Toward a quantitative investigation of a major hypothesis in education. *Educational Researcher*, 37, 280-297.

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### **Peer Reviewed Manuscript in Preparation**

Tyler, K.M., Uqdah, A.L., Dillihunt, M.L., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., **Conner, T.**, Gadson, N.C., Henchy, A., . . . Stevens, R. (in preparation). Validating the Cultural Activities and Values Scales. To be submitted to *Journal of Black Psychology*.

### **Presentations (peer-reviewed)**

Skidmore, R. L., **Conner, T. W.**, II., & Aagaard, L. (2013, February). *Are college students' textbook reading and instructional preferences related to their self-efficacy and disposition?* Paper presented at the annual Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy, Blacksburg, VA.

**Conner II, T.W.**, Skidmore, R.L., & Aagaard, L. (2012): *College student dispositions and academic self-efficacy*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Lexington, KY.

Lennox, L., Masche, D., Nettleton, K., Lindsey, S., & **Conner II, T.W.** (2012): *Appalachian culture within the context of global learning: A professional learning community challenge*. Presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Lexington, KY

Skidmore, R.L., Aagaard, L. & **Conner II, T.W.** (2011, Nov.). *Student dispositions, textbooks, and class-time: What do they really want?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Jackson, MS.

**Conner II, T.W.,** Aagaard, L.J., & Skidmore, R.L. (2011, Feb.). *Academic self-efficacy in the college classroom: An examination of undergraduate students' reported efficacy for learning tasks*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwestern Educational Research Association, San Antonio, TX.

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Mulder, S.L., Tyler, K. M., **Conner II, T. W.,** Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Gadson, N.C., Henchy, A.M., Stevens, R. (2008, October). *Teacher efficacy: How do teachers' attitudes affect their efficacy in teaching culturally diverse students?* Poster session presented at the meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Columbus, OH.

Aagaard, L., **Conner II, T.W.,** & Skidmore, R. (2008, November). *Transfer of elaborative strategies in college students*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Mid-Southern Educational Research Association, Knoxville, TN.

#### **Presentations (non-peer-reviewed)**

**Conner II, T.W. (2009).** *Multicultural awareness and teaching practices internship research report: Morehead Youth Development Center* (Tech. Rep. No. 1). University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Psychology.

Mulder, S., **Conner, T.,** Tyler, K.M., Beatty-Hazelbaker, R., Gadson, N.C., Henchy, A.M., Stevens, R. (2008). *Cultural discontinuity research: Winburn middle school* (Tech. Rep. No. 1). University of Kentucky, Department of Educational psychology.