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"I WONDER WHAT YOU THINK OF ME": A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO EXAMINING STEREOTYPE AWARENESS IN APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

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EXAMINING STEREOTYPE AWARENESS IN APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Educational and Counseling Psychology in the
College of Education at the
University of Kentucky

By

Chelsea G. Adams

Lexington, Kentucky

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2017

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

"I WONDER WHAT YOU THINK OF ME": A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO
EXAMINING STEREOTYPE AWARENESS IN APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

Historically, Appalachia has been stereotyped as being a culture bred in poverty and ignorance. Much research has shown that stereotyping reveals a pattern of behavioral change and an impact on psychological well-being for the stereotyped (e.g., Pinel, 1999; Woodcock, Jernandez, Estrada, & Schultz, 2012), and has largely been centered on race and gender (e.g., Byrnes, 2008; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011). Less is known about the development of culture-specific stereotypes such as those related to Appalachians – a highly stigmatized group (Daniels, 2014; Otto, 2002). The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how adolescents in rural Appalachia develop awareness of stereotypes about Appalachia. Stratified random sampling was used to select twelve students (Grades 6-12) belonging to a small school district located in the Appalachian region of eastern Kentucky who were invited to participate in individual interviews. Eight of the participants self-identified as Appalachian, but for distinct reasons. Students characterized Appalachia for its strong sense of community, accessibility to nature, and lack of opportunities. All students readily identified negative Appalachian stereotypes, but most, particularly older students, were quick to defend the integrity of their culture and community. When discussing cultural stereotypes, the richness of student responses varied by grade-level.

KEYWORDS: Appalachia, Stereotype Awareness, Stigma, Adolescents

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Introduction

Historically, Appalachia has been stereotyped as a region that does not foster success. President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960s cast a light on the uneducated, poverty-stricken people of the Appalachian Mountains for the nation to see. Through the introduction of educational work-skills programs, financial aid, and health care, Johnson hoped to rid Appalachia of its poverty. As part of this initiative, the president took "poverty tours" starting at the northern tip of the Appalachian Mountains, stopping at various locations along the way, until reaching the southern tail of the mountains. One of these stops brought President Johnson to the dirty porch of an unemployed father of eight in Inez, Kentucky. Broadcast across the nation, eastern Kentucky became the face of the War on Poverty. Though his intentions may have been honest, President Johnson's exploitation of these people and their culture aided in the spread of many stereotypes still prevalent today.

More recently, documentaries like 20/20's "A Hidden America: Children of the Mountains" (2009) and CNN's feature, "Can President Trump Win the War on Poverty" (Long, 2017) have brought to light some of the most extreme cases that confirm these stereotypes. In "A Hidden America," one spotlight was placed on a high school football star who lived in his truck to escape his abusive alcoholic family, moving eight times over the course of the show. Another teen in the series traded in his dream of becoming an engineer in the military for coal mining three and a half miles below the earth's surface to support his girlfriend and child on the way. These case studies generate an image of the Appalachian population that is mostly negative.

Stereotypes about people from rural Appalachia and eastern Kentucky are prevalent in local and popular culture today. However, there is a gap in research regarding stereotypes of Appalachia. Most literature about the stigma of Appalachia is written by Appalachians who have dealt with the stereotyping and discrimination first-hand (Daniels, 2014; Otto, 2002). Negative stereotypes about Appalachia can influence how outsiders perceive individuals from these communities despite their academic abilities or individual characteristics (Gorski, 2012).

The reality of the situation in eastern Kentucky is not much different from the stereotypes some hold. For example, Appalachians are often stereotyped as being poor. Within Appalachian Kentucky –where the current study population resides – 35% live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Within the 53 Appalachian counties found in Eastern Kentucky, 85% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch (Kentucky Department of Education, 2015). This means that more than 8 in every 10 students in Appalachia come from a household earning 135%, or less, of the poverty level[1] (Food Research and Action Center, 2015). In the county in which this study takes place (henceforth referred to as Appalachian County[2]), more than one in three individuals is living in poverty – nearly two and a half times more than the rate of poverty in the United States.

Appalachians are frequently stigmatized as being uneducated and incompetent. Differences in educational attainment rates also exist when comparing the Appalachian population and the U.S. as a whole. Seventy percent of the adult population in

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[1] The poverty line for a family of four in Kentucky is $24,250 a year (Kentucky Report – 2016, 2017).

[2] To ensure the anonymity of the participating school district, all county, district and school identifying information will be represented by "Appalachian County."

Appalachian County have earned a high school diploma or GED, with only 5.6% completing a four-year college degree, compared to 86% and 29% respectively, for the general U.S. population (Data Reports, 2014). Appalachian County educational attainment rates are also considerably lower than educational attainment rates in the general U.S. population. Not only do students living in the county fare worse than the rest of the country, they may also face the psychological stigma associated with being from rural Appalachia.

This study focuses on the development of stereotypes related to the educational and academic prospects of adolescents in rural settings, particularly in Appalachia. The study was guided by two main goals. The first goal was to understand if adolescents from Appalachia are aware of stereotypes and stigmas about their own culture and how that awareness develops. The second goal was to determine if the awareness of these stereotypes and stigmas might affect Appalachian students' self-perceptions and academic aspirations. The terms stigma and stereotype must first be defined in regards to how they will be used in the context of this study.

Stigma Versus Stereotype

Though the terms stigma and stereotype are often used interchangeably, stigma is associated with a more negative connotation. Merriam Webster defines stigma as "a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something; a mark of shame or discredit" (Stigma [Def. 1], n.d.). On the other hand, stereotype is defined as "something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; especially a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that

represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment"
(Stereotype [Def. 2], n.d.).

Stigma consciousness and stereotype threat are common conceptual terms first appearing in psychological literature around 1995. The terms refer to similar but distinct phenomena. Stigma consciousness has been defined as "the extent to which targets believe that their stereotyped status pervades their interactions with members of the out-group" (Pinel, 2004, p. 39). In other words, stigma consciousness refers to a person's belief that others hold negative stereotypes about a group that he or she belongs to. Stigma consciousness has been studied in a variety of contexts (e.g., by gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity) where it correlates positively with perceptions of discrimination (e.g., Pinel, 1999). Research shows that individuals high in stigma consciousness often forego opportunities to disprove stereotypes about their group and are more vulnerable to the effects of stereotype threat, or the fear of confirming stereotypes about a group they belong to (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Pinel, 1999; Steele, 2010). For example, women who are highly conscious of the stigma that women are inferior to men at math skills will often avoid the subject (Pinel, 2004). Though studied in several diverse populations, stigma consciousness has not been studied among youth within the cultural context of Appalachia.

The concept of stereotype threat is included in much of the research regarding stereotypes. Though similar, stigma consciousness and stereotype threat are not synonymous. Stereotype threat occurs when people have a fear of confirming a stereotype about a group to which they belong – a fear of behaving in a way that is stereotypic of the group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Whereas stereotype threat is based on

a fear of behaving in certain ways, stigma consciousness is not behavioristic in nature, but is the expectation that one will be stereotyped, regardless of one's behavior (Pinel, 1999). The main goal in this study is to understand whether and how Appalachian students become aware of cultural stereotypes held by outsiders, and how they expect interaction with outsiders to be based on those stereotypes. I have chosen to use the term stereotype because it encompasses both valences of commonly held beliefs, and not only the negative stigmatization group members may actually experience. For this reason, I have elected to use the term stereotype awareness when addressing the goals and research purposes for the current study.

Stereotype Development Among Adolescents

Many perspectives of stereotype development have been offered in the literature, two of which are explored here. The first perspective is the cognitive perspective made known by cognitive psychologist Edward C. Tolman. Tolman (1948) explained how information is taken in, assimilated, and accommodated into categories of the child's mind. This is how learning in its basic form occurs. Young adolescents are developing stereotypic categories into which they organize new information. A toddler learning about animals might know that a dog has four legs and is covered in fur, and so when he sees a cat, he categorizes that cat within the schema for dog. This is called assimilation (Byrnes, 2008; Wood, Smith, & Gorssniklaus, 2001). In this example, the toddler has stereotyped anything having four legs and fur as a dog, whether that classification is correct or not. With further learning and experience, the young toddler will be better able to discriminate and categorize like objects into their corresponding cognitive structures; this is called accommodation (Byrnes, 2008; Wood, Smith, & Gorssniklaus, 2001).

In another example, a young girl may see a doll, a tea set, and a toy monster truck in a play area. Her mental structure for all things "girly" may lead her to categorize the first two toys as "girl toys." However, when seeing the monster truck, she may stereotype it as being "boyish" and group it in her mental structure for boys. These cognitive processes are the first steps of stereotyping. According to Piaget (1952), accommodation begins to happen in early adolescence during the preoperational stage of development. The cognitive perspective suggests that with time, age, and experience, adolescents' understanding of stereotypes and different social groups should improve and become more flexible alongside other cognitive competencies (Rowley, Kurtz-Costes, Mistry, & Feagans, 2002; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011). Not only do adolescents classify and categorize things, they also learn to classify and categorize people.

The second perspective of stereotype development emphasizes the social dimension as a key factor. The social perspective demonstrates how the unique culture and environment to which one is exposed can shape mental structures (Chafel, 1995; Katz, 1983). As individuals interact with people of different groups or learn about these groups from other sources, they begin to build a mental image or stereotype on which that group is based. This perspective was illustrated in the earlier demonstration of how media have stereotypically portrayed Appalachian people. Though an outsider may have never interacted with someone from Appalachia, his or her beliefs about these people may have been shaped by the stereotypes conveyed socially in the news, films, or literature. This idea that beliefs can be influenced by an individual's environment is known as social transmission and is illustrated in the below examples.

One of the classic examples of how adolescents develop stereotypes not only about others but also about themselves can be found in the Clark Doll Test (Clark & Clark, 1939). Young Black adolescents (six to nine years of age) were given two dolls – one Black and one White – and asked a series of questions that were to be answered by pointing to one of the two dolls. The adolescents were asked to point to the doll that was "nice" and the one that was "bad." Positive attributes were given to the White doll, whereas the Black doll was seen as bad and ugly. Even when the adolescents were asked to point to the doll matching the color of their own skin (after having already labeled the Black doll as bad) 44% picked the White doll. The Clark Doll Test illustrated how adolescents as young as six internalize stereotypes about a group they belong to. The study has been replicated with similar (and some more dramatic) results (Davis, 2005). A similar study examining the onset of both gender and race stereotypes showed that children as young as four years of age experienced the effects of stereotype threat (Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012).

It is important to consider an individual's environment, as well as personal experiences, when discussing stereotype development. Personal experiences, the events and conditions a person is exposed to throughout life, can influence future thoughts and behaviors (McGuire & McGuire, 1981). For example, individuals who have not been exposed to members of the outgroup (i.e., people who do not identify with the same group/culture) may not have had the opportunity to experience their own stereotyped status (McGuire & McGuire, 1981). Adolescents from rural Appalachia who have never been more than 50 miles from their homestead may have never been in contact with a member of the cultural outgroup (e.g., someone from an urban area). They may not be

aware of the dialect they carry in their voice or the stigma that comes along with such a dialect in outgroup social settings. Conversely, students who have traveled beyond the borders of their cultural region may have experienced the dissonance of dueling in-groups and out-groups.

One study examined the interplay of environmental and personal factors effects on academic outcomes (McGill, Hughes, Alicae, & Way, 2011). Results showed that, among Black and Latino middle school students, parental involvement, level of racial/ethnic socialization, and perceptions of public regard (i.e., perceptions of public opinion about one's group) were predictive of future academic adjustment and achievement. Students who were not ethnically socialized (i.e., had not interacted with many others from differing ethnical backgrounds) and had parents who were less involved in school, had lower views of public regard, which predicted a steeper decline in academic adjustment over time. This study shows how environmental factors and internalized perceptions of outsider views can influence students' academic achievement.

Visibility of an identity also plays an important role in determining the effects of stereotyping and discrimination. In their proposed developmental model of adolescents' perceptions of discrimination, Brown and Bigler (2005) identified some of the key factors that are involved in the development of the perception of discrimination. Findings that are especially prevalent to the current study suggest that it is easier to perceive discrimination if that discrimination is based on an explicitly labeled identity. For example, it would be easier for a child to identify discrimination toward a more visually-explicit identity (e.g., boys vs. girls, or people of different skin color) than it would be to identify discrimination toward a non-visual identity (e.g., religion). Being from

Appalachia is not something that one can necessarily identify visually. It may be easier to identify someone as an Appalachian if a person were to listen to their dialect, but visually no key identifiers exist.

Much of the research regarding adolescents' perceptions of stereotypes and discrimination focuses on the ability of a child to recognize when discrimination is happening to others. Brown and Bigler (2005) supposed this might be because "children are more likely to perceive discrimination if the target of discrimination is another individual than if it is the self" (p. 544). The focus of the current study is to account for developmental levels of stereotype awareness and investigate students' perceptions of stereotypes about Appalachia.

Social Identity Theory

The awareness of how one is stereotyped might also be a function of one's own identity development. Social identity theory can help explain the importance of one's identity in stereotype development. The concept of stigma consciousness, proposed by Pinel (1999), posits that reactions to stereotyping are partially dependent on the extent to which a person identifies with the stereotyped group, and the perceived likelihood of being stereotyped. The more salient an identity is for an individual, the greater the chance he or she has of experiencing stereotype threat (Steele, 2010). The social groups individuals choose to associate with influence the image they hope to present. Social identity is a reflection of who people think they are based on the groups that they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Those groups shape identity and provide a sense of belonging. However, in the formation of these groups and identities, a sense of in-group

and out-group is created; the differences between groups are over-exaggerated and similarities of the in-group are amplified (Billig & Tajfel, 1973).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) characterized social identity theory as involving a three-step process of cognition: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorization involves the cognitive process of assimilation. This idea is similar to the cognitive perspective of stereotype development. Individuals organize thoughts, and in this case people, into categories based on similarities (e.g., man, Asian, Christian, poor, heterosexual), helping make sense of their environment. When attributions are made on the basis of commonalities, stereotyping occurs.

The social identification phase occurs when individuals begin to identify with groups based on how they have categorized themselves. Many would argue that people's identity and self-concept are a product of their beliefs about how others see them (Cooley, 1998). The more salient a specific identity is, the greater likelihood behaviors and beliefs will begin to adapt to conform to those of the group. For example, someone who strongly identifies as Christian might not be as likely to use profanity or explicit language. Once identifying with a group, members come to understand the stereotypes and stigmas held against their in-group by other out-groups (Dee, 2014). Those who identify strongly with a group will also be increasingly conscious of the perceptions or stigmas held by others toward them.

The last step in the social identity mental process is social comparison. This stage occurs when in-group and out-group comparisons are made. To save face, or prevent the loss of self-esteem, individuals will make comparisons that favor the group to which they belong. Negative stereotypes are often applied to out-groups to boost the image of the in-

group (Mruk, 2006; Spencer, Fein & Lomore, 2001). Once a person identifies with a group and understands stigmas associated with that group, she becomes vulnerable to internalizing those negative beliefs and disidentifying with the stigmatized domain. The next section describes these processes in greater detail.

Stereotype Threat, Disidentification, and Internalized Stereotypes

Steele, Spencer, and Aronson (2002) have explained the dangers and consequences of stereotype threat. As explained previously, stereotype threat is the fear of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group. Research on stereotype threat shows that those exposed to or primed with their stereotyped status prior to a task will perform stereotypically at a much greater rate than members of their group who were not primed before the same task (Stone, Harrison & Mottley, 2012). Not only does stereotype threat have immediate effects on performance, but it can also have lasting psychological consequences for those who are stereotyped.

One long-term consequence of stereotyping is disidentification. Disidentification occurs when stereotyped individuals place less importance on performance in a negatively stereotyped domain. For example, over time, women may become less interested or concerned with performance in math as they have historically been stereotyped as being poor at it. As a means of psychologically combatting the negative feeling that accompanies being stereotyped, one begins to distance herself from the identity (e.g., a woman) and activity in the domain (e.g., math) on which the stereotype is associated. With each stereotypic experience, she progressively disidentifies with the previously salient identity and places less importance on the stereotyped domain.

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Severe consequences come with disidentification, especially in the academic realm (Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrada, & Shultz, 2012). A longitudinal study examining disidentification among high-achieving Hispanic science students hypothesized that exposure to stereotype threat within the domain of science (e.g., the stereotype that Hispanics are not exceptional at hard sciences) would lead students to disidentify with science and science-related studies and careers over time (Woodcock, Hernandez, Estrada, & Shultz, 2012). Stereotype threat was negatively associated with scientific identity one year later, meaning that students who reported experiencing stereotype threat later identified with science less and were less likely to pursue a scientific career. Over the course of the study, students who reported being initially more vulnerable to stereotype threat began to disidentify with science and the possibility of a scientific career.

This concept of disidentification can also be applied in the Appalachian context. Appalachians are stereotyped as being illiterate and uneducated. If exposed on numerous occasions to this stereotype over time, Appalachian youth might begin to disidentify with Appalachian culture, or with literacy and education, and become less interested and concerned with academic performance.

Stereotyped individuals often experience the long-term psychological effects of stereotype threat and disidentification. One way in which long-term psychological effects are felt is through the internalization of stereotypes. Internalization is the conscious or subconscious acceptance of the dominant views or stereotypes about one's group. The internalization of stereotypes has been examined among varying populations, but most often in gender difference research. Pinel (1999) used the Stigma Consciousness

Questionnaire to examine how women internalize gender-related stereotypes. The questionnaire was designed to measure whether individuals perceived their interactions with others to be based on stereotypes held about women or a group they belong to. It was used in conjunction with a social interaction scale. Women who had higher levels of stigma consciousness (i.e., women who are more aware of the stigmas held about women) were more likely to conform to sex-role demands than those who had lower levels of stigma consciousness. Pinel concluded that this was due to the internalization of gender related stereotypes. For example, women who are more consciously aware of stigmas about themselves and who believe that their interactions will be based on those stigmas might also be more likely to prefer a male boss. These women are also more likely to swear in the company of other women, but not in a mixed-gender group.

Those who are more aware of stigmas held toward a group they belong to are also more likely to internalize these beliefs (Corrigan, 2004). For example, individuals who have mental illnesses "are aware that society uses devaluing, discriminating, and denigrating labels for those with serious mental health concerns" (Lannin, Vogel, Brenner, & Tucker, 2014, p. 68). These labels threaten self-esteem and psychological well-being in those with the mental illness. Findings such as these illustrate what it means to internalize stereotypes.

Disidentification and internalization of stereotypes are just two ways in which people experience the consequences of stereotyping. The effects of stereotype threat have been shown to handicap individuals in multiples ways, but especially academically. With educational attainment gaps currently existing between Appalachian students and the rest of the U.S. student population, it is important to examine what factors may play a role. I

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hypothesize that Appalachian students, a highly stigmatized group, may face the risk of stereotype threat, particularly if they are aware of adverse stereotypes about this group. The current study hopes to examine this further.

Purpose of the Study

Stereotype awareness has not been examined among adolescents living in the region of Appalachia. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how young people learn about stereotypes specific to their group and Appalachian culture, and how those stereotypes affect their lives. Students will be invited to discuss the topic in an interview setting. The goal of the interviews is to understand whether and how students identify with Appalachia and stereotypes about Appalachia. This study will address the following four research questions:

1. What does it mean to be an Appalachian student?

2. How do Appalachian students believe being from Appalachia affects their lives?

3. How do adolescents become aware of stereotypes about people in Appalachia?

4. How do age, exposure to outsiders, and life experiences influence the development of stereotype awareness among Appalachian students?

Methodology

Study Setting

Appalachian County is positioned in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The city's center is located almost 20 miles from the nearest parkway and over 40 miles from the nearest interstate. Stretches of mountainous and curvy roads separate the small

town from postsecondary education institutions (i.e., 25 miles to the nearest community college and 43 miles to the nearest university) and available jobs. In 2012, fewer than 6% of adults in the school's district had earned a four-year college degree or higher (Appalachian County: 2014-2015 Kentucky county profile, 2015). The largest employers in the region are the district school system, the local nursing home, and a data entry facility. These circumstances create a unique environment with a small population.

Sampling and Recruitment Procedures

Qualitative research is most often used to explain and give meaning to a specific phenomenon and not to over-generalize to a larger population (Mason, 2010). For this reason, a smaller sample size is often sufficient. There is a point reached in qualitative studies where more data does not equate to more information. Saturation of data occurs when repetititve themes or codes begin to emerge from the data (Mason, 2010). When this occurs, it is unnecessary to conduct further interviews (in the case of the current study). Qualitative methodologists have suggested conducting interviews with 20 to 30 participants in order to reach saturation (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994). However, Thomson (2004) reviewed 50 qualitative research articles and found that fewer than half of the studies used a minimum of 20 participants or cases as suggested by Creswell. In a reanalysis of their own data, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that after conducting 60 interviews, 34 of their 36 codes were developed within the first 6 interviews. Given the small population size for the current study, it was concluded that if saturation of content were reached, a small sample size would suffice.

The school district provided a roster for its middle and high school with students' name, gender, grade level, and home address to randomly select participants. A stratified

random sampling technique was used to ensure equal representation of gender and race within the sample. The roster was divided by grade level and gender. Students in each section (e.g., Grade 6 girls, Grade 6 boys) were then randomly sorted. The first girl and the first boy from each randomized list (i.e., one boy and one girl from each grade level) were then invited to participate in the study. Subsequent names on the list were used as necessary. With approval from the University Institutional Review Board, I distributed a letter to parents and informed consent forms (see Appendix E) along with a prepaid return envelope to selected students in the beginning of September 2015. Parents were given the opportunity to return a portion of the letter consenting for their child to participate in the study through the middle of March 2016. Students were asked to either return the signed form to the office where it was placed in a sealed envelope, or place the consent form in a pre-paid envelope and mail it back to the researcher. The prepaid envelope was addressed to a private university mailbox.

Participants

Twelve students in Grades 6-12 in a small public school district within the Appalachian Region of the southeastern United States were invited to participate in a study focused on the development and perceptions of stereotypes about Appalachia. These grades were purposefully selected to grasp a range of ages and developmental stages within the population. Three groups were established: Middle School, Lower High School, and Upper High School. Each group consisted of four students – two boys and two girls. The sample was primarily White (White n = 11, Black n = 1) and 100% of students received free lunch. A full description of each student is provided in the results section of this paper (also see Table 1).

Table 1

Student Introductions

Student	Grade Level	Gender	Student Characteristics	Family Structure
June	6	M	Always tries to do her best and get all A's she has only had two B's her whole life. Best subject is math. Is organized, does not like being timed.	One little brother who is in fourth grade. One half-brother who is in college in Texas. Lives with mom and dad.
James	7	M	Average student, gets everything done, good at listening to his teacher. Not good at algebra when it is complicated.	One younger brother and younger sister. Lives with dad. One sibling lives with his mom, one lives with grandma.
Whitney	7	M	Likes some things about school (e.g., the teachers) but the subjects are hard. Surrounded by "drama" but tries to stay out of it. Does her schoolwork and earns decent grades. Good at presenting, telling jokes, and can explain things well. Struggles with remembering tasks that need to be done.	Youngest of two brothers and one sister. Lives at grandmother's house with one brother, mother, granny, aunt, and brother's best friend.
Scotty	8	M	Tries to be hard working but gets distracted easily. Good at math and is usually organized, but is not good at concentrating and feels tired a lot.	Youngest of three children. Brother is in college and sister moved out. Lives with brother, mom, and dad.
Sam	9	M	Not interested in school however, gets A's and B's. Strengths include reading, writing, and social studies. Struggles in math and is easily distracted.	Youngest of two. Brother is away attending Vanderbilt University. Lives with his mother and father. Mother is a retired school teacher and father is a superintendent.
Sarah	9	F	A hard-working student, but has difficulty keeping grades up.	Second youngest of five children. Lives with her grandmother.

Table 1 (continued)

Kelly	10	F	Above average student. Academically responsible and helps all of her teachers when they or a student needs it. Very dependable, responsible and respectful.	Youngest of three girls. Lives with her father and mother, both retired educators. Family is important to her.
Brandon	10	M	Class clown and teacher's pet, who procrastinates and has a short attention span.	Has one sister and three brothers, and is the middle child. Lives at home with parents and two younger siblings.
Amanda	11	F	Average student, making B's. Struggled academically due to illness but worked hard to bounce back from it. Focuses on Art.	Oldest of two living at home. Has other half siblings across Kentucky who she doesn't get to see often. Lives with biological father, step mother, and half-brother. Aunt plays influential role in her life. Family is important to her.
Jared	11	M	Decent student who enjoys science and makes "alright" grades. He is good at welding and carpentry. Considers math a weakness.	Youngest of three: older brother works in the oil fields, and older sister is a nurse. Lives with mom, a food service director, and dad, a preacher.
Noah	12	M	Above average student who excels at listening and retention. Struggles with test taking.	Youngest of three with two older sisters – one of which attends Morehead State University. Lives with father and mother.
Janet	12	F	Hard working student at the top of her class who is focused on academics. Maintained 4.0 GPA through high school. Officer in several organizations, vice president in HOSA, treasurer in Beta Club. Motivated by success, plans to attend Western Kentucky University to be a PT.	Middle of five children. Mom is the middle school principal; stepdad is a high school teacher. Lives with mom and stepdad, but is close with her biological father who lives in Richmond.

Note. All descriptive content is student-reported and edited for grammar and clarity.

After the interviews were conducted, data were transcribed and analyzed to identify whether saturation of content had occurred. "When the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation," saturation will be reached (Mason, 2010, para. 2). After review of the data, it was concluded that 12interviews were sufficient for reaching saturation of information.

Interview Protocol Development: Pilot Study

To develop an interview protocol to adequately address my research questions, I conducted a small-scale pilot study involving focus group interviews with students similar to those in the final study. The purpose of the focus groups was to gauge how well students in the target population understood questions in the interview protocol and whether the questions adequately captured the phenomena of interest (i.e., cultural stereotype awareness and development). Results from these focus groups informed the procedure and interview protocol that was used in the current study. The pilot study included three focus groups from Appalachian County. The groups were formed by randomly selecting 12 students from a district-wide roster. To achieve equal representation of students at various developmental levels, I selected one focus group from Grade 6, one from Grade 9, and one from upper level grades. Group 1 consisted of two boys and two girls from Grade 6, Group 2 was made up of two boys and two girls from Grade 9, and Group 3 consisted of one boy and one girl from Grade 10, and one boy and one girl from Grade 12.

A semi-structured interview protocol was created and used in all three focus groups. Slight variations in wording and question order existed between groups, as the protocol was continually developed throughout the pilot study. I moderated each focus

group to maintain consistency throughout the pilot study. One graduate research assistant from the P20 Motivation and Learning Lab joined me during the Grade 9 focus group and took notes silently. Focus groups lasted from 40-60 minutes and were digitally recorded with an audio recorder. Members of the P20 Motivation and Learning Lab then transcribed focus group audio. I analyzed each transcript to arrive at central themes and ideas in student responses. I also used results to modify questions for use in the thesis study.

Start codes. A list of start codes was created based on literature and themes expected to emerge (see Table 2). Start codes included Identity (cultural and geographical subcategories), Self-Perception (negative and positive subcategories), Outsider-Perception (negative and positive subcategories), Academics (self-concept, aspirations and achievement subcategories), and Culture. During the analysis, the list of codes was revised and adapted to represent trends in the data (see Table 3). Additional codes and subcategories were added to the list: Perceptions of Community, Perceptions of School, Appalachia, and Stereotype.

Focus group findings. By conducting these focus groups, I was able to identify central trends and detect which items were not answering the questions I sought to answer. For example, when asked what they thought of when they heard the word "Appalachia," students most often responded "mountains," or some other geographical feature of the area. I therefore added a follow-up question that asked what they thought of when they heard the word "Appalachian," referring to a person from the area. I did this because I want to understand whether students think about the area and the people from the area similarly.

Table 2

Pilot Study Start Codes
Identity
Cultural Identity
Geographical Identity
Self-Perception
Negative Self-Perception
Positive Self-Perception
Outsider-Perception
Negative Outsider-Perception
Positive Outsider-Perception
Academics
Academic Self-Concept
Academic Aspirations
Academic Achievement
Culture

Table 3

Study Start Codes
Identity
  Cultural Identity
  Geographical Identity
Self-Perception
  Negative Self-Perception
  Positive Self-Perception
Outsider-Perception
  Negative Outsider-Perception
  Positive Outsider-Perception
Academics
  Academic Self-Concept
  Academic Aspirations
    Resources/Communication*
    Barriers*
    Role Models*
  Academic Achievement
Perceptions of Community*
  Negative*
  Positive*
Perceptions of School*
  Negative*
  Positive*
Appalachia*
  Geography*
  Culture*
Anger*
Culture
Stereotype*

* Indicates code added during the coding process of the Pilot Study.

I decided to omit the question, "How would you explain your hometown to someone who has never been here before? What are the good things? What are the negative things?" Although this question generated some interesting responses, it did not add any valuable information to the study. Responses to this question were rather lengthy but did not help answer any of my research questions. Instead, I retained a similar question in the protocol asking students what makes them proud and what embarrasses them about where they are from. I decided to keep this question because of a valuable response I received from this male senior:

> I like being here. I like living here, it's a small town. I mean I can go on to crappy things or great things in the world. I can live in a thousand different places but it doesn't matter because Appalachian County, United States of America, is my home… Coming from a small town has helped me earn multiple scholarships, so I'm breaking that stereotype. So I'm very proud to say, "Hey I live in Appalachian County – that is, you know, a terrible place, but look at me, I'm breaking barriers. Breaking the stereotype that we're all a bunch of incest, drug-addicted hillbillies."

Another question that I modified asked students to imagine they were from a school outside of Appalachia. I asked this question to learn how students believed being from Appalachia affected their lives, but responses did not provide a clear response. Instead, students focused more on the atmosphere change and less on the effects of being a student in Appalachia on their lives. I adapted the question to place students' focus on how being from Appalachia made them different.

The word "stereotype" never came up in the Grade 6 focus group – neither from the students nor from myself explicitly. Students in this group did not think of

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"Appalachia" except in terms of a geographical region. After some discussion, it was clear that some students did not see their community as culturally Appalachian. This could be because students in Grade 6 cannot imagine Appalachia as being both a place and a culture; the way in which I asked questions may also have influenced their responses. Questions asked of younger students were made more straightforward and less abstractly worded. For example, instead of asking how they related to outsiders' perspectives, younger students were asked if they agreed with the perspective. Additional changes were made to the interview protocol. These changes are describes in Appendix B.

Thesis Interview Protocol

Results from my pilot study led to a 30-question interview protocol used in this thesis study (see Table 4). The 30 questions are organized around five major themes: Relation to Appalachian County (e.g., How do you feel about where you are from?), Academic Self-Perception (e.g., What kind of student are you? Strengths/Weaknesses?), Relation to Appalachia (e.g., When you think of the word Appalachian, what do you think of?), Outsiders' Perceptions of Appalachia (e.g., How do you think outsiders perceive Appalachia?), and Future Aspirations (e.g., What do you plan to do after high school?). Follow-up questions not included on the protocol were used as appropriate.

Procedures

Students were individually interviewed during the Spring 2016 semester. So as not to interrupt instructional time, I conducted interviews while students were in their homeroom classes. Interviews were conducted in the school conference room. I introduced myself to the students as an alumnus to the school and community as a means

Table 4

Thesis Interview Protocol

#	Item
1	Help me get to know you a little better.
2	Tell me about your family.
3	How long have you lived in Appalachian County?
4	How do you feel about where you are from?
5	What makes you the most proud about living here?
6	What might embarrass you about living here?
7	Where is the farthest you have traveled outside of where you are from?
8	How many times have you been outside Appalachian County? Kentucky?
9	Describe for me the kind of student you are.
10	What are some of your strengths/weaknesses as a student?
11	Sometimes in school, different groups of students start to form. What groups would you say that you belong to?
12	When you think of the word Appalachia, what do you think of?
13	What if I said the word Appalachian? What do you think of then?
14	Do you consider yourself to be an Appalachian?
15	How do you think people who are not from Appalachia think about students from people from here?
16	How do you relate to this depiction of Appalachia?
17	What do they think about students from here?
18	Tell me about the first time someone pointed out where you were from and made you feel bad about it.
19	How might your life be different if you were not from Appalachia?
20	How might you be different as a student if you were not from Appalachia?
21	You all have really helped me answer some of my questions about students from Appalachia. Now I want to ask you a few questions about what you want to do in the near future.
22	How far do you plan on continuing your education (e.g., not finish high school, finish high school, 4 year degree, etc)?
23	What do you plan to do after high school?
24	Who have you talked to about your plans?
25	What, if anything, has helped you feel prepared to accomplish your goals?
26	What might stop you from pursuing your goals? How could you fix this?
27	How motivated are you to continue your education?
28	How does being from eastern Kentucky/Appalachia influence how motivated you are?
29	What is expected of you as someone from eastern Kentucky?
30	We've talked about a lot of stuff here today. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about our conversation or any of the things we discussed?

of building rapport and gaining trust from the students (Abbe & Brandon, 2014). Before the interview began, I explained the general purpose of the study, assured complete confidentiality, and obtained verbal and written assent from each participant. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. Interviews lasted between 16 and 32 minutes each.

Analytic Approach

A grounded theory approach was used in this research study. Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that begins with the data collection process (Creswell, 2012; Miles, 2014; Weiss, 1994). According to this approach, a theory will emerge from the data. Grounded theory is used when little is known about the research topic at hand and often when examining a process or interaction that is experienced by a group of people (Miles, 2014). The current study seeks to understand how Appalachian adolescents perceive stereotypes about Appalachia. Using grounded theory will help build an organic framework to discuss findings from data collection. Grounded theory is used in cases where pre-established theories do not fit the study and therefore theory-relevant themes are able to emerge naturally from data.

Rather than beginning with a theory and developed hypotheses, a grounded theory approach begins with data collection. Researchers examine the data (i.e., transcripts), identify any key points or codes, and group those codes into similar concepts. These concepts are further analyzed into thematic categories that begin the basis for an emerging theory (Creswell, 2012). There are three methods of design that can be used when taking a grounded theory approach. For the purpose of this study, a constructivist approach was utilized. This approach reflects the importance of the meaning an

individual attributes to the study (Charmaz, 2006). The constructivist approach examines thoughts, values, viewpoints, and feelings, rather than facts or descriptive actions.

Data Coding and Analysis

All transcription, coding, and analyses were performed by myself, two undergraduate students who have worked closely with this study, and two graduate research assistants – all of whom are members of the P20 Motivation and Learning Lab. All researchers received training from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) through the university. Over the course of three weeks, research assistants were trained on how the coding and analysis procedures would work. First, I met with the four coders to introduce them to the code list that had been pre-established based on focus group findings and the transcription process (see Table 5). Examples and definitions of each code were discussed in depth and any questions of interpretation were decidedly collectively by the coders. Once the coders felt comfortable and knowledgeable of the coding process, one randomly selected transcript was coded together. For practice, research assistants independently coded another randomly selected transcription. All coders then met to discuss the transcript and compare codes. Any discrepancies were addressed and any further training was conducted. All coders independently coded one last transcription where an inter-rater reliability score of 94% was reached. Discrepant scores were discussed to reach an inter-rater agreement score of 100%. The remaining transcripts were divided evenly among the coders for independent coding.

Once all data were coded, they were then uploaded into an Excel spreadsheet. Data were organized first by research question (i.e., all interview questions seeking to answer Research Question 1 and their corresponding responses were copied into

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Table 5

Code List and Examples

Code	Definition	Example Quotes
Academic Achievement	Describes success in academia. Could reference earning a scholarship, or making all A's.	I was a governor's scholar this past summer
Academic Aspirations	Describes student goals what they plan to do after graduating high school.	I know I am either gonna go to Kentucky Mountain Bible College, or my other option is to work in Georgetown.
Academic Barriers	Describes barriers for student's Academic success, or barriers that could prevent them from pursuing their goals.	I've been sick with mono. So I had to be gone a month and a half and I was freaking out [about my grades]
		I have to find a way to pay for college. I can't afford it.
Academic Support	Support from teachers, parents, or friends that has helped them academically or will help them pursue their goals. Could also be financial support.	Yeah, they've all been really helpful this past month where I was sick… all my faculty has been really supportive.
Appalachian Culture	Describes aspects of the Appalachian culture and traditions.	But yeah we do like our traditions, like the annual festival and all this stuff.
Appalachian Identity	Addresses response to: Do you consider yourself to be an Appalachian?	(student was asked if they identified as Appalachian) Yeah, I mean I'm from here, I was raised here…
Appalachian People	How the student describes an Appalachian person.	We're the hillbillies, especially in eastern.
Comparison	Will often refer to questions asking how living/learning in Appalachia is different from other places. When comparisons are made directly.	...learn the same thing throughout their whole lives, just one's from the city, one's from the country.

Table 5 (continued)

Culture Stereotype	When a student directly describes a stereotype about Appalachia.	Well we certainly don't like, strum a banjo every night like everybody says we do
Dialect	When the student addresses the way they speak, or how others think they speak.	Now if I talked yeah, if they were looking at me in a suit and seeing me all dressed up they'd probably think I's from the city but I mean just open your mouth and everything comes out.
Expectations	Describes expectations for the student or for people from that community. What do people expect you to do after high school?	College. That's, that's, I mean Mr. Counselor is out there are like you're awesome. Do something important with your life, go on do something great. You can do it. And its just like yeah we know. Shove it down our throats.
Family	When student describes their family life, or the influence family has on the student.	I babysit sometimes and then I have my little cousins, and I mean I love helping my family.
Geographical Appalachia	Describes Appalachia in geographical/ecological terms.	The mountains. The Climate.
		I don't think I could go anywhere else, too hot down south, too cold up north. We're right down up in the middle. We're good.
Home	Tells where they call home, or how influential home is in their life.	I have to start planning where am I gunna go what am I gunna do… I don't wanna leave home.
		Yea I would definitely consider Appalachian County home.
Negative OP	Anytime a student mentions how outsiders think or view them/people from Appalachia in a negative manner.	Nobody sees the importance in us.
Negative PC	Anytime a student mentions their community, where they're from, or the people around them negatively.	'Specially when we're so little and we don't have a lot of economic awesomeness

Table 5 (continued)

Opportunities	Labels information about opportunities that may or may not be available to the student.	There's just not much for people here.
Peer Perspective	Describes how the student believes his or her peers think.	If you asked my friends, they would probably say no, because they don't ever see that side of me.
Perseverance	When the student tells how they or someone they know have overcome some obstacle.	Yeah, it's like you put me down, you said my county wasn't important and now look at me I'm a big person in the world…
Positive OP	Anytime a student mentions how outsiders think or view them/people from Appalachia in a positive manner.	People think we are kind and generous.
Positive PC	Anytime a student mentions their community, where they're from, or the people around them positively.	Like I said if I'm, if I'm pulled over in the middle of the highway I know somebody's gunna be like oh I'll help her I know her and stuff.
Pride	When a students speaks of the importance of or pride in where they're from.	A lot of my family, like I said before, is from here so it makes me proud to be from here.
Quotable**	A quote from the student that would be great to use as an example in text.	I think it would have been more fast paced. I think I would know more but I wouldn't understand it, and really living down here [clears throat] I get to, get to like understand people 'cuz in the city you talk to a stranger for ten minutes and then they're gone.
Role Models	Describes a person I their life that the student looks up to.	My aunt's, my aunt is a big part of my life… She's like my inspiration and stuff like that. So I look up to [her].
Student identity	Addresses the response to the question: What kind of student are you? Can include their strengths and weaknesses.	I'm average I mean I make B's, I'm, I, as of right now all three years of high school so far I'm gonna be average

Table 5 (continued)

| Travel Experience | Identifies how often student travels outside of Appalachian County/Kentucky, and where to. | Hmm, I probably leave Appalachian County like twice a week. |

spreadsheet called RQ1), then by codes (i.e., every response from a student was placed in its corresponding coded category). Organizing the data by research question helped to ensure that the questions we asked could easily be answered from a quick look at the data. Students' responses were also organized by codes so that the coding frequency could be examined for each student and for the sample as a whole. Through the coding process, the start list of codes was adapted to represent as much relevant information as possible. The final count was 27 codes. Some codes were created to organize demographic and categorical data. For the purpose of reporting results, only codes relevant to meaningful content will be examined. Codes created for organizational purposes are not included in the results.

Data analyses were used to identify themes and codes prevalent in the data. New themes that emerged from the data were added to the coding list and shared with all coding members. Pope, Ziebland, and Mays (2000) highlighted that the strength of this process "is that it is inclusive; categories are added to reflect as many of the nuances in the data as possible, rather than reducing the data to a few numerical codes" (p. 114). This is especially important when interpreting the multiple meanings provided for the term "Appalachia".

Within each transcript, coders selected sections of the transcript and coded them by leaving "comments" on the highlighted selections. For example, if a student had said, "I'm really bad at math, but I've been working really hard at it and I got a B on my last quiz!" A coder would have highlighted this sentence in the document and attached a comment labeling this passage as Student Identity, Perseverance, and Academic Achievement based on the definitions for these codes (see Table 5). It was not necessary

to code every word of the transcript, as only a few sentences may account for what is being expressed by the student.

Validity and Reliability

Positionality Bias. My position within the current study and Appalachian County must be mentioned. I call a small, rural, Appalachian community in eastern Kentucky home. This is where I grew up in what I believe to be the Appalachian culture. Because of my upbringing, I deeply identify myself as an Appalachian. I also deeply identify with academia. As a senior in high school I was discouraged from attending the University of Kentucky by two of my Advanced Placement teachers and the school guidance counselor because of the change (i.e., large classes and lack of instructional attention) I would face attending such a large school – a school that would also take me away from my home in the Appalachian mountains. This lack of support from influential people in my life made a dent in my college-going self-efficacy. Nevertheless, I attended the University of Kentucky, graduating in four years with honors. Opportunities such as joining the P20 Motivation and Learning Lab provided a platform where I could question my high school experience.

As an Appalachian student, I feel that this study is not only important to me, but also to my community, as well as to the larger body of literature on stereotype awareness in Appalachian youth. I believe that my insider experiences enhance the validity of the study. An outsider to Appalachia may not have been able to gather the same data. My positionality within the community has allowed me to build rapport with the students in hopes of eliciting a more authentic response. I see my identity not as a confounding factor, but as a beneficial addition to the study. Nevertheless, by adding outsiders as data

coders, I was able to ensure that my interpretations of the data were based on student responses, and not over-analysis or bias on my part. I remained aware of my status during all analyses and interpretation of results.

Measures to ensure validity and reliability. My position within the study and within the Appalachian County community creates a platform from which biases may emerge. In an effort to minimize such biases from occurring, I employed several validity and reliability checks. My first approach to ensure validity was to revisit transcripts to determine if the relationships I identified were explicitly confirmed by the participant (Creswell & Miller, 2010).

Member checks. Member checks were used to validate results. The purpose of member checks is to address participants' interpretations of study findings. Once the data were analyzed and coded, I returned to meet with participants individually to clarify any responses that left coders unsure or confused. To account for possible biases, an analysis to determine what information needed clarification was conducted by an undergraduate research assistant with no prior experience in the study population and myself. The purpose of the member checks was to allow participants the opportunity to revisit what they said during our interview, as well as discuss my interpretations of their words. If I had misinterpreted themes within a particular passage (i.e., if I had misunderstood the meaning of their words), then participants could ensure correct interpretation. Member checks lasted no more than 10 minutes each, as only items in need of clarification were discussed, as opposed to the whole transcript.

I met with June, James, Scotty, Sarah, and Jared briefly to further discuss their responses. For June, James, and Sarah, my goal was to try to dig a bit deeper into their

thoughts on stereotypes about Appalachia, as these were my quieter students who did not

expand much with their responses. Jared was also a quiet student who did not have much

to say in response to being asked how his life may be different if he were not from

Appalachia. Because of this, I went back to speak with Jared to see if his perspective had

changed, or if he had anything he would like to add. No new data emerged from the

member checks conducted with these students. Scotty struggled with clearly expressing

his thoughts, often interrupting himself with a new thought or idea. The purpose of

meeting with Scotty was to revaluate a statement he made that was unclear to the coders.

Scotty let us know that our initial interpretation of his words was accurate.

 Inter-rater reliability score. Another means of measuring the reliability of the

data is by maintaining an inter-rater reliability of 90% or higher (Neuendorf, 2002). Once

all transcripts had been analyzed, a selection of transcripts (33% of all transcripts) were

coded by myself and four coders of the P20 Motivation and Learning lab who were

familiar with the coding scheme and data set. Qualitative researchers caution against the

use of multiple coders (i.e., have multiple coders analyzing) for an entire data set as this

can be time consuming and costly; therefore, only 4 of the 12 total transcripts were

analyzed by all coders (Barbour, 2001). Inter-rater reliability (IRR) was calculated by

dividing the number of agreed upon codes by the total number of agreed upon and

disagreed upon codes.

$$ \text{IRR} = \frac{\text{agreed codes}}{(\text{agreed codes} + \text{disagreed codes})} $$

As to improve the overall inter-rater reliability score, a fully crossed design was used

(i.e., the four P20 Motivation and Learning lab research assistants and myself coded each

randomly-selected interview). Any disagreements on coding were addressed among the

coding team. Disagreements that were more difficult to work through were brought to a faculty member who was familiar with the study until all coders reached agreement. The inter-rater reliability score between coders was 94% (4 disagreements total; 62 agreed codes / 66 total codes = 93.9% agreement).

Results & Discussion

Participant Background

The next section serves as an extension to Table 1 by introducing each student in more detail. Students are organized within grade-level groups: Middle School – June, Whitney, James, and Scotty; Lower High School – Sarah, Sam, Brandon, and Kelly; and Upper High School – Amanda, Jared, Janet, Noah. This section highlights individual experiences for each student. Overall findings will be discussed following student introductions.

Middle school students. June. The youngest student we interviewed, June, is in Grade 6 at Appalachian Middle School. June moved to Appalachian County in third grade from Rich City – a small metropolitan area just under an hour away. When asked if she identifies more with Rich City or Appalachian County, June explained that although she is from Rich City, she acts more like she is from Appalachian County, and would consider it home. June lives with her parents and little brother. Her older brother is attending college in Texas.

As a student, June loves math and describes herself as a hard worker who always tries her best, making all A's and only two B's in her schooling so far. Although she values organization, a restrictive task like following a rubric or performing with a time limit leaves June feeling stressed. She much prefers using her creative freedom and own

interpretation when completing a task. When she's not in school, June loves to draw and be crafty. When it comes to friends, June would say she has a lot, and interacts with most of her classmates but tries to avoid "drama." Speaking with June was a pleasant experience as she was sweet, but she occasionally needed some coaxing and rephrasing of questions to understand what was asked.

Whitney. A small girl with a big personality, this seventh-grader was not one to shy away from a question during our interview together. The youngest of four, Whitney lives with her grandmother, mother, brother, aunt, and brother's best friend. Her other two siblings do not live with her family. Whitney calls Appalachian County home, and is proud of where she is from. There are parts of her community that make her sad, however. Whitney mentioned that drugs were such an issue in Appalachian County, noting that it is difficult to find a place where they were not present. Even when faced with negativity from "city people," Whitney noted that sometimes you just have to roll with it – "it's who you are."

Whitney enjoys school, loves all of her teachers, and considers herself a skilled presenter. She said her shortcomings include poor memorization and procrastination. Whitney also acknowledged that some groups or cliques exist among her classmates and that she did not mingle with just one group but tried to stay away from any drama if possible. Outside of school Whitney is often active outdoors swimming, playing softball, and romping through the woods. If trapped indoors, however, Facebook is Whitney's go-to source of entertainment.

James. It took a lot of coaxing and follow-up questions for James, a seventh grade student, to open up to my questions. Although he was willing to participate, James

is quiet by nature, and his responses were concise. James' family is split in different directions: he lives with his father, while his younger sister lives with their mom, and an older brother lives with his grandmother. Though separated, James and his siblings get to see each other often. When asked what his favorite things to do were, James admitted to a love of the outdoors where he could hunt and fish. He uses his love of hunting to competitively represent his school on the archery team.

When it comes to schoolwork, James considers himself an average student, but claims that he does not have any strengths. I suggested some examples, such as being a great listener for his teacher, to which he agreed. When I asked if he had any weaknesses, James was quick to offer up Algebra, "I like math, I just wish math was $5 + 5$, not $x = 17 + 5$." The added complexity of variables took James from enjoying math to considering it a weakness of his. James could not identify any groups that existed in his school, but felt that everyone was friends with each other.

Scotty. Being the youngest of three kids, Scotty (Grade 8) is the only child in his family who still lives at home with both of his parents. His older brother is away at college, and his older sister recently moved out. Baseball and videogames are two of Scotty's favorite activities. But when playtime is over and he is in the classroom, Scotty focuses hard on his schoolwork but feels that his lack of concentration works against him.

Scotty also offered a unique perspective to this study. Though he had lived in Appalachian County his whole life, Scotty did not believe that he possessed the same southern drawl as his friends and family – in other words, he did not believe he had an accent [research transcribers disagreed]. Scotty was knowledgeable of stereotypes about people from Appalachia, especially those regarding dialect.

Lower high school students. Sarah. Whether it is camping, playing basketball, fishing, cooking, or swimming, Sarah finds joy in being outdoors and with her family. Sarah described herself as the fourth oldest of her five siblings, all of whom live with their grandmother. Sarah, a freshman, was very detailed in her explanation of the friend groups that exist at her school, and exactly where she belonged. There were students who wore "fancy" clothes, students with a dark side who kept to their corner, and a group of students Sarah dubbed the "weirdoes," to which she claimed membership.

When it came to school, Sarah did not seem to be the most confident student. She considered maintaining good grades to be one of her biggest weaknesses. Even when asked about her strengths as a students, she led with a weakness saying, "When I would hangout with the wrong friends, that's when I would be late. [But] now they are gone and I am always on time." Despite her seemingly low self-efficacy, Sarah prides herself on always trying her best and being a hard-worker. She also takes pride in being from Appalachian County, and loves how easy it is to make friends with almost anyone.

Sam. Being the son of the superintendent of the school district, having a retired teacher for a mother, and a brother who is attending a prestigious university can create a unique education-focused environment, and that is the world in which Sam lives. Sam, a freshman, is not "big on school," and would much rather spend his time playing any sport he can, or being outside. He appreciates the opportunities for hunting and fishing that Appalachian County has to offer. Sam also values the small size of Appalachian County and ApHS, and believes its small size provides better opportunities to learn than do large schools.

Although school is not his favorite, Sam still gets his work done, making A's and B's. He considers reading, writing, and social studies to be his strengths, and math his weakness. Public speaking does not pose as a challenge for Sam as he loves to talk, and talk about anything. Conversely, Sam prefers a quiet environment to get his work done. Being able to talk about almost any subject allows Sam to make friends with different kinds of people; he rarely knows a stranger.

Brandon. Brandon is the middle child of five kids and lives at home with his parents. His family moved from Atlanta to Appalachian County when Brandon was 9 years old to be with his father's side of the family. His father's family is one of the only Black families in the nearly all-White Appalachian County. Brandon's ethnicity provides a unique perspective to this study he noted that the color of his skin supersedes any kind of Appalachian identity when he interacts with outsiders. Brandon considers both Atlanta and Appalachian County to be home since he has lived almost half of his life in each place.

As did his two older brothers, Brandon plays basketball at Appalachian High School and says that he will play as long as he can, but he does not expect to make a career out of it. A sophomore, Brandon deems himself class clown, teacher's pet, and a flirt; in short, Brandon is a very social person and considers this a strength. His weaknesses as a student include a tendency to procrastinate and a short attention span. Although Brandon does not enjoy the country lifestyle (i.e., wearing boots, riding 4-wheelers, listening to country music), he is still best friends with guys that do. He thinks it is funny because it is not what you would expect just by looking at him. Although he

may not hunt, hike, or go riding, Brandon's favorite past time is to go fishing with his siblings and friends.

Kelly. Speaking with Kelly was an interesting experience: she had a lot to share. Kelly considers her home a farm as it is houses five dogs, five cats, two donkeys, a horse, seven cows, and a guinea pig. She lives on this farm with her parents who are both retired educators: her father a guidance counselor, her mother an assistant principal. Kelly's two older sisters are both married and live outside the home. Kelly looks up to her sisters, as they were both successful in college and continue that success through their careers. Family is important to Kelly and plays a role in her continuing education beyond high school.

Kelly is active in her school and community. She plays tennis, takes piano lessons, and is a member of the Beta Club. Her biggest passion in school right now is being a member of the FFA. She competes in public speaking and stays busy helping out in the numerous community service activities carried out through the FFA. Kelly notes that it is hard for her to say no to anyone, so she often keeps herself busy helping others. As a student Kelly credits herself as being dependable, responsible, and respectful. To be only a junior in high school, Kelly is mature. Her downfall, however, comes from her need for perfection. Kelly lets her attention to detail drive her perfectionist behavior.

Upper high school students. Amanda. To Amanda, family was a central part of her life. When I asked Amanda to describe herself, she led by describing her family: one she had been "placed" in since she was three, including her biological father, stepmother, and half-brother. Family is so important to Amanda that she celebrates the anniversary of its conception, celebrating 13 years the week before our interview. For Amanda, close

family extends beyond her parents and brother. Amanda sees her Aunt – her stepmother's sister – as her "inspiration" in life. She mentioned that although her family is great, it does have its own flaws and complications: Amanda has siblings strung out across Kentucky whom she does not get to see.

When asked to describe herself, Amanda identified as an artist of many forms. She also emphasized a love for kids – listening and working with them. Thinking introspectively, Amanda has always considered herself to be an "inspiration to little kids." Amanda also considers herself as different from everyone else, but that is what she enjoys. When it comes to student identity, Amanda – a Junior at Appalachian High School – considers herself average, but also a hard worker. She floats between the different groups or cliques, never really identifying with one group, but as a member of all groups, noting that this is typical of most students at school.

Jared. Talking with Jared took a bit more prodding than with some, as he is quiet spoken by nature. Jared is the youngest of three kids and the only one who still lives at home. His mother works in the school system as the food service director and is always close by; his father is a preacher at a local church in the community. Jared noted that the lack of jobs – especially in the medical field – sent his registered nurse sister looking for work elsewhere; she and her husband were forced to move a few counties west, settling in a small metropolis. For his brother, finding work was equally as hard: he spent a few months driving an hour and a half each way for a factory job in a large Kentucky city, as most young men do, before retreating back to the oil fields: one of the only jobs Appalachian County still has to offer.

When it comes to school, Jared, a junior, describes himself as a decent student. Math is his weak point and science is his strength. His applies his affinity for science to his work at the vocational school where he takes welding and carpentry classes. College is not in Jared's plans for the future. Instead, he plans on attending lineman school.

Janet. It is hard to find a club or team that Janet is not involved with at Appalachian High School. As a senior, Janet participates, competes, and holds office in Health Occupation Students of America and Future Business Leaders of America, cheerleads, leads a weekly Bible study for kids, and works at her family's dairy bar. She is enthusiastic about helping her community and hosted one of the annual fundraisers for cancer victims in her community. At home Janet lives with her mother, stepdad, and younger brother and sister. She also has one sister who is 8 years older than her, and a brother who is 11 years older, both who live outside the home.

When asked what kind of student she considered herself to be, Janet was proud to say she had maintained a 4.0 unweighted GPA all through high school, ranking fifth in her class. Academics are important to Janet and she puts hard work and effort into her classes. She considers her high motivation to be a strength as a student, but her perfectionist tendencies leave her stressed. Janet also notice cliques that formed in the grades ahead of her throughout high school, but never felt that her class developed specific friend groups. She likens her class comradery to that of a large family.

Noah. Though his family could call Ohio home, Noah's family moved to Appalachian County just before he was born and has lived there since. He lives there with his oldest sister and parents, while his other older sister attends a university a little over an hour away. Noah stays active in his community and church, and also in his school

competing in tennis, golf, and bowling. Noah considers himself an average student and prefers to take the easiest route possible in school. The easy route works for him because one of his strengths as a student is that he is a great listener. This means that Noah does not usually take notes in class but rather engages through listening. However, when it comes to high-stakes testing (e.g., ACT testing) Noah gets nervous and it quickly becomes his downfall.

Noah is in the same graduating class as Janet, but he has noticed grouping of friends based on shared interests, specifically gaming and sports. However, like most of his classmates, Noah floats between groups and does not feel refined to one group of friends.

Having provided several defining student characteristics, I will next offer a description of major themes and findings that emerge from students' responses and that answer the research questions at hand.

The Importance of Appalachia

Appalachian identity. The first two research questions examined what being an Appalachian meant to these students, and whether it was central to their identity. The first question asked, "What does it mean to be a student in Appalachia?" To answer this question, students were asked whether they would consider themselves to be Appalachian. Although the majority of students claim to be Appalachian (75% agreed), the reasoning behind why they consider themselves Appalachian varied. Four students said they would consider themselves an Appalachian because they are from the area (i.e., they are from Appalachia). Five students said yes because they are "outdoorsy" (e.g., prefer nature to technology, enjoy hiking, hunting, and fishing). Of the three students

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who did not identify as Appalachian, Noah was unsure of his answer, Brandon said no because he was originally born in Atlanta and was not proficient in the activities people enjoy in Appalachia (e.g., riding four-wheelers), and Sam simply replied with a firm no.

Another aspect of identity formation is developed via an awareness of how one is perceived by others (Cooley, 1998; Liubinene & Keturakis, 2014). I therefore asked students, "Do you think others would consider you to be an Appalachian?" Eight students – one of whom posed a condition – believed others would consider them to be Appalachian because of their dialect, cultural language, where they are from, or their affinity for the outdoors. Amanda, Grade 11, believed whether or not a person would consider her to be an Appalachian would be conditional, offering this explanation:

> Now if I talked, yeah. If they were looking at me in a suit and [saw] me all dressed up, they'd probably think [I'm] from the city, but, I mean, just open your mouth and everything comes out… that's how they judge you. They're like, "Well, you're from there, so you act this way, you do this thing, you have one tooth." They define you by where you're from, but it's okay because really they don't know much about it.

The belief that visually-explicit identities are easier to discriminate than non-visual identities (Brown & Bigler, 2005) is illustrated in Amanda's response. Amanda pointed out that being from Appalachia is not something that can be readily seen and labeled based on outward appearance, but close behind visual appearance is the stigma of speech.

Noah, Brandon, and Sam – the original three students who did not consider themselves to be Appalachian – and Scotty, who considered himself Appalachian because he preferred the outdoors, did not believe others would consider them to be Appalachian.

When I asked Scotty if he thought others would consider him to be Appalachian, his response pointed to the idea that individuals have more than one identity (James, 1890). "If I went up to my friends and said, 'Am I an Appalachian?' They would say no because [I] don't have an accent, and [I] probably don't go outside much, because [I'm] always talking about video games." Scotty's response indicates a varied sense of self; however, he did not believe others could view him as more than one identity (they could see him as either a gamer or Appalachian, but not both.). Because Scotty had never revealed his Appalachian nature (i.e., his love for nature and its proximity and ease of access for him), he did not believe his friends could think of him in that aspect, but would view him as an introvert gamer instead – something not stereotypically associated with being Appalachian. William James (1890) believed that "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind" (p. 294). This is reflected in Scotty's sense of multiple independent identities.

It is also important to note Scotty's disassociation with Appalachia also stemmed from his disbelief in having an Appalachian accent. This mirrors what Amanda mentioned earlier: that without speaking, it'd be hard to identify someone as Appalachian. Amanda felt that once someone heard her speak, they would undoubtedly judge her as an Appalachian. Scotty felt that not having an accent disassociated him with being an Appalachian. This finding illustrates that for these students, to be an Appalachian means the way you talk is of great importance.

Appalachia versus "the city." Another theme among student responses that was briefly mentioned in Amanda's above example is this idea of "the city." Students often used the term "city" to describe the alternative to life, people, and values in Appalachian

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County. Using what students labeled as "the city" as a comparison model made explaining life in Appalachia easier for them, because to live in Appalachia meant living in a rural area. When trying to explain what something is, sometimes it is just as easy to explain what it is not. However, I did not operationally define this term for the students, meaning that what one student may identify as "the city" may be different from another student's idea of it.

As the rest of the results are discussed, an emerging trend can be noticed. What may also notice is that in explaining what "city people" or outsiders believe about people from Appalachia, students began speaking stereotypically about "the city," its people, schools, and values. When discussing the hardworking values of Appalachians, Janet said "…if I lived in the city, everybody just seems like things come easy to them." Similarly, Amanda noted that "[When] I was sick, my teacher probably wouldn't have given me the time of day in the city…" Both students stereotyped "city life" in order to boast about values important to Appalachian County.

Effects of being Appalachian. Social scientists believe that society is governed by institutional and cultural explanations (Alexander, Thompson, & Edles, 2016). Cultural explanations establish "frameworks of meaning that shape and mark the boundaries for individuals actions, thoughts, and feelings" (Alexander et al., 2016, p. 69). An example of a cultural explanation would be the values or morals one believes in. This next section examines themes that emerged that are exemplary of values important to the Appalachian culture (Jones, 1994). Helton (2010) emphasized the importance of cultural values noting, "These Appalachian values and life traditions affect not only interpersonal relationships but also affect how Appalachian people view their world" (p. 67). I asked

students, "How does being from Appalachia affect your life?" Responses to this question illustrated that Appalachian student identity can be found in the importance placed on values. Three key values that emerged from the data show Appalachian students to be hard working, to have a great sense of community, and to possess a strong support system.

Hard working. Most students felt that they were successful and above average when it came to their schoolwork. Students who considered themselves average were eager to point out that they are very hard working because they had to be. Janet said that being from Appalachia has helped her gain

> …a lot of good qualities that might carry out when I go to college. You know, being respectful, and hard working.…because being around here you see what happens if you don't work hard, so it makes you work harder. But if I lived in the city, everybody just seems like things come easy to them.

It seems that being hard-working is an important characteristic to these students, but also a necessity.

Community. Students were also asked if they ever noticed any groups or cliques in their schools. Students mentioned that there are different groups, as would be expected in high school, but that students mostly floated between groups and did not close themselves off to only one group. Overall, students expressed a strong sense of community and felt that their classmates were rather close and supportive of each other. Brandon illustrated this phenomenon saying, "[Groups are] extracurricular like: basketball, or volleyball team, or cheerleaders. Like that's mostly the real cliques. But I normally talk to anybody, everybody. I really don't have any specific group of people

that I mostly like to talk to." Community and kinship are values prevalent in Appalachian culture, and are often ties that are maintained throughout life (Helton & Keller, 2010).

   Support system. Teachers and school staff at Appalachian Middle and High School created an environment for students that was supportive and constructive. The positive effects of being from Appalachia became evident when students compared their cultures to other cultural settings. Students mentioned that in comparison to teachers from school in bigger cities, Appalachian High School teachers provided one-on-one attention when it was needed. It was uncommon for a teacher not to know a student's name, and teachers did not allow students to disappear into the background of a class. This active support system was important and valued by the students; 75% of all students reported valuing the supportive education they received in Appalachia. This supports Helton and Keller's (2010) position that "Appalachian people, who largely live in rural areas, have depended on neighborliness and hospitality and support one another during times of need" (p. 67). This is applicable in an educational setting within Appalachia as well. When thinking of her experience working with teachers towards the common goal of student success, Amanda pointed out that "Within the city you have so many kids there, you will not get the quality time… Here it's: 'Okay sit in the classroom, I'll explain it to you. Take your test.'" This selfless act by teachers of devoting time to students outside of the normal classtime was seen as something unique to Appalachian County schools, according to Amanda. Students also expressed the belief that education in Appalachia was unique in teachers' emphasis on individual student outcomes, rather than the collective. Teacher investment may not be something specific to Appalachia; however, students in Appalachia believed that it was.

Character. Another theme that emerged from the data was the importance placed on one's character. In essence, students felt that if they had not grown up in Appalachia, they would not have been instilled with the characteristics that make up what many call "southern hospitality." Both seniors brought up independent experiences that happened during their senior trip to New York City. Noah's time in New York left him critical of how people treat each other there: "In New York, there's like a lot of rude people.…here, everybody's nice really, because that's just the way we were raised, and I feel like if we were raised somewhere else, then it would change that." Although Noah had mentioned that he did not consider himself an Appalachian, he described values and upbringings that are central to the Appalachian culture. He associates the idea of "southern hospitality" more with his community, and not specifically Appalachia.

Janet's experience mirrored Noah's in that the people she encountered in New York were nothing like those from home. "Well, I feel like [not growing up in Appalachia] would totally change who I am, because I am the person I am [because of the] people I live around, and what we do, and the culture I'm surrounded by." Janet felt that people from Appalachia are more humble and "have more respect." This experience traveling outside of Appalachia, in what could be considered to some students as a foreign land, allowed Janet to reflect on who she is in light of where she is from (Case, 1996). A self-identified Appalachian, Janet took pride in the foundational culture of her upbringing.

Although Janet and Noah's experiences and reflections were almost identical, they perceived their cultural identities differently. This could be because students' self-identifications as Appalachians also depended on context (i.e., some students identified as

Appalachian because of geographical location, some students identified as Appalachian because of involvement in cultural activities, and some students did not identify as Appalachian because of a lack of involvement in cultural activities). Noah said he was not Appalachian because he did not participate in outdoor activities that he considers essential to being Appalachian. For Janet, being from the area and growing up in a small town led her to consider herself Appalachian. These varying definitions of what it means to be an Appalachian created different senses of identity for people sharing common experiences.

Opportunities and resources. Though students valued the one-on-one learning opportunities that their small school could offer, it was not hard for them to imagine the seemingly better education they could receive if they were not from Appalachia. James (Grade 7) believed that attending school in the city and receiving a better education went hand-in-hand: "I'm [well] educated here, but you know it's the way you think of a city. You know the city's got a better education. You just think of that." For James, who was an avid outdoorsman, contemplating the thought of how his life might have been if lived outside of Appalachia left him weighing the tradeoffs. "I wouldn't have the access to hunt and fish… but I'd have more access to better food and better technology." Although living outside of Appalachia may have meant better resources for James, it still meant taking away something that he found of great value, and something that he felt only living in Appalachia could provide.

A lack of jobs in the community and a lack of variety in available school classes have made students feel like living in Appalachia creates different opportunities than living elsewhere. When upperclassman Jared was asked what people expect students like

him to do after high school, he responded, "Around here? Be a bum. There's just nothing around here. You gotta go out of [Appalachian] County to find something." This was echoed by two other upperclassmen students. Seniors Janet and Noah also commented on the lack of opportunities in Appalachian County. It seems that students who were closer to graduating from high school were those who thought more critically of what staying in Appalachian County after high school meant for their futures.

Stereotype Awareness

One of the main goals of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions students have about Appalachian stereotypes. To accomplish this, I asked three central questions: Are there stereotypes about Appalachia, and what might some be? What do people not from Appalachia really think of people who are from Appalachia? What do people not from Appalachia think of students from here? All 12 students could readily identify a negative stereotype about Appalachia (see Table 6). The code Negative Outsider Perspective was assigned 28 times, but Positive Outsider Perspective was only assigned once, showing that students' perceptions of outsider beliefs are primarily negative in nature.

Some stereotypes were so specific that they included the county of origin that the stereotypes were believed to have started in. Brandon recalled being told by his mother's side of the family in Atlanta of the inbred nature of families from Antlershed, a community near Appalachian County. That is to say, people who were not from the area – who were from another state, entirely – were able to inform an Appalachian Countian of a stereotype about a community much like and very close to his own. But Brandon, belonging to one of the only Black families in Appalachian County, did not feel

Table 6

Student Reported Stereotypes

Stereotype	Frequency
Less Intelligent	12
Hillbilly (clothes, no shoes)	12
Dialect	10
Outdoorsy	6
Poor Health/Dental Hygiene	4
Poor	4
Dirty	3
Crazy	3
Incest	2

personally attacked by Appalachian stereotypes. "Yeah! There [are] stereotypes no matter where you go, though. Like I've lived here since I was a kid and I still hear stereotypes about my skin color and where I'm from (i.e., being born in Atlanta) and how I act…, there's not really a way around stereotypes." Even when visiting friends or family who live in larger cities in Kentucky, Brandon is often not believed to be from Appalachian County. To him, the color of his skin is linked to a more salient identity than where he is from. The concept of the identity salience hierarchy posits that individuals often actively seek out opportunities to perform in their most salient identity (Stets & Serpe, 2013; Stryker, 2002). Therefore it is not difficult to understand that Brandon, a young Black man who did not self-identify as Appalachian, felt the effects of racial stereotypes more than Appalachian stereotypes.

Earlier, Amanda offered the thought that being from Appalachia was not something that one could decide about a person just from looking at them. It took knowledge of where they were from, or their hobbies, or simply hearing them speak. But for Brandon, this did not have an effect on him because when people saw him, they could easily identify him as a young Black man. Being a person of color was identifiable on the surface level, without a need to know where he is from, his hobbies, or hearing him speak.

Students used the words "poor," "dirty," "uneducated," "crazy," and "outdoorsy" when describing how they believed others think of Appalachians (see Table 6). In reaction to these negative beliefs, students felt compelled to defend the integrity of their community and culture. Scotty (Grade 8) emphasized that outsiders see Appalachians as "crazy." He illustrated his position by explaining the drug and homicide rate for the

community. However, Scotty believed that if outsiders looked beyond those numbers, they would be able to see that most people in the community are actually sane "Some are like the murderers and the druggies, but… if you took that away, they could be sane. But they don't think about it…, and so [others think Appalachians] are crazy and most of us are not."

Janet believed that the best way for outsiders to get a true understanding of the Appalachian people would be for them to visit the area and the people. Janet felt that by doing so, the outsiders would see that Appalachians are not lazy but hard working. "I think they need to come here and see before they say all that stuff about us, because most of it really is not true." The stereotype that most Appalachians receive government funding instead of working to earn money is one that bothered Janet most: "They don't realize how hard people work around here to make a living for their families… They have to work several jobs. Some people have three or four jobs."

Through students' responses to these questions, three key points were made clear: (a) Appalachian students in this study are aware of and can readily identify stereotypes about Appalachia; (b) Students in this study from Appalachia believe that people who are not from the area have mostly negative perspectives about Appalachia; and (c) though aware of shortcomings within their community and culture, Appalachians often feel the need to defend and protect the integrity of their community, culture, and people.

Sources of Stereotype Awareness

One question that was not explicitly asked of students was "Where are you getting these stereotypic messages from?" However, some students did identify some sources of Appalachian stereotypes. Often, students attributed the messages they had received to a

general "people" (e.g., "People say we aren't smart."). But sometimes, specific sources were discussed. Janet mentioned an article about Appalachian County that had been circling on Facebook. The article had been written by a visiting journalist from California:

> It's got like a picture of an abandoned home in our town to make it seem like everybody here lives like that. So [I'm] pretty sure everybody that's not around here thinks we live in nasty homes, don't have any electric or water.

Media outlets such as Facebook, CNN, and other news sources have exploited Appalachian County and communities like it to get the empathetic wow factor that draws in readers and viewers, oftentimes grossly exaggerating disparity. Noah mentioned receiving stereotypic messages from strangers during his senior trip to New York City. Similarly, Sam mentioned being stereotyped while on vacation in Florida because of his accent. Brandon learned about very specific Appalachian stereotypes from his mother's family in Atlanta. The breadth of sources of stereotypes found in student responses shows that there are a number of ways that students learn about stereotypes. However, a better understanding is needed to speak to the mechanism of how students learn stereotypes.

Factors Affecting Stereotype Awareness

The final aim of this study was to investigate how stereotype awareness develops. I examined two major factors that might influence students' awareness of outsider perceptions and stereotypes: age/grade level and travel experiences. I hypothesized that students in higher grade-levels might report more instances of culture stereotype than students in lower grade-levels due to a higher level of exposure and cognitive development (McGuire & McGuire, 1981).

Grade level. According to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, adolescents begin to become less egocentric around ages 7 to 11 (i.e., the concrete operational stage) and are better able to consider others' perspectives (Gruber & Voneche, 1977). Similarly, Selman's (1971) stages of perspective or role-taking suggest that adolescents begin to understand that other people's perspectives can differ based on their own thoughts, emotions, and values. According to Piaget's stages of development and Selman's stages of role-taking, all participating students in the current study should be able to consider the perspective of others. With age, and throughout adulthood, individuals begin to think more logically and begin to understand abstract ideas (i.e., the formal operational stage; Gruber & Voneche, 1977). It is during this stage of development that adolescents and young adults begin to think metacognitvely about their own thoughts and the thoughts of others. Therefore, one could conclude that with age, students can begin to think more critically about outsider perceptions. Participating students would most likely fall into the formal operation stage, as proposed by Piaget, meaning that they should be able to think metacognitively. However, seeing that this is a skill that continues to develop with age, it could help explain the observed gap in introspection and interpretation between grade levels.

Specifically, the richness of culture stereotype responses varied by grade-level. Students in Grades 10 through 12 seemed to provide richer details to their examples of stereotypes about Appalachia. These same students followed their examples with counterarguments to the stereotypes. For example, Kelly mentioned that Appalachians are stereotyped by their dialect and are known to act "backwards." She noted that most of these notions are exemplified by the media. "They don't understand that we are not really

like that; and of course you see movies that make it like that too." Janet shared a similar view when she informed me of an article published about Appalachian County recently:

> There's a article on Facebook, have you seen that? About Eastern Kentucky and [Appalachian County]. And it's got like a picture of an abandoned home in our town to make it seem like everybody in here lives like that. [I'm] pretty sure everybody that's not [from] here thinks we live in nasty homes, don't have any electric or water…but that's an abandoned home, and not true.

The additional information that upperclassmen provided further illustrates their tendencies to rebuttal stereotypic information.

Travel experience. Another hypothesis guiding the study was that youth who had out-group exposure (e.g., via travel) would report different kinds of experiences related to Appalachian stereotypes. A low-to-high travel experience category was established based on students' reported experience, and not based on any pre-established gauging system. Levels were operationally defined by basing the lowest level on the least amount of travel experience reported by a student. Similarly, the highest level was created based on the most travel experience reported by a student. The middle level, labeled as medium, was created to equally divide the range of travel experience between the three levels for easy distinction between groups. For out of county travel experience, levels were operationally defined as: low – leaves county one time per month or less; medium – leaves county two to four times per month; high – leaves county more than once per week, or more than four times a month. Out of state/country travel experience was similarly operationalized: low – travels outside of Kentucky one time a year, or less; medium – travels outside of Kentucky two to four times per year, going no further than border-sharing states; high –

travels outside of Kentucky to border-sharing states more than four times a year, or travels great distances one to two times per year. No students had traveled outside of the United States.

Out-of-county travel experience (i.e., rate at which students left Appalachian County over the course of a month) was not related to any key findings. However, students' out-of-state travel experience (i.e., rate at which students travel outside of Kentucky in a year) was reflective of age. Students in Grades 6-9 reported low out-of-state travel experience, and students in Grades 10-12 reported medium and high levels of out-of-state travel. This means findings that were previously assumed to be dependent on age (e.g., upperclassmen reporting richer examples of Appalachian stereotypes), could also be a result of travel experience, or the combined effect.

In addition, although all students mentioned something positive about their community, students who had traveled more spoke positively about their home community more often than did those who has traveled less. More frequent travelers rarely said anything negative about their community. Pride in one's community was also reported more often by students with more travel experience than by students with less travel experience. Research has shown that venturing outside of home allows one to reflect more and associate more meaning with their idea of home (Case, 1996). It could mean, then, that students who are traveling outside of Appalachia are given more opportunities to think reflectively about their community.

Academic Aspirations

One stereotype that exists is that Appalachians are unintelligent. For example, young people in Appalachia are stereotyped as not perceiving a college degree as

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important or practical (DeYoung, 2007). However, all 12 students in this study aspired to reach goals that take them outside of Appalachian County. Not all of these goals included a college degree. Jared's plans included attending trade school, and Sam, Scotty, and Brandon considered pursuing the aviation field. Although Amanda's plans to attend college still meant she would have to venture outside of Appalachian County, being close to her family was a driving factor in her decision-making process. DeYoung (2007) attributed Appalachian students' views on attending college to the presence of families who want their children to stay close to home and help with the family. Young women, specifically, are often discouraged by their families from pursuing higher education (Wallace & DieKroger, 2000). However, all of the female students in this study said they had plans of attending a four-year college at a minimum.

Students' aspirations and expectations from their community differed greatly, however. Aside from parents' and teachers' beliefs, 75% of students reported that their community believed that they should stay in Appalachian County to get a job and help the family. This is consistent with the Appalachian value of familism – the notion that the livelihood of the family comes first (Jones, 1994). Students who felt supported in their academic endeavors received that support from teachers, guidance counselors, and parents.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Future Directions**</div>

Speaking with Appalachian adolescents about their perceptions of stereotypes about Appalachia and how they believe outsiders are looking in at their culture allowed me to gain a better understanding of stereotype development among Appalachian youth. Although it was not possible to gauge when students began to perceive and understand

<div align="center">60</div>

stereotypes, as even the youngest participant was well aware, details of how the students attach emotion and feeling to the stereotypes was revealed through this process. As students get older, they seem to feel the need to detach themselves from the negative stereotypic lens that they believe others view them through. It is as though the Appalachian students feel the need to defend in order to protect the integrity of their culture and community. One limitation of the study was that all participants could identify Appalachian stereotypes, therefore prohibiting me from determining a baseline for stereotype awareness development. Future research should closely examine the developmental stages of stereotype awareness in this population with a wider range in age, as children begin to experience the effects of stereotyping at as young as four years old (Rhodes, Leslie, & Tworek, 2012). If guided by Selman's (1971) stages of role-taking and Piaget's stages of development, it would be proper to conduct this research among adolescents as young as seven years old as this is the age at which most children begin to think about outside perspectives (Gruber & Voneche, 1977; Selman, 1971).

Research shows that individuals who are aware of stereotypes about a group they belong to often face the effects of stereotype threat (Stone, Harrison, & Mottley, 2012). As all students in the sample were aware of negative stereotypes about Appalachia, it would be hypothesized that these students are more likely to experience the psychological effects of stereotype threat. Future research should examine whether being aware of stereotypes about Appalachia affects performance of Appalachian students in stereotyped domains.

Another limitation to the current study was that intersectionality of identities was not addressed. As mentioned earlier, a person can have many selves, or many identities

that are all important facets that make up who she is. The interplay between students'
identification as Appalachians with other identities (e.g., student, ethnicity, religion,
gender) was not examined. Furthermore, examining the hierarchy of identities would be
beneficial in better understanding one's Appalachian identity. For example, Brandon was
a Black student living in Appalachia. Given Brandon's unique experience and
perspective, examining the hierarchy of identities in the cultural context of Appalachia
would be an interesting direction for future studies. Most of the current research on
identity salience and hierarchical identity examine identities that an individual can switch
between (e.g., one man could switch between his identities as a businessman, a
grandfather, and a competitive bowler; Stets & Serpe, 2013; Stryker, 2002). These
models do not examine the complex identities of race and ethnicity in varying cultural
contexts (e.g., in Appalachia).

Another means of gaining a broader perspective on the Appalachian identity
would be to include additional data sources and measures such as examining family
networks and measuring socio-economic status or perceived social class. Family has
proven to be an important value and centerpiece for these students. Speaking with parents
or even grandparents could possibly establish a better understanding on where these
stereotypes come from. It could also provide insight to the types of cultural values that
are being practiced at home. One stigma associated with Appalachians is poverty. By
establishing a measure of socio-economic status, I could then begin to tease apart the role
of class in Appalachian stereotypes and stereotype awareness.

Sources of stereotypes were mentioned briefly before, but this was not something
that was explicitly measured. That is, questions asking students where they hear and learn

about stereotypes about Appalachia were not asked during the interview process. Future research should examine the sources from which students develop their awareness of stereotypes. Learning where and how students become aware is the key to effecting change.

Key Findings and Implications

Students in this study illustrated how values, character, and community are important facets in their lives. Being respectful and hard working seemed to be synonymous with Appalachian culture. Students valued hard work even when the outcome did not yield success, when it meant working multiple jobs, and devoting time outside of school to accomplish educational goals. Students felt that this drive and ambition was something that could only come from being raised in Appalachia.

The students who participated in this study come from one school system in a small community in rural Appalachia. Though other students throughout Appalachia may share similar experiences to the ones expressed in this study, the reach of the findings should not go beyond the current study. Despite the large quantity of research examining stereotype threat and awareness in varying contexts, little research has investigated how cultures such as Appalachia experience and learn about stereotypes. The primary goals of the current study were to better understand how stereotype awareness develops in Appalachian students and how those stereotypes shape their identity. Future research should be guided by these findings and should further dissect the sources of learned stereotypes. These findings illustrate that Appalachian students are well aware of and experience the weight of stereotypes about Appalachia. Qualitative research allows researchers to hear the individual influences and power that words can have on students'

perceptions of themselves. It is owed to these students to be mindful of the kinds of messages they receieved and how culture can influence how those messages are interpreted.

I wanted to return to a quote from Janet that best summarized the big picture of this study: "Well, I feel like [not growing up in Appalachia] would totally change who I am… because I am the person I am [because of the] people I live around, and what we do, and the culture I'm surrounded by." Appalachian identities seemed very salient for most students. To better serve this population, it's important to understand not only Appalachian culture, but also how Appalachians perceive their culture, and its interplay with their lives. Dr. Seuss (1971) explained it best when he said, "Unless someone like you/ cares a whole awful lot,/ nothing is going to get better./ It's not" (248-251).

Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol

- Help me get to know each of you a little better.
    - Tell me about your family.
    - How long have you lived in Appalachian County?
    - How would you explain your hometown to someone who has never been here before? What are the good things (using Lexington as an example, UK basketball)? What are the negative things (ex. Lexington traffic)?

        - How do you feel about where you are from?
        - What makes you the most proud about living here?
        - What might embarrass you about living here?
- Where is the farthest you have traveled outside of where you are from?
    - How many times have you been outside.
- What kind of student are you?
    - What are some of your strengths as a student?
    - What are some of your weaknesses as a student?
    - Imagine you were from a bigger city like Lexington or Louisville. How might these strengths and weaknesses differ?
        - Describe the kind of student you think you would be if you were not from eastern Kentucky/Appalachia
- When you think of the word Appalachia, what do you think of?
    - Do you consider yourself to be from Appalachia?
- How do you think outsiders perceive Appalachia?
    - How do you relate to this depiction of Appalachia?
    - What do they think about students from here?
    - If anyone has ever made you feel bad about where you are from, what did they say/do?
- You all have really helped me answer some of my questions about students from Appalachia. Now I want to ask you a few questions about what you want to do in the near future.

- How far do you plan on continuing your education (e.g., not finish highschool, finish highschool, 4 year degree, etc)?
- What do you plan to do after high school?
  - Who have you talked to about your plans?
- What, if anything, has helped you feel prepared to accomplish your goals?
- What might stop you from pursuing your goals? How could you fix this?
- How motivated are you to continue your education?
  - How does being from eastern Kentucky/Appalachia influence how motivated you are?
  - What is expected of you as someone from eastern Kentucky?
- We've talked about a lot of stuff here today. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about our conversation or any of the things we discussed?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol Changes

Item	Original Question	Change
4	"How would you explain your hometown to someone who has never been here before? What are the good things What are the negative things?"	**Omit**. Although this question delivered some interesting responses, it did not add any valuable information to the study. Responses to this question did not help answer any of my research questions.
10	"What kind of student are you?"	"Describe for me the kind of student you are." The word describe will prompt them to provide a richer response.
13	"Imagine you were from a bigger city like Lexington or Louisville. How might these strengths and weaknesses differ? Describe the kind of student you think you would be if you were not from eastern Kentucky/Appalachia."	**Omit**. This question did not tell me what it was like to be an Appalachian student, but what students thought it would be like attending a bigger school. Responses to this question did not help answer any of my research questions.
		Add. "Sometimes in school, different groups of students start to form. What groups would you say that you belong to?" This will give me a better picture of how they see themselves as students.
		Add. "What if I said the word Appalachian? What do you think of then?" I want to know if the way they think of the people from this area is different from the way they think about the area itself.
20	"If anyone has ever made you feel bad about where you are from, what did they say/do?"	"Tell me about the first time someone pointed out where you were from and made you feel bad about it." By changing the wording of the sentence, I am able to get a better idea of when students start to experience/recognize the effects of stereotyping.
		Add. "How might your life be different if you were not from Appalachia? How might you be different as a student if you were not

		from Appalachia?" This questions will help me answer the research question regarding how students believe being from Appalachia affects their lives.

Travel Experience

Student	Grade Level	Travel Experience County	Travel Experience State/Country
June	6	Low	Low
Whitney	7	High	Low
James	7	High	Low
Scotty	8	Low	Low
Sarah	9	High	Low
Sam	9	Medium	Low
Kelly	10	Medium	High
Brandon	10	High	High
Amanda	11	Medium	Medium
Jared	11	High	Medium
Janet	12	Medium	High
Noah	12	High	High

Note. Operational definitions for Low, Medium, and High criteria are discussed in the Results section under the subheading Travel Experience.

Appendix D

Frequencies

Code	June	Whitney	James	Scotty	Sarah	Sam	Kelly	Brandon	Amanda	Jared	Janet	Noah	Total
Opportunities	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	3	8
Family Table	2	4	4	3	2	1	3	3	4	3	8	1	38
Home	6	3	4	1	0	0	4	1	2	0	2	1	24
Geographical Appalachia	3	2	3	3	1	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	23
Appalachian People	3	3	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	2	28
Appalachian Identity	2	3	3	6	2	4	7	1	1	1	1	0	31
Appalachian Culture	0	0	0	2	0	6	3	0	1	0	2	1	15
Dialect	3	2	1	4	1	1	6	1	4	2	3	0	28
Expectations	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	11
Negative Outsider Perception	2	5	2	3	2	2	4	1	4	2	4	2	33
Positive Outsider Perception	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Academic Support	4	2	2	3	1	3	2	1	4	1	4	1	28
Negative Perceptions of Community	4	3	2	3	1	2	2	0	3	2	3	0	25
Positive Perceptions of	4	4	1	4	4	1	1	2	3	3	2	3	32

Community													
Culture													
Stereotype	4	3	3	3	1	4	2	3	4	2	1	2	29
Pride	1	3	0	2	4	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	16
Total	40	38	28	40	22	26	47	19	37	20	37	19	

Appendix E

Consent to Participate in a Research Study About Stereotype Awareness

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study about student's awareness of stereotypes associated with Appalachia and Eastern Kentucky. Your child is being invited to take part in this research study because [Appalachian County] is a part of the Appalachian Mountain Range. If you consent for your child to take part in this study, he/she will be one of about 70 people to do so.

The person in charge of this study is Chelsea Adams, a master's student from the University of Kentucky Department of Educational, School and Counseling Psychology. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ellen Usher, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Kentucky. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

This study will help us understand how the awareness of stereotypes about a group can affect learning outcomes and aspirations. Researchers will come to your child's school approximately four times during the **2014-2015 and 2015-2016** school year**.** During the visits, your child may be interviewed about his or her beliefs and understandings of stereotypes. Your child may also be invited to participate in a focus group setting where stereotype beliefs will be discussed between he or she and up to three of their classmates. These interviews and focus group sessions will last no more than 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. To help us answer important questions about students' stereotype beliefs, we will be contacting your child's school and requesting access to your child's academic records, such as report card grades and achievement test scores. To protect your child's privacy, any information that will allow these scores to be traced back to your child will be removed.

To the best of our knowledge, your child will experience no more risk of harm than he/she would experience in everyday school activities. There is no guarantee that students will get any benefit from taking part in this study, but your willingness to allow your child to participate may help parents, teachers, and researchers better understand student awareness of stereotypes.
Your child's participation in the study is completely voluntary. He/she may stop participating at any time, even if you have given consent to participate in the past. There is no penalty or alternate option for students who choose not to participate.

Students' comments during interviews will be confidential and stored in a secure location. However, if you agree for your child to participate in the focus group setting, confidentiality is not guaranteed, as your child will be discussing his or her beliefs with other students. We will take every precaution to ensure confidentiality on our end. They will not be personally identified in any written materials, including published results of

the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. No school names will be used. There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

We will keep private all research records that identify your child to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show study information to a court or to tell authorities if your child reports information about a child being abused. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies your child to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.
If you decide to allow your child to take part in the study, you and your child still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. No one will be treated differently if they decide to stop taking part in the study.

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

Do you give your permission for your child to be contacted in the future by Chelsea Adams regarding their willingness to participate in future research studies with Appalachian students?

☐ Yes ☐ No _____Initials

Please sign and return the form below if you would be willing to allow your child to participate in this study. If you have any questions about this survey, do not hesitate to contact Chelsea Adams at Chelsea.adams@uky.edu, or Dr. Ellen Usher by phone (859) 257-8647 or by email (ellen.usher@uky.edu). If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

****
Child's Homeroom Teacher/Grade:
_____

I **give permission** for my child, _____, to be
interviewed.   [print child's full name]

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date:
_____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

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Turner, T. A., Adams, C. G., Rose, M. A., Butz, A. R., & Usher, E. L. (2015, April). *Sources of College-Going Self-Efficacy Among Rural Appalachian Students.* Paper presented at the 2015 American Educational Research Association Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Adams, C. G., McCrea, B. L., Butz, A. R., Usher, E. L. (April, 2014). *Sources of mathematics self-efficacy in non-rural and rural contexts.* Poster presented at the meeting of the National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Lexington, KY.

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AWARDS & HONORS

- Recipient of the Presidential Scholarship from the University of Kentucky for completion of the Governor's Scholar Program and obtaining a minimum composite score of 28 on the ACT.
- Pinnacle Scholar of Science from Berea College.
- Dean's List recipient Fall 2012, maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

SKILLS

- NVivo, SPSS, Microsoft Suite, data entry, experience creating research proposals, experience presenting research findings, coding, card sorting, focus groups, prototyping, compose and administer surveys/interviews, task oriented/organized, customer service, clerical skills.