The Impact of Participation in an Appalachian Literature Course on Student Perceptions of Appalachian Culture

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
The Patton College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education

Ashley B. Hopkins

April 2016

© 2016 Ashley B. Hopkins. All Rights Reserved.
This dissertation titled
The Impact of Participation in an Appalachian Literature Course on Student Perceptions
of Appalachian Culture

by

ASHLEY B. HOPKINS

has been approved for
the Department of Educational Studies
and The Patton College of Education by

Dwan V. Robinson
Assistant Professor of Educational Studies

Renée A. Middleton
Dean, The Patton College of Education
Abstract

HOPKINS, ASHLEY B., Ed.D., April 2016, Educational Administration

College Student Perceptions of Appalachian Culture and the Influence of Participation in an Appalachian Literature Course

Director of Dissertation: Dwan V. Robinson

The Appalachian region and people have a long history of poverty, lower educational attainment, and an underdeveloped economy (Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC], 2012a; Billings & Blee, 2000; Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Dunaway, 1996; Duncan, 1992). Many of the region’s problems are related to political, economic, and social marginalization reinforced through cultural stereotypes and perpetuated at the advantage of outside corporations and corrupt politicians (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996; Duncan, 1992).

This dissertation is a case study and formative evaluation which sought to identify and provide understanding of the impact participation in an Appalachian literature course had on students’ perceptions of the culture. The four guiding research questions were developed in relationship to the course instructor’s stated goal of developing appreciation of the region’s culture and diverse arts. Data was collected through classroom observations, instructor and student interviews, qualitative student surveys, and analysis of course documents including the syllabus, student assignments, and journal prompts. Data was then transcribed and entered into AlasTI for coding and analysis. The researcher analyzed each individual case using first- and second-cycle coding methods, and conducted a cross-case analysis to answer the stated research questions.
Dedication

I am dedicating this work to my family who come from the Appalachian mountains of Virginia and Kentucky. They are of the mountains, not just from them, their very existence shaped through their relationships with them. They have passed down for many generations our Appalachian cultural heritage. They have shaped me. The mountains have shaped us all.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who has made this dissertation possible.

First, I would like to thank my advisor and chair, Dr. Dwan V. Robinson, for her never-ending support and guidance. I would like to thank Dr. Sharon Reynolds without whom structure and management of the data would have been impossible. Thank you also to Dr. Gordon Brooks who helped me find clarity and move forward when lost. I would also like to thank Dr. Edna Wangui and Dr. Ghirmai Negash for their critical feedback without which context and theory would have suffered.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the instructor and student participants who made this study possible. Further, a special thanks goes to the individuals at the university where the research was conducted and who provided me the space to complete the work necessary to make this project a success.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Statement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Terms</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Literature Review</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework: Appalachia, Marginalization, and the Role of Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Appalachian context</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian culture and stereotypes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization of Appalachia</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of marginalization</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization in the schools</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally-relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art, literature, and education in Appalachia</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place-based education</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership for culturally-relevant pedagogy</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification of conceptual framework</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy ................................................................. 51
The role of theory in qualitative research ................................................................. 51
Historical foundations of critical theory. ................................................................. 53
Historical foundations of critical pedagogy. ............................................................. 55
  Defining critical pedagogy ................................................................................... 56
Cultural Studies ........................................................................................................ 60
Democratic ideals ..................................................................................................... 62
The role of Marxism. ................................................................................................ 63
Critical pedagogy and identity formation. ............................................................... 65
Postmodernism ......................................................................................................... 66
Appalachian Studies: A critical pedagogy ............................................................... 68
  Justification of theoretical framework. ................................................................. 69
Chapter Three: Methodology .................................................................................... 71
Research Design ....................................................................................................... 71
  Site selection. ........................................................................................................... 75
  Selection of participants. ........................................................................................ 77
    Instructor participant .......................................................................................... 77
    Student participants ......................................................................................... 78
Sources of Data ......................................................................................................... 79
  Observations. ......................................................................................................... 80
  Interviews ............................................................................................................. 82
  Student surveys ................................................................................................... 85
  Documents ........................................................................................................... 86
  Protocols .............................................................................................................. 87
Data Collection Procedures ..................................................................................... 90
  Role of the Researcher ........................................................................................ 94
  Ethical considerations ......................................................................................... 95
  Credibility Techniques ....................................................................................... 97
Limitations ............................................................................................................. 100
Data Analysis ......................................................................................................... 101
  First-cycle coding ............................................................................................... 103
Chapter Four: Presentation of Data ................................................................................. 111
  Findings: Surveys and Context ................................................................................... 111
    The course .............................................................................................................. 111
    Classroom demographics .................................................................................... 114
    Motivations for enrolling in the course .............................................................. 115
    Appalachian heritage ........................................................................................... 116
    Perceptions of Appalachia .................................................................................... 118
    Improving Appalachia ........................................................................................... 119
    Appalachian stereotypes ....................................................................................... 120
    Course impact ........................................................................................................ 123
    Course materials ..................................................................................................... 124
      Texts ................................................................................................................... 125
      Assignments ........................................................................................................ 126
    Instructor impact .................................................................................................... 127
    Improving the course ............................................................................................. 128
  Findings: Cases and Themes ....................................................................................... 130
    Alex ........................................................................................................................ 131
      Course impact ..................................................................................................... 132
      Instructor impact ................................................................................................. 133
      Impactful course components ............................................................................ 134
      Perception of Appalachia .................................................................................... 135
      Perceptions of Appalachian people .................................................................... 137
      Theme of darkness ............................................................................................. 138
    Summary .............................................................................................................. 139
    Morgan .................................................................................................................... 139
      Course impact ..................................................................................................... 141
      Impactful course components ............................................................................ 142
How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture? ................................................................. 230
Which teaching methods do students identify as impactful? ................. 233
Which components of the course do students identify as impactful? ........ 234
  Texts .................................................................................................................... 234  
  Assignments ....................................................................................................... 237
How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian Literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials? .................. 238
Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 240
Chapter Five: Discussion ................................................................................................ 241
Introduction ................................................................................................................. 241
  How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture? ................................................................. 245  
  Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful? ......................... 249  
  Which components of the course do students identify as impactful? ............. 250
How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials? .................. 253
Appalachian studies and critical theory ................................................................. 255
  Subversion of the dominant, Hillbilly metanarrative ......................................... 256
  Social transformation ......................................................................................... 258
  Interdisciplinary problem-solving ................................................................... 258
Culturally-relevant pedagogy, place-based education, and leadership .......... 259
  Empowerment of marginalized people and development of community relationships ................................................................. 259
  Transmission of culture through art and literature ........................................... 260
  Incorporation of students’ realities and context of place .................................. 260
  Attention to real-world problems .................................................................... 261
Implications and Recommendations ................................................................. 262
  Student-centered teaching and learning ........................................................... 263
  Appreciation of diversity .................................................................................. 263
  Subversion of marginalization .......................................................................... 264
  Place as context for learning .......................................................................... 265
Suggestions for Further Research ........................................................................... 266
References ....................................................................................................................... 268
Appendix A: Instructor Interview Protocol ................................................................. 284
Appendix B: Class Observation Protocol ................................................................. 285
Appendix C: Student Pre-Survey ............................................................................... 286
Appendix D: Journal Prompt Protocol ......................................................................... 287
Appendix E: Student Post-Survey ............................................................................. 288
Appendix F: Student Interview Protocol ................................................................. 289
Appendix G: Ohio University Consent Form – Instructor Participant ..................... 290
Appendix H: Ohio University Consent Form – Student Participants ....................... 294
Appendix I: Ohio University IRB Approval ................................................................. 298
List of Tables

Table 1 Classroom Demographics ................................................................. 115
Table 2 Motivations for Enrolling in Course ............................................... 115
Table 3 Student Expectations .................................................................. 116
Table 4 Student Heritage ........................................................................ 117
Table 5 Student Pre-Conceptions of Appalachia ....................................... 118
Table 6 Students’ Preconceived Negative Attributes of Appalachia .......... 119
Table 7 Students’ Post-Course Suggestions for Improving Appalachia .... 120
Table 8 Students’ Pre-Survey Experiences with Appalachian Stereotypes .. 121
Table 9 Appalachian Stereotypes Identified by Students Prior to the Course 122
Table 10 Students’ Post-Survey Experiences with Appalachian Stereotypes 122
Table 11 Course Impact ......................................................................... 123
Table 12 Knowledge Gained through Participation in the Course ............ 124
Table 13 Course Component Having Greatest Impact ....................... 125
Table 14 Impact of Course Texts ............................................................... 126
Table 15 Impact of Course Assignments ............................................... 126
Table 16 Instructor Impact .................................................................... 127
Table 17 Impact of Class Meetings ........................................................... 128
Table 18 Course Improvement ................................................................. 129
Table 19 Student Course Recommendations ........................................... 130
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 1: Economic level by county (ARC, 2012c).</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Chapter One: Introduction

I conducted a qualitative study to determine what impacts, if any, participation in a course on Appalachian Literature had on students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. A stated goal of the course was to “develop an appreciation of the culture and diversity of art from the region” (Instructor, 2013). I was particularly interested in how students’ thinking about culture and place were related to participation in the course. Furthermore, I was also interested in analyzing teaching practices and materials to understand whether they impact stereotypical thinking and/or feelings of marginalization, or have no impact at all.

I shared the findings with the course instructor to inform future practices and curriculum decisions upon completion of the study. In a broader sense, I was interested in developing recommendations based on the case study and formative evaluation that may inform teaching practices and curricular decisions throughout the Appalachian region and for those working with Appalachian students. I also believe the findings may be relevant to individuals outside the region due to the connection between the Appalachian economy and historical context to that of the broader United States. This work adds to the larger body of research related to culturally relevant pedagogy, place-based education methods, Appalachian Studies, and critical theory.

In this chapter, I introduce the background, purpose statement, significance, delimitations, assumptions, methods and key terms in greater detail. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature and provides the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three then provides a detailed account of the
methodology for conducting the study. Chapter Four presents the data in the form of
cases and themes. Finally, Chapter Five provides conclusions and recommendations
rooted in the data.

Background

At the beginning of the study, nearly 20 percent of counties identified as
Appalachian were considered economically distressed (Appalachian Regional
Commission [ARC], 2012a). The three-year averages for unemployment rates in
Appalachi a for 2009-2011 were 1.3% higher than national averages, with the
Appalachian region of South Carolina having the highest unemployment rate for that time
span at 11.0% (Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC], 2011). Similarly, in a 2000
report, the most recent data available at the time of the study, the Appalachian Regional
Commission stated that only 76.4% of Appalachian students completed high school,
compared to a national average of 80.4% (Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC],
2000). Data from the same report shows that the rates drop further and the disparity
widens for college completion with only 17.6% of Appalachian students having
completed college compared to 24.4% nationally. Clay County, Kentucky had the lowest
overall high school completion rates of only 49.4% of students completing high school.
Macon County, Tennessee and McDowell County, West Virginia shared the lowest rates
for college completion with only 5.6% of students completing college (ARC, 2000).

Harry Caudill’s influential work Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography
of a Depressed Area (1963) initiated an era of attention to the poverty and destitute
conditions of the Appalachian region. Since the 1960s and the beginning of President
Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, numerous policies and initiatives have sought, most unsuccessfully, to mediate the poverty that has defined the region since its conceptualization as an area and culture apart from the rest of the nation (ARC, 2012b; Billings & Blee, 2000). While some communities have successfully diversified economies and improved accordingly, other communities still struggle to provide basic infrastructure (ARC, 2012b). Many federal and state funding initiatives poured monies into areas designated as promising economic growth and opportunity to investors. For this reason, those counties and regions already most destitute and having greatest need for assistance were often passed over in favor of larger, more immediate return (Billings & Blee, 2000). The long, complex history of poverty and related cultural, economic, and political ostracism of the Appalachian peoples has only served to sustain and grow its impoverishment and marginalization. This has served to create a seemingly unbreakable cycle of high poverty, high unemployment, low educational attainment, and corporate and political abuses. The region’s poverty led to the development and popularity of several stereotypes of Appalachian peoples (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004).

Billings and Blee (2000) suggested that early written accounts of Appalachia depict the terrain as rugged and wild and its people barbaric and uncivilized. This was manifested in the works of such authors as Caudill (1963), Kephart (1913), Williams and Pipes (1975), and Weller (1965). The portrayal of the hillbilly as indolent, apathetic, morally corrupt, and illiterate by scholars and journalists, whether intentional or not, served only to enhance the social, political, and economic isolation of the region
(Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). By the early twentieth century, many members of mainstream American culture accepted the notion that the Appalachian people were inferior, having an altogether different psychological make-up that was complacent, violent, and uninterested in improving their conditions (Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). The image of the Appalachian Hillbilly is believed by some scholars (e.g. Dunaway, 1996; Harkins, 2004) to have been perpetuated and used by outside corporate interests to justify exploitation of the region’s natural resources. This resulted in an economic colonization in which wealth and resources were extracted from the region with no regard for the people residing within (Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963). Economic colonization by outside interests became the standing explanation of the region’s dire circumstances beginning in the 1960s, replacing the older notion of the culture of poverty (Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963).

Prior to the economic colonization theory, many had come to believe that the Appalachian people represented a culture of poverty. This stereotype adopted the image of the simple Appalachian yeomen who lived out uncomplicated, self-sufficient lives of subsistence farming as its icon (Dunaway, 1996; Harkins, 2004). For these down-to-earth farmers, having a little was just enough and having just enough was more than plenty. Therefore, poverty was accepted as a way of life, resulting in a culture of poverty in which no one sought to improve their lot by gaining wealth but focused more on family relationships (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996). Contrary to the uncouth Hillbilly, the Yeoman was hardworking, honest, morally upright, and independent (Dunaway, 1996). However, the independent and family-focused ways of the Yeomen
were believed to contribute to the social isolation experienced by members of the Appalachian culture (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996; Harkins, 2004; Weller, 1965).

The various stereotypes of the Appalachian people grew in relation to the region’s poverty as both an explanation and a result. Thus, stereotyping and marginalization of the region’s people is directly related to the poor economic conditions that continue to proliferate in Appalachia. Though there are many accounts of resistance in Appalachia (e.g. Fisher, 1993), stereotypes that are repeatedly reinforced through popular imagery and discourse often become internalized by those labeled as the Other (Billings & Blee, 2000; Harkins, 2004). As stated previously, many initiatives and policies aligned with economic development have been adopted throughout the region over the years. However, policies and practices to subvert stereotypical thinking about Appalachia are lacking.

Schools employing culturally–relevant pedagogy and educational leadership are promising avenues for subverting stereotypical images of traditionally marginalized peoples (Geronimo, 2010). Furthermore, schools transmit the local culture and therefore play a pivotal role in renewing, transforming, and sustaining communities like those found throughout Appalachia (Thomas, 2005). Wei (2002) cited Ladson-Billings’ definition of culturally-relevant pedagogy as teachers’ use of instructional methods that incorporate the student’s culture while facilitating the development of skills and knowledge needed to navigate the broader dominant culture. According to Wei, such pedagogy empowers students intellectually and increases students’ sense of social,
political, and cultural capital. Some scholars argue that arts education, including literature, provides a special opportunity for incorporating students’ culture into the curriculum, thereby empowering them through an understanding of their cultural history while teaching them to understand and navigate the dominant culture (Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Foster, 1993; Stiler & Allen, 2006; Vendler, 2010).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this nested case study was to analyze the impacts participation in an Appalachian Literature course had on student perceptions of the culture. This is reflected in the first overarching research question listed below. The study also looked to discover best practices for developing students’ appreciation of Appalachian culture, a stated outcome of the course, which was determined by questions two and three. This study contributes to the larger body of research and literature related to Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy, Appalachian Studies, and Place-Based Education. In order to identify best practices and lessons learned for application in similar contexts, a formative evaluation approach aligned with applied research methods was adopted. The evaluation of the course was secondary, though, to the larger purposes of contributing to the already existing bodies of knowledge cited through case study research. To explore these purposes, the research questions were identified as:

1. How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?
2. Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful?
3. Which components of the course do students identify as impactful?
4. How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?

Significance

Research related to Appalachian student success is lacking (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). This study contributes to the small body of knowledge about Appalachian education and student success that is currently available. Developing this currently lacking body of knowledge is important because, historically, Appalachian students are graduating high school and attending college at rates lower than the national averages (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). Furthermore, the region is expansive and home to a significant portion of the larger population. The Appalachian region includes portions of 12 states and all of West Virginia and is home to some 25 million people (ARC, 2012b). Lower rates of educational attainment directly contribute to higher levels of poverty within the region, which is inseparable from the broader national economy (Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963). The results of the study are relevant to the work of educational leaders, scholars, teachers, policymakers, and advocates of the region and those who work with Appalachian students and/or are interested in culturally-relevant pedagogy and place-based education models.

Contrary to popular belief, the Appalachian region is not economically or geographically isolated, but rather has been marginalized by corrupt political and business practices and stereotypical portrayals by outsiders in literature and media. Therefore, the findings of this study will be relevant to a broader audience outside the region and culture who embrace culturally-relevant pedagogy, multicultural education, or
whose work and livelihood can be connected to the region and culture. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge about culturally-relevant pedagogy and its impacts in different contexts and, therefore, be useful to scholars and activists of the critical pedagogy tradition. Finally, as a formative evaluation, the study’s findings will be shared with the course instructor to inform future practices and curricular decisions after completion of the study.

Methods

The purpose of this case study and formative evaluation was to answer the overarching research question of how participation in an Appalachian literature course impacts students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture by describing the context in which the course occurred while explaining how the instructor’s practices and course materials impacted students’ thinking. Formative evaluation research, such as the case study presented here, seeks to improve a practice or process by identifying strengths and weaknesses thereby providing clues for resolving problems in similar contexts. Thus, this study is best aligned with applied research, identifying best practices and lessons learned for practical application in real-world contexts while contributing to the larger body of knowledge (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2004a; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Delimitations

This study took place from August 2013 through December 2013. Data collection began during the third week of August 2013 with an interview of the instructor. A detailed account of the data collection and analysis procedures is included in Chapter Three. During the first week of fall semester, which began during the third week of
August 2013, I conducted class observations and collected student pre-surveys on the first day of class. Throughout the semester, I emailed journal topics to all student participants enrolled in the course through the course’s online BlackBoard website. During the first week of December 2013 on the final day of class, during the last week of the semester prior to final examinations, I conducted a second set of observations and collected student post-surveys. I also conducted interviews with student participants on Thursday and Friday of the last week of classes prior to final examinations.

The study was conducted at Smoky Mountain University* in a Literature of Place course based in Appalachia. I used criterion sampling to identify participants. The criterion for participation in the study was participation in the selected literature course as an instructor or student. There was only one course instructor. The instructor and all students enrolled and present during the initial data collection were included in the target sample. I began correspondence with the instructor prior to proposing the study, at which time she expressed an interest in participating in the study and opening her classroom to I. Site selection and sampling techniques are described in greater detail in the methodology chapter.

Assumptions

In approaching the study, I made several assumptions. First, I assumed that all participants would answer questions included in the data collection protocols openly and honestly. I also assumed that student participants had read the selected readings and completed the assignments as instructed in the course syllabus and that their answers were based on this experience. The instructor had informed me that the course was a
Liberal Arts elective course open to all majors and academic levels. Based on her description of the course enrollment, I expected many of the students to be freshman students enrolling in their first college-level literature course. After reviewing enrollment data for the university, I expected the student participants to be of Appalachian heritage.

**Key Terms**

- *Appalachia.* In this study, the term Appalachia and its derivative “Appalachian” are used to describe people, places, and things within and related to the region federally designated as Appalachia, which includes portions of New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, and Maryland and all of West Virginia.

- *Culturally-relevant pedagogy.* The incorporation of students’ culture in the curriculum and instructional practices with the goal of supporting student success and promoting social justice and equity (Wei, 2002).

- *Marginalization.* Messiou’s (2006b) description of marginalization was adopted for the purposes of the study. In this context, marginalization is defined as the process of Othering that occurs when a group or individual’s behavior does not fit the dominant group or individual’s ideologies about what is normal or appropriate. The Other group is portrayed negatively as deviant and/or less human.

- *Culture.* Behavior patterns and ideologies shared by a group of people that has been interacting over a period of time and that determine standards for interpreting actions, interactions, language, and feelings (Patton, 2002).
• *Appreciation.* The study adopted Patton’s (2002) definition of appreciation as related to appreciative inquiry. In this context, appreciation is the focus and emphasis of an individual’s, group’s, or organization’s assets rather than a focus and emphasis on problems or problem solving.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two presents the review of relevant literature which was synthesized to create the theoretical and conceptual framework for analysis of the study. The chapter presents the conceptual framework first, followed by the theoretical framework.

I chose three relevant concepts to develop the conceptual framework in which to situate the study. First, the Appalachian context provides insight into the background of some participants as well as a context for the literature and place the participants engaged with which influenced their dialogue and impacted their thinking. The second contextual term is marginalization. I selected marginalization as a framework for understanding the stereotyping of the Appalachian culture that has led to the economic, political, and cultural sidelining within the region that feeds a cycle of poverty and oppression. Third, culturally-relevant pedagogy provides an understanding of educational practices that are inclusive and multicultural and have been shown in other contexts to subvert stereotypical thinking, help students develop cultural pride and perform better academically and, in turn, mediate some of the effects of marginalization. Finally, I presents a more in-depth justification for the conceptual framework and its relevance to the study.

As stated above, the second half of the chapter presents the theoretical framework. I believe that the study’s purpose of analyzing changes in student perceptions as a result of participating in an educational experience warrants the use of critical pedagogy as a theoretical lens. In order to understand critical pedagogy on a deeper level, I present the historical context of critical theory, from which critical pedagogy was developed. Then, I
elaborate on the major tenets and theories that have added to and shaped critical pedagogy, including Cultural Studies, democratic ideals, identity formation, Marxism, and Postmodernism, and how each relates to the proposed study. I then posit the argument that Appalachian Studies is a form of critical theory based on its interdisciplinary approach to solving real problems afflicting the region that includes scholars, activists, and community members. Finally, similar to the conceptual framework, I present a more detailed justification for use of the theoretical lens and its relevance to the study.

**Conceptual Framework: Appalachia, Marginalization, and the Role of Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy**

**The Appalachian context.** The Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC] (2012b) defines Appalachia as a region including 13 states ranging from New York to Mississippi. According to the Commission, the region covers 205,000 square miles along the Appalachian Mountain range. The region is home to over 25 million people, 42 percent of whom are classified as rural (ARC, 2012b). Comparatively, only 20 percent of the nation’s population is classified as rural (ARC, 2012b). The geographical isolation of the region is one attribute often identified as negatively impacting the region’s economy and creating a unique culture (Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963; Harkins, 2004; Williams & Pipes, 1975).

Culture is a way of being and thinking that is particular to a specific group or category of people which determines racial, ethnic, religious, and social identity (Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, & Vinken, 2010; Lieske, 2010; Mason,
Mason (2013) argued that place has culture. Further, Hofstede et al. (2010) suggested that regional cultures may form along geographic, economic, climatic, ethnic, and linguistic divisions. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider the idea that Appalachia represents a geographically, economically, and perhaps even a linguistically defined regional culture. Woodard (2012), listing it as one of 11 rival regional cultures in the United States, described Greater Appalachia as a place settled by aggressive, warrior-minded peoples coming from Ireland, England, and Scotland. Further, he wrote that culturally, the people of Greater Appalachia are deeply committed to self-ownership and individual liberty. Due to these cultural nuances, he stated that the people of Greater Appalachia as a cultural region build alliances with other regions on the basis of who poses the greatest threat to freedom. Therefore, Greater Appalachia has been in alliance with the Deep South region since the Reconstruction Era in an attempt to overthrow the federal government’s power to override local governance.

Similarly, Lieske (2010) argued that regional subcultures result from historical interactions between cultural preferences of different settler groups and the national and regional environments in which they settled. Thus, the cultural preferences of settlers determined not only which environments they came to favor in the U.S., but also how they responded to different environments with which they interacted. Because the settlers grouped in cultural clusters, it allowed cultural groups to continue to maintain political control and cultural dominance. Therefore, place begins to have culture, which affects the overall identity of a particular region (Mason, 2013). Regional cultures are
transmitted similarly to national cultures from one generation to the next through socialization and adoption of basic, subconscious values (Hofstede et al., 2010).

**Economics.** Historically, the economy of the Appalachian region grew from small subsistence farming and hunting to include large-scale agriculture, forestry, mining, and chemical and metal industries (ARC, 2012b; Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963; Duncan, 1992). New industry includes professional, public-sector, and service-related jobs (ARC, 2012b; Duncan, 1992). Despite new industry, about 20 percent of counties identified as Appalachian are considered economically distressed (ARC, 2012a). Bradbury and Mather (2009) stated that the average income of Appalachian families is far below national averages and that one in six families in the region live in poverty.

The map in Figure 1 categorizes Appalachian counties by economic status using a color coding method. The percentage of economically distressed Appalachian counties presents a gradual decline in the region’s poverty beginning in the 1960s, during which about 30 percent of counties in the region were determined to be economically distressed (ARC, 2012a). While some communities have successfully diversified economies and improved accordingly, other communities still struggle to provide basic infrastructure (ARC, 2012a). Due to the already lagging economy of Appalachia, data shows the recent economic depression has had far more negative impacts on the region than other places in the nation (ARC, 2012a). Related to the poor economic conditions found throughout the region, Appalachian peoples are apt to struggle with unemployment, lack of healthcare, and deficient educational opportunities (ARC, 2012a).
The poor economic condition of the region was also believed by some scholars (e.g. Weller, 1965) to contribute to a culture of poverty. Other scholars (e.g. Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963; Harkins, 2004) maintain that the culture of poverty is a stereotype promoted to support the exploitation of the region’s natural resources by outside corporate interests. Much of the poor economic conditions can be traced historically to corrupt politics, unfair business practices, and skewed landholding laws.
that resulted in absentee landlords and a landless local population (Banks, Billings, & Tice, 1993; Billings & Blee, 2000; Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Caudill, 1963).

In 1981, a 1,800 page study was undertaken by the Appalachian Alliance and community organizations in the region such as the Highlander Center to analyze land ownership, taxation, and mineral rights on over 20 million acres of land covering 80 counties in six states (Banks et al., 1993; Glen, 1993). The findings of the study concluded that minimal taxation and absentee corporate ownership of the land and minerals directly contributed to the region’s poverty, inadequate housing and public services, struggling schools, dying subsistence farms, and environmental neglect (Glen, 1993). The study did have a positive influence on tax and land ownership laws in several states in the region (Bankset al., 1993).

**Education.** Research on Appalachian student success is lacking (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). Historically, high school and college completion rates have been considerably lower in the Appalachian region when compared with national data (ARC, 2000; Bradbury & Mather, 2009). Though a significant portion of Appalachian high school seniors express a desire to attend college, only a very small portion actually enroll in higher education. Those that do pursue higher education face special barriers, including the likelihood of being a first-generation college student whose parents did not complete college, family beliefs that do not value education, parents who fear their children moving far away, and financial concerns related to the high poverty of the region (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Waitt, 2006).
Chenoweth and Galliher (2004) stated that Appalachian education has been presented negatively by scholars (e.g. Caudill, 1963; Weller, 1965) for some time. The authors suggest this negative, stereotypical portrayal of Appalachian youth and schools is internalized by students and contributes to low self-esteem that impacts academic success, educational attainment, and decision-making about higher education.

Despite such negative portrayals of the cultural devaluing of education in the region, families and community members have for a long time focused on improving the quality of education their children have access to (Carawan & Carawan, 1993). Similarly, scholars and activists developed the field of Appalachian Studies in the 1980s to address the concerns of the region, including education, and to infuse Appalachian culture and history into college curricula (Banks et al., 1993).

**Marginalization.** Appalachian culture has historically been defined by individuals outside the region using stereotypes of the pastoral, complacent Yeoman or the barbaric, violent, drunk Hillbilly (Banks et al., 1993; Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). Little attention is paid to regional diversity, and these stereotypes are often presented as a metanarrative for all people calling Appalachia home (Banks et al., 1993; Harkins, 2004). Such stereotypical metanarratives of the region have supported and perpetuated cultural, political, and economic marginalization of Appalachian peoples (Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004).

Previously, stereotyping was sometimes defined as overgeneralization, prejudice, defective thinking, immature judgment, or pathological thinking (Martin & Halverson, Jr., 1981). Today, the common definition is stereotyping as a normal thought process that
generalizes and categorizes information for ease of use or understanding (Fiske, 1998; Martin & Halverson, Jr., 1981). Though humans categorize all types of information, the categorization of people creates boundaries based on perceived differences. Fiske (1998) described this as “category-based reactions”, which are reactions based on the perception that a social group is significantly different from one’s own social group (p. 357). Stereotyping, Fiske posited, is partially automatic and practical as well as influenced by social structures and individually controllable. Stereotyping, then, leads to marginalization of some social groups that are perceived as negatively different from the dominant group.

Marginalization theory as applied in sociological settings grew from theories based on individuals and the attributes they develop when navigating two incompatible social positions. Marginalization implies boundaries between and juxtaposition of differing social groups. Often, social marginalization occurs when a group or individual’s behavior does not fit the dominant group or individual’s “rules” for what is appropriate. Individuals not meeting the dominant set of rules are labeled deviant and cast as outsiders. However, it is quite likely that those who have been Othered as deviant regard the dominant group as outside the norm (Messiou, 2006b). Marginalization, then, grows from interaction and labeling between social groups, a sort of symbolic interactionism in which meaning is made and modified by those involved in the social processes (Messiou, 2006a).

**Appalachian culture and stereotypes.** Duncan (1992) posited that many scholars (e.g Kephart, 1913; Weller, 1965) inadvertently contributed to the stereotyping of
Appalachian culture. These scholars, according to Duncan, focused primarily on those negative attributes of moral corruption, poor literacy, apathy, and hopelessness. In doing so, she states, these scholars supported the notion that the Hillbilly was indolent, complacent to survive on welfare, and did not hold traditional American values. Furthermore, the Appalachian culture has often been presented as one that is stagnant and consisting primarily of a white underclass (Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). Such stereotyping of Appalachian culture, purposeful or not, has led to a cultural, social, political, and economic marginalization of the people who call the region home.

Weller (1965) attempted to understand the Appalachian Mountaineer in order to move beyond description and criticism of the unique culture. According to Weller, a working class culture of poverty developed in the region due to geographical isolation, lack of economic progress, and exploitation by outside timber and coal corporations. Weller describes the people as nostalgic, traditional, complacent, and having an independence-turned-individualism culture. He continues his description, stating that Appalachian peoples are fatalistic, rooted in personal relationships, and simultaneously fearful and courageous. Not knowing what tomorrow will bring, Weller preached, Appalachian people avoid commitments in order to take advantage of more thrilling opportunities.

Dunaway (1996) critiqued another, more romanticized Appalachian stereotype in which the people were portrayed by eighteenth century authors as honest, hardworking, independent folk who valued fairness and lived quiet, simple lives. This is in stark
contrast to the Hillbilly who is depicted by some scholars as drunk, violent, and dirty with ragged, ill-fitted clothing (e.g. Kephart, 1913; Weller, 1965). The romanticized depiction of the Appalachian people, according to Dunaway (1996), created the agrarian myth of the Appalachian Yeoman who live out uncomplicated, self-sufficient lives dependent on subsistence farming. To the contrary, the reality of the region is one of deep poverty and frequent exploitation and abuse by outside sources (Billings & Blee, 2000; Caudill, 1963; Dunaway, 1996; Harkins, 2004).

The Hillbilly, sometimes portrayed as a race of his own, warranted social isolation and a subservient position to middle- and upper-class business leaders, landowners, and politicians (Billings & Blee, 2000; Harkins, 2004). Furthermore, he could not be trusted as a steward of his own land due to his lacking economic sense and embracing of a culture of poverty, thereby opening the door for outside corporate interests to drain the region of its natural resources in the name of economic conquest and at the expense of the local ecology, individuals, homes, and communities (Billings & Blee, 2000; Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Dunaway, 1996; Glen, 1993). The failure of the government and wider national community to address the region’s problems was supported and excused by the notion that the mythic Appalachian Yeomen was happy with and even preferred their circumstances (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996). The failure to adequately address the region’s poverty, educational concerns, and dying ecology by the government and outside corporate land owners would eventually lead to a growing social movement that would embrace Appalachian tradition, art, and culture as a means for uniting and
empowering the people (Banks et al., 1993; Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Glen, 1993).

As a contemporary writer and researcher, Greiner (2010) described her own personal encounter with Appalachian women in a research setting. In the encounter, Greiner found that she felt compelled to seek out the exotic, to present the marginal struggle. The culture was new to her, and therefore she sought the unique differences she expected and disregarded the more typical and ordinary stories of struggle shared by the Appalachian women. These more common stories would perhaps have been perceived as more novel to the reader than yet more stories of the Appalachian marginal struggle (Greiner, 2010). Scholars (e.g. Kephart, 1913; Weller, 1965) writing in previous decades may have fallen victim to the same tendencies to exoticize what they did not understand, thus leading to the continued, unintentional stereotyping and marginalization of the Appalachian people.

**Marginalization of Appalachia.** The theory of a culture of poverty existing in Appalachia was often employed to explain the unusually poor economic conditions of the region (Billings & Blee, 2000; Harkins, 2004). The supposed culture of poverty in Appalachia is one of a broken people who, because of generations of hard times, have become dependent on government support, have little pride, and lack the ambition, resources, and knowledge required to change their circumstances (Duncan, 1992). However, culture of poverty theory has led to the stereotyping of Appalachian peoples, casting them as socially backward, lacking efficacy, and isolated from mainstream culture (Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). Scholars (e.g. Duncan,
1992) have suggested that some authors, activists, filmmakers (e.g. Barken, Chhay, Duff, Hevert, Hunt, Nash, Williams, 2013; Boorman, 1972; Weller, 1965) and so forth have negatively stereotyped the people for some time leading to the social, political, and economic marginalization of Appalachian people. Korbin (1987), in a discussion on cross-cultural understandings of child sexual abuse, presented another popular stereotype of poor Appalachian peoples. This stereotype presents poor Appalachians who share sleeping quarters as engaging in incestuous behavior. This is contrary to phenomena in other cultures in which a change in living styles from shared spaces to individual apartments with private bedrooms coincided with a rise in child abuse (Korbin, 1987).

Presenting the negative stereotypical view of Appalachian children and schools critiqued by Chenoweth and Galliher (2004), Weller (1965) described schooling in Appalachia as being overrun with “content-retarded, sometimes less able children” who often come from homes in which learning is not valued (p. 22). These students, according to Weller, negatively impact the achievement of entire school districts. Weller opined that Appalachian schools, having limited resources, often combined classrooms to include multiple grades. Such situations, he states, arose from the diminishing population reflective of the outmigration of people seeking better economic opportunities and higher standards of living. The combination of lower student ability, limited resources, and devaluing of education often caused teachers to leave the region out of frustration (Billings & Blee, 2000; Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Caudill, 1963; Weller, 1965).

While many scholars (e.g. Billings & Blee, 2000; Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004; Duncan, 1992) suggest that Weller (1965) and others (e.g. Barken et al., 2013; Behring et
al., 2003; Boorman, 1972) inadvertently and, sometimes, purposely contributed to the negative stereotyping and marginalization of the Appalachian people, it could be argued that Weller and similar activists were in fact engaging in an act of resistance against outsider abuses that created the problems the region faces. By drawing attention to problems such as poverty and lack of educational attainment, Appalachian people may be united for a common cause and begin to work to resist further outsider abuse. This would be in line with Freire’s (1968) theory of conscientization. An example of such work would be Caudill’s (1963) work which spawned Johnson’s War on Poverty and the focus on the Appalachian region.

Effects of marginalization. Chambers and McCready (2011) argued that students whose cultural norms and values are not tended to or aligned with the school environment become marginalized and are consequently viewed as having less academic ability. Geronimo (2011) stated that the consequences are great for both the child and the community when students are not provided equal educational opportunities due to marginalization. Ramifications include greater rates of incarceration and accompanying costs, decreased employment opportunities, and lower productivity (Geronimo, 2011). Therefore, as Blaustein (1990) lectured, the periphery position of Appalachia to major social, economic, and political centers results in marginalization that can negatively impact students’ performance and, consequently, their professional lives. In turn, these negative impacts resulting from marginalization carry economic, social, and political ramifications for the region as a whole (Blaustein, 1990).
Chenoweth and Galliher (2004) stated that stereotyping of Appalachian culture presents an image of educational deficiency and lack of professional attainment. Differences between Appalachian and mainstream culture, the authors posit, only serve to perpetuate the isolation of the Appalachian people. Resulting from stereotyping and cultural isolation, Appalachian students report high levels of low self-esteem (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). Students believe they lack the academic abilities and social skills needed to navigate college life (Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). Students’ low self-esteem, they argue, is a major contributor to poor college matriculation rates in some rural areas of Appalachia.

Bradbury and Mather (2009) found that a sense of belonging and ability to adjust academically were defining and influential factors of first-generation Appalachian college students’ experience during their freshmen term. In the study, the student participants attended a smaller college in Appalachian Ohio. Considering that a sense of belonging and positive academic adjustment are necessary to the perceived success of first-generation Appalachian college students attending college in their own home region and culture, the importance of remedying feelings of low self-esteem and inadequacy of Appalachian students is even more important when students must live in and learn to navigate a culture outside their own.

**Marginalization in the schools.** In creating a more inclusive educational environment, it is imperative to listen to the voices of the marginalized (Messiou, 2006a). Wink (2005) defined voice as the language one uses to convey and make meaning of reality. However, over the past few decades, state departments of education have
introduced core standards that are exclusive of local contexts (Gibbs & Howley, 2000). Standards attempt to represent the knowledge that all citizens should know and understand and, consequently, exclude diverse voices. Government officials who design and promote these standardized curricula assert that standard outcomes allow for monitoring of schools and create equity (Gibbs & Howley, 2000). Many educators (e.g. Gibbs & Howley, 2000) worry that standards drive curriculum, erode local control, and limit the connection between the school, community, and local culture. Scholars also claim that standards require schools to adopt a curriculum that limits local input and construes learning to standardized measures (Gibbs & Howley, 2000; Jennings, Swindler, & Koliba, 2005; Reigeluth, 1997).

The lack of local input and cultural context in standard curricula marginalize Appalachian students and other students not identifying with the mainstream culture. Rural scholars view the current standard-based reform movement detrimental in the sense that it attempts to seek the same results for all schools across the nation. A national curriculum not only excludes but devalues local input and further separates rural schools from their communities and cultural heritages. The current educational system has forced rural schools throughout Appalachia and elsewhere to consolidate and forfeit local control, which has created an organizational culture of national surveillance (Howley & Howley, 1995).

Specific to Appalachia and similar rural areas, marginalization of the local culture from the school curriculum leads to a depleted population and struggling economy. The urbanization of the world’s population resulting from the globalization of the market and
rise of technology has propelled rural brain drain, or rural peoples migrating to urban areas in search of employment opportunities and higher standards of living (Spring, 2008). The National Core Curriculum compounds the problem of brain drain by providing students with an education that is not rooted in the local community or related to their lived experiences. Thus, students often choose to leave home in search of professional opportunities that are aligned with their educational background that was based on a core curriculum and more relevant in urban economies (Spring, 2008).

Some parents and families of Appalachian students will not promote or will even outright oppose higher education for their children because they realize that it will likely require their children to leave home either for study or to pursue a career after study (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). The results of rural brain drain include a significant loss of skilled professionals, such as teachers and doctors, negative impacts on the home community’s tax base, and a loss of educational investment made by the community. Rural-to-urban migration will result in negative population growth in rural areas by 2018, and by 2050, 80 percent of the world’s population will live in urban centers, having serious consequences for already struggling rural economies (Spring, 2008).

**Culturally-relevant pedagogy.** Geronimo (2011) argues that schools that work to facilitate educational equity and equality play a pivotal role in mediating the effects of marginalization. Mainstream culture has traditionally embraced the idea of merit-based success without considering the deeply embedded social structures that influence academic achievement, particularly for students of marginalized backgrounds (Geronimo, 2011). Ideas of educational equity and inclusion are considered democratic ideals,
originally posited by educational scholar John Dewey (1897). In order to adopt democratic ideals, school leaders must appreciate and incorporate the specialized knowledge and strengths *all* students, families, and community members contribute to the learning process of students (Diez, Gatt, & Racionero, 2012; Epstein, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Some scholars suggest that schools should actively engage students of diverse backgrounds to facilitate democratic ideals of empowerment and voice that contribute to a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own learning and development and mediate marginalization of Othered populations (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Burbank & Hunter, 2008; Diez et al., 2012; Epstein, 2011; Haeseler, 2011; Sabia, 2011).

Internationally, culturally-relevant curricula and school-family-community partnerships that engage and include marginalized populations are gaining more attention. Programs and curricula that reflect indigenous cultures, such as the Roma in Spain and the Maori of New Zealand, have been implemented at the local and national levels to mediate the effects of historical marginalization, provide greater educational equity and opportunity, and preserve local culture (Melgar, Larena, Ruiz, & Rammel, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2011). Much of this attention has resulted from the growing diversity, increasing migration, heightened international competition, and necessary global cooperation among diverse individuals (Spring, 2008). In contrast, Geronimo (2010), in her analysis of disciplinary alternative education programs, argued that certain practices in the U.S. education system serve only to further alienate and disservice students who have traditionally been marginalized. Geronimo advocates for adopting
policies that mediate rather than exacerbate marginalization to produce a well-educated workforce capable of developing a stronger national economy.

Economic concerns are a reality for many Appalachian families and youth (Billings & Blee, 2000; Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Caudill, 1963). Literature on the poverty of the region resulting from marginalization would suggest that mediating the effects of a long history of marginalization should be the focus of Appalachian schools and communities. The largest portion of the Appalachian region can be classified as rural (ARC, 2012b). As Spring (2008) noted, rural populations are declining as people relocate to urban areas for greater economic opportunity and higher standards of living, resulting in rural brain drain. Therefore, it’s important that rural schools and communities engage in efforts that encourage students to stay or return to their home communities to contribute in meaningful ways (Epstein, 2011; Hobbs, 2004; Spring, 2008). Adding to the discussion, DeYoung (1995) stated that rural schools, to counteract the marginalizing effects of cultural and geographic isolation, should educate students in ways that enable them to navigate the national culture. While much attention has been paid to the education of urban students, rural schools also educate a significant portion of the nation’s youth and play an important role in transmitting both local and national culture (Hobbs, 2004).

**Art, literature, and education in Appalachia.** Schools, teachers, and curricula are capable of propagating local culture and therefore play a critical role in sustaining rural communities (Thomas, 2005). According to some scholars, culturally relevant pedagogy involves incorporating students’ culture into the curriculum and instructional methods,
thereby helping the student develop the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the
dominant culture (Wei, 2002). Wei argues that culturally-relevant pedagogy empowers
students intellectually and increases students’ sense of social, political, and cultural
capital.

Some scholars argue that literature and the arts should be the focal point of
today’s curriculum because they transmit culture from one generation to the next, having
the propensity to cultivate a sense of cultural pride in learners (Vendler, 2010; Waitt,
2006). Strengthening the argument, Vendler posited that culture is developed and rooted
in the arts, which embody human experience. Therefore, the arts allow us to make
meaning of our lived experiences (Vendler, 2010). This argument is similar to
Zunshine’s (2010) statement regarding the field of Cognitive Cultural Studies that posits
that the human mind interprets the meaning of cultural artifacts, events, and other cultural
texts only through learning and participation in the culture.

As an example, Stiler and Allen (2006) found that using culturally-relevant
literature in an after-school program assisted students in developing an understanding of
their cultural heritage, supported academic achievement, and had a positive impact on
students’ self-esteem. The project also forced teachers to reflect on their own language
and dispositions, proving to be transformative for both students and teachers (Stiler &
Allen, 2006). Similarly, Rabin (2010) found that students participating in a teacher
education course reflected on preconceived notions and theoretical literature about
cultures apart from their own more deeply when using fictional literature to explore
diversity. The pre-service teachers, according to Rabin, cited the personal and
emotionally provocative nature of literary arts as having a more profound impact on their thinking as compared to theoretical literature.

Scholars (e.g. Brashears, 2012; Waitt, 2006) call for the use of culturally-relevant literature in Appalachia for a variety of reasons, though empirical research on the subject is lacking. Waitt (2006) and Brashears (2012) provide curriculum guides for incorporating Appalachian literature into high school and elementary Appalachian education, respectively. Appalachian literature when included in the curricula of schools serving Appalachian students has the power to engage students who have shown little interest in reading the traditional literary canon aligned with the middle- and upper-class White male experience by connecting literature to the lived experiences of the students (Brashears, 2012; Waitt, 2006).

The use of culturally-relevant literature in Appalachian classrooms also enables students to critically analyze and resist stereotypical representations of the culture, as well as developing an appreciation for multiculturalism through the introduction of the diversity of the region (Brashears, 2012; Waitt, 2006). Waitt (2006) provides a strong guide for pairing Appalachian literature with writings from the traditional canon for presenting themes often explored in literature classes such as class conflict and conformity and rebellion. This will allow students to first engage and connect with literature that is relevant to their own experiences and then make meaning of literature from a culture outside their own, strengthening pride and understanding of their own cultural heritage while preparing them to navigate mainstream culture (Waitt, 2006).
In her discussions on composition classes in Appalachia, Hayes (2011) suggested that it is important that the Appalachian dialect be appreciated as a culturally-based, different dialect rather than punished as an incorrect and inferior form of speaking compared to Standard English. She positions her argument as supported by the 1972 Conference on College Composition and Communication’s “Students’ Rights to Their Own Language” resolution that declared that the standardization of language is usually the result of one group attempting to dominant another group and that students’ use of different dialects and languages should be respected and viewed as a right. Along with cultural values, Appalachian dialect is often reflected in Appalachian literature, another reason to consider the use and possible impact of incorporating Appalachian literature into a culturally-relevant curriculum for schools serving Appalachian students.

Appalachian culture is one that embraces music, dance, and storytelling (Carawan & Carawan, 1993). Historically, the arts, including literature, have been included in social movements responding to poverty, unfair land, labor, and tax practices, and other problems of the region in order to enact change and transform the region’s circumstances. Effective forms of resistance and community organizing in some Appalachian communities often involved cultural expression in the forms of dance, storytelling, drama, and music (Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Foster, 1993). The Highlander Education Center, now located in New Market, Tennessee in the heart of Appalachia, sought to involve artists of the region in the protests of the United Mine Workers of America in the 1970s and community organizing efforts that included the Appalachian Volunteers and VISTAs, believing the cultural arts unite and strengthen people involved in social
movements (Banks et al., 1993; Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Glen, 1993). Notable artists involved in the Appalachian social movement include John Prine, Jean Ritchie, and Hazel Dickens, among many others (Carawan & Carawan, 1993).

Many scholars and activists suggest that the cultural traditions of Appalachia have the power to unite the region, developing greater resistance and leading to transformation of the culture and region (Banks et al., 1993; Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Glen, 1993). Strengthening Appalachia through cultural pride also provides the opportunity to bridge with national and global cultures, ending the isolation that contributes to its poverty (Fisher, 1993). A renewal of cultural pride can begin in the classrooms of Appalachia where culturally-relevant music and dance, literary and dramatic arts, fine arts, and agricultural and mechanical skills are explored and developed and place is used as a text of the curriculum.

**Place-based education.** Place-based education (PBE) models are an extension or type of culturally-relevant pedagogy (Azano, 2014; Johnson, Thompson, & Naugle, 2009). Place-based education is increasingly referred to as critical pedagogy of place (Azano, 2014; Baquette, 2014). Some scholars use the terms interchangeably, and have also described place-based education as the same as or related to community-based education, service learning, environmental-based education, bioregional education, ecological education, outdoor education, and nature studies (Azano, 2014; Estey, 2014). Historically, PBE is not a new idea but related to Dewey’s historical theory of experiential learning in the early twentieth century. It is simply new terminology which arose in the early 1990s (Evans & Kilinc, 2013).
Place-based education models provide meaning to learning and instruction that otherwise occurs in a decontextualized classroom by being conscious of the place in which learning occurs. (Azano, 2014; Johnson et al., 2009). Thus, PBE decenters the traditional classroom and encourages learning to happen in a variety of natural, social, and cultural environments in and out of the classroom which activate all senses during the learning experience (Estey, 2014; Evans & Kilinc, 2013). PBE incorporates students’ realities into the learning environment while also helping students to connect to place and develop deeper relationships with their surroundings. Like culturally-relevant pedagogy, students’ abilities to connect academic material to lived experiences through place enables more meaningful learning to occur (Ajayi, 2014; Bartsch, 2008; Estey, 2014; Evans & Kilinc, 2013; Sorenson, 2008).

Incorporating local culture, indigenous knowledge, and students’ backgrounds into the learning experience engages students in critical thinking and civic engagement that leads to a more complex understanding of diversity, unchallenged stereotypes, and dominant cultural norms. Such experiences are reflective and transformational, mediating marginalization and having the capacity to solve real-world problems related to social justice (Ajayi, 2014; Azano, 2014; Baquette, 2014; Barnhardt, 2008; Estey 2014). Writing specifically about Appalachia and rural places, Azano (2014) suggested that critical pedagogy of place can help students develop complex, authentic narratives of rural people and places that challenge both positive and negative stereotypical metanarratives. Scholars (e.g. Estey, 2014; Sorenson, 2008) suggest that PBE models be both multidisciplinary and holistic, not just incorporating the five senses, but also
attending to physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental learning. PBE has also been shown to improve students’ academic skills and future aspirations (Bartsch, 2008).

**Leadership for culturally-relevant pedagogy.** Johnson and Reynolds (2011) argued that educational leadership takes place in specific places which are contextually layered geographically and culturally. Leadership for culturally-relevant pedagogy and place-based education is often referred to as culturally-responsive leadership or applied critical leadership, and built on the tenets of transformative leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory (Johnson & Reynolds, 2011; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). The pedagogical approach of applied critical leadership is that of culturally-relevant pedagogy and antiracist pedagogy (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011). Such leadership analyzes the inequities and power relations in educational contexts to promote social justice, educational excellence and equity, and academic engagement of all students (Davis & McCarther, 2015; Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Horsford et al., 2011; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

Educational leaders should adopt a broad conceptualization of human and institutional assets, include local culture and community representatives, be attentive to place, and develop sustainability and stakeholder capacity. Further, such leaders are described as innovative, collaborative, culturally competent, visionary, student-centered, and future oriented. (Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Horsford et al., 2011; Johnson & Reynolds, 2011; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Educational leaders adopting culturally-relevant practices should structure content so that it is interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and delivered in various forms to address different learning styles specific to people, place,
and time (Davis & McCarther, 2015; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). This leadership approach is not only mindful of place and context, but of diversity and intersectionality and their relationship to social justice in learning institutions (Horsford et al., 2011; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

Fraise and Brooks (2015) extended this to add critical consciousness of the self, the “Other”, and the context in which those relationships are occurring as a hallmark of applied critical leadership. Providing a framework for culturally-relevant leadership, the scholars suggest beginning with reflection at both the individual and institutional level to develop said critical consciousness. The second step in the cyclical process is that of learning, or rather unlearning, biases and co-constructing new knowledge across cultural divides. Third, inequitable curricula are replaced with a culturally-relevant pedagogy through a deconstruction of previously held assumptions that guided decision-making processes. Finally, leadership takes action and maintains the cycle (Fraise & Brooks, 2015).

**Justification of conceptual framework.** I selected the concepts of Appalachia, marginalization, and culturally-relevant pedagogy based on the research questions and objectives. The first stated research question seeks to analyze any change in students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. Thus, marginalization and related stereotypical thinking are concepts necessary for positioning the initial ideologies students hold about Appalachian culture and any transformation that occurs. Within the survey and interview protocols, questions directly related to students’ understanding and experiences with Appalachian stereotypes are included, again validating marginalization as a concept.
Similar to the first research question, the fourth research question seeks to analyze the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian culture. The instructor interview protocol includes questions that relate the instructor’s thinking to decision-making and teaching practices within the course and also emphasize the importance of understanding marginalization and stereotyping of Appalachian culture and the resulting effects.

Research questions two and three focus on students’ perceptions of meaningful teaching and learning through an exploration of teaching practices and course materials, warranting an understanding of culturally-relevant pedagogy and place-based education as teaching approaches, with particular attention paid to the Appalachian context. This along with background questions included in the protocols that were used with both students and the instructor point to the importance of a conceptual definition of the Appalachian context. In developing this conceptual framework, I sought to identify the overarching concepts that partially guided the analysis of the data and aided in understanding the analysis.

**Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy**

**The role of theory in qualitative research.** Patton (2002) discussed the variety of theoretical frameworks that research has been situated in throughout time, paying particular attention to qualitative research methods. Many frameworks have evolved over the course of research history, often related to or in opposition to previous theories, and include such approaches as phenomenology, heuristics, ethnography, and narratology, to name just a few (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). Critical theory is yet another theoretical framework particularly relevant to the proposed study. Critical theory is a framework
that is naturally orientational, or value-oriented, seeking to critique society and initiate
change based on that critique (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 1993). Orientational research also
includes frameworks such as feminist inquiry and queer theory (Glesne, 2011; Patton,
2002; Thomas, 1993). Unlike more conventional forms of research that seek to define
and understand, critical theory and orientational research, or critical research, rejects the
idea of knowledge for knowledge’s sake and stresses the obligation of scholars to society
(Thomas, 1993). In doing so, critical research subverts commonly accepted ideologies
that constrain the definitions of culture, society, and the roles of individuals in it by
raising questions about what culture, society, and individuals can be (Glesne, 2011;
Thomas, 1993). Critical research in itself is not a methodology, but it does often
incorporate certain research approaches including participatory and action research
(Patton, 2002).

In raising these questions, critical researchers often focus their endeavors on
acting as the voice of marginalized groups, facilitating empowerment among members of
the group (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002; Thomas, 1993). Critical theory as a school of
philosophical thought is rooted in analysis of class-based power and struggle within
societies (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Corradetti, 2011; Darder, 1995; Freire, 1968;
Critical questions surrounding deeply embedded power structures that result in
inequality, of advantage for one group at the disadvantage of another group, are by nature
political, biased, and sometimes yield dangerous knowledge (Thomas, 1993). Dangerous
knowledge resulting from critical research challenges power structures and suggests
actions for developing social justice and equality, often viewed as radical and a threat to those in power (Freire, 1968; Thomas, 1993).

Democratic themes of social justice, equality, voice, and empowerment run throughout critical research, which embraces ideals of human rights and full participation of all members of society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Thomas, 1993). Critical researchers approach research by openly proclaiming their positionality and being reflexive and open to critique, yet still maintaining the same scientific rigor as conventional researchers (Thomas, 1993). Though a value orientation is unapologetically and unashamedly embraced in critical research, I strived to remain neutral when analyzing data, not imposing my own meanings in place of participants’ meanings and interpretations while being transparent and owning my biases (Thomas, 1993).

**Historical foundations of critical theory.** Critical Theory is considered first developed by philosophers of the Frankfurt School of Germany including Theodor Andorno, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas (second-generation) and Max Horkheimer (Corradetti, 2011; Darder, 1995; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.). The Frankfurt School was first created by the Institute for Social Research as specific school of thought, whose original mission when opening in 1923 was to develop Marxist studies throughout Germany (Corradetti, 2011). The original scholars’ thinking was affected by the devastated post-WWI economy in Germany and Central Europe that was characterized by failed strikes and high unemployment rates (Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.). Marxist theory analyzed class-based power relations and inequalities in an effort to subvert ideological beliefs that silenced and oppressed marginalized peoples. Likewise,
it attempted also to subvert the consciousness created by those ideological beliefs upon which the marginalized had come to depend for defining their circumstances, identities, and roles in society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). This consciousness presumed that the marginalized of society were incapable of independent thought, were less human, and, therefore, not worthy of the same rights bestowed upon the upper classes of society. Moving beyond simple analysis and critique, Marxist theory posited the notion that marginalized people, upon developing their own consciousness, had the power to define their own identity and history (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

The school of thought known as Critical Theory first developed when Nazis closed the Institute in 1933 and the first generation of theorists moved to Columbia University in New York. Some scholars trace the origins of Critical Theory further back than Marx to Kant, Descartes, Aristotle, and Plato (Darder, 1995). Ancient Greece, from an arguably Eurocentric worldview, was the birthplace of modern democracy. Political debate and discourse was open to all members of the society and served a greater purpose than merely obtaining popular opinion. Arenas of political debate were also spaces of teaching and learning, and education was believed to happen though living and participating in the collective. It is important to note, however, that slave labor was prevalent and both slaves and women held a lower role in a hierarchical, only partially democratic society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Though originally based on class structures, critical theory would eventually be adapted and applied in many different contexts.
Other contexts in which critical theory would be adapted and applied include the analysis of power and inequality in racial hierarchies, referred to as critical race theory, and the application to women’s issues, known as feminist inquiry (Patton, 2002). Many of the different theoretical lenses that fall under the umbrella of critical theory share commonalities and often overlap. Though multiple theoretical frameworks could be applied to the current study, I believe that a theoretical framework of critical pedagogy is most relevant to the research objectives. For example, Marxist frameworks can be used to analyze the class-based struggle that has created and reinforced the marginalization of Appalachia. Cognitive cultural studies can be employed to understand how Appalachian culture has come to be defined and redefined. Postmodernists would oppose the Appalachian metanarrative of marginalization and emphasize the differences found among the data. Some of these frameworks have contributed to and are embedded in critical pedagogy, though they could each stand alone. I strived to remain open to the application of the various theoretical frameworks when analyzing the data, but approached the study with critical pedagogy as the overarching theoretical framework.

**Historical foundations of critical pedagogy.** Critical pedagogy is a form of teaching and learning rooted in critical theory and thought to be the entrance of cultural studies into educational discourse (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Marx believed in the ability of the marginalized to define history and identity for themselves when they were pushed to examine structural inequalities and develop a new consciousness. However, he saw schools as institutions determined by the same power structures that silenced and oppressed marginalized people and, therefore, an extension of and apparatus for enacting
that domination (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Giroux (1981), a notable contributor to the theory, introduced the idea that pop culture plays a role in perpetuating domination and oppression in modern American society and greatly influences the identity formation of today’s youth (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Learning from and following in the footsteps of the original Critical Theorists, many scholars have contributed to the shaping of critical pedagogy. John Dewey and his ideas of democratic education, Antonio Gramsci and his exploration of hegemony, and Raymond Williams’ development of Cultural Studies, or the study of cultural artifacts and events as texts of cultural meaning and creation, have all largely impacted critical pedagogy as a theoretical lens for analyzing educational systems and practices (Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.).

**Defining critical pedagogy.** Wink (2005) provides a simplified definition of critical pedagogy, stating that it teaches students “to name, to reflect critically, and to act” (p. 23). It is learning, relearning, and unlearning, and recognizes both students and teachers as learning and teaching simultaneously (Freire, 1998; Wink, 2005). As already alluded to, critical pedagogy reveals inequalities resulting from power relations of dominance and oppression through the process of conscientization (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Freire, 1968, 1998; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Razak, 1993). Conscientization results in the confidence of marginalized individuals – those made to feel less worthy at the peripheries of power - in their abilities, knowledge, and experience; they come to “know that they know” and are no longer passive victims of a system that silences and disempowers them (Wink, 2005, p. 32). Though the original critical theorists were focused on class-based power struggles, contemporary scholars
generally adopt a postmodern approach that rejects a master metanarrative of the
oppressed and considers the intersectionalities of class, gender, race, and sexual
orientation and the notion that identity is flexible and evolving (Carlson & Dimitriadis,
2003).

Hegemony, a concept first introduced by Italian philosopher and critical theorist
Antonio Gramsci (1971), describes the complacent acceptance of oppression by the
oppressed who have come to be dependent on the oppressor for a definition of reality
(Darder, 1995). Hegemony achieves the partial consent of the oppressed to their
domination through the control of knowledge by the dominant group, rather than by more
overt means of control (Wink, 2005). Developing a critical consciousness is not enough.
The new knowledge and ideologies created through conscientization must be
accompanied by action for social transformation that names and subverts hegemonic
systems (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Wink,
2005). In engaging in critical pedagogy, educators and researchers act on behalf of the
marginalized peoples they serve by empowering their voice, which has been historically
silenced by those wielding greater power (Wink, 2005). The voice of the marginalized
reveal and color their experiences and reality in place of, and sometimes in opposition to,
the voice of the dominant culture that has controlled the definition of reality in which the
marginalized have been subjugated (Wink, 2005).

Critical pedagogues engage in education and research from the worldview of the
marginalized in an attempt to subvert commonly accepted ideologies that perpetuate
social, political, and economic inequality (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995;
In a somewhat Marxian vein, some scholars have suggested that schools and similar institutions are determined by members of the dominant culture who also define reality for themselves and those they oppress (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). However, others argue that when critical pedagogy is adopted, schools become democratic spaces that emancipate and empower students to define their own history, identity, and future (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Wink, 2005). As previously mentioned, Giroux emphasizes the important role of pop culture in youth identity formation and the re-creation of inequality, arguing that schools and educators must begin to analyze cultural productions critically (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Along these lines, Giroux conducted an analysis of popular Disney cartoon movies that perpetuate gender and race stereotypes, while other scholars have provided analyses of Barbie, the World Wrestling Entertainment corporation, the Appalachian Hillbilly as an American cultural icon and Dangerous Minds, the 1995 film by Simpson, Bruckheimer, and Smith about a white teacher who “saves” a group of students of color (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Harkins, 2004; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004).

Multiple theorists and academics have suggested critical pedagogy as a means of liberation from oppressive systems wielding hegemonic power that serve to advantage the dominant culture (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Freire, 1998; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Wink, 2005). Those that practice critical pedagogy and conscientization emphasize facilitating experiences that are empowering, are owned by those participating, and produce social change as it is defined by the participants (Freire,
Individuals who participate in a critical pedagogy and process of conscientization come to recognize ideologies that have traditionally defined history and society as something that can be rewritten (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Freire, 1998; Loughlin, 1994; Wink, 2005). Emancipation, or liberation, occurs when the individual is free from their dependence on seemingly natural constraints in their knowing, ideologies promoted by the dominant culture (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Freire, 1968, 1998; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Wink, 2005).

The historical marginalization of Appalachian culture that has resulted in economic, political, and social inequality in the region would suggest the usefulness of a critical pedagogy that empowers the Appalachian voice. The outside imposition of a historical reality, the Hillbilly metanarrative, by corporate interests, corrupt politicians, and unwitting scholars and activists that has long silenced the lived reality of the Appalachian people has by most groups remained unquestioned and unchallenged (Billings & Blee, 2000; Dunaway, 1996; Duncan, 1992; Harkins, 2004). For this reason, a critical pedagogy that works to raise the consciousness of disenfranchised Appalachians that will develop a confidence in what they know they know and to name, reflect critically, and act should be at the forefront of educators’ thinking.

The Appalachian people have a long history of engaging in critical thinking, resistance, and social activism (Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Fisher, 1993). However, the dominant Hillbilly metanarrative still prevails as perpetuated by mass media in movies and shows like *Deliverance* (Boorman, 1972), *Wrong Turn* (Behring et al., 2003) and its
numerous sequels, and the MTV reality show “Buckwild” (Barken et al., 2013).

Unaware authors and journalists also continue to promote Appalachian stereotypes. Classic examples include Ann Curry’s reporting in the “Friends and Neighbors” (Libretto, 2010) documentary on poverty in Appalachian Ohio and Diane Sawyer’s reporting on youth issues in Kentucky Appalachia in “A Hidden America: Children of the Mountains” (Dauer, Powers, & Pierson, 2009).

If we return to the authors suggesting a culturally-relevant pedagogy for Appalachian students and schools (e.g. Brashears, 2012; Hayes, 2011; Waitt, 2006), we understand the purpose is to connect students to their learning through a reality that aligns with their own lived experiences. When students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, the first step to developing the confidence that they know what they know is taken. Students can then begin to explore ideologies that have long been silenced by the dominant metanarrative of reality. Educators must take a step beyond including students’ culture in the curriculum and encourage critical reflection that questions the previous lack of culturally-relevant curricula. Students should also be encouraged to question the contradictory ideologies of reality, inequality, and who is advantaged and disadvantaged through maintenance of the dominant ideology visible in pop culture, education, and other social institutions.

**Cultural Studies.** As stated, Henry Giroux first coined the term critical pedagogy and introduced Cultural Studies into educational discourse (Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.). Cultural Studies as a school of thought is traditionally linked to the scholars of the Birmingham Center for Cultural Studies in England (Carlson &
Dimitriadis, 2003). The field of cultural studies is difficult to define because it has resisted traditional academic definitions in favor of a definition that can evolve with culture and new problems. Scholars of cultural studies have rejected high culture as a definition of culture and have turned to popular culture and the cultural practices of everyday people for developing a progressive political agenda (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). Cultural Studies is sometimes defined as an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing expressions of culture in different forms and in different contexts (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). Finding its roots in critical race theory, feminist inquiry, queer theory and disability studies, among other critical theories, cultural studies is committed to the promotion of democratic ideals of equality and social justice, having always focused on the influence of the ordinary masses in cultural revolutions (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Within education, Cultural Studies has been influential in critical pedagogy, as well as in the social foundations of education and the reconceptualist curriculum movement. Cultural Studies provides educators with a space for approaching critical analyses of social and cultural practices in ways that relate to students’ everyday lives while encouraging them to look beyond what is to what could be (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

Cultural Studies enable educators and students to begin developing critical questions that empower the voices of the historically marginalized, drawing attention to the hidden curriculum within education and relationships of power that result in inequality (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004). With a focus on democratic ideals, the marginal voice, power dynamics, and competing definitions of culture and reality, a
curriculum infused with Cultural Studies informs the practices of critical pedagogy (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Scholars and activists of the Appalachian region took a first step towards Cultural Studies and critical pedagogy when they developed an interdisciplinary approach that involved the participation of the marginalized in efforts to change political and economic institutions and practices through illuminating hegemonic domination and oppression in the land survey conducted by the Highlander Center and Appalachian Alliance in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Banks et al., 1993; Carawan & Carawan, 1993).

**Democratic ideals.** Some scholars suggests that the growing diversity and interconnectedness of the world today emphasizes the need for educators to contribute to the development of a society of individuals who value diversity, human rights, and civic engagement (Banks, 2004; Stewart, 2007). Educators of the newly globalized world must be democratic, humanist teachers and learners who contribute to a socially just society (Banks, 2004; Wang, 2009). Critical educators in favor of a socially just, democratic society should work to facilitate collaboration and communication across boundaries and promote an education that extends beyond basic literacy to equality, social justice, and empowerment of marginalized groups (Banks, 2004; Stewart, 2007; Wang, 2003).

Critical pedagogy embraces democratic ideals as the foundation for teaching and learning (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.). The banking method of transferring fact or knowledge from teacher to pupil without problematizing unquestioned ideologies constructed by the dominant culture is
void of the democratic ideals of voice, conscientization, freedom, and empowerment that contribute to a transformed society that values social justice and equality (Freire, 1998). Banking models of teaching serve to further marginalize students, supposing students to be void of thought and unable to construct reality for themselves in a way that is valuable and meaningful (Wink, 2005). The goal of critical pedagogy, then, is to reject traditional banking system education models and to raise the consciousness of marginalized peoples in order to inspire action for social transformation (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.).

Social transformation is rooted in endeavors to mediate the effects of power imbalances that result in structural inequalities in order to achieve social justice and equality. Critical pedagogy is emancipating and empowering, and the educator/researcher acts as a voice on behalf of the marginalized, empowering them to define reality from their own worldview and create their own identities. A pedagogy that lacks action that results in social transformation cannot be considered a critical pedagogy. Some scholars accept the notion that changing students’ perceptions, thinking, or ideological beliefs is a form of social transformation in itself that will contribute to greater, sustained change as time progresses.

The role of Marxism. Marxist thought originally critiqued power related to a classist society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Karl Marx and scholars who shared his thinking believed that schools served as a tool of the state to perpetuate dominant, mythical ideologies through indoctrination into the existing structure of dominance and oppression (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Wink, 2005). This belief followed the logic
that a capitalist society must maintain dominance to control reproduction of a
disempowered labor force that served the advantage of the ruling classes (Carlson &
Dimitriadis, 2003; Wink, 2005). This controlled reproduction was maintained through
public education by controlling the knowledge and ideologies that defined reality. When
such subtle forms of control failed, overt forms of control, such as military and police
force were employed (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). A history of violence and police
force surrounds protests to strip mining in Appalachia, when the more subtle forms of
reproducing a silent, oppressed, and acquiescent labor force had failed (Bingman, 1993;
Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Glen, 1993; Sessions & Ansley, 1993).

Contemporary scholars still consider schools and, more specifically, formal
curricula as perpetuating a bourgeois ideology of capitalist production and which is often
termed tracking when occurring in today’s schools (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Wink,
2005). Mass media is also skeptically criticized for its social reproduction of middle
class culture. Along this line of inquiry, scholars have investigated the ways in which
ideology devalues the language and culture of one group of people (the marginalized,
thereafter) while simultaneously privileging the language and culture of the middle and
upper classes, which dominate in society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). An example of
this is the portrayal of the Appalachian dialect as an improper and substandard form of
speech compared to Standard English spoken by middle and upper classes (Hayes, 2011).

Moving beyond a cynical and perhaps fatalist perspective that capitalism, through
hegemony, reproduces social inequality and a consumer society, Freire contributed to the
ideas of Marx and critical theory the idea that educators can facilitate conscientization
among marginalized students that illuminates and subverts oppressive ideologies (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Thus began the development of critical pedagogy, which is still informed by Marxism and critical theory today.

**Critical pedagogy and identity formation.** “One of the most important tasks of critical education practices…is to engage [learners] in the experience of assuming themselves as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons…” (Freire, 1998, p. 45). Indeed, education is very much about the formation of identity, rather than just the transmission of knowledge. Identity is defined in relation to others, and is often based on power, be it an empowered or disempowered identity. Many social struggles revolve around the privileging of one identity group at the disadvantage of another; thus one’s identity is defined by the other’s, by who they are not. This is one theory of identity, identity socially constructed through struggle, promoted by modern progressives such as Hegel and Marx (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). In contrast, some perspectives propose identity as essential and naturally-derived, immutable and united rather than fragmented. Examples of such identity theories include women’s ways of knowing as an essential and natural characteristic shared by all women and defining their womanliness. Likewise, African American studies focuses on a united, unchanging identity of Blackness (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

From the social constructivist views of Hegel and Marx, consciousness can keep individuals empowered or disempowered, independent or dependent. Although identities created through dialectical processes of struggle keep individuals bound within certain limits when creating or assuming their identities, such identity formation is useful in
uniting for social movements of liberation. Education should, then, help students question the ideologies that identify them as marginalized and develop a resistance to domination while promoting a sense of solidarity in struggle with other marginalized groups. Education should also challenge students of the dominant culture to question their own privilege and the disadvantage dealt to marginalized populations (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). In critical pedagogy where conscientization and social transformation are defining goals, the Marxian and Hegelian understanding of identity as emergent, mutable, created in the mirror of the “Other”, and politically and socially uniting becomes central to its purposes and applications (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

**Postmodernism.** Postmodernism is sometimes considered a whole new era of philosophical thinking, while others recognize postmodernism as an evolution and rejection of modernism (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). It is fitting, then, to provide a brief definition of modernism to assist in defining postmodernism. Modernity embraces the metanarrative of an achievable utopian democracy through the power of human reason; that one such undeniable truth of social justice, equality, and liberation would reign when the language of a transparent reality was employed (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

Postmodernism begins with a skeptical critique of any unified, objective truth. It understands attempts at unity as erasing difference and promoting standardization (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Society is now defined by chaos, heterogeneity, and fragmentation. Language does not reveal one true reality, but engages people in the creative endeavor of constructing society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).
Mass media productions replace the original supposed ultimate reality with virtual realities for understanding experience (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Some view postmodernism as directly related to mass capitalist consumerism and recognize that rationality without reason has not progressed society to a place that widely embraces truly democratic ideals. Rather, we live in an unsustainable social world void of humanizing work and enlightenment (Banks et al., 1993).

In rejecting any semblance of an essential and unifying metanarrative of reality or marginal identity, postmodernism embraces the intersectionalities of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. It posits that identity is fluid and evolving, and promotes exploration of the borderlands of identity. Hybrid identities such as the Creole and the Affrilachian have emerged as flexible, fluid, borderland identities (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Walker, 2000). Women’s issues may differ along lines of race, class, nationality, sexual orientation or other numerous identity markers. Similarly, class struggle may differ along gender and racial lines, and so forth.

In rejecting one unifying history of struggle and oppression, postmodernism renames the Oppressed. The Oppressed become the marginalized, the “Other”, or those subjugated in society (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Postmodernism recognizes that all people are subjugated in different ways and at different times. In rejecting the Enlightenment language of an ideal democracy, postmodernism adopts a more cynical language of limited freedom for self-determination (Banks et al., 1993; Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Postmodernism’s exploration of a fragmented reality and rejection of a cultural metanarrative or unifying marginality have centralized it as means for
critiquing contemporary society in critical pedagogy. Likewise, its scrutiny of popular culture as contributing to youth identity formation and maintenance of power structures that result in inequality have promoted its role within contemporary critical pedagogy.

**Appalachian Studies: A critical pedagogy.** Appalachian Literature belongs to the academic field of Appalachian Studies. Similar to Women’s Studies, Appalachian Studies as an academic field grew out of the grassroots social movements beginning in the 1960s that were in response to the failed War on Poverty and protests against unfair practices involved in strip mining (Banks et al., 1993). Unlike other traditional academic fields in which the main purpose of research and study was to build upon an existing body of knowledge, Appalachian Studies developed as a field that brought together scholars, activists, and community members to discuss and research the region’s problems and to develop a plan of action that would initiate positive change. The field, along with its representative Appalachian Studies Association and conference, was by default interdisciplinary, bringing together artists, musicians, writers, educators, sociologists, environmentalists, and many other activists and academicians with a united goal of mediating the impoverished circumstances of the region by developing a deep understanding of the structures, policies, and practices that had created them (Banks et al., 1993).

Through the land survey carried out in the early 1980s by community groups, activists had identified some of the underlying causes that had facilitated high rates of poverty, unemployment, and lack of educational quality. Activists, scholars, and community members also perceived President Johnson’s War on Poverty to have failed
its mission, only leading to a greater dependency among the people and failing to create sustained change, as evidenced by the higher unemployment and poverty rates coupled with lower educational attainment rates (ARC, 2000; ARC 2012a; ARC 2012b). Finally, while some of the strip mining protests and union strikes were successful in meeting their goals of influencing employment practices, tax legislation, and landownership rights, many were met by too great an opposition from both government and corporations (Banks et al., 1993). Historically, then, it is evident that Appalachian Studies as an academic field developed as a sort of critical pedagogy that sought to analyze the practices, policies, and events that created and sustained the structural inequalities and power imbalances that inhibited the overall progress of the region.

**Justification of theoretical framework.** Throughout the section, the author has attempted to link critical pedagogy and its major tenets and contributing theories as a theoretical lens to the study of Appalachian problems as framed within educational discourse. As demonstrated in the last subsection, Appalachian Studies as a field is one of critical theory and a critical pedagogy. Having grown from social movements of the marginalized to transform the society they live in to a more equitable and socially just one through examination of dominance and oppression, Appalachian Studies is first a critical theory. Its application as an academic field with goals of raising the consciousness of Appalachian people in order to rewrite the ideologies that define their identity and existence moves it to a critical pedagogy.

The study was situated in a class on Appalachian literature, which falls under the umbrella of Appalachian Studies. The course was also a literature course, which is
informed by literary theory, another branch of critical theory related to cultural studies as the analysis of texts and language for cultural meaning. This informed the instructor’s course objectives of developing an appreciation and understanding of Appalachian culture. In order to develop an appreciation of a marginalized culture, dominant ideologies that have devalued Appalachian culture must be subverted and the traditionally silenced and marginalized voice of the Appalachian people must be privileged. When teaching practices raise the consciousness and transform the thinking of students through critical reflection, the teacher and students are engaging in critical pedagogy. In analyzing teaching practices, student perceptions of Appalachian culture, and the instructor’s conceptualization of Appalachian culture and selection of course materials, the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy was most relevant and useful in approaching the data.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Design

Solutions to society’s problems often take the form of policies or programs which can be evaluated through the use of case study designs (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002). In order to evaluate a program or policy, one must study the processes by which something occurs or operates, such as the processes of a specific program. Studying the processes by which something occurs is particularly well-suited to qualitative study in that it requires detailed description, participants’ stories of experience, is not easily quantified, and values participants’ perceptions (Maxwell, 2004a; Patton, 2002). Likewise, Patton states that qualitative methods are often used in evaluation research because they capture the stories of participants and, in turn, tell a rich story for the program being evaluated.

Traditionally, evaluation research has been separated into two types: formative and summative. Formative evaluation research is more relevant to the proposed study and therefore warrants definition. Formative evaluations often take the form of case studies and serve the purpose of improving a program, policy, product or whatever is the case (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1994; Stake & Munson, 2008). Though some view the case study as a research strategy, the case study defines what is to be studied rather than how something is to be studied. In other words, case study research may involve a number of designs, methods, and purposes (Glesne, 2011). In this particular case study, the participants were treated as individual cases nested in the larger case that is the literature course. The purposes of the study are multiple – to provide
formative, in-depth, meaningful feedback that may inform the knowledge and practices of the participants and a broader audience - but fall within an evaluation research approach.

The findings of formative evaluation research are context specific, thereby relying heavily on qualitative methods that provide thick description of the context at hand, and are not meant to be generalized (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1994). However, the purposes of evaluations have begun to reach beyond summative and formative. Many evaluations, such as the one at hand, seek not only to provide formative feedback to participants to improve the program being studied but to identify best practices and lessons learned that may be applied in similar contexts or to similar problems. In the current study, the formative evaluation purposes were secondary to the identification of best practices and lessons learned that add to the larger body of research. Patton (2002) suggested a continuum of theory-to-action to describe the variety of purposes of qualitative research. He described formative case study evaluations like the one presented here as aligned most closely with applied research. This is due to the idea that the formative evaluation is meant to identify the strengths and weaknesses in order to improve a given program and can provide clues to addressing similar problems in similar contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1994).

As stated, case studies are especially well-suited to evaluation research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) defines five applications for its use within evaluation research. These five applications include explanation, description, illustration, exploration, and meta-evaluation. The current study uses the case study
design to both explain linkages between course implementation and course outcomes and to describe the course and the actual context in which it occurred. According to Patton (2002), in conducting a case study, it is important to always begin with the smallest unit of analysis. In an evaluative case study such as this, each individual participant is a case study nested within the larger program case study. The data collected from each individual participant case study is combined to make up the program case study. The current study first analyzes student and instructor participants as individual case studies and then combines the data for cross-case analysis to analyze the course as a larger case study. This is presented in further detail in the analysis section of this chapter.

Yin (2003) identified case study research designs as being best suited for answering questions of how and why. Experiments can also serve to answer how and why questions, but case studies are particularly useful in research in which the environment cannot be manipulated or controlled. In order to answer the research questions, I designed and completed a qualitative case study to understand how instructor practices and course material impact students’ thinking about Appalachian culture. This overarching “how” question has been broken into four research questions:

1. How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?
2. Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful?
3. Which components of the course do students identify as impactful?
4. How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?
In order to understand how participation in the course impacted students’ thinking about Appalachian culture, I collected data from student participants to identify which teaching practices, course materials, and experiences were most meaningful and what impact the students felt they had on their thinking. To accomplish this, I conducted observations, qualitative surveys, interviews, and document analysis to provide a thick, detailed description of each participant’s experience in the course. Analysis of the data allowed me to answer the first three research questions. In order to answer the fourth research question, data was also collected through an instructor interview that provided a detailed story of how the instructor’s thinking and decision-making impacted course processes and, in turn, student thinking. Combining the data from each individual participant case, a larger case study of the program was formed that provided a formative evaluation for the instructor and best practices and lessons learned for use in similar contexts.

The overarching “how” question, use of qualitative data collection methods, and evaluation purposes of the current study justified the use of the case study design following the descriptions of Patton (2002) and Yin (2003). Similarly, in order to provide evaluative feedback that was useful and meaningful to the instructor and individuals seeking to solve similar problems or create similar programs in comparable contexts, it was imperative that I did not manipulate the environment, participants, or other variables in the study. This allowed me to describe the actual context of the course, one of the five applications of case study design according to Yin (2003). Therefore, the current case study design is also one of naturalistic inquiry in which I did not manipulate participants or any variables in the study, allowing data to emerge from the natural
context. An emergent and naturalistic design is another defining factor of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1994; Stake & Munson, 2008).

**Site selection.** Glesne (2011) described how sites may be phenomenon- or geographic-specific, or be determined through some other rationale. First, I needed to locate a course on Appalachian literature, determined by the first question, “How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perception of the culture?” Courses on Appalachian literature are not offered at all or even many universities. I contacted instructors of Appalachian literature courses at three universities and chose the site based on the availability of the course during the study timeframe and communication with the instructor.

Glesne (2011) discussed the important role of building rapport with participants when conducting qualitative research. Simultaneously, she warns against conducting research in one’s own institution or community because of the potential pitfalls that may arise due to being too close to the participants or setting. Potential pitfalls can include ethical and political dilemmas, feelings of guilt or anxiety over the findings to be reported, and the acquisition of dangerous knowledge or information that is professionally risky for the researcher and may lead to the need to break away from the institution or community after conducting research (Glesne, 2011). In the current study, I developed rapport with the instructor prior to conducting the study through email communications and meeting at an academic conference. I was somewhat familiar with
the setting and other instructors at the same institution, which was outside my own institution and community.

The case study took place in a course on Appalachian literature at university which will be known as Smoky Mountain University for the purposes of the study. The university was situated in the Smoky Mountain region of Appalachia. The town and university were located in a county recognized by the Appalachian Regional Commission as an Appalachian county (Appalachian Regional Commission, n.d.) The university enrolled approximately 10,000 students, was a member of a state university system, and was accredited to provide degrees up to and including doctorate degrees (Smoky Mountain University, 2013). Students enrolled at the university represented 44 states and 27 countries. The majority of the students enrolled at the university were from the United States. Most of the students enrolled at the university came from the state in which it was located (Smoky Mountain University, 2012).

Along with building rapport and avoiding the pitfalls of conducting research too close to home, the research site also aligned with the research questions and purposes and had the potential to deliver some unique benefits. A large portion of the students coming from the state represented counties designated as part of Appalachia or counties that border the federally designated Appalachian region. The greatest concentrated group of enrollees was from an Appalachian county in the state, making up about 10% of the enrollment. The next largest suppliers of students to the university outside of the home state and its counties were states with counties also designated as Appalachian (Smoky Mountain University, 2012).
The university’s location in the Appalachian region and enrollment of a student body that offered the opportunity to work with students from both inside and outside Appalachia made the university an ideal location to conduct the study due to the potential to gather the perspectives of both members and non-members of the Appalachian culture. The Liberal Arts structure of the course added to the diversity of student participants in that students from all majors and levels were admitted to the course. The diversity among students and the perspectives and experiences they brought with them added to the richness of the data. This is discussed in further detail in the next section, Selection of Participants.

**Selection of participants.** Qualitative research uses purposeful sampling, meaning that the sample is obtained to meet the purposes of the study rather than to generalize to a larger population (Glense, 2011; Patton, 2002). To fulfill the purposes of the study, the design employed a criterion sampling strategy. Patton (2002) defines criterion sampling as purposeful sampling in which participants must meet specific criteria to participate in the study. In the current study, the criterion was participation in the course on Appalachian literature, either as a student or instructor. The course was a lower-level undergraduate Liberal Arts course offered through the department of English that was open to students of all majors and levels. There was only one section of the course being taught during the fall semester 2013.

**Instructor participant.** The purpose in sampling the instructor of the course was to answer the fourth research question, “How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course
materials?” One instructor participant was identified as part of the target sample. The selected instructor, the only instructor teaching the course during the study timeframe, was an Associate Professor in the English Department of the university. The instructor held a Doctorate of Philosophy in Southern Literature from a notable university in southern Appalachia. The instructor wrote and edited several published works and taught classes related to Appalachian, Southern, and Native American Literature. She had held a position at the research site for nearly 20 years, had earned tenure at the research university, and had been teaching the course and similar Appalachian literature courses at the research site for several years.

**Student participants.** In purposefully sampling students of the course on Appalachian literature, I aimed to answer the first three research questions regarding the impacts of course participation, selected materials, and teaching practices on students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. I identified all students enrolled in the course and in attendance during her first class visit as the target sample, with enrollment and attendance at the first visit as the sampling criteria. I anticipated a target sample size of 30 or less, though the actual target sample ended up including 35 students. Throughout the semester, data was collected from all students present the first day of class who met the requirements of participation and who completed consent forms. Data were collected from BlackBoard discussion postings and from journal entries sent by I through email to all participants. At the end of the semester, 13 students had completed journal entries. I purposively sampled six interview participants from these 13 participants completing journal entries.
The course was a Liberal Arts course and was open to students of all majors and levels. Therefore, I anticipated a varied, heterogeneous sample of students ranging in age, ethnicity, major, level, gender, and other demographics. It was important to distinguish that criterion sampling was the method employed and, despite the potentially diverse student participant sample, maximum variation sampling was not used in the study. Maximum variation sampling selects cases that differ widely across a variable, such as ethnicity, and compares for patterns and themes among diversity (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002).

**Sources of Data**

Qualitative data most often takes the form of observations, interviews, and document analysis with variation in each category aligning with the research purposes (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002; Glesne, 2011). In order to enhance the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, I collected data using multiple techniques including classroom observations, student and instructor interviews, student surveys, and document analysis. Using a variety of techniques to collect data from multiple sources provides greater insight into varied perspectives and experiences through analysis of patterns and deviant cases (Glesne, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Some scholars refer to the use of multiple data sources and collection techniques as *data source triangulation* (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005), while others use the term *crystallization* to emphasize the multidimensional nature of qualitative data (Glesne, 2011).
Observations. I conducted two direct observations of the course meeting, on the first and last days of class. The number of observations was limited due to the study time frame, distance, and solo researcher approach. The beginning and end of the course were selected to develop a sense of how the course began and how it was concluded, as well as aligning with the time frame in which student pre- and post-surveys were conducted. Conducting an observation at the end of the course also aligned with the time frame for conducting student interviews, while the observation at the beginning of the course aligned with the time frame for the instructor interview. Direct observations range from casual to formal observations of the case study site in which the researcher observes as an outsider and does not participate in the setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2003). Some scholars suggest there is a continuum of the role of the observer ranging from full participant to full observer (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). According to Patton’s (2002) depiction of the variations in the role of the observer, I conducted the observations as an “onlooker observer (spectator)” and did not participate in the class meeting, save for one ice breaker activity on the first day of class at the instructor’s request (p. 277). Participation in this one activity served to help I build rapport with the students enrolled in the class.

Direct observations are beneficial in conducting case studies in that they allow the researcher to collect data that is contextual and temporal, adding to the thick, detailed description that hallmarks qualitative research and is used to construct new knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Stake, 1994; Yin, 2003). Direct observations also have inherent weaknesses, two of which are particularly relevant to the current study: selectivity and
reflexivity. Selectivity refers to the usually narrow scope of case study observations, and
reflexivity refers to the idea of participants behaving differently because they are being
observed (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Despite the possible influence the observations may have had on student participants’ behaviors and interactions, I conducted the observations under full disclosure to students and the instructor. This was in ethical consideration of the participants’ right to consent to participation in the study. I also believed that full disclosure would help preserve any trust established between the instructor and students that would better facilitate students’ democratic exercise of voice. In other words, students would not feel betrayed by the instructor who knew in advance the researcher’s agenda and would hopefully feel more comfortable participating in the class if they, too, knew the researcher’s purpose and had the right to choose whether or not to participate in the study.

Time and resources in general are very real constraints to be considered when conducting research (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). In this case, completion of the dissertation warranted that I collect data as a solo researcher, even though case studies and different data collection techniques are often easier to conduct and yield more reliable results when carried out by a team of researchers (Yin, 2003). Working as a solo researcher also impacted the scope of the observations, as well as the case study design. The observations were narrower in focus, with a semi-formal protocol of guiding questions that addressed teacher practices and student interactions, rather than a formal checklist as described by Yin (2003). Along with recording field notes of the
observations, I audio and videotaped the observations to capture class dialogue after receiving the consent of both the instructor and students. Patton (2002) describes the taking of field notes as the one component of observations that is non-negotiable. I maintained dated, detailed field notes, leaving nothing to recall.

The length of the course, time allotted for each class meeting, and time limitations of the dissertation process also placed restrictions on the structure of the observations. The course only lasted one semester, or about 15 weeks. Each course meeting lasted only about an hour. That short amount of time during which the course was taking place combined with the geographical distance from my home location resulted in a relatively short observation phase of two observations not exceeding an hour each during the 15 week course. However, Patton (2002) states that evaluation research, such as that undertaken in the current study, often involves shorter observations in order to provide feedback to participants or other audience members in a timely manner. The objective in recording descriptive field notes is to allow readers of the study to experience the observation setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1981; Patton, 2002). I’s interpretations of the events occurring during the observations were bracketed in the field notes as a beginning point of analysis.

**Interviews.** Yin (2003), Wolcott (2005) and Tangaard (2009) describe interviews as a source of data that is integral to the case study, yielding some of the most important data. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the course instructor prior to the beginning of the course. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with six purposively sampled student participants during the final days of the class prior to final
examinations. The interviews were conducted in person at the research site, ranging in time from 20 minutes to one hour. Qualitative interviewing allows the researcher to collect data that is directly relevant to the case study topic. Furthermore, interviews provide insight into the perceptions of events, practices, and policies from those who experienced them first hand (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Tangaard, 2009; Yin, 2003). In the current case study, I conducted the interview with the instructor to answer the fourth research question posed, “How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?” Similarly, I conducted student participant interviews to delve more deeply into answering the first three research questions:

1. How does participation in an Appalachian literature course impact student perceptions of Appalachian culture?
2. Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful?
3. Which course components do students identify as impactful?

To answer the research questions, the interview protocols included open-ended questions. The questions in the instructor interview protocol were intended to assess the instructor’s conceptualization of Appalachia, her familiarity with the culture and cultural stereotypes, and what guided her choices about curriculum and teaching practices. Questions contained in the student participant interview protocol sought to uncover the experiences students had with course materials, assignments, and the instructor and how those experiences impacted their thinking about Appalachian culture. Open-ended
questions invite the interviewee to converse freely rather than answer with one-word, yes-no responses allowing the researcher to collect more in-depth data (Patton, 2002). Questions fell into two categories: opinion/values questions and background/demographics questions. Questions focused on the instructor’s conceptualization of Appalachia and the culture, of what she deemed important for students to learn from the course, and those assessing student experiences within the course are values/opinions questions. These types of questions tell what an interviewee thinks about an event or issue and provide insight into their ambitions and intentions (Patton, 2002). Background/demographic questions about the instructor’s educational and professional background and cultural heritage provided insight into how the instructor viewed herself in relation to others, helping define her worldview for the audience (Patton, 2002). Glesne (2011) describes interviews that focus on people’s opinions and values as topical interviews because such interviews focus on a topic and the interviewee’s opinions surrounding the topic.

As stated, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, conversational in tone and with a standardized question protocol. The standardized protocol and relatively short interview phase of one hour or less would suggest that the interviews were what are sometimes termed a focused interview (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). The semi-structured, conversational nature of the interviews combined with the standardized protocols allowed me to maintain rapport with the participants while also fulfilling the purposes of the study (Yin, 2003). Patton (2002) states that standardized, open-ended interviews are often very useful in evaluation research because of the time-
sensitive nature of data collection and provision of feedback to data users. Standardized, open-ended interviews allow researchers to make efficient use of their time (Patton, 2002). The interviews were audiotaped for later transcription which allowed me to take field notes during the interviews and focus more on the conversation in the present while also having a verbatim record of the interview. Finally, I strived to remain open to opportunities and experiences that created casual, unstructured interviews with the instructor, such as asking follow-up questions about what was happening during an observation period.

**Student surveys.** Surveys are another type of interview that uses a standardized protocol to collect topic-focused data (Yin, 2003). While surveys are often quantitative in structure, the surveys used in this study asked open-ended questions similar to those found in a standardized, open-ended interview. The difference between the survey and the interview was that participants were asked to write their answers to the questions rather than have a conversation with me. This was an ethical consideration on my part to ease discomfort some participants may have felt discussing the controversial topics of stereotypes and prejudice or in speaking with unfamiliar individuals or those perceived to have authority. The surveys also provided more data that further contextualized the study.

The questions contained in the qualitative survey, similar to the instructor interview protocol, were background/demographic and values/opinions questions. Again, background/demographic questions aimed to locate the student participants’ worldview and values/opinions questions sought to provide insight into students’ judgment of
Appalachian culture and the course (Patton, 2002). As a defining aspect of evaluative research, I sought feedback from the instructor regarding the questions contained in the student survey protocols to ensure that the questions were useful and that all important information had been covered. Surveys were collected at the beginning and ending of the course when I visited the research site to conduct observations and interviews. Pre- and post-surveys were matched for each participant and given an identifier code to which only I had access to in order to protect the anonymity of participants. Survey data was used only from participants who had submitted both a pre- and post-survey. Survey data is presented in the first section of Chapter Four.

**Documents.** Documents and class artifacts can serve as rich sources of data and are often termed material culture (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Documents are useful in that they are an unobtrusive form of data that can be reviewed multiple times (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Yin, 2003). However, problems of limited access can occur (Yin, 2003). I collected documents for analysis including the course syllabus, instructor hand-outs, and completed assignments whenever possible. I also collected discussion board postings from the class BlackBoard website. Throughout the semester, I emailed journal prompts related to the course material according to a timeline protocol attached in the appendices. The journal prompts were not graded or included in the formal coursework and this was clearly communicated to the students participating in the class. In order to address potential issues of access to documents, I approached the research site’s Institutional Review Board after gaining approval from my own Institutional Review Board. I also obtained informed consent from all participants. Data collection
from relevant documents provided me with data that could be triangulated with interview and observation data to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the processes and implementation of the course in the specific setting.

**Protocols.** Protocols guiding the collection of data are attached in the appendices in the order in which they were used. The interviews were qualitative and semi-formal in structure. The instructor interview contained approximately 20 open-ended questions and accompanying probes related to biographical data, perceptions of Appalachia and Appalachian culture, classroom practices, and the course being studied. The questions were structured to provide insight into the instructor’s background to develop a thickly described participant case study and to analyze values and opinions about the course and Appalachian culture. The instructor interview was scheduled for one hour during the first week of class in August 2013 and occurred in person. The interview protocol for conducting the instructor interview is included as Appendix A.

As stated, the interviews were qualitative and semi-structured in design. The protocol for student participant interviews included 15 questions regarding the students’ experiences with the course material, assignments, and instructor. The purpose of the questions was to delve more deeply into students’ experiences and how they impacted their thinking about Appalachian culture in an effort to answer the first three research questions. The interviews were each scheduled for one hour on the Thursday and Friday of the final week of class before examinations. The protocol for student participant interviews is included in Appendix F.
Appendix B includes the observation protocol. The protocol was developed as a graphic organizer that guided me in collecting data through observations. The protocol includes the sensitizing concepts of goals and processes. Goals was selected as a sensitizing concept for the observation in order to observe incidences and interactions as they related to the course goal of developing an appreciation of Appalachian culture, which determined in part the research questions. Processes was chosen as a sensitizing concept related to the research questions regarding teaching practices and course materials, which are also related, in turn, to the stated course goal. Within the three-part graphic organizer, the guideline, located in the left column, guided me in collecting data that described the physical environment, the social environment, and the participants. Next, the guide called for a description of activities including learning activities conducted during the class, perception of the teacher’s teaching style, the use of materials, and students’ responses. Finally, the guide focused on describing the social interactions between the teacher and students. The central column of the protocol provided space for observational notes to be entered next to the guidelines as described above. The third column provided space and a guide for reflective field notes and includes “repetitive events/activity/issue”, “emerging idea/issue/theme”, and “unique event/activity/issue”. The observation protocol was used to guide data collection from observations conducted once during the first week of class and once during the last week of class prior to final examinations. The observations lasted the entire length of the class meeting, but are comparatively short. I conducted the observations as a solo outside observer.
Appendix C contains the pre-survey protocol for student participants. Students who were willing and consented to participation in the study were given the qualitative survey to complete during the first week of class, which fell during the third week of August 2013. I coordinated the collection of surveys with the instructor prior to the class. The survey included 17 open-ended questions related to biographical data, participation in the course, and Appalachia and Appalachian culture. The purpose and structure of the questions were similar to those of the instructor interview questions. The questions enabled me to develop a case study for each participant in combination with interview and document data, which was analyzed individually and with other cases in a cross-case analysis. The instructor and I were available for participants who had questions. Participants generally completed the survey in about 20 minutes.

Throughout the semester, I emailed journal prompts related to the course material as a means of recruiting students to participate in interviews that were held at the end of the semester. The protocol for the journal prompts provided a date to send each prompt, the prompt to be sent, and the due date by which the entry should be completed and returned to me. I began sending the prompts the last week of August and sent a new prompt about every two weeks through November, except during the holiday break. The prompts asked about the impact of characters, settings, plots, dialect, and themes on students’ thinking about Appalachian culture. The protocol for the journal prompts is attached as Appendix D.

Finally, the post-survey protocol for student participants is included in Appendix E. The post-survey was also qualitative and similar to the pre-survey. The post-survey
protocol contained 17 open-ended questions about Appalachian culture and participation in the course. Students present during the last day of class who submitted consent forms were asked to complete the post-surveys, which were later matched to pre-surveys collected earlier in the semester and assigned the coordinating identifier code. The post-survey was intended to gain insight into students’ values and opinions about the class and Appalachian culture after having completed the semester of study and engagement with the course materials, assignments, and instructor. The survey also generally required about 20 minutes to complete.

Data Collection Procedures

I began the study by interviewing the instructor during the third week of August 2013 prior to the first class meeting. The interview was semi-formal in structure and contained approximately 20 open-ended questions and probes. Eleven questions focused on instructor bio-data, four questions and accompanying probes focused on instructor perceptions of Appalachian culture, and the remaining four focused on the course under study. The interview was scheduled to last approximately one hour. I also arranged for the ability to communicate follow-up questions at a later time after completing the initial interview. I collected any information that was available for the fall course, such as a syllabus and proposed reading list, during the interview. I spent mid-June 2013 through mid-August 2013 analyzing the syllabus, course readings, and any documents the instructor had already prepared for the course. Data about the course and the instructor were collected prior to the course beginning in order to provide me with some
understanding of the course goals and objectives and the instructor’s thinking about Appalachia and Appalachian culture.

I attended a course meeting during the first week of fall semester near the end of August 2013 with permission and consent of the instructor. I introduced the study and collected consent forms from all students willing to participate in the study who met the sampling criteria at the beginning of the class meeting. I then conducted an observation as the class proceeded. The observation protocol contained guides for describing the environment, participants, social interactions, and activities. It also contained space and guidelines for collecting observational and reflective notes. The observations were overt, with me having provided participants with full disclosure when obtaining consent. I conducted the observation as a solo outside observer, refraining from participating in the class and recognizing her primarily etic perspective. This was the first of two short class observations, with the second observation taking place at the end of the course prior to final examinations in December 2013.

Afterwards, I invited students to participate further in the study by submitting a qualitative pre-survey that was given to them at the end of the first class meeting. The questionnaire contained approximately 17 open-ended questions comprised of nine bio-data questions, three course-related questions, and five questions related to Appalachian culture. Students who were willing to participate in the study were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they may choose not to participate at any time during the study. Students were also informed that data collected from surveys,
observations, and interviews would be shared with the instructor to inform future teaching practice, but that their anonymity would be maintained.

Throughout the semester, from August to December 2013, I sent journal prompts related to the characters, plots, settings, themes, and dialect within the course materials about every two weeks. Journal prompts were emailed with an assigned due date to the entire class via the class’s BlackBoard website. It was clearly communicated by both the instructor and I that participation in the journal would not impact their performance in the class positively or negatively, and that it was unnecessary to abide by spelling and grammar conventions when submitting journal entries. Of the 35 students enrolled in the course and receiving the journal prompts via BlackBoard email, 13 students completed at least one journal entry. I then reached out via email to those 13 students who completed journal entries to recruit students to participate in interviews at the end of the semester to develop individual student case studies. Six students volunteered to participate in the interviews.

At the final class meeting in December 2013, I reminded participants of their right to consent to participation in the study and that they could choose not to participate at any time. I conducted another class observation using the same protocol used in the initial observation. The purpose in conducting two observations, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end of the semester, was to describe student interactions with one another, the course material, and the instructor, as well as to describe the instructor’s teaching style. Due to the distance between my home location and the location of the study, combined with the relatively short time during which the course was happening, it
was only be feasible for I to conduct two observations. Therefore, observations provided data that added more detail to the data collected from interviews, surveys, and documents and served purposes generally assigned to secondary data sources such as documents.

At the end of the class, I provided willing participants with the student post-survey that I collected the same day when participants had completed the survey. The post survey was semi-formal in structure, with 17 open-ended questions. Three questions focused on student perceptions of their own heritage, three questions focused on Appalachian culture, and the remaining 11 questions focused on the course material. Post-surveys were matched with pre-surveys taken by the same student and assigned the coordinating identifier code to protect participants’ anonymity. Matching pre- and post-surveys were added to case files for individual participants that also included completed assignments, BlackBoard discussion posts, journal entries, and interview transcripts for triangulation of data sources. Data from students not participating in interviews and for whom, therefore, no individual case files were created or analyzed, but who submitted matched pre- and post-surveys was used to create a thick, detailed, contextualized description of the course which provides the introduction to Chapter Four. Those students’ surveys were matched also with their BlackBoard discussion posts, though only the survey data was used in the study. Data from students who only submitted either a pre- or post-survey was not used in the study due to incompleteness of the data.

Throughout the semester, I also collected from consenting participants copies of any submitted course assignments for document analysis, along with the aforementioned journal entries. Primarily, this was collected in the form of BlackBoard discussion posts.
Two students participating in interviews on Thursday and Friday of the final week of class also submitted commonplace book assignments completed during the course that were added to their case files for analysis.

As previously stated in this section, I recruited six students to participate in interviews at the end of the semester from the 13 students who completed journal entries throughout the semester. Interviews were scheduled for approximately one hour, but ranged in time from 20 minutes to about one hour depending on the participant. The interviews were conducted on the Thursday and Friday of the last week of classes for the fall semester in December 2013, with the last meeting of the class at 9:00 a.m. Friday morning. The interviews were similar to the instructor interview in that they were semi-structured, containing 15 open-ended questions and accompanying probes. The questions mirrored those sent in the journal prompts, seeking to provide greater detail to students’ experiences with the characters, plots, settings, dialect, and themes they encountered in the course material and how they impacted students’ thinking about Appalachian culture.

**Role of the Researcher.** I am of Appalachian heritage, though from a different sub-region than that in which the research site was situated. I shared an emic perspective with the two students claiming Appalachian culture as their own. This sometimes resulted in both an overly positive worldview of Appalachia and a strong adverse reaction to more negative stereotypical representations of the culture. As an insider of Appalachian culture, I had to work to remain aware of my own sensitivities and reactions to participants’ responses to questions about Appalachia and its stereotypes, as well as popular depictions in course material. On the other hand, I held an etic, or outsider,
perspective in that I did not participate in the course or conduct an analysis of the course material and hailed from a different subregion of Appalachia where cola mining and gas and oil extraction were of greater focus than timbering or problems more relevant to the research site. This allowed participants perceptions to shine through without being detracted or colored by my own analysis and experience with the course materials. Likewise, observations and other data collection procedures were conducted as an outside observer.

**Ethical considerations.** Glesne (2011) lists the five guiding ethical principles used by Internal Review Boards to approve dissertations. They are summarized here as follows:

1. Providing participants with sufficient information to make informed decisions about their participation.
2. The ability of participants to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
3. The elimination of unnecessary risks to participants.
4. Benefits to society and participants should outweigh potential risks.
5. I should meet certain qualifications prior to engaging in the study.

The first step I took as an ethical consideration was to obtain the informed consent of participants through the use of consent forms and a verbal explanation of the study. The consent forms and verbal explanation described in brief detail the study, informed participants that their participation was completely voluntary, and that participants could withdraw from the study at any point. Participants were also ensured that their names
would be replaced with pseudonyms protecting their personal identities. Informed consent also involves disclosing any possible risks or discomforts that may be experienced as a result of participation in the study (Glesne, 2011).

Patton (2002) stated that informed consent does not equate with confidentiality. However, in the current case study, participants were informed that their confidentiality would be protected with the use of identifier codes and a corresponding master code list which would be destroyed along with all other sensitive or identifiable data and documents six months after the dissertation had been successfully defended and to which only I had access to throughout the study. Contemporary arguments suggest that participants should be given the right to choose whether their stories remain confidential and anonymous, allowing them to maintain ownership over their story (Patton, 2002). In the current study, the consent forms informed participants that they would remain confidential unless they indicated they would like to be recognizable in the study and space was provided for this indication.

Informing participants of the possible risks involved in participating in the study is not enough (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). I reflected on the potential risks and took steps to eliminate as many as possible. In order to eliminate the possible discomfort some participants may have felt speaking in interviews, I included written surveys as a form of participation that may have felt less risky to participants. Finally, I believed the potential benefits to society outweighed the risks associated with the discomfort experienced by participants. I believe the study is of merit and use to the instructor, educators in similar settings or working with similar students, future students in the
instructor’s courses or from the culture under study, scholars of Appalachian Studies and culturally-relevant pedagogy, and policy and decision-makers who define different curricula.

Reciprocity, or returning the favor for participants’ time spent providing the researcher with data, is another ethical consideration that should be made (Patton, 2002). I established preliminary professional rapport with the course instructor and the instructor was made familiar with my research agenda prior to proceeding with the study. I, in staying true to the evaluation research design of the case study, shared my data with the instructor after the study had been fully completed. This will also serve as a form of reciprocity in that the instructor is very interested in learning about the data and findings of the study. Due to limited resources, reciprocity in the form of cash or vouchers for student participants was not included in the study.

**Credibility Techniques**

A first and imperative way in which I worked to ensure credibility in the current study was to maintain reflexivity by keeping field notes throughout the study and disclosing biases in the study findings. It is necessary for researchers to disclose both tacit and formative theories that inform their selection bias, which requires the researcher to be openly reflexive and take ownership of their voice and perspective (LeCompte, 2000; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). As Patton (2002) suggested, I worked to balance inherent subjectivity with objectivity that is essential to good research by engaging in reflexive questions about herself and about study participants and audience. For example, throughout the study, I reflected on what she knew and what she did not
know, how and by what events participants’ worldviews had been shaped, and what perspectives the intended audience might hold about the study. Reflexivity not only adds to the credibility of the study, but is an important and useful tool for considering ethical concerns that may arise in research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

I also engaged in three types of triangulation in order to strengthen credibility of results. Techniques of triangulation strengthen data in that using multiple methods of data collection, sources, analysts, and theories paint a clearer, more complete picture than using only one data collection method, for instance (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1981; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). First, I triangulated multiple theories to provide a foundation for understanding the data which included theories of marginalization, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and the Appalachian context. I remained open to new theories that emerged as important through review of the relevant literature. Secondly, by collecting data from the multiple sources of interviewing, surveying, document analysis, and observational work, I was able to triangulate collected data across sources. As Patton (2002) pointed out, triangulating data across multiple sources, even within the same method, can strengthen interpretations of data by highlighting consistencies, uncovering discrepancies, and revealing various facets of the studied phenomenon.

I conducted the current study as dissertation research. Therefore, a dissertation committee of five faculty members was available to review the data and my analysis, providing critical feedback as a peer debriefing which served as the third type of triangulation. Peer debriefing helps eliminate bias-based tunnel vision on the part of the
researcher and brings to light new perspectives about analyses of the data (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The committee followed university guidelines and included faculty of the Educational Research and Educational Administration departments of the College of Education and Human Services, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the College of Sciences, the Department of English Language and Literature, and an Appalachian scholar and faculty member of the Literacy Center. This established a balanced peer debriefing team that held multiple perspectives and had different knowledge relevant to the study. I was also able to engage in member checking during the course of the study, emailing with participants to verify and clarify my understanding of their stories. However, in this study, I was not able to send the completed cases for member checks to the participants, which presents a possible limitation and also the potential for future research. Peer debriefing, member checks, and maintaining reflexivity also assist the researcher in recognizing new limitations as they arise throughout the study (Brantlinger et al., 2005; LeCompte, 2000; Patton, 2002).

As a final measure to reinforce credibility of the research and study findings, I maintained an audit trail of interviews, journal entries, surveys, and observations. Keeping an audit trail helps verify that adequate time was spent engaging with research participants and data, supporting claims that study findings are reliable and able to be validated (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). A thick description contextualizing data collected from each source demonstrates I’s prolonged field engagement, supports greater credibility of data interpretations, and assists others in
making decisions about the transferability of findings (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002).

**Limitations**

In carefully considering ways to add to the credibility of the study, I took several steps to minimize the limitations of the study. Collecting data from multiple and different informants and analyzing for consistencies and discrepancies among them is one way to enhance the trustworthiness and authenticity of the data (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). In this case, I conducted surveys and interviews with multiple students participating in the course. The open enrollment structure of the course attracted a diverse group of students that brought with them different experiences, values, and opinions. I also interviewed the instructor of the course to gain insight into her perspective of the course goals and purposes. Similarly, triangulating data collected from multiple sources reduces the overall limitations of the data by strengthening the credibility by establishing consistency and due attention to disconfirming cases (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Patton, 2002). In the current case study, data collected from observations, interviews, surveys, and documents serves to reinforce and corroborate patterns and themes or illuminate new findings.

The study lacks of transferability, which is inherent in qualitative research (Wolcott, 2003). There are many complexities to consider such as the instructor’s teaching style, course material, make up of class enrollment, specific place, time, and so forth. However, the thick description allows audience members to understand the exact context in which the study was conducted and permits them to transfer from the study
what would make sense in their own context, bridging the gap between the traditional purpose of formative evaluation researcher and evaluation research that is meant to inform the practices of a broader audience (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

**Data Analysis**

Patton (2002) stated that the initial phases of data analysis often occur during the data collection phase when the researcher first begins to have insights into the phenomenon or recognizes patterns. This initial phase of analysis can direct future data collection and analysis. While patterns and themes may begin to present themselves to the researcher during the data collection phase, it is important that I does not allow their focus to narrow to only include those emerging patterns and themes, but should search for discrepancies and cases that lie outside what has emerged (Patton, 2002). The current study was emergent in design where initial analysis occurred while data was still being collected and the reflections that constituted the initial analysis were maintained in my field notes. I referred to the field notes regarding emerging patterns and themes throughout the formal data analysis phase. It was imperative that all field notes and data employ thick description, providing as much detail and depiction as possible, in order to take readers and users into the case study (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 2005). This led to very detailed description of the setting and each individual case which will aid the audience in determining the study’s transferability, a means for establishing credibility (Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 2005).
Beginning the formal analysis phase, I created a case study of each participant. In qualitative case study analysis, researchers begin with building a study of each of the smallest units of analysis, transforming raw data into a detailed description of each individual case (Patton, 2002). Depending on the quantity of data, researchers sometimes organize raw data into case records prior to creating the individual case study (Patton, 2002). In this study, the large amount of data required me to organize data into case files in both hard and soft formats, which were analyzed as individual single-case studies for patterns and themes.

In order to organize the raw data into a format that allowed me to begin making meaning of the data, all data was transcribed verbatim and entered into the qualitative data analysis software Atlas TI after being sorted into case files. It was important that all data be transcribed verbatim to capture the perceptions and experiences of the participants which are the true raw data of any qualitative study (Patton, 2002). I first conducted an inductive content analysis to search for emerging themes and patterns in each case using a mixture of first-cycle coding methods defined by Saldana (2013). Patton (2002) describes content analysis as data analysis that searches for patterns and themes in order to reduce and make sense of data. Inductive analysis allows these patterns and themes to emerge from the data, rather than using a priori, or pre-established, codes (Patton, 2002). In searching for emerging patterns and themes, I worked to identify recurring regularities in the data, or pieces that fit together. This is also known as convergence (Patton, 2002).
First-cycle coding. The first cycle of coding each case included three phases: in vivo, open, and a priori coding. First-cycle coding is conducted as a line-by-line analysis, or “splitter” style of coding (Saldana, 2013). The initial phase of the inductive content analysis or first cycle of coding used an in vivo coding scheme. In vivo coding is an inductive process that uses the exact words and phrases of participants to allow the data to tell the emic story (Saldana, 2013). Particularly salient quotes that were highly representative or descriptive of emerging patterns were coded in vivo. Patton (2002) describes the inductive analysis of key phrases used by participants to make sense of their world as isolating the indigenous categories and concepts, or the emic analysis. This allowed me to identify the indigenous typology before moving on to develop through continued analysis the analyst-constructed typology, which identifies and codes the emerging patterns and themes in a form that can be understood by outsiders of the case study (Patton, 2002).

The second phase of the inductive content analysis utilized an open coding process, often termed as such because the researcher must be open to the emerging patterns and themes (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2013). Open coding can incorporate a variety of code types. This study included attribute codes, process codes, descriptive codes, values codes, evaluation codes, versus codes, and developed referents as sub-codes. Attribute codes represent demographic data. Process codes are actions, words, or phrases that include “-ing” (Saldana, 2013).

Concepts the researcher brings to the data are termed sensitizing concepts and represent an etic analysis because they are concepts imposed on the data by the researcher
who is an outsider. This type of coding represents the final phase of the first cycle of coding, which utilized a priori codes defined prior to the study. A priori codes, sometimes referred to as provisional, were developed from the literature, research questions, and data collection protocols. The process of a priori coding is deductive, or a top-down application of preconceived codes. Due to the deductive nature of a priori coding, it was important that I work to suspend these codes during the first and second phase of the first cycle of coding in order to let the emic perspective emerge as unbiased as possible (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2013). A priori codes established for this study were applied independently during the third phase of first-cycle coding. The a priori codes were then collapsed and condensed during the transition phase with the in vivo and open codes applied during the first and second phases of first cycle coding. For example, “hillbilly”, “stereotypes”, and “marginalization” were all condensed with other like-codes to create the super-code “stereotyping”. The a priori codes used in this study were:

- **Stereotypes** – The categorization of people through normal thought processes that generalize and categorize information for ease of use or understanding which creates boundaries based on perceived differences, also referred to as “category-based reactions” or reactions based on the perception that one social group is different from another (Fiske, 1998; Martin & Halverson, Jr., 1981). Derived from the conceptual framework, which presented stereotypes of Appalachian culture primarily related to the Hillbilly and Yeoman images.

- **Marginalization** – Messiou’s (2006b) description of marginalization was adopted for the purposes of the study. In this context, marginalization is
defined as the process of Othering that occurs when a group/individual’s behavior does not fit the dominant group/individual’s ideologies about what is normal or appropriate. The Other group is portrayed negatively as deviant and/or less human. Marginalization is derived from the conceptual framework which describes the historical social, political, and economic marginalization of Appalachia and its people.

- **PBE (Place-Based Education)** – Place-based education models provide meaning to learning and instruction that otherwise occurs in a decontextualized classroom by being conscious of the place in which learning occurs. (Azano, 2014; Johnson et al., 2009). PBE as a code is derived from the conceptual framework which described it also as a critical pedagogy of place and its derivatives.

- **CRP (Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy)** – The incorporation of students’ culture in the curriculum and instructional practices with the goal of supporting student success and promoting social justice and equity (Wei, 2002). CRP is derived from the conceptual framework, which also relates to the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy.

- **CT (Critical Theory)** – Critical theory as a school of philosophical thought is rooted in analysis of class-based power and struggle within societies (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Corradetti, 2011; Darder, 1995; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002; Thomas, 1993). CT is related to the theoretical framework which presents many facets of critical theory and
describes critical theory in Appalachia as having the goal of intervening in the structures, policies, and practices that have worked to create the impoverished circumstances found throughout Appalachia.

- **Instructor** – Instructor as a code was used to code any student data related to or discussing the course instructor. The instructor code is related to the second research question which sought to identify teaching practices students described as impactful.

- **Course Materials** – Course Materials as a code was used to code any data related to or discussing materials used in the course such as novels, poetry, film, etc. Course Materials is related to the third research question which sought to identify course components students believed to be impactful.

- **Assignments** – Assignments as a code was used to code any data related to or discussing assignments included in the course. Assignments as a code is related to the third research question which sought to identify course components students believed to be impactful.

- **Perceptions** – Perceptions as a code was used to code any data describing participants understanding and beliefs of Appalachia or Appalachian culture. Perceptions is derived from the first research question which was the overarching question and sought to identify the impacts participating in an Appalachian literature course may have on student perceptions of Appalachian culture.
Deductive analysis uses a pre-established framework for analysis (Patton, 2002). A priori codes related to the initial research questions allowed the analysis to stay true to evaluation research in which a primary purpose is to answer questions about the characteristics of a given program or what happens within the program (Patton, 2002). To judge the usefulness of both inductive and a priori codes, I considered the internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of the codes. Internal homogeneity is defined as data becoming meaningful when categorized together. External heterogeneity is the clear delineation between categories with little overlapping in meaning (Patton, 2002).

**Transition.** After completing the first cycle of coding, I engaged in a variety of transition tactics before moving on to second-cycle coding methods. In this study, my first step to transitioning from first- to second-cycle coding was to list all codes in a case and condense them based on similarity, known as convergence, yielding distinctly different codes defined by divergence, or difference. Sorting codes in this manner is sometimes called “lumping” (Saldana, 2013). I chose to do this in a tactile manner, cutting the codes up on sheets of paper which allowed her to see all of them at once and organize them freely. Each case was then re-coded using the unique condensed code list it yielded. Relationships, patterns, and themes emerging during the re-coding phase were then used to create a code map. I chose to create these code maps by hand and then create electronic versions in the typed case files (Saldana, 2013).

**Second-cycle coding.** Once transition methods were completed, I began second-cycle coding methods. This cycle is sometimes referred to as explication, in which the researcher develops a portrait of the data to present as the participant’s story (Patton,
The goal of second-cycle coding methods is to develop and define the coding categories, resulting in data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new themes or patterns emerge from the data. In this study, I engaged in two types of second-cycle coding: focused coding and axial coding, in respective order. Focused coding allows the researcher to sharpen codes by lumping codes into categories based on similarities and then organizing by relationship or hierarchy (Saldana, 2013). It is useful to create outlines or diagrams during focused coding. In this study I developed outlines similar to a standard paper outline in which categories were lumped and then ordered by relationship and/or hierarchy. Focused coding generally resulted in five to seven major categories emerging from the data and first-cycle codes (Saldana, 2013).

After, I had completed focused coding, she then engaged in axial coding. Axial coding is an extension of focused coding and used the major categories yielded by the focused coding process (Saldana, 2013). The categories which emerged from focused coding were further lumped by similarity, yielding three to five axial codes. During axial coding, I worked to define the properties and dimensions of the axial codes, such as location on a continuum or the conditions and causes of certain events. Relationships between variables, categories, and subcategories were analyzed, as well as the presence or absence of certain contexts, conditions, and interactions. The axial codes were developed into the write-up of the case (Saldana, 2013).

Cross-case analysis. As described earlier in the chapter, case studies are generally nested (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). For example, in this case, the individual participants’ case studies were nested within the larger case study that is the literature
Therefore, once I had completed the individual case study analysis for each participant, I then conducted a cross-case analysis. Cross-case analysis is the searching for patterns and themes across cases (Patton, 2002). This analysis was conducted inductively, searching for patterns and themes that emerged from the content of the participant cases when analyzed collectively.

The open coding process began with the transition phase since all cases had individually been re-coded. I sought for convergence and divergence among the axial codes obtained during the individual analyses. Axial codes from individual cases were sorted and lumped once more into categories and subcategories to create a new code list. Once the new code list was developed, I returned to second-cycle coding methods and again engaged in focused coding and axial coding, in respective order, analyzing data across cases. Focused coding resulted in developing an outline of relationships and hierarchy among the codes, and axial coding resulted in developing the properties and dimensions of codes further lumped by similarity while attending to divergence. Once second-cycle coding was completed for the cross-case analysis, I presented the cross-case data first thematically and then in response to the four research questions guiding the study.

**Analysis of survey data.** After completing the analysis of individual cases and the cross-case analysis, I analyzed the data collected from course participants who submitted both a pre- and post-survey. A simple analysis was completed in which I searched for convergence and divergence among participant responses, using a color-coding scheme and organizing by frequency. Data was then included at the beginning of Chapter Four to
provide context to the overall case study. The presentation of survey data, individual cases, and the cross case analysis is presented in the next chapter.
Chapter Four: Presentation of Data

Findings: Surveys and Context

To contextualize the cases and study, all students enrolled in the class, after signing a consent form, were given a pre-survey on the first day of class and a post-survey on the last day of class. The surveys included open-ended, qualitative questions about demographics, aspirations, perceptions of Appalachia, and experiences in the course. Although 35 students completed surveys, only 22 students were present both days to provide matched pre- and post-surveys. I tabulated the responses for each question from the 22 surveys, while comparing pre- and post-surveys for changes within the individual over time where appropriate. Surveys were compared both across participants and within individual cases. Responses for each question were color-coded based on convergence and arranged by frequency. The data from their 22 matched surveys is presented here to provide context to the cases and study.

The course. The course was a Liberal Arts course on Literature of Place offered through the English department. It was open to all majors, enrolling a diverse student body, and filled a general education credit. The class was a 15-week semester course that met for about one hour three times a week. June created a participatory structure in which the class relied heavily on student engagement with the dialogue. Outside of class, students were required to continue engaging in the dialogue by posting in Blackboard before each class. They were also required to respond to at least one classmate’s post prior to each class meeting. On her syllabus, June included goals around developing students’ appreciation of Appalachian culture, music, and art and enhancing students’
academic skills in reading, critical thinking, and writing. June had selected texts based on previous positive experiences with other students and courses, as well as her belief that teaching environmental awareness and including marginalized voices was imperative to teaching the course successfully.

She chose *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) for the interesting perspective it provided on the Civil War, and also included folk music written, played, and sang by the book’s author. June chose Ron Rash’s short stories (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e) and novel *Serena* (2008) because his writings are local to the region of the course and because he was often happy and available for classroom talks. The local area of the university had a rich Cherokee history including some of the university buildings having been built right on top of sacred Cherokee lands. Therefore, June felt it imperative to include historical documents revealing the relationship between the Cherokee and European settlers and written recordings of Cherokee oral histories in the course materials (e.g. Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998). June also included a short story, *The Tender Branch* (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), by a local public school teacher along with her acceptance speech for an award she won for the short story.

June included the film *Cold Mountain* (Berger, Horberg, Pollack, Yerxa, & Minghella, 2003) to demonstrate a dramatized version of the Civil War in the mountains. *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008) and the works of Wendell Berry (1995, 2002) were included for their eco-critical merit. Poetry by Appalachian women (eg. Fisher, 2004) from the Central part of the region reflected the history, danger, and life of coal mining in Appalachia, while Frank X Walker’s (2000) poetry described the Affrilachian experience.
June included Cormac McCarthy’s work *The Road* (2006) as an experiment, having never previously taught it in an Appalachian Literature course, because of its seemingly placeless-ness in a post-apocalyptic Appalachian setting. To end the course, June included a speech, *The Thin Places* (2010), given by Kentucky author and poet Silas House because it seemed to tie together most of the themes explored throughout the course.

June developed her course assignments in alignment with the course goals she stated in the syllabus. The mapping project the course started with required students to map their home places, connecting them first to home to begin their journey through the course. The second assignment included options from which the students could choose. June included choices because she felt students should be in control of their learning and have input in the process. Students were able to choose an oral history project, a service learning project, or an environmental research paper.

All of the students chose the service learning project, which both immersed students in the local culture and mediated some of the marginalization of the local community by the university community. Students completed service learning projects that included collecting firewood with a local church to benefit those in need during the winter months, cleaning up pollution from a local river, volunteering at a local soup kitchen, and volunteering at an Appalachian music and heritage festival. One student chose the environmental research paper which allowed her to use prior knowledge gained from a previous course taken on the same topic while focusing on a local environmental project.
Finally, students were required to complete a commonplace book, which included nature-related writings, quotes, photos, artwork, as well as students’ personal pieces related to family, their own interests, and so forth. The commonplace book allowed students to link their home connections with their local connections and their learning of Appalachia and its people. Throughout the course, the students engaged in various classroom activities outside those listed here. At the conclusion of the course, students also completed an essay exam.

**Classroom demographics.** Table 1 below presents demographic data collected from the 22 participants completing both pre- and post-surveys. The course enrolled more female students than male, and students’ ages ranged from 18 to 23 years old. Most of students enrolled in the course were in-state students. No international students participated in the class. Of the 22 respondents, 17 were first-generation college students, meaning only five of the survey participants had parents who graduated with at least a bachelor’s degree. Less than half of the respondents reported having previous experience with similar courses. Those who did have experience with similar courses listed English 101 and 102, high school English classes, various other college-level literature and communications courses, and an Appalachian Culture course.
Table 1

*Classroom Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Home Location</th>
<th>First Generation Status</th>
<th>Similar Course Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Male</td>
<td>18 – 23</td>
<td>18 in-state</td>
<td>17 yes</td>
<td>9 yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Female</td>
<td>2 out-of-state</td>
<td>5 no</td>
<td>12 no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 no answer</td>
<td>1 no answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivations for enrolling in the course.** Table 2 presents the variety of reasons that motivated students to enroll in the course under study. The largest portion of students enrolled in the class because it fulfilled a liberal studies credit they needed to graduate. Other reasons for enrolling in the class included an interest in Appalachia and literature, advisor suggestion, development of reading and writing skills, and random chance.

Table 2

*Motivations for Enrolling in Course*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Motivation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulfill Liberal Art credit</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in Appalachia and literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor suggestion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop reading and writing skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random choice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contributing to students’ motivations for enrolling in the course were students’ expectations of what they would gain through participation. Table 3 presents what students hoped to gain through participation in the course. Half of survey respondents hoped to gain knowledge about Appalachia as a result of participating in the course. Other students expected to gain general knowledge, knowledge of place, writing skills, and a good grade. Two students did not know what they hoped to gain from the course. Two students provided no answer as to what they expected to gain by participating in the course.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoped to Gain</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about Appalachia</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of place</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good grade</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appalachian heritage. Table 4 presents students’ perception of their heritage and whether or not they considered themselves Appalachian before and after the course.
At the beginning of the course, students had spent various amounts of time in Appalachia ranging from very little time to their whole lives. The majority of the students did not consider themselves Appalachian prior to taking the course. One student reported considering themselves Appalachian after having moved to the region to attend college. After the course, the original number of students who did not consider themselves Appalachian was reduced by half. Several students felt only “somewhat” Appalachian, while a larger number considered themselves Appalachian. The total number of students who considered themselves Appalachian to some degree, either somewhat or full, nearly doubled at the end of the course. Some explanations included statements such as, “after learning about my heritage in the mountains, I feel a very deep sense of place here” and “I have a better idea of Appalachia now.” Some students remarked that they identified as Appalachian despite not being from the area, while others stated that while they identify as Appalachian, they did not feel as Appalachian as people who were born and raised in the region. Several students felt they could not claim the term Appalachian at all because they were not from the region.

Table 4

Student Heritage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>Pre-Survey Data</th>
<th>Post-Survey Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Appalachian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Appalachian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions of Appalachia. Before taking the course, students listed what they thought of when they thought about Appalachia. Table 5 presents students’ replies. Appalachian State University and mountains were the only two replies that appeared repeatedly. Other answers of what students thought of when they thought about Appalachia prior to taking the course included hillbillies, moonshine, Cherokee, beauty, simplicity, ignorance, cold, outdoor activities, mountain life, home, bears, clouds, rural mountain area, men with beards, plaid, and barefoot banjo players.

Students also listed the assets they believed belonged to Appalachia prior to taking the course. 13 students listed the mountains as an asset of the region and two students listed the culture. Other answers included the people, history, food, traditions, uniqueness, family-orientation, mountain men and diversity. Two students were unsure of any assets. Answers to the same question on the post-survey diversified to include music, belonging, crafts, nature, coal, poverty, creativity, connection to place, isolation, earth, spirituality, individualism, pride, beauty, work ethic, and purpose. One student said the entire region was an asset, while two students provided no reply.

Table 5

Student Pre-Conceptions of Appalachia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Survey Thoughts of Appalachia</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian State University</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Improving Appalachia. Students described the negative attributes they perceived in Appalachia prior to taking the course. Table 6 presents students preconceived ideas about the negative attributes of Appalachia. Other responses included weird, redneck, hillbilly, moonshine, “simpleness”, and stereotypes.

Table 6

*Students’ Preconceived Negative Attributes of Appalachia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No negative attributes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural isolation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance/lack of education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the course, students were asked to consider ways to improve Appalachia. Those replies, presented in Table 7, differed from what they viewed as negative attributes prior to taking the course. Almost half of respondents gave attention to environmental issues including cessation of mountaintop removal mining, pollution reduction, restriction of development, and addition of more or bigger mountains in the region. The
pre- and post-survey data did align to some degree with regards to knowledge and education in the region and rural isolation.

Table 7

*Students’ Post-Course Suggestions for Improving Appalachia*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental issues</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase knowledge, tolerance, awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase economy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add entertainment options</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appalachian stereotypes.** Prior to the course, the majority of students reported having no experience with Appalachian stereotypes. The students who reported having some sort of experience with Appalachian stereotypes reported a variety of experience types. Students’ experiences with Appalachian stereotypes prior to taking the course are listed in Table 8 below. Though many students were reported having no experience with Appalachian stereotypes prior to the course, many were able to identify an Appalachian stereotype, presented in Table 9. The disparity in the data may represent the way in which students interpreted the phrase “experience with.”
Students also reported the Appalachian stereotypes they were familiar with prior to taking the course. Hillbilly topped the list with the largest number of responses. Many of the other responses, such as moonshine and banjos, were images frequently accompanying the Hillbilly stereotype. Those responses are reported below in Table 9.

Other Appalachian stereotypes students reported familiarity with included moonshine, redneck, hicks, country, banjos, hippies, small towns, country men, racists, simpletons, mountains, old people, and stupid. One student wrote there were “few if any.”
Table 9
*Appalachian Stereotypes Identified by Students Prior to the Course*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appalachian Stereotype</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hillbilly</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After taking the course, students were asked again on the post-survey to describe their experiences and feelings about Appalachian stereotypes. Their answers varied widely from and even challenged replies on the pre-survey. Those answers are presented here in Table 10.

Table 10
*Students’ Post-Survey Experiences with Appalachian Stereotypes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect/should not be applied to all Appalachians</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders lack understanding of the culture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True, but not of all people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent, creative people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging and family</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected to land/place and willing to protect it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great literary and artistic works by</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar to other historic cultures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other answers were in list form and included poverty, racist, homophobic, religious to a fault, hypocritical, and redneck country.
Course impact. Table 11 presents data collected from the post-survey illustrating the various overall impacts of the course as reported by students. Nearly half of students reported gaining knowledge about Appalachia as a result of participating in the course. Knowledge of place, environmental concerns, and the significance of the mountains were all reported, reflecting June’s goal of raising awareness about the environmental issues and connection to place in Appalachia. Knowledge of self, another of June’s goals, was only reported as an impact of the course by one student, although knowledge of heritage was also reported and could be considered similar.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Appalachia</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater sense of place</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of environmental issues</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight into heritage and importance thereof</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater understanding of the importance of the Appalachian Mountains</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of self</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autographed Ron Rash book</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After taking the course, students were asked to describe the new information they had gained in the course. Table 12 displays the results from the survey. Some students reported gaining more than one type of new knowledge as a result of participating in the course. Three of the eight students who reported learning about the people and culture also challenged stereotypes applied to Appalachian people in another section of the post-survey. It is important to note that knowledge about environmental problems afflicting the region was reported by multiple students, as was knowledge about Cherokee history.

Table 12

*Knowledge Gained through Participation in the Course*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information about Appalachian people and culture</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental problems</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee history</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural connection to place</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing new</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty in the region</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course materials.** Students were asked on the post-survey to identify the component of the course that had the greatest impact on their thinking about Appalachia. Out of the course components, 13 students, more than half of all respondents, identified some form of text as being the most beneficial component of the course. Students
reported appreciating the texts’ local settings, personal feel, and themes of place and belonging. Students who did not identify texts as the most beneficial component identified assignments that allowed them to tell their own stories, share their thoughts and perspectives, and incorporate prior knowledge. Table 13 presents a breakdown of the various responses students submitted regarding the course component having the greatest impact on their thinking.

Table 13

*Course Component Having Greatest Impact*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Component</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commonplace Book Assignment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>My Old True Love</em> (Adams, 2004)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Readings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee Materials</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays and Speeches</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry and Short Stories</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Research Paper Assign.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlackBoard Discussion Posts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Texts.* Students described how the texts had impacted the thinking after completing the course. A large portion of the students reported gaining knowledge about Appalachia as the greatest impact of engaging with the texts. Interestingly, while a few students felt the texts promoted diversity in Appalachia and helped them develop a sense of appreciation for the culture, another student wrote elsewhere that she felt the texts only
served to support stereotypes of Appalachian culture. Table 14 illustrates the impacts students reported the texts had on their thinking.

Table 14

*Impact of Course Texts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impact</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Appalachia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New perspectives/information</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to connect to real life and local area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required deep, critical thinking</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration of diversity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed appreciation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assignments.* Students also reported how or what about the assignments had the greatest impact on their thinking. More than a third of the students stated that the assignments impacted them by encouraging more and deeper thought.

Table 15

*Impact of Course Assignments*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impact</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged deeper thinking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration of place</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of academic skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to connect to real life</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration of environmental issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Instructor impact.** Students were asked to evaluate the impact of the instructor on the post-survey. Because the instructor facilitated class meetings, students were also prompted to assess the impact class meetings had on their thinking throughout the semester as a question related to instructor impact. Table 16 displays the data related to the instructor’s direct impact on students’ thinking. The largest portion of respondents felt that June’s greatest impact was that she encouraged thinking among students. Sharing knowledge, facilitating discussion, and encouraging students to read were also included in several responses and are related to the thinking she inspired during the course. Interestingly, one student wrote that she impacted them by making them “step outside themselves” to think from a different perspective, which reflects June’s goal of pushing students outside their comfort zones to encourage growth.

Table 16

**Instructor Impact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impact</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged thinking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged reading</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating discussion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made students “step outside themselves”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated, students were asked to consider the impact of class meetings. Table 17 displays students’ responses. Almost half of respondents felt that the most impactful aspect of class meetings were the discussions that included diverse voices. Other responses varied and only two students felt the class meetings had very little or no impact on their thinking.

Table 17

*Impact of Class Meetings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Impact</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with diverse perspectives</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student involvement/collaboration</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun/interesting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite aspect of course</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel gratitude</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think about Appalachia often</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Improving the course.** In the end, students offered suggestions for improving the course. Almost a third of students felt the course could be improved by reducing the reading load for the allotted timeframe. Nearly a quarter of the students felt that discussion dominated the class meetings and would have liked other in-class activities to be added as an improvement. However, two other students wanted more discussion and student involvement in class meetings. Finally, nearly a quarter of respondents reported
that they felt the course did not need improvement. The data on course improvement is displayed in Table 18.

Table 18

*Course Improvement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less reading</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize/restructure discussion/discussion posts/add other activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time to read</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More discussion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More student involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More group assignments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Less focus on certain things”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of students suggested other students should take this course. However, almost a third of students stated they would not recommend this course to other students due to the intense work load. Finally, one-fifth of students stated they would recommend the course with the caveat that it should only be taken if one likes to read or is interested in the topic. This information is displayed in Table 19.
Table 19

*Student Course Recommendations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive recommendation to other students</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not recommend due to work load</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would recommend to those who enjoy reading or learning about Appalachia/Place</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings: Cases and Themes**

The profiles presented here capture the experiences of students enrolled in a Literature of Place course based in Appalachia. I invited the 13 students who participated in the journal entries sent throughout the semester to participate in interviews at the end of the course. Six students agreed to be interviewed. Their stories and the instructor’s story are shared here for insight into how participation in an Appalachian Literature course impacted the students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. The interviews included open-ended questions and were semi-structured which allowed the conversation to flow naturally and provided opportunity for probing and clarification.

The student participants in this study vary in age, major, and hometown. Students hailed from very urban cities, suburban neighborhoods, and rural small towns. They were all of traditional college-going age, ranging up to 21 years old. Of the six student participants, all were women except two. All of them were White, except one African American woman and a woman of Mexican heritage. The five of the six participants were first-generation college students who had enrolled in the course randomly to fulfill a graduation requirement. Three of them did state some general interest in the topic. Only
one of the student participants was an English major; the rest had other majors including art, broadcasting, film, and history. Their career aspirations varied widely to include fiction writing, academics, television, and art. Only two student participants considered themselves Appalachian before or after taking the course. One of these students only felt partially Appalachian, because she was not born and raised in the region. The instructor was a White woman and tenured English professor who had taught a variety of English classes since 1994. She identified as Southern, but not Appalachian. The stories of the seven participants are presented next as individual cases.

Alex. Alex arrived for his interview on time. We met in the faculty lounge of the English department, seated across the table from one another. He wore a hooded sweatshirt and jeans. He had longer, side-swept brown hair and still wore wires from braces on his teeth. He tried to be talkative and give me plenty of data to work with, but he struggled sometimes to explain his thoughts more fully. Alex was an 18 year old male student from Cary, North Carolina, a suburb of Raleigh. He aspired to be a film director. At the beginning of the course, he had only lived in Appalachia for three days and did not consider himself Appalachian. His father was a graphic designer and his mother a science teacher. It would probably be fair to assume that he was not a first-generation college student, but when asked on the pre-survey, he only commented, “My older brother just graduated from [the same university].” Alex stated he was taking the course because it was randomly assigned to him and that he had no previous experience with similar courses.
Interestingly, Alex reported on both the pre- and post-survey that he did not consider himself Appalachian prior to engaging with the course material. Initially, when beginning the class, Alex felt like an outsider to Appalachia. Not only did he not identify as Appalachian, he often struggled to connect with local culture. For example, when asked in the interview about his perception of Appalachia or Appalachian people prior to coming to the area and taking the course he replied, “…I honestly didn’t really know what to expect, so—I don’t know that I was expecting everyone to be crazy, but they talk weird, but they know what they’re talking about. It’s kind of like that, I think…”

Alex also believed the course was a good introduction to the local area and Appalachia for outsiders and new transplants to the region:

I think it’s really good for anyone that’s new to the area like I was. I was really new to this area, so— …Well, for me, it introduced me to a lot of—it gave me a mindset about what this area is like. When I came I had no idea where anything is. Where’s the UC? I don’t know. When somebody has no idea about the area, it’s nice learning about it. Learning about what makes this place, this place.

He also reported on the post-survey that he did consider himself Appalachian after taking the course. After identifying himself as Appalachian in the post-survey, he also wrote that he does not have Appalachian heritage, but that his feelings about being Appalachian before the course were “pretty good” and the course made him appreciate the area more.

**Course impact.** Overall, Alex felt that he had a very special experience participating in the course, saying during the interview: “At first I was a bit
overwhelmed. I was like, ‘This is too much work. I don’t have time for this.’ But about half way through I realized it is something special. You can’t put words on it.”

Alex wrote on the post-survey that participation in an Appalachian literature course impacted his perceptions of the culture. Alex said on his post-survey that he gained a “better mindset of Appalachia” and came to realize there was more poverty in the region than he was previously aware of. He also discussed on the post-survey what he learned about stereotypes of Appalachian culture, saying “I’ve learned the stereotypes, that it’s redneck country, poverty, and everyone loves it.” He also said the course made him begin to think about place and Appalachia more frequently, saying during his interview “The class has really got me thinking that way, and that kind of mind set. It’s almost making me enjoy every moment in every place I am…I think about Appalachia all the time.”

In the beginning of the course, Alex said on the pre-survey that he was unfamiliar with any Appalachian stereotypes other than banjoes. He also stated that he did not recall having any experiences with Appalachian stereotypes. At the end of the course, during the interview, I asked him specifically how he had been impacted with regards to Appalachian stereotypes in relationship to the dialect used in some of the texts. He replied that even though Appalachian people talk “weird”, they know what they are talking about.

**Instructor impact.** When asked how the instructor impacted his thinking on the post-survey, Alex replied, “I have learned to appreciate this area.” He expounded on this during his interview when I asked how the class meetings impacted his thinking:
Because of the class, now I just kind of walk out and I will be looking out at maybe the mountain or something—or when I was back at home, I’d just be sitting there looking at this part of the street that I grew up on, and I just think about what is it that connects me to this place.

In his discussion posts, Alex described struggling to understand the first few chapters of *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and wrote that he looked forward to class discussion with the instructor, where he hoped to gain clarity.

**Impactful course components.** Alex reported on the post-survey that the course readings “impacted [his] feelings” and his thinking by causing him to “think about the books all the time.” Alex had very little negative to say about any of the course readings. During our interview, Alex talked a lot about the character of Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and the dialect the author used. Despite sometimes struggling with the dialect, Alex really enjoyed the book, writing in a BlackBoard post, “What I love about the book so far is how it is told like I'm sitting on the porch with the narrator just telling me stories.” Alex also described enjoying *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) in our interview. He particularly enjoyed the theme of darkness as it was portrayed in the text, as well as the descriptive writing style of the author:

That was one of the themes I really liked…Or the lifelessness. The way that McCarthy describes the world is just really well described, and you really picture like what this dry ashy world is, and its cold, and there’s cannibals everywhere and stuff like that…. Everyone was just struggling and it was really sad, and I thought it was a very captivating thing for the story.
Overall, Alex wrote about how the assignments had impacted his thinking on the post-survey, saying “I think they have taught me to analyze a place.” He cited the second assignment as having the most impact, saying that it “made him think.” In our interview, he elaborated on his experience with the second assignment, the service-learning project, stating,

Well, I really enjoyed the second assignment. I did the service project, and I went out to the Baptist church up there….We were splitting logs and stuff and were delivering them to people that, you know, couldn’t afford logs or people that are struggling with money, and I really enjoyed doing that cuz it really showed me how much poverty there actually is around this area, and I also got to see more of the area which was nice.

**Perception of Appalachia.** On his pre-survey, when asked what he thought of Appalachia, Alex wrote, “mountains, bears and clouds.” He was the only student to list “clouds.” In the post-survey, Alex identified “mountains” as an asset of Appalachia, though he also perceived the mountains as a barrier to travel and access. When asked on the post-survey how he would improve Appalachia, Alex wrote, “I wouldn’t do anything.”

Alex used the term “connection” frequently when discussing place in all sources data. Connection in Appalachia included a person’s connection to place, land, family, history, music and community.

You can’t really put a specific word on what connects people to Appalachia. I already feel connected to it somehow and I can’t put my finger on it. It’s just
something that’s captivating, and people fight for it. That’s kinda what I got away from that.

A sense of community, or helping one another out, was something that Alex noted more frequently than his classmates. While others remarked on the small and sometimes “tight-knit” communities, Alex defined the Appalachian community a bit further to include shared responsibility. “I guess there is a small fight for survival in the Appalachian area, but it’s definitely more unified I think,” he stated during his interview. Family was also something that Alex really appreciated and discussed frequently, describing both positive and negative family relationships.

Alex also remarked on the local knowledge held by Appalachian inhabitants. He described their unique way of speaking and of intimately knowing the land in his journal entry, saying they “know the land like the back of their hand.” He wrote about the main character in “Back of Beyond” (Rash, 2010a): “I think he was an interesting character who understood the area in a way that most others do not. He knows how rough life can be up here and he isn’t afraid to deal with it.”

Alex described a sense of environmental awareness. He wrote that Appalachia is “beautiful but brutal” on his pre-survey. Alex wrote about the complexity and vastness of the terrain, the harsh weather, and how life in Appalachia requires a lot of hard work throughout the data. He talked about ways in which the land has been used and abused. In describing Serena (Rash, 2008) to me during the interview, he said, “It’s always a shame when trees are being cut down, cuz they’re so—I think they’re really pretty and I—it just stood out to me then.” He also described in his BlackBoard postings energy
conservation, the travesty of mountain top removal, and the dangers of underground coal mining.

**Perceptions of Appalachian people.** Alex described Appalachian people in both positive and negative terms throughout the data. Positively, Alex talked about Appalachian people as choosing to do the right thing and help one another, or having a sense of humanity. He described humanity most often when discussing *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) in his BlackBoard posts.

> I'm glad he found some good people to carry on the fire. The fire is such a good symbol of the morality of the human race. People huddle around fired together for warmth, for friendship, to eat, and to sleep in community. Fire can bring us together.

Strength, which also included work ethic, was the positive trait Alex most frequently described while thinking about Appalachian people. Of their work ethic, Alex said, “I think that this land has had a lot of hard work. When I think about Appalachia, I think about dedication and elbow grease. People love this land and will do anything to keep it.” In his BlackBoard posts, Alex often talked about the strength of the characters surviving in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) and stated that the boy character was the strongest because he always did the right thing morally. Similarly, Alex described the strength of Nerve in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) in overcoming the childhood abuse she had endured. Alex initially “loved” the character Serena in Rash’s (2008) work of the same title because she, too, was strong, independent, and “stubborn.”
However, her strength grew negative over time and became the reason he eventually no
longer cared for her.

Most of the negative characteristics Alex described revolved around family or
romantic relationships. He talked about the child and spousal abuse and alcoholism in
“The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), the sham marriage in Serena (Rash,
2008), cousins betraying one another for love and murdering each other in My Old True
Love (Adams, 2004), and Horace Kephart’s abandonment of his wife and children.

**Theme of darkness.** During our interview, I asked Alex to tell me about a theme
that really stood out to him. He told me the “whole darkness theme” in The Road
(McCarthy, 2006) stood out to him the most. He talked about feelings of both sadness
and hope invoked by the theme of darkness. To Alex, the theme of darkness presented
itself in all course materials in various forms including homesickness, poverty, war,
racism, intolerance, violence, murder, and death. Poverty seemed to be cited most
frequently by Alex. He described poverty as one of the stereotypes he learned about
during the course during the interview. When comparing the local area during our
interview to a previous service experience he had, Alex said, “I guess it feels a lot like
Kentucky kind of. At least with that whole poverty thing.”

Alex often wrote about the mental problems characters experienced as a result of
the dark contexts in which they were living and how those mental problems often resulted
in substance abuse, violence, and death. He described this well when writing on
BlackBoard about Serena (Rash, 2008), saying that as the story became “more intense,”
he could tell that the characters were “reaching their breaking point.” He wrote about
how Pemberton had gone “crazy” and was “drinking more alcohol” and that Serena would only be able to “hold it together for so long until [she] snaps like a log in a river.”

**Summary.** Alex was a first-time freshman from an urban area of North Carolina who did not consider himself Appalachian prior to taking the course and who struggled in adapting to the mountainous terrain and local dialect. He was taking the course simply because he was enrolled in it by an advisor to fill his liberal studies credit and had never taken a similar course. He felt the course had a profound impact on him, helping him to appreciate the area more and pay closer attention to his connection to different places. He believed the instructor was a main source for the impact this course had on him. He particularly enjoyed the service project and generally liked the selected materials.

After taking the course, Alex described Appalachia in primarily environmental terms and stated that there was nothing about it he would improve. Throughout the data, Alex described Appalachia as a place of connection – connection to land, family, history, music, and community. He described the people as strong with a good work ethic and the type to help one another out and do the right thing. He also talked about the substance abuse and violence that often resulted among the people from the difficult lives they lived. This was one component of the theme of darkness Alex cited as standing out most to him. The theme of darkness that characterized Appalachia was defined by struggle, violence, poverty, and death. This theme caused Alex to feel both sad and hopeful, often at the same time.

**Morgan.** I found Morgan sitting cross-legged waiting for me outside June’s office 20 minutes early of our appointment. She seemed athletic because she was
wearing gym shorts, a t-shirt, and sneakers. She had her long strawberry-blond hair held
back with a ballerina headband and tied in a ponytail over her shoulder. She wore very
little makeup. She was typing on her cell phone, the only thing she carried, when I
arrived. I sat in a chair diagonal from her instead of behind the desk, hoping this would
make the interview more conversational and put her at ease. I was also wearing a t-shirt
and sweat pants with flip flops because I had just traveled six hours by car to the research
site.

Morgan was very talkative. She was a 21 year old first-generation college student.
She had taken similar courses on Appalachian culture during the earlier years of her
college career. She told me she had read several of the books before. Morgan wrote in
her pre-survey that she was motivated to enroll in the class by her “love of home and
being immersed into the literature and issues associated with the region.” She aspires to
be a fiction writer or editor, saying that much of her writing is set in and inspired by the
mountains. She calls a small city in the heart of Appalachian North Carolina home and
considered herself Appalachian both before and after the course. As an Appalachian, she
said that she had an idealistic view of Appalachia. She described a strong sense of pride
and connection to Appalachia and “her” mountains. She talked about Appalachia as
home and the place where generations of her family had built their homesteads.

Morgan’s mother was a “teacher’s assistant/secretary/bookkeeper” and her father
was a professional truck driver. From her creative essays in her commonplace book, I
learned that her grandparents owned a farm and slaughterhouse. They lived in the same
town Morgan lived in their entire lives. They met and married young. Her grandmother
later earned her GED and her grandfather worked at the mills while farming after starting out as a local baseball star. She lived within walking distance from her grandparents, just across the horse pasture. Her parents inherited her grandparents’ barn and moved it to their property where Morgan kept her horses.

**Course impact.** Morgan stated on her post-survey that the course forced her to turn inward and really define for herself what it meant to be Appalachian. On the post-survey, Morgan wrote that the class impacted her thinking about Appalachia through the class meetings that involved “discussion and being able to hear other peoples’ opinions who may not be from this region.” She told me in the interview that this is one reason she likes classes based on Appalachia, saying,

> A lotta the people in the class were from Raleigh and around down east. I think it was kind of a shock to them, the ones that were from down east. Then, we had a couple that were from the mountains. I think, I enjoy Appalachian classes because I feel like people from outside the region can learn something about this region, and they’re not just focused on the stereotypes of hillbilly and rednecks. They’re able to see that it’s more than that.

When asked on the pre-survey what Appalachian stereotypes she was familiar with, Morgan wrote that she was familiar with hillbillies and rednecks as stereotypes but stated that she had never had any experiences with those stereotypes except in a class. On the post-survey, when asked what she had learned about stereotypes, Morgan wrote, “We’re not hillbillies and rednecks.”
Morgan also talked and wrote about being impacted by the environmental issues explored in the course, the Appalachian women characters in the materials, and the challenge to Appalachian stereotypes she felt the course offered. She wrote on the post-survey that she would tell someone considering taking the course “To take it. It’s eye-opening and can impact your ways of thinking whether from here or not.” When asked directly on the post-survey about how the instructor had impacted her thinking, Morgan replied that June “really encouraged us to take a deeper look at Appalachian issues.”

**Impactful course components.** Overall, Morgan wrote on her post-survey that the assignments impacted her thinking because “[She] had to take a deeper look into [her]self and examine what it means to [her] to be Appalachian.” Out of the assignments and materials, when asked on the post-survey which she found most beneficial, Morgan replied,

I found the environmental and pieces that dealt with place and belonging to be most beneficial. I also found the commonplace book assignment important because it allowed me to explore myself and what it means to me to be Appalachian.

She reiterated at times how she felt the commonplace book was the most beneficial assignment because it encouraged students to “go out and try and do things and read articles that related to the class. They were even more immersed in Appalachian culture.” She also described appreciating the “creative freedom” the project allowed her, but wished there had been more examples because she struggled with deciding how to present it.
When asked on the post-survey how the course materials had impacted her thinking, Morgan replied, “Opening my eyes to the issues, but also of the people that reside in Appalachia and their resilience.” In both her journal entries and interview, Morgan identified the settings in Rash’s (2008, 2010) works as having the most impact on her. She described his works that include the destruction of land through logging, poverty, and substance abuse saying they reveal

The harsher truth of what these blue mountains hold. It’s not all Andy Griffith, apples pies, crisp autumn air, and good family values. There is a darker side to what people consider Appalachia, just as there are light and dark sides of any beloved place.

Morgan most appreciated the plot of The Road (McCarthy, 2006) because it was “so unlike the other ones” and was flat, much like an actual road.

During the interview, Morgan was the only participant that identified the theme of love as the theme in the course that impacted her the most.

Honestly, it may sound cliché, but probably, I think, love was a big theme. In The Road (McCarthy, 2006), the man and the boy, you could tell that the man loved the boy more than anything, and he was going to do anything to help him survive. In My Old True Love (Adams, 2004), Arty keeps everyone together. It’s called My Old True Love. I think it’s a love of the region and a love of her family and a love of survival. I think in some of the Ron Rash short stories—I can’t remember which one it was—but in the one where the little girl, they catch the little girl stealing the eggs because the family is starving, and the man lets her go.
At the end of the semester, Morgan posted in BlackBoard about House’s (2010) “Thin Places”, saying it tied together all the themes of the course, which she listed as “themes of place, environment, love, knowledge, religion, [and] memory.”

In the interview, I asked Morgan which characters she felt had the most impact on her. She described the character of Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2010):

Probably Arty in—I think her name was Arty—in *My Old True Love* because I think she really embodied the strong woman character of the South and the Appalachians and being able to take care of her family while her husband was in the Civil War. She was basically the glue of that whole family, and I think that just really embodies how strong the women in the South have to be.

Morgan also talked about dialect used by Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), and discussed dialect more frequently than the other participants. She told me, “I don’t like dialect because I feel like some people can portray us, well, Appalachians as hillbillies and hicks and they overdo it.” However, she also said that the book did a very good job of not “overdoing” the dialect so as to not “turn off a broader audience.”

**Perception of Appalachia.** When asked on the pre-survey what she thought of when she thought of Appalachia, Morgan wrote “home” and “mountains.” On the pre-survey, Morgan was asked to identify the positive and negative attributes of Appalachia. For positive attributes, Morgan wrote, “the landscape, the history, [and] the food;” and for negative attributes, Morgan simply wrote, “none.” However, on the post-survey when asked to identify assets of Appalachia and ways to improve the region, Morgan identified
“mountains, pride, [and] belonging” as assets and said that she would “stop mountaintop removal” as an improvement to the region.

In her journal entries, early in the course, Morgan wrote about how she envisioned Appalachia in relationship to Rash’s (2010) short stories and owning her bias:

I see blue mountains and clear streams, cool autumn days and changing leaves, a culture preserved through time that still resonates as it used to when people sat on their back porches and sipped lemonade, watching the sun fade over their mountains. I know this view is biased, idealistic, and, in most all cases, not entirely realistic.

Morgan also heavily described Appalachia as a place of grim conditions throughout the data, characterized by the people who inhabit it and the natural environment it is made of.

_Grim conditions._ Morgan frequently described the darker side of Appalachia present in the literature and film. Grim conditions are characterized by poverty, rural isolation, death, murder, violence, war, escape, survival, and hope. Her idea of grim conditions was captured well when she described McCarthy’s (2006) _The Road_, saying, “I'm always taken aback by the bleakness of the setting and... pretty much the whole thing. From the very beginning it is dark, dismal and without hope.” Morgan also wrote about the enslavement and ethnic cleansing of the Cherokee people, the poverty in Rash’s (2008) and Kephart’s (1913) writings and that she met in her own daily life, and the devastation caused to the region by the Civil War.

Grim conditions were characterized not only by death, violence, and poverty, but also by rurality and isolation. In her commonplace book, Morgan described her own
adolescent yearning to leave the small Appalachian town she grew up in, which she connected to Rash’s (2010a) “Back of Beyond” saying, “Being stuck in a small town in the mountains traps them and sucks them in where they'll never get away.” The rurality and isolation Morgan frequently described was strongly connected to the poverty of the region. She described a conversation she had with her boyfriend about moving to a very remote part of the countryside and realizing how dependent they were on being close to a town for groceries and gasoline. The isolating rurality was something to be survived and escaped, as were all aspects of the grim conditions of Appalachia.

**Environmentalism.** Morgan placed a large focus on environmentalism, which she stated impacted her the most. When asked on the survey what she had gained from the course, Morgan replied, “I gained a better respect for environmental issues. When you take into consideration all the abuse of land that is happening right outside your door, it’s pretty eye opening.” She reiterated this later in the post-survey when asked what new information about Appalachia she had learned, writing “…the environmental issues. I knew about them, but this course helped bring them under the microscope.”

Many of these issues took the form of negative progress. Negative progress is the idea that modern life and development often do more harm than good. Often this progress is in the form of natural resource extraction and development of the lands of Appalachia resulting in a destruction of the environment. Finally, when asked what had the most impact on her thinking about the course, Morgan again focused on environmental issues, replying,
The realization that people are destroying the mountains by mountaintop removal just to get a little bit of coal. I feel that society, mountain people or not, need to stop this. We need to find another ‘cheap source’ of energy.

Appreciation for and connection to nature, often in the form of mountains, land, and forest, was another form of environmentalism Morgan discussed and wrote about often during the course. For example, Morgan identified the mountains as an asset of the region in her post-survey. Sometimes, appreciation of nature also took the form of conservation efforts. Connection to animals was something Morgan wrote more about than any other participant, from the horses she owns to the farm animals she grew up with to the inclusion of numerous essays related to animals in her commonplace book. She referred to herself as “horse girl.”

**Perceptions of Appalachian people.** Appalachian people, from Morgan’s perspective are characterized by love, connection to people and place, community, strength, resilience, a strong work ethic, being family-oriented, and having religious beliefs and strong morals. Appalachian people, from Morgan’s perspective are characterized by a strong sense of connection. Connection is often to place, home, and nature such as land, mountains, and forests. Appalachian people often exhibited a sense of pride when describing their connection to place and home. Morgan even listed “pride” as an asset belonging to Appalachia on the post-survey. She also wrote that the course had impacted her feelings about being Appalachian on the post-survey, writing, “I am proud of my Appalachian heritage.” She also described this sense of pride for me in the interview:
I know I feel pride of where I come from and being from a small town and living in the mountains and being able to go out my back door and see these blue mountains right in the back. I feel like I own part of them, I guess, because they are a part of me.

A sense of community in Appalachia contributes to the overall sense of connection to place. On the post-survey, Morgan identified “belonging” as an asset of Appalachia and wrote that she found assignments and readings that dealt with belonging as most beneficial. She felt that how the characters dealt with poverty in Rash’s (2010) “Hard Times” demonstrated the Appalachian sense of community well, saying “I think that just really shows that in Appalachia, it’s a community. I think people stand up for each other, in a way.”

Morgan wrote about family connections frequently and family history was also perceived as important. Morgan wrote extensively in her commonplace book about her own family, their history, and her experiences with them, highlighting a family of love. Her essay, “An Appalachian Family History,” even included a decent-sized collection of family photos from throughout the ages. Morgan also selected several readings on her own to include in her commonplace book that revolved around family.

Strength and resilience were viewed as defining characteristics of Appalachian people. Strength and resilience also included strong work ethic, humor, and independence, and was related to the survival of grim conditions. When answering the question of how the readings impacted her thinking about Appalachia in the post-survey, Morgan replied that they opened her eyes to “the people that reside in Appalachia and
their resilience.” Morgan remarked often about the strength and resiliency of the many characters she encountered during the course, but most often talked about the character Arty from *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), as was evident in the section Impactful Course Components.

Morgan viewed the connection to land and nature as a spiritual one, relating back to the original Cherokee inhabitants and that that is being carried on by individuals like House (2010) in his speech “Thin Places.” She identified with this, writing in a commonplace book essay, “I am willing to wait here forever, if forever is how long it will take to memorize every detail about this land that was undoubtedly hand painted by God himself.” She particularly enjoyed discussing the idea of the boy character in McCarthy’s (2006) *The Road* as a “Christ-like figure.” She described him in her BlackBoard posts as “the embodiment of goodness” in a post-apocalyptic world where he carried the last bit of “goodness of the human race”.

**Summary.** Morgan was an upper-level first-generation college student from small-town Appalachia. She considered herself Appalachian and had taken similar courses and read some of the course material previously. She enrolled in the class because of her own connection to Appalachia. She felt she most benefitted from the class because it challenged the idea that all Appalachians are hillbillies. She learned the most about the environmental issues facing the region and felt deeply impacted by them.

Morgan most enjoyed the commonplace book because it allowed her to be creative and to explore the local area. Morgan felt most connected to the character Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) because she represented the strong, Southern
Appalachian woman she perceived herself and her female relatives to be. She enjoyed Rash’s (2008, 2010) depiction of the Appalachian setting, even though it was harsher than her own idealistic visions of Appalachia. She most liked the plot of *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) simply because it was so different than the other course materials.

Morgan defined Appalachia as home, and a place of natural beauty and mountains. She believed the food, history, landscape, pride, and belonging are all assets of the region, and she would stop mountain-top removal as an improvement. She recognized that her ideas of Appalachia may be biased because of her own personal connections to it. She also described the grim conditions found in Appalachia characterized by rurality, isolation, poverty, war, violence, death, and murder. The grim conditions were something to be survived and escaped, which was related to the strength and resilience of Appalachian people. She also found the people to be characterized by good morals and a sense of belonging, family, and community.

Environmental issues impacted Morgan the most, as previously stated. Environmental issues were perceived by Morgan as negative progress where human development caused destruction more than improving an area. Morgan also described a strong connection to nature in the literature with which she related. This was in the form of appreciating the natural landscape of the region and advocating for conservation efforts. Morgan also demonstrated a very strong connection to animals and was the self-titled “horse girl”.

**Daniel.** Daniel was a 19 year-old male college student from the rural suburbs of a larger urban area only a few hours from the university. He was a first-generation college
student, the son of a daycare teacher mother and a father who worked in rental homes and
maintenance. He did not consider himself Appalachian, neither before nor after the
course. He was a history major and self-proclaimed “history buff” who someday wants
to be a history professor and make historical documentaries similar to the ones viewed in
class. He stated in his journal entries that he was “used to reading historical stuff” in
reference to the dialect used in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004). In a post about what
he felt were stereotypical representations of Confederate soldiers as warmongers, Daniel
described having “very strong connections to the South” and his two great uncles who
fought in “the War Between the States.” He took the course because it was suggested to
him and he hoped to gain a broader understanding of the Appalachian perspective of
place.

Daniel was originally scheduled to interview on Friday in the late afternoon, but
his jazz band commitment resulted in rescheduling the interview. He arrived a few
minutes early of the rescheduled time. Daniel was a bit tall and lean with short, buzzed
brownish-blonde hair. He was wearing typical college gear: a gray zipper hoodie over a
t-shirt and jeans. He was polite and friendly, but not very talkative. I sat diagonal from
him. He did not maintain eye contact during the interview. Several times he forgot what
he was saying or lost the words to express himself. I asked several probing questions, but
still ended up with only 13 minutes of audio in which he repeatedly said, “I’m not sure.”
After the interview, he told me he’s “not good with words” in an apologetic manner. He
also mentioned having interviewed people before and that he “understands my pain.”
The instructor told me later that he expressed himself well in writing and the data he submitted supported this claim.

**Course impact.** Daniel reported that the course impacted him greatly in positive ways. In the post-survey, he wrote that he gained “a new perspective on Appalachia. I’ve learned a lot about the many problems affecting Appalachia and it has changed my opinions of the region.” Later, in the interview, he explained further that,

> It’s definitely been one of my favorite classes. I feel like I’ve learned a lot, and there’s a lot more discussion, and—I don’t know how to describe it. It seems like there’s been a lot more to the class, a lot more depth than most English classes. We’ve gone further into the actual literature, and Appalachia, than I was expecting.

During the interview and in the journal, Daniel was asked to identify specific elements of the course that had most impacted his thinking and how his thinking was impacted. In general, the impact the course had was a broadening of Daniel’s awareness of Appalachian issues and his learning information he was not yet familiar with. For example, in the journal, he reported that,

> There have been several differing themes presented through the many writings we've read that relate to Appalachia and have expanded my thinking about Appalachia. In particular one theme that has stuck out to me has been the constant theme of environmentalism.

Environmentalism was a theme Daniel strongly identified with. During the interview, Daniel discussed how the literature informed his thinking about the effects of
timbering in the local area as presented in *Serena* (Rash, 2008). He stated, “I know it’s a problem at home” and said he could better understand the severity of timbering in the local area because he knew how negative the effects of timbering were in his hometown. Similarly, after viewing the documentary *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008), Daniel reported in a BlackBoard post having an “a-ha!” moment when he learned that his home area is one of the nation’s top 25 most polluted cities.

Not only did Daniel learn new ideas and concepts, some of the beliefs he held prior to the course were changed as a result of his participation in the course. For instance, Daniel repeatedly remarked throughout the data on the strong female characters he encountered in the material, something he was not expecting and contrary to his prior beliefs. He described the character of Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) during our interview, saying he expected a “strong, patriarchal figure” to “be in charge of the family” and that Arty was the opposite of that. He described his experience, “I wasn’t expecting a character like that, especially in that time period, and in that region. I didn’t know much about it, and I wasn’t expecting such a strong female character, I don’t think.”

Daniel also wrestled with his belief that Appalachia was culturally and geographically isolated from the rest of the nation. He stated during the interview that he began the class believing that Appalachian culture was “so disconnected from the rest of America.” He described the characteristic isolation as a “disconnectedness” that helped create the dialect particular to the region. However, as we discussed this in the interview, he said the class changed his thinking some because there were “some cases where you
can see that it’s not that—there was more connection. There’s influence, more influence than I thought there were. It’s hard to explain…”

With regards to Appalachian stereotypes, Daniel reported at the beginning of the course on the pre-survey that he had no experience with Appalachian stereotypes and was familiar with “few, if any.” In the post-survey taken at the end of the course when asked what he had learned about stereotypes and Appalachian culture, Daniel wrote, “Many if not all stereotypes are untrue. Mainly those related to the uneducated view of Appalachian people.” Throughout his writings, Daniel described the “really cool stories” about the Cherokee people and how they did not portray the “savage” stereotype like other works he had encountered. He also described the “interesting poems” of Frank X Walker (2000) and his understanding of Affrilachia. Similarly, he frequently wrote about the strong, sometimes “masculine,” female characters he met and how they challenged more traditional ideas of women of the time period and location. However, as previously stated, he felt there were negative stereotypical images of southern Confederate soldiers. He wrote about this in a BlackBoard post, strongly stating, “To me this is much like looking at a video of 9/11 and al Qaeda terrorist attacks and affiliating that with all Middle Eastern countries and all Muslim people.”

Daniel also engaged in analysis of power relations frequently and in different forms. He was especially interested in the power imbalance between wealthy, outsider businessmen and poor, local laborers and environmentalists. A very interesting culmination of these power imbalances is symbolically carried out when Pemberton faces off with Horace Kephart in Serena (Rash, 2010). Kephart and Rachel, the unwed mother
of Pemberton’s child to whom Kephart offered shelter, symbolize the latter. Pemberton, on the other hand, plays the former. Daniel wrote about the showdown in BlackBoard, saying,

I also liked how it really came down to a Pemberton vs. Kephart thing for a bit when Rachel was staying with Kephart, but then she left. But still I thought that showed an interesting comparison with Kephart and Rachel on one side and Serena and the businessmen on the other with Pemberton square in the middle.

Daniel applied similar analyses to today’s environmental problem in Appalachia. He urged for more publicity surrounding mountain-top removal mining, stating that if people knew more about it, there was “no way they could continue living as inefficiently as they do”. He described the current inefficient and unsustainable mode of living as “honestly ridiculous.” Finally, he described how House’s (2010) speech made environmentalism more relevant to people’s lives by connecting it to a sense of place.

**Impactful course components.** Overall, Daniel seemed to connect with and be most impacted by the theme of environmentalism throughout the course materials, as already alluded to. He stated that the “different environmental writings from Kephart, House and others opened my eyes to more than the other works did. Serena represented an important environmental issue as well.” Elaborating on his experience with House’s (2010) “Thin Places” in the discussion posts, Daniel wrote in BlackBoard,

[It] really helps people, including myself, understand the bigger picture of the mountains as sacred….It seems these holy places are being paved over and its terrible. One of my favorite quotes from this goes like this: ‘In America, we turn
our thin places into putt-putt golf courses that have fiberglass dinosaurs hovering over the tourists. We take our sacred sites and build rows of McMansions on their crests.’ This is simply haunting and terrifying to think that that is really the American viewpoint and this actually happens to all the things that should be considered holy in our country.

During the interview, I asked Daniel which plot he found most engaging. He told me he liked *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) the best, that he “loved that book.” He found the journey the characters were on to be “really interesting.” He appreciated the ending of the story in which nothing was found and equated the book with “everything” he reads because it is all a “journey of some sort.” However, when I asked if and how *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) impacted his thinking about Appalachia, he said “Not particularly. Not like the other things we read did.” He stated this was mostly because, other than a few hints, the book was not as apparently Appalachian as the other works.

In his journal, Daniel also discussed the ways in which certain characters had impacted his thinking about Appalachia:

For me, the most interesting have been the characters of the many Cherokee myths I've read….I think that and the obvious connection that the Cherokees had to their home land, the mountains here in Appalachia, have impacted me the most in my thinking about Appalachia….I have personally grown more connected to the land here, more appreciative of where I am because of the connection that I’ve seen the Cherokee had to this exact same land. It’s truly remarkable.
Daniel also wrote in his journal that the settings within the Cherokee-related materials (e.g. Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998) had the greatest impact on him because of “how connected to the land the Cherokee people are….Their religion revolved around this land, the mountains. This was their Garden of Eden.”

When I asked Daniel about his experiences with the course assignments during the interview, he stated that he “loved them.” He really liked the mapping exercise at the beginning of the course because it enabled him to explore his home and that he was “connected to [his] land” because it had been in his family for many generations. He also described liking the commonplace book, as well, because he was able to “gather different things” he found interesting, which included quotes from different people and literary characters and environmental photography.

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** Daniel’s perception of Appalachia was impacted by the course primarily in a positive manner. He realized the importance of environmentalism in the region as related to the connection inhabitants had to their land. He also recognized connectedness to family and history as important defining elements of the culture. Despite his remarks about the people and region being characterized by a disconnected-ness during the interview, Daniel, even in the same moment, identified connection as the greatest defining element of Appalachia. He said of the course during the interview, “It makes me realize that there is that more connection here. I didn’t realize that there was more connection than, like I said, back home, but people seem really connected to the land here.”
Theme of connection. The term connection and its variants were used by Daniel to describe Appalachian people throughout the data. Daniel remarked repeatedly on how connected the people were to their land and to their families, as well as how the land, and therefore the people living on it, was connected to the history of the region. As an example, he described how connection was visible in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) and how that connection attached him to the novel, writing in BlackBoard:

To see how connected everyone is to their family, their land it is really amazing. It reminds me a lot of home….it connects me and reminds me of my family, I think that’s why I’ve become so emotionally attached and connected to this book. These three forms of connection – to place, family, and history – are detailed below.

Daniel identified connection to place and family as an asset of Appalachia in the post-survey: “A deep rooted connection to place and family is very important to the people here.” He again referenced connection to place when asked what he learned about Appalachian culture as a result of participating in the course, writing on the post-survey, “I learned about the strong connection to place that is here. I also learned about the vast amount of issues still prevalent in the area, most notably those related to environmentalism.”

Daniel’s initial experiences with the Cherokee literature and film at the beginning of the semester seemed to inform his thinking about place and environmentalism through the remainder of the course. Daniel described repeatedly how the Cherokee connection to land and place impacted his own thinking: “I believe the Cherokee had the right idea in
the holiness of the land here. It should be preserved and kept the way it was earlier. The pollution and destruction of mountain tops should be eliminated.”

Several quotes from Daniel demonstrated his understanding of “a deep-rooted connection to place and family” as a defining characteristic of Appalachian culture. Whether good or bad, connection to family and its influence on character’s lives was a constant in all the literature. In Serena (Rash, 2010), Pemberton’s parental urge to provide for his illegitimate son ultimately resulted in his death, though Daniel clearly believed this was the correct choice: “You can really start to tell Pemberton's stuck between the two sides and is really leaning toward helping his son, which is good!”

Family was also a convoluted theme in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) in which the main character murders her infant sister to protect her from the abusive, neglectful family she was born into. Daniel described it saying the “most important” aspect of the story “was the constant relation back to family.” Daniel appreciated the complexity of family relationships presented in the story: the lack of love for her parents, the very strong love for her baby sister, and the love and struggle she experienced in her romantic life as a result. Oftentimes, though, family was a positive theme, providing strength, support, the will to go on, and connection to place or history. He described the connection to “family and land” in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) and called their closeness “really fascinating.” He described the father-son relationship in The Road (McCarthy, 2006) similarly.

Daniel often focused on the historical context of the course materials, refraining from making outright value judgments and instead trying to understand the temporal
perspective of the characters. He not only remarked on the connection to history present in the materials, but on the historical nature of the materials. Daniel described how history and family were related in many of the materials, as well as the historical context of the dialect and music included in the course materials. He described how history and family were related in his analysis of the inheritance of knowledge in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) saying in a BlackBoard posts, “I thought it was cool how Hackney and Larkin were doing things that Arty had taught them, and Granny had taught her and showed her these things, and her granny before her had showed her these things.” He also described how history was connected to place when writing in BlackBoard about Berry’s (2002) essay “An Entrance to the Woods.”

I also thought it was cool how much he related nature back to history. He said that nature is not only beautiful because of its naturalness, but also because of the changes that have been done to it, like the large fields where the loggers have been, and the lonesome chimney rocks in the wilderness.

**The dismal view.** While Daniel generally described Appalachia as a place full of warm connections between family, land, and history, there was always a lingering element of darkness. He refers to the “theme of death” that makes itself often-present, as well as violence and hardship. Daniel wrote in his journal, “Another theme I thought interesting that I’ve seen presented often in many Appalachian works is the encapsulating theme of death throughout several works.” He described repeatedly how this “dismal view” was incorporated into many of the course materials. He wrote in BlackBoard about how *Serena* (Rash, 2008) opens with the death of a worker and includes animal
deaths, as well, saying “For me it seems that death and dying is a pretty major part of this book.” He also described the narrator’s “blank and dismal view of life” in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011). Similarly, he described Arty’s numbness to the many deaths she experienced in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and the “dying hope” of the man in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006).

Oftentimes, the dismal view presented in each work required some form of escape to cope with or survive. Sometimes, that escape was into the mountains for camouflage, as in the case of the Cherokee people, who “were able to escape” and hide “in the land” and stay there “throughout all these years.” Rachel of *Serena* (Rash, 2008) was able to hide in the Tennessee mountains at first, but eventually “escaped to a completely different place” to flee the dismal conditions she and her son experienced inside Appalachia.

**Summary.** Daniel was a 19 year-old college student from a working class background who was also a first-generation college student. He was a history major who aspired to teach history at the college level and produce historical documentaries. He often viewed the course materials through a historical lens. He felt positively impacted by the course, particularly with regards to environmental issues in Appalachia. He also felt that the course changed how he perceived isolation and connection in Appalachia, which became a defining characteristic of the region from his perspective. He described the connection to land, place, family, and history as an asset of the region. He also described the dismal view of Appalachia that is characterized by death, violence, and survival as a more negative characteristic of the region.
He most enjoyed the mapping exercise and commonplace book, both of which allowed him to explore places and things that were important to him. He felt that the course materials challenged his ideas of traditional gender roles in the region during historical times. He also felt they presented more positive images of racial diversity in Appalachia. He most strongly connected to the theme of environmentalism throughout the materials, but also felt materials that exposed connection to be of great importance, too.

**Aurora.** Aurora joined the class late and was never given the pre-survey other students filled out the first day of class. I contacted her when compiling the data and she filled out portions of the pre-survey. In her post-survey, Aurora described herself as “from Baltimore, MD…’good ole city girl’ and only thing I knew about Appalachia was Appalachian State and Western.” She wrote that she was taking the course because she had taken a lower-level Literature of Place course that was based on Appalachia in which she was “really intrigued” by the material and she hoped to gain a “deeper understanding” of Appalachian culture. She also stated in her interview that she was not from Appalachia and wrote in the post-survey that she did not consider herself Appalachian before or after taking the course. Aurora had ended up the university by earning scholarship funding and having an interest in living somewhere different from her own home town of Baltimore. This may have contributed to her interest in enrolling in courses exploring the local culture that was different and geographically removed from her own. In several places throughout the data, Aurora alluded to having been raised with a religious background, though she never stated with which religion her beliefs or
upbringing were aligned. For example, she wrote in BlackBoard about how one might consider suicide if they were in the predicament of the characters in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) but said that in “MY religion suicide is not an option”.

Aurora was the first participant I interviewed on the second day. Aurora was an African-American student from Baltimore, Maryland. She was the only African-American student in the participant sample group, and one of only few in the class. She seemed friendly and talkative. We set up at a table in the faculty lounge of the English department. She wore a pink blouse with matching brightly colored necklace. She smiled a lot and willingly explained her thoughts in detail. She seemed very positive about her experiences in the course. She described really connecting with the service-learning projects, and seemed to have found that she had more in common with the culture and people than she perhaps expected.

Aurora experienced a great deal of Insider-Outsider tension during the course, in which she was an outsider to the place and culture. For example, she described Cherokee religions and ways of life saying in BlackBoard they were, “just hard for [her] to digest since [she’d] already been taught traditions and stories of creation have been embedded in [her].” She also talked about Kephart’s (1913) chapter on dialects in BlackBoard, saying, “I barely can understand the dialect its self but then talking about it in depth kind of ...eh. Oh yea I also had to go and look up some words because I had no idea what they were saying.” Similarly, she wrote in her journal about how the various settings had impacted her thinking, “It really gives you an inside on how this area really is (considering I'm from Baltimore, MD and don't know much about this area anyway).”
She also described reading about “old wives tales” of the region, calling them “just total gibber gabber.” Likewise, she described feeling shocked by how quickly the characters would “just move on like it was another day” after experiencing tragedy. She had similar experiences during her volunteer work at the local soup kitchen, which filled the service-learning project of the course. She described her experience,

    Then workin' at the soup kitchen...there are a lot of not necessarily homeless people, but the people had to choose between gettin' medication or getting food and they would often choose gettin' their medication first. They're like, 'I'm not homeless. I just need food.' It's like they still had a sense of pride, but they still wanted to get food.

    Course impact. Despite the tension Aurora often felt as an outsider, there were multiple times where she described relating to characters or appreciating the cultural and racial diversity of the region demonstrated in the course materials. At the end of our interview, I asked her if there was anything else she wanted to add, giving her free reign to speak about anything she wanted.

    I like how even though this, I mean, this class was originally based on Appalachian, she also incorporated other things relatively connected to it, like the Cherokee stories and the Affrilachian. I really like that cuz it was like it all comes together. It's not just one peoples. Appalachian involves a lotta people, so I thought that was really nice, how she included other things, sub-points of Appalachian.
In the post-survey, Aurora cited Walker’s (2000) *Affrilachia* as the component of the course that had the most impact on her. In the BlackBoard discussion posts, she chose to read and write about a poem from his collection, saying “it’s nice to hear something about how the African Americans felt” and “we have the Caucasians, the Cherokees, and now the African Americans.” Similarly, she related to the stories of the Cherokee Trail of Tears (Owle, 1998) through her own racial identity, writing, “Being African American and hearing how other ethnicities being called slaves and having similar events happen to them just got my mind wondering.”

In the interview, I asked Aurora which character impacted her thinking the most and she told me it was Arty from *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), explaining “she still reminded me of me a little but, but I guess she knew a lot more things that I didn't know about this area, so I liked her.” She went on to describe that she and Arty were similar in “bein’ above a lotta different things…but still tryin’ to…reflect on herself.” She stated that Arty broke some stereotypes she had in mind about Appalachia because she seemed like “a regular person [she] could possibly know from back home” who just had slightly different, nature-based knowledge as opposed to “city knowledge.”

Aurora wrote on the pre-survey that the stereotypes she was familiar with prior to taking the course were “uneducated, rednecks, making and selling moonshine, dirty, [and] poor.” She stated that before she took the class, she primarily thought of Appalachians as “rednecks and uneducated,” but that taking the class helped her see Appalachia as a “separate subculture.” She described discussions of stereotypes in class when I asked her to talk about the stereotypes Arty had broken, saying “everyone talked
about” the idea that Appalachian people “sit around and listen to banjo music all day on the porch.”

Many of the stereotypes Aurora reported as being familiar with or holding prior to beginning the class had to do with the rurality of the region. I asked her in the interview to describe how the settings had impacted her thinking and she replied that they improved her notion of Appalachia as a “very rural” place of “dirt roads.” She realized after the course that “it’s not really like that,” that Appalachia is a place of “little cities.” She stated on the post-survey that overall the course changed her thinking about Appalachian rurality “a lot.” However, on the pre-survey, which Aurora filled out after the course due to not having been enrolled at the beginning of the course and study, she said she believed there were positive attributes to Appalachia but was not “100% sure what they are.” She wrote that negative attributes occur when “the people fulfill the stereotype.”

On the post-survey, Aurora wrote that the class positively impacted her perception of Appalachian culture because she did not know the majority of the things she learned prior to taking the course. Aurora answered the question of what she learned about Appalachia or Appalachian culture as “all of it….I knew nothing about the culture but the stereotypes, but I didn’t know how important land and knowing these natural survival things was so important to them.” She also cited “the music, role of women, role of men” as what she had learned about stereotypes of Appalachian culture in the course. In assessing the class on the post-survey, Aurora stated that there was nothing she would do to improve the course and would recommend it to other students, writing, “It’s a great class, go for it!” Aurora said she gained “a heap of knowledge about my surrounding
area and Appalachia in general” from the course and that she found the “Cold Mountain movie, Afrolachia [sic], [and the] Cherokee special guest” to be the most beneficial components of the course.

Aurora discussed the course instructor more frequently than other students. In the interview, Aurora described how helpful the professor was in class, saying that the instructor helped her gain “a lot of clarity” during class meetings about readings and assignments she did not understand. Likewise, in the post-survey, she wrote that the instructor impacted her by making her “think abstractly which was needed for the readings at times.” She also used “abstractly” to describe on the post-survey how the class meetings impacted her thinking.

**Impactful course components.** On the post-survey, Aurora identified “discussion postings [and] creative assignments about culture” as the assignments that had the greatest impact on her thinking on the post-survey. Aurora stated during the interview that she enjoyed the service-learning project because she liked volunteering and it was “so different from back at home so bein’ able to help bein’ involved in this area.” She completed a large number of extra credit volunteer opportunities despite her fear of insects, describing herself as “environmentally friendly” and wanting to help clean the local river up since she “was somebody in [the] area.” She also volunteered at the local soup kitchen and helped with music at a local festival, which she described as “really cool” and “pretty interesting.” She also said she liked being creative and enjoyed the creativity involved in the commonplace book assignment.
Overall, her experience with the literature was positive and she described many of the readings as enjoyable. When asked on the post-survey how the readings had impacted her thinking, she responded they “Made me realize how important nature is and without we have a pretty ‘screwed up world.’ Everywhere can’t be city living without grass and trees.” In the BlackBoard discussion posts, she repeatedly described “loving” the readings and appreciating the descriptive nature of the materials, while simultaneously being “shocked,” “freaked out,” or “creeped out.” Aurora felt very impacted by the descriptive nature of the materials. She felt she “could just imagine” what the setting of *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) looked like and appreciated the visual aspect of the movie *Cold Mountain* (Berger et al., 2003). Aurora also told me she most enjoyed the plot of *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) because of all the “twists in the plots” and because it had “more action in it.” In her journal, Aurora described the themes she felt were most apparent in the literature and related that to her perception of reality.

Some of the themes form these Appalachian books are very sad. I think most of that is because this area is poor, and have older people and just not really modernized. So I’d say a common theme would be sadness and poverty.

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** Aurora claimed that the course had a positive effect on her perception of the region. She also named on her post-survey the assets of Appalachia as “nature, conservation, [and] survival of the fittest.” She reported that she would not do anything to improve Appalachia, stating, “It’s great the way it is!” Despite her positive remarks, much of the data reveals a more negative perception of the region that revolved around poverty, lack of development, and poor conditions. In her journal,
Aurora wrote that the plots of the literature taught her that “Appalachia isn’t very wealthy” and that there was a “dark, dingy, poor vibe to the area.” This harkens back to her entry describing themes of poverty and sadness, a “poor area [of]…older people and just not really modernized.” She also wrote about the alcoholism, child abuse, and infanticide in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), saying she felt it was “something that could happen in this type of community.” She also said during the interview that after she watched *Cold Mountain* (Berger et al., 2003), she would play its setting in her head while reading the other works in the course. Finally, discussing Kephart’s (1913) chapter “Moonshine Land,” Aurora posted in BlackBoard,

> I guess it would have to be a pretty accurate statement. I should preface this entire posting saying I don’t really know too much about this area since I am not from here but I have seen [reality] shows on television about how the moonshine business is very serious, and how they express not getting caught.

Nature was perceived by Aurora as an important aspect of Appalachia. She not only listed “nature” as an asset of the region on her post-survey, but went on to write, “I didn’t know how important land and knowing these natural survival things was so important to them.” She discussed this several times in her BlackBoard postings about the various environmental pieces, such as the *Norton Book of Nature Writing* (Finch & Elder, 2002), when she described the “importance of nature and serenity.” She experienced this first-hand when attending a lecture by Appalachian author Ron Rash, who talked about being an “avid fisher” and how “peaceful” water is. Aurora wrote in her postings about how we often “get so caught up in life and forget to stop and smell the
 roses.” She also wrote about the “many negative effects” of coal, the needs for “eco
friendlier options” because current practices are not “fair or ethical,” and her “great
amount of interest in conservation.”

Perceptions of Appalachian people. Aurora mostly described the people as
superstitious, strong, family-oriented people and was very interested in the various
gender roles. Aurora noticed a difference between the types of knowledge she had and
that of the characters. She described “old wives’ tales,” superstitions, and nature-based
knowledge with which she was unfamiliar. Several times in BlackBoard, she contrasted
the many belief systems with her own, such as describing a class discussion in which they
compared Appalachian funeral practices to those with which they were familiar and “how
they had so many different superstitions.”

Aurora focused on gender roles displayed by the characters in the literature at
different times. This relates back to her statement on the post-survey that the “roles of
men and women” were some of the things she learned about Appalachian stereotypes.
She wrote about two Cherokee stories (Mooney, 1900) that “show how a man should act
in his society” and how she thought Maggie in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) was
“going to be a harlot” until she realized Maggie “just hadn’t had much of a childhood”.
She also stated that the wife in “Abe” (Fisher, 2004) “shouldn’t be undermining with her
husband,” that she was “excited that Pemberton [was] starting to man up” and take
control of his own behavior (Rash, 2008), and how the women’s role during the Civil
War was “very intense” and they were “impacted as much as the men” (Adams, 2004;
Rash, 2008).
As demonstrated in the last quote, often intertwined with gender roles was the character trait of strength. Aurora described her perception of the characters’ strength more in the interview when asked why death and sadness stood out to her as themes. She talked about the loss of babies in *Serena* (Rash, 2008) and *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and how the characters went on like it was just “another day in life” and how this “took [her] aback.” Often related to strength is the trait of pride, which Aurora perceived in both the characters and people in the local community. She described in a BlackBoard post the grandmother in Walker’s (2000) poem “Matriarch” as having a strong sense of pride related to her intelligence and way of doing things, calling her “hard-headed.” Likewise, she stated that, for the Cherokee, buying their land back “made them so happy and restored some of their pride back” (Owle, 1998). This same sense of pride was also demonstrated by local people who visited the soup kitchen where Aurora completed a service-learning project and made it a point to emphasize that they were not homeless.

Finally, Aurora talked about the different family relationships demonstrated in the literature. Some of these relationships were negative and some were positive. She wrote about “all of the difficulties” the narrator “endured while a child” in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) and the suffering of the boy in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) after his mother’s disappearance. Similarly, she wrote about Kephart abandoning his family and how they were “apathetic” to his legacy and the “infamous birthing scenes” in which the older siblings helped during the delivery of a child in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). However, she also wrote about the “special bond” between the father and son in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) and how Freeman Owle (1998) remembers
the “story being told to him by his grandfather” because his “family is big on passing the
stories” down. She also enjoyed reading about the “bond being developed into some true
love” between Arty and Larkin soon after he was born in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004).

**The tragic.** For Aurora, the idea of environmental destruction leads to the theme
of tragedy or, as she called it, “the tragic.” Aurora’s perception of Appalachia as
impoverished, dark, dingy, populated with aging people, and not modern has already
been presented. She described repeatedly how all the books were so sad, and how the
characters had abnormal, apathetic reactions to sad situations. Aurora laughed as she told
me during the interview, “It was a lotta death and sadness. I have never read so many sad
books in my life than this class.” Aurora posted in BlackBoard about the death and
violence among the characters, drug use, and predatory behaviors. She wrote about
Serena miscarrying her baby (Rash, 2008), which she had hoped would not happen since
in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) “there was tragic [sic],” but upon reading further,
she knew “tragic [sic] has struck again.” Similarly, she wrote about the murder the boy
witnesses in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) and how she was not surprised the father died in
the end. Opposing “the tragic”, though, was hope. Aurora described her “sense of
excitement” when a house was found in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) and how she was
happy the characters had morals enough to feed an elderly, disabled man. She also really
liked the happy ending in Owle’s (1998) “Trail of Tears” in which the Cherokee family
was able to buy back the land stolen from them and that baby Larkin survived “when no
one else really expected [him] to.”
Summary. Aurora was an African-American female student from urban Baltimore, Maryland. She knew little about Appalachia except negative stereotypes prior to taking the course. She had taken one similar, lower-level course that sparked her interest in learning about Appalachian culture. She often felt like an outsider to the place and culture, but sometimes was able to relate to the characters and situations. She was most impacted by her ability to relate to some characters she may have thought of initially as very different from herself and by the inclusion of different races within the course material.

Prior to taking the course, she mostly believed negative stereotypes about the people and region. After the course, she came to see Appalachia as a separate subculture of its own. She wrote in the post-survey that she had learned a lot from the course about music, gender roles within the culture, and the importance of land. She also talked about her perception of Appalachia as strictly rural being changed by the course to include little cities in her imagining of the region. She felt that the instructor encouraged her to think abstractly while also helping her to gain clarity through times of confusion. She most enjoyed the discussion posts, the creativity allowed her when creating the commonplace book, and the many opportunities to engage in service-learning projects. She reported enjoying the materials, even when she found them shocking and sad, and felt they helped her understand the importance of land within the region and culture.

She often discussed “the tragic,” and described the region as “dark, dingy, poor,” having an aging population, impoverished, and characterized by death, violence and apathy. She described the people as superstitious, but strong, prideful, and family-
oriented people who had an abundance of nature-based local knowledge. She felt that nature was the most important positive asset of the region, arguing for environmentally friendly energy sources, the abolishment of coal mining, and a heightened appreciation for nature.

Melissa. Melissa was my next-to-last interview on the final day of interviewing. She was one of the first students to agree to an interview. We met in the office the faculty had provided me for research purposes. Melissa was wearing a t-shirt and basketball shorts with her long golden-brown hair slung in a low ponytail over her shoulder and no makeup. She told me during the interview, “I have always been kind of a tomboy myself.” She later told me her aspirations “to be a professor eventually” and how she was motivated to participate in the interview because she was going to have to “publish and stuff.” One of her parents had a bachelor’s degree. She stated in her pre-survey that she would like to be “an art director for [a] successful company” someday. Her dad was a mechanic and her mom a loan officer and sales manager at a mortgage company. Melissa enrolled in the class because it fulfills the required liberal studies credit and she hoped to gain knowledge of Appalachian literature from the course.

Melissa was from Charlotte, North Carolina. She struggled to transition from urban to rural environments, saying during the interview that rural living requires “commuting to do the simplest things” and that she was “not used to that” despite understanding and being “okay with it.” She considered herself Appalachian because she spent much of her time growing up at her grandfather’s cabin in the Smoky Mountains. She also stated on the pre-survey that while she considered herself Appalachian, she did
not feel as Appalachian as people who are born in the region. She attributed this understanding to the course, stating that “the course made [her] realize people who have lived in Appalachia their whole life feel much more pride for their place.” She had been residing full time in Appalachia for nine months prior to the course. During the interview Melissa described how outsiders may view Appalachians as “dumb hillbillies” and be unaware of how creative and resourceful they are. She also described being proud of her Appalachian home because the “culture is known for its arts and crafts.”

Melissa referred to herself as a Southerner. On more than one occasion, she stated that she loved living in the south and southern traditions such as big family meals. She went on to say that in some cases, the negative stereotypes are true, but that she “loves living in the south” because the people “are just nice” and she finds a lot of creativity. She also described experiencing tension related to her liberal, Democratic political leanings when she met people she disagreed with because she lives in the “Bible belt.” When I gave her the opportunity to add any final comments to our interview, Melissa told me “I guess I don’t want anybody to think I’m bashing the South. I love living in the South.”

**Course impact.** In the pre-survey, Melissa noted a variety of stereotypes, both positive and negative, that are often applied to Appalachian people. Such stereotypes included racist, hillbillies, simpletons, and beauty. She also said, “there’s [sic] negative stigmas that people have, and they always will have toward Appalachian culture, or whatever. I find that a lot of those are true. I think that the positive outweighs that, in a lot of ways.” In the post-survey, Melissa reported that she felt that the stories impacted
her thinking most, but that they also “furthered stereotypes and stigmas associated with Appalachian culture”. However, she stated in her journal that the theme of Appalachian music stood out to her the most and “positively impacted” her thinking because she related to music.

Overall, Melissa did not have much to say about the actual class meetings. During the interview, Melissa described how the class “was very laid out” with three main assignments and a discussion list posting to read and reflect on. On the whole, Melissa stated on the post-survey that the “class meetings did not impact [her] very much because [they] just went over the readings.” However, one thing she did appreciate about the class was the diversity of the student body and the discussion that took place among them during class meetings because it was “interesting to hear what other people have to say.” She especially thought the local perspectives were “pretty cool.” Finally, with regards to how the class was facilitated, Melissa only had this to report in her post-survey: “[June] made me think about literature in a new way.” To improve the class, Melissa said she would assign less reading.

When directly asked in the post-survey how Melissa’s feelings about being Appalachian were impacted by the course, she stated that the course helped to bring to life Appalachian issues because it pushed her to “think more about why Appalachian culture is the way it is.” She stated that the course met her goal of gaining more knowledge of Appalachia. However, she also said she did not learn much new information because the course “just made [her] think about it more.”
*Impactful course components.* Although Melissa stated that the literature had the greatest overall impact on her thinking, she also said, “The assignments made me think more about culture and place.” Melissa most enjoyed the commonplace book assignment because it allowed her to use her own artistic talents. She described her experiences making the commonplace book to me during the interview. She stated, “I’m an art major. That’s just what I do, and I like to draw. It’s not work.” She went on to explain further that she “thought it was cool that [she] could use something that [she’s] good at.” She also enjoyed exploring her own feelings about place through the commonplace book assignment, saying, “Just trying to also explain how I feel about my place, too. This is kinda cool.”

As stated, Melissa reported that the literature had the greatest impact on her thinking, although she also said she “[did not] really like the readings” because they were “drama.” She said she “found the poetry and short stories to be most beneficial.” However, she also believed that the “readings just furthered stereotypes or stigmas associated with Appalachian culture.” She explained this in more detail, saying the plots “just furthered [her] stigmas about Appalachian culture…negative stigmas as well as…positives…such as bad grammar, improper language, racism, violence…creativity, resourcefulness, and wittiness.” She said the readings did not have as much impact on her because she had lived in or near Appalachia her whole life and had “seen some of the stereotypes displayed in the reading” in her everyday experiences.

Melissa stated repeatedly that *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) was her favorite book. She said in a BlackBoard post that she was “a very visual person” and that she “love[d]
the way the author uses grey and ash to set the scene.” The description helped her “put [her]self in the story” and she really liked the post-apocalyptic setting. Melissa stated that she also enjoyed “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) and found it very engaging, even though “some parts were honestly hard to read”. Melissa perceived the story as emotionally provocative, stating that she could not help but to “feel incredibly sorry for this woman.” Similarly, her general feelings about the Cherokee stories (Mooney, 1900) was that they “seem silly,” but she also stated that she “enjoyed the explanation of how plants saved us from much of the diseases with their medicine” and enjoyed learning about the Trail of Tears. Melissa posted to the discussion board that she liked *Serena* (Rash, 2008) better than *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), discussed in the next section, because Serena was easier to follow, “more captivating,” and was written in a style she preferred.

Melissa did not care for the film *Cold Mountain* (Berger et al., 2003), saying it “was not the best one [she] had ever seen.” She agreed with a classmate in a discussion post that both the film and short story “Lincolnites” (Rash, 2010d) presented a limited, negative, and unfair depiction of Confederate soldiers, most of whom “were probably noble men.” Likewise, Melissa discussed a negative experience with *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). She told me during the interview that she did not like it because it was “all negative stigmas” to her and that she did not like the use of dialect she perceived as improper grammar. She described those negative stigmas as people switching sides in the Civil War and “crazy stuff happening and people sleeping around.” The discussion in “The Mountain Dialect” (Kephart, 1913) was “not very interesting” to Melissa because it
just talked about the vocabulary of people who live in the mountain south, the Scotch influence on the mountain dialect, and the frequent use of double negatives.

Melissa connected with the character Granny in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), saying she was “the most sane” of all the characters. She talked in a BlackBoard post about the wind reminding her of her own grandmother just as it reminded the characters of Granny. When she began reading *Serena* (Rash, 2008), she held an appreciation for the tomboy nature of Serena but later began to dislike her cruel personality. Melissa came to like Rachel, who seemed weak at first, recognizing her strength because “she is able to be a good mother to her child despite being a single parent.” She also believed the character in the poem “Amazin’ Grace” (Walker, 2000) was “noble” and strong for hoping for redemption for his abusers. She also related positively to the poem “Breakfast in Hazard” (Walker, 2000) because it reminded her of the “southern breakfasts [her] mom makes at home.” Melissa reported in her post-survey that *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008) was her favorite text because she had written “multiple papers and stuff on that.” She went on to say “I feel really strongly about it. I’ve seen all of those documentaries, and I love them all just ‘cause I think they’re really interesting.” Melissa said she was “positively impacted” by the theme of music because she “can relate” to it. She also liked how the theme of place “was played out” in the readings as something that defines identity and to which people have strong connections.

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** In most cases, Melissa described Appalachia as more similar to other places than different. While she pointed out certain problems as being more Appalachian-specific, such as poverty, lack of jobs, and substance abuse, she
pointed out that a connection to place is a common theme worldwide. She said connection to place is “not necessarily Appalachian” and that “people connect with their places, no matter where they’re from.” Similarly, Melissa talked about southern Appalachia as rich in history, but said “there’s also rich history” in other places worldwide. However, Melissa wrote in her post-survey about the history of the place she was in during the course, saying, “By seeing the history of this area, I have grown closer to this place.” Melissa also described in several instances how family passes down the history of a place through culture and traditions. In her commonplace book, Melissa also included pieces from her own family history, the history of the campus, and natural history of the area. She described the Cherokee culture and oral tradition that still exists in the region as related to the “very tight-knit” families that pass stories from one generation to the next. Melissa appreciated the section of the course devoted to the Trail of Tears. She felt, as she stated in BlackBoard, that the “Trail of Tears is not touched on enough in history class” and that “more people should be aware of exactly what happened and not just taught a restricted version.”

Melissa repeatedly used the word “rural” to describe the Appalachian settings featured in the course materials. She wrote in her journal entries that “often times in more rural areas” there is more drug use and that the settings really made her aware of “how truly rural the Appalachian Mountains can be.” She said that she had always associated “rural” and “small towns” with Appalachia, but thought there was always at least a grocery store nearby prior to taking the course. She wrote about “Lincolnites” (Rash, 2010d) saying that “rural is nice, but that kind of rural is just dangerous.”
pointed out during the interview that “rural-ness isn’t necessarily connected to being
dumb.” Despite viewing Appalachia as very rural, Melissa described it as a place where
it is easy to “find things to get involved with, especially creative stuff…because there’s
nothing else to do.” She told me that once you’ve been in Appalachia for a while, “you
start to gain a certain respect” for the local people having witnessed their creativity.

The rural nature of Appalachia can result in “grim conditions,” a phrase used by
Melissa. Grim conditions are characterized by death, violence, poverty, and a constant
need for survival. The grim conditions create the constant need for survival, which then
contributes to the development of creativity, resilience, and types of moral corruption.
Sometimes, survival meant surviving not only the grim conditions of poverty but moral
corruption of another, driven to survive their own grim conditions characterized by
violence and poverty, such as the woman in “Lincolnites” (Rash, 2010d) who is
struggling to provide food for her children while her husband is away at war and then has
to fend off a violent sexual attack by a soldier.

Grim conditions included still-born babies and infanticide in “The Tender
Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), multiple murders and a miscarriage in Serena (Rash,
2010), starvation and murder in The Road (McCarthy, 2006), and war, murder, death
from old age, and children dying from disease in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004).
Melissa described the “strong theme of death within” Serena (Rash, 2008) and how the
boy had to “watch his father die from an arrow wound” in The Road (McCarthy, 2006).
Death was often the result of violence. Melissa stated twice in her BlackBoard posts that
she enjoys violence in a story, but described it in her journal as one of the negative
stereotypes of Appalachia that was promoted by the literature. She talked about people “shootin’ each other over salt” in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) and the captivity of pregnant women by crazed men in The Road (McCarthy, 2006).

Rurality also created poverty in the region. Melissa stated, in reference to “Back of Beyond” (Rash, 2010a) and “Hard Times” (Rash, 2010b), that “there are not many good paying jobs in small towns…people try to get away…to better their lives and provide for their families.” Poverty was found in most of the course materials. The timber workers of Serena (Rash, 2008) barely made ends meet during the Great Depression, just like coal miners who continue to struggle today, as Melissa pointed out when she said she was happy that Rachel got a job at the timber camp because “she needed the money for her child.” Poverty and a lack of jobs due to rural isolation contributes to the ignorance, orneriness, and moral corruption among Appalachian people, as they contribute to the creativity and resilience in which people make do with what they have.

**Environmentalism.** Place was often discussed as something people are connected to physically, such as the mountains being “a big part of people’s lives because it is their place.” Place was also described as shaping and representing identity. Melissa wrote and talked frequently about nature and its importance to Appalachia and herself. Melissa believed there was a special connection between people and nature, especially in Appalachia because of its rurality. In most cases, Melissa viewed the human-nature connection positively, perhaps related to her own appreciation for nature. Melissa focused most of her commonplace book on readings based in or on nature. She described
her own connectedness to the “beautiful mountains.” She stated in BlackBoard posts that she “really enjoyed when Owle points out that we should all take time to stay in touch with our child-like side and stay close to nature” (Owle, 1998) and “how reflective being in nature made [Berry]” (Berry, 2002).

Melissa described Appalachia as very rural. There are both pros and cons of rural places. The pro is being surrounded by the peace of naturally beautiful settings. The con is the isolation that creates rural poverty, lack of jobs, and related problems. As for the natural part of Appalachian rurality, Melissa felt positive, saying during the interview, “I enjoy being outdoors and I hope to one day hike the Appalachian Trail.” She wrote that she, too, like Berry (2002), “find[s] great peace in the wilderness.” She also described the “tranquility” and “calmness” she finds when staring off at the “beautiful mountains” in the rural areas surrounding the university. Similarly, Melissa agreed with Berry (2002) that modern people do not take enough time to “get away from the hustle and bustle” and often take the natural beauty of the Appalachian region for granted. Melissa had a lot of pride in her grandfather’s rural mountain cabin, having written an essay about it which included pictures for her commonplace book.

Sometimes, the human-nature connection results in negative progress and destruction of nature. Melissa spoke strongly about mountaintop removal mining throughout the interview. She said that she agrees that “coal is cheap energy” but that the destruction of our natural resources that comes with it is something that she “cannot begin to agree with.” Discussing “The Thin Places” (House, 2010), she said she hopes we can stop the destruction of MTR in the near future. In the interview she told me her
feelings about MTR and how that affected her perception of some of the course materials:

“Yeah, well my favorite was *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008), just because I’ve done
multiple papers and stuff on that. I feel really strongly about it.” Melissa considered
MTR and other forms of environmental destruction throughout Appalachia to be
reflective of the ignorance found among the region’s people, as well as the lack of jobs.
She described the coal miners as “unconscious,” doing what they have to for their
families and what they know how to do, carrying on a family tradition. She also talked
about feeling “shocked” and guilty that the southeast was the largest consumer of electric
and how she thought it was wrong for humans to force the rest of the earth to sacrifice for
their “selfish needs.” Melissa discussed overtly in several instances the important role
that environmental awareness plays in the human-nature connection in Appalachia.

*Perceptions of Appalachian people.* Melissa described Appalachian people both
positively and negatively. On the positive side, Melissa viewed Appalachians as creative,
resourceful, resilient, humorous, and family-oriented people. On the negative side, she
viewed Appalachians as morally corrupt people who engaged in drinking, drugging,
bigotry, violence, ignorance, and poor-decision making. Those two sides are presented
here in greater detail.

Family interactions of the Appalachian characters she encountered in the course
were described by Melissa in both negative and positive terms. On the negative side,
Melissa described poor parenting in various situations, such as the woman who had a
“miserable life” because her “parents were awful to her” in “The Tender Branch”
(Gilchrist-Young, 2011) and the “hard feelings” the Kepharts must have towards Horace
for leaving when he “could have been a better father and husband to his family.” On the more positive side of things, Melissa described unconditional love and good parenting prevalent in several stories, like the characters who, “despite all the roughness”, obviously “love each other deep down unconditionally” in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), and how Rachel in *Serena* (Rash, 2008) and the man in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) both worked hard to be good single parents. Family was also viewed by Melissa as what connects people to a specific place, as she proclaimed in her journal entries, “My family is what connects me to my place,” and described how the mountain was both the uncle’s favorite place and a place of shelter during hard times for the family in “The Thin Places” (House, 2010).

Melissa favored characters who demonstrated creativity. Melissa described in her post-survey how she “really enjoyed the theme of Appalachian music” and how “art is the universal language”. She also described how the isolated environment had shaped the creativity of Appalachian people, saying that “Appalachians can make fun out of nothing” and described them as “using what you got to make a living.” Similarly, she talked about the resourcefulness of the father in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) which helped him and his son survive. Melissa also valued the strength and resilience demonstrated by the characters. She described the resilience of the characters in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and how they did not “stop living their lives like the normally would” during hard times. She also described the Cherokee people as being “truly resilient,” which led to their survival and overcoming the Trail of Tears.
Melissa wrote in her journal entries that the characters were “affected by the setting in many ways,” citing the greater use of drugs in rural areas as a form of entertainment and the high poverty and “lack of good paying jobs” as struggles they endured living in an isolated place. More benign types of moral corruption included ornery behavior such as drinking at parties, fighting, and generally rowdy behavior. Serious forms of orneryness would be addiction to methamphetamine in “Back of Beyond” (Rash, 2010a) or how the “boys all like to fight each other and everyone chaws” in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). Melissa related this to rural isolation, saying during the interview “people’s boredom kinda leads them to get into trouble, or odd situations…just because there’s nothing to do.” More significant forms of moral corruption included murder, theft, dishonesty, and cruelty to animals and others. Much of the moral corruption displayed by the characters was the maltreatment of women by men, such as Pemberton “not really respecting women as much as he should” in *Serena* (Rash, 2008) and how Hackley was a “horrible husband” and “runner of women” in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). Melissa also described Serena as a “wicked woman” because of the murders she committed.

Words Melissa listed in her surveys as being stereotypical of or characterizing Appalachian people were “simpletons,” “ignorance to the evolving world and American culture,” and “racist.” This was visible in Melissa’s perception of the male characters in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) which she wrote about as “simple minded…getting drunk and trigger happy and [not] giving their wives nearly what they deserve.” She also described mountain top removal mining as a problem in which the victims are ignorantly
naïve and the perpetrators are morally corrupt. Melissa equated the local dialect with ignorance, as well. She found the use of dialect as annoying and unnecessary. She believed that dialect was something that was chosen in a sense because she had never picked up a “twang in [her] voice.”

**Summary.** Melissa was a self-proclaimed tomboy, an Appalachian, an artist, and a Southerner. She was also a liberal Democrat. She was an art major who wanted to be an art director for a successful company someday, as well as a professor. One of her parents held a bachelor’s degree, so she was not a first-generation college student. Melissa defined negative stereotypes of Appalachia as in line with the “dumb hillbilly” narrative, which she felt was similar to stereotypes of Southerners. She enrolled in the course because she was interested in Appalachian literature and wanted to meet her liberal arts requirement.

Melissa believed the course did not provide her with any new information, but forced her to think more deeply about the issues affecting the region. She also believed that much of the literature, though she enjoyed it, perpetuated both good and bad stereotypes about Appalachian people. She enjoyed using her artistic talents to make her commonplace book, and perceived creativity as one of the major assets among Appalachian people. She did not feel the class or instructor impacted her thinking much, but she did appreciate the diversity of voices among the students.

She perceived Appalachia as a place that is primarily rural, which creates both natural beauty and grim conditions. The natural setting creates a place of environmental issues and activism related to the abundance of natural resources. The rurality and
isolation that created the grim conditions characterized by poverty, death, and violence shapes the culture within the region. She perceived the people to be creative, resourceful, family-oriented, and resilient, but also ignorant and morally corrupt to varying extents.

Renee. Renee was waiting to begin the interview when I returned from lunch on the second day of interviewing. She had long dark hair and olive-toned skin. Her eyes were dark with a hint of eyeliner and curled, mascara-coated lashes. Renee had a small but athletic frame. She said she enjoyed hiking, rafting, and anything outdoors. She was wearing yoga pants, a purple college t-shirt, and had her hair tied in a long ponytail over her shoulder with a headband to control stray hairs. She seemed very comfortable and outgoing during the interview being very talkative and even a bit loud.

Renee was a 19 year-old, first-generation female college student. Her parents were a cook and a housekeeper. She aspired to work for a television station someday and majored in broadcasting. She primarily enrolled “randomly” in the course because it filled her liberal studies credit, but wrote in her survey that she had always wanted a better understanding of Appalachia since she was living there to attend college and believed, therefore, she should know more about it. She told me during the interview she had never had any classes that focused on Appalachia before. Renee lived her entire life in urban Raleigh, which she described as “a completely different setting” than that of the university. She was of Mexican heritage, which played an important role in her understanding of the use of different dialects. She said people often asked her to pronounce certain words to hear her accent.
She had lived in Appalachia for about two years while attending college at the time of the study, but did not consider herself Appalachian. She stated on her post-survey that, even after taking the course, she did not feel she could claim the term Appalachian because she was not from the region. She stated in her BlackBoard post that having not grown up in the region, she was unsure of the accuracy of Kephart’s (1913) portrayal of Appalachian people “but [that] his descriptions did fit the images I have in mind just from things I have heard, and stereotypes of what ‘real mountain people’ are like.” She later said in the interview that even though she was not from Appalachia, she could really connect with it and that the course impacted her ability to relate to the culture. Renee identified as Christian and felt that the theme of religion was more pronounced than other students reported. She described her religious affiliations during the interview and how they impacted her worldview.

As far as religion goes, I don’t know, that’s just something that always kinda like pops. I am a part of a church group on campus, so anytime I’d see, well, like Bible-related, I’d be able to relate that back.

**Course impact.** Renee said gaining an appreciation for Appalachia and the local region was the greatest impact the course had on her thinking. She described how important she thought the class was, stating that the class should be mandatory for all students who come here because it really helped her better appreciate the place she was in and develop a connection to it. She said during the interview that she “thought it was a really cool course” and that she did not realize how much she “took [the] area for granted” until after taking the course. She attributed this newfound appreciation to
having learned so much about the culture and settings around her. She wrote in her post-
survey that she would tell students new to the course that “it’s very interesting and you
learn a lot.” She described how coming to understand the characters’ appreciation for
the area helped her develop a similar sense of appreciation, and caused her to also feel
guilty for living on holy land taken from the Cherokee.

Renee said the class made other classes more meaningful because she could
connect them to her lived experiences. Renee described her experience in the course
during the interview, saying that “being able to relate it [outside course material] back to
the class and being out in this area…It’s just kinda like nice--.” She described linking
coal mining and other environmental issues she had prior knowledge about to the projects
and material included in the course. Similarly, learning a new dialect was interesting to
Renee, especially being able to read it in a book and “then hearing people that live in
[the] area speak the way that they [characters] do.” She described working with an
elderly woman in the area who she sometimes had trouble understanding, but would later
read words and phrases the woman used in course material and “be able to connect it” or
understand what the woman had said. She also enjoyed the diversity of students enrolled
in the class and felt that it was essential to the success of the course. She enjoyed
learning about places and cultures that were different but unexpectedly similar. She
called it a “total learning experience” that would not have been the same without the
diverse student enrollment. She said it was “interesting seeing the different ways” in
which people spoke in the class and that “it’s similar because it’s different.”
Initially, on her pre-survey, when asked the negative attributes of Appalachia, Renee wrote, “All the stereotypes that come with it and all the small and far away towns.” When asked what Appalachian stereotypes she was familiar with, she simply wrote “hillbillies” and reported that she had not really had any experiences with Appalachian stereotypes. When asked what she thought of when she thought about Appalachia, she listed, “The mountains, men with beards, and plaid.” In the post-survey, when asked what she had learned about Appalachian stereotypes, Renee wrote, “People are quick to judge without really knowing. Many stereotypes seem true on the outside, but are a lot more on the inside.” During our interview, she told me that she was warned to prepare for “hippies or total mountain people” when she decided to move to the region for school. She believed the course challenged those stereotypes and the idea that Appalachian people all speak with a certain dialect.

Summarizing on the survey how the instructor had impacted her thinking, Renee wrote that June “made me think about themes.” She liked the instructor’s incorporation of open dialogue around the reflective discussion posts in class because students were “always able to talk about it” in a continuous fashion. She also talked about how the instructor would show the class “stuff on the computer and different stories” that aided in their learning and understanding.

*Impactful course components.* When asked in the survey what about the course had the most impact on her thinking, Renee wrote, “The readings (especially personal ones).” When asked how the readings impacted her thinking, Renee wrote that “they educated [her] a lot on things I didn’t know.” However, she also described the material
as promoting a “sad and negative light” about the area that was difficult to relate to because of “all the stereotypical images…of what ‘real mountain people’ are like,” such as those in Kephart’s (1913) work. Renee described how much she loved the settings and “being in the mountains” and her connection to religion and morality when naming themes that had the greatest impact on her thinking. She also described how place impacted her connection to the literature:

Any time they’d mention the Blue Ridge Parkway, that would always stand out to me 'cause I know, I’ve been through the Blue Ridge Parkway and seen most of it. Those were important. Just anytime they’d mention a place around here…I thought it was cool. Places that I’ve actually seen.

Similarly, Renee reported in both her interview and BlackBoard posts that she could really relate to House’s (2010) ideas about thin places because she had places “here in the mountains” where she would go to “relax and just get away from everything.” Therefore, she told me, his essay had the greatest impact on her. She felt that his essay was a good place to end the course because it summed up the three main themes of place, religion, and sense of morality.

Renee described “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) as “very interesting,” but requiring a “breather” because the story as a “whole was pretty dark.” She described the Cherokee stories (Mooney, 1900) as powerful, entertaining, and personal. She felt the imagery in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) made the book “fantastic” and “easy to read,” and she enjoyed the suspense of wondering what would happen next. She described the various poems she read as personal, powerful, and a
“little depressing.” She described *Serena* (Rash, 2008) as a “crazy story” that she found very “engaging” and easy to picture while reading. Of *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006), Renee wrote, “All in all I actually really enjoyed this book. It was my favorite by far, after getting over the weird style it was written in, I began to really appreciate everything that happened in it.” During the interview, Renee told me the father in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) stood out to her because of his strength, decisiveness, and how he was able to “teach his son different things”. At one point, she thought Serena was going to be her favorite character because she represented “females raised in areas like Appalachia that had to work hard for their living.” However, when Serena turned malevolent and power-hungry, Renee came to “hate” her (Rash, 2008). Renee wrote in her journal that the historical context of *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) impacted her most, saying it was “interesting learning all the history of the war and what people were going through.” She thought the setting was beautiful despite the devastating circumstances.

Renee described how she felt about the course assignments. Renee wrote in her post-survey that the assignments “…made me take things I learned and relate it to me and the real world.” She reported liking the commonplace book a lot because she “love[d] doing outdoors stuff” and the book was a “good way” to write about her experiences. She also stated that she enjoyed completing the environmental research paper she wrote for the second assignment because she was able to incorporate knowledge she had gained in a previous course on conservation. This made the assignment “a lot more meaningful.” She also appreciated the reflective posts because they forced students to
comment on specific sections of the course material and “when you have to search for something within the reading, it sticks better.”

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** In her pre- and post-survey answers, Renee identified Appalachia as a place with beautiful settings, diversity, and a hardworking culture. While she also reported she would do nothing to improve the region, she stated the negative aspects of it were all of the stereotypes and small, far away towns. She also described the region as somewhat developed and aligned with the visions for the Appalachian Trail with “people living in the land” and established communities, “especially in the fall.” She remarked on Kephart’s (1913) work in her BlackBoard posts, describing it as an accurate portrayal because the “little mountain towns” she was familiar with had “a little bit of stores” and tight-knit communities like those he wrote about. Finally, she also agreed with the idea that connection to place, land, and mountains was a defining feature of the culture.

Environmentalism was defined as a theme encompassing an appreciation of the natural beauty of the Appalachian region, the destruction of the land often in pursuit of natural resources, and the need for conservation of the mountains. The connection to land held by many of the people combined with the long history of environmental abuse in the region has resulted in environmentalism being a defining factor of Appalachia today. Renee recounted being impacted by Appalachian people’s appreciation of the land. She said she had experienced the gardens of local people and how “they just take care of the land a lot more” compared to urban dwellers. She believed that students
should take the course to be encouraged to experience and appreciate the local environment, and came to be in favor of protecting the land.

Renee described Appalachia and life therein as characterized by grim conditions. Grim conditions include death, murder, violence, poverty, substance abuse, and other forms of hardship and struggle. Some course materials included scenes of substance abuse which mirrored Renee’s experiences in the region. Renee recalled a story in which she had learned about the bust of a local make-shift methamphetamine laboratory when she first arrived at the university. She also described the lack of good paying jobs and how everyone was “struggling economically.” She talked at length about the murder of Hackley in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) and all the murders committed by Serena and Galloway (Rash, 2008). She was also moved by the “sad and depressing time” of the Trail of Tears (Owle, 1998) and the hopeless journey of father and son in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006).

**Perceptions of Appalachian people.** Renee primarily described Appalachian people as independent, strong, hard-working, and resilient by Renee. She also described “the simplicity of these people,” referencing Granny’s final wish to see the moon once more before passing away in a BlackBoard post. She compared Granny’s final request to that of more modern people who, Renee supposed, would “ask to change their Facebook status one last time or travel to an expensive island.” She viewed them as survivors who made do with what they had and who were indifferent to struggle. Often times, their strength or resiliency was related to or resulted from a dependency on family and community. She felt the readings revealed the people as “hardworking” individuals who
“didn’t take for granted what they had” and “used their resources.” Strength, work ethic, survival, and resiliency were prevalent in much of the material. She described the character in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) as having a “very strong personality” but also having human weaknesses. Similarly, she discussed the strength of African-Americans in Walker’s (2000) poetry and of the character Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). Mostly, she talked about Serena as a “super strong, independent woman” and how the weak characters became stronger over time and vice versa (Rash, 2008).

A strong connection to and dependence on people, be it family or other community members, was characteristic of the connection to place demonstrated within Appalachian culture. Renee described in her journal entries how the small town atmosphere in “Return” (Rash, 2010e) and “Hard Times” (Rash, 2010b) impacted how the characters shared in their economic struggle. In “Back of Beyond” (Rash, 2010a), the small town setting created relationships of respect among the townspeople. Similarly, it helped the Cherokee survive because “they were good neighbors and loved their neighbors” (Owle, 1998). Family was also a defining characteristic of Appalachian people for Renee. She wrote about the more negative family relationships in “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) and Beth Kephart’s (2012) essay, the centrality of the “very important” family relationships in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), and the relationship between boy and father in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006).

**Summary.** Renee was an “outdoorsy” 19 year-old first-generation female college student of Mexican heritage. She majored in broadcasting and hoped to work for a
television station someday. She had lived in Appalachia for about two years at the time of the course and interview. She randomly enrolled in the course to meet graduation requirements, but thought it was important to learn about the place she lived in and the people who lived there. While she did not consider herself Appalachian before or after the course, she felt the course helped her better relate to the culture.

Renee felt she came to appreciate the region more and learned so much that she believed the course should be mandatory for all students attending school in the area. She believed the course had such a great impact on her because she was able to connect it to other classes and her experiences in the local community. She stated that the diversity of students enrolled in the class and the dialogue encouraged by the instructor were pivotal to the course’s success. She also reported that the class alleviated many of the stereotypes she once held and, as a result, she realized that “people are quick to judge without really knowing.” She felt most impacted by the more personal stories among the materials, which she found to be very educational, but questioned some stereotypical imagery they may have promoted. Renee felt the assignments were impactful because she was able to relate them to the real world, such as her love of the outdoors, and information she learned in other classes. She believed they promoted deep reflection.

The themes she identified as most important were place, religion, and sense of morality. She also stated she was most impacted by characters embodying strength.

Finally, Renee defined Appalachia as a place of beautiful settings, diversity, and a hardworking culture. She felt the stereotypes and remoteness of the region were the more negative aspects, while deep appreciation for and conservation of land were major assets.
She also described Appalachia as a place defined by the struggle to survive grim conditions characterized by poverty, death, and violence. She viewed Appalachian people in a mostly positive light as an independent, strong, hardworking, and resilient people who valued relationships with others, family, and their community.

**June.** June was the course instructor. During our interview after class on the Monday morning of the first week of the semester, June told me a bit of her life story. She told me that culturally she defined herself as “definitely southern” and described her childhood growing up in southern Georgia. She described moving around with her father who worked in the Air Force until she was five, when they relocated “about an hour north of the Florida line” where it was all “rural farming land” of “peanuts, cotton, [and] flat land” a few hours from the coast. She described how she did not consider herself Appalachian, but identified some similarities between Appalachian culture and the Southern culture in which she grew up. She compared the two regions, connecting them through the Scots-Irish traditions, saying “Definitely a lot of that, probably, in the same area where I’m from. Geographically, culturally, some important differences.” June further described how she perceived her identity as an outsider in Appalachia. I asked her what improvement she would make to the region and she replied with a chuckle, “I would never, ever wanna answer that question because I’m one of those outsiders.” The idea of being an outsider arose again when June related how, as an outsider, decentering her authority was paramount to teaching Appalachian literature. She stated that she never had the authority to teach the class because she was not from Appalachia.
She told me how her father later worked in student affairs at the college where she spent her first two years of post-secondary education. She then transferred to complete her bachelor’s degree, though she did not say where. She eventually went on to complete a master’s degree in North Carolina and a doctorate in Georgia. She told me she did not “remember a lot discussion when [she] was in high school about choices of colleges,” only an expectation of attending college in her hometown where her father worked. She said she ultimately chose her major because she “just love[d] to read” because of “what it could teach you about the world.” While she disliked the writing aspect, she very much enjoyed liberal arts education, especially classes related to history, music, and art.

She enjoyed college study so much, it guided her career choices because she “liked being at a university” and the longer she could do that, “the better.” She elaborated further saying that to her, the “ideal career was always to be able to talk about books with other people.” She also stated that teaching had been a family tradition and was “incarnated on her DNA.” She told me about returning to the junior college where she began her collegiate career to teach for a year between her master’s and doctoral programs, and that she had been teaching at least part time since 1994. She came to her current university in 1996 in an instructorship, receiving tenure around 2007. She said she had learned about her current institution from classmates in her doctoral program who had completed their master’s there and “thought that it was totally God’s gift to the world.” She began her full time teaching experiences teaching mostly freshman composition courses and American Literature. She moved on to teach Southern Literature, having completed her dissertation on the works of Eudora Welty, which later
allowed her to transition to teaching Appalachian Literature when the opportunity presented itself. Eventually, that also segued into a teaching opportunity in Native American Literature.

**Teaching style.** June described her teaching style as student-centered with decentered teacher authority. She told me she preferred “being in there” with engaged students who were interested in the material and how she most enjoyed discussion-based classes. She described her experience when first teaching Appalachian Literature and her lack of knowledge and experience compared with students in the class, telling me that in the beginning her students probably knew more than she did. She prioritized students’ stories and cultural richness and felt that “allowing students to have a voice…a choice of assignments” was very important. On the first day, she told students the class was not about her “bequeathing knowledge” and stressed the importance of diversity of backgrounds and experiences. She told the students, “I am much more interested in hearing what you think.” During the final course meeting, June provided positive feedback multiple times to both the whole class and individual students regarding their performances in the course. She also repeatedly offered her availability to help students prepare for final examinations the following week.

June told me in the beginning of her career she received student surveys saying she lacked enthusiasm for the subject. She realized that was not good and felt it was because she was too concerned about professionalism and classroom control as a young professor. Revealing her enthusiasm for the subject is something June has worked on over the years, which was visible on student evaluations at the end of the semester. She
described teaching as fun because “you never know what’s gonna happen.” She reiterated this to students the first day of class, telling them, “…that’s what’s exciting about being an English teacher is that every class comes up with something interesting.”

June described her teaching approach for teaching Appalachian Literature as interdisciplinary. She stated that this approach was necessary to teaching Appalachian Literature; that it had to be taught more as an Appalachian Studies course because all things worked together. She also described how the interdisciplinary nature of Appalachian Literature stimulated her enthusiasm for teaching. She said she found it interesting that, unlike other literatures, you cannot teach Appalachian Literature without teaching “ecocriticism and history,” or “music and crafts.” She stated that the interdisciplinary nature of Appalachian Literature “makes it really fun to teach because you’re constantly learning about something you can bring into the classroom.”

Course goals. June structured the class to be discussion-based, interactive, participatory, and student-centered. She said she really wanted the class “to ultimately be…a lot of participation.” She talked about preferring to arrange the class in a circle as opposed to rows of desks, but was discouraged by the number of students enrolled and the size of the classroom. She told me how the class was in the humanities category of the liberal studies credit students were required to fulfill, that it was not an English class, and that the students would most likely be “very young…and freshman from different backgrounds.”

June discussed at length her goals for the course and students’ learning. Many of her goals revolved around identity development and understanding of place and how it
shapes identity. She also identified knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the local place and people, along with the development of traditional academic skills. She said she wanted students to “connect to their own places,” to be able to “identify where they come from” and how it related to their developing identities, and to “connect to here and the rich culture and history and literature.” She also hoped that students improved their reading and writing skills, as well as ventured outside their comfort zones to experience the local community which was sometimes disconnected from the university environment. She hoped students would “see a bigger picture…but also see themselves within that picture.” She wanted students to appreciate Appalachian art and culture, and understand and respect them as local ways of communicating and knowing.

**Selection of course components.** June and I discussed her selection of course materials during the interview. She began by saying the “material’s so important and so interesting” that she wanted “everybody to take the class.” She wanted students to have the opportunity to read material she felt was important but “not always respected.” She said that students generally liked the material she chose and that the “books are very interesting.” June also described incorporating different types of texts, such as music and film, so as not to continue the historical marginalization of different cultural ways of knowing and communicating. She related her thinking to the idea that Europeans believed themselves superior to Native Americans “because [they] had books.” She wanted to avoid promoting the idea that Appalachian “culture is not that important because [they] didn’t produce a lot of books that were sold in New York publishing houses.”
June told me how she had been inspired to teach the theme of place after reading *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology, and Place* (Lynch, Glotfelty, & Armbruster, 2012), which explores teaching literature about place from an ecological perspective. June described it as the idea that “we look at people as being from a region rather than a particular town” and “more of an emphasis on…geography.” She described how and why she chose specific materials for her Appalachian Literature courses, saying she does not change her Appalachian Literature syllabi as often as she changes her other courses. She said she chose *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) because “it’s a good history book” and teaches the Civil War from a perspective other than from the battlefield. She also liked that it is based in the local area and culture. She said she had taught each of Ron Rash’s works at some point and that she enjoyed when he was able to visit a class. She chose to teach *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) for the first time because it offered such a different exploration of Appalachian and place-based literature than the other course materials.

For assignments, June told me she had chosen “to do some new stuff this time.” The first assignment was a mapping project in which students explored their own place. June chose this because it offered the opportunity to explore different types of texts and to help meet her goal of connecting students to their own place. The second assignment was a service-learning project and accompanying reflection paper in which, to honor their voice, students chose the project they would complete. June hoped it would encourage students to understand different perspectives and “go outside their comfort level.” Other options were an oral history project, which “allow[ed] students to bring their own
families…into the class” that would hopefully be recorded and archived someday, and an environmental research paper. The third assignment was a commonplace book, which was guided by the *Norton Book of Nature Writing* (Finch & Elder, 2002), and encouraged students to explore the local environment to “scientifically identify” native plants and collect “artifacts like photos.” June hoped it would end up being a “compendium of issues [and] texts related to the class.” Students were also required to complete a reflective discussion posting for each class meeting and take a final exam. June felt her plan for the course was “ambitious,” but hoped it would “allow for some creativity.” I was also present for two in-class activities: an icebreaker activity on the first day and a word-theming activity on the last day.

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** During our interview, June and I discussed how she defines Appalachia as a place. She said it was important to “not put real lines around it too definitively” and that one can “map it in a lot of different ways.” She said she was comfortable as seeing it as “mountainous” or “Upper South,” but that she was also becoming aware of “urban Appalachia.” On the last day of class, June asked students to draw mountains on the chalk board for an activity representing her comfort with defining Appalachia as mountainous. June told me she first became aware of Appalachia and its culture when she moved closer to the Georgia mountains to pursue doctoral study. She believed it was important to keep questioning why the region was mapped or defined the way it was and by whom. On the first day of class, June encouraged students to begin thinking of Appalachia in more complex terms, asking students what first came to mind when they thought of Appalachia. “Mountains” was the first answer, which June praised.
She then encouraged more responses, citing negative examples and “baggage in the area” like “banjos.” She went on to explain to students that “Appalachia is more diverse than most people think it is….it can be urban; it can be rural.”

June listed several assets of Appalachia during the interview, which included the “oral history, oral cultures, the history, the storytelling…music, [and] musical tradition.” She also talked about the connection to land. She described the newfound popularity of heirloom tomatoes across the nation, comparing it with Appalachia saying that “people here have been raising gardens….they never stopped all that canning and all that.” Lastly, she included connection to family and culture as important assets of the region. I asked June how she would improve Appalachia. She chuckled and told me she would “never ever wanna answer that question” because she was an outsider and there is a long history of outsiders telling Appalachian people how to improve their home. She jokingly went on to say that an improvement would maybe be to get rid of outsiders, but laughed and acknowledged that it was probably a bad idea, remarking that “change is inevitable.”

**Perceptions of Appalachian culture.** June also named culture as another asset of Appalachia during our interview. Culture is defined in this case as music, arts, religion, and family. June defined culture when she identified assets of the region and described her interdisciplinary approach to teaching the course. She told of how students eventually came to appreciate music they did not normally like because they came to understand the cultural context in which it was born. She described when she first moved closer to the Georgia mountains and became more aware of Appalachia, saying they “had music festivals where there was bluegrass and that was more culture from the
mountains.” June also felt that connection to family was a defining factor of Appalachian culture. This was a large part of the discussion I observed on the last day of class, when the class discussed House’s “The Thin Places” (2010) and his family’s deep connection to their particular mountain. Connection was a defining characteristic of both Appalachian culture and the class. Throughout the class, students discussed connection to their own places, land, family, and history. Belonging and community were other terms to describe the theme of connection.

June also described how Appalachian culture has been influenced by other historical cultures. She described Appalachian-based conferences that include Native American issues and the connection between the Cherokee materials (e.g. Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998) to more contemporary Appalachian works. She particularly described the Cherokee connection to land as a sacred place and the connection to modern Appalachian issues. Similarly, she outlined the influence of Druid religious practices introduced into the region by Scots-Irish and other Celtic immigrants which observed the spirituality of specific places and natural objects.

During our interview, June and I also discussed marginalization and stereotyping of Appalachian culture. When I asked her about her experiences with Appalachian stereotypes during our interview, she began by highlighting the isolation of her own institution and community within the region, describing the university as being “in a little bubble” but having faculty that are “respectful, usually, of other cultures.” She talked about including assignments that encouraged students to explore the local context because “marginalized populations who are not gonna be in the college classroom need to
be part of [the] analysis as well.” She introduced students to this idea the first day of class, describing the juxtaposition of “really rich people” and “working class” people within the county where the university was located.

June told me there was “a reason why” stereotypes exist, that “there’s always a certain grain of truth in them,” but that they ultimately lack the complexity of reality. She described the tradition of outside writers visiting the region and writing about it after having returned to where they came from. June stated that many of the stereotypes of Appalachian culture she encountered were in the media rather than reality and how most of those media-based stereotypes were negative. She told me they are often present in literature and that it is “pretty easy to find always” in film. She described teaching a film in which students debated whether it was merely another outsider choosing what image to portray of Appalachian people, or if it represented reality because some students were able to personally relate to it. For the most, June, laughingly, told me that the media stereotypes of Appalachian culture revolve around moonshine and “the whole hillbilly thing.” She said that stereotypes promote that idea that “people here are not very smart and they talk funny and have bad teeth.” She illustrated how some Appalachian stereotypes are similar to those applied to southern culture, making an exception for “the isolation thing where people think of the backwoods, back in the middle of nowhere kind of hillbilly thing.”

**Environmentalism.** Environmentalism was a large theme of the course. Environmentalism relates to the bioregionalism that inspired June’s approach to teaching the course. June also identified environmental issues as central to understanding
Appalachia today. During the interview, June described her interdisciplinary approach to studying and teaching Appalachia, saying that among other topics, “you have to teach ecocriticism.” She elaborated on how she selected materials to meet this necessity. She said that it may be important to “get Wendell Berry’s perspective on what is going on in the environment” in order to understand an Appalachian text. She told me that Berry’s “An Obligation to Care” (1995) had “changed [her] life and perspective on the world.” She felt it was important to include environmental issues because “a lot of students here don’t know anything about mountaintop removal or coal or any of those environmental issues that affect the rest of Appalachia.” She felt it was “important stuff” and that she should “spread the word” because the students do not know about the “resources [they] tend to benefit from but aren’t impacted by.” The inclusion of environmental issues in the course lead resulted in the development of environmental activism among some students. Such activism was part of the discourse during the final class meeting. The class discussed how there are “a few people who wanna see change” and who made “call[s] to action.”

Environmental destruction resulted in what was called “chaos” the final day of class. Chaos is the opposite of the connection to place, when place is disrupted or lost. Chaos is the “removal” of “purpose [and] belonging” that comes from a connection to place, which in Appalachian culture is synonymous with a connection to land. In describing it to the class, June talked about the removal of the Cherokee people from their land for future development by the Europeans and how this created “chaos” for the
Cherokee. They discussed how place is “fragile” and easily destroyed, referencing House’s (2010) thin places.

**Summary.** June was a tenured English professor who had taught college courses since 1994. She spent most of her life in rural Georgia farmland two hours north of the Florida line. She began her college career at the junior college where her father worked after retiring from the Air Force. She wrote her dissertation on Eudora Welty and had strong interests in the concept of place, bioregionalism, history, music, and liberal arts. Her teaching experience included courses in Freshman Composition, American Literature, Southern Literature, Appalachian Literature, Native American Literature, and Literature of Place. She chose a career in teaching because she loved books and the university setting.

June described herself as a supportive, student-centered educator who appreciates the diverse voices students bring to her classes. She strived to show her enthusiasm for the subjects she taught and believed enthusiasm was an important part of teaching. She also felt that teaching Appalachian Literature required teaching music, crafts, history, and other relevant subjects because of its interdisciplinary nature. She believed the interdisciplinary nature of Appalachian courses was interesting and invigorating. June wanted her students to connect to their own places, as well as the local area and its culture and history. She wanted students to venture outside their comfort zones to explore the local area and experience different perspectives, while also developing stronger reading and writing skills.
June perceived herself as an outsider to Appalachian culture because she was not from the region and, therefore, she did not feel comfortable suggesting improvements or too closely defining Appalachia. She felt primarily comfortable defining it as mountainous and “Upper South,” but felt that it was important to attend to the diversity and complexity of the region. She identified the assets of the region as connection to land and family, culture, music, oral tradition, and history. She described the stereotypes as primarily negative hillbilly images which were mostly found in media. She also talked about marginalization within the region as primarily class-based. Because of her own interests in bioregionalism and environmental issues and the connection to land which hallmarks Appalachian culture, June also defined Appalachia from an environmental perspective. She incorporated environmental issues into the curriculum and course materials as a result. Chaos was the destruction of place, connection, and belonging that accompanied her environmentalist thinking.

**Cross Case Analysis**

Cross-case analysis allows for examination of themes and patterns across cases, as well as difference among cases. In this study, the seven participant cases are nested to form one large case which serves the purposes of conducting the cross-case analysis. The cross-case analysis presented here follows the same pattern in presentation as the individual cases, beginning with Course Impact.

**Course impact.** Most of the participants described being positively impacted by their experience in the course. Alex described it as a “very special experience.” Renee stated she believed the class was so “cool” and “interesting” and stated that it should be
mandatory for all students to take because it helped her to develop an appreciation for the local area. Similarly, Morgan said everyone should take the course because it’s “eye-opening,” while Aurora talked about it as a great course students should be willing to take. Daniel stated it was his favorite class that semester and that he learned a lot by participating in the course. Melissa, however, was different than the other students. She reported that the class meetings had little effect on her and that she did not learn much new information but was only pushed to think more deeply about Appalachia. She also offered the only improvement, stating there should have been less reading in the course.

*Knowledge, understanding, and appreciation.* June described some of her course goals as aimed at identity development and acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the local place and people. She hoped students would connect both to home and the local. Daniel and Alex both described developing a new perspective on Appalachia as a result of taking the course. Daniel stated he became more aware of problems facing the region and that he was most impacted by environmental themes in the material. Alex also wrote that he began to think about place and Appalachia more frequently as a result of taking the course. He also realized there was more poverty in the region than he previously knew about. Similarly, Aurora said the course helped her develop a perspective of Appalachia that challenged her preconceived, stereotypical notions of what the region and culture were like. Likewise, Renee described learning a lot about culture and place. Morgan appreciated reflecting introspectively to define for herself what it meant to be Appalachian, aligning with June’s goals of identity development and connection to home. Despite feeling the course did not
have as much impact on her, Melissa did feel that it brought Appalachian issues to life and encouraged her to think about why the region and culture are the way they are. She felt positively impacted by the inclusion of Appalachian music in the course because she connected to others through music. However, overall she felt that the course only served to encourage stereotypes and stigmas of the culture.

**Connecting with the material.** Renee appreciated being able to connect the course content to daily life and other classes. She stated she was also able to relate to the characters’ appreciation of their home, which helped her develop an appreciation of the local place. The characters’ appreciation of their home also caused Renee to feel guilty for the destruction that had been done to the local area historically. Similarly, Aurora also felt she could connect with some of the characters, despite experiencing some tension as an outsider of the culture. Morgan, too, was strongly impacted by the female characters because she could identify with them. Similarly, Daniel felt the woman characters challenged his preconceived notions of the more traditional gender roles he assumed would characterize the culture. Daniel and Aurora also reported being strongly impacted by the racial and cultural diversity exhibited in the Cherokee stories (e.g. Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998) and Walker’s (2000) works. Aurora especially related to “Affrilachia” (Walker, 2000). All of the participants, except Alex, reported being impacted by the environmental issues explored in the course, as well.

**Participatory structure.** June stated that one of her course goals was for the class to be very interactive, discussion-based, and participatory. She described the diverse enrollment and how she hoped to create a class structure in which the large number of
students acted as more of a discussion group rather than her acting as a “bequeather of knowledge.” Several of the class participants cited the diversity in the course enrollment as positively impacting their experience in the course. Even though Melissa felt the class meetings only served purposes of reviewing the material and were therefore worthless, she believed that hearing the varied perspectives among her classmates was interesting. Likewise, Renee, being from an urban area outside Appalachia, enjoyed hearing what Appalachian students had to share about their place. Morgan similarly enjoyed hearing about places outside Appalachia and having the opportunity to share her culture and background with outsiders. Aurora also enjoyed hearing the diverse voices from both inside and outside the culture and region, and Daniel found the discussion to be very deep. Renee felt the deep, extended dialogue facilitated by June was the greatest impact of the course and of June’s instruction.

**Examination of stereotypes.** June reported having a course goal that students would develop an appreciation for the local culture, art, and ways of knowing and communicating. At the beginning of the course, Melissa had described stereotypes as being both positive and negative. She was the only student who acknowledged this. Collectively, the participants listed the stereotypes they were familiar with as rednecks, hillbillies, moonshine, rural isolation, poverty, ignorance, and racism.

At the beginning of the course, Daniel and Alex said they were unfamiliar with Appalachian stereotypes. At the end of the course, Daniel stated that he believed very few stereotypes were true, especially those of the uneducated hillbilly, and that his preconceived notions of a culturally and geographically isolated Appalachia were
challenged by the course. Similarly, Aurora also stated that her stereotypical notions of Appalachia as being very rural and having hillbilly culture had been positively impacted by the course as she came to understand Appalachia as a separate subculture.

Renee and Morgan, while being familiar with stereotypes, reported having very little experience with them. Morgan, like Daniel, challenged stereotypes, writing, “We’re not hillbillies and rednecks.” Similarly, Renee stated that stereotypes may seem true on the surface, but are usually untrue beneath the surface of someone’s character. She stated that people are quick to judge, and that the course helped counteract some of the stereotypes she had expected to find. Melissa was more similar in this instance, stating that while many of the negative stigmas are true, the good usually outweighs the bad.

Melissa did, however, believe the course and accompanying materials served to perpetuate some of those stereotypes. Similar to Melissa’s idea that some stereotypes and stigmas were promoted by the course, Daniel felt that Confederate soldiers were presented in a negative, stereotypical light despite feeling that most stereotypes are untrue and were challenged by the course. Alex was the only student reporting that he learned stereotypes as a result of the course, saying, “it’s redneck, country, poverty and everyone loves it!” He also reported that stereotypes related to Appalachian dialect are true on the surface, but that the people “know what they are talking about.”

Instructor impact. June described her teaching style as student-centered, enthusiastic, and interdisciplinary. In being a student-centered educator, she felt it was important to decenter her own authority as the instructor and emphasize student voices. This may provide insight into why the participants had less to say about the impact the
instructor had on them over the course of the semester. Melissa, Morgan, Renee, Aurora and Alex all stated that the instructor impacted them by making them think. Thinking revolved around place, themes, and Appalachian issues. Melissa stated that the instructor made her think about literature in a new way, while Aurora stated she was encouraged to think abstractly. Both Daniel and Aurora reported that the instructor helped them gain clarity about readings or assignments they did not understand during class. Aurora, Daniel, Alex, and Renee all stated that they appreciated the ongoing dialogue incorporated into the course and encouraged by the instructor. Daniel was the only student to not comment directly on the instructor’s impact, but spoke about it more in terms of how the class meetings had impacted him.

**Course components.** Course components included the various texts and assignments included in the coursework. Analysis of characters also emerged as an important aspect of the texts.

**Texts.** June stated that she chose texts she felt were important for students to read that were not always respected because they represented a marginalized population. She stated that students generally liked the material and found it interesting. Alex and Renee both felt the readings had the greatest impact on their thinking out of the various course components. Alex said they greatly impacted his feelings about Appalachia and that he constantly thought about the books. Renee stated that the more personal stories had the most impact on her and that, through them, she learned much about Appalachia. She particularly appreciated being able to connect them to real life. Aurora was sometimes shocked by the readings and struggled to identify with the culture, but overall enjoyed the
readings. She often talked about “loving” the readings and stated they helped her understand the importance of nature and rural spaces. Morgan reported that the readings helped open her eyes to the problems facing Appalachia. Melissa stated she did not like the readings because they were “drama” and promoted negative stereotypes of Appalachian people. However, she stated that she enjoyed the poems and short stories. Renee also reported enjoying the poems included in the course.

Though she did not like them, Melissa said the readings had the greatest impact on her out of all the components of the course. However, she stated the overall impact was small because being from the area, she had personally experienced many of the stereotypes she felt they promoted. Melissa felt the readings promoted both negative and positive stereotypes such as bad grammar, racism, violence, creativity, and resourcefulness. She also did not like the portrayal of Confederate soldiers in Cold Mountain (Berger at al., 2003) and “Lincolnites” (Rash, 2010d). Renee also felt that certain readings (e.g. Adams, 2004; Kephart, 1913) promoted negative Appalachian stereotypes to some extent. Generally, Morgan felt the use of dialect such as that in My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) also served to promote negative stereotypes, but in this case she felt like it was properly portrayed.

June described choosing to teach The Road (McCarthy, 2006) during the course because of its very different exploration of Appalachia and theme of place. As stated, Alex most liked The Road (McCarthy, 2006) because he appreciated the imagery and the way it painted the theme of darkness he felt was prominent in the course. Daniel also chose The Road (McCarthy, 2006) as his favorite work because of its interesting plot, but
felt that it did not really impact his feelings about Appalachia due to its sense of placeless-ness. Morgan selected *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) as her favorite work for similar reasons, and because it was different from the other works and very descriptive. She also appreciated Rash’s works (2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e) for similar reasons, reporting the poverty, destruction, and substance abuse depicted in the stories as having a great impact on her thinking. Likewise, Aurora also chose *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) for its plot and visual representation, as well as *Cold Mountain* (Berger et al., 2003) for the same reasons.

Renee wrote about *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) as her “favorite by far,” but also stated that she was most impacted by the historical context and “fantastic imagery” in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004). This connects with June stating she teaches *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) because it is a good history book related to the local area and culture. Renee also described liking “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), but felt that it was gloomy, and she found *Serena* (Rash, 2008) very engaging but “crazy.” Melissa felt that *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008) was her favorite text overall because of her strong feelings about environmental conservation and mountain-top removal mining. She also described liking *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) for its descriptive style, “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011) for its emotionally-provocative plot, and the Cherokee stories (e.g. Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998) for the history and knowledge they included. She did not like *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), however, because she felt like it was “all drama” and promoted negative stereotypes of Appalachian people.
Characters. Alex identified Arty from *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) as the character having the most impact on him because, though he struggled with her dialect at times, he felt like she seemed like a real person with whom readers could connect. Morgan also connected strongly to Arty because Arty reminded her of herself and her female family members who represented strong, independent, hardworking Mountain Women. Morgan stated she usually did not like the use of dialect because people often mistake it as representing the hillbilly stereotype, but felt that in this case the dialect was very well done. Aurora also liked Arty because she felt like though they were from different regions and cultural backgrounds, they shared many similarities. She also appreciated Arty’s local knowledge.

Melissa most favored Granny in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) because she was the most “sane” of all the characters. She, as well as Renee, also liked Serena (Rash, 2008) at the beginning of the novel for her strength, tom-boyishness, and independence, but came to favor Rachel later for her strength as a single mother once Serena had become wicked. Renee also favored characters that demonstrated strength, stating that the father in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) was her favorite for this reason. She also appreciated the narrator’s voice in “The Thin Places” (House, 2010) because she could identify with his connection to nature. Similarly, Daniel favored the characters in the various Cherokee materials (Mooney, 1900; Owle, 1998) because he admired their spiritual connection to the land and nature.

Themes in the course texts. Each of the participants named different themes that had the most impact on them. Melissa named the themes of music and place and their
impact on identity and human connection as having the greatest impact on her. Renee also named place, but included religion and morals as other themes that spoke to her. Aurora stated that most of the themes she recognized were very sad and included things like poverty and an aging population. Echoing this, Alex stated that he most enjoyed the theme of darkness, especially as it played out in the wasteland setting of *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006). Daniel stated that the theme of environmentalism had the greatest impact on him, naming the works of Kephart (1913), House (2010), and Rash (2008). Similarly, Morgan stated that the environmental pieces and readings about place and belonging had the greatest impact on her. However, she named the theme of love as the theme impacting her most and described it as love of family, place, and survival. Both Morgan and Renee described appreciating “The Thin Places” (House, 2010) as a way to end the course because it tied all of the themes together, which Morgan listed as place, environment, love, knowledge, religion, and memory.

**Assignments.** June described her selection of course assignments during the interview. The first assignment was a mapping project in which students mapped their homes. This fulfilled June’s goal of connecting students with their home places. Daniel named the mapping project as one of his favorites because it allowed him to explore his home which had been in his family for generations and to which he felt very connected. He appreciated how the assignments allowed him to connect to things that were important to him.

The second assignment, June told me, was one in which the students were given choices as to how it could be completed. The choices included a service-learning project,
oral history project, or environmental research paper. The assignment was meant to immerse students in the local context and tie in Appalachian issues. Aurora and Alex both chose the service learning project, which they described as their favorite assignments. Aurora participated in two river sanitation events, volunteered hours at the local soup kitchen, and volunteered at a local heritage festival. Alex helped deliver firewood to local residents experiencing financial hardship with one of the local churches. Aurora reported enjoying the assignments that explored cultured and required creativity while Alex enjoyed the opportunity to explore the local area. Renee described completing the research paper for the second assignment and how it was one of her favorite projects because it allowed her to synthesize knowledge gained in other courses. Renee liked assignments that she was able to connect to the “real world.” Renee and Aurora also listed the discussion postings as assignments they enjoyed, which June included with the intention of facilitating dialogue beyond the classroom hours.

Renee, Morgan, Melissa, and Daniel all reported the commonplace book as one of their favorite projects. Melissa enjoyed it because she was able to engage in creative work and explore her own feelings about place. She said the assignments overall made her think more about culture and place. Morgan also liked the commonplace book for its creative structure and because it required immersion in the local culture. She felt the assignments pushed her to reflect on her own Appalachian identity. Daniel liked it because he could gather things that were important to him and relevant to place and Appalachia, while Renee appreciated the “outdoorsy” nature of the project. June had
described the commonplace book as meeting the goal of encouraging students to explore
the local area and issues related to Appalachia.

**Perceptions of Appalachia.** June said she was comfortable defining the region
as the “Upper South” and mountainous, but also warned about too narrowly defining
Appalachia. On the first day of class, she described it as a place that is complex and
diverse, of both rural and urban spaces. Student participants were asked on the pre-
survey to describe what they thought of when thinking of Appalachia. Most of them
wrote about the geographical landscape. Both Morgan and Alex listed mountains, which
was similar to June’s response that “mountainous” was one of the few ways she was
comfortable defining Appalachia. Renee also described it as a place of “beautiful
settings,” and Aurora listed “nature” as one of Appalachia’s assets. Alex wrote that the
mountains were an asset in the region, but also described them as a barrier to access
citing the complex, vast terrain as difficult to navigate and requiring hard work. He said
the environment was one that is “beautiful but brutal.”

Melissa echoed Alex’s statement, describing the dangerous rurality of the region,
but conversely describing how rural nature can provide an escape from daily life. She
also felt that it was important to mention that rurality is not necessarily related to lack of
education or ignorance, which she had listed as negative attributes of the region.
Similarly, Renee described an only somewhat developed place and cited both stereotypes
and rurality of the region as negative attributes. Aurora also felt that it was somewhat
rural, though not as much as she imagined prior to the course, and thought lack of
development was a negative attribute of the region.
Only Morgan and Melissa, the two Appalachian students in the study, had suggestions for improving the region. They both listed that abolishing mountaintop removal mining would be an improvement. Though the other participants did not state this as a suggestion for improvement, Renee, June, Aurora, Daniel, and Alex all expressed similar sentiments regarding conservation, mountaintop removal mining, and environmentalism. A section detailing Environmentalism is including later in this chapter. Melissa also felt that opening people’s minds to other sexual orientations and religions would improve Appalachia. Both Aurora and Renee stated they would do nothing to improve the region because it is “great the way it is,” and Daniel listed no improvements on his survey. June also stated during our interview that she was not comfortable offering suggestions for improvement to the region because she was an outsider and therefore did not hold that authority. She described Appalachia as a place with a long history of being abused and misrepresented by outsiders.

Morgan listed positive attributes and assets besides the landscape that included the history, food, pride, and belonging. She did not offer any negative attributes, perhaps because when she thought of Appalachia, she thought of “home.” Similar to Morgan, Daniel, Melissa, and June all listed history as an important asset of the region. Like Morgan’s idea of belonging, Renee listed small, tight-knit communities as an asset, as did Daniel and Alex. Likewise, Alex, Daniel, Melissa, Renee, and June all described connectedness as a defining characteristic of the region. Connection was in relation to history, family, culture, music, land, mountains, and nature. Melissa felt the connection to place and history made Appalachia more similar to other places around the world, as
opposed to contributing to its uniqueness. Alex was also the only participant to list “bears” and “clouds” as things that came to mind when he thought of Appalachia. He also wrote that the unique dialect and local expert knowledge of the land were assets of the region and culture. He described a “fight for survival” as characterizing Appalachia that was similar to Aurora’s idea that “survival of the fittest” was an asset of the region.

Though Daniel and Aurora wrote that their perceptions of Appalachia had been positively impacted by the course, and all of the students were able to list positive attributes of the region, every student participant described Appalachia as being a place of grim conditions, tragedy, dismalness, sadness, and darkness which required survival. These grim conditions included poverty, death, violence, substance abuse, an aging population, lack of development, brutal rurality, and lack of jobs. Aurora summed it up as having a “dark, dingy, poor vibe.” The environment, as perceived by the participants, also produces people that are strong, hardworking, resilient, creative, resourceful, and humorous. Perceptions of Appalachian people and culture are explored in greater detail in the next section. The darker side of Appalachia is included in a later section titled “Appalachia Noir.”

**Perceptions of Appalachian people and culture.** The data from participants cases helped define their perceptions of Appalachian people. Data illuminated three themes that defined the culture of Appalachian people: Morality and Spirituality, Connection, and Strength. These three overarching cultural traits are described in more depth here.
**Morality and spirituality.** June, Renee, Morgan, and Alex all described Appalachian culture as valuing morals, spirituality, and/or religion. Conversely, Melissa found them to often be closed-minded to other religions, hypocritical, and morally corrupt. Moral corruption often involved engaging in violent, bigoted, substance-abusing, and ignorant behavior. While Melissa had a negative reaction to what she perceived as ignorance, Renee described appreciating the simplicity of the people especially when compared to their contemporaries who were perceived as shallow and materialistic. Despite describing her own religious background, Aurora was the only participant to describe Appalachian people as superstitious. She did, however, appreciate their nature-based knowledge which differed drastically from her urban knowledge. June stated that there was “always a grain of truth” in stereotypes, but that they lack the complexity of real life, perhaps pointing to why students developed a portrait of Appalachian people that contains both positive and negative attributes.

**Connection.** Collectively, participant descriptions of Appalachian people and culture paint a picture of a people who is very connected. Appalachian people are connected to place, land, family, history, and community. Connection was also described as a sense of belonging, love, and humanity. June described Appalachian people and culture as influenced by earlier Native American and Celtic peoples. She described a region that represented a visible stratification of wealth and marginalization within communities. All participants named family and community as an asset of the culture. Family can provide support, strength, and will to survive and connect one to their heritage. However, family can also include abusive relationships and struggle. Student
participants remarked on the overall centrality of family in Appalachian culture, whether positive or negative. Melissa and Morgan both identified love as the larger defining factor among Appalachian families, Melissa describing such “despite all the roughness…they love each other deep down unconditionally.”

**Strength.** Student participants all described the culture as people of strength. Strength was equated with strength of character and morals, work ethic, resiliency, independence, and humor in the face of adversity. Alex summed up strength and work ethic saying that when he thinks of Appalachia, he thinks of “dedication and elbow grease.” Strength was nurtured by the grim conditions prevalent in the region, which contributed to the aforementioned positive qualities, as well as creativity and resourcefulness. Melissa and Renee defined this aspect of the culture describing the people as survivors who were able to make do with anything and use what they had to survive. Melissa really appreciated creativity and said the arts and crafts of the region helped her develop pride in her identity. Morgan also described having pride and stated that cultural pride was an asset of Appalachian people. Like Melissa’s appreciation for the arts, June also identified the cultural connection to music and art as an asset developed in response and resistance to grim conditions. Aurora discussed the strength of characters, as well, but was also shocked at the perceived aloofness to terrible circumstances. For Aurora, strength was often tied to gender roles in which the women were presented as very strong matriarchs contrary to the submissive women she expected to find.
Environmentalism in Appalachia. June described being inspired to teach her course after reading a book on bioregionalism (Lynch et al., 2012), or the relationship between people and place. She talked about the necessary role ecocriticism must play in any Appalachian Studies course because environmental issues are central to understanding modern Appalachia. She stated that many students are unaware of mountaintop removal, coal, and other destructive environmental practices and, therefore, she felt it was necessary to “spread the word” through her classes. She also described some of the environmental pieces she used in her curricula as having changed her life and worldview.

June’s students echoed her perspective on environmentalism. Every student mentioned environmental issues to some extent. Alex described being against timbering and mountaintop removal, the dangers of coal mining, and the need for activism and conservation. Aurora described having similar beliefs, as well as believing in the importance of rural spaces and the need to develop more ethical, “eco-friendlier” energy sources. Both Renee and Daniel described the importance overall of environmentalism based on an appreciation of nature and the spiritual connection between humans and the environment.

Morgan and Melissa discussed environmentalism at length. They were also the only two students to identify as Appalachian. Morgan stated that the environmental issues she learned about had the greatest impact on her thinking throughout the course. She described nature and mountains as assets and frequently referred to the connection between people, nature, and animals. She suggested the only improvement she would
make to Appalachia would be to “stop MTR,” and described commercial development and natural resource extraction in Appalachia as negative progress. Melissa described the same negative progress and also spoke strongly against mountaintop removal mining and coal in general. She felt that coal mining was reflective of the poor economy and lack of knowledge, as well as of corrupt business practices. She juxtaposed negative progress with an appreciation for nature as the positive form of human-nature connection. Melissa and Morgan discussed at length the connection between humans and animals. Much of Morgan’s dialogue surrounding this connection was related to her farm-based childhood. Melissa also described the rurality of Appalachia as part of nature, and how it can both provide protection and create grim conditions.

**Appalachia noir.** June was hesitant to provide criticism or suggest improvements to Appalachia. The only negative aspects revealed in the data referred to a stratification of wealth and marginalization of certain populations in the local area, and the negative Hillbilly stereotype often promoted in literature and film. All of the students, despite reporting positive impacts to their perceptions of Appalachia as a result of participating in the course, also described it in terms that collectively create “Appalachia Noir,” or the dark side of Appalachia. Melissa described these as “grim conditions,” Daniel referred to “the dismal view,” Alex identified the “theme of darkness,” and Aurora termed it “the tragic.” Both Melissa and Daniel talked about the “theme of death,” and Aurora, reporting she had never seen so many sad books in her life, talked about the themes of sadness and death. Morgan described the “bleakness of the setting” that was “dark, dismal, and without hope” in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006).
Renee, too, described a sense of hopelessness and both she and Morgan chronicled the sad history of the Cherokee Trail of Tears (Owle, 1998), much like Aurora.

Overall, Aurora’s description of Appalachia as having a “dark, dingy, poor vibe” defines the concept well. Appalachia Noir is an underdeveloped place of old age, death, murder, extreme poverty, hardship, struggle, substance abuse, mental breakdowns, homesickness, war, racism, ignorance, and rural isolation that requires survival and sometimes escape. Morgan described being trapped and “sucked in” by the rurality, which demanded escape as the only form of survival. Similarly, Daniel wrote about the Cherokee people escaping into the mountains to hide from persecution by European settlers, while Rachel had to flee across the country from the murderous Serena and Galloway (Rash, 2008). The idea of survival and escape often led to a sense of hope and conceptualization of silver linings for many of the participants. With regards to poverty, Renee described the lack of “good paying jobs” and overall economic struggle like many of her classmates, while Alex focused primarily on poverty as a defining factor of Appalachia Noir. Melissa equated this with the cruelty of extreme rural living, which she called “dangerous.” The dangerously rural setting that is Appalachia contributed to the strong, creative, resourceful, and resilient people that survive among its lands. Likewise, it is the perfect storm that creates ignorance, malevolence, and corruption among people desperate to survive. In a sort of circle of life, Appalachia is in turn shaped by its inhabitants.

**Summary.** Six students and one instructor studied literature of place in Appalachia for one semester in a class setting that enrolled approximately 35 students of
diverse backgrounds and experiences. Generally, the student participants felt the course had positively impacted their perceptions of Appalachia. They felt as though they had gained knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for the region and the ability to relate to Appalachia and its people through the material. They also reported benefitting from the participatory structure of the class and the examination of Appalachian cultural stereotypes. They reported that the instructor encouraged them to think and engage in thoughtful dialogue. They were positively impacted by both the course material and assignments which helped them explore, connect to, and learn about the local area more deeply. Ultimately, their perceptions of Appalachia and Appalachian people became more complex after participating in the course to include an understanding of both positive and negative attributes and a challenge to the application of stereotypical metanarratives.

**Research Questions**

This study sought to examine how participation in an Appalachian literature course impacted students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. To that end, I worked to answer the following research questions:

1. How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?
2. What teaching practices do students identify as impactful?
3. What components of the course do students identify as impactful?
4. How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian Literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course material?
These questions explored which aspects of an Appalachian Literature course may impact students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture and what type of impact those aspects may have. The final question provides information to guide future decision-making processes in similar contexts by linking the instructor’s curricular decisions with the outcomes among student participants.

**How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?** The participants reported their perceptions of Appalachia and Appalachian culture as being positively impacted overall as a result of participating in the course. Renee described a newfound appreciation for the land and local area after coming to understand how much it was appreciated by the Appalachian people who inhabited it. Aurora’s simplistic view of Appalachia as a very rural, dirt-roads-kind-of-place occupied by rednecks and hillbillies became more complex as she began to appreciate the local, nature-based knowledge of the people, understand Appalachia as a place of developed “little cities,” and find similarities among Appalachian culture and her own. Aurora also came to recognize the importance of rural spaces within society.

Both Aurora and Renee stated they would make no improvements to the region because it was “great the way it is.” Similarly, Alex suggested no improvements and came to appreciate how connected the people are to place, family, and history. He also developed an appreciation for Appalachians’ local knowledge and enduring work ethic. Likewise, Daniel reported his perceptions as being positively impacted and described appreciating and relating to Appalachians’ connection to place, family, and history. He also respected the spiritual connection the Cherokee had to the land of Appalachia and
felt that it should inform modern cultural beliefs and practices to a greater extent.

Morgan and Melissa were the only two students who claimed to be Appalachian both before and after the course. Both students reported developing a sense of pride in being Appalachian as a result of their participation in the course. Morgan felt a sense of pride after turning inward to reflect on what being Appalachian meant to her, while Melissa came to be proud of her Appalachian heritage because of its deeply rooted connection to music, arts, and crafts.

As a result of participating in the course, most of the students came to challenge the application of negative stereotypical metanarratives of Appalachian culture. Morgan remarked at the end that she had learned that Appalachian people were “not hillbillies and rednecks.” As stated, Aurora, coming from urban Baltimore and having no experience with Appalachian culture except what she had seen on television, stated she learned a lot more than just stereotypes and came to recognize Appalachia as a separate subculture. Her idea that Appalachia was very rural was also challenged as she was encouraged to explore the surrounding area while taking the course and visited “little cities” and areas of modern development.

Aurora also remarked more frequently than other participants on the racial and cultural diversity she encountered within the material and how she came to see Appalachia as a place more diverse than she had originally thought. Renee also believed Appalachia was a place of diversity. She believed the course “lifted” the stereotypes she had encountered previously helping her appreciate the region, which, she stated, was the biggest impact the course had on her. Renee also stated, after taking the course, that
though the stereotypes may seem true on the exterior, there is usually a more complex picture beneath the surface and warned that people should not be too quick to judge.

Likewise, Daniel stated that he was unfamiliar with many stereotypes of Appalachian culture prior to taking the course, but that “many if not all are untrue,” especially those related to ignorance. He, too, reported appreciating the cultural and racial diversity depicted in the material and enjoyed learning about the different gender roles within the region over time. Alex also reported having little knowledge or experience with Appalachian stereotypes prior to the course and, even though he stated he learned a lot about Appalachian stereotypes, stated that Appalachian people “know what they’re talking about.” Melissa was the only student who felt that the class served only to promote stereotypes, both positive and negative. She was also the only student to recognize stereotypes as sometimes being positive and not as just negative typecasts. Melissa felt that a lot of the “negative stigmas” were true, but that the more positive attributes often outweighed those negative aspects.

Overall, students’ perceptions were not only positively impacted to reflect an appreciation for the culture, but students also developed a more complex understanding of both the region and people. Students challenged the application of stereotypes to Appalachian people, but also described the weaknesses of Appalachian culture as those aligned with negative stereotypical images of poverty, hillbilly culture, substance abuse, racism, violence, and ignorance. Simultaneously, students also listed assets of the culture such as connection to place and family, oral history, spirituality, morals, local knowledge, music, and arts. Similarly, students came to see Appalachia as a more complex place.
They understood it as a place of natural wonder and beauty, home to a spiritual and nature-connected culture, a place where the land should be protected and a place of grim conditions characterized by rural isolation, extreme poverty, violence, death, and moral corruption.

**Which teaching methods do students identify as impactful?** When describing the impact the instructor had on them during the course, students described two effects. The instructor encouraged critical thinking and facilitated reflective discussion. Students repeatedly identified ways in which the instructor encouraged their thinking. Aurora stated that the instructor had “made her think abstractly” about the materials, while Melissa stated that June had encouraged her to think about the literature in a new way than she had before. Morgan stated the instructor made her think more deeply about Appalachian issues, while Renee said she was encouraged to think more about the themes presented in the material. Alex stated June made him think about place more, which in turn caused him to appreciate the area.

Alex and Aurora both stated that they often gained clarity through the class discussions. Renee also appreciated the discussion posting which facilitated dialogue outside classroom hours. She also appreciated how the diversity of class enrollment enriched the class discussions, as did Morgan and Melissa. Renee described appreciating the supplemental materials the instructor added during class discussions that helped students develop a better understanding of the themes and concepts presented in the course much like Alex and Aurora. Daniel described the course as having more
discussion than other English classes he had experienced and, as a result, greater depth
and exploration of the literature and place.

Which components of the course do students identify as impactful? As
previously stated, components of the course includes the various types of texts and
assignments that were used in the course.

Texts. Several of the participants reported some form of course materials as
having the greatest impact on their thinking throughout the course. For example, Alex
reported that the course readings impacted his feelings about place and caused him to
think about the texts constantly. Renee also reported that the readings, especially more
personal stories and poems, had the greatest impact on her because they taught her a great
deal about Appalachia. Melissa stated that the readings had the greatest impact on her,
even though she felt she was already familiar with the themes and topics presented in the
course and, overall, did not like the readings because of what she perceived as a
stereotypical presentation of Appalachian people. She did report that she most liked the
poetry and short stories included in the course. Daniel and Morgan both reported being
most greatly impacted by materials related to environmental issues. Morgan felt as
though the materials brought environmental issues into the light and presented
Appalachian people as resilient. Morgan also reported being greatly impacted by
readings that represented belonging and community. Aurora wrote that she loved the
readings because of their descriptive nature, but was more greatly impacted by the course
assignments.
The Road (McCarthy, 2006) stood out as important to many of the participants. Alex chose it as his favorite because of its depiction of the “theme of darkness,” while Morgan appreciated how it contrasted with the other materials and the style in which it was written. Aurora also enjoyed the description the author used and enjoyed the plot better than the other course materials. Similarly, Daniel reported that he “loved” the story and its overarching plot, but felt that it did not really impact his feelings about Appalachia due to its placeless-ness. Though not her overall favorite course component, Melissa reported The Road (McCarthy, 2006) as her favorite text for its descriptive style. Renee wrote that The Road (McCarthy, 2006) was her “favorite by far” and she described the father character as one of her favorite characters during our interview due to his strength and sense of purpose.

Students mentioned other texts that were impactful and critiqued them as important to the course. Both Morgan and Renee connected strongly with “The Thin Places” (House, 2010) which they felt synthesized all themes presented in the course including place, environment, love, knowledge, religion, morals, and memory. Renee chose the narrator as her favorite character because she could relate to his connection to special thin places of spiritual respite in the natural world. Melissa stated that her favorite material overall was the documentary Kilowatt Ours (Barrie, 2008). She was the only student to select a film as her favorite text. Melissa also reported a strong aversion to Cold Mountain (Berger et al., 2003), “Lincolnites” (Rash, 2010d), and My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) for their negative portrayal of Appalachian and Southern people. Both Melissa and Renee stated they liked the emotionality of “The Tender Branch”
(Gilchrist-Young, 2010) and the engaging, “crazy” Serena (Rash, 2008). In contrast to Melissa, however, Renee stated that the historical context of the setting in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) had the greatest impact on her and had “fantastic imagery.”

Despite not naming *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) as a favorite or as having much impact on their thinking, Alex, Morgan, and Aurora all selected Arty as their favorite character because she was relatable and engaging. To Alex, her narration seemed as if the story was being told by a real person “sitting on the porch.” For Morgan, Arty reminded her of herself and her strong southern Appalachian women relatives. Aurora felt that she and Arty both were reflective by nature and motivated toward self-improvement, despite having different backgrounds and epistemologies. Despite disliking the novel, Melissa chose Granny from *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) as her favorite character because Granny reminded her of her own grandmother and was “the most sane” character in all the texts.

The participants also noted specific themes within the texts as having the greatest impact on their perceptions throughout the course. Themes noted as impactful by students included the darkness or grim conditions, place, religion and morality, music, environmentalism, and love. As stated earlier in the chapter, Alex was most impacted by the “theme of darkness,” especially the grim conditions depicted in *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006). Similarly, Aurora was impacted by the themes of sadness and death, as she stated she had never read so many sad books before. Both Melissa and Renee stated they were impacted by the theme of place. Melissa especially connected to the theme of place and how it molds individual identity and is something to which humans become very
connected. She also described a strong connection to the theme of music because, from her artist perspective, “art is the universal language” and she built relationships through music. Renee, along with place, listed the themes of religion and morality which she related to her participation in a Christian student group. Daniel was most greatly impacted by the theme of environmentalism that was especially apparent in texts of Kephart (1913), House (2010), and Rash (2008). Finally, Morgan felt most impacted by the theme of love – love of family, of place, and of survival.

**Assignments.** Morgan reported that, out of the various course components, the assignments had the greatest impact on her perceptions because they made her reflect on and define her Appalachian identity for herself. Daniel also stated the he “loved” the assignments because he was able to include things he cares about, like home or specific essays and photographs. Melissa stated that the assignments made her think more about culture and place. Similar to Morgan, Melissa stated she enjoyed the assignments because they enabled her to explore her own feelings about place. Alex, too, described the assignments as encouraging him to analyze place. Melissa, Morgan, and Aurora described appreciating the creative nature of the course assignments. Renee felt that the assignments helped her relate the materials to the real world.

Morgan, Daniel, Melissa, and Renee listed the commonplace book as a favorite and most impactful assignment. Reasons varied to some extent. Morgan enjoyed it because it allowed her to engage in creative work and immerse herself in the local culture. Daniel liked the commonplace book because it allowed him to read and explore things he cared about related to the local area. Melissa, like Morgan, enjoyed the creative
work, but also liked the self-reflection the project required. Renee enjoyed it, similar to Morgan, because it immersed her in the local region and allowed her to work outdoors.

Aurora and Alex did not list the commonplace as one of their favorite assignments. Instead, they both listed the service-learning projects they completed for the second assignment as their favorite assignments. Alex appreciated and had a history of engaging in service work in other parts of Appalachia, and was happy to deliver firewood to the less fortunate in the local community. Aurora, too, enjoyed giving back and felt that it was important that she engage with the local community while she was living there. She completed two river sanitation projects, volunteered at a local soup kitchen, and helped support the musical acts at the local heritage festival. Renee was the only student to list the environmental research paper she completed for the second assignment as her favorite because she was able to synthesize knowledge gained from other courses. Both Renee and Aurora described enjoying the discussion posts, which was detailed in the last section.

How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian Literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials? June described her approach to teaching the course as being inspired by a book she had recently read entitled The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology and Place (Lynch et al., 2010). She described it as promoting an understanding of a person as being from a specific geographical region, rather than a town or city. June also talked about how Berry’s environmental works (1995, 2003) had changed her life and worldview and how this added to her understanding that teaching ecocriticism is essential to teaching
Appalachian Studies. She stated that in order to understand modern Appalachia and its problems, one must understand Appalachia from an environmental perspective. Thus, environmental issues became a central theme in the course and many participants reported being positively impacted by the theme and developed a pro-conservation attitude about Appalachia.

Similar to the necessary inclusion of ecocriticism, June felt that it was also necessary to teach Appalachian Studies courses from an interdisciplinary perspective that incorporated cultural arts and music. She also described exploring different forms of texts as important, especially texts that had been traditionally marginalized as culturally inferior because they were not books and/or were not published in a major New York publishing house. June also felt that it was important to teach the history of the region and people related to marginalization and environmental issues within the culture. This helped provide an understanding of some of the more modern cultural nuances. For instance, such lessons provided an understanding of the spiritual connection to place often exhibited by modern Appalachians that was influenced historically by the Cherokee and Celtic peoples.

Finally, June hesitated to provide any suggestions on improving Appalachia recognizing herself as an outsider of the region and culture and, therefore, not having the authority to make those suggestions. Instead, June focused on the assets of the culture such as storytelling, oral history, history, music, arts, and connection to land and family. She also described an understanding of Appalachia as a complex, diverse place of both urban and rural spaces, social stratification, and history of stereotyping by outsiders.
Besides visualizing Appalachia in geographical terms as “mountainous” and “Upper South,” June cautioned against too tightly defining or mapping Appalachia and stated that we should always question why it is being mapped the way it is and by whom.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the themes and patterns among participants’ experiences in an Appalachian Literature course. The analysis presented themes that emerged within individual cases and followed by presenting convergence and divergence among themes that emerged across cases. The data was then arranged and presented by research question.

This study examines the impact of participation in an Appalachian Literature course on student perceptions of Appalachian culture. The analysis and conclusions presented in the next chapter provide answers to the following questions:

1. How does participation in Appalachian Literature course impact students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture?

2. Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful?

3. Which components of the course do students identify as impactful?

4. How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian Literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?
Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Six students and one instructor participated in a Literature of Place course in Appalachia. Though many similarities existed among the individual cases, each student’s story was nuanced by their identity and experience. Their own perceptions of Appalachian people and place became more complex over the course of the semester, while they developed a deeper understanding of some aspect of their self.

Freire (1998) argued that identity development was the most critical aspect of critical pedagogy. Social constructivist state that identity is always formed in relation to the “Other”, thus knowing the “Other” helps one to define their own identity (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). From this perspective, education should challenge students to question power and hegemony, privilege, and marginalization (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). In the current study, two of the six students considered themselves Appalachian both before and after the course, though one student felt she was “not as Appalachian” as those who were born and raised in the region after taking the course. Three of the students represented urban areas from within the state, and one student represented an urban area in the northeast US. One of those students identified as African American, and one identified as having Mexican heritage, while the remaining participants were White. None of the four students representing the various urban areas considered themselves Appalachian, nor did the instructor who came from the Deep South.

The study analyzed the perceptions and opinions of six college students ranging not only in ethnicity and hometown, but also in age, major, career aspirations, and most
other demographic factors. The study explored their experiences in a literature of place course based in Appalachia to understand how participation may have impacted their perceptions of Appalachian culture. The research is relevant because it contributes to an underdeveloped body of research related to Appalachian student success, which scholars partially attribute to lower self-esteem among Appalachian students resulting from internalization of negative stereotypical portrayals and marginalization of the culture (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004). This is especially important to consider when Appalachia as a statistical region is still lagging behind national averages in high school completion and college matriculation rates, undoubtedly related to high poverty and unemployment (ARC, 2000, 2011; Billings & Blee, 2000).

The study was based at Smoky Mountain University, a medium-sized state institution in the Smoky Mountain range of southern Appalachia. The school historically began as a teachers college and now awards degrees up to the doctoral level, enrolling almost 10,000 students annually. Most of the students come from areas within the institution’s home state. The two subsequently largest student populations also represent states having Appalachian counties. The instructor alluded to the institution and its culture as having a new interest in developing stronger ties with the local community through service and interaction.

The study analyzed the impacts participation in an Appalachian literature course had on participants’ perceptions of Appalachian culture. Four questions guided the research:
1. How does participation in an Appalachian literature course impact student perceptions of Appalachian culture?

2. Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful?

3. Which course components do students identify as impactful?

4. How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian culture inform teaching practices and selection of course materials?

These questions address students’ experiences with the instructor and course materials and how those interactions impacted their thinking about Appalachian culture, as well as how the instructor’s perspective impacted the curriculum. Student perceptions about the course, texts, instructor, and Appalachia were examined throughout the semester in relationship to the instructor’s perceptions.

The study is qualitative in design, which was applicable to the evaluative nature of the case study which sought to assess whether the course did help students develop appreciation for Appalachian culture and music with the intent of developing recommendations for best practices and lessons learned to be applied in similar contexts. This is what Patton (2002) refers to as formative evaluation. Likewise, studying the processes by which something occurs, such as students’ thinking being impacted or changed, is best understood through a qualitative lens that presents a detailed description of participants’ stories while valuing their perceptions (Maxwell, 2004a; Patton, 2002).

Many qualitative case study evaluations seek not only to provide feedback to participants for improvement of a program but also to identify best practices and lessons learned that may be applicable in similar contexts. Adopting these purposes, this study is
aligned most closely with applied research because it is intended to identify strengths and weaknesses to improve the course under study and to provide insights for addressing similar issues in similar contexts (Patton, 2002).

An extensive and structured coding scheme was developed for making meaning of the data. The data was first transcribed and organized into case files for individual analysis, and to make the large amount of data more accessible. Data was coded first using first-cycle coding methods applied in three phases of coding independent of one another: in vivo, open, and a priori coding. Several transition methods were conducted between first- and second-cycle coding methods which included sorting and lumping codes and developing code maps. Second-cycle coding methods were applied in two steps, one after the other, including focused coding and axial coding, to define and develop the emerging themes for each case. A priori codes were applied during the third phase of first-cycle coding to each individual case and then condensed based on convergence with like in vivo and open codes. Each case was coded, analyzed, and written individually before moving on to the next case. Then, a cross-case analysis was conducted in which the seven individual cases were nested to create the larger case representing the course. The inductive coding and analysis allowed themes to emerge that provided an understanding of the factors that impacted students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture related to participation in the course.

The results of the study are not transferrable to other contexts. The study involved a sophomore-level literature of place course that fulfilled a liberal arts credit, and therefore was open to all students enrolled at the university. Due to the open
enrollment nature of the course, the course attracted a very diverse group of students. The only sampling criterions were enrollment in the course and not having status as a minor. The sample was not selected with the intention of being representative of the larger class enrollment or enrollment at the university. The sample captured diverse experiences and reactions to the course.

This study examined how students’ perceptions of Appalachian culture are impacted by participation in an Appalachian literature course. Categories have been identified and themes and sub-themes have emerged to aid understanding. How are student perceptions of Appalachian culture impacted by participation in an Appalachian literature course, and which aspects influence that impact? How does the instructor’s worldview influence that impact? Findings of the study are summarized below, with a discussion of the findings against the backdrop of the conceptual and theoretical literature following.

**How does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?**

Student perceptions were impacted four ways. 1.) Students developed a deeper, more complex understanding and appreciation of the culture and problems facing the Appalachian region through the acquisition of new knowledge and incorporation of new perspectives. 2.) Students were able to connect their learning and course material to lived experiences and prior knowledge which supported the acquisition of new knowledge and understanding. 3.) The diversity of course enrollment combined with the participatory structure of the course allowed insider students to author their own narratives which were shared with outsider students and develop a sense of cultural pride.
Insider narratives were shared with outsider students, which allowed outsider students to analyze privilege and preconceived notions of Appalachian culture. In examining preconceptions and stereotypes of Appalachian culture, insider students developed a sense of pride in defining their own identity and outsider students developed a more complex conceptualization of the region and people.

The course impacted students through four means, including the acquisition of knowledge and a developed understanding and appreciation of Appalachian culture, the ability to connect with the material in meaningful ways, the participatory structure of the class, and the examination of Appalachian stereotypes. Five of the six students reported positive experiences with the course, recommending other students take the course because of the valuable information they learned and the fun they had learning it. Only one student stated she did not learn very much new information from the course on account of being an insider student, though she was encouraged to think about the material and issues in new ways. She also stated she did not care much for the readings because they were full of “drama” and promoted stereotypes of Appalachian culture, suggesting that the course could be improved by decreasing the reading load.

Along with appreciation of Appalachian culture and place, the instructor had identified the course goals during the interview as development of academic skills, increased knowledge of the environmental issues facing the region, and development of students’ own identities and connections to place. Two of the students, Daniel and Alex, described heightened awareness of the problems facing Appalachia and how they came to
think about Appalachia and place more frequently. Similarly, Renee felt she had learned a lot of information about the culture and region as a result of participating in the class.

Aurora felt that the stereotypical, preconceived notions she had brought to college with her about the region were challenged during her participation in the course and that she developed a more complex understanding of the culture, while Morgan described defining for herself what her Appalachian heritage meant in opposition to outsider-imposed stereotypical metanarratives. Despite reporting a less positive experience with the course, Melissa stated she gained a new awareness of environmental problems in the region and how those problems tie the region to the rest of the nation. Both she and Morgan, claiming Appalachian heritage, used the term “proud” in describing how they felt about their heritage after taking the course. Through the acquisition of new knowledge and new perspectives, students developed a rich, complex understanding of the region’s problems and assets along with an appreciation of the culture and its nuances.

All of the students but one stated they were strongly impacted by environmental themes in the course materials which helped them relate to the material more broadly. Each participant was able to identify a character they could relate to, and in most cases they were able to relate because the characters reminded them of themselves or someone close to them. Aurora, even while experiencing tension as a cultural outsider, was able to relate to a character that ultimately had the greatest impact on her. Similarly, Morgan related to the same character because she reminded her of herself and her female relatives. Daniel connected with various female characters for a different reason – they
challenged his original ideas of what women would have been like during different historical periods in Appalachia. Renee also appreciated the course material because she was able to connect and synthesize it with academic material from other courses and apply it to real life situations. Students’ ability to connect course material and the learning experience to their daily lives and prior knowledge supported the greater acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and appreciation for the region and people.

June stated that she developed the class so that it would be very interactive and discussion-based. She sought to de-center her authority as the instructor to allow student voices to be heard. Five of the six student participants described the diverse voices included in the class dialogue as being profoundly impactful. The group dialogue allowed cultural insiders to share their culture while learning about regions outside Appalachia, while outsiders of the region and culture had the opportunity to learn first-hand from insiders about Appalachia while sharing information about their own cultures and places. The exchange allowed all students in the class to make comparisons between their own homes and other places. Two students also reported appreciating not just the diversity, but also the depth of the dialogue. The diverse enrollment and participatory structure allowed insider students the opportunity to voice their own narratives and share their culture with outsider students while challenging stereotypical metanarratives imposed upon them. Likewise, outsider students were encouraged to analyze their own privilege in relation to the Appalachian people and region, particularly with regards to environmental problems and conceptualizations of the culture, while challenging their own preconceived notions about Appalachia and its people.
At the beginning of the course, only one student acknowledged stereotypes as being both positive and negative. On the syllabus, June had included development of appreciation for Appalachian art and culture as a course goal. On the first day of class, she also encouraged students to begin to think about Appalachia in more complex terms, presenting both cultural assets and problems within the region. By the end of the course, four of the students challenged the negative stereotypes often applied to Appalachian people. Even Melissa, who felt that the course material often served the purpose of promoting those cultural stigmas, stated that the positive attributes usually outweighed the negative aspects of Appalachian culture. Alex was the only student who stated he learned stereotypes as a result of participating in the course. However, it is important to note that he was able to identify certain cultural depictions as stereotypes. The examination and challenging of stereotypical metanarratives helped insider students develop a sense of pride and empowerment related to the ability to author their own narratives and define for themselves what it meant to be Appalachian. Outsider students developed a more complex conceptualization of Appalachian culture not defined by stereotypical representations and an understanding of Appalachia as having its own unique culture.

Which teaching practices do students identify as impactful? This section details the teaching practices participants identified as impactful. Participants believed that a goal-oriented, student-centered, and enthusiastic teaching style was impactful. Student participants also appreciated that June encouraged deeper critical thinking,
helped students clarify thoughts and understanding, and facilitated in-depth, extended dialogue.

Student participants identified several teaching practices they felt had the most impact on their thinking throughout the course. Five of the students identified the instructor’s ability to encourage students to think about place, Appalachia, and themes within the materials as being impactful. Two students appreciated the clarity the instructor was able to help them gain in understanding the materials, assignments, or course expectations. Four students stated that the ongoing, in-depth dialogue the instructor encouraged had a great impact on their thinking. June described her teaching style as student-centered, goal-oriented, enthusiastic, and interdisciplinary. Her student-centeredness is evidenced in that students felt encouraged to think in various ways for themselves and that she helped them gain clarity which supported their overall achievement and growth in the course. Therefore, the latter is also related to goal-oriented teaching. The sustained dialogue promoted by June points to her enthusiasm for the subject material, which helped students become excited about their learning in the course.

**Which components of the course do students identify as impactful?** Students identified both texts and assignments they felt had an impact on their thinking about Appalachian culture. Within the discussion of texts is a secondary discussion about characters and themes as they were often the focus of students when engaging in dialogue about the texts.
June described choosing readings that students generally liked and that she felt were important material for students to read. Two students identified the readings as having the greatest impact on their thinking during the course. However, all of the students stated that the readings impacted their thinking in some sort of positive manner, be it awareness of environmental problems or because they were enjoyable to read. Melissa felt that the readings served only to promote negative stigmas of Appalachian culture and, therefore, did not like them, even though she stated they had the greatest impact on her thinking. However, she also stated the course did not have a great impact on her, so that even the greatest impact was small. Daniel and Renee also questioned the depiction of stereotypical images in the literature. Five of the six students identified *The Road* (McCarthy, 2006) as their favorite work, though most agreed that it had little impact on their thinking about Appalachia due to its overall feeling of placeless-ness. The only factor of the book that students related to Appalachia was its overall dark and dreary tone. In contrast, Melissa stated that her favorite text was the documentary *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008) for its exploration of environmental problems in Appalachia. Other titles that appeared in the data as runner-ups for various reasons included the short story “The Tender Branch” (Gilchrist-Young, 2011), the novel *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004), the film *Cold Mountain* (Berger et al., 2003), the short story works of Ron Rash (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e), and the Cherokee myths (Mooney, 1900).

Three students identified Arty in *My Old True Love* (Adams, 2004) as being the character that they could relate to most and, therefore, having the greatest impact on their
thinking about Appalachian people. Melissa most liked Granny from My Old True Love (Adams, 2004) because she reminded her of her own grandmother and seemed to be the wisest of all characters. Renee and Daniel favored strong characters and people who described spiritual connections to the land, such as the Cherokee people and House (2010). The student participants named a variety of themes, some of which overlapped, that impacted them in ways similar to the impact the characters had on their thinking. These themes included music, place, sadness, darkness, environmentalism, belonging, love, religion, knowledge, and memory. Several of the students felt that the final essay on thin places (House, 2010) tied all of these themes together to create a nice summation and ending to the course.

Along with texts, characters, and themes, students also described assignments that impacted their thinking about Appalachian culture. All of the course assignments June included in the course were directly related to goals she had identified for the course. Daniel most liked the mapping assignment because it connected him to his home place, which aligned with June’s goal of connecting students first to their own places, then to the local, and, finally, to broader Appalachia. Two of the students, Aurora and Alex, cited the service-learning projects as having the most impact on their thinking, helping them to develop an appreciation for the local area and culture while also being able to identify problems and solutions within local context. This project fulfilled June’s goal of linking students to the local context and moving them out of their comfort zones to engage with local culture. Another option in place of the service learning project was to complete an environmental research paper. This was favored by Renee who enjoyed
synthesizing information learned in other classes with the important themes of the course. It also fulfilled June’s goal of developing students’ awareness of environmental issues afflicting the region. Four students reported most liking the commonplace book assignment because it allowed them to connect to the local community and nature through creative means and to include items that were important to them or reflected their identities. Two students also named the class discussions as having a great impact on their thinking throughout the course.

**How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?** This section details how the instructor’s thinking impacted course structure and content. First, June’s thinking and approach to teaching the course was informed by bioregionalism and the importance of ecocriticism. She also held the belief that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching Appalachian Studies courses was a necessity and inherent to the field. She prioritized the inclusion of traditionally marginalized texts and voices, which she believed was particularly important in Appalachia due to its history of marginalization. Lastly, June had a developed understanding of the history of outsider abuses in Appalachia which lead her to decenter her authority as the teacher based on her outsider status. June’s approach to teaching aligns well with the literature on critical pedagogy and the other theoretical and contextual frameworks presented in this research. However, it is important to note that this was her own pre-established mode of teaching and that she was not prompted during any part of the study to answer questions in a particular way or to adapt her teaching practices or approach to the course.
June’s selection of course materials and approach to teaching the class was informed by the book *The Bioregional Imagination: Literature, Ecology and Place* (Lynch et al., 2012). June believed her students lacked knowledge and awareness of environmental issues facing Appalachia, as well as the world, and felt it was her obligation to share with her students information about those environmental issues. Thus, June chose multiple texts based on their eco-critical value. Environmental issues in Appalachia were an important theme in the course and were presented in works by Wendell Berry (1995, 2002), Ron Rash (2008), and Silas House (2010), as well as the documentary *Kilowatt Ours* (Barrie, 2008). June described an understanding of environmental issues as necessary to understanding modern Appalachia. Several students reported being positively impacted by the inclusion of environmental themes in the course.

June also described adopting an interdisciplinary approach she felt was required to properly teach any type of Appalachian Studies course. Therefore, she felt it was important to include different types of texts which represented different disciplines in honor of the interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving that defines Appalachian Studies, such as photography, music, and Cherokee art. She felt it was especially important to include texts that traditionally have been marginalized by mainstream culture as inferior or less important because they did not align with New York publishing house standards. In understanding the historical stereotyping and marginalization of Appalachia and Appalachian people by outsiders, June recognized the importance of including the Cherokee and Affrilachian experiences. She also realized the necessity of
including text-types traditional to Appalachian culture that have been categorized as inferior by mainstream publishers, such as oral histories and folk music.

June also recognized herself as an outsider of Appalachian culture and, therefore, felt she did not have the authority to make suggestions for improvement or to bequeath knowledge to students in her Appalachian literature courses. This was yet another reason June felt it was important to de-center her authority as the instructor and to emphasize student voices. Her identity as an outsider and her understanding of the historical context of Appalachia lead June to develop a participatory, dialogue-based course structure in which students’ voices were honored and in which students were co-creators of knowledge and authors of their own narratives. With regards to Appalachia, June also hesitated to define it too tightly, avoiding application of a metanarrative and embracing a complex understanding of Appalachia as a large region characterized by diversity. She stated she was comfortable viewing it as mountainous and Upper South, but otherwise felt it was more important to question who was defining the region in a specific manner and why. She also focused on cultural assets of the region, such as family-orientation, creativity, and connection to place.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is presented against the backdrop of the relevant literature synthesized in two sections as representing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks respectively.

Appalachian studies and critical theory. The data aligned with Appalachian Studies and Critical Theory literature in three ways: subversion of the dominant, Hillbilly
metanarrative, social transformation, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. Historically, Appalachian culture has been defined, presented, and marginalized by cultural outsiders as the stereotypically barbaric hillbilly or the complacent yeomen. Regional diversity is often overlooked and the stereotypes of the culture are presented as metanarratives for all people calling the region home. When applied as a metanarrative, such stereotypes perpetuate cultural, political, and economic marginalization of Appalachian people. (Banks et al., 1993; Billings & Blee, 2000; Duncan, 1992).

June carefully attended to her identity as an outsider, hesitating to offer suggestions or definitions of the region. Instead, she chose to focus on the assets of the culture and to examine the diversity of the region. She also felt that it was important to incorporate a variety of texts, especially those traditionally marginalized like Appalachian folk music or Cherokee stories. This allowed the marginalized voices of Appalachia to present an alternative history and identity for the region and engaged students in examining structural inequalities and developing a new, more complex consciousness in line with the teachings of critical pedagogy (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003).

**Subversion of the dominant, Hillbilly metanarrative.** When students’ culture becomes marginalized within the school or classroom, they are often perceived as being less academically capable. Marginalization of students in the classroom or learning institution results in negative consequences for both the individual and the community, such as increased unemployment rates. Scholars argue that the negative stereotyping of Appalachian culture has led to marginalization of the people. The marginalization of
Appalachian people causes Appalachian students to internalize feelings of inadequacy when compared to their contemporaries and, therefore, negatively impacts college matriculation rates within the region (Blaustein, 1990; Chambers & McCready, 2011; Chenoweth & Galliher, 2004; Galliher, 2011).

Both students, Melissa and Morgan, who identified as Appalachian before and after the course described the course as helping them develop cultural pride. Morgan described reflecting inward to define for herself what it meant to be Appalachian, connecting to the tenets of critical pedagogy in which the traditionally marginalized write their own narrative of identity and being (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Likewise, Morgan challenged stereotypical portrayals of Appalachian people, saying “We’re not hillbillies and rednecks.” This challenged the metanarrative applied by mainstream culture and subverts the cultural marginalization of Appalachian students within the classroom pointed to by Blaustein (1990) and Chenoweth and Galliher (2004). Critical pedagogues engage in education and research from the marginal perspective to subvert dominant ideologies that propagate social, political, and economic inequality (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Glesne, 2011; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.; Thomas, 1993; Wink, 2005).

Five of the six student participants challenged negative stereotypes of Appalachian culture at the end of the course, suggesting again that the course and instructor’s practices aligned with critical pedagogy in which members of the dominant culture are also encouraged to analyze their own privilege and the disadvantage dealt to members of marginal populations (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003). Thus, critical pedagogy
is a process of learning, relearning, and unlearning that recognizes both students and teachers as co-creators of knowledge (Freire, 1998; Wink, 2005). June felt it was important to de-center her authority as the instructor to honor the diverse voices of students enrolled in the class and because, as a cultural outsider, she did not feel she had the authority to “bequeath knowledge” to students about Appalachia in a banking-style teaching approach. She believed that the students had as much to teach about Appalachia and their home places as she did. This was evident in student responses regarding class discussions that brought together diverse voices to share both insider knowledge about Appalachia and information about other places that were home to students from outside the region.

**Social transformation.** Some scholars accept the notion that changing students’ perceptions, thinking, or ideological beliefs is a form of social transformation in itself that contributes to greater, sustained change as time progresses. (Carlson & Dimitriadis, 2003; Darder, 1995; Freire Project Critical Pedagogy, n.d.). Appalachian Studies as an academic field is an interdisciplinary approach that involves multiple stakeholders in addressing the concerns of the region through social action, many of which are focused on environmental issues (Banks et al., 1993).

**Interdisciplinary problem-solving.** June adopted the interdisciplinary approach that is native to Appalachian Studies when teaching the course, engaging in ecocriticism, exploration of historical contexts, and examination of diverse cultures and art within the region. As a result, five of the six students reported that their thinking about Appalachia had been positively impacted through their participation in the course. Two students
described holding stereotypical, preconceived notions prior to engaging in the course which were ultimately discarded in favor of a more complex understanding of Appalachia and its culture resulting from their participation in the course. Similarly, all of the participants described being impacted by the exploration of environmental issues in the class and two of those students participated in service-learning activities to address environmental problems and poverty within the local region. June described one of her course goals as a heightened awareness of environmental problems afflicting Appalachia.

**Culturally-relevant pedagogy, place-based education, and leadership.**
Similar to Appalachian Studies and critical theory, the data aligned with literature related to culturally-relevant pedagogy, place-based education and leadership in four ways: empowerment of marginalized people and development of community relationships, transmission of culture through art and literature, incorporation of students’ realities and context of place, and attention to real-world problems.

**Empowerment of marginalized people and development of community relationships.** Critical educators seeking to enhance educational equity and equality must appreciate and incorporate the knowledge and strengths of all students, families, and community members (Diez et al., 2012; Epstein, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Scholars suggest educators should actively engage students of diverse backgrounds to facilitate empowerment and voice of marginalized students, encouraging ownership and self-direction of their learning (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Burbank & Hunter, 2008; Diez et al., 2012; Epstein, 2011; Haeseler, 2011; Sabia, 2011). June engaged in this type of teaching by creating a participatory, student-centered, discussion-based learning environment in
which all students were encouraged to participate and equally respected and valued. Students participating in the study described the benefits of incorporating diverse voices and epistemologies into the course dialogue.

*Transmission of culture through art and literature.* Some scholars argue that literature and arts transmit culture from one generation to the next by helping us make meaning of lived experiences and can help develop cultural pride among community members (Vendler, 2010; Waitt, 2006). Historically, the arts, including literature, have been included in various social movements addressing problems throughout the region. Effective forms of resistance and community organizing in some Appalachian communities often involved cultural expression in the forms of dance, storytelling, drama, and music (Carawan & Carawan, 1993; Foster, 1993). Incorporating an assortment of texts important to Appalachian culture, such as oral histories, music, and poetry allowed June to introduce Appalachian culture as communicated by cultural insiders. Melissa reported developing a sense of pride in her Appalachian heritage after taking the course due to the artistry and creativity prevalent in the region.

*Incorporation of students’ realities and context of place.* Place-based education (PBE) is a type of culturally-relevant pedagogy often referred to as a critical pedagogy of place (Azano, 2014; Baquette, 2014; Johnson et al., 2009). PBE incorporates students’ realities and context of place into the learning environment to make learning meaningful and to help students develop deeper relationships with their surroundings. (Ajayi, 2014; Azano, 2014; Bartsch, 2008; Estey, 2014; Evans & Kilinc, 2013; Johnson et al., 2009; Sorenson, 2008). Developing a curriculum that includes local culture, place, and
knowledge and values diversity among students creates opportunities for critical thinking and civic engagement. Such opportunities result in complex understandings of diversity, stereotypes, and cultural norms. Learning experiences are transformational, solve real-world problems, and mediate marginalization (Ajayi, 2014; Azano, 2014; Baquette, 2014; Barnhardt, 2008; Estey 2014).

Attention to real-world problems. June’s course was a course on literature of place, with place being Appalachia. June’s goal was first to link the diverse group of students enrolled in the course to their own places through a mapping activity, which Daniel stated was his favorite because it connected him to his home. After connecting to their own place, June assigned the students to explore issues within the local context by completing a service-learning project that addressed a local problem such as river pollution or poverty. Participating in civic engagement addressed real-world local problems. Students also had the choice of writing a research paper related to environmental concerns in the local area and greater Appalachian region to fulfill the requirements of the second assignment. Renee appreciated the environmental paper because it allowed her to incorporate knowledge she had gained in other courses into her work. June also assigned students to complete a commonplace book, which was favored by three of the participants and required students to explore the local community and natural surroundings. Besides connecting students to the local environment, one goal of this assignment was to develop relationships with the community and its members marginalized outside the university, thereby mediating the isolation of the university and outside community. Similarly, June used texts from the immediate area and broader
Appalachia, which demonstrated the diversity of the region and reduced marginalization by challenging Appalachian metanarratives. The texts also served to engage students with literature relevant to their lived experiences and the local context.

**Implications and Recommendations**

The purpose of formative evaluation research is not only to provide the instructor with feedback for course improvement, but also to identify best practices and lessons learned that may be applicable in similar contexts. In this study, I identified the impacts a course on Appalachian literature had on student perceptions of the culture, which teaching practices and components were impactful, and how the instructor’s thinking informed her curricular choices. This adds to the larger body of research related to Culturally-Relevant Pedagogy, Place-Based Education, and Appalachian Studies by providing suggestions for successfully teaching similar courses and meeting goals related to developing appreciation for Appalachian culture.

In describing effective leadership for critical pedagogy, which includes culturally-relevant pedagogy and place-based education models, scholars agree that educational leaders must develop a broad definition of assets, incorporate local culture, place, and knowledge into the learning process, and work to develop sustainability and stakeholder capacity. This type of educational leader approaches the curriculum from a perspective that values interdisciplinary, multidimensional, and multimodal learning that is contextualized by time, place, and the individual. Likewise, the culturally-relevant leader places value on diversity, equity, and social justice and understands the relationship to
educational approaches (Davis & McCarther, 2015; Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Horsford et al., 2011; Johnson & Reynolds, 2011; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

In this study, the data mirrored the suggestions for culturally-relevant educational leadership and are posited here in support of the implications and recommendations developed from the research.

**Student-centered teaching and learning.** Student-centered teaching and learning places students’ voices and epistemologies at the center of the learning process. It is characterized by:

1. A participatory, discussion-based structure in which all student voices and ways of knowing are legitimized, valued, respected, and encouraged. Students are the driving force and co-creators of knowledge. June encouraged the participation of all students in the ongoing critical discussion generated by the class.

2. The de-centering of teacher authority in which the teacher recognizes the value of learning from students and understands their role as a co-creator of knowledge *with* students rather than a bequeather of knowledge *to* students. June recognized herself as an outsider of the culture and also felt that it was important to elevate students’ voices and knowledge.

**Appreciation of diversity.** Culturally-relevant educational leaders appreciate a broad definition of diversity and seek to incorporate it into learning experiences that subvert metanarratives defined by the dominant culture resulting in social, political, and economic marginalization.
1. Culturally-relevant leaders appreciate the diversity of students and the rich contribution they make to the learning process. June encouraged participation of all students in the course dialogue, respecting and valuing the input of each student.

2. Culturally-relevant leaders mindfully incorporate diverse texts into the curriculum so as not to perpetuate marginalization of texts considered inferior by dominant cultural norms and to emphasize the voice and narrative of the marginalized. June included a variety of texts outside dominant cultural norms alongside those that align with dominant cultural norms.

3. Culturally-relevant leaders seek to illuminate the diversity among and within places, be it cultural, environmental, or historical, etc., avoiding the application of metanarratives to describe the experience of all peoples inhabiting a place. June described Appalachia as being home to diverse peoples, including rural and urban spaces, and having different histories while still sharing some similarities throughout the region and with other places.

Subversion of marginalization. Culturally-relevant leaders, as critical pedagogues, seek to subvert marginalization that has been propagated through the promotion of dominant cultural norms. The goal of such work is to enhance equity and social justice by raising consciousness among learners. Subversion of marginalization can be accomplished in the classroom by:

1. Including portrayals of broad diversity within the curriculum, as stated in the previous section. Within the study, the instructor incorporated materials
portraying different ethnic groups, used diverse texts, and encouraged the participation of diverse learners.

2. Challenging stereotypes and metanarratives through the inclusion and valuing of diversity, critical thinking, civic engagement, and extended discourse within the curriculum. The incorporation of Affrilachian (Walker, 2000) and Cherokee texts (Mooney, 1990; Owle, 1998), ongoing critical discussions, and service-learning projects challenged the White Hillbilly metanarrative often applied to people of the Appalachian region.

Place as context for learning. Adopting a critical pedagogy of place provides context to otherwise decontextualized classroom learning. This is achieved by connecting students with their environment and culture. Place-based education (PBE) identifies problems to be addressed that enhance social justice within given contexts.

1. A connection to place subverts marginalization as seen when students in the study experienced local culture that is marginalized from the university community and developed a more complex understanding and appreciation for the local culture and problems within the area.

2. PBE addresses local problems and creates possibilities of future transformation, as evident when students in the study participated in service-learning projects that addressed both poverty- and environmentally-based problems in the area and expressed a heightened awareness of problems afflicting the broader region and social movements addressing those problems.
3. PBE makes learning meaningful and relevant to students by connecting them to their immediate surroundings and local culture and by incorporating students’ previously held knowledge into the learning process. Examples in the study include the service-learning projects and commonplace book, which connected students to their local environments and culture while providing opportunities for them to include items reflecting their own knowledge and identity, and the environmental research paper in which Renee was able to incorporate knowledge gained from other courses.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Similar studies should be conducted in similar contexts and account for differences among pedagogical approaches, student enrollment, and selection of course materials and assignments. Such studies may provide greater insight into the nature of place-based education and culturally-relevant pedagogies that inform leadership practices in different contexts and with different learners. Likewise, similar studies should be undertaken in other types of Appalachian Studies courses to assess the impacts such courses may have on learners’ perceptions of Appalachia and Appalachian culture.

Lengthening this study to revisit participants would be research-worthy. Member checking was limited to email correspondence with participants during the length of the course. The study was complicated by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data during different phases of the study. The quantitative data may be better explained through following up with participants in the future. In doing so, the study would be able to uncover what changes, if any, the instructor made after receiving feedback from me.
and what impacts those changes may have. Likewise, following up with the student participants to understand whether their perceptions have continued to change, remained static, or reverted across time would be important in understanding the long-term impacts of the course. Discovering whether or not any of the participants were involved in work that is transformative and problem-solving in the region would point to another aspect of an enduring critical pedagogy of place.

The students in this study were attending school in southern Appalachia and were diverse on many demographic measures. How would a similar course in central or northern Appalachia impact students’ perceptions? What would the data reveal if all participants in the study had been Appalachian, or non-Appalachian?
References


Appendix A: Instructor Interview Protocol

Research Question: How does the instructor’s thinking about Appalachian literature and culture inform instructional practices and choice of course materials?

1. Where are you from?
2. Do you consider yourself Appalachian?
3. Where did you attend college?
   i. Graduate school?
   ii. What did you study?
   iii. Why?
4. How long have you been teaching overall?
5. How did you come to WCU?
6. How long have you been teaching at WCU?
7. What courses do you teach at WCU?
8. Is your appointment tenured, full-time or part-time?
9. What courses do you teach?
10. What prompted you to teach Appalachian literature?
11. Have your teaching practices been impacted by any experiences over the years?
    i. If yes, please describe those experiences and how they impacted your teaching practices.
12. How do you conceptualize Appalachia?
13. What are your experiences with Appalachian stereotypes?
14. What do you describe as assets of Appalachia?
15. What improvements are needed in Appalachia?
16. Is the course under study a requirement for students for degree completion, or elective?
17. What are your goals for teaching Appalachian literature?
18. What practices do you believe are most important to include in an App Lit course?
    i. Materials?
    ii. Assignments?
19. In what ways do you think the course impacts students’ thinking about Appalachian culture?
Appendix B: Class Observation Protocol

Sensitizing Concepts:

Goals: “To develop an appreciation of the culture and diversity of art of the region.”

Processes: Teaching practices, dialogue, student-teacher/student-student interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Observational notes</th>
<th>Researcher’s reflective notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Description of  
  • physical environment  
  • social environment  
  • participants  
  Description of activities conducted  
  • types of learning activities  
  • teacher’s teaching style  
  • use of materials  
  • students’ responses  
  Description of social interactions  
  T – S  
  S – T  
  S - S | | Repetitive event/activity/issue  
  Emerging idea/issue/theme  
  Unique event/activity/issue |
Appendix C: Student Pre-Survey

Participant Identifier Code ____

Research Questions:

- Does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?
- What practices and components of the course do students identify as impactful?

1. Male or Female?
2. Age? ______
3. Where are you from?
4. Do you consider yourself Appalachian?
5. How long have you lived in Appalachia?
6. Are you a first generation college student? (One or both of your parents have less than a bachelor’s degree from college.)
7. What are your career aspirations?
8. What did your father do for work?
9. What did your mother do for work?

10. What prompted you to take this course?
11. What do you hope to gain from this course?
12. Which courses have you taken similar to this course?

13. What do you think of when you think of “Appalachian”?
14. What Appalachian stereotypes are you familiar with?
15. What have been your experiences with Appalachian stereotypes?
16. What are positive attributes of Appalachia?
17. What are negative attributes of Appalachia?
## Appendix D: Journal Prompt Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Provided to Students</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 8/26</td>
<td>What characters in the literature you’ve read so far have impacted your thinking about Appalachia and how have they impacted it?</td>
<td>Friday, 8/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 9/16</td>
<td>How have the settings in the literature informed your thinking about Appalachia?</td>
<td>Friday, 9/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 9/30</td>
<td>How have the plots in the literature explored impacted your thinking about Appalachia and Appalachian peoples?</td>
<td>Friday, 10/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 10/21</td>
<td>How has the word choice of different authors explored in the course impacted your thinking about Appalachia?</td>
<td>Friday, 10/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 11/11</td>
<td>Describe some of the themes explored using the literature and how they have impacted your thinking about Appalachia?</td>
<td>Friday, 11/15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Student Post-Survey

Research Questions:

- Does participation in an Appalachian Literature course impact student perceptions of the culture?
- What practices and components of the course do students identify as impactful?

1. Where are you from?
2. Do you consider yourself Appalachian?

3. What prompted you to take this course?
4. What did you gain from the course?
5. What assignments or readings or course meetings/activities did you find most beneficial?
6. What would make the course better?
7. Would you recommend the course?
   a. Why or why not?
8. Did your participation in the course change the way you think about Appalachia?
   a. How?
   b. What had the most impact on your thinking?
   c. Did the instructor play a role in impacting your thinking about Appalachia?
      i. How?
Appendix F: Student Interview Protocol

1. Which character(s) have impacted your thinking about Appalachia?
   a. How have they impacted your thinking?
   b. Why do these particular characters stand out to you?

2. Which setting(s) stands out to you the most?
   a. Why?
   b. How has that setting(s) impacted your thinking about Appalachia?

3. Which plot(s) did you find most engaging?
   a. Why did it stand out to you?
   b. How did it impact your thinking about Appalachia?

4. Which particular words grabbed your attention while reading the literature?
   a. How did those words impact your thinking about Appalachia?
   b. How did use of different dialect(s) in the literature impact your thinking?

5. Which themes stood out most to you in the literature?
   a. What made those themes stand out?
   b. How did those themes impact your thinking about Appalachia?
Appendix G: Ohio University Consent Form – Instructor Participant
Title of Research: College student perceptions of Appalachian culture and the influence of participation in an Appalachian Literature course
Researchers: Ashley B. Hopkins
You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study
The purpose of this study is to analyze whether participation in a course on Appalachian Literature has any impact on student perceptions of Appalachian culture and, if so, what those impacts are. Data collected for the study will also be used to determine teaching practices and course materials that are particularly beneficial to developing appreciation of Appalachian culture among college students. This study may be used by the instructor, instructors teaching similar courses, in similar settings or working with similar students, and educational policymakers and advocates of Appalachia and arts education to inform future practice and policy. More broadly, I is
interested in the potential impacts such curricula may have on the Appalachian region with respect to cultural and economic marginalization.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in person in an interview with I the semester prior to the course and allow I to conduct observations of course meetings with dates to be coordinated in advance. With consent of the student participants and following all applicable university, state and federal law, I will also collect from you copies of submitted student assignments and course grades.

The study will last through the end of the fall semester. However, even if you choose to participate, you may stop participating at any time. I will remind you of your participation rights on an ongoing basis throughout the study.

Risks and Discomforts

Some discomfort may result in discussing personal feelings, beliefs and Appalachian stereotypes and marginalization.

Benefits

This study may inform the practices of the course instructor or other college instructors and K-12 teachers working with similar students, in similar settings or with similar curricula. Educational administrators, policymakers and advocates for Appalachia, arts education and/or culturally-relevant pedagogy may use the study to inform decision-making about curriculum and policy.
You may use this study to inform future teaching practices and curriculum development and may also benefit from reflecting on personal beliefs, values and thinking about Appalachian culture.

**Confidentiality and Records**

Your study information will be kept confidential by maintaining all data on a password protected computer that only I will have access to. Data will be destroyed six months after the dissertation defense. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact *Ashley Hopkins, ag354609@ohio.edu, 614-607-4182 or Dr. Dwan Robinson, robinsd3@ohio.edu, 740-593-9453.*

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been
given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered

- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature_________________________________________ Date_______

Printed Name________________________________________ Version Date: 01/27/2013
Appendix H: Ohio University Consent Form – Student Participants

Title of Research: College student perceptions of Appalachian culture and the influence of participation in an Appalachian Literature course

Researchers: Ashley B. Hopkins

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze whether participation in a course on Appalachian Literature has any impact on student perceptions of Appalachian culture and, if so, what those impacts are. Data collected for the study will also be used to determine teaching practices and course materials that are particularly beneficial to developing appreciation of Appalachian culture among college students. This study may be used by the instructor, instructors teaching similar courses, in similar settings or working with similar students, and educational policymakers and advocates of Appalachia and arts education to inform future practice and policy. More broadly, I is
interested in the potential impacts such curricula may have on the Appalachian region with respect to cultural and economic marginalization.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to choose to complete two short, open-ended questionnaires at the beginning and ending of the course or participate in two focus group interviews after course meetings on selected days to be announced in advance. I will also ask your permission to review submitted assignments and course grades.

You should not participate in this study if you are either a minor or not enrolled in this course section of Appalachian Literature for the summer/fall semester 2013.

The study will last through the end of the current semester. However, even if you choose to participate, you may stop participating at any time. I will remind you of your participation rights on an ongoing basis throughout the study.

**Risks and Discomforts**

Some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing Appalachian stereotypes or personal feelings and beliefs related to the study.

**Benefits**

This study may inform the practices of the course instructor or other college instructors and K-12 teachers working with similar students, in similar settings or with similar curricula. Educational administrators, policymakers and advocates for Appalachia, arts education and/or culturally-relevant pedagogy may use the study to inform decision-making about curriculum and policy.
Students may also gain a deeper understanding of stereotypical thinking, Appalachian culture and heritage, and their personal values and beliefs as a result of the reflective questions in the study. Student participants will also be able to share their ideas and beliefs regarding course materials and assignments and teaching practices in an anonymous form that may guide the instructor’s future practices during the course and other courses taught by the instructor.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by maintaining all data on a password protected computer that only I will have access to. Data will be destroyed six months after the dissertation defense. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;

* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Ashley Hopkins, ag354609@ohio.edu, 614-607-4182 or Dr. Dwan Robinson, robinsd3@ohio.edu, 740-593-9453

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.
By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered

- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.

- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study

- you are 18 years of age or older

- your participation in this research is completely voluntary

- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature_____________________________________________ Date__________

Printed Name________________________________________ Version Date:

01/27/2013
Appendix I: Ohio University IRB Approval

The Influence of Participation in an Appalachian Literature Course on College Student Perceptions of Appalachian Culture

Primary Investigator: Ashley Brooke Hopkins

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Dwan V. Robinson

Department: Educational Studies

Jo Ellen Sherow, MPA
Office of Research Compliance

6-27-13

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.