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# Roots and Wings: Language Attitudes of Professional Women Native to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina

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ROOTS AND WINGS: LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF PROFESSIONAL WOMEN  
NATIVE TO THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH CAROLINA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Kristina Holland McBride

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2006

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Title: Roots and Wings: Language Attitudes of Professional Women Native to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina

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Many professional Appalachian women have built their careers in employment environments which expect the language of the academy—Standard American English (SAE). This expectation, along with societal beliefs that Appalachian English (AE), the native vernacular of these women, is an inferior language variety, has led many women to balance the two language varieties through bidialectism. This qualitative study explored the language attitudes of twelve professional Appalachian women, seeking a better understanding of their experiences and attitudes toward this bidialectism.

Initial data collection included writing samples from each participant. These essays allowed the participants to share their views of their identity prior to the interviewing process. Three individual interviews were then held with each participant, focusing on the participants' language history, their language experiences in the workplace, and their attitudes toward both SAE and AE. Following the series of individual interviews, a focus group met for a final discussion where six of the participants elaborated on their stories as they shared them with each other.

Analysis of the collected data led to the following findings: participants believe that SAE holds professional promise, and they have made efforts to

standardize their speech; participants take pride in their native variety and still exhibit, to varying degrees, linguistic characteristics of their vernacular; participants recognize AE as an integral part of their heritage and identity, yet value the role SAE has played in their lives; finally, many participants exhibit ambivalence about both SAE and AE. Participants reported that they were led to bidialectism through negative experiences which typically occurred during their first year in undergraduate school; most participants have experienced negative work experience in relation to their native vernacular, leaving them to perpetually strive for more standardization as their careers develop; the participants believe that bidialectism to varying degrees is a necessity in order to balance their membership in the two speech communities. These findings suggest that American society and especially the post-secondary academic community needs to recognize the valuable role the vernacular plays in the role of the individual as it strives to be inclusive and to embody diversity.

## DEDICATION

For Palmer,

You were the inspiration for my study. During this process, you taught me the true meaning of the word sacrifice. Since you were six, you have slept with me on inflatable mattresses in hot summer rentals without air conditioning. You have traveled many hours in the back of my car and slept in strange motels en route to and from campus. You have packed your stuffed animals and your baby dolls too many times, eaten at questionable restaurants too often and longed for carefree time with me every day. Now, at eleven, you are beginning to understand the end is here. For you, the sacrifice has been the greatest, and I can only repay you by seeing that your dream to dance comes true.

Mom

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I love the African proverb: *it takes a village*. It reminds me of the communal spirit in which all of my academic mentors, family and friends came together to help make my dreams possible.

First, I want to thank Jeannine Fontaine, my director, for her guidance and loving support during this process. Her academic advice was always sound, her criticism always kind and her belief in my success steady. Compassionate and supportive, Jeannine understood my role as mother, daughter, and wife, and her understanding made this project possible during the most difficult life circumstances. For her, I will be forever grateful.

I also want to thank Gian Pagnucci and Mary Jalongo, my readers, for their time, guidance and understanding. Their investment in my success will be appreciated for years to come, not only by me, but by my family and my students.

I have cried few times at work over the course of my 20 years at Brevard College, but for those few moments of weakness over the past two years when I believed life was cruel and I didn't have the strength to succeed, I thank Betsy Burrows and Pat Shores for helping me pick up the broken pieces of my life and move forward. Their friendship is a gift few ever find. They have taught me the true meaning of grace under pressure during my years at Brevard, and for that, I am thankful.

My husband has slept alone too many nights and survived on *Chef Boyardee* Spaghetti and Meatballs far too long, and he still manages to love me somehow, and for that, I am grateful. My mother-in-law traveled to Pennsylvania

many times to take care of my daughter as did my parents and my daughter's nanny, Kendra Jones. Without them, I could not have completed my residency requirement. Their contribution certainly doesn't go unnoticed, yet I can never adequately repay them.

My immediate family has been a constant reserve of strength and support since I entered undergraduate school at eighteen. My mother taught me to dream big; my sister is my rock. Most importantly to my father, who built his family around women, my mother, my sister and me, thanks for making us believe that women can achieve anything!

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## PROLOGUE

*Roots*

“School didn’t take up ‘til 9 o’clock when I was a young’ n,” Granny announced with authority. I paused, remembering my high school days.

“Really? It took up about 8:30 when I was in high school.”

“Well, 8 o’clock is just way too early for school to take up. It’s just too hard on the young’ ns.”

My daughter looked up at me, wide-eyed with curiosity and asked, “What does *took up* mean, Mom?”

With her question, I realized I slip into speaking Appalachian English, my native variety, as easily as I slip into my favorite winter coat and bask in its warmth. It is the language of my ancestors, the people who have loved me, supported me, taught me to love Appalachia while also teaching me to love and appreciate the world outside of my Appalachian home. All of my family speaks Appalachian English, but each of us with our individual nuances, and with each less-isolated generation, our native tongue more closely resembles the Standard American English myth. What I realized, during this simple morning chat with my husband’s grandmother, is that I will never leave my native variety behind. It comforts me. It speaks to my soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

I nervously awaited my religion professor’s comments. He had asked me to stay after class, and I couldn’t imagine what I had possibly done wrong. I wasn’t just a good student, I was a straight-A, never give the professor any

trouble kind of student.

I sat in the front row and waited as he began to speak.

“You know, I love your accent. There’s absolutely nothing like it. I could sit back and listen to you talk all day. But, everyone is not going to find the way you speak as endearing as I do. You’ll never be taken seriously unless you learn to speak without it. I suggest when you transfer to Wake Forest that you take some speech classes to help you.”

He had seen me through the difficult first two years at Brevard College. A first-generation college student, I had taken all of his advice during those two years. Never wavering in his support, never questioning my ability to succeed, he always had my best interest at heart. I knew this conversation must have been difficult for him, letting me know I didn’t measure up in some way to societal expectations. Yet, he had the courage to tell me what others were thinking.

\* \* \* \* \*

I left my Appalachian roots and drove onto the campus of Wake Forest. I learned immediately that stereotypical images of Appalachia were historically embedded in the Wake Forest culture. I was not only ostracized in my dorm, I was also criticized openly by my professors. Only one professor thought Appalachian English was something to be celebrated. I met him on the first day of class, and he boasted of his rural roots.

“If anyone can tell me the meaning of *stob* or *poke*, I’ll excuse you for the day.”

I knew. Of course, I knew. A *stob* is a fence post, and a *poke* is a paper

bag. Granddaddy never said post or bag, and I never questioned why. I could sit and listen to Granddaddy for hours. He would tell stories of growing up in Macon County, North Carolina, and how he moved to Walla Walla, Washington, as a young man, only to return to his Appalachian roots. But at that moment, I denied knowing. I refused to raise my hand and acknowledge my own heritage. It was too embarrassing, too painful.

I sighed in relief as I walked back to the dorm among the laughter of my peers as they belittled the professor and questioned his ability to teach us anything.

I majored in Speech Communications.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since graduating from Wake Forest, I've made a conscious decision not to intentionally reduce my accent. My long *i*'s and extra syllables keep me grounded in my heritage. At home, with my friends and family, I slip easily into my native variety as well. In the summer, I love to go a-swimming to find relief from the sultry Southern sun. Appalachian English feels comfortable. It is a reflection of my identity.

On any given Sunday afternoon, you may find me relaxing in my Appalachian home, enjoying the stories of my family and friends while I bask in my native variety. However, when I am teaching, I only speak with my standardized version of English. As an English professor at my alma mater Brevard College, located in my hometown of Brevard, North Carolina, I am expected to use Standard American English. I have learned to shift from

Appalachian English to Standard American English with ease. Ultimately, this concept is the foundation of my teaching pedagogy—trying to assist students in their language choices—always remembering the role both their heritage and their goals play in their language use. My ability to shift allows me to navigate two of the most important priorities of my life—my family and my career. It is *my* answer, not *the* answer. People must make their own language choices; as educators, we can only hope to help them develop the awareness that underlies those choices.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: MOTIVATION, FRAMEWORK AND OVERVIEW

*There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other, wings.* –Hodding Carter, Jr.

Carter's comment on heritage, cited above, seemed to resonate with my feelings as I began writing my dissertation prologue. I was sitting in the bleachers watching my daughter play basketball and carefully balancing my laptop on my knees. That morning I had realized that, at 9, she was already beginning to shift her speech, in patterns that persist today. When she is with adults, and particularly when she visits me at the college, she speaks her standardized form of English. In contrast, with her peers, she shifts into her native variety, using the a-prefixing and adding such words to her vocabulary as *ain't* and *ya'll*. All day I had thought about the life-long language journey we each take and the power of this journey. Already, I can easily see the need my daughter and I both share—to be included in at least two quite distinct social groups.

I had often wondered about the language journeys of other professional Appalachian women, much like myself, and I wanted to hear their stories. In order to explore others' language journeys, I studied the experiences of twelve women native to the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains, primarily using interviews to learn about their attitudes and views of their linguistic experiences.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the workplace and home life experiences of professional women native to the Blue Ridge Mountains, as seen through the women's own narratives, and the effect, if any, of these life experiences on their language attitudes. In particular, I wanted to focus on the following questions:

### Research Questions

1. What language attitudes, if any, motivate professional women from Appalachia to balance two language varieties (AE and SAE)? What attitudes do they, themselves, hold toward these two varieties?
2. What types of struggles, based upon their membership within two different speech communities, do these women feel they experience in such life events as job searches, and daily encounters with co-workers, employers, or others who play important roles in their lives?
3. What pivotal events in their lives are the cognitive basis for their language attitudes, making them conscious of their language use and aware of the possible need to balance AE and SAE?
4. What perceptions do these women hold in regard to the place of bidialectism in the professional world?
5. How do these women cope with the linguistic challenges of their lives?

### Definition of Language Attitudes

For the purposes of this current study, the term 'language attitudes' was defined as having a tripartite structure. Edwards (1982), among others, defines language attitudes as having cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Working with this definition, I view language attitudes as having the following three aspects:

1. Language attitudes are cognitive in that they comprise and contain beliefs about the world (*for example, learning SAE will help me become more successful in the professional world.*)
2. Language attitudes are affective in that they evoke feelings about an attitude object (*for example, showing enthusiasm about hearing stories told in one's native variety*).
3. Language attitudes are behavioral in that they are systematically linked to behavior (*for example, learning SAE*).

This definition was a constant foundation for the current study, assisted in recognizing language attitudes in the participants' narrative, and served as a basis for analyzing the data.

### Conceptual Framework

When my daughter and I use our informal vernacular speech to be accepted by native members of our community, Patrick (2003) and others would say that we are motivated by 'covert prestige,' which involves "[adopting] forms used by a low prestige group, in order to mark solidarity with that group" (¶ 4). But we also show the effects of 'overt prestige' when interacting with others in the academic environment of the college community "adopting linguistic forms that are used by a high prestige group in order to claim inclusion" (Patrick, 2003, ¶ 4). Somehow we feel we are members of both speech communities; yet this shift represents a clear conflict in our daily lives—a conflict we try to avoid by carefully navigating our language use.

My daughter and I are not alone. Often, native speakers of vernaculars, varieties considered nonstandard or non-mainstream, are pulled in these two competing directions. As Wolfram and Shilling-Estes (1998) point out, when

“faced with the dilemma of choosing between group solidarity and evaluation of social and educational stature by external groups of speakers, it is not uncommon for speakers of vernacular dialects to attempt a sort of dialect balancing act” (p. 34). This balancing act can be seen in many nonstandard speakers’ lives. Wolfram and Shilling-Estes go on to emphasize the importance of speech variety as a marker of social acceptance or rejection:

...native speakers of a vernacular dialect in East Tennessee who have moved away may feel constrained to shift to some degree back to the native dialect when visiting with family back home. If they fail to do so, not only will they fail to fit in with family members but their relatively standard patterns may even be interpreted as a kind of symbolic rejection of family ties. (p. 34)

Individuals must weigh the considerations of status and solidarity as they pertain to speech. Some speakers’ linguistic flexibility between two language varieties can be extraordinary. Again, citing Wolfram and Shilling-Estes, some “are amazingly adroit at balancing two dialects in order to live in two different worlds—the world of in-group identity and the world of mainstream social status. Others are not as successful in balancing their dialects and pay the social consequences” (p. 34). One of my friends, a female native to the area, once told me that she constantly feels the need to balance. Her family and childhood friends often make comments about her “getting’ above her raisin’,” yet while at work, as a high-ranking administrator in an area business, she often feels like a “token local.” She said once in frustration, “No matter how well I perform at work,

I'll always be viewed as the token, the one that hails from the poorest, most illiterate section of the country." Likewise, an economics professor at Brevard College once told me that during her graduate studies, she attended a conference in her home region of Eastern Tennessee. She returned to campus excited and wanted to share all of the wonderful things she had learned about the economic growth in the area. She asked one professor, "Do you know all the wonderful things that are going on in the mountains?" She was met with his sarcastic reply, "Oh, they are wearing shoes now?" This was quite painful to her, and she viewed it as an insult to her heritage. Later, while teaching economics at Notre Dame, she was met with the same type of demeaning behavior, this time from her students. During her first four semesters, the students laughed and sneered at her because of her accent. She, then, purposefully took on more SAE pronunciations in order to be taken seriously her remaining eight years at Notre Dame. These anecdotal stories are examples of how social and professional pressures keep these women consistently feeling the need to style shift.

This form of style shifting by monolingual individuals is a form of self-classification (Hudson 1996). Since society classifies its speakers according to their language use, individuals typically learn to shift their styles in order to be accepted by various groups of speakers. This process of shifting sometimes develops into what is known as 'bidialectism.' Speakers who are bidialectic have the ability to shift from one language variety (e.g. a vernacular) to another (e.g. a standardized version) with ease. Trudgill (1983 revised) recognized that different linguistic varieties will be employed by the same speaker in different situations

and for different purposes. Ferguson (1991, 1971 & 1959) purports that in extreme instances, where the nonstandard version is so uniquely different from the standard; the two varieties can function as two different languages. In these instances, a phenomenon called *diglossia* is in play. One component of diglossia is that speakers begin to perceive the standard version as a High variety that is the 'real' language and view their own vernacular as a Low variety that is 'incorrect' or degenerate. In fact, this kind of thinking permeates many speakers' views of the relative status of standard and vernacular, even in the many cases where no formal diglossic situation is present. For instance, in Labov's (1972a) study of the speakers native to Martha's Vineyard, Labov quotes one participant as saying, "I think perhaps we use [an] entirely different...type of English language...think differently here on the island...it's almost a separate language within the English language." This phenomenon of viewing the two language varieties as two different languages can become a perception for speakers of stigmatized vernaculars.

Language use has long been identified by sociolinguists as a method used by speakers to manipulate relationships and achieve goals. That is, to obtain power and influence, speakers will speak like those members of a speech community that the speakers perceive as holding power and influence. For instance, Hudson (1996) cites the commonly discussed phenomenon called *accommodation*, when he observes that "people who are socially similar...are more likely to feel socially close...to each other... accommodation theory says that the more you like a person...the more you want to be like them [sic]" (p.

236). This tendency is called *convergence*. Conversely, sociolinguists have also noted the opposite trend in *divergence*; that is, speakers who wish to distance themselves from one another socially will adopt speech forms that are maximally distinct. Researchers such as Childs and Mallison (2004), and Bucher and Strauss (1961) have conducted studies on accommodation theory which are relevant to this study, as the practice of bidialectism can be seen as a form of accommodation to insure acceptance in the workplace.

Acceptance, as defined by Hymes (1984), could be an indicator of why various groups of people adjust their speech forms in accordance with covert and overt prestige in different social contexts. The Appalachian English (AE) speaker may serve her professional social needs by shifting to 'overt' prestige forms when wishing to gain the benefits of the higher social groups. In contrast, the same AE speaker will best serve the equally important set of social needs while using 'covert' prestige forms in informal or intimate settings with family and friends. It is this balancing act in my own life that led me to this study. Through many one-on-one conversations with other professional Appalachian women, I have discovered that many of them feel their native linguistic variety is considered inferior, and linguistic discrimination still exists. Accordingly, it is my sense that, as speakers of this stigmatized variety, these women often seem to make great efforts to speak with a reduced accent in a more standardized variety than the AE they grew up speaking. I wanted to hear other women's stories, and to formally explore what was until now a set of anecdotal and intuitive ideas rooted in my personal experience.

By interviewing other women who grew up in these same mountains and listening to the stories of their language journeys and their possible linguistic balancing acts, I hoped to also bring the life experiences of this group of women into focus. In fact, beyond my sociolinguistic interest of exploring the social importance of the speech varieties involved, I was also driven by a second concern. Growing up in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, I learned to love the diversity of the land, its people and their ways. The strong women of these mountains are an integral part of the culture, although, historically, they have been given little to no voice. My hope was for the current study to serve as a vehicle used to express their experiences, make them visible and give them voice.

#### Background and Need for the Study

My interest in this topic led me to work with a fellow doctoral student at IUP during the summer of 2003. We conducted separate studies but found amazing similarities in our results. My study asked the question, "How has pronunciation affected Southerners in the workplace?" Results revealed that comments were made almost entirely by superiors who chose to present consequences to the speakers ("If you don't lose that accent, you'll never move up in this company"), or whose speech revealed negative critical assumptions ("Do all Southerners think as slowly as they talk?"). These results demonstrate the existence of a discriminatory phenomenon within the American culture--an unequal powerbase established upon the superficial notion that pronunciation is indicative of socioeconomic class and/or intelligence. I concluded that such a

misconception must account for the dominance of negative comments to employees by superiors and the absence of such comments by subordinates.

It seems almost innate in some ways that we are more attracted to some language varieties while we dislike or disfavor others. I, too, have personal preferences concerning the types of language varieties I enjoy hearing most. However, these preferences should never manifest themselves in comments or actions toward the speakers of various language varieties. When we, as individuals, begin to make derogatory comments, off color jokes or decisions based upon the language variety of an individual, we have in turn become discriminatory. That is, it is not surprising that some language varieties may be favored by different listeners, it is unfortunate when we act upon these preferences, or when we let them become linked to assumptions about a speaker's abilities, character or intelligence.

Beliefs about speakers, their membership in various groups, and their assumptions about attributes of those groups' members, are often based upon linguistic varieties, styles and forms. Tajfel (1981) argues that this type of categorization can serve several functions—one function is making a society orderly, manageable and predictable. Thus, members of a society can better understand their position within the society; this structuring, which includes social differentiation, represents a hierarchical organization which is detrimental to some individuals in the society.

Linguist Einar Haugen (1980) points out that any scorn for a language variety is a form of social discrimination because it represents scorn for the

speakers who use the variety. As others have pointed out, one cannot assume, as so many do, that personal or professional worth in America is linked to speaking SAE. As one linguist has pointed out, “the need for such mastery arises only out of the prejudices of the dominant speech community and not from any intrinsic shortcomings of nonstandard American dialects” (Daniels, 1998, p. 57).

Lippi-Green (1997) recognizes some extreme cases where these types of views have led to linguistic discrimination. In some instances, linguistic discrimination was used as a company’s reason to deny individual promotions. Particularly, in 1991, a meteorologist with exemplary qualifications, James Kahahua, was denied a promotion in radio broadcasting because the radio station that employed him believed that his Hawaiian-accented English would be an endorsement for ‘incorrect’ English (p. 31). More specific to this study’s focus is a story drawn from my own experience. A local resident of Brevard, North Carolina, Kathy Hoxit, was one of the 12 finalists on the reality show “America’s Next Top Model.” The town was buzzing as her appearance on national television had made quite a stir. Not a fan of reality television, I missed the program. However, I was stunned to receive many calls the next day from a variety of my students upset about the way she was treated on the show. Having just completed a unit on linguistic bias, my students, most of whom were standard speakers, had taken to heart the issue of linguistic bias and were keenly aware of its possible harmful effects. All of the students asserted that the young woman had been treated with linguistic discrimination because each time

she appeared on camera banjo music was played in the background feeding into the viewers' stereotypical images of the region. Then, during her interview segment, Kathy was told by supermodel Tyra Banks that she should 'lose that accent' if she planned on making it as a model. My students found this attitude reprehensible and were taken aback particularly because modeling is not a professional field which relies heavily on communications skills. On a quick Google search I found the official site for "America's Next Top Model" which states that "due to a weak photograph, the first girl eliminated was Kathy Hoxit, a self-described hillbilly from Brevard, North Carolina". There is even a link to Wikipedia's information on both *hillbilly* and *Brevard, North Carolina*. This recent situation made me painfully aware of the linguistic discrimination that Lippi-Green refers to in her text, and how this type of discrimination reaches many nonstandard speakers' lives.

These stories, events and concepts led me to wonder if some professional Appalachian women continually reach for that ultimate goal of bidialectism, aspiring to speak Standard American English (SAE), yet always seeming to fall short, finding themselves openly criticized in the workplace, since their pronunciation retains traces of their regional speech. I undertook this study with a desire to find more answers to this question.

In preparing for this study, I began by focusing on language attitudes, particularly attitudes toward Appalachian English, and I found that three main bodies of literature exist:

- Stigmatization of Appalachian English (Hazen and Fluharty 2001, among others),
- Linguistic analyses by researchers such as Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006 & 1998), Wolfram, Christian and Dube (1988), Wolfram and Christian (1976), Wolfram and Fasold (1974) among others,
- Anecdotal refutations of prejudicial attitudes, as found in such texts as *Confronting Appalachian stereotypes: Back talk from an American region* (Billings, Norman and Leford 1999).

The bulk of current sociolinguistic research exploring nonstandard varieties of English is dedicated to African American Vernacular English (AAVE), although a few studies briefly refer to Appalachian English (AE). The study most resembling my own is a 2002 Gaines Fellowship Senior Thesis by Rebecca Greene, a University of Kentucky student. Greene's thesis explores the sociolinguistic identity of 10 Eastern Kentuckians from her home county. She interviewed participants who were a variety of ages, both genders and either college-educated or college-bound. Because she felt linguistic discrimination in her own life, Greene, an AE speaker, assumed that she would find the same sense of discrimination felt among her participants. Surprisingly for Greene, her study did not illustrate this feeling among the participants, though Greene believes some participants may have been hesitant to be truly forthcoming. For instance, stories told by the participants exhibited what Greene believed to be linguistic discrimination; however, her participants tended to deny being made to feel

inferior or that the comments or actions of others reflected malice. Still, based on her overall results and the anecdotal content of her data, Greene argues that society needs to be aware of and to guard against stereotypes based on regional language varieties:

My findings include considerable evidence for the power of dialect stigmatization on the lives of individuals, but that stigma seems to be most influential on the respondents who had lived outside the region at some point in adulthood. Those who had not were less vocal about experiences surrounding their speech, probably because they were not confronted in their daily lives with outsiders' comments, especially in this relatively homogeneous community...Dialect awareness needs dire attention, to combat stereotypes and discrimination. (p. 18)

Greene suggests that some participants may have filtered their comments because of cultural expectations of politeness and personal reserve. Prior to conducting her study, Greene did not take into account various politeness theories such as those of Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978), and Lakoff (1973) which purport that politeness is a strategy used to defend face or to avoid conflict. Participants may have used these strategies when being interviewed by Greene. Greene's work was a tool in allowing me to better understand the importance of politeness theory within my own study. More studies are certainly needed, with special care for this factor of politeness, which may distort results, and I took great care in creating an environment where participants did not feel

the need to use these strategies. I wanted the participants to speak openly with me. The homogeneously-designed study and the conversational style of interviewing were both important factors in creating a research environment which lessened the need for participants to 'save face.'

In short, the studies conducted on linguistic discrimination based on the perspectives of AE speakers are both few and inconclusive. More studies are needed to explore the language attitudes of AE speakers, their exposure to linguistic discrimination and their attempts to be included in mainstream American society by learning and using Standard American English (SAE). More knowledge in this area may assist in combating linguistic discrimination, overcoming stereotypes associated with linguistic varieties, and teaching in ways that promote understanding of bidialectalism. This study is an attempt to help fill this gap in existing research.

#### Significance of this Study

This study is significant in several ways, in that it focuses on individuals marginalized by gender, by regional association and by linguistic features.

As pointed out in the previous section, the existing literature is sparse in this area. Local studies, such as Clark's (2005), Wallace's (2004), Dannenberg's (2001), and Sohn's (1999), and have great value in the local context as well as in the greater American society. For instance, Sohn's results found various benefits held by nontraditional women students in rural Kentucky upon reentry into academia. This knowledge is important in a variety of ways; for instance, it can aid educators in giving these women voice and knowledge about their own

experiences and data for future studies. The current study was designed, much like Sohn's, in the hope of gleaning new information that can assist teachers with pedagogical decisions related to teaching English.

More studies in this area will certainly give greater breadth to the field. Montgomery and Bailey (1986) use McDavid's article in the introduction of their text *Language Variety in the South*, which is almost entirely dedicated to the contrast between black and white language use in the South. The late Raven I. McDavid, Jr. called for further research in seven broad areas in which research on American English was lacking. One of these was "Needed Research in Southern Dialects," in which McDavid included the following areas: the speech of Southerners who had migrated north; the speech of relic areas such as the Delmarva Peninsula and Appalachia; and nonverbal communication. However, McDavid (1965) clearly noted that "as important as...the study of the speech of relic areas and especially Appalachia (is), the study of Negro speech is far more urgent for teaching programs in all parts of the United States" (McDavid, quoted in Montgomery & Bailey, 1986, p.4 ).

McDavid argues for this priority on the grounds that research concerning the language use of blacks and whites in the South could be relevant to cultural awareness throughout the United States, allowing for better pedagogical practices in the classroom and greater social understanding of the two races. This book is exemplary of most of the studies of Southern English. With its low African American population, Appalachia is rarely included in linguistic studies,

with the exception of studies of Texana, North Carolina (Childs & Mallinson 2004; Wolfram & Thomas 2002).

Moreover, studies which focus on individuals and their language attitudes about being AE speakers are lacking. Most studies on Appalachian English focus on analysis in one of three areas: the lexicon, grammar/syntax, or phonology (Wolfram & Christian 1975; Wolfram 1969; among others). Little has been done to explore the individual speakers and their perceptions of their own language use in various social contexts. Rarely do studies even mention possible consequences in the social and professional lives of AE speakers due to their vernacular.

I hope that this study of the language attitudes of professional women native to the Blue Ridge Mountains brings needed insights regarding linguistic discrimination of the stigmatized AE variation and the effects, both positive and negative, such discrimination may have on its speakers' attitudes and their language use. Through data collection and analysis, a better understanding was obtained of these women's experiences and their language attitudes. I did not attempt to make any generalizations from these women's experiences to those of larger populations; however, learning these women's stories and analyzing the commonality of their experience could help us better understand the phenomenon of linguistic discrimination as it relates to at least some speakers of Appalachian English (AE).

## Delimitations

This ethnographic, naturalistic study explored the language attitudes of twelve professional women native to the Blue Ridge Mountains, giving voice to these women of Appalachia, these well-educated, successful women, who face similar linguistic challenges. Six participants resided in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, while the remaining six were urban dwellers who have migrated outside the region. Therefore, the collected stories assisted in illustrating the lives and language use of women from differing geographical areas. Through individual and focus interviews, this qualitative study explored the language journeys of these women in hopes of determining the role linguistic discrimination may have played in their lives.

## Overview

The remainder of the study is organized into seven chapters, an epilogue, a bibliography and appendices in the following manner. Chapter Two provides an overview of the context of the study: the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains including sections on the land, the demographics, the people, the language, and the stereotypes. Chapter Three provides a review of the related literature dealing with language varieties, linguistic features of Appalachian English, linguistic discrimination, women's studies and narrative studies. Chapter Four explores the theoretical basis for the naturalistic research design and the methodology of the study. Participant selection, data collection and data analysis are described. An analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings are presented in Chapter Five. Chapter Six presents the study's conclusions, while Chapter Seven

presents implications and recommendations arising from this research. The study concludes with an epilogue, bibliography and appendices.

## CHAPTER 2

### CULTURAL CONTEXT: NORTH CAROLINA'S BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

This chapter delineates the physical, economic and social characteristics of the Blue Ridge Mountains the women in this study call home. Place is important to Appalachians, and their connection to the land is renowned. As a native to the area, I have always felt a close connection to the land. It is the stage and backdrop for both my life and the current study, and the cultural context provided in this chapter will serve as “the stage on which the [study’s participants] act out their lives...to see the contexts that shape their view of the world” (Neilsen, 1989, p. 2).

This chapter begins by describing the region’s land, and then continues by exploring other integral elements of the culture: the people and their traditions, the language, the stereotypes, and a final section dedicated to the women of Transylvania County, North Carolina. I know too well the myriad of elements that define this culture and the daunting task of creating a comprehensive cultural image. For the most part, we don’t consider ourselves Appalachians: we “identify [ourselves] by [the] hollow, town or state” we call home (Sohn, 2003, ¶ 2). To compound the issue, scholarly work describing the region is sparse. Although much has been written of Appalachia, the body of work mainly consists of literature by local colorists, informal studies of the area such as Cratis D. Williams’ work of the 1950s (Drake, 2001, p. 119), and outsiders’ perceptions found in newspapers and other forms of media. It is apparent that the “effort of

Appalachian scholarship to describe the region has been the slower [sic] of all genres to develop” (Drake, 2001, p. 129). My goal here is to create a comprehensive, yet compact, picture of Appalachia, more specifically, the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. By understanding the cultural context of the study, we can truly begin to learn more about both the region and the women participating in the current study who are native to the region, allowing this study to contribute to Appalachian scholarship in its effort to create an appropriate cultural image of these women’s specific locale.

### The Land

*The oldest mountain range in our nation, the Appalachians are like an old grandmother, comforting those within her arms* (Sohn, 2003, ¶ 3).

The Blue Ridge Mountains are one of three sub-regions of the Appalachian Mountains. This extremely long mountain crest “runs from just north of the Potomac River on the Virginia-Maryland border south all the way to northern Georgia” (Blue Ridge) and is home, provider, caretaker and inspiration to the people who live here. To better understand the Blue Ridge Mountains, particularly the small section within North Carolina that is the stage for the current study, it is best to begin with the larger Appalachian Mountain range where the Blue Ridge Mountains are found. The rugged ridges, steep peaks and cool mountain hollows are a driving force in the culture, as “the geography of Appalachia has impacted nearly every aspect of life” (Richards, 2004, p. 9). Home to 22.9 million people, the Appalachian range includes a vast area of mountains (US Census 2000a), the oldest in the world, extending some 900 miles from upstate New York to Alabama (Appalachian Region Commission).

This rugged range lies northeast-southwest and is some 200 miles wide.

These mountains are named for the Apalachee tribe, a tribe indigenous to Florida. The etymology of the name is uncertain, but many, including linguist Albert Gatschat, a specialist in Native American languages, believe the word derived from the Choctaw *A' palachi*, signifying 'people on the other side' (Access Genealogy). The name certainly seems appropriate to this region of the United States defined by its high mountains. It is commonly believed that these mountains, until recent years, served to isolate the region's people by acting as a natural border to the greater world. Some scholars, such as McNeil (1989) suggest that this isolation has been exaggerated in the common depictions of Appalachia. Still, even the name seems to suggest that the people of Appalachia seem to live "on the other side," a phrase that lays the foundation for images of "the other", which have ultimately become detrimental in promoting negative stereotypes of its people.

The boundaries of Appalachia are difficult to define. Still, cultural regionalists have "recognize(d) a distinctive 'upland' culture subregion dominated by the foothills and mountains of Appalachia based on its unique 'cultural' landscape and individuals' cultural 'self-consciousness'" (McCauley, 1995, p. 3). Political boundaries for the region were established in 1969 by the newly appointed Appalachian Region Association; these appear in Figure 1.

## THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN RANGE



Source: The Appalachian region defined. Center for Appalachian Studies and Services. 23 September 2005. <http://cass.etsu.edu/cass/apregon.html>

Figure 1. Appalachian region map.

This 210 county region has been designated by the Appalachian Region Commission as the “official” boundaries for the region; the designation was developed in 1969 to ensure financial assistance to the region with its economic struggles which affected education, medical and other opportunities for its inhabitants. However, people define themselves intuitively, and many inhabitants of this area do not think of themselves as Appalachians. I was five years old when this political distinction was made, and I have never heard my family refer to themselves as Appalachian. We are from the mountains; we are from the Blue Ridge; we live in “God’s Country.” We identify ourselves with our immediate surroundings, not the greater Appalachians found in most political discourse. In other areas of this broad map, the same seems to be true; people in much of Pennsylvania have a culture which, while distinctive, is very different from what is found in areas like the Blue Ridge Mountains. One graduate student I encountered while giving a preliminary presentation on this was surprised to be told that she belonged to a region called “Appalachia,” and found much of the region’s culture new and unfamiliar.

We love our mountains, as do thousands of tourists each year, many of whom choose to relocate to the area. Historian Margaret Brown, who specializes in Appalachian history, asserts, in her narrations of *Three Cultures of Appalachia* (Suttles 2002), that “it is possible for tourists to spend an entire week in the area having no contact with a native to the region.” This influx of others to the area reflects the attraction these mountains hold for newcomers, as well as for those of us born and raised here. A fellow graduate student at IUP, Ria Rankin-Brown,

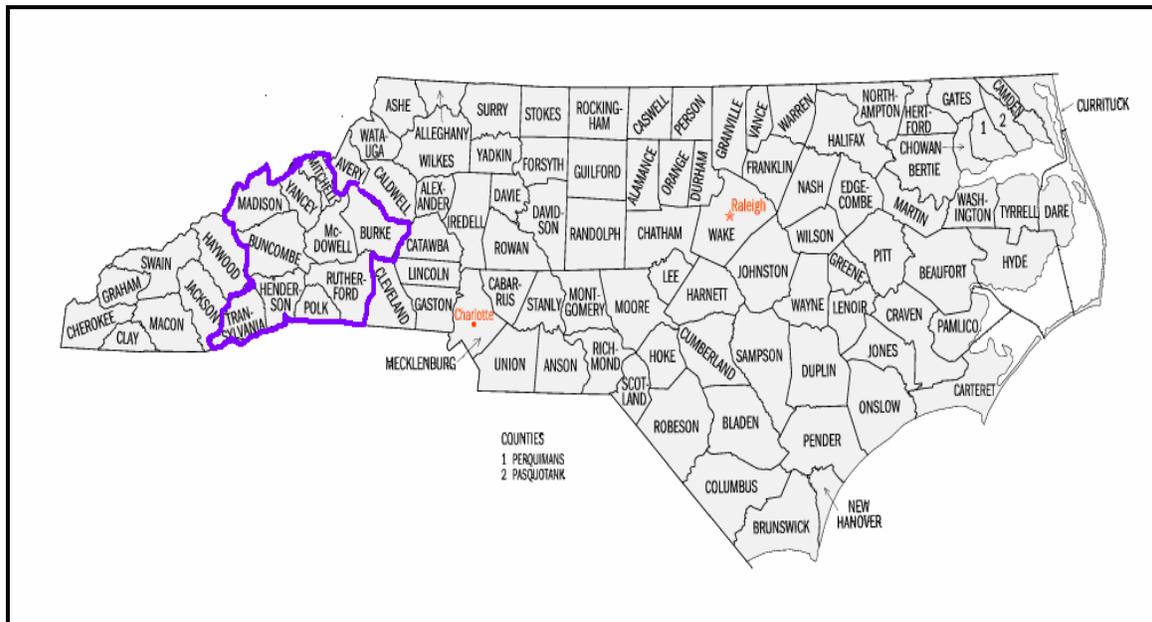
grew up in South Africa and has lived in various parts of the United States in the past decade. I asked her to describe for me her first impression of the mountains she and her husband visited three years ago:

The first time we drove through the Blue Ridge Mountains, it was morning and the sun was rising. My first impression of the mountains was [of] the mists and fog hovering protectively above and around the mountain, like a mother hen's wings. The mountains seemed as old as time, and the mists seemed to be hiding the secrets of the valleys; hiding the beauty, hiding other unspoken things, so that people would stay at a distance and simply enjoy them from afar, not coming too close (Rankin-Brown, personal communication January 18, 2006).

Rankin-Brown's description of the Blue Ridge Mountains, cited above, captures the essence of the mountains that are often referred to as America's first frontier. Her description echoes the words of Annie Dillard: "mountains are giant, restful, absorbent. You can heave your spirit into a mountain and the mountain will keep it, folded" (1975, p. 2). Dillard, a nature writer who lived just outside Roanoke, Virginia, called these mountains home, and for her, it seems the mountains did hold her secrets, unspoken things. To many who live here, the mountains are sacred.

This Southern Highland area of North Carolina includes ten mountain counties and is the native home to the participants (See Figure 2). There are two regions of the Appalachians: Northern and Southern. People who live in the Southern Highlands are seen as both 'Southern' and 'Appalachian'; thus, the study's participants will probably be influenced by both of these geographical classifications and the perceptions both hold for listeners.

## The Blue Ridge Mountain Counties of North Carolina



Source: North Carolina County Selection Map. US Census Bureau.  
5 January 2005. [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/north\\_carolina\\_map.html](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/maps/north_carolina_map.html)

Figure 2. The Blue Ridge Counties of North Carolina.

Mountains, rising more than 6000 feet in some areas, tower over the foothill region of the state, as the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina are located just west of the state's foothill region. As home to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River at 6684 feet (Wikipedia), the Blue Ridge creates an eastern boundary that is "as imposing as anything in North America east of the Rocky Mountains" (Williams, 2002, p. 15). The Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina begin the steep incline to the vast Appalachian Mountains as people travel from the state's foothills. Historically, the mountains served as a barrier between its inhabitants and mainstream America. The isolation so often associated with the Appalachian Mountains has certainly been a factor in the lives of the participants in this study. However, with easy access to Asheville, the participants have experienced less isolation than people living in more remote areas of Appalachia, and certainly less than is historically attributed to the region as a whole.

The area is rich with history and tourist attractions such as the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina, and the Blue Ridge Parkway, which begins in Western North Carolina. Other attractions include Pisgah National Forest, which spans several counties and serves as playground for both natives and many tourists. There has been a major turn in the economy of this area, which will be discussed in more detail in the following section, but it is important to note here that the focus on the economy has moved from the area's agriculture roots; today, most people do not live off the land, but rely on its attraction to tourists for

economic survival. This has been emotionally devastating to many natives, who hold tight to the land and its historical value to us as a culture.

To the local people, the land is always an important element of their lives. Ask a native Blue Ridge inhabitant about home, and almost without fail, the answer will be steeped in connections to the land. This idea of connection to the land is reflected in the words of Barbara Miller, a native to the area: "I am here. I belong here. I don't think I would feel that way if I had grown up somewhere else....it's the place" (Miller as told to Hopkins, n.d.). The participants have spent their childhoods in homes with pristine mountain views, and those still living here may enjoy seeing the winter's breathtaking snow-covered mountaintops and soaking their feet in the summer's cool mountain streams. It seems only natural that the women in the current study would have a strong connection to this place they all, in some way, call home.

### The Demographics

It is important to note that, although the initial research model for the current study was designed to include participants from a nine-county region of Western North Carolina to be identified through snowball sampling described in chapter four, all of the participants have some connection to Transylvania County, and this connection is discussed in detail in chapter five. In order for readers to better understand the study's participants and the cultural context of the current study, this section on demographics, and the remaining sections discussing the people, the language, the stereotypes and the women of

Transylvania, will focus on the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina but with particular care given to Transylvania County.

### *Education*

*The region's educational attainment levels have improved sharply since 1960. In 1990, for the first time, the share of people aged 18 to 24 with 12 or more years of schooling was slightly higher in Appalachia (77 percent) than in the U.S. (76 percent) (Appalachian Region Commission).*

Although many have an image of Appalachia as home to only poor, rural, uneducated people, US Census (2000a) data reveals diverse educational levels within the studied counties (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Educational Comparisons of 10 Studied Counties to State and National Averages*

<b>Counties</b>	<b>High School Graduates Percent of persons age 25+, 2000</b>	<b>Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons 25+, 2000</b>
Buncombe	81.9	25.3
Burke	67.6	12.8
Henderson	83.2	24.1
Madison	68.3	16.1
McDowell	70.2	9.0
Mitchell	68.6	12.2
Polk	80.6	25.7
Rutherford	70.4	12.5
Transylvania	85.5	23.7
Yancey	71.1	13.1
Ten County Average	74.7	17.4
North Carolina	78.1	22.5
United States	80.4	24.4

This most current census information exhibits an inequity in education levels among the counties. My home county, Transylvania, is far above the state average in the number of high school graduates, and is on a par with other areas in terms of the number of bachelor's degrees and higher degrees. However, it is important to note that Brevard, my hometown, was named the "Best Place to Retire" by *Rand-McNally* in 1983; and neighboring Asheville (Buncombe) and Hendersonville (Henderson), have since been named as national retirement hot

spots. *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Geographic Traveler* and *Outside Magazine* have promoted Transylvania County as “one of America’s top ten places to live and play” (Discover Transylvania 2006). Polk County, adjacent to Henderson County, is also a retirement area in the southern area of the region. In these four counties, Transylvania, Buncombe, Henderson and Polk, the influx of retirees who hold advanced degrees has been great during recent years. This is important to note, because available statistics are skewed by the influx of outsiders, and do not address the percentage of the original population that hold degrees. According to the Transylvania County School statistics from 1990, only 72.1% of the students entering high school graduated and 17.9% of those continued to complete a bachelor’s degree (“Land of Waterfalls” 2006). If adjusted for this factor, the numbers in these four counties would most probably mimic the counties with lower percentages.

Transylvania County is the only county being studied which is home to an institution of higher learning. Brevard College, which draws the majority of its students from outside the region, employs 56 full-time faculty members with higher education degrees. Of the 56 full-time faculty, I am one of only two faculty members native to the studied region. Only 24 of 66 faculty members are female, which shows a gender inequity among Brevard faculty; at any rate, as the faculty is nearly all composed of outsiders to the region, these figures may distort any statistics offered for the area overall. This is one example of how misleading census information can be. Appalachia is not the home of the uneducated who are devoid of opportunity; however, the statistics for improvement in the area

cannot be directly used to assess either the gender question or the general educational achievement of native Appalachians.

### *Employment*

As I grew up in the mountains, I certainly understood that the land was a central element of my culture, particularly for the livelihood of its people. Like many men of Appalachia, who relied on logging for financial survival during slow times on the farm (Williams, 2002, p. 247), both my grandfathers spent many years raising large families through hard labor on the land. Many of my family and friends also relied on the land for their livelihood; tanneries, pulp mills, farming and logging, are all common to the region.

Still others worked in factories located in the area: chemical plants, lumber mills, paper mills and the like have provided livelihoods for many families. In recent times, many natives who earned degrees and returned home were employed as accountants, engineers and human resource specialists at the local factories, taking the place of the jobs historically given to outsiders.

Factories in this area were once abundant, as companies were drawn to the pristine stream water needed for the processing of various materials. P.H. Glatfelter, a local paper company, produced cigarette paper, once a lucrative enterprise in North Carolina. A dip occurred in the market demand following publicity on health concerns related to cigarette smoking, and lower labor costs offered by paper companies overseas; this situation led to a period of economic strife for the company. Proposed contractual pay decreases led to a union strike and ultimately the permanent closing of the facility. Agfa, a film company, was

purchased by a European company in order for it to gain more of the market share. Closing of that plant site followed three years later. These two examples are indicative of the loss of employment opportunities in the area, beginning in the mid-1990s and continuing today. These losses have led to a high unemployment rate, and many individuals have remained unemployed indefinitely. To complicate matters, a controversy in the state legislature concerning the balance of environmental and employment concerns has left problems in both areas. Many facilities are now closed with no clear future, streams have become irreparably polluted, and many families are left suffering the financial consequences of the widespread job losses. This economic shift has touched working class families as well as accountants, engineers, human resource specialists, and other professionals, many of whom have had no choice but to move from the area for the sake of economic survival. Trained laborers have found themselves retraining for opportunity in new arenas such as education, technology, landscaping and more.

This pattern is common among all of the counties in the Blue Ridge Mountain region of North Carolina. Still, like the culture, the economy is also dynamic and ever-changing and continues today, through this major shift which has touched almost every family in the area. Currently, in Transylvania County one vacant site is being revived through the opening of a new industry, Excelsior Packaging, which will make specialty food prep bags using new technology.

Particularly interesting choices are being made by the former laborers in the closed industries. Not only have some returned to school, others have

chosen to begin their own businesses. And women are featuring quite prominently in this economic resurgence: currently, women own an average of 24.6 % of small businesses in the studied counties (US Census 2000a), with Transylvania County again ranking the highest at 28.1%. An emerging new circular, *Western North Carolina woman: Celebrating the strength, wisdom & grace of women*, highlights a different aspect of women's lives in each monthly issue. In the January 6, 2006, issue, business women of the area are the focus. The title for this issue, "Women minding their own business," is a wonderful play on words and puts a new twist on the old cliché typically used to silence women.

The circular certainly works to give women voice and support their success. However, like the statistical picture for educational background cited earlier, the image projected by this circular is somewhat skewed. Once again, the women business owners cited are, for the most part, not native to this area; moreover, the businesses highlighted are in the relatively developed Asheville area. No rural, small town businesses have earned a place in the publication. So again, the statistics are misleading when one is trying to consider the opportunities open to the native woman. Although these figures reveal that more opportunity seems to be generally available to women in the area, one need only travel through the area, read other local publications, and talk to the residents to see that many obstacles for Appalachian women still exist.

### The People

*Mountains demand diversity. Their angled paths and the views they afford challenge our perceptions of who we are, where we're going and what we really need...diversify or die* (High, 2005).

Three cultures dominate the mountains of Western North Carolina: Cherokee, African American and Scots Irish. Anthropologists have determined that the Cherokee have been in these mountains for more than a thousand years; however, the Cherokee believe that they have inhabited these mountains since the beginning of time. Many Scots Irish moved to the Blue Ridge Mountains during the only large scale migration, which occurred at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. McCrum, Cran and MacNeil (1992) describe American migration as it pertains to the mountains of Western North Carolina. Many German and Scots-Irish immigrants settled in Pennsylvania, beginning with the Pennsylvania Dutch who first settled in 1680. The Scot-Irish, who did not settle in Pennsylvania, pushed their way south through the Cumberland Gap and into the hills of Appalachia:

On the frontier, they bore the brunt of [Native American] hostility. They tended to live isolated lives in backwoods settlements. It was a harsh, pioneering existence, but they had become well suited for it. (McCrum, Cran & MacNeil, 1992, p. 142)

During that time, wealthy migrants brought their African American slaves with them to their new home. Since then, these three cultures have lived together in the oldest mountain range in the world (Suttles 2002).

Only two small towns are located in Transylvania County: Rosman and Brevard. Brevard is the county seat and the 2000 Census revealed the strong presence of Scots Irish descendents, which have so long dominated the area. The Census reports that Whites make up 84.81% of the population while African

Americans and Native Americans make up 0.22% and 0.88% respectively (US Census 2000a). The area of the county outside of Brevard is even less diverse. This explains the lack of racial diversity among my participants, as all of the women interviewed are of Scots Irish descent. The following characterization of the people of the area is thus particularly relevant to the Scots Irish, for the purposes of this study.

The people of Western North Carolina are diverse. Their careers, education, personalities, and beliefs represent a plethora of differences. However, like other cultures, some characteristics are more prominent than others. From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the *New York Magazine* hailed the term *hillbilly*, the people of Southern Appalachia have been viewed as ignorant, social inept, poor, incestuous, backwoods folks. This image was perpetuated further with the 1913 publication of Kephart's *Our Southern Highlander*. The author purports that "mountaineers are homogeneous as far as speech and manner and experiences and ideals make them" (p. 428). Although the people of these mountains are quite homogenous, Kephart's presents the mountaineer man and woman as being the every man and woman of the mountains, as if no individuality existed. Of the men, he writes, they are "brave, but hot-headed" (p. 463). This is an example of how he characterizes the people as being alike and the way he tempers any characteristic deemed as positive by adding a second, characteristic perceived as negative.

More recently, the negative images have begun to change. Beaver (1983) explored rural communities in Western North Carolina and depicted them as

communities rooted in kinship, rather than as isolated and inbred. This kinship extends beyond the boundaries of biological family members to those of the native community at large. This kinship serves as an organizing principle for rural communities. Newcomers are treated with caution, not fear, hostility or contempt as portrayed in Kephart's work. As long as newcomers exhibit respect and appreciation for the natives and their lifestyles, the newcomers will eventually be accepted into the community and treated as kin. This sense of community is important to the people of this area:

Community homogeneity is expressed in terms of the community's collective representation of its own historical mythic charter, involving notions of common ancestry, kinship, shared experience and rootedness in place. (Beaver, 1983, p. 154)

To be included in the 'in-group' one must be worthy; however, worth is rarely discussed in a positive way; instead, "the negative condition 'worthlessness' is frequently expressed. For example, 'He ain't worth the bullet it'd take to kill him or he'd been dead year ago'; 'that worthless old woman'; 'he ain't worth shit' and 'he ain't worth a pinch of dried owl shit'" (Beaver, 1983, p. 154). This sense of worth is important, as each individual is expected to be a contributing member to the community as a whole. A little over a decade after Beaver cited these phrases, Jones (1994) provides the missing positive counterpart, when he describes Appalachian people, in *Appalachian Values*, as independent, self-reliant, proud, neighborly, hospitable, humble, modest and patriotic.

Upon reading Jones' work, I wondered how women of my family might describe the people of the area. I asked my maternal grandmother, my mother and my sister to write five adjectives describing the people. All three are native to the area and completed their lists independently and without knowledge of Jones' work. Their responses reflected the same themes apparent in Jones' terms. Most commonly, ideas of *hospitality, independence, strength* and *Christianity* appeared. Other adjectives they listed included *dependable, honest, God-fearing, compassionate, humorous, family-oriented, and easy-going*; and as I completed this section of my literature review, I realized how similar their descriptors of people were to those of the available material written about us. But I also realized that many individuals would describe their native home in similar ways, particularly in rural communities located throughout the United States.

Families are the major unifying element of the community; family values are extremely important to most Appalachians. Many of the first settlers homesteaded and made farming a way of life. The children inherited the land and traditions for generations, illustrating both their respect for family values and their connection to the land. Fisher (1998) asserts "the Blue Ridge folk...live close to the soil and cling to strong family life and neighborly ways" (p. 117). This holds true for most Appalachians today. A connection to one another is as important as the connection to the land. Holidays, Sundays and special occasions are spent together. Many who have had to move from the area due to economic strife grieve for these missed occasions, and those at home, in turn, grieve for them. An acquaintance of mine points this out unequivocally during a recent

conversation: “Even after living away for more than three years,” she says, “I am never more acutely aware of my sense of displacement than during the missed family celebrations” (G. Newell, personal communication, January 5, 2006).

Faith is as important as family for most. During the early stages of settlement, churches, schools and stores were the few community establishments. Of these, churches had the greatest influence on both men and women (Williams, 2002, p. 123). Although the Baptist denomination is dominant here, many other faiths are also prominent. Pentecostals are also a driving force, but other Protestant groups are strongly represented: Methodists, Presbyterians and Episcopalians (Dorgan, 2004). Catholics, although a definite minority, are represented and growing in numbers as the South becomes a more popular retirement destination for Northerners. In short, “these mountains are home to a complex patchwork of Christian faiths that give Appalachia a wonderfully rich and varied religious face” (Dorgan, 2004, p.184).

Most Appalachian people consider themselves Christians and value the Ten Commandments (Jesse Stuart Foundation). Evangelicals and fundamentalists are often associated with the region’s religious ideology and are often believed to be the religious choice of the less educated. Jimmy Carter (2005), in his book, *Our Endangered Values*, delineates the two terms which are often used synonymously by many Americans. Carter relies on the definitions for ‘evangelical’ from *Random House Dictionary*, where ‘evangelical’ has two meanings. First, an Evangelical belongs to a Christian church which focuses on the teaching of the New Testament and uses the Scripture as authority, rather

than the church itself. The core of Evangelicals' beliefs lies in the idea that salvation is found in a personal conversion, which culminates in the acceptance of Christ as Savior. Second, the term can refer to a group of Christians, especially of the late 1970's, which shunned the designation of fundamentalist, but held to a conservative interpretation of the Bible. Evangelicals are known for believing in the Gospels and sharing their beliefs, but not necessarily holding to rigidity of interpretation or political conservatism. 'Fundamentalism' is quite different, in that people who are fundamentalist believe in a more rigid interpretation of the Bible, hold to conservative beliefs such as patriarchal leadership within the church, and present themselves in a more 'us' vs. 'them' dichotomy. Carter uses three words to characterize fundamentalism: "rigidity, domination and exclusion" (p. 35).

Many people living in the Blue Ridge Mountains are Evangelical, in the sense that they hold to the belief that a personal conversion is an integral part of one's Christian experience. Certainly, Christianity is important to most. My friends and I all knew the Ten Commandments before entering school. My parents hosted a backyard Bible school the summer I was six, and even today, Bible School information decorates the summer roadways. Although beliefs are as unique as the individuals who hold them, faith is certainly a driving force among the communities here. Fundamentalism, which seems to be on the rise as it is in much of the country, certainly is not the core Christian ideology in all parts of the region. Yet, the South, particularly the rural South, is often referred to as the 'Bible Belt,' leading many outsiders to associate the South with fundamentalism.

Appalachian people love to have a good time. We entertain each other at social gatherings by singing, playing the guitar or the banjo, dancing and more. Lakes, streams, and nature trails are our backyard playground, so swimming, water skiing, four-wheeling and hiking are just a few of the outdoor activities keeping us busy. Because our culture is oriented around family and faith, we have huge family and church events, and we always welcome everyone to join in.

Much has changed over recent decades in Appalachia. Like others in the U.S., we have seen the development of cable and satellite television, cell phones, internet services and high speed travel. Isolation is no longer an issue even in this rural area, which historically was less isolated than other areas of Appalachia. The image, then, of an isolated people of the backwoods is not an image worthy of the people of this region, especially today.

### The Language

*In my grandmother's house, when quare is the word we need, quare is the word we use* (Early, 2004, p. 207).

Appalachian English seems 'quare' to many outsiders. The word 'quare,' for us, "packs a specificity of meaning that *queer, strange, eccentric, odd, unusual, unconventional, or suspicious* do not" (Early, 2004, p. 207). *Quare*, like many words specific to AE are found in dictionaries such as *The Smoky Mountain Dictionary*, but rarely found in dictionaries which adhere to the 'standard.' Even as I type this, my spell check insists I should be writing *queer, quire* or *square*, though a Google search did produce a definition of "queer or strange" for the term. The oral culture of Appalachia, which has been slower to accept formal

education than other regions of the United States, finds its people speaking a language not validated by the institutions that promise greater opportunity. I was taught SAE in school, and I have never tried to write the colloquial forms of the language variety I grew up speaking. In fact, the first time I have ever written this word, so familiar to my ears, was today as I drafted this paragraph. I suppose AE is 'quare' to many from other areas, who have never seen this kind of form in print.

However, I find that the specific variations of AE, which tend to take the brunt of heavy criticism from more standard speakers, bring color and personality to the language. Take, for instance, my sister-in-law's favorite way to enter a room. She walks in with grandiose style, yelling "How's ya mama 'nem?" She hears the local saying many times at the health care center where she is employed. Visitors enter the front door asking this question, which translates into standard, "How's your mother and them?" And, it seems, we all know who *them* are—the friends, family, acquaintances—anyone worthy of news. We understand the uniqueness and lack of standardization our vernacular holds. Yet, most of us seem somehow attached to it.

The documentary *Mountain Talk: A unique journey to the heart of Southern Appalachia* explores the language and its speakers' affinity for their native variety. Set in Robbinsville, North Carolina, a town located further west than the current study, the documentary still makes some excellent points about AE that can be applied to the participants in the current study. One interviewee summarizes the feelings of many of the documentary's participants: "There is no

advantage in aspiring to an acceptable norm, no advantage to everyone speaking the same” (Hutcheson 2005). Another local woman in the documentary adds her feelings about returning home after living in Washington, DC for several years. She struggled with the culture and the assumptions listeners made about her based upon her speech. Of her time spent living in Washington, DC, she says, “I’d rather be in hell with my back broke as live there.” Karl Nicholas, a Western North Carolina linguistics professor, explains that some speakers “are proud to cling to signs of earlier times,” referring to both the speaker’s younger years and the speaker’s ancestral ties. This documentary captures the affinity many AE speakers hold for their native variety. Language, for all people, is an integral part of culture, and for the Appalachian people, it is no different. The variations of our linguistic features from SAE give flavor and individuality to our speech. AE of this area was greatly influenced by the Scots-Irish, the Germans, and the Cherokees during the settlement of the Western North Carolina mountains. Isolation led to the uniqueness of the language, as speakers did not have daily contact with outsiders. Now, with televisions, music and computers, the language seems to be moving more toward the acceptable ‘standard.’ Poet Thomas Raine Crowe theorizes that we are two generations away from the variety being nonfunctional as an everyday language. He adds, “stereotypes have poisoned the culture. We have become sensitive to the stereotypes and this sensitivity has been a catalyst for language change” (Hutcheson 2005). Several parents of college-educated children claim that their children do not speak as they do. In the documentary, the feelings of both pride and loss seem

to be in conflict. This documentary captures the essence of AE and the conflicting feelings its speakers may encounter. These conflicting feelings are very much at the center of the topic being researched in the present study.

This inner conflict many Appalachians feel about their speech is echoed in some other American venues. For instance, many researchers today feel that being Southern, even Appalachian, is in vogue. The term *New South* has been used in various contexts to describe the Southern culture post-Civil War. MacNeil and Cran (2005) explore the idea of the New South as it pertains to linguistic and cultural trends within the current American cultural climate. The authors cite the work of both linguists Denis Preston and John Fought. Preston discusses the current appeal of country music. In the past, “if you liked country music you were hopeless.” Now, even in Northern urban areas, you can go downtown “and be a very hip person” (p. 71) with an enjoyment of country music as it is evolving and often influencing other styles. Likewise, Fought’s work with the New South phenomenon has explored the popularity of

Southern ways and country talk that now seem to reach farther and farther. For a long time, the most rapid population growth percentages in the United States have been in the Inland Southern area, the Sun Belt... ‘This dialect has probably the largest body of speakers of any of the American dialects now. And this will only grow with time.’” (Fought, quoted in MacNeil, 2005, p. 71)

This is important to note because many people in Western North Carolina fear that the native vernacular is dying out. Barbara Miller, a native to the region who

appears in the documentary, *The Women of These Hills*, feels that “the speech has been poisoned over recent years” (Hopkins n.d.). Others perceive the changing language of these mountains differently. MacNeil and Cran (2005) purport that

if the Appalachian dialect in its purest, mountain usage is dying out, it is being reborn in a new and powerful way, because in its modern form it is absorbing other Southern dialects or accents and spreading itself across the Sun Belt and further. (p. 69)

Still, not everyone has taken the view that Southern speech, particularly Appalachian speech, is in vogue. This change is certainly a valuable one for speakers of the vernacular, but deep-seated ideas about language varieties are slow to change within an entire culture.

In fact, the unusual syntactical structure, the colorful vocabulary and the pronunciation variations found within our variety may often be viewed as inferior, leaving many speakers viewed as inferior as well. However, some of the nonstandard variations we use are not unique to the area. AE speakers share some of their nonstandard forms with other vernaculars. Sometimes the two phenomena show up in a single utterance. For instance, the word *fixin'* meaning ‘planning,’ is used in some other vernaculars; however, using the *a-*prefixing with the word to form *a-fixin'* (as in ‘She’s *a-fixin'* to go up North’) is specific to Appalachia. Both nonstandard forms, those specific to AE and those shared with other vernaculars, are still viewed by many in mainstream America as ‘inferior’ when they show up in Appalachian speech, in spite of the New South ideology.

Simply speaking can bring to the listener all of the negative images of both the South and Appalachia. However, as for me and my family, when we are “in grandmother’s house and quare is the word needed, quare is the word we will use” (Early, 2004, p. 207). Early’s words echo the sentiment of Barbara Miller:

I have never made a study of Appalachian speech to see how much it affects me because I am proud of the way I speak. I speak Appalachian; I hear Appalachian. I don’t like people to make derogatory comments about the way I speak. It is not my problem; it’s their problem. (Hopkins n.d.)

Many Appalachians take similar pride in their speech, recognize its influence on their identity, and feel comfortable with its nonstandard characteristics. This affinity for their native language variety is found in much of the current literature of the region (Hopkins, n.d.: Early, 2004; Suttles, 2002; among others).

This section has explored the affinity many AE speakers feel toward their native variety; however, since AE, its use and the language attitudes the study’s participants hold for their native variety are major foci in the current study, a more in-depth discussion of the linguistic features of AE, and a section on linguistic discrimination, are presented in Chapter 3.

### The Stereotypes

*You might be a redneck if...*

*you ever won first prize in a tobacco spittin’ contest.  
your front porch collapses and four dogs get killed.  
you’ve got more than three cousins named ‘Bubba.’  
you go to your family reunions looking for a date.*

Redneck jokes, Bubba, Holy Rollers, poor white trash, the illiterate—we all know the images of Southern Appalachia. Recently, my father-in-law was sitting at the dinner table telling a story, and he began with “You know, if you travel 50 miles into the foothills, people think we live in houses with burlap sacks covering the windows.” Even my daughter chimed in, “I know what you mean PawPaw. A friend at school told me a redneck joke yesterday. She said, ‘you might be a redneck if you steal your own car.’”

Ironically, everyone at the table laughed. We certainly know the images. We even see the roots of some of the stereotypes in ourselves, our family members and our friends. But, stereotypes don’t define us. The people of the Southern Highlands are multi-faceted human beings, like all other human beings. Yet the most common negative stereotypes in the American culture today center around us and our lives.

For more than a century, the people of Appalachia have been subjected to the stereotypical beliefs of outsiders. These images began developing at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In April 1900, *The New York Journal* coined the term ‘hillbilly’ with the following description: “A free and untrammled white citizen who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he gets it and fires off his revolver as his fancy strikes him” (George-Warren, 2004, p. 109). In publishing this description, one of the most prestigious publications of its time created one of the most damaging Appalachian stereotypes, which has thrived for more than a century (Appendix A).

The geographical barriers have contributed, not only to the isolation of the people, but also to the perception of the people as eccentric, backcountry separatists. Most problematic, though, may be the Appalachian role within the American culture as the 'other' against which 'civilized' America defines itself (Pennycook, 1998). These images still thrive, even though some scholarly works, such as Branscome (1971) contend that these negative images have done irreparable damage to the Appalachian soul.

To add to the dilemma, people of the Southern Highlands are also subjected to stereotypes specific to the South, such as the view of the inhabitants as 'Southern belles,' racists, or practitioners of incest. In the early 1980s, one Harvard student from Virginia contemplated placing a sign around his neck to clarify some questions he repeatedly faced, or perceived he faced: "Yes, I am from the south. No I do not know your uncle in Mobile...Both of my parents are, in fact literate...No, I do not watch "Hee Haw." No, I do not own slaves. No, I do not want any" (Ayers 1996). This student's frustration illustrates the dominance of Southern stereotypes, even among some of the most educated in our culture, and the conflict such stereotypes can create.

The term 'redneck' originally referred to the sunburned necks of hard-working Appalachian farmers. However, with time, the term has lost its original meaning and has taken on new meanings, such as being uneducated, poor white trash. Although the connotations of the word have changed over the past century, like 'hillbilly,' the term 'redneck' has thrived in the American culture. Appalachian people can define terms like 'hillbilly,' 'redneck,' 'Southern belle,'

and 'Holy Roller,' probably better than the greater society. We know and love people others would classify into these categories; but unlike many in the American culture, we understand the erroneousness of the simplistic images others hold of these people.

Stereotyping may complicate the process of mainstreaming in the professional world for many of the women in the current study. Not only are the study's participants subjected to the above stereotypes, which are inclusive of both genders, they are also subjected to gender-specific stereotypes. The professional women of Appalachia have struggled to change outsiders' images of them. In fact, outsiders' perceptions of Daisy Mae and Southern belles are often difficult for these women to overcome. In fact, many collections at the Archive of Appalachia, located at East Tennessee State University, dispel these stereotypes and "highlight women who [have been] writers, prominent leaders in the community, underground miners, aviators, educators and health care workers" (Appalachian women). However, the negative stereotypes remain dominant across the country; like many stereotypes, they are unchanged by news of the success of many of the region's women. Breaking the boundaries established through these cultural stereotypes, which are reinforced through pop culture creations such as *Hee Haw*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and *Deliverance*, seems a daunting task. Even now, some of these century-old stereotypes are perpetuated in pop culture, as with the 2005 release of the feature film *The Dukes of Hazzard* and Hot Apple Pie's 2005 Top Forty country hit, "Hillbillies Lovin' in the Hay."

Even though some of the images have seeds of truth, seeds that were more fruitful a century ago, the Appalachian culture, like all others, is alive and ever-changing. The people have changed, yet the American image of Appalachian people has changed little over the past century, leaving the study's participants living in a society which perpetuates these erroneous images, and which challenges the women of Appalachia to overcome them.

### The Women of Transylvania County

*What makes Appalachian women special, again, it's the place* (Miller quoted in Hopkins, n.d.).

The documentary, *The Women of These Hills*, mentioned previously, explores the life stories of five women native to Western North Carolina, four of whom have lived their lives in Transylvania County, North Carolina, my native county. These Transylvania women, who range from ages 68-92 and currently live independently in the mountains, tell their stories of growing up in the Blue Ridge Mountains. All of the study's participants are from Scots Irish descent; thus, again, for the purposes of this study, the remarks of this section can best be taken as describing the culture of Scots Irish women.

The women who participated in this study were raised by mountain women, mothers and grandmothers, who can remember being from the Blue Ridge, long before the Appalachian Region Commission was developed and the 210 county region was designated as the 'official' Appalachia. These women were strong, defined by the isolation of the mountains:

What makes Appalachian women special? Again, it's the place, and it has to do with the isolation for so many years and the lack of

transportation. You didn't always have a team of horses and a sled to take you where you wanted to go. Most women didn't go anywhere. Most stayed in a radius of 3 miles from where they were born. That was their world, and they made a world out of that small spot. (Miller as told to Hopkins, n.d.)

That is, many of the women built their worlds around family, and community became more important in the rural mountains than in urbanized areas, for no other reason than survival. Church was the center of the community and helped meet the spiritual, educational and entertainment needs of the community members. Everyone native to Transylvania County knows someone who remembers attending a one-room or church school house, and the women in Hopkins' documentary (n.d.) represent that era. They all are well educated having attended the local grammar school before moving to the area high school and graduating. Most women married young, but could "survive with or without a man" (Vera Cansler as told to Hopkins, n.d.). These women learned to survive on their own and to help the other women in their lives survive as well. Strong, independent and resourceful, these women used home remedies such as burning sulfur in metal pans for asthmatic breathing treatments, making mustard plasters for chest colds, and killing germs with turpentine (Hopkins n.d.). In the 1920s other homemade treatments were introduced, including the following striking practices:

For typhoid, one homemade treatment was a pan of water placed under the sick person's bed to stop the fever. Boiled

and sweetened sheep dung was a sure cure for measles.

Spider webs were placed on cuts and other raw wounds.

For childbirth, it was believed that labor pains would be eased if the husband would sink an ax into the floor under the bed on which his wife was giving birth. (p. 139)

Even after a few doctors arrived in the area, most of the women still took a lead role in nursing the family because doctors were scarce and travel time from location to location was time-consuming.

The women had to make their own soap, wash their clothes in the creek, and hang them to dry on the fences as the children kept the animals from dragging the clothes into the woods. In the absence of undertakers, the women were responsible for *the setting up*. They prepared their family and friends for burial. Lying the dead on a plank in the living room, placing quarters on his eyelids to keep his eyes closed, and using camphor in the absence of embalming materials, the women hosted the entire community: family, friends and neighbors for three days and two nights while the men made a handmade casket for burial. My own grandmother still tells the story of preparing her father for the setting up, how her fingers trembled as she placed quarters on his eyelids to close his eyes. This memory seems as real to her today as the day of the actual event. She knew hardships. All of the elder women of Transylvania County remember hardships much like the ones described above. They knew the hardships of living a rural life and found strength to be a necessity, not a luxury.

Through these hardships, the mountain women found contentment. Most women of these mountains remember having plenty in terms of food. Corn, molasses, beef, pork, beans, honey and much more were abundant, and feeling poor didn't cross their minds: "We didn't have any money, but we weren't going anywhere to need any" (Vera Stinson as told to Hopkins, n.d.). Mountain women were strong; they could endure loneliness, they could endure sorrow, not that other women in other places didn't do this, but they did it more on their own and family became very, very important to them. (Barbara Miller as told to Hopkins, n.d.)

This strength is something that many of the participants in the Hopkins documentary recognized in themselves and the women who raised them. Vera Stinson, age 90, acknowledges, "we had strength and determination or we wouldn't have made it. This shaped the lives of my children" (Hopkins, n.d.).

Certainly, this heritage, its women and the local culture shaped the lives of this study's participants. Eleven of the twelve participants were first generation college-educated. Brought up by mothers and grandmothers, the participants were taught to be strong, independent and self-sufficient. They realized these qualities were imperative, even in a changing world. Some have decided to take these qualities passed down to them by their ancestors and use them in the new realms of higher education and professional training. Families can no longer survive on the land alone. The outside world has infiltrated the local culture, and entering the public workforce is seen as a necessity. Historically, women have moved more rapidly and willingly into the realm of education and public

employment than their male counterparts, and the entrance of women into the workforce, mainly since the 1950's, "has resulted in a variety of changes in the relative status of women in the public sector, as compared with their status in the traditional community context" (Beaver, 1983, p. 3). This creates a new dynamic within rural communities. Women in the workforce today may wish to look to their elders, and may feel that the working world of today's women differs too much from the traditional roles of earlier Appalachian women for there to be a clear connection with their elders. This disconnect can be found in other regions as well, but seems particularly poignant here, where women's roles were fundamentally more traditional in comparison to previous generations in other areas of the country. In fact, this poses a challenge for some of the women, who take on this new role as working professionals while they also try to balance that with the elders' expectations.

Local economics also poses challenges for today's women. The current economic climate of Transylvania County has dealt a devastating blow to the community, requiring higher education of its current high school graduates because high school graduates now find lucrative employment scarce. At the same time, many of the college-educated natives, who were employed in areas such as administration and engineering, have had to migrate to urban areas outside the region for employment. Some people balk at higher education because of its perceived connection to other natives' migration outside of the region. Yet natives who chose to enter the workplace directly after high school

have found themselves trained for employment that no longer exists, and the unemployment and poverty rates have soared among the native population.

The dilemma is clear. The only 'booming' industry currently is tourism. Much like Martha's Vineyard during Labov's (1972a) study, the area is scenic and attracts tourists during the summer and fall seasons. Pisgah National Forest is renowned throughout the United States for its rock climbing, kayaking, fishing, camping and other outdoor activities that abound. But like Martha's Vineyard, this Appalachian region suffers serious economic problems. In spite of the crowds of tourists attracted to Martha's Vineyard, the county remained the poorest in Massachusetts (Labov 1972a). Likewise, Transylvania natives have recently struggled financially in a way not uncommon to many other natives in neighboring counties, even though the opportunity for some professionals, such as professors, lawyers, doctors and architects, is the greatest in the county's history.

In 1983 Rand McNally listed Brevard as number one on its list of "Best Places to Retire," since then, the influx of retirees, young professionals and back-to-the-landers (Beaver, 1983, p. 3) to the area has been mind-boggling for locals since it has helped to create a greater disparity in income and opportunity between the college-educated women of Transylvania County and the high school educated women. Changes in the economy, culture, population and opportunity have been vast in recent years. These life changes have sent many Transylvania County women, unlike the women before them, venturing into the

greater world, where they must call on the strength, independence and ingenuity of their ancestors in new ways as they seek to find a new place for themselves

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH CONTEXT: RELATED LITERATURE

Since this study examines the ways that the context of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina has influenced these women and their attitudes toward their native vernacular, AE, the preceding chapter focused on the study's geographical and cultural context. Just as important to this study is the current body of literature relevant to the phenomenon under study, language attitudes. Therefore, this section explores important texts dealing with language varieties, linguistic features of Appalachian English and linguistic discrimination. Also important to the research context is the area of narrative studies. The Appalachian culture is steeped in storytelling, and most natives, when asked a question, answer with a story. It was natural that I collected the stories of these women, stories that represent the events which have affected their attitudes of AE and SAE. Lastly, gender issues are addressed, as this study focuses on professional Appalachian women, who belong to three traditionally marginalized groups: Southerners, Appalachians and women as a section is devoted to women and language.

#### Studies on Language Varieties

For the purpose of this study, the kind of language variety in question is defined as a "variety of English which has a certain set of lexical, phonological and grammatical rules that distinguish it from other [varieties]" (Daniels, 1998 p. 47). Sociolinguists working in this area have connected language varieties to two

main elements of the culture in which they are spoken: the region, and the socio-economic stature of their speakers. Language varieties, then, are usually categorized as regional or social, and sometimes both (Hudson 1996, 1998; Labov, 1966; Labov, Cohen, Robin and Lewis, 1968; Wolfram, 1969; and Wolfram and Christian, 1969, among others).

### Regional Varieties

Most Americans are familiar with language varieties as they relate to region or geography. Linguists have determined that lexicon, syntax and phonology can all serve as indicators of language variation and allow listeners to connect a speaker to a particular region. For instance, many are familiar with the New England characteristic of dropping r's [*pahk the cah in Hahvahd yahd*], or the lexical difference between *pop*, *coke* and *soda* as speakers from various regions in the United States order their drinks with dinner (Daniels, 1998, p. 47). However, language varieties are much easier to identify, or even to classify, than they are to explain. Wolfram (1969, 1982) and others have established that isolation has an enormous effect on regional variation. In keeping with this theme, I chose a small geographic area to study because people who live, work and interact together within the same speech community speak the same variety. At least until the age of eighteen, the participants of this study shared the following traits:

- they grew up in a county with similar educational and employment opportunities;
- they lived, worked and socialized within the same speech community;
- they had easy access to only one metropolitan area, Asheville, North Carolina.

Based on the current body of research dealing with regional varieties, the participants exhibited many of the same linguistic features, which listeners associate with AE, or more generally, with the South.

### Social Varieties

There is a strong association between regional and social factors in the public view: “regional accents are generally associated with some sociocultural differences among people in the geographical areas where they occur, and with traditional views or stereotypes of such sociocultural differences. As a result ...regional varieties carry social meaning” (Pennington 1996). Hudson (1996) concludes that “people...use the speech of others as a clue to non-linguistic information about them, such as their social background and even personality traits like toughness or intelligence” (211). Wolfram (1969) points out that “it is the social class structure, not the linguistic structure, which determines which forms will be socially stigmatized and which ones are socially prestigious” (p. 132). Likewise, Gumperz (1962) points out that a single utterance can reveal a great deal about the speaker such as social class.

Linguistic varieties are, in fact, often most closely associated with social class. Labov (1966) in his book *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* found significant correlations between language variety features and factors involving geography, ethnicity, education, economic status and age grouping. Preceding Labov’s study is a less known study by Emory University professor Lee A. Pederson (1965), who discovered correlations between social and ethnic difference and recurrent pronunciation features. He was able to correlate

distinctive features common to the native blacks of the Metropolitan Chicago area that contrasted with the corresponding features among area whites. This is important to the current study in that researchers such as Sivertsen (1960), Wells (1982) and Trudgill (1999) have established that some language varieties, such as Cockney, correlate strictly with a particular social group, such as the working class. Others, however, correlate with a region, but are identified, mistakenly in many cases, by listeners as a social variety. For instance, in the documentary, *American Tongues* (1987), one woman describes her frustration with being from New York and having listeners assume that she is from the ghetto, strictly because they make that association with her variety. This happens as well with AE; many listeners identify the regional variety, but interpret it as a social variety, attaching social status to its speaker, assuming she may be the poor, uneducated backwoods idea the media has historically portrayed.

Since Labov's (1966) and Pederson's (1965) ground-breaking studies, Trudgill (1974, 1976, 1983 revised) has confirmed that different social groups employ different linguistic variants, and that listeners classify speakers according to the language varieties speakers employ. Social differentiation exists in many forms, including age, class, gender, race, education, religion and sexual orientation. Different social groups employ different linguistic varieties, and we, as humans, classify each other accordingly (Trudgill 1976). Trudgill (1983 revised) further recognizes social stratification, the "hierarchical ordering of groups within a society," and states that "in industrialized societies of the West this takes the form of stratification into social classes, and gives rise linguistically

to social-class [varieties]" (35). Other linguists such as Wolfram (1982) agree that since, the culture in the United States rests on hierarchical social structures, it is expected that there are linguistic features of language variation which correlate with status differentiation.

Linguists clearly acknowledge that language varieties are directly related to social-class background. For instance, the highest social class speaks what we call Standard American English (SAE), in which there is little variation. On the contrary, the lower class speakers, using nonstandard regional forms, employed the most variation within their speech. Consequently, these perceptions are hierarchical, leaving some speakers of English judged as "inferior." For instance, Cockney, a vernacular that varies a great deal from the 'standard' in England, is generally held to be 'inferior'.

The relevance of social varieties to the current study lies in the complex relationship between regional and social varieties. When a listener is able to recognize any variety and then associate the speaker with a particular region, she then quite typically makes the inference that the speaker shares the region's perceived socio-economic status. For instance, if a listener perceives Appalachia to be the home of poor, uneducated people, that perception can be attributed to AE speakers, allowing the listener to judge the speaker as 'inferior' without clear evidence of the speaker's socio-economic status.

#### Linguistic Features of Appalachian English (AE)

Comparative studies of AE and SAE have shown many distinctive features of AE which differ greatly from SAE (Wolfram 1969, Wolfram & Christian 1976,

Hutcheson 2003). It is important to note here, as discussed in chapter two, that although AE has characteristics exclusive to its variety, many of its nonstandard characteristics are shared with other nonstandard or regional language varieties. Thus, some of these features reflect widespread informal usage; however, when perceived as part of the language of an AE speaker, they tend to be seen as part of the Appalachian identity of the speaker.

The existing literature includes comparative analyses, producing clear differentiation between AE and SAE in three linguistic categories: lexicon, syntax and phonology. Most AE speakers can be easily identified by the linguistic variants of their vernacular. Even those who employ few of the lexical and syntactical variants are readily identifiable through pronunciation. As Stevick (1978) observes, “pronunciation is the primary medium through which we bring our use of language to the attention of other people” (145). The following section outlines some of the lexical, syntactical and phonological features considered unique to AE and used to identify AE speakers.

#### *Lexical Features*

Lexical differences between AE and SAE certainly make the AE speaker identifiable to outsiders. In addition, use of some of the lexical variants may even cause communication difficulties if the listener is unaware of the meanings of such lexical variants. Even I had never seen or written the word *quare* before researching the cultural context of this study. Appalachia has historically been an oral culture, and words in the AE lexicon only appear in rare dictionaries such as Montgomery and Hall’s (2004) *The Smoky Mountain Dictionary*. Realistically,

listeners can often only learn the meaning of Appalachian-specific words through context or by questioning an AE speaker. Thus AE speakers generally, like the women in this study, are not only easily identifiable, but also easily misunderstood. Table 2 lists some of the lexical forms that make this possible.

Table 2. *Lexical Features of Appalachian English*

<u>Lexicon</u>	<u>Standard English Correspondence</u>	<u>Illustrative Sentence</u>
aim (v)	intend, plan	I aim to go to church in the morning.
Hear tell (v)	listen, heard	Did you ever hear tell of that happening here?
gaum (v) (n)	a mess or to make a mess	My daughter loves gaumming with finger paints. OR The bedroom is a guam.
quare (adj)	different, eccentric or unusual	He is friendly, but he sure is quare.
si' gogglin' (adj)	out of square, not being level or containing right angles	They built the garage si' gogglin'.
fetch (v)	To retrieve something	Go fetch the water from the creek.
nary 'un (n)	none/not one used to respond to a question, such as Where is a good restaurant?	There ain't nary 'un 'round here.

eye (n)	stove burner	Put that pot on the stove eye.
frog strangler (n)	heavy rain	Boy, it came a frog strangler yesterday.

From Wolfram (1969), the *Smoky Mountain Dictionary*, (Early 2004), Hutcheson (2005), Hopkins (d.) and Wolfram and Clark (2004).

### *Syntactic Features*

In addition to obvious differences among lexical items, syntactic differences can reveal an AE speaker to listeners. Some grammatical features in AE which appear regularly include the a-prefixing on participial –ing forms, making possible such sentences as *I love to go a-swimming in the sultry summer sun* and *the wind was a-blowing*. However, it is notable that the a-prefixing also happens, though less frequently on participial –ed forms (Wolfram, 1969, p. 743), to produce such sentences as *the snake was a-stretched out in the road*, and *they were a-gone swimming this morning*. Other types of grammatical differences occur in subject-verb agreement patterns. In particular, several subject types that normally require a plural verb in the standard language appear in AE with singular verb forms. During Wolfram's study, four such patterns emerged: (1) compound subjects, (2) collective subjects, (3) other plural noun phrases, and (4) Expletive *there* (Wolfram, 1969, p. 78). Examples of these include:

#### *Compound Subjects*

- (1) A girl and her mom was shopping.  
My brother and my cousin gets into a lot of fights.

*Collective Subjects*

- (2) Some people gets all upset for no reason.  
Other people's not concerned with our way of life.

*Other plural noun phrases*

- (3) The flowers was beautiful.  
Their parents has taught them not to do that!

*Expletive there*

- (4) There was five people in the choir this morning.  
There's usually at least 10 people in the choir.

It is apparent, simply by reviewing these two grammatical structures, the a-prefixing and subject-verb agreement, that some obvious differences between AE and SAE are identifiable even to the untrained SAE listener. Some of these differences are unique to AE; however, some are found in other language varieties. For instance, Pittsburghese, a language variety spoken by many natives of Pittsburgh, also uses the subject-verb variant. In fact, there are similarities among many of the language varieties considered 'nonstandard'. AE speakers are not alone in many of the variants they employ, yet it is clear that an AE speaker can be easily identified by listeners through the speaker's use of characteristic syntactic variants. Other informal varieties which employ similar variants, like Pittsburghese, are also viewed by many listeners as 'inferior,' though they typically do not belong to regions marked socially in anything like the way Appalachia or the South is marked.

Other common nonstandard syntactical forms include verb conjugations. For instance, *seed* is often used for the past tense of see (Hopkins n.d.). 'I *seed* him' might be used rather than 'I *saw* him.' Other examples of nonstandard verb conjugation include *clim* or *clum* rather than climbed. Sometimes one might hear

*fit* instead of *fought*. These nonstandard verb conjugations can lead to sentences such as *the cats fit all night and one of them clim up a tree*. These types of syntactical forms are used more often by aging generations than by the age range of the participants in the current study. However, people growing up in these mountains are familiar with many of the nonstandard forms and use some of them in their conversations. A speaker can be identified as being a speaker of AE by using only a few of these clearly nonstandard syntactical forms.

### *Phonological Features*

Pronunciation features are especially tied to geography. Pronunciation can differ from town to town and valley to valley. Even the pronunciation of the word “Appalachia” is often debated; people from Central Appalachia and the Southern Highlands pronounce the word with a short *a* (ă), yet Appalachians in the northern section pronounce the same word with a long *a* (ā). This differentiation may seem minute to many, but listeners can identify outsiders by their pronunciation (Williams, 2002, p.14). Even when AE speakers standardize their lexicon and syntax, pronunciation presents an even greater task, possibly making pronunciation the easiest indicator of the vernacular. Changing one’s native accent is quite challenging because even though geographic neutrality may be a desire for SAE speakers (Lippi-Green 1997), linguistic studies have long confirmed a clear correlation between pronunciation and geography (Wheatley, 1934; McDavid, 1965, 1977). Dan Rather, long-time news anchor for CBS news, is a native Texan. He works diligently to speak without his accent while on the

air, so much so that he has worked with a speech therapist to standardize his pronunciation:

I worked on my own for a while trying to say *e* as in 'ten' correctly. Texans, including me, tend to say *tin*. I also tried to stop dropping *gs*. It never seemed to be a problem except sometimes when I was tired (still is the case I fear), I tended to say *nothin'* instead of 'nothing.' (McCrum, Cran and MacNeil: 1986, p. 18)

Certain pronunciations are common to the region studied, such as *kivvers* for covers, *yellar* for yellow and *thar* for there (Hopkins n.d.). Changing these pronunciations to standard is not difficult for most speakers; however, the long vowel sounds in words such as *light*, *night* and *bright* pose a more difficult dilemma. Some AE pronunciations are notably different than those of SAE and are noticed in areas such as the sounds of consonants, vowels and other phonetic features. Consonant omissions are often a recognizable AE feature. For instance, many speakers omit *d* after *n* and *i* to produce *ole* for *old* and *han* for *hand*. In other consonant clusters, consonants are also often dropped, to produce forms like *chillen* for *children* and *exackly* for *exactly* (Newton 2000). In vowel sounds, some variations are quite widespread in AE such as the merger of /E/ and /I/, most notably before /n/, /m/, /t/, which leads to the lack of differentiation between *pen* and *pin* as noted in many AE speakers. Another common characteristic is the substitution of /i/ for /ej/ in word-final, unstressed vowels, producing *Tuesdee* for *Tuesday* (Kurath and McDavid 1961 and Wolfram and Christian 1976). Other common phonological features include syllable initial

stress in such words as *Detroit*, *cigar*, and *directly* as well as *metathesis*, which is common among several dialects. Metathesis produces such pronunciations as *aksed* for *asked*, and *ablum* for *album* (Christian, Wolfram & Dube 1988).

For the purpose of this study, I have presented several of the AE phonological variations to illustrate that these types of variation allow a listener to easily identify an AE speaker, even one that has standardized her vocabulary and syntax. This poses a challenge for AE speakers, in that pronunciation is the most difficult change for us to make. That is, even if we try to standardize our vocabulary and syntax to meet mainstream America's expectations, pronunciation seems to be the area which most identifies us with the region because pronunciations such as the ones discussed in this section easily allow a listener to identify an AE speaker. For many, to speak with geographic neutrality may mean working with a speech therapist, migrating from their home region, and/or sacrificing solidarity with one's own family and friends. This may cause an internal conflict for the participants in this study, as they try to mainstream into the professional world while they also wish to remain close to home and/or family and friends.

#### *Summary of Linguistic Features of Appalachian English (AE)*

It is rarely difficult for an untrained SAE speaker to identify an AE speaker because differences in all three linguistics categories (lexicon, syntax and phonology) abound in AE. Many AE speakers actually employ relatively few of the variants (Jesse Stuart Foundation, n.d.). But even if a speaker employs these features infrequently, eliminating them totally from one's speech is almost

impossible, leaving Appalachian speakers such as the women in this study open to be both identified and judged by their vernacular.

### Studies of Linguistic Discrimination

Many languages, worldwide, have a variety considered 'standard,' which is associated with more prestige than other varieties. Standard varieties may confer political, social and economic power, and many listeners believe vernaculars are less sophisticated varieties. However, comparative studies of vernacular varieties and SAE, such as Labov (1966), Dillard (1972), Stewart (1964 and 1969), Wolfram (1969), and more recently the work of Montgomery and Bailey (1986), have established that such language varieties, including those of American blacks (AAVE) and Appalachians (AE), are complete linguistic systems with specific rules of lexicon, syntax and phonology. Sociolinguists seem to agree that these varieties differ not in their status as full language systems, but mainly in their position as less prestigious, nonstandard varieties of English. In other words, the 'nonstandard' varieties of English are just as complex and productive as the 'standard' variety.

Although many listeners believe that vernaculars are less sophisticated versions of SAE, for example, full of errors, incorrect ways of speaking, lacking eloquence, etc., these comparative studies of vernacular varieties and SAE have examined the three linguistic features which exist in all languages, and have shown that these varieties are as systematic, as complex and as linguistically valid as 'standard' varieties. These linguistic studies are important in that they establish language varieties, including those varieties of American blacks (AAVE)

and Appalachians (AE), as complete linguistic systems with specific rules of lexicon, syntax and phonology which differ only in their position as less prestigious, nonstandard varieties of English (Adler, 1984, p. 16). Montgomery (1995) recognizes that Southerners

maintain grammatical categories and structures having no exact equivalent or paraphrase elsewhere in American English; therefore, the complexity of language in this region of the United States, particularly the Southern Appalachians, often seems moot because when such differences are registered among speakers of the same language, these differences serve as a basis for social judgments.

(p. 64)

In short, even though linguists have noted the complexity of nonstandard language varieties, speakers still tend to associate prestigious standing with speech that is seen as 'correct' or even 'pleasant,' while other speech forms become stigmatized as 'incorrect' or 'ugly' (Montgomery, 1995, p. 64). Many AE speakers are still subjected to the prejudice and discrimination that come from this unwarranted linguistic bias, and some scholars are beginning to speak openly about its personal effects. Sohn (2003) explains her connection to the south and its speakers: "my affinity for the region resulted from growing up in North Carolina and experiencing prejudice from those who connect a southern accent with lower intelligence." Sohn's comments suggest that linguists' work to recognize vernaculars as valid seems to have done little to improve the day-to-day life of AE speakers or general societal impressions of these speakers and

their language. Linguists are certainly aware that “both class distribution and language variants and prejudice against the users of ‘nonstandard’ dialects’ are current realities in the United States” (Marckwardt & Dillard, 1980, p. 277).

Though this statement was made over a decade ago, it deals with attitudes that have persisted for over a century. The Standard American English myth has a great hold on speakers within our country, and this hold represents unrealistic expectations of the speakers of the language.

This SAE myth is perpetuated in such a way that linguistic bias is tolerated as one of the last politically-correct forms of prejudice in the United States. Anne Shelby (1999) writes in her essay, “The ‘R’ Word”:

Some people know, of course, what we unfortunately call ‘political correctness’ isn’t just about manners. It’s about human dignity...But even people who seem to understand this, who would never make bad jokes about Polish people and light bulbs, for example, feel perfectly free to stereotype rural southerners—farmers, Baptists, Holy Rollers, hillbillies, rednecks, poor white trash. To stereotype is to dehumanize, to make ridiculous; to ignore history, politics, economics and culture. To deny full humanity. (p. 158)

This type of prejudice prevails, and a language hierarchy remains dominant in a world where the ‘standard’ is almost impossible to attain for speakers of many varieties, including AE.

The problem with these classifications lies in their rigid nature. Thus, unfounded generalizations are applied to whole language communities. For instance, one definition of the term 'non-mainstreamer', offered by the prestigious researcher Shirley Brice Heath (1993), offers a cluster of negative characteristics:

Non-mainstreamers exist in communities which do not rely on formal education systems to prepare children for participation or [sic] in settings involving literacy. These groups are illiterate, school-resistant, do not aspire to upward mobility through success in formal institutions, and they remain within the primary networks of family and community for behavioral models and value orientations.

Lippi-Green (1997) points to problems with Heath's definition, which suggests that "[a]ll speakers of Appalachian English are resistant to formal education" (p. 60). Lippi-Green offers a critique of the definition above as too simplistic in the context of today's fluid society:

This definition cannot be taken as uniformly true...simply because there is movement between cultures and language communities. Not all members of peripheralized, disempowered communities find enough rewards and support in their own communities to stay within them. Many persons, who function outside the mainstream, embrace the goals and implied promises of participation in the mainstream. (p. 60)

As Lippi-Green implies, Heath's definition for the term 'non-mainstream', clearly fails to describe the professional women of Appalachia, who have sought literacy and formal education in institutions of higher education and who have "embraced the goals and implied promises of participation in the mainstream" (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 58).

Still, the prejudice against non-standard speakers is particularly problematic for Appalachian English (AE) speakers, as their variety is most often viewed as the language of lazy, ignorant mountain people. These prejudices are so prevalent that "when people speak of Appalachian English, they often treat it as if it has mad cow disease and needs quarantining" (Hazen and Fluharty 2001).

Luhman (1990) utilized the matched guise technique, using four bidialectal actors to study language attitudes toward the language variety of eastern Kentucky AE speakers. Respondents were told that the actors were seniors of high academic ratings. Still, the results confirmed the idea that Kentucky-accented speakers are viewed as inferior. Of particular interest for the dynamics underlying this study is one of Luhman's conclusions:

Even university graduates with a slight Kentucky-accent, but otherwise 'standard' speakers, were faced with stereotypical images of low intelligence, poor education and lack of ambition.

This result leads me to predict that the participants in the current study will probably be viewed by some listeners as being members of a low social class. Ironically, since these educated speakers will have adjusted some aspects of

their speech away from their vernacular, this may lead to their not being viewed as having solidarity with either their AE or their SAE counterparts.

Linguistic prejudice can be as damaging as any other form of discrimination based upon race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors. For instance, the perceptions held about Appalachian people are so strong that “at its roots, prejudice against AE is more a social judgment of Appalachian people than of the language they speak” (Hazen & Fluharty 2001). In actuality many AE speakers employ few features from their native vernacular, yet most are still subject to prejudice which “unfairly maligns the entire social group that speaks it” (Hazen & Fluharty 2001).

These studies, although quite different than my own, establish the complexity and worthiness of AE, while also revealing the prejudice still associated with this vernacular. Linguists have documented the marginalization that speakers like the participants of this study face because they are native speakers of AE. After leaving Appalachia in search of economic opportunities, many AE speakers, finding themselves faced with discrimination based upon negative stereotypes, have returned to the region (Luhman, 1990, p. 346).

### Women and Language

Since the 1970s, research focusing on women and language has made great strides (Tingley 1994; Coates 1993; Tannen 1998a, 1998b, 1995, 1994, 1990; Lakoff 1979, 1975, 1973). Earlier studies, mainly quantitative, focused on women as a biological sex only. More recent studies have moved to qualitative

methods which can take into account cultural dimensions such as femininity and masculinity (Holmes 1997).

Cameron (1995), Coupland and Coupland (1995), Crawford (1995) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1995) have demonstrated that language is used to construct different social identities, and that, in any particular interaction, we use language to construct identities which either express our conformity to or rejection of the mainstream. The women in this study use their language to construct social identities which either accept or reject the mainstream (workplace) and the nonmainstream (home).

Pertinent to the current study, the work of Kramarae (1982), Smith (1979) Labov (1966), and others have established that women in many Western societies are more likely to adopt or to value high status speech forms than men who live in the same nonstandard speech community and hold the same social status. In addition, Trudgill (1972) noted differences between men's and women's perceptions of their own speech. Women were likely to claim higher speech status than they actually exhibited, while men claimed lower status. As Luhman (1990) points out, much debate has ensued about the possibilities of why men and women perceive their status so differently. One theory explained that men found more masculinity, or held a 'macho' view of the nonstandard variety, which may represent 'covert' prestige these men feel toward their native variety. Others have argued that the difference could be explained through the different social connections men and women foster in their speech communities; but no conclusive studies have accounted for the differences.

Others studies such as Lakoff (1975) and Crosby and Nyquist (1977) have hypothesized about the specific linguistic characteristics researchers have associated with women, such as those outlined by Deborah Tannen's work:

- Women ask questions more than men.
- Women use tag questions more than men.  
(That child was misbehaved, wasn't he?)
- Women use qualifiers, adjectives and intensifiers more than men.
- Women apologize by saying "I'm sorry" when an apology is not even warranted. Likewise, women say "thanks" when a thank you is not warranted.
- Women take responsibility for things that go wrong and do so more readily than men.
- Women give criticism in a more supportive, less critical format than men  
(Tannen, 1995, pp. 44-55).
- Women tend to listen while men lecture.
- Women will speak less on a topic of expertise in the presence of men who are non-experts.
- Despite, the reputation that women talk more than men. Men actually speak more often and typically longer than women (Tannen, 1990, pp. 125, 75).

Tannen (1990) discusses the long-standing belief that women do speak "too much" according to many. Colonial America used corporal punishment for women when they were thought to speak too much, and this idea of women speaking more freely and more often than men still pervades a culture whose

research purports a much different phenomenon. That is, there is much more to learn, not only about the difference in language use among men and women, but also about the perceptions of listener's attitudes toward men vs. women.

Citing these and other similar features, Lakoff (1975) hypothesized that there is such a thing as 'women's language'. However, Crosby and Nyquist (1977) concluded that nothing inherently female defined 'women's language', but that the stereotyped roles which society places on women are the cause for the differences in linguistic characteristics. Whatever the underlying causes, three decades of research since Lakoff's now-classic *Language and Women's Place* (1973) have consistently documented differences between the way men and women speak. The women of this study will have to face attitudes based on any speech patterns they display that may be typical of women, as well as those which are associated with their status as AE speakers or speakers of a variety perceived as 'southern.'

To summarize, the studies on women's language establish various phenomena relevant to the current study: women view their own speech as higher status than their male counterparts; men may want more solidarity with lower status speakers; and women exhibit various linguistic characteristics more often than men. This research is important to the current study because these phenomena may come into play in thinking about the ways in which the women in the study construct their various identities. Studies on gender and language may be helpful in placing the current study in context with the existing research, and in planning future research on male participants. Crawford (1995) argues

that there is no preferred method of studying gender and language issues. However, the current study lends itself to qualitative methodology, like other studies which explore cultural dimensions of language and the current study will in turn give breadth to the existing literature.

Finally, like other studies which have sought to give women voice, such as Jonsberg (1995), Blenkey et al's (1997) and Sullivan's (1992), the current study seeks to give voice to women whom Flynn (1997) claims have been "suppressed, marginalized, written out of what counts."

#### Narrative Studies

According to Barbara Hardy, a literary theorist (1968), people "dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative" (p. 5). Stories are within all of us, and historically, many cultures have relied on storytelling for keeping historical records and much more. In such cultures, generation after generation not only learned the art of storytelling, but understood the importance of remembering and sharing stories. Since Appalachia is historically an oral culture, the people have been telling their stories for generations, and as Holmes (1997) asserts, "telling stories is one very explicit means of constructing a particular social identity" (196). Harre (1979), along with Harre and Davies (2006) assert that positioning is always situational. Positioning allows people to find their place, or 'position,' in any given situation and stories are created as part of one's identity to position one's self.

In psychology and sociology, Bruner (1991, 1996) and Gergen and Gergen (1986) are in the forefront as leaders in narrative theory. Like other researchers, they believe that narratives, in both content and form, *are* people's identities. Based on these narrative studies, I expected the participants to share stories, as their heritage is steeped in the storytelling tradition, and I expected them to position themselves within the context of their life experiences based upon the stories they used to define themselves. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, et.al. (1998) believe that "the story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to other by the stories we tell" (p. 7).

In recent years, narrative has been given more credibility in its role as a tool in both teaching and research. In fact, "narrative studies are flourishing as a means of understanding the personal identity, lifestyle, culture and historical world of the narrator" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, et.al., 1998, p. 3). Many fields of study have expanded to include narrative as a valid form of research; evidence of this trend includes storytelling studies, such as Mackall's (1997) literacy studies, and others such Sohn (1999), Clark (2005), Wallace (2004) Royer (1994) and Daniell (1999). Other related titles include medical studies such as Greenhalgh and Hurwitz (1999) and Hunter (1991). The vast possibilities offered by narrative are expressed in the assertion by Greenhalgh and Hurwitz (1999) that "there is no self evident definition of what is relevant or what is irrelevant in a particular narrative. The choice of what to tell and what to omit lies entirely with the

narrator and can be modified, at his or her discretion, by the questions of the listener” (p. 48).

Both Mackell (1997) and Wallace (2004) completed dissertations focusing on narrative and place. Mackell’s (1997) study explores the stories and storytelling traditions of places both he and his students call home, while Wallace’s (2004) work utilizes local narratives to explore three generations of literacy in Appalachian families. Through his analysis of local narratives, Wallace concluded that the participants write for a variety of reasons including writing as an art form, creative writing, recreational writing, writing as a memory aid, and as a substitution when communicating orally is impossible. Although such studies are quite different than my own, they serve to exhibit how the storytelling tradition serves localized studies well, whether these studies focus on literacy or on other issues.

Rose (1990), Villanueva (1993), and Pagnucci (2004) among others have completed narrative studies which have been written in mixed-genre narrative. Villanueva’s (1993) work explores his own journey from poverty to the professional world. The author uses mixed-genre narrative to relay his personal journey. Rose (1990) also uses a mixed-genre method in presenting autobiographical information, then turns to a more academic discourse in later sections of the book as the author explores the marginalization of students who enter the academy under-prepared.

The current study has some common elements with the aforementioned studies, particularly as its focus on a traditionally marginalized group who most

probably entered the academy under-prepared. Although these women may no longer be challenged by issues of literacy or succeeding in the academy, their stories will reflect the challenges they have faced in their journey to become successful. The presentation of the study's results, like those from Rose's (1990) work, will include both narrative excerpts from the interviews and interpretive sections phrased in the language of academic discourse.

### Chapter Summary

Although my study varies greatly from the ones discussed in this chapter, the chapter outlines a cross-section of the studies which are the conceptual basis for the current study. Previous linguistic and sociolinguistic studies in language variation, Appalachian English and linguistic discrimination set the stage for the research context of the current study. The women of the study are speakers of a vernacular which is both easily identifiable by most listeners and associated with low social status. Validation by linguists of AE's worth has changed little for contemporary AE speakers, and the women of the study may still find validation in the professional world a challenge. It is important, in carrying out a study of this nature, to keep in mind the literature on gender and language, as the existing literature addresses differences between the ways in which women and men speak, as well as the social expectations and negative stereotypes associated with gender identity. Lastly, I have taken into account studies on narrative, since narrative will play an important part in my attempt to listen to these women's stories and give voice to this historically marginalized group.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN: QUESTIONS, METHODS AND ETHICS

#### Research Questions

The research questions for this study are repeated here:

1. What language attitudes, if any, motivate professional women from Appalachia to balance two language varieties (AE and SAE)? What attitudes do they, themselves, hold toward these two varieties?
2. What types of struggles, based upon their membership within two different speech communities, do these women perceive in such life events as job searches, and daily encounters with co-workers, employers, or others who play important roles in their lives?
3. What pivotal events in their lives are the cognitive basis for their language attitudes, making them conscious of their language use and aware of the possible need to balance AE and SAE?
4. What perceptions do these women hold in regard to the place of bidialectism in the professional world?
5. How do these women cope with the linguistic challenges of their lives?

As outlined in Chapter One, the present study relied on interviews as a main source of data, backed up by written documents and researcher journals. The subsequent sections cover the following points in more detail: Description and Selection of Participants, Overview of Participant Activities, Methods of Data Collection, Methods of Analysis, Researcher Bias, Validity and Audit Trail.

#### Description and Selection of Participants

Michael Patton (2002), in *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, offers ten strategies for making decisions concerning sources that will support the researchers' questions, and also outlines ways to narrow one's list of potential participants. My study followed his criteria for 'homogeneous sampling,'

a type of purposive sampling often used in qualitative studies, because it “focuses, reduces variation, simplifies variation, [and] simplifies analysis...” (p. 185). Since the research focused on language attitudes of professional women native to the Blue Ridge Mountains, I chose women who were educated at the graduate level, as I was interested in how these women felt about adapting to Standard American English education and how that adaptation played a role in their speech and other areas of their lives. This focus led me to interview 12 women who meet the following four criteria: each was (1) a master’s or doctoral graduate; (2) a full-time working professional; (3) a rural native of the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains; and (4) a resident in either the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina or an urban area outside the region, with equal numbers drawn from each group. For better understanding of criteria 2-4, further definitions of terms are offered here. A ‘full-time working professional’ was defined as a woman working forty hours per week, self-employed outside the home, or a ‘full-time’ contractual employee. A ‘rural native’ of the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains was born in the defined area and had lived there until the age of eighteen. The Western North Carolina Tourism Association (n.d.) identifies ten counties in the Blue Ridge Mountain Region: Buncombe, Burke, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, and Yancey. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (n.d.), all ten of these Blue Ridge Mountain counties of North Carolina are federally-designated Appalachian counties.



Figure 3. The Ten Studied Counties of the Blue Ridge Mountain Range

Source: The Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. *Western North Carolina Tourism Association*. <http://www.ncblueridge.com/> 4 December 2005.

Since the Western North Carolina participants were considered rural participants, Buncombe county residents were excluded from the study since Buncombe County is the home of the largest Western North Carolina city, Asheville, NC, which has a population of 68,889 (US Census 2000b). The residency requirement was used in order to study women both living in the region and those who had chosen to move outside of the region. That is to say, six

participants were women who have chosen to live in a rural area of the Appalachian region, and six were women who had chosen to live in urban areas outside this region. This selection process was imperative in order to obtain the perspectives of women living both in and out of their native area.

Since the research was focusing on the language attitudes of these women, I selected the first two participants: one rural and one urban, through the homogeneous sampling method mentioned above, which has also been called 'purposeful sampling' or 'criterion-based selection.' According to Maxwell's (1996) definition, purposeful sampling is called for in the type of study envisioned here:

[T]his is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices...Selecting those times, settings, and individuals that can provide researchers with the information they need in order to answer their research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions. (p. 70)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that for certain research goals purposeful sampling is more effective than "random or representative" sampling which "suppress(es)...deviant cases" (p. 40). The authors purport that a variety of "realities" is more likely to be uncovered by using purposeful sampling (p. 40). As Kidder and Judd (1986) point out, the underlying assumption with purposeful sampling is that, with good judgment, the researcher has the ability to handpick

the participants, thus creating samples that are satisfactory for the researcher's needs (p. 154). This method allowed me to begin developing my participant group appropriately. However, after interviewing the first two participants, I used 'snowball sampling,' asking each of them to identify participants they knew which met the criteria and might be willing to participate in the study. In this process, social networks of participants within the study were utilized in order to recruit potential participants (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 32). Other comparable network studies using this procedure for participant selection include the research of Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes (1999) on Eastern US island communities, and Labov's (1972b) study of the language of young black males in Harlem.

Snowball sampling, a nonprobability sampling method, is often used when a sample characteristic is rare (Trochim 2002). Although I would not consider Appalachian women who have advanced degrees and successful careers to be *rare*, I did find it difficult to locate such women outside of my own local community and my personal acquaintances, to participate in the study.

After each of the first two interviews, I asked the participants to give me names of others I might talk to. This began the snowball sampling process. Then, I continued with the next participants, asking them the same question, with the result outlined by Patton (2002), that "by asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger" (p. 237); following this method, I was able to select appropriate information-rich participants. I was careful to solicit several names from each participant and make efforts to obtain the best cross-

section possible in relation to economic background, geographical location, career choice, and similar factors.

### Overview of Participant Activities

Once I identified possible participants, I contacted them via phone or email, taking care to describe the study in depth, particularly the responsibilities of the participants as well as the researcher. After discussing the study with each potential participant, if she was to participate, I asked her to allow me to complete a biographical data form to insure that she met all the necessary criteria. After completing the biographical data form and confirming that she met all criteria, I scheduled a brief meeting in order to have the participant sign the IRB protocol consent form (see Appendix B), which includes details of the study's activities as well as assurances that the participant is free to withdraw at any time. During this meeting, I allotted time for the prospective participant to address any concerns or questions she had. In addition, I allowed time for a written biographical statement to be collected. At the end of this meeting, I set up an individual interview, after again allotting time to answer concerns or questions the participant had at that time.

Once the first interview focusing on the participant's life history was completed, a second interview was scheduled. The second interview, focusing on workplace experiences of the participants, was followed by a final individual interview. The final interview focused on the meaning of the participant's experience and her attitudes toward the future. After all individual interviews were transcribed, and the transcriptions were analyzed, I invited participants to gather

for a focus interview. After the transcriptions were completed, I sent transcriptions to the participants for member checks. Likewise, Chapter Five, which includes several of the women's stories, was sent to the participants for a member check. The following sections will focus more closely on the data collection methods.

### Methods of Data Collection

In order to obtain the needed data for this study, I gathered biographical data using a brief biographical data form; the main instruments were writing samples, individual and focus interviews and a reflective journal.

#### *Biographical Data Form*

Background information was gathered from the participants in two ways. First, they were asked to fill out a brief form with biographical information. The purpose of the form was twofold. It allowed me to confirm that the potential participants met all of the necessary criteria; it also allowed me to obtain all contact information needed for future use and helped me familiarize myself briefly with the participants' history (Appendix C).

#### *Writing Samples*

Next, participants were asked to submit an informal written statement about themselves prior to the interview. Each woman was instructed to write a journal style response, at least two paragraphs in length, but not limited to that length, in response to the following prompt: "Based upon the elements in your life that you feel define your identity, write a brief description of yourself. Think about the experiences and values that you feel have made you the person you are

today. Please write at least two paragraphs, but feel free to expand as you wish. There is no limit on length” (Appendix D). This writing sample gave insight to the women, their lives, and their perception of themselves prior to the initial interview. This information assisted me in tailoring the interview questions appropriately. In addition, it revealed, to some degree, whether and how these women consider their language variety, native heritage, religious beliefs etc., to be integral elements of their identities prior to the interview, which obviously focused on language issues.

### *Individual Interviews*

Three rounds of individual qualitative interviews were conducted as outlined by Siedman (1998); each interview lasted approximately one hour. As Siedman suggests, the first interview was a focused life history, the second focused on the detailed experiences on the participant, and the third allowed for reflection on the meaning of the participant’s experiences and how the experiences helped to shape her future language choices. Each interview was a conversation with a purpose, including

here and now construction of [persons], events, activities...feelings, motivations, claims, concerns and other entities; reconstructions of such entities as experience in the past: projections of such entities as they are expected to be experienced in the future: verification, emendation and extension of information. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 268)

Since qualitative interviews are emergent in nature, each progressed differently, but all were guided by predetermined topical questions (Appendices E, F and G). I needed to use topical interviews, which, according to Rubin & Rubin (1995) assisted in my understanding of a particular event (p. 6). Therefore, each interview moved from a general conversation to a semi-structured, topical interview. Following Seidman's (1998) interviewing strategy, I designed the interview guides to cover three major topics: participants' life histories in relation to their personal language journeys, their workplace experiences, and the meaning of their experiences as they relate to their views of nonstandard vs. Standard American English. This design assisted my goal of representing "the world of [my] interviewees accurately, vividly and convincingly" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 261) and created a vast amount of data so that I could "select from many quotes, examples and illustrations that make [my] case most convincing" (p. 261). Possibly most important, I used the interviews to allow the "respondent to move back and forth in time—to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). With the permission of each participant, the interviews were taped and accompanied by field notes which assisted with the data analysis.

The initial interviews were designed to be conducted approximately one week after the writing sample was collected. I had planned to analyze the writing assignment prior to the first interview. However, due to the participant's hectic schedules, the writing samples were sometimes given to me just before the first interview. Therefore, I waited and analyzed all of the writing samples after the

initial interview. This was valuable as I focused on the dominant themes within the writing and was able to create an overview of the participants' identities in Chapter Five.

All of the interviews consisted of many stories to illustrate the participants' points: "the language of 'storytelling' is less intimidating to nonresearchers than the language of 'case studies' or 'ethnography,' words that sound heavy and academic" (Patton, 2002, pg. 198). The participants were made to feel at ease when sharing their stories with me, rather than having the sense that they were being viewed as a 'case study.' This was particularly appropriate in a culture steeped in storytelling, and where most natives are talented in the art of storytelling, but are often wary of outsiders. By encouraging participants to tell me their stories, I encouraged them to express a broad range of their experiences and feelings.

Immediately following each of the interviews, I wrote field notes, trying to capture the reality of the interview session as clearly as possible. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) stress the importance of completing field notes immediately after interviews in order to capture the important nuances through detail: "over time, people forget and simplify experience; notes composed several days after observation tend to be summarized and stripped of rich, nuanced detail" (p. 40). In order to ensure accuracy and detail in my field notes, I worked diligently to complete them immediately following each of my interviews, including the focus interview.

### *Focus Group*

Upon completion of all individual interviews, I conducted a final focus interview. According to Patton (2002), focus interviews typically include six to ten people of similar backgrounds. The focus interview was optional for participants, and since the study's group of twelve participants is just above the ideal maximum number usually involved in a focus interview, I planned for probable attrition. Realistically speaking, some of the participants were simply unable to attend the focus interview; however, I tried to be accommodating in order to have as many participants as possible involved. Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest an upper range of twelve, even though this number might not be optimum. Thus, I was prepared for all participants to attend. (p. 84). However, with attrition, five participants actually attended.

Focus interviews usually last one to two hours. I planned for a two-hour interview in order to allot enough time for a larger number of participants. This interview session was integral to my study, in that participants heard comments and stories from the other participants and expanded upon their own ideas (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 386), as well as commented on those of other participants.

Watts & Ebbutt (1987) suggests that the research should facilitate an environment for the participants to exchange comprehensive views by being able to speak their minds and respond to others' ideas. This exchange of views allowed for a group climate that the participants used "to express views and

feelings which if voiced in a person-to-person interview might sound selfish or intolerant, and would therefore be repressed” (Abrams, 1959, p. 502).

According to Patton (2002) focus interviews have several advantages which are relevant for this study:

- This would be a cost-effective method of data collection because within the two-hour interview, I was able to obtain information from all twelve participants.
- Data quality would be enhanced by interactions among the participants. Krueger and Casey (2000) note that participants often provide checks and balances for extreme or false views.
- The extent of relative consistency, shared views and extreme diversity can be assessed fairly quickly.
- As social animals, humans tend to find focus groups enjoyable (Patton, 2002, p. 386). This focus interview, held in an informal context, would give the participants an opportunity to meet one another, which should prove to be a satisfying process.

However, focus interviews, like other forms of data collection, also present disadvantages; these include the following, adapted from Patton (2002):

- The number of questions asked is greatly restricted in the group setting.
- Individual response time is limited in order for everyone to have ample opportunity to respond.

- Monitoring the interview can be challenging for the researcher, who must have considerable knowledge of group processes and must maintain control so that one or two participants do not dominate the session.
- Participants who have a minority perspective may silence themselves in an effort to avoid negative reactions from other group members.
- Participants, although having similar backgrounds, work better in focus interviews if they are strangers to each other, (which was not entirely the case given the 'snowballing' technique used here to identify participants).
- Poor topics for focus interviews include controversial and highly personal issues, a point which had to be kept in mind given the nature of the current study.
- Focus interviews, unlike other qualitative methods, usually take place outside of the natural setting where social interaction occurs.
- Confidentiality cannot be insured (Patton, 2002, p. 386-387).

To this list of possible drawbacks, Krueger (1994) adds that micro-analysis of subtle differences is difficult.

Careful planning was used to avoid many of these disadvantages. At least some of these disadvantages can be countered. For instance, I studied the group process and focus interviewing in order to help me choose few, but pertinent questions, and serve appropriately as a monitor for the session. The topics, although personal, were not highly personal or controversial within the group who participated. Furthermore, only some participants were acquainted with one another; during the selection process, I had excluded family members,

colleagues and close friends, focusing on acquaintances of participants during the networking process of my snowball sampling. In short, the setting felt as comfortable and natural as possible.

The focus interview took place in a retreat-like setting. Participants were invited to attend an overnight retreat weekend, where they could attend the focus interview, followed by dinner and an overnight stay. The focus interview took place at the Brevard College Guest House at no cost to participants. This allowed accommodations for participants who live far away to attend the focus interview without putting undue strain on individual budgets. It also allowed for further informal reflection the morning after the focus interview, when at least some participants were able to interact before they traveled back to their home areas. However, I kept those who have time restrictions in mind.

We gathered in the Guest House, a small cottage on the edge of campus, and five participants were able to attend. A researcher assistant was available for note taking purposes, but the participants chose to have an informal, somewhat intimate, conversation on the screened porch. I kept notes during the focus interview, and the interview was followed by a dinner. The focus interviews and in-depth notes were used to enhance the stories, attitudes, and examples which had been shared during our earlier one-on-one interviews. By placing the focus interview as the first and most important event of their stay, participants were able to attend only the focus interview session without placing undue strain on their time. Of the five participants, three were rural and two were urban. After the

focus interview, two stayed for dinner. The focus interview lasted for approximately 2 hours, with casual conversation following for about 30 minutes.

### *Reflective Journal*

I kept a reflective journal, which Lincoln & Guba (1985) define as “a kind of diary in which the investigator on a daily basis, or as needed, records a variety of information about *self*...and *method*” (p. 327). This allowed me to incorporate research decisions and challenges encountered during the study within the text of the dissertation. Citing Lincoln & Guba again, “the journal provides information about methodological decisions made and the reasons” for those decisions (p. 327), for both are important to the auditor. My journal consisted of three parts as outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985):

- (1) the daily schedule and logistics of the study;
- (2) a personal diary that provides the opportunity for catharsis, for reflection upon what is happening in terms of one’s own value and interests, and for speculation about growing insights; and
- (3) a methodological log in which methodological decisions and accompanying rationales are recorded (p. 327).

By covering all three topics within my reflective journal, I provided a document that served two main purposes, providing (1) an account of my feelings, decisions, etc. to be incorporated in an appropriate way into the write-up of the dissertation; and (2) a means to create increase trustworthiness and assist with the audit trail.

Smith (1999), in a study of problem drinkers in Scotland, utilized a reflective journal during her interpretative approach to the data analysis of six in-depth interviews. During the analysis, she created metaphors as a vehicle for conveying the participants' stories. In doing so, she kept records of the intuitive, creative process in her journal. In her article, which reflects upon the process, she concludes that "the researcher's self-awareness, fostered by the use of a...journal, is mirrored by the participants' ability to reflect on the final interpretations of their stories". The journal became "a valuable source of data and...a means of enhancing ethical and methodologic rigour". This type of journaling was an integral part of my own study. I made my entries on a regular basis, after each interview, and on an as-needed basis, such as when making decisions about follow-up questions.

Heppner and Heppner (2004) support journaling during the qualitative research process because it helps the researcher to reflect on feelings and thoughts concerning the process. This reflection also assists the researcher in overcoming obstacles which hinder progress (p. 8). My journal served both as a form of data collection and as support for the triangulation process.

#### Methods of Analysis

My role within this study was that of researcher as interpreter, because this role allowed me to "recognize and substantiate new meaning" (Stake, 1995, p. 97). As researcher, I tried to recognize phenomena and connect them to existing knowledge. Of course, the dimension I planned to operate on was necessarily *subjective*. As Goetz and LeCompte (1981) assert,

Ethnographers who infer cultural and behavioral patterns as viewed from the perspective of the group under investigation must use strategies to elicit and analyze subjective data...The goal is *to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualize their own experience and world view*. This contrasts with an objective approach, *which applies conceptual categories and explanatory relationships, readily visible to an external observer*, to the analysis of unique populations. (p. 334)

A researcher doing naturalistic research is engaging in an activity that is “inductive, generative, constructive and subjective” (p. 334). These adjectives assisted me in deciding the importance of analyzing my data with the constant-comparative method. This method can be used as “a means of deriving (grounding) theory, not simply a means of processing data” (p. 339). During this process, I continued to keep in mind the four questions that Hollway and Jefferson (2000) claim are imperative when analyzing any qualitative data: 1) What do I notice? 2) Why do I notice what I notice? 3) How can I interpret what I notice? 4) How can I know that my interpretation is the ‘right’ one? (p. 55).

The analysis was also guided by the advice of Rubin and Rubin (2004) regarding the importance of identifying emerging themes in qualitative data. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts assisted me in answering the original research questions and in enriching the value of the data that emerged from the interviews. I coded interviews “for themes, concepts and ideas, but [I] . . .also code[d] for the names of...people, major projects, dates, stages, or steps

of a process, or just about anything that [I thought] might be useful in tying things together” (Rubin & Rubin, 2004, p. 241). Coding forced me to look at “each detail, each quote, to see what it adds to [my] understanding” (p. 251). Therefore, “when [I was] looking for underlying meaning and themes, it [was] useful to pick out and analyze stories. Stories...are refined versions of events that may have been condensed or altered to make a point indirectly” (p. 251).

Patton (2002) identifies narrative analysis or narratology as a method of qualitative analysis that is used in the social sciences, in (interpretive) literary criticism, and in literary nonfiction (p.133) ; narrative analysis “focuses on stories as a particular form of qualitative inquiry” (p. 198). Patton places two fundamental questions at the center of narrative analysis:

- What does this narrative or story reveal about the person and world from which it came?
  - How can this narrative be interpreted so that it provides an understanding of and illuminates the life and culture that created it?
- (p. 115)

Patton also points out that stories shared during the research process may be of utmost importance, because “personal narratives, family stories, suicide notes, graffiti, literary nonfiction and life histories reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences” (p. 115). As I employed thematic analysis of the data, I was looking to identify patterns within the stories of the participants to better understand the cultural and social phenomena associated with their language attitudes and identity.

Lastly, I reviewed and analyzed the reflective journal to assist me in the data analysis process, in that I reviewed the decisions I made and the reasons for those decisions, as well as any stumbling blocks, successes, etc. that I found particularly important.

The data is presented through narrative analysis and is presented in the following chapters of the dissertation. Chapter Five is organized thematically based upon the themes which came to light during the analysis: life changing events, language changes, current attitudes toward AE and SAE, bidialectism in the professional world, linguistic challenges, and finding balance. Gubrium and Holstein (1997) note the importance of interpreting participants' stories, keeping the participants' voice, and keeping the stories, "their own stories" (p. 28). During the writing process, I was conscious of telling the participants' stories. It was imperative to remember that the stories told were the participants' own stories, not mine. I served as the vehicle for my participants' stories, and not as a filter or editor for the perceptions they shared with me.

#### Researcher Bias

Like most researchers, I had biases going into my study, biases which needed to be acknowledged and addressed. My assumptions were based upon my experience as a professional Appalachian woman and include the following.

1. The participants will have experience with and be able to identify linguistic discrimination.
2. The stories and responses collected from the participants will accurately reflect both their life experiences and their language attitudes.

3. Participants will be able to accurately remember what their perceptions were during high school, undergraduate and graduate school as well as during their early careers.
4. Participants will answer the questions openly and honestly.
5. Since I have experienced marginalization from linguistic discrimination, I expect the participants have experienced similar marginalization.

Researcher bias cannot be avoided; but it can be minimized when the researcher is aware of the biases. So as the researcher, I knew I had certain expectations, and I strove to keep those from intruding on my participants' viewpoints, which I was trying to represent as accurately as possible. By being aware of my own biases from the outset, and by making every effort to prevent their intruding on my reporting of the interview responses, I worked to insure that my findings would reflect the participants' own stories, not colored by my own preconceptions.

### Validity

Validity within a qualitative study refers to both description and explanation. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) ask, "Is the explanation credible?" One way that I ensured that my explanation was credible is that I utilized a researcher assistant, Pat Shores, in transcribing the interviews. We worked together for three weeks discussing various interpretations as we listened to the tapes together. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that other ways to ensure as much credibility as possible are through triangulation, member checks and audit trails. In order for the current study to have fewer concerns with validity, all three of their suggestions were employed.

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation is important in qualitative studies, as it assists with internal validity. Denzin (1978) outlines four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. I used methodological triangulation, as defined by Mathison (1988):

methodological triangulation is “the use of multiple methods in the examination of a social phenomenon” (p. 14). As Holliday (2002) suggests, various methods of collecting data such as the writing samples, interviews and reflective journal, enabled me to build a “system of interconnected data” which enabled me to “triangulate between various aspects of the same thing” (p. 75). Eisner (1991) argues that, since qualitative research may allow the researcher to be neglectful and interpret the data based upon her own assumptions and interests, “it is especially important not only to use multiple types of data, but also to consider disconfirming evidence and contradictory interpretations or appraisals” when presenting research (p.111). Pitman and Maxwell (1992) agree that “triangulation is an essential validation technique for conclusions and recommendations” (p. 763). Other researchers concur that triangulation is essentially an aid which assists in the elimination of bias and the dismissal of rival explanations which are plausible (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1978; Webb, Campbell, Schwarts & Sechrest, 1966). The current study was carefully designed to ensure proper triangulation and lessen the risk of researcher bias.

### *Member Checks*

Member checks were carried out with each participant after completion of the three individual interviews as well as the manuscript for Chapter Five. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) support the idea that researchers need to find one way or another for participants to review the material (p. 216). In constant-comparative methods of analysis, the member checks assist the researcher in ensuring that the material produced for analysis (interview transcriptions) accurately depicts the reality of both the researcher and the participant(s). Therefore, the member checks ensured that the information given by the participants during the interview sessions was clearly and accurately represented in the study.

### *Audit Trail*

Developing an appropriate audit trail was also important to the validity of my study. An audit trail, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), should provide adequate information so that researchers interested in reconstructing the process can do so (p. 230). Halpern (1983) developed a list of six types of documentation to be included in an audit trail (reported in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.p. 319-320):

- raw data (biographical data sheets, writing samples, interview tapes),
- data reduction and analysis products (interview transcriptions),
- data reconstruction and synthesis products (reflective journal, field notes),
- process notes (field notes, reflective journal),

- material relating to intentions and dispositions (reflective journal, e-mail correspondences),
- and instrument development information (notes concerning interview questions/reflective journal).

I preserved the interview tapes, reflective journal and e-mail correspondences with my committee members and participants. In addition, I created a notebook with a section dedicated to the data collected from each participant in the study. Each section contains the individual participants' biographical data form, writing sample, interview transcriptions, and member check forms. Information concerning each woman's participation in the study will be made available to my committee, or to future researchers, upon request.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I present my analysis of the data collected during my study. By reviewing the biographical data forms and interviewing the women for the first time, I was able to appreciate the unique qualities of each woman, which are highlighted in the first section of this chapter. In the second section, based upon a thematic discourse analysis of their writing samples, which were discussed in Chapter 4, I discuss the women's similarities as demonstrated in their writing. The remaining sections explore various linguistic issues in their lives, including life changing events, language changes, current language attitudes, bidialectism, linguistic challenges, and balancing two language varieties. These sections are based upon analysis of the individual interviews with each participant and the focus interview. Although the focus group data was extremely valuable to the study, the majority of that data was an expansion of stories or feelings expressed earlier in the individual interviews; for this reason, I refer to the interviews collectively, unless there is a reason to delineate the focus group data from the individual interviews. During these interviews I collected the participants' stories, and these narratives are interwoven in the text of this chapter in an effort to give voice to this group of historically marginalized group of women. Each story is complex and presents a myriad of issues related to the participants' language use.

### Meeting These Women Rooted in the Blue Ridge Mountains

This section introduces the women who so graciously welcomed me into their lives. To more fully understand the language attitudes of these women, it is imperative to first learn how they identify themselves. I used the writing samples discussed in Chapter Four as introductions to these women and their identities during the research process, analyzing them thematically to help define each woman as part of the larger participant group. This section seeks to present a vivid portrait of the participants. While providing a rich description of these complex women seems a daunting task to me, using their own words from the essays I have collected seems to be the most accurate and intimate way to present them to readers of this dissertation.

As I began my participant selection, I used purposeful sampling to identify two participants: one rural and one urban. I selected Suzanne, a chaplain in my hometown of Brevard, North Carolina, and Adrian, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Atlanta, Georgia, who grew up in the Brevard area. Knowing that these two participants have strong ties to the local area, but attended schools outside of the region, I considered these women not only wonderful participants themselves, but also as rich sources for future participant recommendations during the snowball sampling process. From them, I collected names of women from all walks of life; i.e. various ages, professions and educational backgrounds.

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen pseudonyms representative of the area to represent the participants. As I collected names for the study, one

phenomenon became clear. The women of this study were all going to be Scots-Irish women of Transylvania County. Although I had originally stipulated residence in a nine-county region as discussed in Chapter 4 as a criterion for participation, I realized as the study progressed that all of the potential participants recommended to me were rooted in some way to Transylvania County. Even the urban participants, who all currently live in different urban regions, were born and raised in Transylvania County. This phenomenon is important as all of these women discussed place as an important aspect in their lives and talked throughout the data collection process about their home. The importance they attached to place was embodied in their recommendations, as they seem to have kept their closest ties to others from their own county.

Bethany, a local full-time farmer who holds a master's degree in public administration, was the recipient of a full scholarship that allowed her to engage in extensive world travel during her undergraduate studies. Still, she writes:

Over the course of my twenty-five years, I have traveled thousands of miles around the world, met hundreds of people in many walks of life, and have always wanted to come back home when my journey ended. Home does not necessarily refer to my parents' brick house on top of a hill overlooking a farm along the river. It is also the surrounding community and the sights, smells, feelings and emotions that are all bundled up in the memories that I have made throughout my lifetime in that place...I am a child of the farm,

even though I love to explore other countries and learn about foreign lands. I love nothing better than having my hands in the soil tending to the needs of newly sprouted plants in the garden or working with a horse that has just been born and is experiencing, for the first time, the touch of a human.

Although Bethany's connection to the land is more intimate than that of the other participants, the others certainly reveal a connection to the place they all, in some way, call home.

Adrian lives in Atlanta with her husband, a native of Charlotte, and she jokes that he often reminds her: "You can take the girl out of the mountains, but you can't take the mountains out of the girl." This twist on an old cliché does reveal the connection many of these participants, including the ones who have migrated outside the region, have to the area. Suzanne, who ministers to the spiritual needs of people in Western North Carolina, takes great pride in her connection to the area, and I was honored to hear one of her sermons in May 2006 that illustrates this connection. In the sermon, Suzanne drew a comparison between Mount Pisgah of the Bible and Mount Pisgah of our very own mountains; her oral delivery revealed her native vernacular as she extended the syllables containing the long *i* sound, "*I* have lived in these parts most of *my life*." Being Appalachian and having much experience with our connection to place, I was still surprised by the obvious links to place revealed by the participants, and I grew to understand even more clearly how my own study, inspired by my endearing affection for this place, my home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North

Carolina, had led me to twelve professional women tied in some clear way to my own Transylvania County.

Chapters two and three discuss the historical lack of interaction between the various towns within the region, which can be attributed to the geographic boundaries and the language variation separating people who live in neighboring towns, valleys and ridges. This clustering of participants seems to confirm descriptions that emphasize these divisions. For clearly, these women are rooted not just to the Blue Ridge Mountains but specifically to Transylvania County.

It is imperative to see these women first as individuals and then as members of the study. The following descriptions focus on their individuality and serve as their introduction. The first six descriptions are of the rural participants and will focus on their individuality. Each time I begin a new story or example, the participants' names will be followed by the descriptor [r] as a rural participant indicator.

Suzanne, 37, an ordained Methodist minister native to Henderson County, now ministers to the youth of Transylvania County. She attended a prestigious private school to obtain her Master's in Divinity and has fulfilled her goal of moving back to the mountains and ministering to the people of Western North Carolina.

Kaitlyn, 25, a public relations coordinator, is the youngest of five children. Kaitlyn's perspective on life is unique, as she was born to parents in their forties who had already raised four children. When Kaitlyn was born, her siblings were ages 18 to 21. They grew up with no electrical power and no running water, and

Kaitlyn only identifies with this life through their stories. She feels she belongs to a different generation than her siblings, and she was raised almost like an only child.

Sharon, 29, a home health care social worker, is one of two participants who have spent their entire lives in the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. She is quite at home in the mountains, and her husband's family, like hers, has lived in the area for generations. She has one son and is a dedicated wife and mother.

Dana, 48, the chief financial officer for a local company, is a single mother to two children. When Dana was four, her father died, and her mother became a single mother. Dana's mother only had a 5<sup>th</sup> grade education, and life proved difficult for Dana and her brother. Completing her education was important to Dana and has been an asset as she, like her mother, found herself a single mom.

Bethany, 25, a full-time farmer, was raised on her parents' farm and finds herself enamored with the land and its ability to sustain life. When we met, her mare had just given birth to a colt, and she lovingly referred to it as "her baby." Her fiancée shares this love of the land as he is a high school agriculture teacher.

Norma, 54, is an adult services social worker. Married with two daughters, Norma, like Sharon, has lived in the mountains all of her life. Norma spends much of her time as the caregiver for her mother, 87, who holds a master's degree in English. Norma takes great pride in her mother's achievements and

glows when talking about the accomplishments her mother made as an Appalachian woman in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Norma is the only woman in the study that was not first-generation college educated.

The following descriptions of the six urban participants, all of whom were raised in Transylvania County and have migrated to various urban areas of the South, focuses on their uniqueness. Each participant still has family and/or friends in the mountains and comes home to visit quite often, but otherwise they are quite different, and these differences are certainly worth noting. Each time I begin a new story or example, the participants' names will be followed by the descriptor [u] to identify her as an urban participant indicator.

Trish, 40, is a lawyer in Winston-Salem. She is admittedly a private person who is often unsure of herself. She welcomed me into her home where she lives with her husband, a native of New York, and their two daughters. They love to travel, and when I interviewed her, they had just returned home from an Alaskan cruise.

Mia, 52, lives and works in Raleigh, North Carolina. She was raised on a farm and was quite active in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) during high school. FFA was not a popular endeavor for gifted young women at her high school, so this interest often led to conflict before she continued her education at a prestigious, private school. Now a practicing psychologist, she still beams when talking about visiting the family farm and takes pride that her only child has grown to love the land during visits "back home" with grandparents.

Callie, 31, a family physician, wife and mother of a toddler, had recently located to Anderson, South Carolina. We sat on her deck and enjoyed the view of her neighbors' horse farm as her toddler pointed to the horses saying, "hos, hos." Callie found great joy in the sound of one of her child's first words. Her husband is also a physician, and Callie is a physician with teaching responsibilities. She successfully juggles a myriad of responsibilities with ease.

Adrian, 31, is a 7<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Atlanta, Georgia. She teaches World Regions and after four years, is finally quite comfortable with the material. She loves to travel and does so often with her family even though her schedule is relentless. A wife and mother to an entering Kindergarten student, Adrian, along with her husband, works full-time, yet they spend much of their "free" time working at a newly opened family business. Her time is rarely her own.

Leigh, 29, is a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher living in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Before marrying, her history of perfectionism led her to have several physical disorders; however, she now basks in her success and also finds a way to take life as it comes. This newfound happiness and acceptance is only highlighted by the joy she has found in the birth of her first daughter, now a toddler, and her love of family life.

Ali, 32, a nurse practitioner living in Charlotte, North Carolina, is proud of being the first-generation college graduate in her family. She and her mother lived alone for many years after her parents' divorce, and Ali takes great pride in her mother's training during those years. Her mother taught her to "always be

able to support herself.” Ali is a dedicated wife and mother, and she takes great pride in her ability to solely support her family if ever necessary.

The previous descriptions give only a glimpse of the participants, yet these brief descriptions are important tools for the reader in differentiating the women and their nuances as I begin to discuss them as part of the larger study group.

### *Common Themes of Identity*

Community, like place, plays an important role in the lives of these women. Adrian [u] summarizes the importance of community on the day-to-day life of the area: “Growing up in a small tight-knit community fostered a reliance on family, church, school and friends. With the nearest mall or decent movie theater 45 minutes away, whatever was going on in ‘town’ was the biggest excitement around.” Asheville, a 45-minute drive from Brevard, was the only urban area easily accessible to these women while they were growing up; therefore, most of the participants stayed close to home and participated in the local activities of the community. This factor had a great impact on the local culture and did, in fact, place a great emphasis on family, friends and church for social, emotional and entertainment needs. This sense of community was notably apparent in the lives of the rural participants as well as in the early years of the urban participants.

Although place seemed to be the most identifiable connection between these women, many other themes emerged during the analysis of their essays. All of these women identified themselves as Christians who hold tightly to their faith. The participants, including those who have migrated to urban areas, reflect the strong Protestant beliefs so often associated with the area. Ali [u] wrote, “God

is in my heart and is with me on a daily basis. Just having that rock is the foundation of my family.” Callie [u] also placed her faith in Christ as a major component of her identity: “The most important identity in my life is being a follower of Christ...I have tried to base my actions on the leadership of the Holy Spirit.”

Direct comments about God or Christ were not the only way that these women expressed their faith. All of the participants discussed the satisfaction found in their professions in relation to helping people, and four specifically referred to their choice of professions as a calling. Callie continued to discuss her faith during her interviews, citing her belief that God had called her to be a physician during her time in undergraduate school, and had shown her how to fulfill her calling to help others. Likewise, Leigh [u], a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, discussed her ideology as it pertained to an inner conflict: “Becoming a teacher was a tough decision for me. I always thought that I would be in a more prestigious job; however, I strongly believe that teaching is a calling.” Even the participants who did not specifically connect their professions to their faith still discussed their faith and the importance of helping others and then included this ideology in their descriptions of their profession. Trish [u], whose profession as a lawyer is not known for altruism, still reflected upon her professional satisfaction: “I have helped to change lives and am proud to feel that I have made a difference.” In both direct and implied ways, the essays illustrated strong Christian ideology throughout.

Christian values and morals passed down from one generation to another were also an important theme within the essays. Trish also writes, “My grandparents instilled values in me that sometimes even my parents could not. They taught me the importance of family life and the security that a wonderful home life, education and family can give.” Analyzing her essay helped me realize the clear connection that faith has to these women’s lives. Some participants synthesized their family and professional ties to illustrate their idea of helping others and giving back to the community. Norma, a rural social worker, recognized her parents’ role in her current belief system: “My basic core values were instilled by my parents, a strong work ethic, high moral values, strong religious training, a sense of empathy of others and a helping attitude by seeing my parents’ example.” This family connection, introduced by many in descriptions of their upbringing and Christian values, is important in other ways as well. Kaitlyn [r], a local public relations coordinator, described her family connection and its importance to her personal identity:

I spent my entire childhood here, learning about where, and, more importantly, who I come from....I have found that home and my identity rest in the people who love me...I am an Appalachian daughter and a vessel for the life stories of my family.

Kaitlyn eloquently recognized the gifts of her family while also acknowledging her own role within the family in relation to the great community. Nuances of place, family, storytelling, and heritage are all found in her words, which echo so many

of the participants' ideas of identity. Norma [r] also synthesized several elements of her identity including family, values and profession: "I'm currently a caretaker for my mother who has brought home so many things I've helped other families with over the years." It was apparent in the essays that family ties were of great value to these women, not just in the context of their past, but also in their current ideas of identity.

While the participants did talk of family as a whole or refer to parents and grandparents as couples, there was a definite connection with female role models and their specific gifts, these generational gifts from mother to daughter. Dana, who works locally as a chief financial officer, speaks of the dedication her mother exhibited as a single mother after Dana's father's death. "[My mother] has always placed the needs of others before her own needs." Ali, also raised by a single mother, gives her mother credit for always telling her "to be able to take care of [herself]." As a reader, I sensed the strong female ancestors these women credit for their own strength and commitment to family.

This dedication to family was illustrated in each woman's commitment to her own family. Roles as wife and mother were dominant themes throughout the essays; however, much more emphasis was placed upon the role of mother than that of wife. This led me to wonder if these strong women of Appalachia have autonomy unusual to women from the area. Sharon, another local social worker, wrote: "I love being a wife and mother...I try to spend as much time with my family as possible, so as to show them how much love I have for them." She seemed to weigh the roles equally, as did two other participants; however, the

remaining participants named their children or spoke about them with a depth they did not show in their mention of their husbands. Leigh wrote:

Although I have always had a great marriage, I never knew what was missing in my life until I gave birth to my daughter on February 19, 2005. The best definition I can give for being a mother is that my daughter has taught me what love really is.

Without even knowing it, she makes me a better person.

Many of the women referred to their spouses and roles as wives briefly, but it was the role of mother that dominated, and they elaborated more on this aspect of their identity. In a culture historically dominated by the patriarch of the family, this seemed surprising to me as I read the essays. However, it seems the participants desired to share more openly their roles as mothers, including their hopes and fears for future generations. Dana acknowledged that her mom, being unable to complete high school because of her own mother's death, feared traveling far from home. This isolation left Dana feeling that she and her brother, although thankful for their mother's dedication, entered the greater community less worldly than their peers. This caused Dana to question her own heritage for years, even trying to hide it at times. Now a single mother herself, Dana fears the negative effects her own history might play in the lives of her own children:

I wonder what this means for my offspring. Will I hand them this 'heritage' or can I teach them to honor and respect their true heritage and not let it keep them from becoming all that they can be? Will I teach them to embrace it honor it, love and

respect it but never allow the fact that they are 'Appalachian' born influence their paths in life? Are they educated any better than I was? I fear not. The Appalachian Mountains are very much like my mother. They are wonderful and safe. They hold us in their arms and embrace us. They keep us from the outside world in many ways. Can we really learn to love them, but not let them rule our lives? Can we grow up and not even think of ourselves as 'backwards'?

Dana, like many of the other participants, came to me with many questions of her own...questions, such as the ones Dana raised, that we certainly didn't find answers for, but from which we did learn, about ourselves and our attitudes. We did learn a great deal about our situations; even if these answers are not transferable to the greater community, they have helped us better understand our own identities.

Much of the information I gathered during this study seems to fit the many other scholarly descriptions of Appalachian women reported in the literature; however, the nuances, personalities, questions and voices of the women in my study touched me in a way the literature I was not connected to personally could never do. I marveled at the personal essays the participants shared with me. Through their written words, they gave me a sense of their identities in an open and selfless way, allowing me to construct a comprehensive view of them, not only for my readers, but for me as researcher and a fellow Appalachian woman.

I have included two tables below, one for the rural participants and one for the urban participants, which serve as descriptors for the women, and can be used as a reference while reading the study's results (See Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. *Rural Participant Descriptors*

<b>Participants' Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home County</b>	<b>Current Residence</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Suzanne	37	Henderson	Transylvania	Chaplain
Kaitlyn	25	Transylvania	Transylvania	Public Relations Coordinator
Sharon	29	Transylvania	Henderson	Home Health Care Social Worker
Dana	48	Transylvania	Henderson	Chief Financial Officer
Bethany	25	Transylvania	Transylvania	Farmer
Norma	54	Transylvania	Transylvania	Adult Services Social Worker

Table 4. *Urban Participant Descriptors*

<b>Participants' Names</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Home County</b>	<b>Current Residence</b>	<b>Profession</b>
Trish	40	Transylvania	Winston Salem, NC	Lawyer
Mia	52	Transylvania	Raleigh, NC	Psychotherapist
Callie	31	Transylvania	Anderson, SC	Family Physician
Adrian	31	Transylvania	Atlanta, GA	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher/World Regions
Leigh	29	Transylvania	Spartanburg, SC	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher/Core Subjects Team Leader
Ali	32	Transylvania	Charlotte, NC	Nurse Practitioner

### Life Changing Events

While growing up in the mountains, none of the participants viewed their native language variety as different and certainly none saw her language as inferior, until outsiders speaking a more standard, more accepted version of American English brought the difference to light through their comments laced with implied judgments of inferiority. Although for most, this realization occurred when they entered college and began living in a less homogeneous environment, for some the realization came early in life with comments about their language differences made by relatives or family friends visiting the mountains. Those who experienced this realization earlier in life made a definitive decision concerning their speech during those early years and do less dialectal balancing than the other participants. Mia [u] had cousins who sometimes visited from New York and Detroit. During those visits, she was the butt of many jokes concerning her

pronunciation. Her extended vowel sounds in words, such as *rain* and *Spain*, were thought to be funny, and at first, she laughed along with her cousins. Still others remarked on her ability to turn all one-syllable words into two syllables. She remembers making a remarkable discovery: “then as I grew older, all of the attention I was getting. . . I realized there was a negative aspect to it.” This realization was confirmed later when she attended a prestigious, private school in the South. Sometimes during college, she would say a particular word and would be asked for clarification. These questions from her peers would sometimes “begin with laughter”. Sometimes the message of the laughter seemed mixed. At times it seemed genuinely a reaction to the unique differences of her speech compared to the majority of her peers, but at other times, it “was a put down.” Some listeners made the erroneous assumption that Mia was not as advantaged as the other students. These experiences led Mia to make some clear decisions about her speech and her future profession:

I realized if I chose a vocation reliant on speech, for instance, if I went into television, then I would have to change a lot of my pronunciation and some of my vocabulary [and I didn’t want to change my speech]...it is part of me and my image, so that was never a viable option. I really couldn’t see changing something that is such a part of me.

So, during the formative young adult years, Mia made a conscious decision that her native variety was so much a part of her identity that she made career choices, in part, based upon that realization. Mia became a psychotherapist.

Another urban participant, Trish, had similar experiences with family members, but her experiences had a different effect on her during her formative, elementary school years, and she made a different life-changing decision. Trish also had relatives from different areas of the country, who spoke differently than she did and often pointed out their language differences: She remembered, “They don’t have supper; they have dinner.” Not only was her lexicon an issue, but her pronunciation was an issue as well. Her long vowels were brought to her attention, and she was often told she didn’t speak “correctly.” She realized at a young age that, even though the people she was around on a day-to-day basis spoke as she did, that they “were not the norm, which made me strive to change . . . It made me consciously try to change that.” And change she did. She is the only participant who didn’t discuss the inquisitive question many people ask these women, “Where are you from?” Trish finds that most people cannot tell that she is even from North Carolina. As I completed my interviews, it was apparent that Trish was certainly the most proficient standard speaker. Her effort to disconnect linguistically from the area began “as early as 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade”, and she believed changing was a necessity because the relatives who pointed to her language differences were wealthy and well-educated. This early realization led Trish to believe “that people thought I was poor and uneducated.” She remembers “they were definitely the ideal to aspire to, so I felt that they were right, and I was wrong, and they were better educated, and I should learn what they were saying.” These early life-changing events led Trish to change her

speech and remove herself from the stereotypical images she believed would hinder her future success.

These two participants, Mia, a psychotherapist, and Trish, a lawyer, represent two extremely different outcomes from similar life experiences. Although the other 10 participants may have had similar experiences in their early years, none were affected by them in quite the same way. It wasn't until these women entered college that they realized the widespread views of their vernacular being that of inferior status. This realization was the catalyst for change in these women's lives, and they began making adjustments to balance their language use, as an important coping mechanism, in navigating college and home life.

One participant remembers "hiding where I was from for awhile" and while another remember her peers "laugh[ed] at the way I spoke" both in a fun, loving way and in a superior way. This type of laughter was reported by 11 of the participants, all except Trish, and was certainly a factor in the realization that their language variety was valued less than most others. For instance, even though Sharon [r] attended a school in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, the student body was quite heterogeneous, and many students were native to areas outside the region. Sharon was told by one of her peers: "You talk like a hick. I can't understand what you are saying." During the interview process, it was apparent that Sharon is the participant who has retained the most Appalachian characteristics in her speech. Still, this comment is exemplary of other comments the women received during their time in college, even though

the others had less identifiable Appalachian characteristics. While four of the participants felt the comments were in good humor and did not see the comments as a direct affront to their language use, they still discussed the time in their life as being the first time they realized that the differences somehow mattered. It was apparent in the interview data that by their freshman year in college, all the participants were aware of their linguistic differences, and they were beginning to understand that linguistic change was needed if they were to reach their goals. The following narrative shows a life changing event in one participant to begin making conscious linguistic changes.

#### Language Changes

The classroom was filled with nervous, yet excited, freshmen just beginning the orientation process. Leigh and several of her friends from high school were excited about this new adventure even though they were attending college in the neighboring town.

Sara, Leigh's friend, suggested, "Let's not tell anyone where we are really from."

Leigh knew Sara was worried about the perceptions the other students and the professors would have of them. Even though the local college was only a few miles down the road, most students and professors were from all over the country; few were native to the area. Sara simply wanted to keep her heritage a secret. Leigh did not.

Slowly Leigh stood up to introduce herself, and from the minute she said her name, she saw the look on everyone's face. They began to ask her about her

unusual language variety, and she became extremely uncomfortable. In one simple moment, her journey toward language change had begun. Always trying to speak and write in an acceptable, collegiate way without losing her native variety made her worry about her competence throughout undergraduate school. Once during her first semester math course, the professor even told her, “People from here just have a much more difficult time grasping these mathematical concepts.” At that moment, the perceptions of inferiority she felt the first day of orientation had been confirmed by her math professor.

Leigh [u] told this story during our interview and recognized the experience as a catalyst for language change. Like Mia [u] and Trish [u], a life-changing event was the catalyst for Leigh’s language change. Unlike Mia, who decided to hold tight to her native variety, or Trish, who decided to disconnect from her native speech by learning and adopting SAE, Leigh has made a conscious effort to speak with ‘proper’ grammar while on campus, which illustrates her attempt to begin balancing the two varieties. She omitted words and phrases that were considered nonstandard, but she maintained her native pronunciation and today still feels her heritage and native variety are of great value. Her face lit up as she began to talk about the group of students from her high school that had denied their heritage and tried to change their language in an effort to remove themselves from the stereotypical assumptions of outsiders. According to Leigh, “they have come back to it.” Teaching 6<sup>th</sup> grade language arts at a rural middle school, she has chosen to work with students who are native Appalachian English (AE) speakers even though she lives in a neighboring urban county.

Leigh has incorporated her language change into her teaching pedagogy, and she enjoys working with her students to help them balance ‘proper’ grammar and vocabulary choices in their writing while teaching them to value their spoken native dialect. She smiled as she explained her belief that her pedagogy and language use was a help to her students. They talk “very much like I am talking to you today.” It is a balance she believes has worked for her, and she feels a responsibility to assist young speakers with their language choices. Her changes have helped her reach her professional goals while holding on to her valued heritage, and she hopes to assist others in their journey in a way that will help them hold on to their heritage as well.

Leigh’s story, much like my own, is similar to the stories told by most of the participants. By their freshman year in college, all of the participants had realized their native language variety was not valued as highly as some other varieties, so the young women began to make changes.

### *Vocabulary*

All of the participants discussed their attempts to standardize their speech, and their attempts reflect change in all three categories of language use: phonology, vocabulary and grammar. For example, Adrian [u] realized her freshman year that “unique words are not recognized outside of the area.” She met her future husband in undergraduate school and remembers having a minor head injury and showing it to him:

‘Oh! I have a pump knot on my head’.

He replied, ‘What is a pump knot?’

‘Well, a pump knot is. . .?’

She remembers being “shocked that he didn’t know what a pump knot was because [she] just thought that was a standard word that everybody in the United States” understood. She asked many of her collegiate peers, and none of them, with the exception of her friend from home, knew the meaning of *pump knot*. It seemed so simple. We all know that often times when we hit our heads, we develop an unsightly knot at the point of injury. The pain is sometimes excruciating, but her friends, didn’t know. Now, she is conscious to use terms familiar to the mainstream when she is outside of her native geographic region.

Others also found themselves embarrassed in various social situations. Sharon [r] had a Jewish male acquaintance in college that stopped by her room one day to talk about his great yard sale find. And she remarked, “Well, that’s not a bad deal. Did you *jew* him down?” She remembers, with a blush in her cheek even now, years later, that “he was horribly offended, horribly offended! And I thought it was a verb. I didn’t even know it was derogatory to the Jewish people...a huge light bulb came on.” In an oral culture, not ever having seen the word in written form, Sharon had not understood this connection. The participants, having grown up in a homogeneous culture, were not astute in regard to many multicultural issues. Now our questions about this word can be easily answered. A simple internet search today reveals that the term *jew* (v.) derived from *Jew* (n.) in 1824 means “to cheat, to drive a hard bargain.” In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a campaign to eliminate the use of the term was “so successful that people began to avoid the noun and adj., too, and started using *Hebrew*

instead” (Wikipedia). During the early 1900’s the Appalachian people were certainly not part of this mainstream cultural movement and focus on multicultural sensitivities was not in the forefront of Appalachian thought since there was little to no exposure to other cultures. Over time the term became disconnected in the cultural understanding of its racist beginnings. That is, the term may not be specific to Appalachia, and has been used by other language varieties throughout the country; today, some people outside of the area probably still use this term at times. It seems the participants’ disconnection between the word and its meaning speaks to the regional color since they grew up in a homogeneous culture which did not readily associate this word as offensive, Sharon did not connect the term to the Jewish culture until her friend pointed out the word’s derogatory meaning. Sharon immediately eliminated the word from her vocabulary and admits she has been careful never to use that word since.

As I conducted my earliest interviews, I began to realize many similar examples of vocabulary changes were discussed in the individual interviews, so during the remainder of the study, I gathered a list of words and phrases common to us that we no longer say outside of our family and hometown friends. Although these vocabulary examples may not be specific to AE, they are certainly familiar to the all of the participants and are considered nonstandard by mainstream America. The table below outlines these examples that were discussed most often during the study and reviewed, to some degree, at the focus interview. All of the words and phrases are nonstandard, but not all are Appalachian. The two table presented below delineate the difference (See Tables 5 & 6)

Table 5. *Nonstandard Words and Phrases and their Commonly Understood Meanings*

<b>Nonstandard Word/Phrase</b>	<b>Standard Meaning</b>
Fixin' to	Making preparations
Boy, ain't that the truth...	To express agreement with the speaker
Bless her heart...	The preface to a derogatory comment
Buggy	Grocery cart
Supper	Dinner
Get off your high horse.	Used to express someone's behavior as being too conceited.
Well, I'll be...	To express surprise.
That just floored me.	To express surprise.
She is going to have a hard row to hoe.	Describing someone who has made a decision in life that will likely cause grief and/or strife.

Table 6. *Appalachian Words and Phrases and their Commonly Understood Meanings*

<b>Appalachian Word/Phrase</b>	<b>Standard Meaning</b>
Do What?	Could I have clarification? What did you say? You cannot be serious.
What cha ma call it	Used when unable to think of the appropriate name for something
The child has raisin'.	Describes a well-behaved child
Slower than snails	Used to describe anything not progressing at a satisfactory speed.
Quare	Eccentric, unusual, odd
Si' goggin'	Out of square, for a structure to be built without the typical right angles so that it leans in one direction.

### *Phonology*

Other examples of change are not quite as easy to outline as eliminating these words and phrases, but are certainly in the subtexts of our lives and, unlike the specific expressions, can be heard in virtually even the shortest utterance. Consider pronunciation, for instance. Upon calling 411 for information for our own hometown, many participants say *Brevard*, but the computer system gives information for *Arden*, a suburb of Asheville. The confusion to listener's may be explained by the emphatic pronunciation of the last syllable in *Brevard*; when pronouncing *Brevard*, natives seemed to reduce the first syllable, and as a result, listeners seem to understand 'ard' as the first syllable of the word. Several others discussed the differentiation between *nine* and *five*. The confusion to the listeners' in this instance is probably caused because the prominence of the long *i* sound become a focus for listeners not accustomed to hearing this language variety. Many find that, no matter how diligently they try to pronounce words in a more standard form for utilitarian reasons, they are still misunderstood, not only by listeners in conversations, but also by the many technology programs popular in today's culture. For instance, Mia [u] always has difficulty ordering in a drive-thru restaurant. When ordering *iced tea*, she usually receives *Hi-C*. No matter how diligently she tries to pronounce her order on the intercom, she always receives the wrong drink. This, too, is most probably contributed to her dropping the *d* in *iced tea*, combined with the long vowel sounds. Technology seems to complicate the communication between AE speakers and listeners because

listeners have to rely completely on the sounds of the words with no visual cues. Not surprisingly, with the exception of Trish [u], who in her middle school years consciously decided to use standard pronunciation, the women reported that they try to enunciate more clearly and “tone down” their accent, rather than speaking with their “heavy native accent.” They all felt this was a compromise between being able to communicate with the outside world easier while still holding on to their native variety and the connection it gives them to their native culture. Participants reported the difficulty of trying to standardize their pronunciation for two reasons: 1) pronunciation is the most obvious indicator of the native variety and helps to keep that desired connection to their heritage; and 2) pronunciation is simply the most difficult area to standardize. Through English and communications courses, the participants have learned Standard Written English and try to incorporate ‘proper’ or ‘correct’ grammar into their speech while eliminating vocabulary familiar in their native variety. Understanding the lexicon of SAE seemed to be connected to the participants’ education, and they could readily employ changes. Pronunciation was more difficult. Adrian [u] speaks specifically of the word *oil*. Adrian recalls, “I guess I have been made fun of...or maybe people just point out that I sound different like [pronouncing] oil. I began saying petroleum to avoid it, so I guess that is a form of standardizing...to avoid comments from the students.” This is an illustration of the phenomenon five participants pointed out. Changing pronunciation was simply complicated and in previous attempts seemed “contrived” or “unnatural.” These two reasons seemed

to explain the reason that phonology was the least affected area of the three linguistic categories.

This is one area of speech about which the participants revealed ambivalence. Callie [u] has maintained the pronunciations of her native language variety and holds pride in it as it connects her with her home, family and childhood friends. However, she “was embarrassed” during medical school when her class reviewed an instructional videotape of Callie’s bedside manner. When the patient listed his symptoms to Callie, she replied with a slow, “All *right*,” extending the long *i*. Her peers began making fun of her, and “All right” became a phrase used to embarrass her throughout the rest of the year. Callie says this became an annoyance to her, and she was embarrassed by her speech.

Surprisingly, several participants pointed to their embarrassment when hearing their voice on tape, expressing themselves in terms that either carry or imply a negative judgment. One said, “I absolutely can’t stand to hear my voice on the answering machine. My accent just seems stronger when I hear myself on tape. I just don’t hear it that way when I am talking.” Another participant talked about the difficulty she has enunciating on the answering machine: “I do well with our names in the beginning, but I just trail off at the end with my *nine* and *five* when I am giving the number. It’s embarrassing. My husband makes fun of me.” Although these women are most closely connected to the phonology of AE, they speak of the embarrassment and disappointment in their speech when they hear themselves on tape. Two other participants discussed how they “hate to hear” a heavy accent on the evening news, especially when a reporter is interviewing

someone not well educated: “It just makes us all look stupid.” Upon meeting her husband’s best friend, who speaks with a heavy accent, one participant said, “I just assumed he was a redneck, dumb even, but my husband told me later than he was a 4.0 student in engineering. I felt awful. I had done to him what I hate others do to me!” This conflict between pride and embarrassment seemed to characterize the participants’ feelings about the phonology of their native language variety.

### *Grammar*

In addition to lexical and phonological issues, all of the participants discussed the importance of using ‘proper’ grammar. Of all the three areas, grammar was discussed the most. Many didn’t want to appear ‘stupid’ or ‘uneducated’ to their listeners. Sharon [r] worried that people “might think [she] didn’t know better” while Trish [u] believed that most native speakers “do know the difference. It is just how they chose to speak.” Even though Trish values the speech of her family and friends, her description of SAE as being *better* reveals her own hierarchal thinking of the two language varieties.

All participants performed well in college and have a good command of SAE grammar. All of the participants emphasized their attempt to always use “proper” grammar, both written and spoken, in all work-related communications. Participants indicated that phonology and vocabulary might link them to the area quite easily, but “improper” grammar was an automatic indicator to intelligence: “using proper grammar helps the listener see you as intelligent.” All of the participants discussed their attempts to use proper grammar; as a result of this

language change, grammar became a point of contention for many of these women. When discussing their reactions to speech they have heard, the implicit judgments above again took explicit form in their reports. Three of the participants used the same phrase when referring to “improper” grammar: “it simply grates on me” while another said, “I don’t want people to think I am stupid.” In contrast, Sharon [r], who has always lived in the mountain region even during her college years, revealed that speaking with proper grammar is most important to her, but admits she is simply unaware that many words are from her vernacular and are not standard, making her vocabulary adjustments more of a challenge. In fact, one seemingly off-hand comment of hers suggests a certain resentment about the need to make such adjustments. Making a joke, she mirrored the women’s opinions in the documentary, *Women of the Hills*, discussed earlier in Chapter 3 when she says, “I’m from here. It’s the mountains. If you don’t like it, go back home!” She relishes in her native accent as well, and of the word *dog* she exclaims, “It doesn’t matter if it is *dawg* and not dog. It’s just *dawg*!” This comment reveals her lack of desire to mainstream outside of her home region and helps explain some of her vocabulary challenges. Perhaps more importantly, she expresses her comfort when speaking her native variety and the value she holds for her speech in a stronger, more intimate way than any of the other participants. It is important to note that Sharon does admit that proper grammar is imperative in her office, and that writing social work reports requires excellent writing skills, an area in which she feels exceptionally competent. She learned to write for the academy and has translated that ability to

her workplace successfully enough to reach the personal goals she has set for herself. So to summarize, Sharon revealed herself to be the most connected to her native vernacular, but she still places an importance on proper grammar and talks of its benefits in her workplace.

This need to standardize, to some degree, all three categories of their language use became apparent early on in the interview process, and continued to be a constant as I completed the interviews. No later than their first year of college, all of the participants had realized that their language variety was not common in mainstream America, and they began to make conscious language changes. The degree these women felt the need to change their language varied, but they viewed change as a necessity if they intended to reach their life's goals.

#### Current Attitudes Toward Appalachian English and Standard American English

The realization that Appalachian English (AE), the participants' native variety, was not valued as much as other more acceptable varieties began their evaluation process of their native variety as it compared to Standard American English (SAE). I will introduce this section by discussing Mia [u] and Trish [u] in depth. As discussed earlier in this chapter, these two participants represent differing views about their native variety. Mia holds close to AE while Trish consciously decided to change to SAE. In addition, Mia's attitudes represent a constant view, and Trish admittedly has changed her views recently, more than two decades after entering undergraduate school. The remaining 10 participants try to balance their language between the AE and SAE, a position that emerged

during their college years and early careers and has since remained constant. These participants will be discussed more in depth later in this section.

Mia [u] realized in college that choosing certain careers, such as television broadcasting, would require her to totally abandon her native variety she decided then to hold to her native variety and avoid those careers. This decision did have an effect on her vocational options. She has been quite successful as a psychologist in the Raleigh area, but she realizes that her language choice limited her career options. This conscious decision by Mia clearly reflects her current attitudes toward AE and SAE. She does claim that she omits a variety of Appalachian phrases while living in the urban area, but primarily as a means of clear communication because listeners often needed “clarification.” However, when visiting home, she begins to incorporate much of the old familiar language into her current way of speaking:

I have lived away for 30 years, and what I find is that my vocabulary changes unconsciously. There have been a couple of occasions where I have been home visiting my father when he was sick one summer, and it was my parents’ 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. So, I was back in Brevard for a couple of weeks, and I found myself going back [to Raleigh] and saying “fixin’ to” and things like that. But I don’t feel my nature changes. I feel that my vocabulary

and the way I describe things certainly would be more common to the local dialect, but it is unconscious. I don't think about it.

Mia's acknowledgement of taking on AE characteristics when she returns home is an examples of 'convergence' as mentioned in chapter one.

Accommodation theory explores the phenomenon of how individuals, desiring to belong to a certain speech community, will take on characteristics of that speech community. Mia takes great pride in her native variety and exhibited sadness at some of the negative experiences shared by the some of the other participants during the focus interview. Even so, she still recognizes changes she has made through her many years as a professional living outside the region.

Representing a different perspective, Trish [u] changed her speech in her adolescent years for fear of being viewed as "unintelligent, poor, or uneducated." This attitude has gradually changed, however, and Trish shared a story with me during our interviews that helped her realize how deeply she values AE. Recently during a trial, she was working with another female lawyer who spoke with a heavy Southern accent. After the trial, the judge made a specific effort to compliment the other attorney in the case: "He loved hearing her speak in court because he loved her accent". The judge's appreciation for Southern speech and Trish's pride in his recognition of such may be attributed to the New South phenomenon mentioned in Chapter 2. Conversely, not all of these women may appreciate this type of compliment. As discussed in Chapter 3, Hazen and Fluharty reflect the intuitive viewpoint of many when they point to the offensive

way in which some people refer to AE as “quaint.” Three participants in this study also referred to the condescending way people compliment their native variety. I often wonder when people compliment my accent if they would still be as enamored with my native lexicon and syntax. I think probably not. Yet, this event was a catalyst in Trish’s changing views of her native dialect, since her reaction was appreciation of the compliment, untainted by concerns over the motivations that may cause others to be wary of such compliments:

I used to think that I would get further along by speaking more Standard English. That there would be more prejudice by having a Southern accent...but the older that I am getting the more that I see that that is no longer the case...finally, I am seeing that it is appreciated and seeing that not everyone sees it as illiterate, and that is comforting.

Trish also acknowledged a growing phenomenon in the United States that was addressed by five other participants in their interviews: “There is [sic] so many different languages, and it is not as much of a big deal as it was in the past, and I think it is becoming easier rather than more challenging” to speak with an accent. Trish’s change of view represents growing value for her native variety, something some of the other participants like Dana [r] are still struggling to feel.

As mentioned earlier, Mia and Trish both realized the devaluation of Appalachian English during their youth, while the other ten participants only realized during their freshman year in college that their language just wasn’t quite “up to par.” Most of the participants revealed a bit of surprise at the reaction they

received in college and the realization that their language use would affect their futures. All were excellent students in high school and thought they knew well how to employ Standard Written English. But most seemed to accept, or take in stride, the surprising (to them) adjustments they were required to make in college. Only Dana [r] reported disappointment during her college English studies, which led her to devalue her native variety. Dana values her native variety now more than in the past; but unlike Trish, she still feels that it is devalued at her place of employment, and she continues to struggle with her own attempts to value her native variety. She remembers her disillusionment during her freshman year in college:

I did very well in high school. I was in the top 10%...of the graduating class, and I did well. I earned good grades in English, and I went to college, and I realized that I didn't know how to use proper grammar...It was important to the vocations in college, and I just didn't fit in.

In fact, the language factor was among those that shaped her life for some years. Dana didn't return for her sophomore year in college, and over a decade passed before she re-entered the world of academia, where she still felt incompetent. To this day, she "doesn't feel comfortable" with her own language, and she summarizes her struggle to change in this comment: "I will never feel that I will be good enough." Dana's example is common among most of the participants, in that they all exhibited the need to change and be more standard to some extent, even if those changes were minor. It was apparent in the interviews that the

participants, who had performed well in high school and had conformed to the requirements of Standard Written English, were surprised that they were not judged as well in the area of oral communications. The spoken language, which had never occurred to the participants as a problem, as they had received no negative feedback from listeners, now became an apparent weakness that had to be overcome.

The one participant who entered college with a positive personal history involving use and appreciation of both dialects was Bethany [r]. Bethany's mother was an "Air Force brat" who traveled worldwide before settling down in Transylvania County during high school. Bethany's grandfather was a native of the area, but her grandmother was British. They had married during World War II in England, but decided to settle in the States after he retired from the Air Force. This history is quite different from that of Bethany's paternal family, who are eight generations strong in the Appalachian Mountains. Therefore, Bethany grew up valuing the two language varieties spoken by the people closest to her. A recipient of a state-wide good citizenship award during her senior year in high school, Bethany attended the awards ceremony at a regional state university. The keynote speaker had a great effect on Bethany and her thoughts on language varieties. She remembers:

The one thing that he talked about that always stuck in my mind from that point forward was that people's accents are a little piece of who they are and it's a little signature of where they come from and just like you have customs from different

cultures, you have accents for different places. And so, I always thought that was important, because if you are forced to change your accent then you are forced to change where you have come from and who you are and the community that has raised you, basically where your roots are, so that has always been on my mind.

Bethany's words reflect the respect she has constantly felt toward her native variety, and they are exemplary of how most of the participants evaluated their views of their native variety; however, as an award-winning public speaker, Bethany also recognized the value of SAE, and she testified to the careful balancing act she had to perform as she juggled these two views. She spoke openly about the necessity to speak publicly with 'correct' grammar and vocabulary appropriate to the audience; but she insisted she would only reduce her accent and "enunciate more clearly" whenever she spoke before an audience. She represents the participant most grounded in knowing exactly how she feels about both varieties and how she is willing to navigate her language choices. The other participants fall on a continuum between Dana and Bethany. All have made changes as discussed in the previous section, but all seem to struggle at times with feeling inferior, like Dana. Interestingly, all believe that AE should be valued as part of their heritage, which they all hold in high regard. Some refer to the inferior value placed upon their native variety as "sad" or "unfair."

This ambivalence was highlighted in a comment made by Leigh [u] when thinking about the two varieties and her daughter's future. I asked Leigh to consider how she might lead her daughter in future language choices. Would she attempt to 'correct' her daughter, so as to give her the advantages of the SAE variety? Leigh's response clearly reflects the conflict all of the participants recognized during the interviewing process:

That is such a fine line because I don't want my daughter to feel the way that I have at some point in my life because of my accent. On the other hand, it's almost as ...well...if no one speaks the Appalachian dialect, it will die out. I think that it is a very important part of who I am, who her daddy is, and I think whether we want to or not, it will be passed down.

In short, the participants cling to their roots and feel a strong connection to their own language variety. But still, all of the participants definitively understand the degree to which SAE holds power in their lives. Suzanne[r] reflected that she "did need to continue to learn language that does hold power" even though she found this idea "somewhat incomprehensible." It seems to her that "some majority has decided that this is the standard. I don't know who gets to decide that, though."

This brings her to the emotional conclusion:

It makes me really sad, especially in the realm of theology where we say we worship this God who is creative and diverse, and look at us all, we are not the same, but then we're not valued.

Even the participants who were most comfortable with their speech, like Suzanne, recognized the devaluing of their native variety and talked about that devaluation as a personal slight to their families and loved ones, knowing that in some ways, their loved ones are devalued by the society at large for still speaking their 'inferior' Appalachian. This conflict, the devaluation of family and friends who still speak AE without any standardization, seemed to be a particularly emotionally driven conflict of value that these women had to face. Finding their own way was one thing, but seeing their family and friends devalued was quite another.

#### Bidialectism and the Professional World

Ali sat in the medical staff meeting, perplexed at the word her colleague has just used. Knowing that she will simply look "stupid" for asking its meaning, she tries to write it in the margins of her paper phonetically for future reference. She could call a friend for help later if she was unable to find the word in the dictionary. Yes, maybe that would work.

On the way home, she berates herself for other linguistic deficiencies. Always feeling like wording questions in an appropriate manner is a struggle, she nonetheless had slowly raised her hand during the meeting and asked the managing physician a question.

Not surprisingly, it was met with, “Ali, you confuse me. What do you mean? What are you talking about?”

Ali, trying to reword the question, stumbled with “I...I...” and simply gave up. As she thought about the day’s events, she wondered why she had even opened her mouth.

Ali [u] feels respected at work and is quite successful as a nurse practitioner. Yet her linguistic struggles were apparent during our interviews as were the linguistic challenges of the other participants during their respective interviews. In Ali’s particular situation, she found herself thankful that at least the managing physician hadn’t acted as some of the doctors often did, when “they just totally act[ed] like [she] didn’t say anything.” She reflects on her work situation, estimating that 2 of the 5 doctors she works with “are very condescending” to her, and she is always striving to meet their expectations, some of which are linguistic. Although she continues to become better educated, having earned her master’s and a specialty certification, she still finds herself being treated in a condescending manner. Once when she mispronounced *disheveled* at work, she was denounced once again with “Ali, I don’t even know what you are talking about.”

Although she knows the meaning of many words through her extensive reading, Ali finds she doesn’t know how to pronounce them or she can’t pronounce them well. This is simply one lingering challenge in her attempt to speak SAE at work while going home to a husband who still speaks a purer form of AE, since he doesn’t try to make any changes or accommodations in his

language use. Ali, whose profession is often viewed in a condescending way by physicians who rank higher than nurse practitioners, finds herself treated differently more because of the way that she speaks than any inadequacies in skills as a nurse. Once she received top evaluation marks in every category on the standard evaluation form at her place of employment except one, her language use (See Appendix H).

Leigh [u] experienced a similar situation in her first-teaching evaluation. She, too, was marked down only in “uses proper grammar” (See Appendix H). Leigh simply “fell apart” when receiving the evaluation. Later, she approached the principal and questioned why she had been marked down in that area. Asking if she spoke incorrectly in front of the class, Leigh was shocked to find out that the ‘observation’ had occurred when she was speaking to a friend in the hallway after school. This incident taught Leigh that bidialectism is, in fact, a necessity in her life—and that, furthermore, she needed to be careful in situations that she had never before thought of as formal, or as requiring SAE usage. She and the principal now are good friends and laugh about the incident; but Leigh feels that this type of behavior is a form of linguistic discrimination, and she is still negatively affected emotionally by the experience, in that she worries about her language use in certain professional situations. Serving on a recent search committee for a new teacher, Leigh reports that she “tried to enunciate well”, so the interviewee from Indiana could understand her well, and wouldn’t think she was “stupid.” Leigh’s example was noteworthy as she became concerned of

being evaluated when, in fact, the interviewee was the one who was supposed to be evaluated.

Although all of the participants except one revealed that they speak their native variety at home with family and friends and their standard version at work in a clearly delineated way, Bethany [r], Mia [u] and Trish [u], the participants who made the earliest and most consciously elaborated decisions about their language use, seemed to navigate their language choices with the most ease. Only two specific examples of bidialectism within the workplace were presented during the interviews. One example came with Kaitlyn's description of working as a public relations coordinator. She works with both tourists and natives, and she takes great pride in the way that she can slip into her vernacular when a native comes into her office asking for assistance. She has received comments about her ability to make everyone who walks in requesting information feel at home. At the same time, she values her ability to speak SAE. Reporting on a kind of back-handed compliment that also carried implicit criticism, she says that she has been told by several SAE-speaking visitors that they could "actually understand" her. This ability to speak to both groups is a skill that she uses in her workplace and that has made her a valuable asset in her office. This skill was echoed as valuable by one other participant, Leigh [r], who teaches children who are native AE speakers. She reports that she speaks to the children with a "heavier accent" than she does to the administrators. Otherwise, bidialectism was clearly defined by the professional/personal delineation, and did not seem to be subject to code-switching in either environment.

Kaitlyn's success is important on many levels to her. Before obtaining her public relations position, she interviewed with a company in Wisconsin. She had a series of several telephone interviews, career assessment tests, etc. after which she was chosen as one of the three perspective applicants to be flown into the company headquarters in Wisconsin for an interview. Upon getting off the plane, she "felt like the only person in the state who wasn't from Wisconsin." She noticed during the interview that the interviewers preferred "yes and no answers...either choose A or B". This was difficult to Kaitlyn who found that her way of storytelling, even in professional settings, was devalued. She had difficulty answering the questions in a clear, concise way without using stories within her answers. Kaitlyn remembers receiving the call to let her know she was not chosen for the position. The company representative said, she was "the perfect candidate and as far as my qualifications, they were wonderful, but they didn't feel that I would fit in with the company." It struck Kaitlyn as odd that the representative kept referring to Kaitlyn's native area, and making comments like one directed at advice that she seek employment closer to her own area: "This will be better for you. You will be closer to home." Kaitlyn could not necessarily label this reference to her 'home' as discrimination; but it was decidedly odd, in a professional explanation for a hiring decision. And she noticed that her roommate from graduate school had no difficulty finding work in the Midwest, even though she and the roommate "had the same exact degree and qualifications, and emphasis ...so the difference between [us] is that she is from there and fits, and I am not." This realization was disappointing to Kaitlyn, who predicts that her

husband's work will eventually relocate them to another area of the country. Ironically, Kaitlyn feels that she has an ability to "hear the way others talk"; she can mimic other accents, and she is accustomed to making changes in her vocabulary choices when she travels, the very way she communicates. But still, other culturally-mediated features of discourse still seem to weigh in against her in the professional world. Specifically, the way she tells stories and organizes her thoughts is not valued in some areas of the country. This is a broader linguistic challenge, beyond accent and grammar that she believes she will have to eventually confront.

### Linguistic Challenges

Adrian [u] dreaded walking into her 7<sup>th</sup> grade World Regions classroom in Atlanta, a four-hour drive from her childhood home. What had begun as seemingly good-natured humor from her student Seth had taken an ugly turn. Now the constant mocking and ridicule she faced each day had simply become demeaning. Seth had meant to undermine her authority, and he had succeeded. She had felt herself losing control of the classroom over the past few weeks. Today was the day she needed to regain control; today, she would meet with the boy's father.

Sitting at her desk in front of the room, Adrian took an authoritative stance as Seth's father walked in.

"Take a seat, please."

"I want to know why I have been called here today. I am a very busy man."

He, too, had taken a stance.

“Well, some of Seth’s behavior is disrupting the class and undermining my authority.”

“What is he doing?”

“He mocks my accent everyday. Even in the middle of class, he shouts derogatory comments about the way that I speak and undermines my authority with the other students. It has become a real problem.”

“When did he begin behaving this way?”

“Probably about a month ago...”

“A month ago!”

“...but the behavior has been intolerable for a couple of weeks now. “

“Why did you let him get so out of control?”

“Well, it began as what seemed to be good-natured humor, and I didn’t realize it would turn into this constant mocking and ridicule.”

Standing up to leave, he announced, “If you *let* him do this for awhile, weren’t you giving him permission to mock you? If you don’t like it now, I see that as your own fault, not Seth’s. If you don’t like people making fun of the way you speak, don’t let them start in the first place.” Grabbing his coat, he stormed out the door.

Feeling defeated, Adrian sat at her desk a few moments. The lack of parental support in this situation surprised her. She took a mental note of all the changes she had tried to make. Hadn’t she tried to reduce her accent? Hadn’t she always tried to enunciate clearly when speaking to the class? Hadn’t she focused on speaking with proper grammar? Hadn’t she even replaced the word

*oil* with *petroleum* when teaching the students about the Middle East? She really had tried to pronounce *oil* in a more standard way, but year after year, the students loved to point out her accent when she tried to pronounce the word; so she had simply stopped saying *oil* at work. Yet, somehow the linguistic changes were not enough. She stood up and gathered her belongings as she began pondering what else she could do to avoid future ridicule from students.

As Adrian drove from the parking lot, she thought about her new connections to Atlanta. It would never be home like the mountains, but she had built a good life in the city with her husband, and her daughter had been born there. With the economy in the mountains offering little opportunity for Adrian and her family, she had finally adjusted to urban life and had grown accustomed to the idea of not moving back to the mountains. So, to overcome this professional challenge, she had been forced to make some tough decisions. But she now had to take a stand to protect her new position. She decided that she would no longer allow students to discuss her accent, even if they did so in good humor. Still, she knew that when the new school year arrived, she would cringe when the onslaught of personal questions would begin with “*Where* are you from?”

Adrian’s story is exemplary of the kinds of challenges these professional women face. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the stories hold a myriad of meanings. Adrian’s story not only presents a linguistic challenge, it also presents a life changing event and a set of reminiscences about language changes. These stories are as complex as language itself. They are all related to the various issues discussed in this chapter. So, as the participants shared their

stories of life changing events, language change and language attitudes, they all revealed linguistic challenges they still struggle to overcome. Norma [r] still avoids talking about her education and career to her husband's extended family, for instance, fearing their censure for the cultural background that centrally includes her native language variety. Ali [u] projects that she will always be working to improve her communications with the physicians, and Callie [u] knows that many patients will continue to ask her, "Where are you from?". Dana [r] somehow believes that she will "never be good enough" and Adrian [u] will continue to substitute *petroleum* for *oil* when she teaches. They will continue to look for a balance that serves their needs; but judging from the tenor of many of their responses, they will be dealing with alien demands imposed from a world that remains somewhat mysterious to them.

#### Finding Balance

#### *Professional Ties*

Sitting in her professor's Duke University office discussing her future in the ministry, Suzanne [r] was stunned at his suggestion.

"You mean you want me to go to speech therapy?"

"Yes, if you want to minister to people, you need to speak more standard English. There is a certain authoritative role you need to have with your congregation, and you won't be taken seriously if you speak in your native variety."

“But I want to minister in my native area, Western North Carolina. I grew up in a 40-member church in the mountains, and my goal is to serve as chaplain in a similar church. My congregation will speak the way that I speak now.”

“Well, the problem is that this is a quite prestigious university, and all of our graduates are considered scholars. Scholars just don’t speak with your accent. So I am requiring you to attend speech therapy as part of your graduate studies.”

Suzanne felt a quiver in her stomach as she walked into her first speech therapy session. The conflict of wanting to minister to her native community, the strong connection she felt between her native variety and her identity all suddenly seemed at risk. She had already made many linguistic adjustments just to make it this far, and yet, it wasn’t enough. The mere idea of having to take speech therapy was insulting, but to reach her goals, she seemed to have no choice. The very change that Suzanne was required to make in her speech might endanger her future ministry.

Some months later, Suzanne’s voice filled the university chapel as she spoke to the congregation. Chosen as one of only two students in the divinity program to speak on this campus-wide day of celebration, Suzanne received accolades for her words, her presentation skills, and her message. She realized that day the value of the therapy. She had learned as a woman not to make statements using inflection typical of questions, which naturally undermined her authority as a female minister. She had also learned to speak effectively to a congregation outside her native region, she had learned a more standard

phonology, and she certainly had learned that, for some audiences, there was a need to eliminate the storytelling features of her vernacular and to play the role of the scholar. For that, she was grateful.

Suzanne's narrative captures her feelings, not only about speech therapy, but also about the catalyst responsible for her attending speech therapy, and about the results of that process for her. Fortunately, she did not internalize all aspects of her graduate work. Although she recognizes the value of the therapy she was required to experience, Suzanne [r] still interweaves stories into her sermons. She now recognizes that some audiences prefer a more "academic approach"; she realizes that she has been both embraced and ostracized by members of various audiences based upon their view of storytelling, a part of the culture Suzanne adores. Her story also represents many aspects of her language use that are similar to many of the other participants. She had a life-changing event, much like Mia [u], Trish [u], Leigh [u], Sharon [r], Dana [r] and others cited earlier, which helped her realize the depth to which her native variety was devalued. She found speech therapy an avenue to successful balance of the two language varieties, but she was also able to 'rescue' parts of her own heritage from the therapeutic situation. Suzanne is the only participant in the study who had therapeutic training, although Bethany [r] had public speaking training for Future Farmer's of America (FFA) competitions, and others have taken college courses concerning public speaking and other communications skills. Now as Suzanne ministers in her native area, she employs her now-hybrid speaking skills; but she still uses stories and phrases familiar to her native variety—

practices that her formal training would have discouraged her from incorporating into her ministerial style. She never devalues the ability, in part due to her therapy, which allows her to communicate with a variety of audiences; but she also values her resistance to some aspects of her graduate training and therapy. In short, the events in graduate school set her on a lifelong journey of balancing two varieties.

All of the other participants also acknowledged their efforts to balance between the two linguistic worlds. All of the urban participants talked of standardizing at work while taking on qualities of their native dialect when visiting home. In fact, the most common thread among all of the participants was the idea of balance. All of them discussed their need to balance and their efforts to successfully do so. Even those most connected to their native variety, Bethany [r], Mia [u] and Sharon [r], talked of ways in which they recognize the need to standardize their native variety. All twelve participants, both urban and rural, discussed this balance as being subconscious and natural. However, when discussing their native variety, they acknowledged that they incorporate more elements considered 'Appalachian' when at home with their extended families. The participants consistently used language that implied that these choices were not completely unconscious; they realized that they took on more characteristics of their native variety when they are "relaxed". One participant said, "I often notice this [change] when I let my guard down." These descriptors led me to conclude that these women still have to think about speaking SAE at times. It doesn't always come naturally or easily. Dana [r] and Adrian [u] are examples of

this struggle as they have to think about their speech in a conscious way that speakers of more standardized, valued language varieties do not.

### *Personal Ties*

The struggle and balancing act that weaves its message through the previous sections was identified by all of the participants as a worthy endeavor. The task for them has been to “hold on to heritage,” while following their career and educational aspirations; and they have managed, by and large, each in her own way, to do so. Speaking their native variety allows them to stay connected to their family and friends in Western North Carolina, allowing them to remain members of their personally important “in group”. However, once recognizing that this variety is not highly valued in most professional fields, the participants have tended to standardize their language to various extents, in a personal way, choosing the characteristics of the language and the degree of change that they were willing to make for professional success. Those participants who held tightest to their native variety felt less disconnection from family and friends than the more standard speaker. Trish [u] recognizes that her early standardization made her feel disconnected in high school. In an environment where “every single thing makes you feel out of place”, her language differences certainly did have that effect. Referring to her language variety, she said of her peers, “some of them loved to point that out.”

The other women who have retained more of their native speech noted other types of disconnections. Kaitlyn [r] and Bethany [r], for example, talked of how their life choices, more than their language choices, had been a factor in

their feelings of disconnection from friends who are also native to the area. They noticed themselves using more AE characteristics when speaking to their friends, but also realized that their life experiences were so different from those of their friends who did not attend college that they have held closer to relationships with the few others that did attend college, feeling more in common with those individuals because of life choices.

Family relations were a major contributing factor in these women's need to balance. Wanting again to be part of the 'in-group', they understandably speak with more Appalachian characteristics when conversing with their extended family members. Only two participants Leigh [r] and Trish [r] noted a disconnection with family. Both cited their fathers as people in their lives who probably take the most note of their language change. As Leigh reflects on some of her language changes, she thinks of her pronunciation of the word *pretty*. She used to say *purty* before attending college, but not anymore. She thinks that "it really bugs [her] dad to think that [she] might be 'puttin' on the dawg." She readily admits that he would never comment directly on her language changes, but she "feels it," i.e. his reaction, in other things he says. Others admit they choose not to discuss their education at family functions where other family members are not college-educated. It's as if there is a clear line. Family is family; work is work. Norma [r] finds she "never mentions" her education or her work when visiting her husband's family; this avoidance is most prevalent in Norma's remarks, but all of the other participants reveal the same type of avoidance. For example, some seem to "gravitate toward the others who are college-educated.

We simply have more in common.” Still another said, “I would never talk about it. It would be like boasting.” Yet, all of the women talked about the family support that allowed them to pursue their education, and the pride the family takes in their success.

I was surprised that several participants credited the disconnections they felt from family and friends with their education rather than their language use. For instance, Suzanne, whose father was always an elder in her church as she was growing up and still serves in the Western Conference of the United Methodist Church, often remarked about her education during times they have theological debates. She said it was common for him to say, “Well, *you* are the one that is educated, not me.” Suzanne rolled her eyes during the interview and playfully joked, “I guess I am the edumacated one in the family.” Feeling the resentment of her education and status, Suzanne seemed to long for a greater connection to her father; her pain at feeling more disconnected as she became better educated and more successful was often noticeable during the interview process through her body language, her teary eyes and her shaking voice. It seems apparent that language change and education are closely connected, and all of the participants cited their education as an asset to their careers, just as their language change was an asset to their education. The two go hand-in-hand. So it is difficult to delineate which is most responsible for the disconnections the participants may feel. Even though they cited education most often, participants realized that SAE is an expectation in the academic community they chose to enter. And of course, to family members, the language change must take center

stage any time the standardization illuminates the speech of their newly educated daughter.

All of the participants revealed a desire to balance their language to some degree. Likewise, all revealed some feeling of disconnect with friends, but only 8 of 12 noted disconnect with family. The four participants who noted no feeling of disconnect from family cited a belief that their family members would never “judge” them or “love [them] less” based upon their speech. Still, even these participants said they felt the need to balance and use more Appalachian characteristics in their speech, to feel like part of the ‘in group’ when conversing with family and friends.

I wondered if some participants might have made an ultimate choice of one or the other linguistic form: to have totally abandoned their native variety or to have abandoned their efforts to standardize; but none had done this. They were all performing the balancing act so apparent in my own life. This phenomenon seems to represent a similar conflict to my own. In the introduction, I discussed that the conflict of navigating my conversations at work and at home led me to balance my two language varieties; on some level, all of the women in this study also experience conflicting expectations that have led them to balance their language varieties as well. Their willingness to engage in this balancing act reflects the critically important values these women associate with both these language varieties.

## Summary

All of the participants discovered by their freshman year in college that they spoke a language variety considered inferior by mainstream America. For these women, there were two catalysts for language change: 1) life changing events that highlighted outsiders' perceptions of linguistic inferiority; and 2) a desire to succeed in postsecondary academic pursuits and to reach the implied promises of higher education. Language change for each of these women was an individualistic pursuit that was tailored to their individual life goals, yet all of the women are still working to navigate their two varieties to reach their goals as they satisfy their personal need for identity through language. The balance is a delicate one. The next chapter will discuss the conclusions to the data discussed in this chapter.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Finding Closure

For several days I had been contemplating writing the final chapter of this study which would bring, not just a close to the research process, but closure to the stories the participants had so willingly shared with me as well. Tying up loose ends has never been easy for me; and I felt it was an especially daunting task when trying to interpret the place these women had come to in their rich and complex lives.

I sat on the hardwood floor in my living room fumbling quickly through the bottom drawer of my antique armoire. I love antiques. They, too, tell stories. They have been passed down from one family member to another, sold to new owners, moved to different homes, loved by some owners, and abused by others. Their wood finishes reveal much, but not all. Like many of us, antiques hold some details of their lives hidden. A new owner never knows an antique's entire story. I can only imagine the woman who polished and cared for my armoire before me. I love the mystery. Knowing this love I have for antiques, my husband bought me the armoire when we were newly married and poor—a time when we shouldn't even have thought of such a luxury--and I have grown to love it more each day. It is where I keep things precious to me. The most valuable things find a home in the bottom drawer.

It didn't seem to matter to me at the time that the station wagon was packed and my daughter, now 11, was waiting impatiently in the back seat. She was ready for our final trip to Pennsylvania where I was working to complete this dissertation text. I knew that my daughter was waiting for the ride to Pennsylvania, and that she was also more than ready to have her mom back. I knew that I should join her and that we should get on the road; but nothing seemed to matter at the moment except the treasure I knew must be lying right in front of me. I just knew that, somewhere in the bottom drawer, I would find something precious--something I had held back, but had known that through this long research process I would need to revisit, something that had touched my heart deeply, though it had not registered clearly in my memory.

Finally I saw something lying on the bottom of the drawer—a stack of magazines bundled together with some worn rubber bands. Suddenly, I remembered ordering them in the fall of 2005 from The Center for Appalachian Studies and Services. I had methodically reviewed the archives for *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine* and had chosen the thematic issues relevant to my study: storytelling, rural Appalachia, accents, women, and more. I knew this must be exactly what I needed. I grabbed the stack and prayed for inspiration as I ran to the car and began my final twelve-hour drive back to campus.

We traveled eight hours before I succumbed to exhaustion after a long summer of heavy research, writing, and travel, so I decided to stop in Summerville, West Virginia, for the night. I put my daughter to bed as I thought about how much she had grown during this two-year dissertation process. She

was only 9 when I sat in the bleachers at her school's basketball camp writing my dissertation prologue, and she had matured in numerous ways. As I watched her, I wondered how this dissertation would affect her as she, too, grew into a mature woman rooted in the soil of Appalachia. I pondered the ways in which I, too, had grown immeasurably, as I sat down and began leafing through the pages of my magazines. I was unsure of what I was searching for, but I knew it was there somewhere.

Just as my eyes became almost too heavy to continue reading, I came upon some poems in the back of the issue dedicated to "Rural Appalachia" (1990). One particular poem, called "Cancer, His 83<sup>rd</sup> Year," reminded me of my grandfather's last days. It brought tears to my eyes as it touched me on a personal level; but the poem spoke nothing of my study, so I decided to move on. Then, on the opposite page, I noticed the title "First Generation, Bachelor of Arts", by a poet named Jane Hicks, and I was intrigued. Eleven of the twelve participants in my study were first generation college-educated, and all twelve talked of their first year in college as a pivotal time in their awareness of the vernacular they spoke and its place in the world. I read further, and realized that Hicks' words echoed the most important nuances of each woman's story. I will return to individual lines of the poem later in this chapter, but I cite the poem in its entirety here, by way of introduction to this chapter:

Leaving home, she  
arrived to find herself  
outclassed and  
outnumbered. She

watched the style,  
took up the talk –  
treading warily on  
the edge of their  
society. The education  
outstripped them in  
content and amount.  
the ground uncovered  
at home, fertile  
for cultivation.

Coming home, she  
found herself alone,  
outnumbered. She  
knew the style, took  
back the talk –  
treading warily on  
the edge of their  
society. Suspect  
for what she  
knew and they  
could not imagine –  
in the distance she  
sat alone-singing (pg. 32).

The treasure had been there all along. The pages, more than 16 years old, had been kept safe. The poem had simply been lying there, waiting for me with poetic answers to my study's research questions.

In the following sections of this chapter I respond to the research questions outlined in chapters one and four by using Hick's words as a creative framework. I hope my responses reveal a comprehensive understanding of these women, their perceived experiences and their language attitudes. These findings are important as the changing, contemporary American society tries to embody diversity.

*Language Attitudes: "She watched the style, took up the talk"*

My first research inquiry was designed to better understand the participants' language attitudes concerning AE and SAE:

- What language attitudes, if any, motivate professional women from Appalachia to balance two language varieties (AE and SAE)?
- What attitudes do they, themselves, hold toward these two varieties?

These questions led to the following findings:

- The participants believe that SAE holds professional promise, and to some extent they have all made efforts to standardize their speech. None mentioned SAE in connection with social advantages, and none spoke of a personal link to the standard variety.

The participants feel pride toward their native variety, to which they feel a strong emotional attachment; all still exhibit, to varying degrees, linguistic characteristics of their vernacular.

- Many participants exhibit ambivalence about both language varieties, even their own native variety.

Much research has been conducted on attachment theory including Bowlby (1969, 1979, 1982 and 1988), Ainsworth (1982) and Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978). This research addresses the possible motivations for the participants to choose bidialectism. Bowlby (1969) describes attachment as a "...lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (p. 194). He

believed that attachment aids in survival and that “the propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature” (Bowlby, 1988. p.3). The participants of the current study exhibit the desire to feel included in both speech communities, which may be attributed to their need for attachment, and this need seemed to guide their decisions and form their current attitudes toward AE and SAE.

The most apparent finding in the study to support the participants’ motivation for balancing the two language varieties lies in the power each participant feels that SAE holds in her professional life. All of the participants were clearly aware of the power that SAE holds in the American society, and all participants, to some degree, had tried to achieve a type of bidialectism. This realization led all of the participants to change their speech to some degree. Throughout the study, all of the participants placed great value in their family and their heritage, while at the same time recognizing their need to standardize their speech in order to “move up”. Even Trish [u], the participant who exhibited the fewest AE characteristics, discussed her fondness for hearing her parent’s dialect and her own ability to shift her lexicon during visits home. In contrast, Mia [u], the participant who most notably tried to retain her native variety, talked of her time in college when she aspired to be a psychotherapist. She remembered emulating her role models, learning the lexicon, dressing the part, and acting as a professional: “There just weren’t any Appalachian role models in my field,” she observed. The participants’ professional motivations can be clearly seen throughout the data; surprisingly, it was the only motivation the participants cited.

No motivation based upon social group inclusion or any other factor appeared in anything they said about the importance of Standard English. In particular, in contrast to their conversation about their own native variety, essentially no noticeable emotional connection to standard forms was evident as they spoke of the advantages connected with mastery of these forms.

The participants' attitudes toward SAE seemed to be both cognitive and behavioral, to use categories from Edwards (1982). The cognitive aspect of the participants' attitude lies in the way they develop and hold beliefs about the world. Participants noted the power SAE holds in the American society, and they realized that learning SAE was certainly a requirement for success at the professional level. However, their attitudes are also behavioral because they decided to act upon their belief that SAE holds power by standardizing their vernacular to varying degrees.

The second finding notes that participants feel pride in their native language variety. Unlike the SAE attitudes noted above, this pride reflects the third component Edwards (1982) outlines, as presented in chapter one, the affective component. This component is present when language attitudes evoke feelings about an attitude object. All of the participants exhibited some sense of pride toward their native language variety. The most standard speaking participant, Trish [u], illustrated this pride as she talked of the Southern attorney who was complimented on her accent by the presiding judge. In addition to Trish, Callie [u], Sharon [r], and Leigh [u] among others, showed their joy in smiles and in their eyes when discussing the AE characteristics they are

beginning to notice in the speech of their small children. Those participants without children cited attachments as well, though in their case, they tended to look at the generations that preceded them. Suzanne [r] beamed as she discussed the stories told by her elders that she loves to hear in AE. Likewise, Kaitlyn [r] echoed this joy when discussing her childhood days enjoying the stories of older generations. The element that seemed the most poignant in my mind as the interviews came to a close is that all of the women acknowledged the inferior status of their native language variety; still, they spoke openly about their own personal attitudes toward AE as being different, not inferior.

Most surprising for me was the third finding listed above: many participants exhibited ambivalence about both language varieties. I expected ambivalence in their attitudes toward SAE because it was the language variety that has been learned for pragmatic reasons alone. However, I expected less ambivalence toward their vernacular. Somehow, I expected participants to either respect their vernacular, holding close to it in their identity, or to have abandoned it and the stigma it holds. This was not the case. All of the participants exhibited some pride and personal connection to their vernacular; yet they still spoke of it in terms of 'incorrect' or 'wrong,' in contrast to forms of SAE, which they referred to as 'proper' and 'correct'. These references revealed that the participants themselves, at least to some degree, reflect the hierarchal beliefs of the greater society in relationship to both language varieties.

On a more predictable note, I found ambivalence in their attitudes toward SAE, attitudes which carry an affective component in that the topic evoked

emotion in the participants. Suzanne [r], for instance, showed sadness as she talked of the way that SAE is held in higher esteem than her vernacular. Others expressed frustration and anger toward SAE and the role it plays in society. These feelings were not evoked simply by mentioning SAE; they were only evoked when discussing the role of both varieties in relation to the family and friends of their native community. All of them referred to the disrespect and inferior position that speakers of AE have been subjected to in society. This I have also felt, so this finding was not surprising to me. However, the ambivalence toward their vernacular both surprised me and taught me something important about myself. Leigh [u], Sharon [r], Adrian [u], Kaitlyn, and Ali [u] discussed their embarrassment when newscasters interview people exhibiting many AE characteristics. These participants even admitted to laughing at people with “strong accents.” As our focus interview ended, we all took a few moments to think about our past behavior. I remembered laughing at others in this way at times. As we felt our own past behavior was inappropriate and possibly hurtful to others and this realization was a true didactic moment for us. On a parting note, we vowed to be more mindful of our own behavior in the future.

This phenomenon was echoed by other forms of ambivalence in Dana [r], Callie [u] and others’ descriptions of their embarrassment when hearing themselves or family members either on training videotapes, answering machines, or home movies. This embarrassment was in direct conflict with the pride these women also exhibited. These attitudes reflect some of the motivations that have inspired these women to become bidialectic.

The Speech-Language Hearing Association (1983) published a position paper concerning the association's views on speech therapy in relation to social varieties. Three philosophies are presented, covering the range of possibilities for non-standard speakers: 1) no intervention, 2) promotion of bidialectalism, and 3) eradication of nonstandard usage. Having read this position paper before my interviews, I thought that I would meet the same range in attitudes among these women. That is, I expected to meet women who had attempted no standardization, or women who believed total eradication of AE was a necessity in their lives. However, all of the women fell under option 2 above, as they reflected on their attempts at bidialectism and the importance they attached to maintaining membership in both speech communities. This was true of the one participant Suzanne [r] who had officially worked with a speech therapist after being given advice in her master's program to "lose that accent." Also important to note here is that the one aspect of Suzanne's therapy she valued most was her ability to speak without the high rising terminal which describes the rising intonation used at the end of declarative sentences, making them sound more like questions than statements. Uptalk, another name for high rising terminal, was coined as one of the "new words of the year 1993" by the American Dialect Society. Linguist Cynthia McLermore didn't realize during her study of uptalk in a University of Texas sorority house that this phenomenon was widespread. While presenting her results in various lectures across the country, she realized uptalk was more common than she had first recognized. The Chicago Tribune (28 November 1993) featured uptalk at its lead story, "Can we uptalk?" In this feature

article, one woman reported that she practices uptalk in order to be perceived as good-girlish (Algeo & Algeo 1994). MacNeil and Crum (2005) report on the ongoing debate on the effect of this widespread uptalk on the language. “Does changing language mean a changing American consciousness? And what does that mean for the future of the country, not just the language? Or is the rising inflection as innocent as a wish to connect with a listener, a way of saying, in effect, Are you following me?” (pp. 176-177). Uptalk has been connected to the language of women in a widespread, universal manner. Important to this study and to Suzanne’s experience is that the use of uptalk is widespread, but in her particular situation, it was associated specifically with her native language variety. This leads to the possibility that the women of this study may experience judgments about linguistic characteristics in their speech that are not specific to AE, but are perceived as negative and therefore associated erroneously with AE because of its inferior status.

As mentioned previously, I had expected that at least one participant of the twelve would have removed herself more completely from her native area and variety through linguistic divergence. However, this certainly was not the case. All of the women clearly respected their family ties and the gifts their heritage had offered them, and none of the participants felt that AE was inferior in a way that led them to wish to disconnect from it completely. Moreover, all of the participants exhibited some sadness when discussing the inferior perception AE receives in the American society, and all value their native variety in a way not seen in the greater society. Since AE was valued by all of the participants and

each held on to at least some of its characteristics, bidialectism was used to balance the needs of their conflicting professional and personal lives. Each understood the need to speak a more standardized version at work. For instance, Sharon [r], who exhibits the most AE characteristics, recognizes her need to speak SAE while at work and is proud of her ability to do so. Yet each also exhibited great comfort and joy when discussing their ability to shift back to their native language variety. Not one participant talked of SAE in a hierarchical way as being a better choice for them personally in absolute terms. They only spoke of its value in the greater society and what that value meant to their professional lives. One explanation for their unanimous choice of bidialectism might be the fact that all of the participants are still connected in some way to the local area. It seems that a woman who felt she needed to remove herself from the stigmatism of the area would not be in contact with others from the area, and therefore would not have been suggested to participate in this study during the snowball sampling process. It was apparent throughout the data collection and analysis processes that all of the women in the study agreed that AE was close to their heritage and history and held value for them, but also that SAE holds power. At some point in their lives and to varying degrees, they had all “watched the style, took up the talk”.

*Views of Professional Life: “Treading warily on the edge of their society”*

My second research question was designed to explore the work events the participants have experienced which led to their current language attitudes:

- What types of struggles, based upon their membership within two different speech communities, do these women feel they experience in such life events as job searches, and daily encounters with co-workers, employers, or others who play important roles in their lives?

This question led to the following findings:

- Most participants have experienced negative work experiences in relation to their native vernacular, leaving them to continue to strive for more standardization.
- Participants have remained members of their native speech community and entered a new professional speech community, but feel on the fringes of both.

Only three participants noted that they had never experienced a negative experience at work in relation to language use. One was the most standard speaker Trish [u], while the other two, Norma [r] and Sharon [r], have always lived and worked in the local area. These three women represented the most disconnected individual and the most connected individuals respectively, from their vernacular. This seems to point to the possibility that the women who balance most have experienced the most negative work experiences. The employment evaluations discussed in chapter five are clear examples of work experiences which have led the participants to continually strive for more standard speech. Dana [r] reflects her frustration when she remarks, "I will never be good enough, never." These feelings of stigmatization have followed many of these women into the workplace, causing them to continually strive for more

standard speech and leaving them feeling as if they are “treading warily on the edge of their [professional] society”.

Likewise, many of the participants talked about feeling some disconnect with their native community. Surprisingly (to me), none of them noted language use as the cause of this perceived disconnect. Instead, they unanimously identified their education as the cause for feeling distanced from their native community. Bethany [r] is careful to use words her father will readily understand and not use the lexicon of her profession, even though they are both farmers. Others, such as Norma [r], admit that they never talk about their work or their education at family or class reunions. Some admit that in those situations they tend to gravitate toward other college graduates, this time citing life experience as the great disconnecting factor. Recall the story of Suzanne [r], discussed in chapter five; Suzanne reports that her conflict with her father about being “the educated one in the family” still brings her discomfort. Mia [u] talks not of her education, but of her specific profession. According to Mia, many mountain people do not believe in psychotherapy as a valid profession. Many believe that she can “read their minds” or that she will in some way evaluate them during a conversation, so she chooses not to discuss her education or profession on her return trips home because she is “suspect for what she [knows] and they [can] not imagine”. This is true of many professions. As an English professor, whenever I am introduced to a new person, I am often greeted with, “I had better watch my language around you, then!” Likewise, many of the participants discussed conversation in relation to the contextual omission strategies they use

during time spent in their native region. Bethany [r], Kaitlyn [r], Callie [u] and others cited omissions of such topics as higher education and professional issues when speaking with other natives who are not college-educated. These strategies were used to help bridge the gap between the participants' knowledge base and their life experience that their friends and family "could not imagine." These omissions, both lexical and contextual, leave these women "treading warily of the edge of their [native] society."

*Life Milestones: "Outclassed and outnumbered"*

The third research question was designed to explore the life events which led the participants to bidialectism:

- What pivotal events in their lives are the cognitive basis for their language attitudes, making them conscious of their language use and aware of the possible need to balance AE and SAE?

This question led to the following finding:

- Participants were led to bidialectism through negative life experiences which typically occurred during their first year in undergraduate school.

All of the participants noted that they first began to realize the stigmatization of their vernacular upon their first important interaction with outsiders. Trish [u] and Mia [u] both experienced negative comments or humor from family members residing outside the region. Both the comments and humor were directed at their language use, and the message was one that clearly marked their vernacular as inferior. Likewise, Kaitlyn traveled to Michigan during high school and experienced the same type of stigmatization concerning her speech. The

remaining participants cited their first year of college, when they were first introduced to a more heterogeneous population, as the first time that they understood the difference or stigmatization of their vernacular. Those who moved further outside the region noted more stigmatization than those attending college either within the region or in close proximity.

Upon entering college, the participants were suddenly thrust into a population where their vernacular was the exception, rather than the norm. By their first year in college, all of the participants had realized that not all, but many members of society viewed their native language variety as inferior. They found themselves, “outclassed and outnumbered.”

The commonality among all of the participants is that interaction with people outside the region brought the differences of AE and SAE to light. In addition, this interaction, much of which was negative, left the participants with the understanding that AE was considered inferior by many. This realization that AE was considered inferior became the cognitive basis for the participants' move toward bidialectism. The documentary *American Tongues* (1987) reveals the same phenomenon with another speaker of AE, a Kentuckian, who thought when he first attended college that everyone else spoke ‘funny’ until it was pointed out to him that he was the one who spoke differently than the majority of his peers. That is, the participants' experiences in college reflect similar experiences that others have when they are first exposed to a more standard speaking speech community for the first time.

*Living in Two Worlds: “She knew the style, took back the talk”*

My fourth research question was designed to better understand the participants’ attitudes in relation to their bidialectism:

- What perceptions do these women hold in regard to the place of bidialectism in the professional world?

This question led to the following finding:

- Participants believe that bidialectism is a necessity to balance two speech communities.

Most of the participants understood that using Standard Written English was important, even as students in their K-12 years. This phenomenon relates somewhat to Ferguson’s (1959, 1971 and 1991) idea of diglossia, discussed in chapter one, in that the written form of the standard variety, to some, might function as a different language variety, an “H” form to their spoken “L” vernacular. Adjustments had to be made to their spoken language so that it would more closely reflect that of the more accepted prestige language variety. This realization for most came during their college years when the participants felt the need to speak SAE as well being able to write for the academy. Therefore, most of them began their bidialectic journey during these formative adult years. Understanding that SAE has great power in American society and knowing that power was a factor in their professional success led the participants to take on more standard characteristics within their speech. During this time, the participants also made decisions concerning the role SAE would play in their careers. For instance, Callie [u],

the physician who hated hearing herself on the training video during medical school, has relaxed her efforts to speak SAE in a way that she feels best suits both her needs and the needs of her patients. For instance, she speaks with her native accent, but rarely using nonstandard lexical or grammatical forms. She now accepts that her patients will probably ask her where she is from, and she answers them briefly, but politely, and then moves back to the patient's reason for the medical appointment. This allows her to retain some of her AE characteristics, while still finding success in the medical profession. Others note similar adjustments. Leigh [r] takes pride in knowing that the other students from her high school, who attended college and tried to "lose their accents," have now relaxed this effort and taken back more of their AE characteristics. The most interesting element of this phenomenon, to me, is that the participants' varying degrees of standardization showed a clear correlation to their professional needs. More specifically, each participant seems to have standardized her speech to the degree she perceived necessary in order to be successful. Once she understood the degree to which she needed to standardize for professional success, she relaxed and "took back" the acceptable characteristics of AE which she could use in her professional life. Also, each participant specifically recognized her ability to take on more characteristics of AE when visiting with family and friends in the region. In other words, "she knew the style, took back the talk."

This phenomenon leads me to believe that the role SAE plays in these women's lives is a professional role based upon the cognitive component of

their language attitudes toward SAE. Even Trish [u] discussed her belief as a child that SAE was a necessity for her future success and was the driving force behind her language change, which led her to become the most standard speaking participant in the study. None of the women felt they had to continue speaking standard in all arenas of their lives and were only willing to change to the degree needed for professional success.

*Coping: “In the distance she sat alone – singing”*

My final research question as outlined in chapters one and four was designed to develop an overview of how the participants have coped with their linguistic challenges:

- How do these women cope with [language-related] challenges in their lives?

This question led to the following finding:

- Participants recognize AE as an integral part of their heritage and their identity, yet value the role SAE has played in their professional lives, making bidialectism a coping mechanism for the conflicting values within the two speech communities.

The answer to this question can largely be drawn from what has been said in answer to the earlier questions. All of the participants clearly valued their two language varieties, AE and SAE. However, AE was clearly connected to their heritage. They illustrated many language attitudes that were affective when talking of AE. The language variety reminded them of their childhood, their ancestors, and their place in the world. Most recognized that their

children will have some AE characteristics in their speech and valued that connection their children will have to preceding generations. During the individual interviews, each of the participants “took back the talk” at some points. Smiling as she drew out her long vowels or reminisced of words from her childhood. The participants were clearly connected to their vernacular as a part of their own heritage and identity and found great sadness in the judgments that others still make of family and friends from the region.

Since each woman values SAE and its role in her career, there was a nuance of nostalgia in each of the interviews. Will AE disappear if we continue to buy into society’s expectations of SAE? Have we assisted in the ‘dilution’ of our own vernacular? This concern was clearly on some of the participants’ minds, while others simply noted they felt that they may devalue their native language variety in some ways by taking on such standardization. As noted earlier, bidialectism seemed to be the coping mechanism for these internal conflicts.

I expected some of the participants would have a humorous story about occasionally using some nonstandard forms at work. This was not the case. The participants continue to work diligently to speak correctly at work so that they are not targets for criticism or off color humor in relation to their language use. When jokes are made about Appalachian language or culture, the participants do say that they simply laugh and move on. Norma [r] remembers, “There were times when I don’t think was I taken as seriously as I could have been. I don’t think I had my feelings on my sleeves.” Norma

carefully analyzed her own reactions to her colleagues' jokes about her language use. She definitively decides during our interview that she believes she was not too sensitive, but that she truly experienced a lack of credibility due to her speech. Referring to her language use, Callie [u] reflects, "I think people joke about it in just kind of a fun way", but goes on to say that during college she was uncomfortable with the way that Southerners were played out in the media. Others reflected on the humor used to characterize the people of our area, citing *Deliverance*, *Sweet Home Alabama*, *Cold Mountain*, late night comics and newscasters to name a few. Therefore, humor should be considered a coping mechanism that the participants use when they join in the laughter of others. All of the participants who discussed humor spoke of it as a coping mechanism; none cited finding actual humor in being the butt of other's jokes. I am reminded of the old adage, "laugh and the world laughs with you"; unfortunately, for these women, it seems to have been more a matter of "laugh at yourself while the world laughs at you." This use of humor should be considered a secondary coping mechanism. As the participants try diligently to speak SAE while at work to avoid placing themselves in situations where people judge them or laugh at them based upon their speech.

It is imperative to note that the bidialectism and humor seem to be successful coping mechanisms, as all of the participants noted that any sacrifices they have made in this journey have been worth the rewards they have received. The occasional disconnection from family members, the

adjustments to their speech for professional success, and the long hours and many years of hard work to become well educated are all sacrifices which have led them to live their dreams while not severing their ties from their family, friends and the place they love called home. At times, the participants expressed the idea that they have taken the 'unusual' path among their family members. All of them represent the family's most well-educated member. The pride, envy and other emotions this role evoked from members of the greater community were often directed at them, sometimes in a way that made them feel isolated; however, each woman in the study was strong, independent and successful. Each had found happiness in her journey. Even though she may at times "tread warily on the edges of [both societies]", each takes pride as she stands "in the distance alone—singing."

## Chapter 7

### IMPLICATIONS AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

#### Implications

The broadest implications for the present study apply at the level of society as a whole. The underlying meaning of these women's stories is of relevance to people everywhere, especially to Americans and English speakers in all walks of life. In an age where American society has become more sensitive to the needs and the culture of various minority groups, it is important for people to understand the culture, language and beliefs of these long-standing players in the American story: the Appalachian people, who sometimes see their language and culture either as invisible or as a target of discrimination still tolerated in our society. American society, with all its rich diversity, has always been the better for absorbing, accepting, and respecting new groups into its life; given that, it is only natural to hope that it will now learn to accept and respect this culture in its own midst, which has been marginalized in mainstream venues for so long.

The participants' willingness to change their speech makes it apparent that they have accepted the personal sacrifices they have had to make to obtain their professional goals; however, at the same time, they continue to hold to the idea that retaining some AE characteristics grounds them to their native community. This pattern of bidialectism may be apparent in other individuals who speak AE, and in other cultures whose members speak other stigmatized vernaculars, as language use is closely connected to identity. Research has historically connected language and issues of identity and much literature is available

connecting language use to identity. (Joseph, 2004; Greensburg, 2004; Fisher 2001; Schmid, 2001; Norton, 2000; LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985 among others). Most recently, Miller (2000), Holmes (1997), Buchholtz (1999), among others have conducted studies exploring this long accepted connection between language, gender and identity. The implications of this study on teaching practices speak to the issues of respecting nonstandard vernaculars and their speakers' identities, particularly in relation to women.

Of course, social change comes slowly if left to the efforts of a few social reformers. But such change can be given a major boost in classrooms from elementary school through the university years, if educators see the need and the importance of fostering understanding in their students. Thus, the implications of the current study extend to the development of pedagogy designed to value students' native language varieties while recognizing the power of SAE. During her interviews, Leigh [u], a sixth grade language arts teacher, speaks of her efforts to play a part in shaping tomorrow's attitudes in this area. Leigh recognizes the role bidialectism has played in her life and how it has helped her develop much of her pedagogy. She takes pride in her work with Appalachian elementary school children as she works to teach them the expectations of mainstream American in regard to SAE. However, she also stresses the beauty of their language forms. Of her students she says, "number one, they should be proud of their accent, their dialects...They are going to have to learn that in order to go to college, they are going to have to learn SAE...at least in their writing because sometimes the only picture that others will have of

them will be from an essay.” Leigh continued to discuss her desire to assist students in their language journeys, to help them navigate their educational and professional futures without devaluing or eradicating their vernacular. Leigh has been able to take her life experiences and develop pedagogy that she believes helps her students value their vernacular while she is teaching them the SAE expected of mainstream America. Recognizing the separate place for the two varieties, Leigh observes, “What students say at home may not be what they write in a paper.” Current research such as Crystal, 2001, 1997; Christian, 1997; Demo, 2000; Wolfram 1990; Wolfram, and Adger, and Christian 1999, among others, supports Leigh’s commitment to valuing students’ native language variety as Leigh works to help students see their native vernaculars as valid. Most specifically, her pedagogical practices reflect Trudgill’s (1975) comment that “if a child feels his language is inferior, he is less likely to be willing to use it” (p. 62). That is, if children feel that their native language varieties are valid, they will be more likely to use their vernaculars and to feel validated in their natural form of expression.

Pedagogical practices everywhere should lend themselves to this type of thinking. If we, as educators, want the American culture to be accepting of the nonstandard language varieties spoken throughout the country, then we can be the catalyst for change. Since eleven of the twelve participants in the current study cited their college experience as a catalyst for change in their language use as they began to enter a second speech community, the university seems to be an appropriate place for changing attitudes. Of course, ideally, a respect for

diversity should begin at the pre-school or kindergarten level. However, university educators bear a considerable responsibility, as well as having a situation with rich potential.

As an educator in the Appalachian region, I am especially interested in ways that the schools in my native mountains can help today's young regional speakers become balanced and productive adults. When teaching students who speak nonstandard forms of English, there are ways we can value their native language variety. Activities which value the Appalachian variety include listening to songs, reading poetry and enjoying stories which are written in AE. Also, various Appalachian storytelling events are held in the mountains each year, and teachers could encourage their students to attend one of those events. These valuable experiential learning opportunities could illustrate to students the value of this language variety. Teachers could also incorporate readings from such magazines as *Now and Then: The Appalachian Magazine* or from *The Nantahala Review*, which value the language and the culture of Appalachia as they give voice to its people. Humphries (2001) urges teachers to use what he refers to as dialect literature as a pedagogical strategy for addressing the challenge of teaching students who speak AE, which is devalued by the greater American society. Not only does this literature present places, characters, culture and ideology familiar to students, which results in greater engagements with the material; Humphries also argues that

students are not getting the message that they should not learn Standard American English. Rather, they begin to realize that

their dialects have validity. As a result, they become more interested in language. (¶ 3)

Humphries also makes an excellent observation about the existing Appalachian literature. For the most part, dialogue is the only instance when AE appears in these texts. Otherwise, the texts are written in SAE. This still sends the message to students that SAE is more valid than their AE. Therefore, more literature, written entirely in AE, needs to be available for teachers to share with students.

This pedagogical ideology extends to all nonstandard speakers, not just those of Appalachia. Pedagogical changes introduce more challenges for the teacher that further research should address. For instance, research on British English varieties has found that “the most problematical situation is one where the teacher and the child have markedly different accents and the teacher is not aware of the nature or extent of the differences” (Trudgill, 1975, p. 48). That is, teachers need to be better educated in native language varieties so that they may better serve the needs of the students by filling this ‘gap’ between nonstandard versions and SAE. Christian (1997) purports that “teachers and materials developers need a clear understanding of the systematic differences between standard and vernacular dialects in order to help students learn standard English” (p. 2-3). Professional development addressing these types of needs could begin at the K-12 level and continue at the university level in an effort to incorporate dialect awareness and literature into the curriculum

As students mature and develop interviewing skills, they could interview the elders of their native communities regarding language use. Interviews could

assist students in “learning about how language varies geographically and socially, students will come to understand at least two basic facts about language: 1) that language changes over time, and 2) that language use is linked to social identity” (Hazen, 2001, ¶ 1). That is, interviews can help students value their vernacular and understand the important role their heritage and language play in their identity. This can be achieved by having students identify nonstandard elements of their native vernaculars they share with their grandparents’ generation, as well as elements that the students have eliminated or standardized which differ from their grandparents’ generation. This activity may help students understand language change as it relates to their native variety, as well as giving them a general appreciation for language change. These activities can also serve as a foundation for discussions of bidialectism and the role that both students’ native language variety and SAE may hold in their future.

While the previous suggestions might apply most specifically to the K-12 curriculum, higher education does play a crucial role in shaping social attitudes. As this study points out, college is typically the place where students first meet others from widely different backgrounds; thus, at the college level, the lessons which may have been taught in the abstract earlier can be tested in a realistically diverse environment. Colleges could offer workshops to help prepare speakers of nonstandard language varieties, such as AE, for professional interviews. In addition, college and university campuses are ideal sites for workshops promoting more inclusive ideology in regard to people of different races, sexual

orientations, religious beliefs and more. In an effort to help students embrace speakers of nonstandard language varieties, why not use such opportunities to educate them about these language varieties and the value each holds for its native speakers? At a time in students' lives when they are questioning their identities, beliefs, and personal boundaries, colleges and universities could begin moving the current American culture toward a more inclusive ideology in relation to nonstandard language varieties.

Linguists have long scoffed at the idea of pressing students to abandon their native language varieties. In fact, as Humphries (2001) purports,

even if students decided that they want to adopt more features of Standard American English in their speech, there is little, if any reason why school should 'prepare' students for changing their dialects. Research indicates that, if at some point, a student decides to alter his or her dialect, whether for reasons of geographical or social mobility, he or she can do this with reasonable success. Rather than insisting that students 'change' their dialect in school, we can rest assured that, if they choose, they will associate with other who have the desired dialect and, in a less conscious way, adapt different dialect features.

The participants clearly illustrate the kind of choice Humphries is talking about, as they navigate their language use based upon their identity—realizing that linguistic change may be needed whenever they face a geographical or professional change. This pattern reflects the insights of current sociolinguistic

research and should help us in guiding our future teaching practices in regard to speakers of nonstandard vernaculars.

The venue for social change should of course not stop in the classroom; the present study points out the importance of language in the workplace, especially in the professional world. Ironically, the workplace itself, the bastion of SAE hegemony, should play a role in helping promote mutual understanding among speakers of different varieties, whether these draw from global English and have been nurtured in Bangladesh or Africa, or whether they come from regions of American with distinctive language patterns, such as Appalachia. Most employers of professional personnel hold workshops to help their employees continue to grow and develop; these might incorporate language awareness activities, and in so doing, they might lead to a greater sense of solidarity and collaboration in the professions, especially those where collegiality and cooperation are of central importance.

On a more subtle level, where implications are harder to draw, the current study clearly connects to the available research on language and identity (Greensburg, 2004; Joseph, 2004; Fisher 2001; Schmid, 2001; Norton, 2000; LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985 among others). As professional women, the participants in this study are members of two different speech communities, with each community playing an integral role in the women's individual identities. Language use is one of the more important factors which allow these women to be included in both speech communities. Thus, SAE holds great importance to them as they identify themselves as professionals, while AE is recognized as an

integral part of their personal, less public, identity, allowing them to remain connected to family and friends. AE also allows these women to remain connected to their heritage. This phenomenon is clear in that the women have only standardized their speech to the point each deems necessary for their professional aspirations.

The two main coping mechanisms identified in the study, bidialectism and humor, are used to insure that these two integral elements of their identity are preserved. Of these, bidialectism seems to represent a healthier approach than humor. For one thing, the use of humor is a complicated matter. First, participants described situations in which they used humor as a coping mechanism, but then qualified its use as something to be used to “avoid conflict” or something used to divert attention away from their true feelings of “hurt” or “anger”. Relying on the research by Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1978), and Lakoff (1973), I believe humor is being used as a politeness strategy to avoid conflict or save face. Basically, bidialectism seems to be a coping mechanism which allows the participants to straightforwardly navigate their differing speech communities, while humor seems to be a coping mechanism which allows the participants to avoid conflict or save face in difficult social situations. In other words, bidialectism represents a long-term relationship to the two speech communities, while humor provides the more immediate remedy for individual embarrassing or difficult situations. Insights such as these could of course be integrated into the college and workplace activities mentioned above; however, I

discuss this reflection here, as it is of importance to all speakers in the greater domain of social interaction.

The women also discussed the linguistic challenges they may face in the future: job interviews, moves to other geographical areas, further educational opportunities. The participants recognized that these future challenges may lead them to standardize their speech more, or at least to “mind their p’s and q’s” even more so in the future. In fact, more than half of the women noted they are willing to continue to adjust their speech based upon future professional and life challenges. The more deeply this picture is understood, the better speakers such as these will be able to succeed in their careers—and the better the professional world will be able to benefit from their expertise and training.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

The current study points toward new topics for further research in a number of areas, which I will touch on in this section. The first extension that comes to mind for a study such as this involves the population chosen. Not all Appalachian women choose bidialectism. We could learn much from a population not tapped in the present study, namely native Appalachian women who have eradicated their vernacular in order to move into the mainstream and rid themselves of the cultural stigmatism their vernacular holds. Such studies could lead us to better understand the effects that abandoning one’s native language variety might have on the speakers’ identity and relationships. Likewise, studies of women who hold tight to AE and chose not to conform to expectations of the greater society might reveal feelings of pride as well as regret due to lost

potential (e.g. education, employment opportunities). Other populations whose experiences and attitudes would differ substantially include working-class speakers, males, and speakers of other nonstandard varieties. A few words are in order here about other populations that would be interesting to study.

During the past 50 years, rural Appalachian women have been less resistant than men to entering the public workforce, as their ability to be self-sufficient has steadily declined in the changing economy (Beaver, 1983). However, today more Appalachian men are entering the academy and facing the same professional choices the women of the current study have faced. Expanding this study of language attitudes to men, and even drawing comparisons between the experiences of both genders, could reveal much. Do Appalachian men feel the same need to become bidialectal as the women of the current study? Do these men's language attitudes reflect those of the women in the current study, or does gender indeed play a role in the language attitudes explored in this study? Certainly, the volume of research on gender, including the relative emphasis on competition among men (Tannen, 1995 & 1990, among others), would lead us to expect that men might show very different coping mechanisms, and might develop very different attitudes, from the women in this study.

Another area for further study worth noting is the role of experience and language attitudes in the lives of children. Each participant of this study who was a mother noted her concern for her child(ren) in relation to language use. For instance, all of the mothers valued the AE characteristics they had already

noticed in their children's speech; but each also exhibited some ambivalence concerning the AE-SAE dichotomy as a potential source of pain for their children. In fact, Dana [r] stated, "I don't want my children to suffer the way that I have." Due to the mobility of the current American culture, many of us are raising our children to speak differently than ourselves. What effect does this type of language change within a single household have on its children? What message do we send to our own children when they see us using SAE in one area of our lives and our nonstandard variety at home with family and friends? Do our children begin to see the nonstandard as less valuable due to our own actions? Alternatively, when nonstandard speakers raise their children in areas where the local variety is closer to the standard, how do the children view their parents' culture, and to what extent does that culture influence their own very different emerging cultural identity? These questions were not the focus of the current study, but are important as possible foci for future studies.

Finally, my focus during this study was the language attitudes of AE speakers; however, as in any misunderstanding, it is appropriate to explore both sides. Therefore, studying the language attitudes of the listeners (the relatively 'standard' speakers) is just as valuable and could bring more understanding to the attitudes relevant to the whole area of nonstandard speech. This could be done in a similar qualitative interview format or by using a less direct research design, such as Luhman's (1990) study of language attitudes toward nonstandard speakers native to Kentucky.

Finally, more research is needed in a similar vein to the current study, to more fully represent the speakers of vernaculars such as AE. As Beaver (Fall 1999) asserts: “it is indeed a fruitful time to ask new questions and theorize anew this region” (p. ix).

Further studies could probe the underlying issues in more depth as well. Even though the women of the current study felt SAE was a necessity for professional success, more studies could reveal results challenging this belief. Shuy (1972) represents an early, classic statement of this problem:

Speech appears to be an important criterion for job opportunity, despite protestations to the contrary from employers. Speech reveals a great deal about a person, but practically nothing about his intelligence or use of logic. (p. 154)

In his study, Shuy explores the pitfalls of speaking SAE in various employment venues. He purports there is “a need to speak something other than ‘school-room-English’ at work in a society which at least outwardly claims that its values are to be placed on entirely different forms.” (p.146). Shuy’s argument suggests that speaking SAE can be counterproductive to the speaker in some work settings, such as industrial ones. That is, there is a place for social dialects in the workforce. More research on social dialects and employability are needed, particularly in relation to speakers of AE. These women felt great societal pressure to speak SAE in order to be successful; but can people of Appalachia be successful speaking their native vernacular in the workplace?

Other theoretical issues are raised as well in the current study. These include the underlying linguistic description of nonstandard varieties; when categorizing forms that I and others instinctively identified as 'Appalachian,' I found little backup in terms of lexical information on these forms, and I was surprised to learn that many of them are common in informal usage in other areas besides Appalachia. This raised the question of the distinction between truly 'regional' speech patterns on the one hand, and informal usage on the other. A similar issue was raised with Ali's pronunciation of a word she had encountered only in reading. Her inability to produce the word phonologically has little to do with regional language, though she and her listeners obviously made the connection. These underlying issues need to be understood more fully in order to base emerging pedagogical approaches to language awareness on sound linguistic descriptions.

### Final Reflections

There seems to be a great debate today concerning language and its manifestations within the American culture. Rarely a day goes by that I don't find a segment on FOX News or CNN about language use. Should America adapt so readily to the influx of Spanish and other immigrant speakers? Should African Americans adapt to a more standard speech? Should people with great influence, such as Bill Cosby, criticize their own culture and its language variety? When we have a valid and growing movement to recognize and respect English varieties that have emerged from Hong Kong to the African countries, it is a bit

ironic to think that we continue to discriminate against a native variety as old and entrenched as Appalachian English.

The concerns are many; the answers are few. What I find most fascinating is that speakers of these varieties, or even academic scholars who have studied nonstandard language and culture in depth, are rarely given voice on a national level. Instead, the culture seems to be led by the opinions of powerful people with little knowledge concerning this particular dilemma. I ask myself, "Where is Labov or Wolfram, Baugh or Smitherman, Hazen or Hicks, in these debates?" I have followed many of the national broadcasts, looking diligently for these scholars or speakers of vernaculars to be involved in the debate, yet I have found a void in our culture's inclusion of these scholars. The debate includes only speakers of SAE with strong opinions. Many Hispanics today also find themselves under fire for speaking their native language in the United States or for having traces of their native accent. Many Americans have argued against singing the American National Anthem in Spanish, and some states are even trying to make English the official language and banning Spanish in various venues. This type of control did not obliterate English during the Norman Conquest, and changes are, most people will hold to their native language, including its variety, more tightly than the opponents realize. Some progress can be seen with John McWhorter (2001 & 2005), author of several books exploring the role of SAE and the vernacular of African American communities, including *Word on the street: Debunking the myth of 'pure' standard English* (McWhorter & McWhorter 2001) recently appeared on Book TV (18 June 2006) to discuss his most recent book, *Winning the race:*

*Beyond the crisis in black America.* McWhorter's appearance represents change in the debate; however, more appearances by experts like McWhorter in more mainstream venues are still needed. More change is needed. More speakers of vernaculars, and more scholars who have dedicated their lives to answering these important cultural questions, should be given a voice within an American culture that claims to be working toward embodying more diversity.

I was honored to join these women in our search for answers to questions important to our native culture; I hope that, within this study, their voices have been heard. Because of the homogeneous nature of the participant group, I was a member of the in-group and found camaraderie with the participants. Although I expected to be welcomed by the participants and viewed as an insider, I also expected their stories to be quite different than my own. I thought I might struggle looking for themes within their stories. I expected some would have abandoned their native variety completely while others held to it without waiver. This I did not find. I found all twelve women searching for the perfect balance that would best serve their own needs—a balance that would let them soar toward their dreams while staying rooted in their heritage—a tough balance to find indeed.

Each of us is truly unique. Each of us has a story to tell. My goal was to give each woman a voice. Through dedicating myself to this goal, I bonded with the participants as we realized our stories were similar. In the future, I know that I will often find myself alone in the distance singing; but now, like the participants, I know there are other women singing the same song.

Through sharing their struggles and comparing their journeys, many of these women have become friends with me and with each other, and have shared my excitement about this academic pursuit. All of the participants have asked to read the study, and several have asked to continue our talks. One participant told me, "I finally feel like there are other women struggling the way that I am." This comment led me to realize, I had not just found them. We had found each other. So, my interest and work in this area has not ended with the completion of this study. It has merely begun.

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## Appendix A Holly George-Warren's Hillbilly Timeline

According to J. W. Williamson, author of the excellent book *Hillbillyland: What the Movies Did To The Mountains & What the Mountains Did To The Movies*, the term 'hillbilly' "was no doubt in common parlance throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century." Following are the dated that mark op-culture event that further popularized both the stereotypical caricature of the hillbilly.

**1900:** "Hillbilly" appears in print for the first time, in the *New York Journal*: "A Hill Billie is a free and untrammled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he get it and fires his revolver as the fancy take him."

**1904:** The year after the silent films *The Great Train Robbery* is released, the 'flicker' *The Moonshiner* is issued by Biograph.

**1910:** The stage play *The Cub*, starring Douglas Fairbanks and satirizing feuding mountaineers, opens on Broadway.

**1910-1916:** Nickelodeons feature approximately three hundred different flickers about moonshining or mountain feuds.

**1915:** "Hillbilly" appears in a movie title for the first time, via the two-reeler *Billie-The Hill Billie*; *Harper's Monthly Magazine* publishes a travel article by William Aspenwall Bradley entitled "Hobnobbing with Hillbillies."

**1923:** The first musical group to use 'hillbilly' in their name, Galax, Virginia, string bank All Hopkins and the Hill Billies, come up with their moniker after a recording session in Hew York: When asked their name, Hopkins answered, "We're nothin' but a bunch of hillbillies...Call us anything."

**1925:** The term "hillbilly record" is a new category added to the Okeh Records catalog by A&R man Ralph Peer, after his recording of Fiddlin' John Carson's "Hill Billie Blues" sells half a million copies.

**1929:** Hillbilly music is introduces to national movie audiences when Al Hopkins and the Hill Billies are featured in a short subject that runs with Al Jolson's *The Singing Fool*.

**1930:** Montgomery Ward begins offering "hillbilly records" in its mail-order catalog.

**Appendix A**  
**Holly George-Warren's Hillbilly Timeline**  
**(continued)**

**1934:** Al Capp's *Lil' Abner* comic strip and Billy DeBeck's comic Snuffy Smith debut; cartoonist Paul Webb introduces his signature hillbilly character, the Mountain Boys, in *Esquire*.

**1935:** The first animated cartoon short with "hillbilly" in the title—"Hill Billys"—is released by Walter Lantz; other hillbilly-themed cartoons follow, with such stars as Porky and Petunia Pig ("Naughty Neighbors," 1939) and Betty Boop ("Musical Mountaineers," 1939).

**1942:** A hillbilly character names Yosef is introduced in the yearbook of Appalachian State University, in Boone, North Carolina: Yosef soon becomes the college's mascot.

**1949:** The film *Ma and Pa Kettle* released; several sequels follow.

**1950:** Little Jimmy Dickens' "Hillbilly Fever" hits Number Three on the C&W chart, then still known as the hillbilly chart.

**1951:** The Lou Costello vehicle *Comin' 'Round the Mountain*, inspired by a collection of 1938 Paul Webb Mountain Boys cartoons, is released.

**1953:** Andy Griffith releases the comedy album *What It Was Was Football*, which becomes very popular, introducing his North Carolina mountain accent and colloquialisms to a wide audience.

**1958:** *Thunder Road*, starring Robert Mitchum is released.

**1959:** The musical movie *Lil' Abner* is released.

**1960:** Sheriff Andy Taylor of Mayberry, played by Andy Griffith, is introduced on *The Danny Thomas Show*. *The Andy Griffith Show* debuts later that year.

**1962:** *The Beverly Hillbillies* debuts on CBS, where it runs for nine seasons, totaling 274 episodes.

**1963:** *Petticoat Junction* debuts on television, where it runs in prime time until 1970.

**1965:** *Green Acres* debuts on television, where it runs in prime time until 1971.

**1969:** *Hee Haw* debuts on television, where it runs until 1994.

**Appendix A**  
**Holly George-Warren's Hillbilly Timeline**  
**(continued)**

**1971:** The film *Deliverance*, directed by John Boorman and based on the novel by James Dickey, is released.

**1973:** The film *The Last American Hero*, starring Jeff Bridges as mountain booze-runner Junior Johnson and based on an Esquire profile by Tom Wolfe, is released.

**1975:** *The Dukes of Hazzard* debuts on television.

**1977:** The film *Smokey and the Bandit*, starring Burt Reynolds, is released.

**1980:** The film *Coal Miner's Daughter*, starring Sissy Spacek as Loretta Lynn, is released.

**1986:** Steve Earle's single "Hillbilly Highway" makes the country Top Forty.

**1990:** Marty Stuart's "Hillbilly Rock" hits Number Eight on the country chart.

**1993:** The feature film *The Beverly Hillbillies*, directed by Penelope Spheeris, is released.

**2000:** The Coen Brothers film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* introduces old-timey Appalachian music to the masses; the soundtrack album sweeps the 2001 Grammys in February 2002.

**Holly George-Warren's "A Hillbilly Timeline" appears in *The Appalachians: America's First and Last Frontier* (109-112).**

## **Appendix B**

### **Human Subject Informed Consent Form**

I would like to invite you to be participant in my dissertation study, "Roots and Wings: Language Attitudes of Professional Women Native to the Blue Ridge Mountains," through the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). The following is provided, so you may make an informed decision about your participation. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

This study seeks to explore various language attitudes of its 12 participants and the life events that have shaped these attitudes. Being a participant will include some commitment on your part. I will first ask you to complete a brief background survey and write a short statement about yourself. After speaking with you concerning this biographical information, I will speak with you to confirm your participation in the study. You will then be asked to take part in a series of three one-hour individual interviews and a 2-hour focus group interview. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research project other than the minimal risks associated with everyday conversations. No costs or payment are associated with participating in the study.

You may find the interview enjoyable and will learn more about events that have shaped your language attitudes as well as the events and language attitudes of others women's lives, similar to you. Upon request, you will be provided with the study's findings.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You are free to decide either not to participate or to withdraw from the study at anytime. If, at any point in the process, you wish to discontinue your participation in the study, you may do so by contacting me or project director, Jeannine Fontaine:

Researcher:  
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*This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (phone: 724-357-7730).*

**Appendix B  
Human Subjects Informed Consent Form  
(continued)**

Voluntary Consent Form:

I have read and understand the information provided on the form, and I consent to volunteer for to be a participant in this study. I understand my responses are completely confidential, and I may withdraw from the study at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this form for my records.

**Name: (please print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone where you may be reached:** \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the purpose and nature of the study, its potential benefits and risks, have answered any questions raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in "Roots and Wings:  
Language Attitudes of Professional Appalachian Women."

**Appendix C**  
**Biographical Data Form**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace (Town, County): \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years residing in birth county: \_\_\_\_\_

Education:

Undergraduate  
(school/year/degree/major) \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate  
(school/year/specialty) \_\_\_\_\_

Doctoral work, if applicable  
(school/year/specialty) \_\_\_\_\_

Current Position (a current resume is acceptable):

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Years at current position \_\_\_\_\_

List Previous Work Experience:

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Years of Service \_\_\_\_\_

(continued)

**Appendix C**  
**Biographical Data Form**  
**(continued)**

Contact Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Most convenient place to contact you is \_\_\_\_\_

Do NOT contact you at \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **Writing Sample Prompt**

Based upon the elements of your life that you feel define your identity, write a brief description on yourself. Think about the experiences and values that you feel have made you the person you are today. Please write at least two paragraphs, but feel free to expand as you wish. There is no limit on length.

**Appendix E**  
**Qualitative Interview Guide**  
**Personal Language Journey**

Describe your feeling/thoughts about your language use while you were growing up?

Did you ever feel “inferior” with regard to your language use while you were in college? If so, do you remember why?

Have you ever felt proud of your speech? If so, do you remember why?

Have you ever felt a need to change (e.g. standardize) your speech? If so, when was the first time you felt this way and why?

What surprises people about you once they get to know you?

What expectation do you feel you have to fulfill because your being a Southern woman?

Have you ever consciously tried to alter your language use (either dialect or accent)? If so, why?

Could you give me an example of how your language use has changed?

Has “standardizing” your speech in any way led you to feel removed from your native speech community?

Has any change in your language affected your relationships with family, friends, coworkers, etc? If so, how?

Have you ever felt that ‘linguistic discrimination’ has been detrimental to you life in any way? How?

**Appendix F**  
**Qualitative Interview Guide**  
**Workplace Experiences**

How did you achieve the position you are currently in?

How well-respected do you feel at work?

How well-respected are your opinions at work?

Are there any critical incidents from your past or present which made you feel validated or proud in relation to your language use?

Are there any critical incidents from your past or present which made you feel disrespected or discriminated against in any way?

Do you believe any of the events we have discussed today are examples of linguistic discrimination? If so, why?

**Rural residents:** Do you ever travel outside of the region for work responsibilities? If so, do people make references to your speech? What types of comments are made? Usually how long into the conversation are comments made? Where do people think you are from?

**Urban residents:** Do your family and friends ever make comments about you “losing your accent” or other speech changes during your visits home? When returning to work from a visit home, do co-workers ever mention a change in your speech?

**Appendix G**  
**Qualitative Interview Guide**  
**Views of Nonstandard vs. Standard English**

Do you feel speaking Standard American English brings power and/or acceptance to its speakers more than to the speakers of nonstandard versions?

Is this concept of power/acceptance important to you? Why or why not?

Would you suggest to your children, family, friends, etc. who speak AE to change their speech? If so, why?

How important do you feel your education has been to your success, both in the workplace and in your social circle? Has your education ever been “too much” or “not enough”?

Have you ever felt disconnected from either your family/friends or your co-workers due to your language use? For instance, have your education, life choices and/or “standardized form of speech distance you emotionally from family/friends?

Do you feel that speaking SAE offers you greater promises of success in your professional future? Are those promises worth the disconnection you may sometimes feel with your family?

Have you guided your children and/or other family members in their language choices; for instance, do you feel your children should aspire to the standard, hold on to their native vernacular, etc.?

What future challenges do you believe you are going to face?

## Appendix H Summary of Employment Evaluations

During the second individual interview focusing on workplace experience, both Ali [u] and Leigh [u] discussed their disappointment in recent employment evaluations of their performance. Each pointed to her disillusion at being evaluated lower in the area of language use than in any other area. Each woman's evaluation was quite comprehensive covering job-specific areas such as patient care for Ali, a nurse practitioner and managing student behavior for Leigh, a sixth-grade language arts teacher. In addition, the evaluations covered more general areas as employee development and communications which pertain to most professions. With the exception of language use issues, both women were evaluated as "exceeding expectations" or as "above standard". An excerpt from Ali's evaluation illustrates this phenomenon (See Table 6).

Table 6. Excerpt from Ali's [u] employment evaluation

<b>Communications: An employee creates an environments of mutual trust, professionalism, and respect and communicated effectively</b>	<b>1 Below expectations</b>	<b>2 Satisfactory</b>	<b>3 Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>4 Superior</b>
Communicates effectively and professionally in written and electronic formats			X	
Follows guidelines of CHS telephone etiquette			X	
Deals with difficult situation or complaints appropriately			X	
Takes Initiative to ask questions			X	
Actively listens to others' ideas and concerns and responds in an appropriate manner			X	
Refrains from inappropriate language or humor when communicating with others		X		

Ali expressed her embarrassment at being evaluated lower in the final category and felt that the evaluation was based upon her nonstandard language

variations, and not on her use of “inappropriate language or humor” as most readers would interpret that category (e.g. foul language, off color or crude jokes, etc.)

Likewise, Leigh [u] was “humiliated” by the marks she received for her language use on her recent employment evaluation. An excerpt from Leigh’s evaluation illustrates an experience similar to that of Ali (See Table 7).

<b>Instructional Presentation</b>	<b>Above Standard</b>	<b>At Standard</b>	<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
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The teacher speaks fluently and precisely. **Above Standard**

- The teacher speaks clearly and smoothly without excessive hesitation, vague words and excessive use of the same word. **Above Standard**
- The teacher uses vocabulary that students understand. **Above Standard**
- The teacher uses correct grammar, both in speaking and in written work. **At Standard**

Leigh confronted the supervising principal concerning this evaluative classification of her grammar use, and the principal assured Leigh that “the grammar errors were not apparent during her classroom evaluation, but in a conversation I heard you having with a friend in the hallway one day.” Leigh felt this was a form of linguistic discrimination and a clear example of the judgments she receives based upon her native language variety.

## Wings

“Ain’t no sich another,” Granddaddy exclaimed as he sat comfortably in his favorite chair, the shade of the old crab apple tree covering his face. It seemed each Sunday when we gathered for the family dinner, one new invention or another would have him make this exclamation. This particular, sultry July afternoon, it was our discussion of microwaves. The early ‘80s brought microwaves, cable televisions and cordless phones. Of course, Granddaddy eventually understood these modern conveniences were common in most homes, but he preferred a simpler life...one where he boiled his coffee on the stove, believed his phone was for his convenience and not the convenience of others, and watched the evening news on a television with rabbit ears. The world was traveling too fast; he, on the other hand, had everything he needed. A decade later, he died, never having bought any of the contraptions we grandkids boasted of that summer.

\* \* \* \* \*

“There’s no such thing.” I always seemed to understand this was the standard interpretation of Granddaddy’s favorite saying. I never exclaimed, “Ain’t no sich another” in public, particularly not in school. I always reserved this kind of phrasing for storytelling with my family and friends.

I adore the colors of my grandfather’s language. The personality it seemed to exude was somehow lacking in the Standard American English I learned at school. Yet, I clearly understood the power SAE could bring to my life.

I can't remember a time I didn't understand. I wanted to earn a college degree before I even entered elementary school. It seems as though I came into the world expecting and being expected to earn a degree. So, my education was always a top priority. I always exclaimed, "There's no such thing," and I knew why.

\* \* \* \* \*

None of my grandparents completed high school—not one. My maternal grandmother, the only one *literate* by today's standards, married my grandfather before she completed her final year—11<sup>th</sup> grade—in 1936. The light from her reading lamp was a familiar comfort late at night whenever I stayed over. She was never hesitant to share her latest favorite, or her latest disappointment. She valued reading, writing, storytelling. She valued it all, and she taught me, by example, to value them as well. She never said *stob*, *poke* or *ain't no sich another*; but she never criticized those of us who did. She understood the value of knowledge outside the world of books—gardening, logging, home remedies, and more. She never looked down upon those less educated than herself and wouldn't tolerate such behavior from her grandchildren. Yet, she never succumbed to the criticism that reading was an idle activity with no benefits. She continued to read. She traveled to the places she was introduced to through books, worked outside her home, handled the family finances and spoke without the familiar AE dialect. She stepped outside the expected female roles of her time. Now, at 87, she still reads daily and carries her most important papers in the ragged Bible of her youth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Language use is as different and versatile as the people who use language. The generations before me taught me this valuable lesson long before I ever left home for college. My college days were filled with lessons that led to nonjudgemental views of those who spoke differently than I. These lessons also led to an overwhelming desire to learn the intricacies of language use and to acquire the ability to employ the power of language. I suppose that, whenever I think of my own language journey, I will always remember Hodding Carter, Jr.'s words: "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other, wings." I am forever thankful that Appalachian English has given me roots; but I am equally grateful for the wings offered to me by Standard American English.