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CASTING CALLS ON THE HILLBILLY HIGHWAY:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF APPALACHIAN-BASED
REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

By

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B.A., University of Kentucky, 1990

A Thesis

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A Thesis Approved on

March 28, 2016

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The thesis project discussed here is a culmination of my familial life, a longtime career in audio/visual production, a fascination with American popular culture and an academic interest in studying media effects. Growing up in the Appalachian mountains in an era of “before” - as a member of the last generation *before* national chain stores really gained a foothold there, *before* the (now ubiquitous) Internet and World Wide Web made access to other cultures commonplace and *before* I left the mountains (and also Kentucky, only to return again, as so many of us have done), my Appalachian experience has left a distinct mark upon me. As for Appalachian people, I must recognize my “town” grandparents, Hassie and Dan Martin, with whom I lived for many years, and my “holler” grandparents, Maudie and Thelman Fugate, from whom I learned about a much more traditional way of mountain life. I am obliged to acknowledge my older sister - Dr. Lucinda Martin, whose lifelong dedication to learning and academic achievement has been inspirational. Finally, I must express some gratitude to my University of Louisville graduate school committee: Dr. Gul A. Marshall (whose kindness and generosity has left a lasting impression on me), Dr. Patricia Gagne (whose no-nonsense critical approach has pushed me to do my best) and Dr. Siobhan E. Smith (who encouraged me to embrace my subject by reinforcing her belief that “research is me-search”). Without all of these people, I would not be where I am currently - digging up cultural fossils and tracing the evolution of my Appalachia.

ABSTRACT

CASTING CALLS ON THE HILLBILLY HIGHWAY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF APPALACHIAN-BASED REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

Dan Thelman Martin

March 28, 2016

This analysis examines two contemporary reality television shows set in the Appalachian region of the United States - *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*. I contextualized the portrayals by tracing the intertwined social, political and economic factors that influenced the evolution of mediated Appalachian stereotypes since the mid-1800s. Beginning with Cultivation Theory, which holds television to be most powerful and persuasive medium available for most people, I expanded the theoretical base to consider the programs to be part of a complex intertextual phenomenon involving various media. I found stereotypes of the Appalachian region and people to be readily present in both programs, although there were some notable differences in kind and degree. Alongside a rather pronounced hegemonic masculinity, the recurring themes of homogeneity, isolation, an aversion to outsiders, feuding, the inability to join modernity, taking the law into your own hands and, most notably, violence corresponded to well-established Appalachian stereotypes.

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INTRODUCTION

The Appalachian region in the United States is simultaneously a mountain range, a cultural region and a socially constructed idea. Stereotypes about the inhabitants of the region, such as being rival clans of shotgun-toting hillbillies, have been presented since the dawn of mass media. In the early twentieth century, educator John C. Campbell wrote that Appalachia was “a land about which, perhaps, more things are known that are not true than any part of our country” (Billings et al. 1999, x). This statement is arguably as true today. The *idea of Appalachia* along with the received stereotypes and the perceived history of the region have resulted in a vast blurring of fact and fiction about the region and its people. In one notable example, Robert Schenkkan’s 1992 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Kentucky Cycle* presented images of Appalachia that were based upon the author’s single brief trip into the region. Native Appalachian writer Gurney Norman saw the play and responded to it in a 1993 *New Yorker* article by stating that Appalachian people are the last group in America that it is acceptable to ridicule. Furthermore, he said, “No one would stand for it for a minute if you took any other group and held it up as an example of everything that is low and brutal and mean. But somehow it’s ok to do that with hillbillies” (Mason 1993, 61). Since this time, Reality Television (RTV) has taken over the media landscape and depicted the “real lives” of modern Appalachian people. The focus of this analysis is examining two of these contemporary programs to find out how Appalachian people are currently being portrayed and determining if there have been any substantial changes in the imagery that has typically been used to represent them.

As a native Appalachian-American who has studied Mass Media at the University of Kentucky as well as Sociology at the University of Louisville and has had a 25-plus year career in television production, this subject matter obviously has personal relevance. Frankly, the Appalachia that I have known contributed heavily to my interest in mass media as well as Sociology and this content analysis of Appalachian-based television programs represents something of a culmination of my life's work and interests. That being said, the Appalachia that I personally experienced was during the period of the early 1970s through the late 1990s and was located in what is the most central part of the central Appalachian area - specifically, the coal fields in the mountainous region of far southeastern Kentucky, which include Knott, Floyd, Letcher, Perry and Pike counties. "I am from the mountains" of Eastern Kentucky, which is what people in the area tend to say (rather than anything approaching "I am Appalachian"), and have deep familial ties to the area. My first-hand knowledge of Appalachian society - the entire process of my *growing up Appalachian*, is based upon having two sides to my family, one "Town" family and one "Holler" family. While other researchers have explored Appalachian social structure by examining (among other things) monetary wealth, political power, family reputation and the degree of community urbanization, my Appalachian experience leads me toward a much more basic social structure, one based on an identification with place. While admittedly an oversimplified, I suggest this two-part social structure (with an "us and them" duality) reflects the inherently dichotomous nature of the mediated stereotypes which this analysis examines and points to the larger societal class structure in America. Furthermore, the perceived differences between these two sides of the internal social fabric of mountain society, as I have described them, can serve as an

example of the hegemonic ideological mechanism moving vertically through our mass American culture. Just as some “holler folk” are ostracized by some “town folk” within the region, both of them in combination (as being a part of a perceived “rural America”) are ostracized by urban Americans, creating something of a “hierarchy of otherness” within the region and in America overall. Of course, “otherness” or “apartness” is a political creation - a semantic artifice that creates a political reality (Batteau 1990, 33). That political reality as well as the socio-economic factors that have long affected the entire Appalachian region and, for that matter, the hegemonic ideology imbedded in the institutions in United States (such as the media), make the Appalachian story here, quite literally, the story of America. For me, however, the story begins (simply enough) by my having one “Town” family and one “Holler” family.

The first was headed by my “Grandpapa” Dan Taylor Martin, who was legally adopted as a young boy on Caney Creek, Kentucky by the noted social reformer and educator Alice Spencer Geddes Lloyd during the missionary movement of the early twentieth century. These efforts were undertaken mostly by middle-class women who came into Appalachia from the Northeast with the goal of educating mountain people (Edwards et al. 2006, 10). Mrs. Lloyd, along with her similarly-minded educational colleague June Buchanan (from Cambridge, Massachusetts and New York City, New York respectively), were just two of numerous well-intended outsiders who came into Appalachia on such a mission to help residents of the region. My grandfather came to be one of their success stories. As a boy, he studied at their school facilities in the newly coined locale of Pippa Passes, Kentucky (named after an 1841 dramatic verse work by English poet and playwright Robert Browning) before going on to Tusculum College in

Greenville, Tennessee and then on to Harvard University (in, once again, Mrs. Lloyds' hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts). He became a successful criminal lawyer in Knott County, Kentucky and served the entire mountain region in his private practice as well as in elected office as Commonwealth Attorney and Knott County Attorney. His wife, my "Grandmama" Hassie Hicks Martin, was one of the daughters of a merchant in the county seat of Hindman, KY. She became a court reporter by trade and honed her stenography skills in the courtrooms alongside my grandfather's lengthy legal career. She also represents, for me, the source of the artistic vein in my family, as several members of her lineage excelled in various creative arts. Frankly, the encouragement toward artistic expression (as well as toward educational achievement) for my two sisters and myself during our formative years was not in short supply.

On the other side of the social spectrum that I experienced in my formative years in Appalachia was my "Holler" family, the patriarch of which was my "Papaw" Thelman Fugate - a rural farmer who developed quite a reputation as a horse trader (literally and figuratively) and whose liquor-fueled exploits were the stuff of legend. Although he passed away when I was rather young, I remember that he almost always wore overalls, a natural-colored straw cowboy hat and 50s-style black horn-rimmed glasses. His tending to their family livestock (especially his chicken flocks) and the bottomland do-it-yourself farming practices that he utilized year after year left a lasting impression on me: I am now a self-declared "urban chicken farmer" and avid gardener. His wife, my "Mamaw" Maudie Russell Fugate - an ardent "Old Regular" Baptist church parishioner, teetotaler and mother to ten children (two of which separately died from illness as infants, pointing to the traditionally high infant mortality rate in the region), was known for her skillful

country cooking and colorful colloquial sayings. As she cooked for numerous people on any given day (including her own family as well as friends and various members of the community who would stop by to visit), she always had a table full of food prepared and available (day or night), draped with a table cloth. Her cooking was, by all accounts, “so good that you can’t sit still and eat it”, as she used to say. It came to be that I was given the combined names of the patriarchs of each side of my family – one representing these poor mountain people who seemed to feed stereotypes and the other from the mountain elites who seemed to break them.

During my time growing up in Appalachia, my overall awareness of distinctions in the social classes in the mountains and of stereotypes of Appalachian people was not particularly acute until I landed my first television production job at a station in the small city of Hazard, Kentucky (not to be confused with the fictional “Hazzard County” from the well-known television show *The Dukes of Hazzard*). Working closely with the news department there at the local CBS affiliate WYMT-TV (the call letters of which stood for “We’re Your Mountain Television”), my awareness of local, regional and national issues grew intertwined with my knowledge of my Appalachian heritage. After working there for six years, I made a substantial career move to the Philadelphia area to work for QVC (the national home shopping cable channel) and found myself experiencing much more than job-related upward mobility. Although I was accustomed to the social problems in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, the scale of the urban problems that I was now being (more or less) directly exposed to was astonishing. Needless to say, during this time I experienced a host of sociological epiphanies, not the least of which came in the form of my colleagues at QVC nicknaming me “Elvis” (due in large part to my Appalachian

accent). At that time, I found it rather odd that I was being pigeon-holed as “Southern” (I certainly didn’t consider myself as such), but this personal experience offers a simple demonstration of the social psychology of stereotyping. As guiding principles, we can consider that a) stereotypes are aids to explanation, b) stereotypes are energy saving devices and c) stereotypes are shared group beliefs (McGarty et al 2002, 2). In a nutshell, then, the people that I was working with were making sense of me in the best way they could, even if their explanations were quite ill-informed. Rather than take the time to learn anything about me, they quickly chose a famous “Southern, white man” to associate me with - an overly simplified categorical image that corresponded with their accepted beliefs of what all “Southerners” represent in their specific cultural group.

As the analysis here looks at portrayals in mass media (specifically RTV), we must look closer at how stereotypes function with groups on more of a societal level. From this perspective, stereotypes generally have a twofold nature: 1) to ridicule the subject group because of its perceived difference from the prevailing norms, and 2) to provide the rationale for active discrimination against the group (Edwards et al. 2006, 244). By labeling a particular outgroup as one that is socially unacceptable, stereotypes produce an emotional background that allows the majority population to justify their oppression (Fraley 2007, 367). Derogatory humor about the Appalachian region and its people (the outgroup in question in this analysis) is very common in popular American culture and usually focuses on issues such as incest, immorality, drunkenness, lack of cleanliness, ignorance, stupidity and (last, but certainly not least) violence. Examples of jokes that ridicule Appalachians include:

“Do you know what a virgin is in Kentucky? It’s the ugliest girl in the fifth grade. (alternately, “The sister that can outrun her brothers.”) ...”Did you know that the old country preacher was arrested? He was arrested for polluting the Ohio River (when) he was baptizing hillbillies.” ...”Did you hear about the hillbilly driver in the Indianapolis 500 who made fifty pit stops? Three were for gas and forty seven were for directions.” (Philliber et al, 1981, 20-23).

Furthermore, there are any number of now-common negative terms used to refer to Appalachian people (as well for rural people in general), such as redneck, cracker, brier, ridge runner and poor white trash, that incorporate these exaggerated characteristics. Although most of this type of derogatory terminology developed and is used mainly in day-to-day conversation, it is nevertheless used by many people and organizations throughout our entire culture, including the media. For instance, during the 1950s and 1960s when there was a substantial amount of outmigration from Appalachian with its people seeking employment in larger cities near the region (such as Cincinnati, Ohio), many newspaper and magazine articles were known to refer to the mountain migrants variously as being WASPs (white Appalachian southern Protestants), SAMs (southern Appalachian migrants) and SANs (southern Appalachian newcomers) (Edwards et al. 2006, 242). In fact, the migration out of the mountains during this time became so prevalent that the highways leading to the various cities outside of the region became collectively known as the Hillbilly Highway. Although much has changed in American culture since that time and such references to minority groups (including Appalachian-Americans) are generally frowned upon, there are still examples of blatantly stereotypical Appalachian imagery being used in the media, including the American press. Two such instances from the 1990s are as follows:

“A *Washington Post* columnist described the Clinton administration’s firing of employees of the White house travel office in 1993 as shockingly incompetent, replete with the Nixonian use of the FBI and the *hillbillyish* hiring of an ambitious Clinton cousin. Similarly, a *New York Post* columnist, commenting in 1992 on the image of republicans after the arrest of the chief justice of the New York Supreme Court for sending lewd and threatening letters through the mail, said in an interview, Bush isn’t out (of office) for six days, and they’re acting like *crazed Appalachians*” (emphasis added in both cases) (Billings et al. 1999, 4).

Although the American political press is admittedly a known hotbed for mudslinging and insults (even for ones in rather poor taste), the fact that such terminology continues to be readily used speaks volumes as to how the Appalachian region and its people are still thought of. Such remarks demonstrate how negative stereotypes remain wholly accepted and easily referenced in the American consciousness - there is no need to explain to your average American that hillbillies are primitive, dirty, uneducated, lazy, prone to violence and sexually deviant (Fraley 2007, 366). Furthermore, self identities and group cohesion of real Appalachian people and communities are also negatively affected. Frankly, any Appalachian self-identification (in other words, acknowledging oneself as a “hillbilly”) can still translate into subjecting oneself to ridicule, derision, and, in some cases, outright discrimination in many areas of American society (Philliber et al. 1981, 15).

When looking at Appalachian stereotypes and their mediated counterparts, one must necessarily examine the socio-political contexts which gave rise to them and then continued their propagation. To begin with, the stereotypic image of the typical person from the Appalachian Mountains, which first developed in the post-Civil War American South, is poor and white. Although I will delve into this era in much greater detail and explain how the images were created and then evolved into what we see now, it is very important to recognize here that from 1865 to 1920, the United States progressed from

being the world's fourth largest industrial nation to being its first (Edwards et al. 2006, 11). The Appalachian region, with its abundance of natural resources (from salt to iron ore to coal and timber), played a rather substantial role in this industrial transition, but there was a quite heavy price for its people to pay. In Appalachia, the economic growth produced material wealth for some (both insiders and outsiders), but it also fueled poverty and inequality within the region and between Appalachia and the rest of the country (Eller 2008, 265). First, Appalachia fueled America's industrial transition and then, in turn, the unfortunate byproducts of the capitalist expansion into and exploitation of the region (namely, vast poverty and inequality) fueled the stereotypes, which are still alive and well today. Of course, one must also take note of the sizable rural-to-urban shift that occurred during this time. In 1900, this nation was still overwhelmingly rural – only 39.9 percent of us lived in urban areas, but by 1920, 51.2 percent of us lived in cities and by 1980, we were 73.7 percent urban (Williamson 1995, 44 - 45). As stereotypes are most often political ploys to disadvantage a particular group in the *urban* competition for resources, opportunities and power (Edwards et al. 2006, 244), this situation has placed Appalachian people in something of a triple societal disadvantage - they have been historically oppressed with little power to alter the region's extractive economy (largely owned and controlled by absentee entities), their communities have remained largely rural in a nation with a heavy bias toward urban "progress" and there are widespread stereotypes reifying a negative *idea of Appalachia* in the minds of the mass mainstream culture of America. As Appalachian scholar and educator Dr. Ronald D. Eller (from the University of Kentucky) stated in his 2008 book *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945*, "For more than a century, the stereotypes created about Appalachia have obscured

the reality of political and economic life in the region and have hidden the exploitation of the land and people for the benefit of the rest of the country and for the enrichment of a few. Popular stereotypes have tended to blame the land or the culture of Appalachia for regional disparities, but the real uneven ground of Appalachia has been the consequence of structural inequalities based on class, race, and gender...and on political corruption, land abuse and greed” (Eller 2008, 265).

Appalachia, then, is of interest to me not only due to familial and personal history, but also because of the intertwined social, political and economic factors that have shaped the region (as part of America) as well as the mediated depictions of Appalachian people. Just as the images of Appalachia and its people have been shaped by the television and motion picture industries, so have the region’s major public issues and its place in the United States political and economic life been largely defined by news organizations owned and operated in distant urban centers (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1680). Thus, who controls the mediated imagery is just as important of an issue as the imagery itself. Also contributing to the necessity of further study of the portrayals and stereotypes of mountain people in the media is the fact that RTV has ascended to the television throne as the uncontested ruler of all current programming. In less than three decades, the genre has infiltrated every corner of the television world and very quickly become a staple of every television programmer’s arsenal of program choices (Huff 2006, ix). It was just a matter of time before the ongoing search for “real people” to be included in such RTV programming found its way into the Appalachian region, beginning with casting calls on the Hillbilly Highway and ending with constructed images of the people there. Television remains the dominant purveyor of stories and messages shared across lines of class,

gender, race, age, religion, geography, ethnicity, sexuality and so on (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 21) and we now have the most popular contemporary form of television entertainment - RTV, expanding into portrayals of people from the Appalachian region. Throughout the history of the media in the United States, the construct of Appalachia has supported the stereotype's essential notion that Appalachia was fundamentally different from the rest of America: a remote, socially and economically handicapped place with a homogeneous population more or less suspended in time (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 239). The analysis here challenges this established hegemonic viewpoint and examines the most recent mediated portrayals of Appalachian people on television for the presence of such lingering societal beliefs and stereotypes. The RTV programs included in this content analysis are the ginseng-based *Appalachian Outlaws* and the self-explanatory *Moonshiners*, which (taken together) draw millions of viewers with each airing. Both of the shows are set in the central Appalachia, the part of the region that I grew up in and am most familiar with.

THESIS STATEMENT

The purpose of this academic content analysis is to examine how the Appalachian region and its people are being portrayed in contemporary RTV programming. However, it must be stressed that Appalachia is much more than just an intellectual idea. It is a *real place* where public policies designed to achieve a healthy society, the object of development itself, have played out with mixed results (Eller 2008, 3). As such, the importance of inquiries such as this one (as well as more in-depth sociological studies which they may lead to) cannot be overstated. The story of Appalachia is quite literally the story of America - a proverbial melting pot that boiled over when too much coal was thrust into its societal furnace producing a smokescreen of stereotypical images that has polluted the atmosphere and obscured the view of most onlookers for well over a century. As we are now living in an era of unprecedented technological advancement, where many people have at least one internet-based device at arm's reach throughout any given day and information about different cultures is almost too easily accessible, one would hope that progress in the area of more realistic and accurate portrayals of different peoples and cultures from all over the world is taking place in all forms of media (and on television in particular, as it has long been the most popular and accessible single medium in the United States). However, one must balance such optimism with the realization that there has been a long history of inaccurate and distorted imagery surrounding the mediated portrayals of a variety of different social groups, including the people of Appalachia.

If and when the RTV programs in question here use the typical stereotypes, they will be the latest examples in a long line of television programs (usually produced by people in distant urban centers who don't know or understand the culture) that have used images of mountain people as targets of ridicule. As Cooke-Jackson and Hansen (2008) pointed out, the perpetuation of the poor white stereotype permits the dominant culture, as represented by the mass media, to justify the marginalization of this sub-group while validating its own status. In a small space, then, common stereotypes pack in centuries or more worth of history, politics and economies (Fraley 2007, 367) and RTV is the latest example of the long, convoluted historical relationship between the media and societal power relations in the United States. Of course, political power and social order are predicated on the effectiveness of the control exercised by dominate actors over the communication process, be it preaching from the pulpit, the editorial line of a newspaper or the programming of television (Castells 2013, xxii). Although some would argue that RTV programs allow their participants to define themselves, it must be pointed out that by selecting or rejecting materials for the show (through casting and editing choices, for example), the content producer is indeed imposing his/her own definitions or stereotypes on the individuals included in the production (Cooke-Jackson and Hansen 2008, 191). As our mass culture's preoccupation with looking into the "real" lives of others through the medium of television has resulted in numerous RTV shows (out of which the specific sub-genre under consideration here sprang), they may serve only to impose the media creator's own ideas and concepts of *what it is* and *what it means* to be a member of the Appalachian community. Taking two distinct possibilities into consideration - namely, of these RTV programs presenting more realistic imagery and portrayals of the Appalachian

region and people as opposed to mining the well-established stereotypes, the analysis here will be guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How are Appalachian people currently being portrayed on the reality television programs *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*?

RQ2: What messages are being communicated over the entire programs and through the symbolic meanings of the individual character depictions?

Prior to analyzing these two shows, however, we need to take a closer look at the entire Appalachian region, its many peoples, their cultures and the evolution of the mediated images that have long been used to describe *the idea of Appalachia*. In doing so, the Appalachia region and RTV will be placed in socio-historical context that will allow for meaningful analysis.

CONTEXT: APPALACHIA AS A MOUNTAIN RANGE

Before looking at the cultural diversity of Appalachian people and the imagery used to describe both them (as well as the entire Appalachian region), one must look at the area itself. Just as the word *Appalachia* is generally pronounced *Ap-pa-LATCH-a* in the southern mountains, but more commonly *Ap-pa-LAY-cha* in the rest of the country, so too is there some dispute over the origin of the name given to the region (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1006). There is a general consensus among historians that the European explorers of the 1500s encountered the Native Americans living on the Florida peninsula (including the Apalachee people, whose name has been interpreted variously as “those by the sea” to “people on the other side” and even “people who bring light”). Although these explorers subsequently created maps of North America that labeled the mountains to the north with name variations of the term Appalachia, the exact story of how this came to be is somewhat open to debate. The most commonly told legend credits Hernando DeSoto’s Spanish expedition party of 1539 as the original source of the European usage of the name. However, the French Huguenots were also in the area during this era and are also said to have encountered the very same native peoples. Both groups laid claim to the area (as well as the precious metals and other riches that were reported to be readily available there). By the time British explorers entered in the new world picture, the mapmakers in all of the European countries were using similar names for the region. Whether the term “Appalachia” was used by the Native Americans in reference to the land or was a term derived by the Europeans (and ultimately adopted by all involved) still remains unclear.

The one thing that has remained clear, from that early point in the history of the United States through the present day, is the sheer magnitude of the area. According to the definition set forth by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) - a regional economic development agency composed of the governors of the thirteen Appalachian states and a federal co-chair, the Appalachian Region includes all of West Virginia and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia (www.arc.gov). Although the region is identified with and defined in large part by its mountains - the topography of which can be divided into four principal areas: the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Great Smokey Mountains, the Black Mountains and the Cumberland Mountains and its plateau (Edwards et al. 2006, 51), they vary dramatically in their height, with the highest peak in the range being North Carolina's 6,684-foot Mount Mitchell. Compared to earth's tallest mountains, the Appalachians are hardly more than forest covered hummocks that were rounded, weathered and diminished by erosion long before the summits of the Alps, Andes, Himalayas or Rockies were created (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 3). Overall, the Appalachian region is made up of over two hundred thousand square miles of relatively mountainous land east of the Mississippi River and has a far-reaching ecological impact on the entire eastern half of the United States. Truth be told, it is one of the oldest and most diverse forest ecosystems in the world and contains the headwaters for most of the streams that drain the eastern United States (Eller 2008, 248). As such, the importance of the region and its natural features cannot be underestimated for either the people within the region or for the country as a whole.

Perhaps there is no other geographically-based word that immediately paints images in the minds of most people from the United States as potently as Appalachia. For many, there is a strong positive association to the natural features of the region, especially to the forests of the region. The native trees of the Appalachians are classified in two major groups: conifers, which are softwoods (such as pine, hemlock and spruce) and flowering hardwood trees (such as oaks, maples and dogwood) (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 91). The latter group is widely recognized for their magnificent display of colors throughout the region in the autumn of the year. When the first European settlers began to arrive in the region, it was heavily covered with old-growth forests. During the early settlement period, these forests were important for a variety of reasons. Of course, they were a good source of building materials for housing structures and supplied abundant wild game to the settlers. Also, once farming activities began, the livestock kept by the settlers (especially the domesticated hogs that were raised) would be allowed to run free to forage in the woods. The fruits of woody plant species that are not disseminated by wind are collectively called mast (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 76) and it was a readily available, free and nutritious food source for the livestock. Furthermore, the eating of the hard mast (e.g. acorns and walnuts) as well as soft mast (e.g. apples or blackberries) by the animals undoubtedly made high quality meat for the settlers to enjoy. Other than the American chestnut, which was totally wiped out by a fungal blight (until recently, when it was re-introduced in some areas), all of the same tree native species are still seen in the Appalachian region today, although there are just a handful of the old-growth forests left due to heavy logging of timber in the region throughout the industrial era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

With the industrial expansion in the United States, the demand for Appalachian timber was matched only by the demand for its substantial mineral deposits, especially coal. In fact, the oft-cited portrayal of Appalachia as *a rich land inhabited by poor people* has more to do with the bituminous coal industry than any other single factor (Edwards et al. 2006, 57). Its importance to the entire region (but especially to the coal fields of central Appalachia) cannot be overstated, as it has literally touched every aspect of the social, political and economic structures there with effects as far-reaching as they have been controversial. Appalachian coal mining determined patterns of settlement and residence, transformed cultures and values, influenced local and state politics, set the course of the region's economic development and has greatly affected the natural environment in the region, causing deforestation, acid mine drainage and siltation of streams, air pollution and acid rain, and degradation of soil (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 113). On the one hand, the coal industry brought employment opportunities and (for some) an improved standard of living, but, as most of the land was and continues to be owned and controlled by many outside (increasingly international) corporations, little thought has been given to the long-range social and economic concerns in the region. Furthermore, the pittance given to the people of the Appalachian region in exchange for their homeland is, at best description, meager. Frankly, the trade-off has proven rather disappointing, to say the least, as the Appalachian region has paid a heavy price for being the testing ground of the free market in the United States.

If one looks at the environmental damage alone, the effects are staggering. To begin with, mining affects underground water, which has huge consequences for local communities throughout the region. For example, the iron ore (that is oftentimes mixed

with the coal deposits) oxidizes when exposed to oxygen causing sulfuric acid to be released into the water tables. Furthermore, the refuse piles generated by coal mining are an additional source of the highly corrosive mineral acid, which is then collected by rainwater, further polluting the surrounding land and water tributaries. In addition, the dry refuse piles can literally smolder and burn for years if ignited. The coal refuse is also allowed to be collected in large sludge or “slurry” ponds, which are also problematic. Of course, there are laws regulating the coal mining operations in Appalachia, but they are sometimes ineffective. The failure of regulators to enforce existing mining laws was tragically illustrated in October 2000, when a 2.2-billion-gallon coal slurry pond in Martin County, Kentucky collapsed, creating what the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) called one of the worst disasters ever in the southeastern United States – a spill twenty times larger than the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska (Eller 2008, 250). The coal company denied responsibility for the accident, saying it was an “act of God” and, in the end, they were cited for two minor violations and issued a \$55,000 fine. An even greater example of environmental damage, the “mountaintop removal” form of strip mining, began in the mid-twentieth century and has become increasingly commonplace in the Appalachian region. In 2009, Appalachian Voices - an environmental non-profit organization committed to protecting the land, air and water of the central and southern Appalachian region, published a study showing that nearly 1.2 million acres to date had been surface mined for coal and more than 500 mountains destroyed by mountaintop removal coal mining (www.appvoices.org). Far from being an employment factor, mountaintop removal is quite simply the quickest and cheapest way for multinational companies to procure the coal from Appalachia (Biggers 2006, 210). Although mine

reclamation practices to “restore” land are utilized to some degree, controversy has long plagued such efforts. In the PBS-produced documentary *The Appalachians*, Janet Fout (the co-director of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition) described such mountaintop removal reclamation efforts to be “like putting lipstick on a corpse” (PBS 2005).

As to how this relates to the analysis here, it must be stated that Appalachian natural resources literally fueled the industrial revolution in the United States, while the Appalachian people were oppressed and their negatively stereotyped images used as tools of justification (in the minds of urban outsiders and corporations) for the exploitation of the land and its people. Furthermore, the stereotypes explain why such economic and environmental destruction can be ignored by most of the American public and why activists can round up more support for the rainforest than they can for Appalachia - the cultural image of Appalachia presents it as an “other,” a place not truly a part of America (Fraley 2007, 370). Frankly, it is much easier to justify any number of the human rights and environmental abuses in Appalachia if the people there are portrayed as backward, ignorant and inbred hillbillies – basically, less than human beings. As Harry Caudill argued in his book *Night Come to the Cumberlands*, most Americans have seen the face of Appalachian poverty, but few are familiar with the other face of Appalachia - the affluence that remained discretely out of view and drained the wealth of Appalachia (Eller 2008, 136). The mediated portrayals of the Appalachian people played a major role in this entire process from the very beginning, as both the control of both the media and the industrial structure lay in the hands of outside corporations with vested interests in the region. As such, the *Appalachian condition* (as some have called it) is truly the *American condition* - something of a problem of cause and effect: it was caused by American

capitalist practices, whose effects are ongoing with severe consequences for both the people and the land of the entire Appalachian mountain range.

As for the mediated images of the mountains and the people of the Appalachian region, the beginnings of the politics of representation found in them can be traced back to the earliest expeditions into the region from the coastal settlements. Early American texts are filled with anxious discussions of the supposedly barbarizing effect of the wilderness on white settlers (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1035) and, as the European settlement of America pushed toward the Appalachian Mountains, descriptions of the people in the region reflected these early societal fears. The Virginia aristocrat William Byrd II, for instance, was prompted by his land survey of the Virginia and North Carolina border in 1728-1729 to describe the latter State as “lubberland” (a prototype of the village in the *Lil’ Abner* comic strip) and to portray the agrarian people of the region as “crude, lazy drinkers of homemade liquor” (Billings et al. 1999, 142-143). Thus, certain key elements of the uncivilized “hillbilly” image that we now familiar with were already in the process of being developed. Furthermore, as the less mountainous parts of the early American frontier were transformed from wilderness to pastoral or urban societies, the rugged, heavily forested Appalachians came to be seen as immune to the civilization process (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1035). In her essay *A Landscape and a People Set Apart: Narratives of Exploration and Travel in Early Appalachia*, Appalachian scholar Katherine Ledford detailed how the explorers and travelers of this era were already expressing their societal concerns in descriptive ways. She reveals quite tellingly that during the first colonial explorations, men persistently characterized the *mountains* as adversarial, unnatural and out of control...but when the landscape turned into a valuable

commodity and settlers were a potential barrier between the explorers and exploitation of natural resources, the mountains became beautiful and desirable while the *inhabitants* became adversarial, unnatural and out of control (emphasis added) (Billings et al. 1999, 49). Thus, the perceived characteristics of the mountains themselves seem to have been transferred to particular people in the region as differing economic and class-based interests developed, paving the way for the generalizations (and, of course, stereotypes) to develop. As these historical examples illustrate, the popular “hillbilly” image did not emerge fully formed at one particular time in our American history. Rather, it was an evolutionary process which coincided with societal struggles over land, money and other class-based interests (not only in the Appalachian region, but in America in general). These ongoing struggles have worked themselves out and been represented in the media in many ways that have had far-reaching impact on the people and cultures of the entire Appalachian region.

CONTEXT: APPALACHIA AS A CULTURAL REGION

Any discussion of Appalachian culture must begin by pointing out that there are actually many different Appalachian cultures. As the region covers a large portion of the eastern United States, was settled by a wide variety of peoples and contains urban as well as rural areas within it, one should not expect that the region would contain anything approaching homogeneity in terms of the people's backgrounds, physical characteristics, mannerisms or even accents. Furthermore, it is equally troublesome to think of the entire Appalachian region in terms of a uniformity of experience (culturally or otherwise). Nevertheless, a serious misconception of the Appalachian region is its homogeneity of experience, with the rural stereotype as the norm (Edwards et al. 2006, 201). Added to this *mythology of homogeneity* has been a *mythology of isolation* so often associated with the region, the combination of which has resulted in a reduction of the region's cultural diversity into the stereotype of the quintessential Appalachian. Although the region is currently home to over twenty five million people, its relative distance from urban centers such as New York and Chicago separate it and its people substantially from the main focus of our society. Furthermore, as these urban centers are the normative cultural standard of our society, the areas outside of them are subjected to an outsider status which is projected onto its people. Thus, it must be noted that whatever their origins, character or personal traits, the people living in Appalachia have been perceived as living in isolation. Whether the isolation is real or only perceived, it is indisputably one of the major "facts" held about Appalachia (McNeil 1995, 3). Of course, in the current technological climate

where the world is literally just a simple mouse-click away, one would think that cultural isolation is somewhat relative. Nevertheless, the generally-held belief that the region is isolated (and therefore not as developed - culturally or otherwise, as other areas in the United States) feeds a sort of *invention of* the Appalachian area in the popular American consciousness. Thus, the read-about Appalachia, personally-experienced Appalachia, laughed-at Appalachia and inspired-by Appalachia are all just as much American social constructions as is the Cowboy or, for that matter, the Indian (Batteau 1990, 16).

As for the different cultures that have played a part in the Appalachian region, one must begin with the Native American civilizations that first settled the area thousands of years before the first European settlers came to the North American shores. As all of the native societies in the eastern part of the present United States were pre-literate (Drake 2001, 4), a full and accurate history is unfortunately not possible. However, we know that once the Europeans arrived, fur traders encountered and interacted with several of the established societies in the region, including the Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw. As the furs of North America were considered quite superior to the ones taken from Old World forests at this time, the Europeans eagerly joined the already established (and elaborate) Native American fur trading system. Many of the traders took Native American wives and frequently joined the tribe with which they traded, as the appearance of such names as McGillivray, Ross, Wiggin, Campbell and Bunning among the Cherokee or Creek elite attests to (Drake 2001, 29). From the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, Native American culture in the southern Appalachians was predominately that of the Cherokee people (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 248-249). The influence of the British led to a much more centralized Cherokee government and the subsequent formation of the

Cherokee Nation in 1828. Over the next ten years, as the federal government of the United States passed measures to appropriate Native American lands, a forced removal of the Cherokee Nation began. In the last of several such federal relocation efforts in the Appalachian Mountains, the now infamous “Trail of Tears” - the route stretching from North Carolina to the new reservations in the state of Oklahoma, resulted in thousands of Native American deaths. Those that left and went west (into to the “Darkening Land” in Cherokee belief) said goodbye to their native homelands, but a few hid in remote areas of the Smokey Mountains and became the parents and grandparents of the current Eastern Band of the Cherokee (Edwards et al. 2006, 144). Despite the near-genocidal treatment of Native American peoples in the region, their presence and influence is still very much alive in the southern Appalachian Mountains - not only in tourism-related activities but also in the folk beliefs and food ways that have remained. One little-known fact about Native American influence in Appalachia is that the country’s first bilingual newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, began to be published in the region in 1828 (the very same year when the Cherokee Nation was established). The invention of the Cherokee syllabary by Sequoyah, an indigenous scientist and linguist from Southern Appalachia (Biggers 2006, 26) directly led to the founding of the newspaper (printed in his alphabet as well as in English), which undoubtedly influenced many of the people within the region, Native American and European immigrants alike.

As for the Europeans peoples that initially entered the Appalachian area in frontier times, most historians agree that the region was settled by a mixture of Scotch, Irish, English, Welsh and Germans who came primarily from Virginia and the Carolinas with smaller migrations from Georgia and Pennsylvania (Edwards et al. 2006, 41).

Professor Charles Wolfe of Appalachian State University (when commenting on the contributions that the most numerous of these groups made as they first settled in the Appalachian Mountains) said that upon arrival into the region, the English would build a church, the Germans would build a barn and the Scotch-Irish would construct a whiskey still (PBS 2005). As pertains to the analysis here, the latter of these groups is perhaps the most important of the European settlers to initially settle the Appalachian Mountains. These immigrants came from the province of Ulster in Ireland and are sometimes referred to as being Ulster Scots, although the preferred nomenclature today is Scots-Irish. This single group was so influential in shaping Appalachia's settlement process that they have become an essential part of the regional stereotypes (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 275). The infamous practice of feuding, for example, has been commonly linked (mistakenly, it must be noted) to the heritage of the Scots-Irish people. A more accurate example of how the culture of the people from Northern Ireland influenced the image and stereotypes of Appalachian-Americans is the specific dialectic properties they brought with them when they immigrated to the New World. Features, such as the love of the "r", as in fire (far), hair (har), and bear (bar); triphongs and quadrithongs, as "abaout" (for about) and "haious" (for house); the use of "h" for specific emphasis, as "hit" (it), "hain't" (ain't), and "hyander" (yonder); the double and triple negative for emphasis; and the omission of the "g" in "ing", all attest to the form of English established by the Scots-Irish in the Appalachian mountains in the late eighteenth century (Drake 2001, 37). Additionally, distinctive dialectic features such as these also provide clues to the development of the language-based ridicule that many of the mediated stereotypes rely on. Other Scots-Irish contributions include storytelling and music, such as the Jack Tales and many of the

traditional ballads so popular in the Appalachian backcountry (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 276). Finally, the basis for some Appalachian folk beliefs and superstitions, such as the belief that a bird in the house foretells a death, has also been commonly attributed to these Celtic people's traditions. Overall, however, it must be noted here that important contributions to the folk life in the mountains have been made by a wide variety of groups, including the Native Americans and Scots-Irish as well as Jewish, German, French Huguenot, Welsh, English, African-American, Slavic and southern European peoples (Edwards et al. 2006, 143). Furthermore, there have been waves of in-migration as well as out-migration of the entire Appalachian mountain area. Therefore, it must be stressed here that the diverse people and cultures in the region have been heavily masked by both a *mythology of homogeneity* and a *mythology of isolation*.

Taking the rich musical legacy of Appalachia as both an example of the cultural diversity in the region and a key factor in the long-standing stereotypes, one could name quite a variety of performers and styles with roots and connections there. While many would undoubtedly point to the more traditional musicians like the virtuosic flat-picking acoustic guitarist Doc Watson or the bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley (whose trademark "high lonesome" vocal harmonies typify that style), it is equally important to remember that a sizable number of notable African-American jazz musicians, such as the eccentric bandleader Sun Ra, composer Billy Strayhorn and drummer Art Blakey, were associated with Appalachia in their careers. Furthermore, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (the largest city in Appalachia) has long been recognized as a hotbed for jazz musicians. The overall influence of African-Americans on Appalachian music should not be discounted either, as the banjo - the one single instrument most commonly associated with the area, has

undisputedly African origins. Interestingly enough, the banjo was not considered to be “Appalachian” until well into the twentieth century. Three factors that encouraged the association of the banjo with Appalachia were a significant decline in the popularity of earlier non-Appalachian musical styles that featured the banjo (such as vaudeville), recording industry interest in (and urban folk revivalists’ focus on) Appalachian music and culture, and major innovations in banjo playing styles that allowed for an increased instrumental virtuosity (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1123). Today, of course, the banjo is featured prominently in country and bluegrass music - the two genres most closely associated to Appalachia. Depending upon the type of audience, the purposes of the promoters, and the medium of promotion, presentations of Appalachian musicians to specific non-native audiences have veered to one of two extremes: the exalted “folk” musician depicted as the keeper of a disappearing heritage or the unrefined “hillbilly” musician stuck in another time and place (Edwards et al. 2006, 165). Thus, as pertains to the analysis here, Appalachian music (particularly the banjo) is a key element in mediated imagery of the Appalachian region, especially of the popular “hillbilly” image. One must also recognize the fact that early promoters, such as Ralph Peer of the New York-based Okeh record company - a central figure at the forefront of what has long been termed the “big bang of country music” (which occurred in the late 1920s and 1930s), started the fashion of dressing down musicians with outdated work clothes and oversized hats to promulgate the stereotypes of hillbillies (Biggers 2006, 4 - 5). Furthermore, “Hillbilly” was also for thirty years the standard industry label for the music now known as country (Hubbs 2014, 24). One might argue that this basically amounted to an updated version of the popular minstrel shows of the 1800s, with rural people being lampooned and made

into the “other” (instead of African-Americans). Thus, it would seem that marketing ploys utilized at the time would prove to be just as influential as the musical performers on the image of future Appalachians.

Just as Appalachian-based music has experienced several periods of renewed popularity (for instance, the multi-platinum Grammy Award winning soundtrack to the popular Coen Brothers’ 2000 film “*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*”), there have also been periodic instances of a resurgence of interest in traditional Appalachian folkways and foodways. Take, for example, the *Foxfire* books: a 12-volume series of anthologies which grew out of a student-run magazine as initially published by high school language arts instructor Eliot Wigginton’s classes at the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in northeastern Georgia. The idea behind the educational project was a (then) new pedagogical technique that allowed the students to interview local residents about the area’s oral histories and traditional folkways as a way of learning about their Appalachian culture and heritage. When the first book was initially released in 1972, it struck a chord with an American public that yearned for connections to the past to offset the depersonalization of modern life and quickly became a best-seller and a how-to manual for back-to-earth pioneers (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1534). Named after a type of bioluminescent fungus that grows on the decaying wood of fallen trees in the southern Appalachian forests, the *Foxfire* book series still glow with a wealth of information about southern Appalachian people and cultures. A wide variety of subjects were covered in the series, including topics related to farming, livestock care, home remedies and the making of traditional handicrafts. There were also a multitude of book chapters that were dedicated to food preparation. One chapter (in the first book) on preserving farm vegetables, for instance,

outlines how to make one particular regional Appalachian food specialty that I vividly recall (and still cook periodically - with salt pork, of course) – a dish called “shucky beans” (also known to some people as “leather britches”). The simple method of drying beans for later usage gives the cooked beans a distinctive fermented type of taste - one that persons unacquainted with it tend to either love or hate. The *Foxfire* book describes the method of preserving the beans as follows:

“String tender green beans. Fill a long needle with a long strong thread. Push the needle through the center of the bean, pushing the beans together at the end of the thread, filling the knot end to needle. Hang up the string by one end in the warm air, but not in direct sunlight. This gives the beans a better flavor. Let them remain hanging until the beans become dry. Store beans in a bag until ready to use.”
(Wigginton ed. 1972, 175)

Traditional food preparation techniques, such as the ones covered in the *Foxfire* series, barely scratch the surface of the amount of plant-based knowledge running through the cultures of the mountains - information that has typically been handed down from one generation to the next. Unfortunately, the ongoing march of modernity has trampled underfoot much knowledge about (as well as the availability of) native Appalachian plant species. Due to ongoing environmental damage, for example, less than half of the over four hundred medicinal plants used by the Cherokee people are readily available today (Edwards et al. 2006, 145). That being said, there are many plants that are still being used as food and medicine throughout the region, including sassafras, May apple, bloodroot, ramps (wild garlic) and, of course, ginseng.

As perhaps the most famous plant utilized by cross-culturally by humans, ginseng has captured the imagination of many different peoples for millennium. There are two

main species of the plant: American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and Asian Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*). Although American Ginseng is an entirely different species from the Asian ginseng, a root the Chinese have treasured for at least five thousand years for its medicinal properties, it is very similar in appearance and is believed to possess similar beneficial properties (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 419). In America as well as in Asia, there are three types of harvested ginseng: wild, simulated-wild and cultivated (with a value hierarchy descending in that order). The plant itself is the same across these types: it is a perennial which grows to be about knee-high, producing a single stalk each Spring with five arrow-shaped leaves. By the Fall of the year, the plant develops a cluster of red berries (containing 1-3 seeds each). The key to the plant, and the valuable part to humans, is below the ground. The tuberous root, which grows at right angles to the stem, ranges in size from a half inch to sometimes eight inches in length depending on the age of the plant and the growing conditions (Wigginton 1975, 251).

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the roots of the ginseng plant play an integral part in a philosophy of balance and interdependence in the natural world. For example, instead of the four basic food groups of western nutrition, Chinese cuisine generally aims to balance yin and yang (Taylor 2006, 238). Foods with a cooling effect (such as melon) are mostly considered to be in the realm of yin while those producing warming sensations (such as chili peppers) are generally thought to be in the realm of yang. Furthermore, there are some foods, such as rice, that are considered to be neutral and a healthy diet consists of a balance of the three realms. Ginseng, depending on its type, can fall on either side of the yin/yang philosophical system, with American ginseng belonging to the former and Asian ginseng being placed in latter category. Regardless of

where the ginseng plant and root originates, the resemblance (in the eyes of many people) between an odd, branchy ginseng root and the human form made ginseng promising for many human ills. In fact, the name ginseng stems from the Cantonese term for “image of man” (Taylor 2006, 35). Thus, ginseng has traditionally held as special place in many Asian cultures with an emphasis on philosophy, harmony with nature and the usage of naturally-derived medicines. According to U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, most wild ginseng roots harvested in the United States (with an estimated wholesale value of \$27 million annually) are shipped to Hong Kong and China (www.fws.gov).

The role that ginseng has played in North America (and in the Appalachian region, in particular) is much different but no less fascinating. In the early 1700s, our native ginseng first came to the attention of Europeans when Father Joseph Lafitau, who had been a missionary in China, recognized the similar American plant growing near a Mohawk village in Canada (Wigginton 1975, 245). Lafitau’s subsequent efforts to then harvest and export the roots for Asian markets opened up a new source to fill the Oriental demand for ginseng. Native Americans and new-world Europeans alike took notice and soon the wild ginseng plants were being hunted throughout all of Eastern North America, including in the Appalachian Mountains where the plant grew well. By the late 1700s, ginseng was an important source of income for many people in America and was being harvested in record amounts. For example, George Washington noted in his diary that he encountered pack trains crossing the mountains loaded down with ginseng. In Kentucky, Daniel Boone not only gathered ginseng for use by his own family but also in 1788 purchased twelve tons for export (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 420). The overharvesting of the roots and the lack of sustainable harvesting practices (such as only digging the

older plants and leaving the younger ones for another year) led to a decline of wild ginseng plants during the next two centuries. Predictably, people began to either grow simulated-wild ginseng by planting the red berries strategically in the woods or to grow it domestically (cultivating it outright). However, the cultivated ginseng grows faster, and thus has a bigger, smoother root than that which has grown in the woods and not been tampered with (Wigginton 1975, 254). Among ginseng diggers and buyers, it is common knowledge that the experienced ginseng handler can easily distinguish the more valuable wild roots from both the simulated-wild and cultivated varieties. Thus, the special status accorded to the roots of the wild plant not only served to create a mysterious aura around the plant itself but also ensured that searching for wild ginseng would remain culturally significant as a social and economic endeavor.

Although ginseng has an important place in the culture of the Appalachian region (where it remains legal to harvest the plant in eleven of the thirteen Appalachian states - North Carolina and Mississippi being the exceptions), a much more important role in the creation of the stereotypes of Appalachia and its people can be distilled from alcoholic beverages. In fact, the production and distribution of homemade whiskey (most often called simply “liquor” in the mountains) has a lively history in Appalachia, beginning with the earliest settlement of Europeans in the region (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1023). Although European liquor distillation practices generally focused on fermenting other types of products (particularly grains such as rye or wheat), Appalachian settlers made their spirits mainly from a crop that they had ready access to - namely, corn. From the very beginning, 100% corn moonshine was widely considered to be of vastly superior quality to other versions, especially those made with sugar as a main ingredient (which

many distillers added to increase yield and make more money, despite its notorious headache-inducing hangover quality). Thus, one must differentiate between “straight corn” and “sugar top” whiskies. Another key defining characteristic of moonshine is that it is generally consumed raw from the distilling apparatus, commonly known as a “still”. The practice of aging whiskey in charred oak barrels (one of many extremely specific requirements of Kentucky’s famous bourbon whiskey) would be developed later in the history of American distilling practices. Exactly when and why is unknown, though a commonly told story in the U.S. points to the 1790s , with distillers shipping white whiskey in barrels on flatboats down the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, from Kentucky to New Orleans, where recipients enjoyed the taste of the softer, more mature beverage produced in transit (Joyce 2014, 14). Prior to the development of aging liquor in wood, however, the corn whiskey of Appalachia quickly became a much sought after product throughout the region and gained legendary status in American culture as a whole, where it began to be known by various names, including white lightning, fire water, mountain dew and (most famously of all) moonshine.

The specific mythology behind the name “moonshine” alone testifies to the colorful history surrounding it. As many early farmers in the Appalachian region grew corn, which was bulky and hard to transport to market, they quickly learned that by distilling spirits from it that they could transport it easier and make more money per bushel. Although these farmer/distillers generally felt that they had the right to do what they pleased with what they grew on their own land (on which they paid taxes) and should not have to pay additional taxes on the corn liquor they made, the government didn’t agree and began to tax them. This philosophical disagreement over the federal

government's 1791 Excise Whiskey Tax led to "the Whiskey Rebellion", an era marked by violent protests. Although it lasted for three years (until 1794), the rebellion was a fight that the whiskey-making settlers could not ultimately win. However, as many of the now-illegal distillers began hiding their operations and operating only at night so as to remain undetected by the law enforcement officers, the name "moonshine" came to be. From there on, much folklore centered around this brew, its proper production, ways to check its potency, stories of still locations and encounters with tax revenue agents, or "revenuers" (Edwards, et al. 2006, 145). Despite the tendency to think in more colorful ways about moonshine, the reality of the situation for most people dealing with the product from the earliest days up through the prohibition era (1920 - 1933) was more on the mundane side of Appalachian culture. For instance, a little moonshine was oftentimes used as an ingredient in homemade medicines for sore throats or other ailments. Whether the homemade liquor was used medicinally or as an intoxicant, the social interactions involving obtaining it were typically on the everyday end. There were no big business overtones, no high pressure sales, just quiet, behind-the-scenes, low-key transactions during which no one asked unnecessary questions (Wigginton 1972, 343). With the rise of the temperance movement in the late 1800s and the eventual passage of the Volstead Act kicking off prohibition, much of the social and business practices surrounding the moonshine trade changed. Illegal production skyrocketed, as did prices - white whiskey, which once sold for \$2 a gallon, could now command \$22 (Joyce 2014, 69). Of course, a substantial rise in liquor-related organized crime corresponded with this highly inflated economic situation. Additionally, a larger amount of impure and poisonous liquor began being introduced into the market and only served to increase the problems of an already

volatile and dangerous social situation. Prohibition was eventually repealed as America's attempts to control the social behavior and morality of its citizens proved to be either naïve or misguided, depending on your viewpoint. However, moonshine has survived, although many would argue that the true art of distilling Appalachia's famous spirit was forever damaged in the process.

From its humble beginning in the early frontier days, when homemade whiskey was one of the few sources of cash income the mountaineers had for buying such goods as sugar, calico and gunpowder from the pack trains which came through periodically (Wigginton 1972, 303), moonshine has seen many ups and downs. Today, there is something of a moonshine renaissance happening in the United States, with a notable proliferation of "legal" moonshines having had began in the 2000s. In other words, moonshine has now been commodified to accommodate a renewed public interest in the products of American rurality (including those from Appalachia). In fact, various rural cultural artifacts (seen as "rustic" and "authentic" products) have been co-opted by much of American culture in recent years – the popularity of the glass Mason jar being used in upscale restaurants being a prime example. More often than not, however, the interest in the physical artifacts is not matched by a genuine interest in the corresponding rural areas or cultures that they were originally associated with. In order to get a grasp on the extent of the particular resurgence of interest in the legal version of America's infamous illegal liquor, I did some field work at the Liquor Barn on Hurtbourne Parkway in Louisville, Kentucky on December 13th, 2015. There, I found no fewer than 76 different varieties of unaged corn whiskey under a variety of names including: moonshine, white whiskey and white dog. Additionally, there were also numerous malt beverages (basically, flavored

beer) being sold in Mason-type glass jars that simulated the look and feel of traditional moonshine. Overall, the products varied from 20 to 100 proof (which is 10 – 50% alcohol by volume) and some, disappointingly, had artificial (also known as “certified”) colors and flavors added. The brand names now available in package stores such as the one that I visited include Midnight Moonshine, owned by the NASCAR car racing legend Junior Johnson (who claims to have been “running shine” in his teenage years) and Ole Smokey Tennessee Moonshine, which is purported to be made from a 100-year-old recipe. One recent upstart brand is Hatfield & McCoy Moonshine, which references the most famous family feud in Appalachian history. In keeping with the legend, the distillery claims to be located on original Hatfield land in West Virginia and to be making their moonshine from a genuine recipe created by the famous patriarch of the family - “Devil Anse” Hatfield, who survived the famous feud. Their product is called “the drink of the devil”, the double meaning of which was undoubtedly designed as a marketing device. Finally, there are two other legal moonshine products: “Tim Smith’s Climax Moonshine” (named after the town of Climax, Virginia and labeled the “Drink of Defiance”) and “Tickle’s Dynamite Cinnamon Moonshine” (marketed by Sugarlands Shine of Gatlinburg, Tennessee). As will be detailed, Tim Smith and “Tickle” are the two main characters on the RTV series “Moonshiners” and their products are reflections of the popularity of the show. As the reader will soon see, this is just the latest example of the *rediscovery of Appalachia* by a public whose interest in the region waxes and wanes just like the moon by which the previously outlined distillers produced their illegal wares.

CONTEXT: APPALACHIA AS A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED IDEA

The popular image of the Appalachian region and its people corresponds to and is a reflection of its periodic rediscovery and the subsequent media representations therein. The folk culture, the depressed area, the romantic wilderness, the Appalachia of fiction, journalism and public policy have for more than a century been created, forgotten and rediscovered, primarily by the economic opportunism, political creativity or passing fancy of urban elites (Batteau 1990, 1). However, bridging gaps between each spike in attention accorded to the Appalachian region has been an almost constant stream of ideologically-infused mediated imagery feeding the American consciousness with ideas about the region and its people. As such, *the idea of Appalachia* - the socially constructed Appalachia, is a much greater entity than either the geographic area itself or the people who live there. Indeed, what Appalachia represents in America casts a shadow on the highest peak of the mountain range and runs deeper into the heart of the country than any of the rivers in the region. The idea of Appalachia as a place in, but not of, America continues because Americans need to believe in Appalachia's existence as part of the ongoing debate over national identity itself (Eller 2008, 222). The people of the region - as varied and complicated as any people on Earth, have been systematically reduced to stereotypes of what American wants and needs to be the quintessential "Appalachian". Thus, the largely rural area and its people have been transformed over time by their status as an "urban creation" into a symbol of everything America isn't and shouldn't be: a vivid representation and reminder (at least in the minds of many people who have no

experience with it) of all that which is still not “modern” in our society. The powerful and long-lasting effects of this discourse about social life and culture in the Appalachian Mountains remain with us long after many of its original contributors are forgotten or are no longer read, thus making their version of “Appalachia” appear all the more objective and factual as the traces of their construction activities fade (Billings et al. 1999, 119). This situation is represented most vividly in the dominant mediated representations perpetuating an “us & them” message serving to “other” the Appalachian people. The typical portrayals present a certain characteristic duality of being “Appalachian”, of being an American, yet also being in (what writer Michael Harrington called in his 1962 book of the same name) “the other America.”

To understand the full picture and see why particular images immediately come to mind whenever the word “Appalachia” is used in popular culture, one must begin in the 1800s. The society that emerged in the Appalachian Mountains in the 1820s and 1830s was not unlike other rural American farm societies that were close to their frontier origins and dominated by the connections between land, family and work (Edwards et al. 2006, 5). Farming and raising livestock was widespread and the families in the region were usually large to accommodate the intensive work necessary for sustenance. In general then, life in Appalachia during this time was remarkably similar to life on the rest of the American frontier. Of course, with the onset of the American Civil War in 1861, things changed dramatically for the United States as a whole and for the Appalachian region in particular. As the Appalachian Mountains cover such a large geographic area, perhaps the best way to view the “war between the states” is with the extremes on both ends (the deep South and the far North) and central Appalachia caught in the middle. The latter area,

which including the border states of West Virginia (as it broke away from Virginia in the very year the war began) and Kentucky, was characterized by pronounced divisions in allegiances to the Union and the Confederacy. The communities and families within them were sharply divided by their affiliations, with men quite literally fighting their own brothers on the regional battlefields as well as in the hills and hollers that they called home. An estimated 150,000 southern mountaineers from central Appalachia fought for the Confederacy, while an estimated 100,000 of their kinfolk fought for the Union (PBS 2005). Destructive as the war was physically and psychologically to Southerners, it may have been even more destructive of the cultural environment and institutional structures of these southern mountaineers (Drake 2001, 102). Guerrilla warfare was the name of the game and, as the war raged on, resentments ran very deep on all fronts. Deserters from both sides seeking refuge in the mountains only served to complicate matters further. As the war dragged on, it reached every aspect of the mountain social structure as schools were closed, trade was shut down, farms were destroyed and, perhaps most importantly, authority collapsed further allowing violence to rule unabated. These were the appalling conditions that dominated the Appalachian area in the era of the Civil war and for some years following the war (Drake 2001, 104) and the effects would linger for decades.

After the Civil War ended, central Appalachia lay in utter ruin. Violence and dislocation cracked the mountains' social structures and opened them to a bevy of new political, economic and cultural interests (Weise 2011, 207). In these rather uncertain, seemingly lawless times (as it is often portrayed in the media), the era of family feuds was ushered in and the established image of Appalachian people as a violent culture was reinforced. "The Feud" - a linguistic construct utilized by local, regional and national

elites to simultaneously dismiss local conflicts as petty squabbles while justifying the use of force to suppress “lawlessness”, depoliticized the roots of the struggles in favor of a romantic, trivialized picture of unfettered, hot-blooded mountain folk who fought each other for no discernible reasons (Sarris 2014, 947). Several notable family disagreements developed in the state of Kentucky during this era, including in Clay County between the wealthy White and the Garrard families. In this particular case, the tensions that set the two families on a collision course were rooted in economic and political factors, as the families competed for the control of the county’s industry and commerce, first as salt manufacturers and, later, as merchants and timber and coal developers (Billings et al. 1999, 122). Of course, media representations of the Appalachian feuds do not focus on such upper class societal battles, which are brushed aside as history while notoriety is selectively given to others incidents, such as the legendary Hatfield-McCoy feud that still paints such vivid images in many people’s minds. Occurring near the Kentucky and West Virginia border between two decidedly more stereotypically “Appalachian” families, the disagreement between these two families stemmed from a lawsuit over a parcel of land. However, the dramatic nature of the details of this famous feud – including three McCoy boys being tied to a tree and then killed as well as seven members of the Hatfield family being sent to Kentucky penitentiaries for participation in the ongoing violence (PBS 2005), captured the attention of the national print media industry at the time (and is still commonly referenced today). One might say that the social fallout of the Civil War had planted the seeds of a stereotype that had now found a fertile medium in which to grow.

As the rest of America entered into an era of industrial development focused on urban growth and change, the stereotype of Appalachia developed into an image of a

rural culture that was portrayed as not having changed at all. The people of the region began to be portrayed in quite contradictory terms – strong, independent and proud, but also dirty, uneducated and violent. The writers who were mostly responsible for this new image of Appalachia were writers collectively taking part in what is now called the Local Color movement (Edwards et al. 2006, 9), which attempted to offer readers a glimpse of cultures that they were unfamiliar with. Born in the active minds of these fiction writers, “Appalachia” was invented in the caricatures and atmospheric landscapes of the escapist fiction they pinned to entertain the emergent urban middle class (Billings et al. 1999, 21). Generally thought of as spanning the final thirty years of the 1800s up through the early 1900’s, the Local Color movement produced a body of written work in the form of short stories, journal (and magazines) articles as well as novels. While not all of the writers in this movement focused on Appalachia, the ones that did are now seen as a perhaps the largest influence at that time in the shaping of the ongoing national perception of the Appalachian region and its people.

Two of the most successful writers of the Local Color movement were Mary Noailles Murfree (who wrote under the pen name Charles Egbert Craddock) and John Fox, Jr. - both of which were born into wealthy families who lived in areas bordering the outer western edges of Appalachia in Tennessee and Kentucky, respectively. Although Mary Murfree was not native to Appalachia, her family had a summer home in the region (in Beersheba Springs, Tennessee) where she would spend several months out of the year throughout her young adulthood, so she was somewhat familiar with the regional cultures and had some degree of contact with local people. However, her first published story using material from the Appalachian mountains - “The Dancin’ Party at Harrison’s Cove”

(published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1878), includes many of the elements of what have become Appalachian stereotypes: a feud, moonshine, puritanical social structures, portraits of winsome mountain youth and their haggard elders, some humor, and purity in ancestry and attitudes (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1077). Such thematic devices earned Murfree's writings wide acclaim during her lifetime, but her popularity decreased with lukewarm posthumous critical reception of her work. Nevertheless, the impact of her work is still felt in Appalachian imagery to this day.

John Fox Jr. is arguably just as influential in shaping the perceptions of mountain people with his two most famous works, both of which are still popular today. Those novels were titled *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* (1903) and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1908). His work as a whole emphasized his belief that environment, not personal characteristics "keeps the Southern mountaineer to the backwoods civilization of the revolution" (McNeil 1995, 121). Fox was by no means the only writer of the era with environmental deterministic viewpoints, but he has proven to be the one that has had the greatest impact on the image of Appalachia. However, it is important to note that research has revealed a direct linkage between Fox's fictional images and his "role as a publicist for absentee mineral developers" who, with their agent, Fox's older half-brother James, were involved in the development of the coal industry in Central Appalachia - in short, for Fox (and how many others?), "Appalachia" was a willful creation and not merely the product of literary imagination (Billings et al. 1999, 21-22). Fox's direct association with the developing coal industry suggests that his heavily influential version of the myth of Appalachia was, in fact, little more than propaganda. That his writings, as well as those of the entire Local Color movement, coincided with America's industrial transition is

highly suspect, to say the very least. In time, the entire Local Color vogue faded: indeed, the term became somewhat pejorative, suggesting fiction marked by concern for the picturesque and charming, by excessive use of dialect spelling and by an undue emphasis on what the writer perceives as different or unique about the area (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1070). However, the movement pushed the developing media stereotypes to new levels and laid the groundwork for the more extreme media depictions to come. Overall, the legacy of the Local Color writers may be summed up by their contributed of a number of descriptive phrases that are still very much used today in reference to the Appalachian region and its people. They include the following: “a rich land of poor people,” “a strange land and peculiar people” and “our contemporary ancestors.”

Occurring at the turn of the twentieth century, in the latter part of the Local Color movement era, “hillbilly” - a derogatory term for Appalachian people (and later, for rural people in general), first appeared in print. In 1900, a New York *Journal* reporter defined such people as “free and untrammled white” citizens living “in the hills” with “no means to speak of”, who “dresses as he can”, drinks whiskey and “fires off his revolver as fancy takes him” (Drake 2001, 121). Similarly, when reporting on ginseng gathering activities of Appalachian people, the *New York Times* derided them as “shiftless, roving people, wholly incapable of keeping up with the march of modern progress” (Taylor 2006, 7). From that time forward, the hillbilly image and what it represents in America has grown exponentially (not unlike the non-native, invasive Kudzu plant that covers large portions of the American South) blanketing the popular American consciousness with a foreign concept of *what it is* and *what it means* to be Appalachian. Thus, it would seem that both the idea of “Appalachia” and the concept of the “hillbilly” function in particular ways in

the larger American culture. Indeed, they served the dual and seemingly contradictory purposes of allowing the “mainstream”, or a generally non-rural, middle class, white American audience to imagine a romanticized past, while simultaneously enabling that same audience to recommit itself to modernity by caricaturing negative aspects of pre-modern, uncivilized society (Harkins 2004, 7). For many people from the Appalachian region, however, the image is quite simply an inaccurate, reductionist, one-dimensional portrayal of the area and its numerous distinctive cultures. Moreover, such stereotypes leave Appalachians feeling marginalized (Cooke-Jackson and Hansen 2008, 186) as the region has been portrayed from the beginning of mass media in this country as “a place in, but not of, America” (McNeil 1995, 45).

As new technologies, such as film and radio, captured the public’s imagination, there was no shortage of Appalachian portrayals in these mediums as well. As the print media had long associated the southern mountain area with moonshine, it was one of the first subjects to be overtly presented about the region on film. In 1913, a motion picture called *Red Margaret, Moonshiner* (also known as *Moonshine Blood*) was released. The silent black-and-white romance starred Pauline Bush as a moonshiner in love with a government agent (Murdock MacQuarrie), and a young Lon Chaney in a pre-*Hunchback of Notre Dame* role as her wannabe suitor (Joyce 2014, 162). Now thought to be lost, the film ends with the entire moonshine gang getting busted by the feds and its leader, Red Margaret, going to prison while the revenue agent gets decorated for his honorable duty. However tame in comparison to today’s standards, the film is an early example of how these stereotypes continued to be used in the evolving media landscape and how the dominant American ideology was being reinforced through a storyline where a righteous

urban officer is victorious over the backwoods hillbillies. It must also be pointed out this film short was just one example of a plethora of such productions with similar imagery and messages that was produced during this particular era. In fact, before 1915, literally hundreds of one- and two-reel “actioners”, varying in length from about eight to twenty minutes and featuring feuding mountain clans or shooting mountain moonshiners, had been produced for the nickelodeon market, a totally urban audience (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1709). Thus, the mediated image of the Appalachian region was clearly being created and infused with ideological meaning by and for urban people.

Intertwined with the history of these mediated portrayals of Appalachian people were social and political factors which undoubtedly influenced how the images were presented. In the 1920s, for example, increase mine mechanization and the subsequent overexpansion of the coal production in central Appalachia contributed to hard times in the latest instance of a low point in the boom-and-bust cycles which have characterized the coal industry there. As such, it could be said that the Great Depression began in Appalachia before the rest of the nation and conditions there were arguably harsher due to its single-industry economy, which was largely owned by outside corporations. “Coal”, as was later pointed out by Harry Caudill in his influential 1963 book, *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, “is, for all practical purposes, central Appalachia’s only industry (and) the region and its people are tied to an industrial albatross” (Caudill 1962, 332). When the collapse of the first great American industrial era came in the late 1920s, unemployed miners struggled to return to the land and to an earlier way of life (Eller 2013, 10). While a large percentage of the population in the region relied on public assistance in these lean years, others remained in the mines and fought for their rights, including unionization. By

the late 1930s, the coalfields of eastern Kentucky received extraordinary media scrutiny and became known to the rest of the country as “Bloody Harlan”, a term which referred to the often violent attempts to unionize coal miners in eastern Kentucky’s Harlan County (Edwards, Asbury & Cox 2006, 16). This was not, however, the first time the media had been splattered with the term to exemplify the common stereotypes of the people in the Appalachian region (which including lawlessness, isolation and violence). It was also used to describe, for example, the feuding activities within “Bloody” Breathitt County, Kentucky during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Of course, nothing captures the popular imagination, then or now, like images of violence and, in accounts of Kentucky violence, “blood” was a constant leitmotif (Billings et al. 1999, 124).

Coinciding with the attention that the print media was paying to serious news events in the Appalachian region during this time was an increase in the amount of stereotypic imagery in portrayals of people from the region, specifically in the form of seemingly innocent print comic strips. The hillbilly characters of *Lil’ Abner* (a country bumpkin, whose family lives in a small town named “Dogpatch”) and Snuffy Smith (an overall-wearing moonshiner in a locale called “Hootin’ Holler” from the comic strip *Barney Google*) were both introduced in 1934 and gained great popularity. In fact, the *Lil’ Abner* comic strip became so popular that it was featured on the covers of national magazines, such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. Though they were not explicitly defined as Appalachian, many readers nonetheless associated the characters with the southeastern mountains, particularly because the cartoons often appeared in *Esquire* across from articles and poems by Kentuckian James Still (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1697), who hailed from Knott County, Kentucky (home to Alice Lloyd College, if the reader will

recall). Animated short films of the 1930s (often shown accompanying longer features) also perpetuated unflattering stereotypes of mountain people. Examples of the Hollywood studio cartoons from this era include “Hill Billy” (1935) by Walter Lantz (the creator of the Woody Woodpecker character) and “A Feud There Was” (1938) by Tex Avery (the creator of Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, among others).

In the 1940s through the 1950s, a series of feature films featuring the hillbilly characters of “Ma & Pa Kettle” became hugely successful. In these movies, the couple resides in a rundown farmhouse with their fifteen children and have their lives changed dramatically when they win a modern house as a prize in a contest. Although the movies are set in the rural town of Cape Flattery, Washington (the closest they get to Appalachia is in the 8th film, where Ma and the kids visit Pa’s brother in the Ozark town of Mournful Hollow, Arkansas), their popularity served to further perpetuate the already established hillbilly stereotypes as the antithesis of modernity. Furthermore, the movies coincided with (and could be interpreted as a reflection of) the American societal push toward consumer consumption. While this essay is not a critique of capitalism per se, it must be pointed out that our society stresses urbanization and industrial development as well as monetary wealth and the consumption of products as the standards by which all are measured. This philosophy and the assumptions behind it – namely, a received value system in which progress equals growth at any cost, wealth is measured only in terms of money, people and communities are expendable, and greed is good (Eller 2008, 263), are important factors in any examination of an America that is quickly becoming one large strip mall from-sea-to-shining-sea and are particularly poignant for Appalachian-based research. From an ideological standpoint, the messages in the mediated images of the

“Ma & Pa Kettle” films are important in that they held substantial meanings above and beyond the seemingly innocent comedic entertainment they were purported to be. It is also noteworthy that the rags-to-riches “American Dream” storyline placing poor rural characters in an affluent modern (urban) setting to comment on social and class-based differences would become a very common set-up in television shows of the era, such as *The Real McCoys* (1957-63), where a West Virginia family moves to California’s San Fernando Valley for a better life. Thus, one could say that the media was being used as a site of struggle for meaning in America.

The image of Appalachia (and its people), politics in the United States and the national media became especially intertwined in the 1960s. Of course, there was a continuation of the rural-bumpkin-meets-urban-sophisticate conceptual rehash of the previously mentioned movies and television programs in one of the most immediately recognizable and popular shows of that decade *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971). The now-familiar story goes like this: a poor, uneducated mountaineer strikes “black gold” (oil), becomes a millionaire and moves to Beverly Hills, where hilarity ensues as his family’s simple backwoods ways clash with the modern world. Recurring themes of moonshine (made this time by the scrappy, shotgun-toting “Granny”), cousins Jethro (who oftentimes boasts of his sixth-grade education) and Elly May (whose pin-up girl body and love for “critters” are featured prominently) and colorful language (the family patriarch, Jed Clampett, frequently exclaims, “Yeeee-doggies!”), took this rag-to-riches story with a rural twist and ran with it. This television show was a prime example of what many Appalachian scholars have long recognized – the *idea of Appalachia* has played counterpoint to the *idea of America* (Billings et al 1999, ix). Thus, for every real-life

frontier hero like Daniel Boone that schoolchildren are taught about in their American history books, they are also given a fictional, cartoon-like Jed Clampett stereotype on television. In the highly politically charged atmosphere of the 1960s, this ideological battleground would come to the cultural forefront as the decade ushered in a new era in the form of a political re-discovery of Appalachia, an era that would bring a new level of attention to the region and its people.

In the 1960 presidential election, Democratic nominee Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts ran in opposition of the incumbent Republican Vice President Richard M. Nixon and was victorious in an extremely close election. Prior to winning his party's nomination, however, Kennedy was exposed to Appalachia in his primary campaign in West Virginia. It was the first state in which Kennedy ran that was overwhelmingly Protestant and a key state for America's first Catholic aspirant to the Presidency since Al Smith's defeat (to Herbert Hoover) in 1928 (Drake 2001, 173). As the story goes, Kennedy was genuinely shocked at the social conditions he saw in the region and felt obliged to help the area. On the eve of the primary, he went before television cameras and promised the people of West Virginia, "If I am nominated and elected president, within sixty days of the start of my administration, I will introduce a program to the Congress for aid to West Virginia" (Eller 2008, 54). Upon being elected, Kennedy began to fulfill his promise by creating the Task Force on Area Redevelopment, which led to the Area Redevelopment Act (ARA) and the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC). For many Appalachian people, it was a time of great hope for the future of the region. However, in the same three year period from Kennedy's inauguration to his assassination on November 22, 1963, the major television networks descended upon

Appalachia and several programs aired that focused on the poverty and backwardness of the region and its people. While these programs and countless newspaper articles drew national attention to the region, they did so in a way that presented Appalachia in a uniformly negative light (Edwards et al. 2006, 18). In the aftermath of Kennedy's assassination, Vice President Lyndon Johnson immediately pledged to continue the Appalachia-based initiatives of the Kennedy administration. Furthermore, he recognized the need to establish his own agenda while appearing to fulfill that of the slain president and, on January of 1964, in his very first State of the Union Address, he declared an "unconditional war on poverty in America" (Eller 2008, 76).

As Johnson (who, like Kennedy before him, visited the Appalachian region), pushed his administration to establish the "War on Poverty", followed through with the PARC recommendation to set up a new independent Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and signed the Appalachian Regional Development Act (ARDA) into law, the national media were also hard at work influencing the public's perceptions of the region. One short, but notable, example was the CBS News-produced documentary "Christmas in Appalachia" (which aired on December 22, 1964 and was narrated by the well-known journalist Charles Kuralt). The 30-minute-long program, featuring stark black-and-white images of hungry children and their impoverished coal miner families at Christmas-time (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1699), repeatedly juxtaposed the poverty and destitution in Letcher County, Kentucky with sentimental reminders of the holiday season. For several years afterward, poverty warriors, planners, bureaucrats and the public that supported them saw Appalachia through Kuralt-colored glasses (Batteau 1990, 7). At the same time, tensions between the coal industry and local residents were increasing in the same area of

central Appalachia that the documentary focused on. The rights of area landowners were being struck down in courtrooms across the region due to coal companies holding many decades old “broad form deeds” (most of which were signed before to the mechanization of the industry), that allowed them to extract the coal from the landscape in any way that they saw fit. Strip mining and mountaintop removal had begun, permanently scarring the land and damaging the ecosystems. While many people in the area felt powerless against the immense social and political influence wielded by the coal companies, others fought back. One particularly dramatic event unfolded in late 1965, as sixty-one-year-old Ollie “Widow” Combs, joined protesters in the Clear Creek Valley of Knott County, Kentucky to try to stop strip mining operations near their homes. In a bold act of civil disobedience, Mrs. Combs literally scaled the high mountain ridge, sat down in front of an approaching bulldozer and refused to move. Needless to say, she was arrested and taken to the Knott County jail, where she would have to spend Thanksgiving holiday. The spectacular image of Mrs. Combs being carried off her own land by two law enforcement officers - a picture snapped by a Louisville Courier-Journal photographer, who was also arrested, appeared the next day in newspapers across the country (Eller 2008, 147). Meanwhile, *The Andy Griffith Show* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, both of which presented more than their fair share of stereotypic portrayals of mountain people, were Top 10 prime time television shows for that season (1965-66). Thus, there was a vast blending of fact and fiction in the media regarding Appalachia - on one hand, real Appalachian people fighting for their rights, and on the other, sensationalistic journalism and fictional, stereotyped portrayals.

During the 1960s, the plight of the Appalachian region and its people fit in well with the heightened social awareness of the times. The ground gained by the civil rights

and women's movements inspired many grassroots organizations, such as Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), which fought environmental damage caused by strip mining practices. The antiwar and student movements called into question the notions of "progress", "modernization" and "national interest" that had been used for so long to justify the destruction of traditional ways of life in Appalachia (Edwards et al. 2006, 86-87). Thus, it seemed that the times, indeed, were changing. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson both used identification with Appalachia to great political advantage (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1699) and established initiatives which helped the region, at least to some degree. Some initiatives, such as the preschool program "Head Start", which focused on school readiness in children from poor families, were hugely successful (and continue to this day). Many critics, however, would claim that the programs failed to account for the structural inequalities that were the real source of the social problems in America in general and in Appalachia in particular. All along, the media had played a particularly important role in the entire process of making Appalachia "a frame of reference, not a fact" (Batteau, 1990, 200) and establishing the stereotypes that had now come to define the people (and the problems) of the Appalachian region. Unsurprisingly, when President Johnson's War on Poverty collapsed in 1972, periodic investigations of poor conditions in the mountains continued as standard fare for television, newspaper and magazine editors (Eller 2008, 89).

Coincidentally, in the same year that the decade-long War on Poverty came to a close, a motion picture was released that has arguably done more than any other single media-related item to permanently solidify (in the public's imagination to this very day) much of the negative stereotypes that had long been associated with the Appalachian

region. Based on a novel by James Dickey, *Deliverance* (1972) was a substantial box office hit, becoming the fifth highest grossing film of the year. Its success began a film trilogy of sorts for actor Burt Reynolds, who also starred in the moonshine-based *White Lightning* (1973) and its sequel *Gator* (1976). *Deliverance* is also notable as the feature film debut of actor Ned Beatty, who is the victim of male rape by a group of hillbilly characters in the movie, when an outdoor adventure trip between four friends into the Appalachian mountains of Georgia takes a horrific turn for the worse. The now infamous line “squeal like a pig”, as uttered repeatedly by one of the hillbilly rapists (all of which are missing many of their teeth), has become an extremely well-known cultural catch phrase - one so popular that even people who have never seen the movie recognize and use it. The movie also contains a commonly referenced scene of a cross-eyed, albino, banjo playing boy on the front porch of a rundown shack - a scene which simultaneously enforces the inbreeding and poverty stereotypes about mountain people. Furthermore, the music being played by the characters in that particular scene – the traditional instrumental “Dueling Banjos” tune, has since become a major keystone prop used by various media (especially television) to relay negative characteristics about rural America (including Appalachia) whenever it is played as background music. Overall, the film’s images have profoundly influenced public perception of the Appalachian region - indeed, all exurban places, and have shaped in some way almost every single Appalachian film to follow (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 1704).

The film *Deliverance* may be the most influential Appalachian-based media release of the 1970s, but there were plenty of other examples on both the big and small screen that are worth mentioning. The decade began with the release of *The Moonshine*

War (1970), which was based on a novel by crime and suspense fiction writer Elmore Leonard. The movie was a vehicle for the (pre-M*A*S*H television series) actor Alan Alda, who starred as a prohibition-era Kentucky moonshiner. Another actor in the movie was Will Geer, who subsequently became known as the Grandfather on *The Waltons* (1972-1981), a decidedly more realistic and sympathetic portrayal of Appalachian family life set in rural Virginia during the Great Depression and World War II. Most portrayals, however, remained entrenched in the caricatures of the established stereotypes. One example - *Moonrunners* (1975), was a “B movie” that became a hit at the drive-in movie theaters of the time. Not just another film in the long list of moonshine-related films, its star - James Mitchum, was the son of Robert Mitchum, who had co-written and starred in a similar film in 1958 called *Thunder Road*. In the earlier film, the elder Mitchum’s character – Lucas Doolin, is a Korean War veteran who runs moonshine for his father in Harlan County, Kentucky. Echoing the “Bloody Harlan” phrase from real newspaper headlines of the previous decades, the film ends dramatically with Doolin barreling down the road, on the run from federal agents. His car fishtails and flips three times before crashing into an electrical transformer. With Doolin trapped inside, two agents observe his final moments. “Mountain people. Wild-blooded. Death-foolish”, one of them says (Joyce 2014, 167). In *Moonrunner*, the younger Mitchum played a character named Grady Hagg, one of two cousins who run moonshine for their Uncle Jesse. If this premise sounds familiar, it is because the movie was re-worked into the popular television show *The Dukes of Hazzard* (1979-1985). The feature film and the television show shared many of the same thematic concepts and featured narration by the “outlaw” country music singer Waylon Jennings as “the balladeer”. Both featured a country sheriff (who

was under the control of a corrupt “boss”, who owns much of the county and tries to control it all) constantly involved in high-speed car chases with moonshining good ol’ boys. The female film character of “Beth Ann” was transformed into “Cousin Daisy” for the television series, whose namesake “Daisy Duke” short-shorts have become another common iconic item and reference in popular American culture. Using *The Dukes of Hazzard* as an example of the longstanding stereotypes, it would seem that rural male portrayals tend to be centered around dangerous activities and (typically) outlawed behavior while female portrayals tend to be focused on their bodies and, especially, their sexuality. In a nutshell, then, the portrayals typically involve deviance among the men and hyper-sexuality among the women (Massey 2007, 130).

During the Fall television season of 1979 when *The Dukes of Hazzard* premiered, the noted television scholar Horace Newcomb published an article in the *Appalachian Journal* where he suggested that “television’s version (of Appalachia), like versions of it in most other popular entertainment forms, is an exploration of a region of the American mind rather than of American geography and the lives of the people who occupy it” (McNeil 1995, 317). It would seem that the national media had long manipulated the American mind through fictional, sensationalistic and stereotypical accounts of mountain people and cultures, but things were in the process of getting real by way of an American family half a continent away from Appalachia. In 1973, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) had produced and broadcast a 12-episode television documentary following the personal lives of an upper-middle class family in Santa Barbara, California. The series - “*An American Family*”, is widely cited as the first American reality television series. The family in the series – The Louds, consisted of the soon-to-be-divorced couple William

(Bill) and Patricia (Pat) Loud along with their five children – Michele, Delilah, Kevin, Grant and Lance, the latter of which is credited as being the first openly gay male character in American television history. One specific connection to Appalachia worth mentioning is that Bill Loud was the owner and president of a (now defunct) heavy equipment supply company named American Western Foundries, which provided replacement parts for equipment used in coal strip mining operations throughout the United States. As for the series itself, it would play an important part in creating the RTV revolution of the early 1990s, which would eventually lead to the two programs being looked at in this analysis – namely, *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*. Finally, it must be noted that, as television has long been considered a medium where success begets copycats and since the reality television craze is no different (Huff 2006, 81), the RTV trend of copycats and spinoffs was established as early as the 1970s when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) produced *The Family*, modeling it directly after *An American Family*. Likewise, the two Appalachian-based shows under consideration here produced a copycat and a spin-off, which are called *Smokey Mountain Money* and *Tickle*, respectively. Thus, there is currently an entire RTV sub-genre of rural-based reality television shows (hereafter, “Rurality TV”) portraying the “real lives” of mountain people as part of the American family of RTV programs.

REALITY TELEVISION

RTV, as the television genre that we recognize now, is really a catch-all category that includes a wide range of entertainment programs about real people and is located in border territories between information and entertainment, documentary and drama (Hill 2005, 2). As such, its roots can be traced back to media before the advent of the television medium. Thus, RTV can be thought of as being as old as television itself. For example, the long-running studio audience participation show *Truth or Consequences* (hosted by Ralph Edwards) began as a radio program in the late 1940s before transitioning to the television airwaves. Likewise, the well-known *Candid Camera* program (the hidden camera show designed to catch unsuspecting people reacting to unusual situations) began on radio before hitting the television airwaves in 1948 and is seen by many as one of the prototypes for reality television, as we now understand it. The fact that the show is still on the air (currently in an hour-long incarnation on the TV Land cable channel), is a testament to the voyeuristic aspect of RTV. In the first decade of television, the popular amateur talent shows, such as *The Original Amateur Hour* (another import from radio, hosted by Ted Mack) added some other elements that would later evolve into RTV. In fact, most of the initial building blocks of RTV came about during the 1950s, a period commonly referred to as the Golden Age of Television (Huff 2006, 14). Without *The Original Amateur Hour*, for example, there would not have been later programs such as *American Idol*. Other specific RTV sub-genres, such as the seemingly omnipresent arbitration-based simulated courtroom reality shows can be traced to 1950s programs

like *People in Conflict* and *The Verdict is Yours*. The evolutionary development of this particular sub-genre saw *The People's Court* in the 1980s and then *Judge Judy* in the 1990s, the latter of which reworked and revitalized the format while generating notoriety and more imitators (Murray & Ouellette 2009, 227).

The 1990s also saw a proliferation of television talk shows which deviated substantially from the “classic” talk show format of earlier decades (as was utilized, for example, on *The Merv Griffin Show* and *The Mike Douglas Show*) into more risqué and controversial subject matter (a hallmark of later RTV shows). The new talk shows also incorporated elements such as audience participation and confessional segments, which had a large impact on the development of RTV programming. The hosts of the new-style of talk shows ranged from 1) Ricki Lake, appealing to a younger, more culturally-diverse demographic, 2) Montel Williams, a black “motivational” host, 3) Jenny Jones - famous for her 1995 display of “ambush” TV, when a man was shocked by a male friend with a gay crush on him and, of course, 4) Jerry Springer (Matelski 2000, 67-68). Arguable the most outrageous of the hosts in the era, Springer relates to the analysis here in a number of ways. To begin with, he is a former city councilman and Mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio - a city that has had a large migratory influx of Appalachian people and which also added that population to its anti-discriminatory ordinances. Next, as was just mentioned, his talk show was part of an entertainment movement which influenced RTV. Finally, his specific show was rather controversial due to numerous accusations that Springer’s producers encouraged or told guests to say certain things and to pick fights with other guests - in other words, the allegations were that the talk show was fixed (Schlosser 1998, 10). This

last fact is a key point in much critical analysis of RTV, as many reality shows have been plagued with similar accusations since their beginnings.

Beck et al (2012) pointed out that the roots of modern reality shows are also rather closely associated with the beauty contests that have been televised since the early 1950s and outlined the evolution of voting on such programs. At first, in fact, a jury selected the contest winners, but *interactive* viewer voting was introduced in the 1970s leading to its widespread use in many modern RTV shows started in the 1990s. Although the example of the annual Miss America pageant has lost some ground in recent years - at its height in 1961, the Pageant commanded a whopping 75 percent share of the television audience and, today, it remains the longest-running television show, though with much lower ratings (Levey 2007, 71), television viewers don't have to look very hard to find *The Voice* or *Dancing With The Stars*, both of which involve talent competitions (with physical superficiality playing a large role) and are broadcast more than once a week on a regular basis. Both of these examples also point to another element of modern RTV – the involvement of well-known or established celebrities either as judges or contestants. It is also notable that older, fictional shows would be considered as prime candidates to be resurrected to fit into the RTV era. A very good example (and one that is applicable to this content analysis) was an attempt to bring the original television show *The Beverly Hillbillies* back in 2002 with real people to be placed in the formerly fictional storyline. The show was ultimately shelved due to protests from Appalachian advocacy groups, such as The Center for Rural Strategies (headquartered in Whitesburg, Kentucky), who used a newspaper advertising campaign, the Internet and everyday word of mouth to raise awareness (Cooke-Jackson and Hansen 2008, 183-184). However, the show's concept

was later picked up by the Reelz Channel, which premiered another reality series entitled “Hollywood Hillbillies” in January of 2014. Thus, it is apparent that television has been heading toward the modern RTV era ever since the earliest days of television and that Rurality TV (and “hillbillies”) would inevitably be a part of it.

Although examples of RTV can be found throughout the history of television, reality programs arrived *en masse* in peak time television schedules during the 1990s (Hill 2005, 24). It is also important to note that at this time and for some time to come, network executives focused on calling the genre *unscripted programming*, rather than *reality* and admitted that the programs were contrived but never scripted (Huff 2006, 111). The competition-in-an-exotic-locale show *Survivor* (on the CBS network) was a key program in contributing in the ascendancy of reality shows, as was *The Real World* (on MTV). The latter program was important because it created a television experiment in the guise of a true-to-life documentary. What *The Real World* did was come up with the idea of setting up a completely artificial family under artificial circumstances and doing *An American Family* treatment (Huff 2006, 13). Concerns about the authenticity and reality of many RTV shows and their portrayals perhaps grew just as rapidly as viewership did, as the reality genre (as a whole) began its unprecedented run in capturing the public imagination. In fact, one of the most recurrent features of the popular and critical reception of RTV has been comment on the ways in which it manipulates and constructs “the real” – hence, the contested nature of the term “Reality Television” as being two mutually exclusive words (Holmes & Jermyn 2004, 11). As media portrayals have long constructed the reality of the rural experience in various types of programming, it was only a matter of time before the Rurality TV sub-genre appeared on the RTV

television landscape. Prominent shows (so far) in this sub-genre include those based in Louisiana (such as the notorious, gossip-magazine-headline-grabbing *Duck Dynasty*), those from Georgia (like the now-cancelled, but infamous *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, which followed the exploits of a child beauty pageant contestant and her dysfunctional, overweight family) and the two specifically Appalachian-based reality shows of interest here - the ginseng-based *Appalachian Outlaws* and the self-explanatory *Moonshiners*. Added to the already established list of specialized formats or sub-genres, which include (most prominently) the gamedoc, the dating program, the makeover program and the docusoap not to mention the ever-popular talent contest, popular court programs, reality sitcoms and celebrity variations (Murray & Ouellette 2009, 5), we have a totally new RTV sub-genre that may prove to be something akin to old moonshine in new jugs, so to speak. The questions at hand, then, revolve around how Appalachian characters in the new sub-genre of Rurality TV are being portrayed and what (if any) stereotypes have been carried over into the new millennium with this so-called new type of programming in an era that we might deem *The Golden Age of Reality Television*.

As is somewhat typical in any emerging field of research, much of the initial literature about RTV focused on defining it. Nabi et al. (2003), for example, provided a very basic definition of reality-based television programming by stating that it shows “real people as they live out events (contrived or otherwise) in their lives, as the events occur.” Furthermore, the researchers pointed out several characteristic elements that they observed in the RTV programming that was being produced at that given time: the programs were seen as having a) people portraying themselves (i.e., not actors or public figures performing roles), and were b) filmed at least in part in their living or working

environment rather than on a set, c) without a script, d) with events placed in a narrative context, e) for the primary purpose of viewer entertainment (Nabi et al. 2003, 304). Of course, these (then) defining characteristics have been massaged a great deal to allow for the continued proliferation of multiple sub-genres of RTV. Perhaps the most noticeable development in the evolution of RTV as a television genre, other than its continued mass popularity, is that many reality-based shows have become noticeably scripted (or, at least, semi-scripted) in recent years, thereby adding many more fictionalized elements into the content of “reality”-based television narratives. As Orbe (2008) pointed out, the vast popularity of reality-based programming alone prompts a need for scholars to explore this dominant genre; yet, in light of what reality TV claims to represent - *authentic social human interaction*, such scholarly examinations become imperative.

As the literature concerning RTV has expanded, researchers have begun to focus on factors such as the emotional, cognitive and social mechanisms that come into play with watching RTV programs that serve to differentiate it from other forms of television viewing. One study that focused specifically on the psychological appeal of the programs suggested consumers did not believe that the RTV programs were real, but that they found the shows to be *more real* than other types of programming (Nabi et al 2003, 327). In another study, Lundy et al (2008) used focus groups to explore college students’ consumption patterns in regard to reality television, their rationale for watching reality shows, their perceptions of the situations portrayed on these shows and the role of social affiliation in the students’ consumption of reality television. Their findings indicated that viewers frequently underestimated how much reality TV that they actually watched and saw their viewing as an escape from reality by way of living vicariously through the

televised lives of other “real” people. RTV was perceived as a “misrepresentation of reality”, which participants suspected was becoming more scripted and contrived in an effort to boost ratings and derive profit for the producers and networks (Lundy et al 2008, 218). Finally, and most recently, Beck et al. (2012) suggested that RTV viewers enjoy watching “real” people (not actors) even though they believe the narratives are made up and may identify more with RTV participants because they embody similar lifestyles. Although some critics may take the position that “reality” and “television” are mutually exclusive terms, the varying blends of fictional and non-fictional content within RTV programming seems to matter very little to viewers. As this is the dominant type of television programming and will likely remain so for some time to come, researchers need to keep an eye on this ever-evolving category of television.

As the RTV sub-genre of Appalachian-based Rurality TV is a very new television entity, research is currently quite sparse. However, its roots can readily be traced back to the documentaries on the Appalachian region of the mid-twentieth century, such as the previously discussed Charles Kuralt-hosted *Christmas in Appalachia*. Although much has changed in the Appalachian region (and in the United States as a whole) in the last half century since that documentary aired, the stereotypes of the people of the region have continued in the media (including television) and so does societal discrimination that is influenced by the images that media consumers take in. Walker (2013) pointed out that discrimination against Appalachian people includes biases against everything from atypical dress, accents and gender roles to substandard living conditions and poverty. Furthermore, despite the ever-expanding forms of discrimination that are acknowledged today, “Appalachiaism” remains unrecognized as a form of discrimination in our current

society (Walker 2013, 336). In today's cultural and social climate, where discrimination is a commonly discussed topic among academics and the public alike, the relative lack of research on television portrayals of Appalachian people is alarming. There is, however, a wealth of RTV research concerning other minority groups (such as African-Americans), which are applicable to the developing area of Appalachian-based RTV research. Squires (2008), for example, noted the large extent to which RTV shows borrow from and depend on racial conventions and constructions from other genres: news, talk shows, sitcoms and soap operas all provide easily accessible types, plot points and stereotypes for producers and editors to use when shaping their preferred readings of how "real people" deal with racism or embody racial identities. For the sake of my argument, the same point could be made about "Appalachianism" and Appalachian identities. Furthermore, the principles of rhetoric within popular culture have a direct bearing on the mediated portrayals of all minority groups. The influential rhetoric scholar Barry Brummet has pointed out that people make texts so as to influence others and, because texts can mean different things, they are often sites of struggle over meaning (Brummet 1994, 68). In this analysis, the textual materials in RTV portrayals of Appalachian people represent such sites of such struggle (a mediated battleground, if you will) where the meaning of Appalachia and the place that Appalachian people hold in our culture are being played out in the guise of "reality" television programming.

In an article with many similarities to my argument, Cooke-Jackson and Hansen (2008) explored the ethical issues raised by stereotypic portrayals of Appalachians and potential harm from those stereotypes as well as the reality from which they emerged. That article (entitled "Appalachian Culture and Reality TV: The Ethical Dilemma of

Stereotyping Others”) culminates in the authors’ rather idealistic proposal of a “decision tree for producers of entertainment media” that outlines numerous ethical questions that (at least theoretically) should be considered when making decisions on media content. Frankly, the feasibility of a realistic implementation of such a plan would be decidedly questionable at best (although their intentions were admirable). Fraley (2007), in a far more realistic examination of the relationship between media imagery and the region’s problems (called “Appalachian Stereotypes and Mountain Top Removal”), addressed the fight to save the natural habitats of Appalachia from “absolute devastation by mining companies” - the failure of which is “wrapped up in *the image of Appalachia*, one created by generations of stereotypes and condescension.” Thus, we come full circle back to the long-standing *image* assigned to Appalachia (and its people) as being the issue at hand, one that is only just beginning to be explored in RTV scholarship. The analysis here is focused on examining the treatment of that image on two contemporary RTV shows that have yet to be examined from a social science perspective.

THEORY

The Appalachian-based Rurality TV content analysis here is informed by the tradition of Cultivation Theory that was begun by George Gerbner at the University of Pennsylvania as portion of their “Cultural Indicators” research project. It is a social science research perspective which begins with a macro-level theoretical examination of symbolic content on television programming prior to exploring potential viewing effects. In a nutshell, this approach to examining media content looks at the way that extensive repeated exposure to media (especially television) over time gradually shapes our view of the world and our social reality (Harris 1999, 21). According to cultivation theory, a distinction must be made between the “television world” that viewers experience and the “real world” (no pun intended, as I have mentioned the long-running RTV program titled *The Real World* on the MTV channel). Cultivation research asserts that, between-program differences notwithstanding, most programming reflects common patterns in casting, social typing and the fate of different social types that cultivate a common perspective among heavy viewers - among those patterns, for example, are consistent presentation of women in a limited number of activities and roles, and virtually inescapable violence (Riffe et al. 1998, 11 - 12). Although the initial thrust and focus of cultivation theory was on violent programming and its subsequent effects on viewer attitudes and behavior, the theory has been applied by other researchers to a wide variety of television subject matter, including the family, occupations and sex roles. Consequently, when and if television presents distorted and/or stereotyped imagery, Cultivation Theory maintains that heavier viewers

will be more likely to base their conceptions of actual reality on what they have seen on television, especially when they have little or no other information to base their views on.

Gerbner's systems approach highlights the interplay of influence across three different components: 1) the media institutions, 2) the mass-produced messages and 3) their cultivated effect on large aggregates (Potter 2014, 1016). Thus, there are three interconnected realms which may be considered: the production of the text, the text itself and the audience response to the text. The content analysis here focuses directly and solely on the messages themselves - the texts of the Appalachian-based RTV programs *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*. However, it is important to point out that the existing major media institutions are typically owned and operated in physically-distant and culturally-separated environments outside of Appalachia. Although there are some community-based media resources in the Appalachian region (such as Appalshop in Whitesburg, Kentucky - where I volunteered for several years), most are owned by outside organizations with vested interests. Furthermore, the mass-produced messages of the region are typically created from an outsider's vantage point and have a substantial amount of ideological material built into them. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall submitted that there is no space of representation which exists outside ideology (Rojek 2003, 91), one could consider mass media (especially television) to be something of an ideological marketplace where viewers are given different conceptual options, but where certain ones (such as "masculinism", the dominate ideology of patriarchy (Craig 1992, 190) in the United States) are stressed. Finally, for the majority of viewers, any cultivated effects which may happen are imperceptible and seem quite natural as most viewers of the images have little to no real-world experience with the Appalachian region or its people.

Here, the theoretical concept of “resonance” - the reaffirmation of the cultivated views based on actual real-world experience, does have a bearing. Television is one of a multitude of influencing factors on any given individual and cultivation is theorized to occur within the context of this spectrum of influences. Television should be the least influential where the realities of that context provide first-hand, unmediated, steady flows of contrary information - however, when there is either no conflict with it or when one’s environment reinforces (“resonates with”) the television view of things, then exposure may make an even stronger contribution (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 66). Using another sub-genre of RTV as an example, the hook behind *reality dating shows* is “relatability” - virtually everyone has been in a relationship of some sort and has been in the perilous world of dating at one point (Huff 2006, 108). If young women – the demographic most drawn to the genre, have had negative dating experiences personally (which are then mirrored by “contestants” on these RTV dating shows), then one would expect the programs to encourage a strengthening in the opinions of the viewers on matters related to their own personal experiences.

Another very important conceptual construct in Cultivation Theory - that of “mainstreaming,” or the homogenization of people’s divergent perceptions of social reality into a convergent “mainstream” (Harris 1999, 21), represents the theoretical extension of the idea that cultivation develops common social perspectives among viewers. It is theorized that heavy viewers will tend to gravitate toward having personal views which correspond to common patterns inherent to the standard representations found in the television world, but that this tendency is affected by their positioning within society. Conceptually, then, the idea of mainstreaming helps elaborate the view of

cultivation as a “gravitational,” rather than a unidirectional, process - (where) the angle and direction of the “pull” depends on where groups of viewers and their styles of life are with reference to the center of gravity, the “mainstream” of the world of television (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 73). In a comparison of light viewers and heavy viewers of the same media-based texts, those in the first category should exhibit a greater variety of views (ranging from those in the mainstream to those being quite divergent) as the latter category has been pulled toward the middle – “mainstreamed,” so to speak. The social reality cultivated through mainstreaming takes many forms, including understanding of gender roles (Morgan, 1982; Preston, 1990), political attitudes (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986), health beliefs and practices (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1981a), and views of the elderly (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1980) and minorities (Gross, 1984) while Cultivation theory, as a whole, has also been applied cross culturally (Morgan & Shanahan, 1991, 1992, 1995) (Harris 1999, 21). Proponents of Cultivation Theory have pointed out the specific features of the medium of television that make it such a powerful conveyor of social and cultural information, which in turn also make it applicable to the television content analysis here. To begin with, the overall amount of exposure to television dwarfs the usage of most other media for most people in our society. Furthermore, exposure to television begins long before we first use most other media and is more available and accessible than most other media. Finally, television is different from other media in its centralized mass-production and ritualistic use of a coherent set of images and messages produced to appeal to virtually the entire population (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 20-21). As it stands, then, television (as a specific medium) is unrivaled not only in its technological saturation throughout our society but

also in its unique ability to convey a specific set of ideological information that has the potential to influence the viewer's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

As Cultivation Theory literature has grown to include well over 500 published studies (Potter 2014, 1015), one must (for sake of clarity), discuss what the theory is and what it is not. Cultivation, in the theoretical sense used here, *is not about* whether a television commercial can make a person purchase a new and improved product at the grocery store or whether a voter will change their opinion about a candidate based on a television advertising campaign. It *is not about* why a teenager dyed her hair blue after a favorite character on television did so on a particular episode or why that viewer prefers shopping at Hot Topic rather than at Abercrombie & Fitch. Cultivation *is about* the implications of stable, repetitive, persuasive and virtually inescapable patterns of images and ideologies the television provides - the focus is on cumulative exposure to television in general over long periods of time (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 5). My argument here incorporates Cultivation Theory and makes the claim that long term exposure to the imagery of the Appalachian region and the characterizations of Appalachian-Americans on television as outlined in this analysis (in a continuation of already embedded imagery in mass media across the board) has a great potential to affect the beliefs and attitudes that the viewers (especially those with heavier consumption patterns) have about real-life people from the Appalachian region. Then, these (sometimes ill-informed) beliefs and attitudes may influence their social behaviors toward Appalachian-Americans. In this sense, Cultivation Theory can be used to help explain how television influences how viewers construct a particular worldview containing ideas about different societal groups and how that worldview may be carried over into action on the societal level.

As my argument centers on social power, ideology and the hegemony of the existing media structure, we must necessarily consider all forms of media as playing a role in shaping views on the Appalachian region and its people. In my research, I have traced Appalachian images (and stereotypes) through popular media from the 1800s through the current day and, as Gerbner and others who have used Cultivation Theory in their work have long held, I consider television to be the most powerful and persuasive medium available for most people. As the idea of Appalachia as a homogeneous region physically, culturally and economically isolated from mainstream America has its genesis *in fiction*, much of what is believed to be known about the life and people of Appalachia actually is knowledge about a complex intertextual reality (Billings et al. 1999, 22). As relates to this analysis, intertextuality involves the use of recognizable textual references that allow the viewer to read the text in relationship to other texts (Andersen 1995, 33) and centers around the medium of television as being the primary source of information about Appalachian (for most people). Therefore, I maintain that television is heavily important in perpetuating the stereotypes that I am looking at here, but my argument expands upon this basic theoretical proposition to claim that many other mediums add to and boost the messages presented there - in effect, amplifying the "textual volume" of the mediated television images. If we think of cultivation as a theory of story-telling, not simply a theory of television as a technology or medium, this allows us to de-emphasize (but not deny) the importance of technological form, while focusing primarily on the content and meaning of messages (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 200-201). My focus is on television - RTV specifically, and the argument here is not based on a claim that all Appalachian-based characterizations on television have forever been or are always

distorted. There have been more realistic and sympathetic examples, such as *The Waltons* (which portrayed the lives of a large rural Virginia family) that aired for a decade starting in 1971, although it has been criticized as being quite maudlin with a “romantic image of Appalachia as the keeper of the nation’s most precious traditions” (Drake 2001, 223). More importantly, that show was a *fictional period piece*, set in the Great Depression and World War II (far removed from the basic frame of reference of most viewers), whereas contemporary RTV shows are portrayed as showing the *current lives of real people*. In fact, the very title of “reality show” implies a certain overt realism. Over time, however, what viewers learned and seemed to accept was that reality programming isn’t real - in many cases, it’s not even close (Huff 2006, 167). Nevertheless, RTV (like most other dramatic television program genres) exploits a distinct style of “representational realism” - the form of story-telling in which the hearer or viewer is convinced that, if certain basic assumptions are taken for granted, the events taking place could happen “in reality” (Shanahan & Morgan 1999, 21). That being said, we must also consider Stuart Hall’s idea of “encoding/decoding” where 1) meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender, 2) the message is never transparent and 3) the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning (Proctor 2004, 59). Thus, the actual intentions of the producers are open to speculation and the interpretations made by the viewers are prone to variation. As this thesis involves a *content analysis*, it is not intended to directly examine any audience reactions to or impressions of the portrayals, whether or not they are real and accurate or not. The point of the analysis is to examine the mediated texts themselves - the imagery and dialog surrounding the portrayal of the Appalachian region and the characterizations of Appalachian-Americans on two specific RTV programs. Once the implicit and explicit

messages (as well as symbolic meanings behind the depictions) are isolated, analyzed and added to the literature on RTV, then (in future studies, perhaps done by myself as part of the research team) we can hypothesize more about and measure potential viewer effects of watching such programming.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

As television imagery and dialog are the specific focus of this inquiry, a qualitative content analysis of the programs in question was the most appropriate methodological approach for exploring the research questions stated previously. To begin with, the list of contemporary Rurality TV programs was narrowed down to two current shows that are specifically set in the Appalachian region of the United States: *Appalachian Outlaws* on the History channel (rated TVPG LV or TV14 LV, depending on the specific episode) and *Moonshiners* on Discovery Channel (rated TV14 L or TV14 LV, depending on the specific episode). As the reader will see, both language (L) and violence (V) proved to be important concepts in the analysis. The first show focuses on ginseng hunters/diggers - people who search mountainous areas for the wild ginseng plant in order to harvest its roots, which are then sold to businesses that (in turn) make medicinal and/or herbal products from it. As it pertains to the storylines of this show, it is important to note that the going price for a pound of dried ginseng roots can be as much as one thousand hundred dollars (legally). Thematically, the show centers on the very competitive and sometimes dangerous (and/or violent) activities of rival ginseng diggers and buyers of the valuable roots. The second show focuses on moonshiners - people who build clandestine manufacturing devices called “stills” and produce illegal liquor, oftentimes from recipes that are said to have handed down across generations. As it pertains to the storylines of this show, it is currently illegal for anyone to manufacture moonshine unless they have

the proper licensing from their state (as well as the United States federal government) and pay taxes on the distilled products. Thematically, the show centers on several characters making illegal liquor and one that is trying to “go straight” (i.e. make the transition to manufacturing it in a legal manner). Considered together, the states that are covered in these two RTV television programs are: West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and South Carolina (which, excluding Ohio, are included in the ARC definition of central Appalachia). Each of the television shows in the analysis are cable network programs and past episodes can be streamed on the internet (for just \$1.99 per episode) using a computer or a streaming device, such as a Roku - both of which I had access to when beginning this project. Additionally, the first two seasons of *Moonshiners* had already been released on DVD and were available on Amazon.com for very reasonable prices (less than \$15 per season). Thus, from a budgetary standpoint, the total cost for obtaining the research materials was rather minimal, so I obtained the available DVDs and accessed the remaining episodes online (after sampling).

As there were two seasons of *Appalachian Outlaws* (consisting of 16 episodes) that had been broadcast at the time, all of those episodes were included in the analysis. *Moonshiners*, on the other hand, had four complete seasons (consisting of 45 episodes) that had already aired, so a sample of those episodes was necessary for that program. The very first episode of *Moonshiners* (Season One, Episode One – hereafter, notated in the manner of S01, E01) was selected to be included in the analysis. The reasoning behind this decision was simple: the debut episode is of fundamental importance for a basic familiarization with the characters and plotlines in the entire series. From the naturally stratified sampling frame of the four seasons of the show, random sample techniques

were used to select fifteen additional *Moonshiners* episodes to be included in the analysis. A smart phone “Random Number Generator” utility application by Nicholas Dean Apps (www.nicholasdeanapps.m.webs.com) was used to choose the episodes from each season, with a greater number of episodes being sampled from larger seasons of the show. The episodic breakdown and sampling strategy of the shows can be seen in Appendix Table 1. Additionally, Appendix Tables 2 & 3 contains information on the final sample of each show, including episode title, premier date, day/time of airing and total episodic length. Considering that the length of each individual episode of *Appalachian Outlaws* is 44 minutes (S01) and 42 minutes (S02), there was 11 hours and 24 minutes of total program content. As the running time for *Moonshiners* episodes was consistently 42 minutes in length, there was 11 hours and 12 minutes of program content for that show. Thus, the entire analysis considered 22 hours and 36 minutes of content across 32 episodes of programming which were aired in the four year span between 2011 and 2015.

The viewing of the sampled programs occurred in a month-long “deep soak” period of Appalachian-based RTV immersion. As I had 32 full episodes in all to watch (16 of each show), my viewing schedule consisted of watching one episode of each program per day. The first viewing (of all sampled episodes of each program watched sequentially) starting on November 31, 2015 and concluded on the 15th of December. The second viewing of the sampled programs (watched sequentially, once again) starting the next day and concluded on December 31, 2015. The time-consuming nature of the content analysis only allowed for two episodes per day, as it takes a fair amount of time to watch each episode - due in large part to having to repeatedly pause the programs for note taking. In a nutshell, the time required amounted to 4-6 hours per day viewing and

taking notes. To facilitate note taking while watching the episodes and to keep things somewhat orderly, I created a *note taking template*, which I altered and printed daily for each episode of each program (see Appendix Figures 1 & 2). The template included the season, episode and title for the day's viewing as well as the parent channel's episodic description and also had lined pages for my viewing notes. During note taking while viewing the programs each day, I developed techniques of writing in shorthand, such as abbreviating narrator voiceovers in the style of "N: <quote>...", to save space and to allow me to view more and write less (while maintaining the accuracy and textual detail necessary for a thorough analysis). Finally, I began using two show-specific 3-ring binders for housing these notes as they accumulated across the analysis viewing month.

After viewing the episodes for each day, I looked back over my handwritten notes and transferred key observations into condensed notes on my laptop computer (using the Microsoft Word program). This is where the process of reading, coding and interpreting of the materials (hereafter, "texts") began. As people construct texts for specific purposes and do so within social, economic, historical, cultural and situational contexts (Charmaz 2006, 35), my prior research into the overall evolution of Appalachian imagery and stereotypes across all forms of media served to provide a large amount of *sensitizing concepts* upon which I began to build my coding design for the RTV programs being considered in the analysis. To begin with, I was aware of the common negative terms used to refer to Appalachian people (such as cracker, brier, ridge runner and poor white trash) and they were on my analytic radar, so to speak. Both programs used two such terms (namely, "hillbilly" and "redneck"), with the characters using them toward other each and also in self-referential ways. In *Appalachian Outlaws*, for example, the

landowner character of Mike Ross constructs defensive landmines and booby traps that he calls his “Hillbilly Alarm System” (S01, E01 and E02) and, the later upgraded version, his “Hillbilly Alarm System 2.0” (S02, E06). Similarly, on *Moonshiners*, the slang term “redneck” was used by different characters, such as when a still hand named Howard says, “You’re a high-tech redneck, brother!” (S02, E07) when his boss/partner Tickle uses a trail camera for still site night surveillance or when Tim Smith says, “I’m a high-tech redneck” (S04, E04) when moving equipment into Troy’s legal distillery. In both cases, instead of the preferred reading of the text - that which Stuart Hall would say reflects the “dominate cultural order” (Procter 2004, 68), where any usage of such terms is making fun of Appalachian people, one could take a reading with oppositional inflection - a bending of the preferred meaning to suit one’s own needs and situations, rather than an outright rejection of those meanings (Brummet 1994, 117). As such, the characters could be seen as using the terms more tongue-in-cheek by simultaneously referencing a usually negative term but with the intention of saying that they are using the basic skills and knowledge at their disposal to achieve their specific goals. Thus, from the very beginning of the project, the texts of the programs were open coded using inductive methods - the using of techniques to read a text freely, allowing generalizations to emerge that may eventually form theories and methods (Brummett 2010, 46).

An example of a technique that I utilized from the very beginning of viewing the programs involved tracking which characters were in each episode (see Appendix Tables 4 & 5). For a particular character to be counted as being in any particular episode, he/she was required to have at least one spoken line (flashbacks & previews excluded). As the episodic data grew, one pattern that emerged was the fact that the real-life moonshiners

of Marvin “Popcorn” Sutton and Barney Barnwell (who were in a combined nine of the sixteen sampled *Moonshiners* episodes) were never shown in the same episode. While this observation is relatively minor overall, it does reveal some information about the underlying structure of the “reality” program and provides clues as to the intentions of the show’s producers. Considering that the best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations on texts (Weber 1990, 10), I developed a more elaborate approach to some conceptual elements, such as the sampling and coding of the violent elements (once again, a main concern in Cultivation Theory) on both television series. Here, I took a simple random sample (SRS) of 25% of the previously sampled episodes in each series (amounting to 4 out of 16 total episodes in each series) in order to document the incidents of violence. Counting is often useful because it may reveal aspects of the text that would not be apparent otherwise (Weber 1990, 56), but, as the violent elements ranged from somewhat subtle to very explicit, some decisions as to what to count were necessary. For the purposes of this content analysis, “violent incidents” included all images (guns, knives and other weapons), threats (verbal or physical) and overt acts of violence (including intimidation). Once again, it must be stated that there was a certain degree of researcher subjectivity involved, especially as to when certain elements crossed the line. For example, shovels were common props in *Appalachian Outlaws*, but when that item is thrown (like a projectile), lodging in a tree in front of another person (usually with sound effects to accentuate the act), it was considered a weapon. Also, it must be noted that multiple qualifying elements in a single camera shot only counted as one incident of violence. This decision was made due to the fact that in one *Moonshiners* episode (S04, E01), for example, there was literally a table full of guns (including rifles,

shotguns and handguns) and their corresponding ammunition shown on camera a number of times. Thus, it would have been quite misleading to count and include all of those numerous weapons in each camera shot, as it would have made that episode look (at least on paper) as being much more violent than it really was. It must also be noted that here flashbacks and previews were included in the quantification of violence on both RTV programs, as they added to the overall effect of that violence played on the particular specific episodes in question.

In approaching coding and analyzing the television programs in question, there was necessarily a wide range of significant elements to be considered. As the material analyzed by means of content analysis may be visual, verbal, graphic, oral – indeed, any kind of meaningful visual/verbal information (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001, 14 - 15), there was a lot to absorb, code and analyze. The *visual* elements (such as the quick-paced montage sequences used often throughout the programs) and the *verbal* elements (like the lines delivered by show characters) are perhaps the most immediately noticeable upon first viewing, but the presentation of the *graphics* used in the opening sequences and closing credits of the programs as well as the *oral* interjections by each show's narrators throughout each program added significant levels of meaning. Furthermore, the video portion of the communication stream often overshadows the audio track - in fact, these two media sources usually compliment with each other during the content creation, thus by taking both sources into account, we are able to achieve a better content understanding (Li and Kuo, 2003, 2 - 3). If one considers, for example, the crow sound effects that are very common in both *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*, one can understand how the sound alone is identified with rural places. However, when the sound effect is used in

combination with visual imagery of such places, the results are reinforced and amplified. An even more obvious example of the importance of audio involves the usage of the song “Copperhead Road” (which was written and performed by Steve Earle) as theme music in *Moonshiners*. As perhaps the most famous modern song romanticizing the outlaw image of moonshining activities, it serves to draw the viewer in and set the stage for the always-on-the-verge-of-being-busted dramatic storylines. Furthermore, the well-known lyrics of “running whiskey in a big black Dodge” whose engine made a “rumbin’ sound” that would leave the smell of “whiskey burnin’ down Copperhead Road” are a testament to how audiovisual materials are, in fact, multi-sensory experiences, leading the listener into a world of sights, sounds and smells (oftentimes entirely in the imagination).

Finally, after all of the methodological detail just outlined, I must point out some possible weaknesses in this analysis. As how you collect data affects *which* phenomena you will see, *how*, *where*, and *when* you will view them, and *what* sense you will make of them” (Charmaz 2006, 15), it must be pointed out that I really did not watch the shows in a normal viewing situation. Watching the episodes at my own convenience (rather than following them from week-to-week as a “fan” of the programs would have) served to prevent me from experiencing them naturally. I think it fair to say that some information was lost to me due to how I collected the data on the programs. For example, early on in my viewing of *Appalachian Outlaws*, I noticed an unusual amount of Ford vehicles (usually trucks) being driven by the main characters on the program (see Appendix Table 6), as well as quick camera shots of Ford company logos, such as one very recognizable “Harley-Davidson Edition” Ford logo in S01, E03. The existence of these visual elements (and the fact that “Ford” was mentioned by the characters in their dialog) hinted at the

possibility of a Ford corporate sponsorship - a fact which may have been confirmed by seeing the commercials as the show aired and which would have spoken volumes about the “reality” of that particular RTV show. As such product placement is commonplace in media production, this is not exactly a limitation of the analysis, but it would have been interesting to see how advertising corresponded to the contents of the RTV series (an idea that points to another possible analysis). Taking things a step further, I did not watch the programs with any other viewers and/or discuss the shows around the water cooler, so to speak. Likewise, I was not on social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) following and discussing the shows during the actual timeframe that they originally aired. For the record, *Moonshiners* seems to have an especially strong following on our contemporary social media websites. Once again, this opens up another area to possibly study. It must also be mentioned here that I was the only researcher examining the texts in this content analysis of Appalachian-based RTV programs. As all communication uses symbols and the meanings of these symbols vary from person to person and culture to culture by a matter of degrees (Riffe et al. 1998, 23), my interpretations are necessarily a reflection of my life, work and educational training. While my experience being from and living in the Appalachian region and working in television production (in both cases, for over two decades) as well as my training in academic sociology may have served to give me something of an insider’s viewpoint and allow me to detect some meanings in the texts that others may not see, it may have also served to color my interpretation of the texts in any number of ways. Frankly, there are other possible interpretations of the texts of the RTV shows analyzed here. So, here lies the challenge for an Appalachian researcher (who also happens to be an “audio-visual production specialist” by trade) looking at

Appalachian-based subject matter in mass media: to develop a sound methodological design that allows the research questions to be answered clearly (and objectively) for himself and the reader. Through the analytical concept of *self-reflexivity* – the careful consideration of the ways in which researcher’s past experiences, points of view and roles impact that same researcher’s interactions with and interpretation of the research (Tracy 2013, 2), I made a conscious effort to achieve that goal in the analysis here. Finally, one last note related to my work in audio-visual production: as I describe some of the scenes in the “Findings & Discussion” sections, I use certain industry-specific technical terms, such as “the camera *trucks* to the right in slow-motion” (for example), because there is oftentimes some significance to such aspects of the imagery. The reader is encouraged to refer to Appendix Table 7, as needed, for clarification of such terms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Series Introductions

Fade up from black. The camera shot is an out-of-focus close-up of dense underbrush in the woods. Suspenseful droning music plays ominously in the background as the camera trucks to the right in slow-motion and character generator (CG) text is superimposed over the image, line-by-line:

Deep in Appalachia, there's a war brewing
over an ancient crop.
The laws are strict, the season is short
and you have to know the land.
This way of life won't get you rich quick.
Most who try their hand at it fail,
and some have gone to jail.

This was the start of *Appalachian Outlaws* (S01, E01) - the first glimpse of the program's version of Appalachia that the viewers of the program saw. The next season of that show (S02, E01) saw a slightly revised introductory message (tagged with a "Viewer discretion is advised." disclaimer):

Deep in Appalachia there is a war
brewing over an ancient crop.
The laws are strict.
For a skilled few, there is money to
be made.
It's a dangerous game.
Some have gone to jail.

Considered together - in a brief mediated description of the ginseng trade in Appalachia, the following elements stand out: dark and impenetrable woods with some sort of war pending, an ancient crop, strict laws, money, eminent danger and threat of imprisonment. Similarly, in *Moonshiners* (S01, E01), the program begins with a camera shot of a mason jar in a dark room. The only other image in the shot is a window with bars in it, which is positioned at the top left corner. Both the glass jar and the window are out-of-focus and have a blue glow around them, as if they are being illuminated by the light of the moon. As before, lines of CG text are added:

In Appalachia, moonshining is
considered by many to be
a way of life.
It is also illegal.
Any person caught moonshining
can be sentenced to prison.
Do not attempt any of this at home.

Here, the viewer sees a glass moonshine jar in a prison cell and the following elements stand out: tradition, illegal activities, threat of imprisonment and an overt warning against participation. According to these introductions, the essence of Appalachia comes down to two products and the activities surrounding them: the ginseng plant - also known as “green gold” (S01, E01), “the golden root” (S01, E02) and “mountain gold” (S01, E06), and moonshine - the intoxicating beverage known by numerous colorful names, such as “rotgut, skull cracker, panther’s breath, mountain dew...and, most famously of all, white lightning...”(S04, E07). Both products are highly valued by humans, which is where the (referred to) danger comes in. The risks involved in gathering the roots or making the liquor are said to be so great that one can lose their freedom through imprisonment

(figuratively, losing your life). As such, Appalachia is set up to be a deep, dark, violent place teeming with danger - a land of constant sorrow and a place of continual struggle between nature, humanity and mortality.

With the opening lines in the two shows (as spoken by show characters), the stereotypes of the Appalachian region and its people are sometimes rather blatant and sometimes quite subtle. Setting the beginning dialog of *Moonshiners* aside for now (as I will discuss violence in detail shortly), we find that *Appalachian Outlaws* begins with a voice-over (VO) by Greg Shook - a ginseng digger, who discusses the early settlement of the mountains and the role of ginseng as follows:

“In the 1800s, a lot of people headed West to strike it rich...but they was some of us *stayed behind* (emphasis added)...some of us knew that they was gold...in our own hills...and it grew right up under our feet...you just had to know where to look... ginseng’s the most beautiful plant in the mountains, because it turns into money, a lot of money...people’ll steal for it, steal it...son-of-a-bitch’ll shoot you, kill you over it...ever who controls the ginseng, controls the mountains...it’s powerful, I want it all.”

By setting the violence aside here as well, we find that the opening line of dialog pointing to some settlers moving westward past the Appalachian Mountains. If a viewer interprets this from a literal standpoint (within the preferred reading, if you will), it simply means that some settlers saw greater promise for making a life in the (then) frontier lands to the west. However, it can also be read as meaning much more. If we look at the first two phrases, we can see that some people “stayed behind” while others went forward toward modernity. This reading, which focuses on what is backgrounded in the text, points directly to the *mythology of isolation* in regards to Appalachia that I discussed previously. From this standpoint, this subtle insertion of an ideologically-infused signifying phrase in

Appalachian Outlaws starts the reification process of the long-standing Appalachian stereotypes. The other show analyzed here - *Moonshiners*, takes a different, more direct approach. Appalachia is immediately called “a forgotten part of America” (S01, E01), which is later changed to “a forgotten corner of America” (S02, E01), and the viewer is told by the narrator of the show that “for the first time, cameras are being led into this secret and mysterious world” (S02, E01). Furthermore, in Season 3, we are introduced to a new character named Chico (an upstart moonshine still hand) who is said to have “connections to a secret part of Kentucky that few have ever seen...the people there are *cut off from the roads, hostile to outsiders and thirsty for shine*” (emphasis added) (S03, E08). The meaning here is anything but subtle: the people living in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky are portrayed as being isolated, dangerous and intoxicated.

I - Hostility to Outsiders, Inbreeding and Homogeneity

If we take the second of the three characteristic concepts just mentioned - the *hostility to outsiders*, and continue looking at *Appalachian Outlaws*, we see numerous examples that serve to reiterate and reinforce this specific element of negative Appalachian stereotypes. Early in the series, the narrator states that “West Virginians don’t take kindly to sharing their digging spots...they take even less kindly to outsiders” (S01, E02), while different characters continually speak of doing their “best to make ‘em know they’re not welcome” (S01, E03) and sending them “back wherever they’re at with a busted ass and a bruised ego...” (S01, E04) or, generally, making “it hard as Hell to operate as an outsider” (S02, E03) coming into Appalachia. Once again, the preferred reading of the text would say

that the ginseng diggers are sensitive to outsiders coming in and digging the roots that they feel are rightfully theirs. However, there are other readings as well - such as this portrayed *aversion to outsiders* representing a skewing of a natural response by many people in Appalachia to the waves of missionaries, poverty warriors and educators that came into Appalachia during the last 150 years (such as Alice Spencer Geddes Lloyd, who adopted, raised and schooled my paternal grandfather, as mentioned previously) and whose edifying impulses have been a pronounced influence on much of the Appalachian region. As Barry Brummett pointed out in his book *Rhetoric in Popular Culture*, the most widely known definition of “culture” has an elitist flavor to it and many people with such an outlook hope to improve people (which is not necessarily a bad thing) by exposing the public to the right artifacts (Brummett 1994, 18). An additional example connected to my own Appalachian history concerns the Hindman Settlement School (located in the small town of Hindman, Kentucky in Knott County - where I grew up and, if the reader will remember, was the location where Widow Combs spent Thanksgiving 1965 in jail for protesting strip mining near her home). Although such settlement schools sought to preserve mountain culture, some analysts have accused such missionaries of modifying reality to make it more worthy, in their minds, of being preserved - a prime example of which is the mountain dulcimer, which was introduced and promoted in the schools’ music classes as more “appropriate” (than some other instruments, such as the banjo) to the highly romanticized image of Appalachian people as the speakers of archaic English and lovers of fine crafts (Edwards et al. 2006, 124). It is also worth noting that these schools were often directly supported by the coal companies in the region, which is a

testament to the interconnectedness of all aspects of Appalachian society and to the complex intertextual reality in the media portrayals under examination here.

In order to move into examining other elements of the mediated portrayals in the two RTV shows in this analysis, one additional quote from Eastern Kentucky is in order. At one point in the early twentieth century, Mrs. Lloyd (who is said to have been typical of the missionaries of that era) told a Lexington, Kentucky newspaperman that, “no more than 25 percent of local people have a mental capacity for more than the most elementary education. Inter-marriage – oh, terrible inter-marriage – has resulted in the development of racial weaknesses – low intelligence, bad eyes, epilepsy, and so on” (Edwards et al. 2006, 169). And, so, we have *inbreeding* (and its resulting health problems) entering into the popular media as a stereotypic characteristic of much of the population of Appalachia. Of course, Mrs. Lloyd was by no means the first person (or the last) to make this type of statement, whether it had any actual basis in fact or not. Although almost a century has passed since her remarks were published, this specific element has persevered (e.g., the cross-eyed, albino, banjo playing boy in *Deliverance* from 1972). As pertains to the RTV analysis here, *Appalachian Outlaws* contains a scene where one particular member of a ginseng digging group from North Carolina says (about their soon-to-be rival West Virginia ginseng diggers), “We gonna give them *inbred hicks* a taste of North Carolina” (emphasis added) (S02, E06). The characters are then seen in a long shot getting into their pick-up trucks (one painted camouflage and the other without a bed on it) and then driving away down a dirt road. Thus, the viewer must be left thinking - if North Carolina people are like this, then West Virginia people must really be bad. Of course, the element of inbreeding also points to the aforementioned *myth of homogeneity* that is oftentimes

used to describe the people of Appalachia. According to the latest statistical data from the American Community Survey (ACS) on the Appalachian region (covering the years 2009 - 2013, as conducted by the United States Census Bureau and available from the ARC at www.arc.gov), the racial and ethnic breakdown of the region is different from the United States as a whole, but the majority of the difference is because of the relatively small Hispanic/Latino community in Appalachia (see Appendix Table 8). Quite simply, there is a 12.3% gap between the United States (as a whole) and Appalachia when it comes to this group. If we look at the Caucasian and African-American populations - the two most significant racial groups of the last two centuries, Appalachia contains just 3% less of the later group (12.2 & 9.2%, respectively). It must be noted, however, that the sub-regional percentage of African-Americans in Southern Appalachia (being a full 6.5% higher than the nation as a whole) does alter these figures. Thus, the racial diversity of Appalachia is quite dependent on whether you are looking at the entire region or a particular sub-region (of which there are five, according to the definition by the ARC - see Appendix map). On one hand, if you strictly consider the conventional social construct of "race", then yes - the racial makeup of the entire Appalachian region is more homogenous than the United States as a whole. On the other hand, however, there are currently close to 2.5 million African-Americans people in Appalachia (not to mention nearly two million other non-Caucasian people), which is a rather substantial amount of human beings to ignore when interpreting the population statistics. Furthermore, the myth of homogeneity that I am outlining here to has two components: racial homogeneity and experiential homogeneity. If one remembers the vast size of the Appalachian region and the fact that it contains rural as well as urban areas, then one cannot expect there to be anything approaching a

uniformity of experience. In order to demonstrate this point, let us consider the small (rural) town where I grew up – Hindman, Kentucky (in Knott County) with a population of 751 (according to 2010 U.S. Census data) that is 98.5% white. Compare that to the largest (urban) city in Appalachia - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (in Allegheny County) with a population of 305,704 that is just 66% white (and, quite notably, exceeds 26% black - over double the national percentage of African-Americans) and the social variance within the region becomes apparent. This very real example of diversity is a testament to falsity of this particular aspect of the mythology surrounding Appalachia. As such, my argument maintains that the size of the Appalachian-African-American population (what Kentucky poet Frank X. Walker has called “Affrilachian”) and other non- Caucasian communities within the region as well as the obvious lack of homogeneity of experience between the peoples and cultures within Appalachia supersedes the fact that the region as a whole is more racial homogenous than the United States.

As for the racial aspects of the portrayals on the RTV shows in this analysis, there is a continuation of this established Appalachia-is-all-white-and-has-the-same-experience myth of homogeneity. In fact, the two seasons of *Appalachian Outlaws* had absolutely no non-Caucasian characters other than a handful of Asian men in and/or from New York City. Although their portrayals are specifically urban, they are worth exploring to show how the show’s producers are using stereotypes of other groups in addition to those of Appalachian-Americans. In one episode (S01, E05), a father/son team of Asian ginseng buyers from NYC visits Tony Coffman, the main ginseng middleman in West Virginia. In an instance of product placement within the show, a very recognizable bottle of Kikkoman soy sauce is placed in the background of a medium shot on a table literally

right between the Asian men (on the left) and Tony (on the right), as if to remind the viewer that the visiting men are Asian. At the beginning of Season Two, the only Asian characters in the program consist of the mysterious “Mr. Lee” and the “Chinatown Syndicate” with whom Tony strikes a deal. Of course, these portrayals drive a main thematic element in the show: Mr. Lee increases his demands on Tony, making him “an offer he can’t refuse” (consistent with the common stereotypic “mob” portrayals across all media), thereby putting pressure on him to deliver as much ginseng as possible. To reinforce this part of the ongoing series storyline, Tony frequently refers to the Chinese Syndicate damaging his hands and fingers if he doesn’t come through with his orders. For example, he plainly states that “These are the kind of guys you don’t want to cross...I kind of like my fingers and hands all connected together” (S02, E01) and “I’ve grown fond of my hand and fingers” (S02, E05). Likewise, when Obie - one of his main ginseng diggers (after making a dramatic plane-based escape from a remote area with a large amount of ginseng, while being hunted down by a gang of robbers), provides enough ginseng to fill the week’s order, Tony says, “This lets me keep my fingers” (S02, E05). He makes the order in this episode, but the demand from the Chinese Syndicate doesn’t stop and he fails to make another week’s order, thereby having to go up to NYC to give Mr. Lee a large framed ginseng root as gift. On the way, in a cab, Tony worriedly says, “...got this peace offering here...hope I can keep all of my fingers” (S02, E07). As *Appalachian Outlaws* (as well as *Moonshiners*, as we shall see) uses a narrator to convey background information, the viewer is told during several episodes certain background information about Chinese history with ginseng that corresponds with the storyline. For example, we are told that “Chinese Emperors used to battle for control of the forests

where the golden root thrived...” (S02, E08) and “In ancient China, ginseng hunters would go into the woods armed only with a stick and a belief that no evil could come to them if they were pure at heart” (S02, E10). Similar to the last example (and the only other mention of any other ethnic group in all 16 episodes of *Appalachian Outlaws*), there was one narrator VO about Native Americans. Here the viewer was told that “The Cherokee tribe used to believe ginseng would hide from those who were not worthy of it...” (S02, E08). Thus, the Cherokee people - the dominant Native Americans in Appalachia prior to their forced removal (as contextualized previously), are almost entirely overlooked as were all other racial and ethnic groups, except Caucasians and Chinese-Americans (the latter, of which, were stereotypically placed in roles of organized criminals). Overall then, the world of *Appalachian Outlaws* is simply one of rural white Appalachians fighting against outside urban influences, which recall the rural/urban dichotomy and societal power relations that were also outlined previously.

The sampled episodes of *Moonshiners* also contained some interesting racial and ethnic treatments. In Season 4 (once again, the last one sampled although another was underway), this program also mentioned Asian people – the Japanese in this case, not because there were any in the show, but because one of the moonshiners was attempting to make some “Saki Moonshine” by fermenting rice. That character - Lance Waldroup, the fledgling son of longtime moonshiner Jeff (both main characters in the series (see Appendix Table 9), fails at his first attempt to prove himself with what the narrator calls “an American twist on a Japanese classic” that is “3 times stronger than traditional Saki” (S04, E03). In the next episode, Lance’s father steps in to help his son and promptly suggests adding cornmeal to the ingredients to get a product with higher alcohol content,

which they can sell to their clients. As for other racial or ethnic groups, the only non-Caucasian characters in the 16 sampled episodes of *Moonshiners* consisted of a handful of African-Americans. However, it must be noted that they were always portrayed in extremely minor, socially marginalized and/or stigmatized roles as either a) confidential informants (black males, shown very briefly meeting with police officers) or b) people in a “nip joint” raid - both in the first season of the show, with the only speaking role in the second example being that of a black female prostitute at the bust. When keeping an eye on race and gender on *Moonshiners*, it was interesting that during a narrator VO (in a side note on women’s roles in the history of moonshining, complete with old photographs), there was a brief mention of the infamous 1800s moonshiner Mahala Mullins, who is said to have “built a cabin so that the Virginia/Tennessee border cut right through her living room (so that) when the revenue men would show up to shut her down, she would simply push her still across the state line to the legal safety of the other side of the room” (S02, E07). What the show did not disclose (when telling this rather tall tale) was the fact that she belonged to a somewhat controversial group called the Melungeons, a mixed-race people of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. This group first appeared in the written accounts of the region in the mid-to-late nineteenth century (including in a short story by John Fox, Jr. - a key writer in the aforementioned Local Color movement, if the reader recalls, whose influence is still widely felt in Appalachian stereotypes to this day). In nearly all cases, these writers focused on the mixed-blood heritage of the Melungeons, posited various theories of their reputedly mysterious origins and generally held them to be representative of the region as a whole – unclean, ignorant and isolated, which probably contributed in some measure to the negative image of Appalachian people held

by non-Appalachians (Abramson and Haskell 2006, 270). Whether the *Moonshiners* production team, which obviously had done at least a small amount of research into the female moonshiners in the history of Appalachia, knew any additional details about Mahala Mullins (or the Melungeons, in general) is open to speculation. However, even a rudimentary internet search provides such information and (added to the established marginalization of other non-Caucasian characters that are present in the show) the fact that only a quite limited, sensational story was added to enhance the particular episode's specific narrative purpose raises a red flag on their overall treatment of the cultural diversity in Appalachian history.

II - Gender, Family and Sexuality

In a continuation of examining gender and race on *Moonshiners*, it must be noted that there were three women characters (all Caucasian) with fairly substantial roles in the series - two illegal moonshiners (Lynn, who is Lance's mother and Jeff's wife/part-time assistant, plus Mississippi-based moonshiner Darlene) and one legal distiller (Troy) (see Appendix Table 5). They were in two, three and four episodes (of the sixteen sampled), respectively. The last of these characters, Troy Ball – the owner of Asheville Distilling Company (a real distillery in Asheville, North Carolina), comes closest to being a main character on the show. Tim Smith – the character which the entire *Moonshiners* series is built around, is said to be a “3rd Generation Moonshiner” (S02, E01) and a “Moonshine Heavyweight” (S04, E04) who is trying to go legal. After many difficulties in going straight in Kentucky, Tim approaches Troy with a proposition to make his shine at her

distillery. Up until this time, Tim speaks about his wife (never mentioned by name) and son (J.T.) - the latter of whom we see a few times, but the viewer never catches even the slightest glimpse of Mrs. Smith. This is not unusual for the program, however, as there are many spouses/significant others that are signified or alluded to but never shown. The previously mentioned character of Chico (Tim's initial still hand at a legal distillery in Kentucky), for example, mentions a fiancé and two children (a four-year-old girl and a two-year-old boy) (S03, E05), but they are never shown. Likewise, Mark (the longtime moonshining partner of the previously mentioned Jeff) wears a wedding ring, but never mentions a wife and we never see her. Thus, the world of *Moonshiners* is one where women and children are typically sidelined. Most often, their presence is presented in such a way as to accentuate the episodic storylines, which revolve around the all-male main characters. It must also be noted that the show sometimes veers into off-color and misogynistic dialog with characters such as Josh and Bill - a continually struggling (as well as arguing) team of upstart illegal moonshiners. In one scene, for example, Josh says (in an instance of their still-side chatter), "what you need to keep you young is a good woman with pretty feet...if she's got pretty feet, you know she's taking care of the rest" (S02, E11). Bill, in a less outrageous but no less offensive manner, says of Josh in a later episode, "man, he changes his mind more than a damn woman" (S04, E03). As the series is basically void of any semblance of visible marital/long-term committed relationships, I maintain that the pairing off of the moonshining partners (especially with Josh and Bill) can be read as an examination of romantic relationships within the narrative structure of *Moonshiners*. By having the team(s) disagree and work out their problems (while doing the "manly, outlaw" activities the show portrays), the typically male viewer is presented

with a relatable scenario (not dissimilar to the RTV dating shows and their heavily female viewership, as previously outlined). Thus, the overtly sexist messages that are being foregrounded present many viewers with subconscious material for examining their own interpersonal relationships that is compatible with their past socialization and safely distanced from any hint of homosexuality.

There are many similarities between gender-based treatments on *Moonshiners* and those presented on *Appalachian Outlaws*. However, as is most often the case, the latter show (which began being aired two years after the first series premiered - see Appendix Tables 2 and 3) takes things to a level only hinted at by the first. As before, there are many spouses/significant others and children that are signified or alluded to but never shown on *Appalachian Outlaws*. A prime example is the character of Obie Bennett - a ginseng digger who is in every episode except one in this analysis (see Appendix Table 4). Obie states that he has “kids to feed” (S01, E06) as well as child support and “another kid on the way” (S02, E04). In a later episode, after bringing Tony Coffman (who is still running short on filling his latest Chinatown order) a massive 216 pound ginseng root haul (worth approximately \$160,000 - according to the show figures), Obie says “me and my old lady won’t have nothin’ to worry about this year” (S02, E10). However, we never see the Obie’s ex-wife/girlfriend, his new significant other or any children. Another good example would be Greg Shook - a ginseng digger from Georgia, who travels up to West Virginia in both seasons of the program. As he leaves on his ginseng quest in the first episode of the series (S01, E01), his wife is shown very briefly twice, but never speaks on camera. Furthermore, the only line delivered by her is simply “do whatever you’ve gotta do” (delivered to Greg as he walks through their house) after which there is a quick cut to

a medium shot of her in a dark room where she looks down at the floor (S01, E01). This is the very last time we see and/or hear mention of his wife, despite the fact that Greg continually mention his children (four sons and one daughter) throughout the episodes of the series, saying (in no uncertain terms) things like “Ginseng ain’t just a plant – it pays my bills, it feeds my kids” (S01, E05) and “Five kids will eat you out of house and home” (S02, E08). Finally, when he returns back home (at the end of Season Two) after another successful ginseng hunting season in West Virginia, all five of these children are shown (as they meet him outside to present him with a new hat as a welcome home gift), but his wife is not mentioned at all and is not shown either. Thus, the viewer is presented with an extreme version of what sociologist R.W. Connell calls “emphasized femininity”, a form of femininity defined around compliance with subordination and oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men (Connell 1987, 183). Quite simply, the world of *Appalachian Outlaws* is all-men-all-the-time, where a “woman’s place” is almost exclusively in the home - having children, speaking little and staying out of site.

Appalachian Outlaws also has its share of sexist dialog, such as when Greg complains about his neighbor/sometimes partner EJ and says, “he’s old...he gripes and bitches like a 90 year old woman” (S02, E06). Other characters, however, are much more extreme in their off-color and misogynistic statements. There is, for example, a local river guide named “Ewok” (a *Star Wars* reference) - a self-described “furry little woodland creature” (S01, E02), who goes into the West Virginia woods with Greg in both seasons. At one point, while digging ginseng roots together, Ewok says to Greg, “I treat my roots like I treat a beautiful woman...all kinds of respect and love and care...I’m bringing Tony (Coffman) cover girls, you’re bringing him a bunch of road whores” (S02, E05).

Although the series does show women from time to time, such as in Tony's office, they have very few speaking lines. In that particular setting, for example, the more visible of his two office assistants is used for effect in scenes such as when Tony tells Ewok via telephone to go find Greg (and "Don't forget your gun!"), she turns around and looks concerned (S02, E04) or when Mr. Lee's henchman is silently lurching around in Tony's office, she looks around worried (S02, E05). Perhaps the most dramatic and telling gender-based character treatment in the series, however, concerns the female character with the most dialog - Willow Kelly, a local landowner. Although she is in only two episodes (see Appendix Table 4), she has 12 spoken lines (8 lines in S02, E06 and 4 lines in S02, E10 - not counting one in a flashback in E10), which is the most of any woman. In Season Two, Tony asks Mike Ross (a young, handsome local landowner who is experienced with warding off ginseng poachers on his own land) to help Willow out protecting hers. When Mike initially goes out to meet her, she is shown brandishing a shotgun. However, Mike quickly explains why he is there and she lowers her firearm (and symbolically, her guard). Then, a hand-held camera tilts down across her body and even lingers on her chest - a technique that is repeated in the following scene as they discuss the situation on her farm. Later in the episode, Mike (the proverbial "knight in shining armor") states offhand to the cameraman, "It's a good thing I sent Willow out of here...thing's might get pretty dangerous" (S02, E06) - a sentiment repeated in another episode as "There's no honor among thieves - they'll hold up a woman just as much as they'll hold up a man" and "It's a good thing I sent Willow out of here" (S02, E07). In a dramatic season-ending storyline, Mike outsmarts would-be robbers, tricking them into following him in a high-speed nighttime chase, thereby allowing Willow to deliver her

ginseng to Tony. As the only woman even remotely approaching being a main character in *Appalachian Outlaws*, Willow has to be taken out of danger's way and saved by a man (Mike Ross), who was coincidentally shown (in the only explicit nod to sexuality in any of the sampled episodes of either of the two RTV series) to have condoms in the episode just prior to meeting with her. In the end, Willow (whose nature-based name of English origin symbolizes femininity), brings to the viewers' mind the well-known ornamental weeping willow tree and, by extension, emotionality and the physical act of crying - both of which are designated as only appropriate for the marginalized and objectified women in the world of *Appalachian Outlaws*.

III - Nature, the Environment and Coal

Although both RTV shows in the analysis here use nature strategically in their narrative structures (such as with crow sound effects, transitional time lapse cloud imagery and very abundant spider web shots, for instance), only *Appalachian Outlaws* uses them extensively in a heavily symbolically manner. For example, as Mike begins to help Willow protect her land and ginseng, there are cutaways of a praying mantis insect, as if to say that he is her only prayer (S02, E06). Other insect symbolism include a walking stick insect being shown to match Greg and his own walking stick (S01, E03) and, as Sam Lunsford (the head of the previously mentioned gang of cutthroat ginseng diggers from North Carolina) enters the picture, small butterflies being shown accompanying knives (complete with creepy tinkling sound effects) (S02, E05) in a razor's edge danger motif. Snakes (from a tabby cat toying with a baby snake up to a large rattlesnake - both

in S02, E06) and birds of prey (such as circling vultures in S02, E09 and E10) are also used in/around scenes with the Lunsford gang. As if there were any viewers that didn't recognize that these protagonists were being set up as "the bad guys" in the series, there is even a close-up camera shot (in a moment of complete symbolic overkill) of a truck tire running over a stuffed toy animal (in extreme slow-motion, while it emits a long, drawn out squeak) (S02, E06) when the gang sets out to wreck havoc on West Virginia. Throughout the whole series, Tony Coffman and Corby "The General" Patton (the two rival ginseng middlemen before Sam Lunsford shows up), are frequently zoomorphically represented by a raccoon and a fox, respectfully. Tony has a taxidermically-preserved raccoon named "Rocky" (a Beatles reference) that holds a ginseng root on his office desk, which he says brings him "good luck" (S01, E01). There is also a similarly stuffed fox mounted and displayed in Tony's office window that is often captured in medium camera shots behind Tony to show that "The General" is always over his shoulder. For good measure, Corby has a preserved fox hide displayed on his truck dashboard, a fox tail attached to his pickup truck antenna and he is known to deliver lines such as "A fox always finds his way into the henhouse" (S01, E02).

As plentiful as the examples of nature-based symbolism in *Appalachian Outlaws* are, environmental concerns are really never explicitly mentioned by any characters in the show, despite the fact that the program is based in the state of West Virginia, whose extensive coal-related environmental problems are well-documented (as outlined briefly earlier in this analysis). There is, however, some evidence that the research done by the production team behind the program included at least some familiarization with the 1962 Harry Caudill exposé on strip mining practices in the Appalachian region that was named

“The Rape of the Appalachians” (as published in *The Atlantic* and then *Readers Digest* before becoming a chapter in his book *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*). In the initial two episodes of the program (S01, E01 and E02), there are no fewer than six different variations of a character saying something about the land being “raped,” although it is always in reference to sustainable ginseng harvesting practices and the show’s constant portrayal of irresponsible poaching of the ginseng roots. Perhaps the producers intended the ginseng/rape references to serve as a metaphor for the ongoing environment/coal industry situation in Appalachia, but this is only speculation on my part as the researcher (who owns a copy of the Caudill book and reads the texts of the show in this way). As for how such environmental issues are dealt with on *Moonshiners*, they are all but ignored. In fact, the only instance of discussing the environment comes in the form of a recurring argument between the team of Josh and Bill over whether or not to use concrete on water dams at moonshine still sites (and the potential adverse affects on the natural ecosystems there) (S03, E02) (S04, E07). Furthermore, none of the moonshining characters ever express any concern over water quality (or contamination) despite their continual usage of the water from whatever creeks and streams are available to them at their still sites. *Appalachian Outlaws* does occasionally mention the coal industry overtly, such as when Tony Coffman states, “With the decimation of the coal industry, there’s gonna be record amounts of people out in the woods (looking for ginseng)” (S02, E01) or when Corby Patton says, “Times are tough...the mines have shut down” (S02, E02), but they are in passing and focused much more on people’s employment rather than anything else. Put in bottom-line numerical terms, coal is only briefly mentioned and/or seen *four times in 32 episodes* of the Appalachian-based RTV programming in this analysis. Perhaps the most

interesting connection between the Appalachian coal industry and the *Appalachian Outlaws* RTV series is the mention of Blair Mountain, where Tony (in a VO montage sequence after he sends Greg and EJ there to dig ginseng) explains that “Around 1920, the coal miners had a battle with the U.S. soldiers, who were sent to break up a union strike...there was an insurrection...and that is where the two sides met” (S02, E08), after which he says that before it was named Blair Mountain, it was known to people in the region as “Ginseng Mountain”. What the show did not disclose (when connecting this real-life event to the episodic storyline) was the fact that the mine labor struggles alluded to actually came to a head in late August of 1921 when some 15,000 coal miners wanting union representation organized their efforts in West Virginia’s Mingo, Logan, Mercer and McDowell Counties prompting the United States government to send in 2,000 military troops. Furthermore, this was the only time in history that the United States decided to *drop bombs on its own people*, although the mission was ultimately aborted when the bomber planes ran into very dense fog as they were heading into the mountains (PBS 2005). Although the unionization efforts there were unsuccessful at the time, the events (and news media coverage of them) served to add yet another layer onto the stereotypes of Appalachia people - a reification of the already established violent media portrayals that continue to this day.

IV - Violence, Feuds and the Law

Of all of the characteristic elements in most Appalachia stereotypes, violence is arguably the most visible in mediated portrayals. Lawlessness, feuds, blood, murder, taking the

law into your own hands and, above all, guns are commonplace. In fact, the first line of dialog spoken by a character on *Moonshiners* is Tim Smith asking his son, “JT, you got the shotgun?” (S01, E01). This comes directly after the narrator introduction in which the viewer is told that what is being shown is “moonshine season...a season lived under the gun” (S01, E01) - a phrase repeated in other episodes, such as when Tim is said to be “under the gun” to deliver a full eighty gallons of moonshine in 24 hours (S01, E03). After the character of Tickle (Tim’s partner and still hand, who goes out on his own when Tim tries to go legal) joins him to help him produce the order, they go back to Tim’s house to eat dinner and discuss the run of liquor (and a man they saw walking in the woods near their still sight, who may or may not be a hunter). At this meeting, Tickle exclaims (drunkenly) into a close-up camera shot, “we got chicken and we got guns” (S01, E03). They produce the needed moonshine and it is then picked up at night by an unknown bootlegger (a middle man, who takes the liquor to be sold). As it is portrayed in the series, such moonshine pickups are always a dangerous situation, which is analogized by the narrator as “a game of Russian roulette...each arriving bootlegger could be the fatal bullet in the chamber” (S01, E06). By Season Four, the guns on *Moonshiners* are in full display, literally. In the first episode of that season, for example, young Lance (once again, Jeff’s son who is trying to learn the moonshine business but is still “earning his wings”) has a picnic table full of assorted guns in his backyard, where he is practicing his shooting skills (S04, E01). Shortly after this scene, the narrator brings in the inevitable blood theme (echoing the coal mine-related “Bloody Harlan” and feud-related “Bloody Breathitt” media headlines of days past, as was contextualized earlier) by stating that “Moonshining has a long history of violence written in blood...and nowhere did the

bodies pile up as high as in the state of Kentucky...” (S04, E01). Of course, Kentucky is not the only state in the Appalachian region to be colored red with blood in mediated portrayals, as the narrator of *Appalachian Outlaws* says that “In 1861, West Virginia’s borders were forged out of the bloody combat of the Civil War” (S02, E09). In actuality, West Virginia seceded from the confederate state of Virginia at the dawn of the Civil War (early in the same the same year the war began) and was admitted to the Union two years later (in 1863). Here, as in many other instances, the narrator of the show takes poetic license with the descriptions of actual events in order to make the RTV depictions more sensational and appealing to the viewer.

As with the usage of nature symbolism before, *Appalachian Outlaws* takes the blood motif to an extreme when compared to *Moonshiners*. In one single episode, for example, there is 1) an image of an angel statue with red paint (symbolizing blood) underneath a barb wire crown of thorns, 2) a young ginseng-digging character named Mitch saying “Living off the land is bred into me...it’s in my blood,” 3) an argument stemming from Obie pocketing some “blood root” in the woods while digging with his sometimes-partner, Ron, 4) the narrator saying “In Appalachia, it only takes one drop of bad blood to poison the well...and the damage can last for generations” and, finally, 5) an employee of Tony Coffman’s named Wayne going to “Bloody Mingo County” to make a ginseng deal “where Hatfield and McCoy was...” (S01, E03). Of all of the blood-related elements in common Appalachia stereotypes, the last one in this example points to what is perhaps the most colorful - the ever-popular feuds that are forever linked (in the public consciousness and media portrayals alike) to the region. Of course, the rather ubiquitous mythology surrounding the Hatfield & McCoy families is what immediately comes to

mind for most Americans when feuds in Appalachia are mentioned, although there were many others (usually related to upper class political struggles and/or economic control of resources, if the reader recalls). Although feuds are never mentioned in the sampled episodes of *Moonshiners*, there is no shortage of such references in the two seasons of *Appalachian Outlaws* examined here. Similar to the narrator's line from the previous example, Obie states in an episode-opening monologue (in a close-up camera shot) that "feuds are just as much a part of this landscape as ginseng...sometimes, one man's actions are enough to fuel hatred for generations..." (S01, E04). Early in Season Two, Tony (in a similar monologue to the camera) declares that the state of West Virginia is "the home of the Hatfields and McCoys...we have guns in every corner and it's gonna stay that way..." (S02, E02). To the show's credit, however, the narrator does deliver a line in one episode where another (fairly obscure) feud is mentioned along with the more well-known one: "For centuries, the Appalachian Mountains have had more than their fair share of feuds, whether it's the family differences of the Hatfields and McCoys...or the political rivalry between Tolliver and Martin, things always get personal" (S02, E02). Throughout the VOs in the series, the narrator includes additional phrases such as saying that West Virginia has had "a history of feuds ever since (the Civil War)" (S02, E03) and that ginseng is a "competitive business sparked by many feuds..." (S02, E04). With this much emphasis placed on mentioning feuds, the viewer must be left thinking that such family disagreements are still a regular part of Appalachian society.

When conceptualizing feuding activities, the dual ideas of "lawlessness" and "taking the law into you own hands" figure quite prominently and both ideas are used extensively in the RTV shows here. To begin with, law enforcement officers are not a

particularly effective presence in either series. In the first season of *Moonshiners*, there were a number of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) agents led by an officer named Jesse Tate whose aim was busting moonshiners and bootleggers. As mentioned previously, there was a “nip-joint” bust where illegal liquor was found, but that was the only bust in the sample episodes of that season, although the viewer is told (via CG text superimposed over the closing sequence of last episode) that Agent Tate did raid a 6-pot still and that two arrests were indeed made (S01, E06). After this, law enforcement is represented in the series through the presence of Deputy Chuck (in several episodes across the next three seasons) and a couple “one-officers” (so to speak), in Deputy Kevin Williams in Kentucky (S03, E02) and an unnamed Police Officer in Campobello, South Carolina (S04, E07) (see Appendix Table 5). Most of the time, however, the law enforcement characters are just used in a way as to appear to be just about to bust one of the main characters, when they are really not in the same area at all. In other words, the show is strategically edited by juxtaposing unrelated scenes to make them appear connected, thereby adding tension to scenes and causing the viewer to cheer for their favorite moonshiner’s continuing evasion of the police in the area. Furthermore, none of the moonshining characters are ever arrested for any offense on any of the sampled episodes of *Moonshiners*, which begs the question as to the “reality” of the RTV show.

Unlike *Moonshiners*, absolutely no law enforcement officers - other than a) one instance of an anonymous Georgia game warden’s presence shown from a distance in a long shot through tree foliage and b) one instance of an unseen Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agent chasing Greg and EJ in a vehicle, were ever shown or alluded to on *Appalachian Outlaws*. As such, “lawlessness” is painted across Appalachia

in broad brush strokes by the series. The landowner Mike Ross even goes so far as to state that “Ginseng season in West Virginia is kinda like the Wild West...there ain’t no laws, except for our own...” (S01, E02) - a sentiment mirrored in *Moonshiners* when Tyler (a moonshining friend of Chico’s) says, “Here in Kentucky, it’s kinda like the Wild West” (S04, E01). In the program that he is a character on, however, violence and illegal activities (other than moonshining) are relatively infrequent. *Appalachian Outlaws*, on the other hand, takes both to an extreme. In fact, there were six completed robber scenes (two at gunpoint) and one foiled robbery attempt in the sixteen episodes of the series (not counting the continuous poaching activities). Events like these prompt those wronged in the episodic storyline to serve “some West Virginia justice...” (S01, E03), also called “Appalachian justice” (S01, E05) or “sending a message, Appalachian Style” (S02, E10). In other words (to quote Mike Ross once again), “in Appalachia, sometimes you gotta take the action into your own hands...the law’s too far away and they don’t help you half the time anyway” (S01, E04). Of course, some variations of this specific theme are used throughout the entire series by the narrator as well, such as when he says “After fighting off poachers all season, Ross has taken the law into his own hands” (S01, E06) and “In Appalachia, when someone does you wrong, you gotta take matters into your own hands” (S02, E02). Thus, the world of *Appalachian Outlaws* is one where laws just do not exist or, if they do, they are not compatible with the culture there. To quote Mike Ross one last time: “In Appalachia, justice and the law are two different things” (S02, E03).

Of the violence in the RTV shows here, psychological elements related to fear, danger, intimidation and the threat of bodily harm (and even murder) are used heavily in the narrative structure of the texts. As usual, *Moonshiners* tends to take a relatively mild

approach in its display of such themes. However, the narrator does occasionally mention how one moonshiner's "mistake could get him hurt...or worse" (S03, E02) or that a particular character has "got a target on his back" (S03, E10). In the latter case, there is even a scene with a rifle scope camera shot, where one moonshiner has the crosshairs on a rival moonshiner and aims to "see if we can get rid of him once and for all" (S03, E10). Of course, this leads the viewer to think that a murder is at hand, when it actually turns out that the rifle scope is substitute for surveillance binoculars and that the real plan is "get rid" of the rival moonshiner by blowing up his still. It is not uncommon for the individual characters to allude to the danger that they are in - whether it is still explosions or the loss of life and limb. Tickle, for example, expresses concern for being out of his home turf of Virginia when helping Tim out in Kentucky by saying "this could be dangerous...being out, this far out...if I run upon something I ain't supposed to see...I could never be heard from again" (S03, E10). At the beginning of the next season, Tyler (Chico's friend and moonshining partner in Kentucky) states that "When you're dealing with other people that's doing illegal stuff, especially in the state of Kentucky... you never know what you're getting into...you are liable to end up in a river or in a sinkhole somewhere" (S04, E01). Finally, the less-than-subtle references to violence and death are symbolically extended to non-human objects as well, such as when the difficulties that Tickle, Chico and Tyler have navigating the rough terrain to their very remote still site in Kentucky lead the narrator to state that "...it's been murder on Chico's truck" (S04, E04). Thus, it would seem to the viewer that the moonshiners in the show face more danger from each other (that is to say, their "human nature" and from nature, in general) than the anything that "civilization" can throw at them.

Turning to *Appalachian Outlaws*, we find that the series goes to much more of an extreme in their presentation of similar themes of nature, humanity and mortality. In the first season, the viewer is told that “the woods are full of thieves...people will kill you for what you’ve got” (S01, E01) and that “In Appalachia, it’s dangerous to go into the hollers alone...” (S01, E04). Season Two continues sending such fear-laden messages to its television audience by stating that “anything can happen to you back in the mountains” (S02, E01) and that “going into the woods alone is always a gamble” (S02, E01) because “the woods are as dangerous as ever” (S02, E03). In one show-opening monologue where he discusses his family’s decades-long ginseng business, Tony Coffman stares into a close-up camera shot with a rather serious look on his face and says, “*because of these mountains*, desperate people do desperate things...there’s lots of people never come out of these mountains” (emphasis added) (S02, E02). Thus, *because* of the mountains - the Appalachian Mountains, the evil in people is brought out. This tourist brochure version of Appalachia is based on a fear of nature and, above all, a fear of “human nature” within us all. It is a signpost on the information highway warning people to enter into Appalachia at your own risk. In doing so, this “strange land and peculiar people” (to quote a key phrase from the Local Color movement) may lead the visitor into their own heart of darkness, where there is little difference between civilized (urban) people and the (rural) savages. The viewer can practically hear the narrator (doing his best Mr. Kurtz) whispering “the horror, the horror” as he leads us into Appalachia. Whereas *Moonshiners* literally makes reference to the 1899 Joseph Conrad novella of the same name when its narrator observes that “Tackle and the Kentucky Boys (are about to) head into the heart of darkness...” (S04, E01), *Appalachian Outlaws* is more interested in driving the point home through a

seemingly endless stream of violence. I read the latter show's texts as being less *Heart of Darkness* and more *Deliverance*, with the viewer traveling into the heart of Appalachia via the television medium. However, the main point is still very much the same in *Appalachian Outlaws*: "you've got chaos in the mountains" (S02, E01) with a hillbilly specter standing silhouetted on the ridge of a dark mountainous skyline - an uncivilized monster just waiting to hunt you down. The program even has some characters mention murder outright, such as when Obie says that he has "seen people get killed out in the woods" (which is followed by a quick extreme close-up shot of a moth fluttering rapidly on ground, compete with sound effects) (S02, E09). Furthermore, there is an episode where a local Appalachian father and son ginseng hunting team - Joe and Mitch Simpson, are said to be "playing the most dangerous game there is" (S01, E05). In fact, Mitch says (as he and his father are tracking ginseng digger Greg Shook through the woods), "I like hunting animals...but, man, hunting humans is fun" (after which he laughs). Their intention, as it turns out, is really to just scare him out of what they see as *their* woods, which they do by shooting a rifle at the brush very close to him as he tries to escape. Finally, in a scene pointing back to the nature-based symbolism discussed earlier, Sam Lunsford - the leader of the North Carolina gang of ginseng thugs that invade West Virginia in Season Two, says that if another character doesn't "make a good impression on me, I may leave him in these woods, ya know?" (which is quickly followed by a long shot of a group of crows - (literally) *a murder of crows*, in a tree (S02, E05). Here, R. W. Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity" clearly comes into play with the Lunsford gang representing the hillbilly masculine stereotype and demonstrating one (particularly violent) way of *being a man*. As hegemonic masculinity is either established through

consensual negotiation or through power and achievement, where (at its most brutal) it is predicated upon raw coercion (Beynon 2002, 16), the Lunsfords are a cultural expression of male dominance through pure animalistic force.

After this very detailed discussion of the violence in the two RTV shows under analysis here, the reader may be left wondering just how much of the programs center around such themes as lawlessness, feuds, blood, murder, taking the law into your own hands and guns. As they are common themes in mediated Appalachian stereotypes, I recognized the need to examine them and took sample episodes of both *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners* in order to quantify their presence. Once again, I defined “Violent Incidents” as including images (guns, knives and other weapons), threats (verbal or physical) and acts of violence (including intimidation). Additionally, I also limited multiple qualifying elements in a single camera shot to counting as only one incident. In the episodes sampled for this part of the content analysis, I found that *Appalachian Outlaws* had a “Violent Incident” once every 28.4 seconds, whereas *Moonshiners* had a “Violent Incident” once every 2 Minutes and 48 seconds (see Appendix Table 10 & 11). Although the number of incidents varied across the sampled episodes of each of the programs, *Appalachian Outlaws* consistently had a much greater number of violent elements. Thus, it would seem that, although there was overlap in the portrayals in the Appalachian-based RTV programs examined here, they varied considerably not only in how the region and its people are portrayed but also in the degree to which certain types of characteristics are stressed. Furthermore, there are certain themes (such as feuds, for example) that are frequently mentioned on *Appalachian Outlaws* (the more extreme of the two programs), but never mentioned on the sampled episodes of *Moonshiners*.

V - Usage of News Media Elements and Ties to Real People

As the worlds of *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners* represent two different versions of Appalachia, it makes one wonder if either is even remotely representative of the region and its people. Of course, a large amount of viewer subjectivity comes into play here. Basically, it would all depend on the viewer and their previous held knowledge of and/or exposure to Appalachia (which covers a large area of the eastern United States and has many different cultures contained within it). As I have stated previously, there are many different Appalachias. However, the shows here are *reality television programs* that claim to show the real lives of Appalachian people. Thus, we must look at what elements in the shows are undisputedly “real” (or at least appear to be from real sources). One element that stands out, especially on *Moonshiners*, is the usage of information and images from identifiable media sources - namely, newspaper headlines and television news footage, which encourage the viewer to believe in the authenticity of the portrayals on the programs. Newspaper headline imagery (consisting of electronic graphics made to look like real newspaper real clippings) is used throughout *Moonshiners*, ranging from one that announces “Two Arrested in Pittsylvania Illegal Whiskey Case” (S01, E06) that is easily traced to the *Danville Register* in Virginia, all the way through the last season sampled with a *Carolina Panorama* article from April 24, 1969 titled “The Making of Moonshine in Franklin County, Virginia” by J.Y. Smith (S04, E03). As the focus of the series is alcoholic beverages, prohibition-era headlines such as “The Saloon is Doomed: Prohibition Gains Foothold in 36 States” (S02, E06) are used to place the RTV show in historical context and further the perceived reality of the show’s mediated portrayals. Contemporary television news footage also comes into the picture, with video clips like

one from KFDM (a CBS affiliate) out of Beaumont, TX that details how a man and woman in that area were busted after they watched *Moonshiners* and decided that they could also make some liquor (S02, E01). At other times, more general media footage is used to build a storyline, such as a short clip from The Weather Channel being interjected in a scene in an episode with the meteorologist saying “it’s brutal out there” (S02, E06) to coincide with a storyline drought causing a shortage in the supply of corn (the traditional main ingredient of moonshine, if the reader will recall) that explains why some of the moonshining characters are using other ingredients (besides corn) in their liquor.

Interestingly enough, *Appalachian Outlaws* only includes information from an outside media source with one particular storyline, although it was literally ripped from (then) current headlines of the day. News footage from WVVA (an NBC affiliate out of Bluefield, WV) connecting a missing local woman named Dee Ann Keene with the cast member/character of Ron McMillian - a ginseng digger and sometimes-partner of Obie Bennett, was included in two episodes. The footage stated that Ron was “a person of interest, not a suspect” (S02, E01) and was partially altered when a clip of the woman’s mother saying “I think he murdered her” had an echo effect added. Two episodes later, a news headline is shown to say “Dee Ann Keene Still Missing” as Ron says (in a close-up shot monologue) “Dee Ann was my friend” (S02, E03) and tells how all the money he made last season digging ginseng went for legal expenses. On Feb 16, 2015 (literally the same day the latter episode was originally aired - see Appendix Table 2), a newspaper article from *The Register-Herald* in Beckley, West Virginia was published: “Police still searching for missing Renick woman” (www.register-herald.com). Ron was not named in this article and the storyline was also dropped from the remainder of Season Two of

Appalachian Outlaws. Thus, it would appear that the History Channel legal department cleared the “reality” episode to air but the short-lived storyline continued on in real life. Unfortunately, the publicity garnered from the story’s connection to the *Appalachian Outlaws* series failed to help solve the case and Ms. Keene was still missing at the time that this content analysis was written.

Returning to *Moonshiners* for examples of how outside media sources were used to establish connections with actual people to accentuate the authenticity of the programs, there are several characters who claimed to have direct ties to two well-known real-life moonshiners – namely, Marvin “Popcorn” Sutton and Barney Barnwell. The infamous Popcorn Sutton was a North Carolina moonshiner, who self-published an autobiography and self-produced a how-to moonshining documentary (both named *Me and My Likker*). He was then the subject of another (more professionally filmed) cult-classic documentary named *This is the Last Dam Run of Likker I'll Ever Make* (2002). Re-worked into an even larger-budget documentary film called simply *The Last One* (2008), it is used extensively in the *Moonshiners* RTV series. The film refers to moonshining as being a dying art and to Popcorn as being the last one making moonshine liquor using traditional techniques. From the initial episode of *Moonshiners*, when Tim Smith mentions that his “dad and Popcorn Sutton – they been making moonshine all their lives” (S01, 01) all the way up through Season 4, when the “former still hand of the late, great Popcorn Sutton” Mark Ramsey claims to have Popcorn’s own “shotgun condenser” (a hand-made piece that was part of his still) (S04, E10), the series is loaded with dialog references to the real person. Newspaper headline imagery (as was described previously), such as “Local Moonshine Legend ‘Popcorn Sutton’ Arrested in Tennessee” and “Famed Appalachian Moonshiner

Marvin Sutton Took Own Life to Avoid Looming Prison Term” (both in S01, E06) were also used. Barney Barnwell, on the other hand, is said to be “South Carolina’s most notorious moonshiner and raconteur” (S02, E01) - a fiddler, bandleader, storyteller and liquor-making mountaineer. Prior to passing away of cancer in 2008, he hosted two different annual Appalachian music festivals on his farm near the North and South Carolina border (the “Plum Hollow Festival” and the “Moonshiner's Reunion and Mountain Music Festival”). Footage of Barney is used throughout Season Two of the show *Moonshiners*, as the characters of Josh and Bill (who claim to be his former still hands) are said to be “keeping Barney’s dream alive...” (S02, E01). In one particularly outrageous storyline, for example, Josh and Bill dig a large underground bunker (directly beneath the stage of the music festival site) as a place to run their moonshine still. The moonshining team rushes (amid setbacks) to get the site built before people arrive for the pending festival. In and around scenes such as this, clips of Barney are oftentimes shown, including an oft-repeated one where (in a wild-eyed, hunched-over pose while looking at the camera) he says “Don’t they know this shit is illegal?” (S02, E07). As can be seen in Appendix Table 5, footage of Popcorn Sutton and Barney Barnwell are used in nine of the sixteen episodes of *Moonshiners*. As such, they are (in effect) main characters in the episodes that not only provide substantial appeal to the viewer, but also anchor the entire program itself to a perceived authentic reality. In other words, the *fact* that they are on the show adds a certain element of *truth* to the show’s portrayals. Similarly, it must be noted that Discovery Channel and History are channels that were both initially known for their authentic documentary programs, but have veered toward more sensational (some would say questionable) programming in recent years. In both cases, the channels’ previous

reputation for presenting factual content adds weight to the perceived authenticity of the programs. Furthermore, the fact that the programs appear to be partially-scripted and strategically-edited compounds the issue.

VI - Series Narration

Turning from real-life people included in the shows to the narrators of the two series (see Appendix Table 12), it must be pointed out that both series have an authorial narrative structure marked by the narrators being both omnipresent - freely moving back and forth between scenes occurring in different places, and omniscient – knowing everything about the situations and events recounted (Prince 1987, 68). It must also be mentioned that both narrators are male actors, which points to the male-oriented nature of the two programs as well as to the pronounced hegemonic masculinity running through them, especially on *Appalachian Outlaws*. From the viewers' standpoint, however, the narrators just serve as an important source of information about the characters and about Appalachia, in general. Simply put, the voice of a narrator is a voice of authority, the voice of someone who knows more than the viewer does (Heinricy 2006, 162). Thus, we must be concerned with inconsistencies and inaccuracies presented by the narrators in the content of the programming. One relatively minor example from *Moonshiners* concerns the temperature at which alcohol separates from water when heated (an important part of the knowledge surrounding distilling alcoholic beverages). Although the correct specific temperature is 173 Fahrenheit, the narrator misquotes it twice in sampled episodes (as 175F in S01, E03 and as 170F in S02, E01). From this point on, however, the actual correct temperature is

accurately and consistently quoted in the show (S02, E06 and E07 as well as S04, E01). An area of larger concern revolves around some obviously exaggerated statements made throughout the show, such as when the narrator says that “in the 1930s, in Appalachia, an estimated *one out of every three* people was moonshining” (emphasis added) (S01, 01). If their “estimate” is accurate, a full one-third of the people in the Appalachian region were making illegal liquor during that decade. Going from Appalachia as a whole to a single particular county for another similar example, the viewer is told (when Tim is trying to produce a legal version of his Virginia moonshine in the City of Lebanon in Marion County, Kentucky) that “There are *hundreds* of shiners operating across the county at this very moment” (emphasis added) (S03, E02). As moonshining activities are clandestine by nature, both of these figures are not exactly provable (even though they are clearly exaggerations), but they boost the potency of the moonshine storylines. Turning back to *Appalachian Outlaws*, we also find some narrator-supplied information about the length ginseng season to be inconsistent. In the very first episode of this series, for example, the viewer is told that ginseng is “only ripe and legal for digging for 2 months a year...” (S01, E01), but by the end of Season One, it becomes “a few months a year” (S01, E06). Furthermore, character dialog contradicts these statements, as when ginseng digger Greg Shook states that “There’s only a few short weeks that you can dig ginseng” (S02, E08 and E10). Truth be told, ginseng season length varies a great deal by individual state laws, lasting three months (for example) in Kentucky and West Virginia and a full five months in Tennessee and Virginia. Finally, the amount of ginseng said to be produced in the Appalachian region varies dramatically throughout the series. The viewer is told, for example, that “last year, West Virginia produced over 73,000 pounds of ginseng” (S02,

E03), which is vastly different from the more realistic per year figure of just under 5,000 pounds (based on the actual amount said to have been harvested in 2011, as quoted by West Virginia State Forester Randy Dye on www.wvcommerce.org). Of course, the average viewer is not going to pay that much attention to inconsistencies and inaccuracies such as these, but the fact that producers of these RTV shows appear to be working the grey areas, so to speak (and, in some cases, seeming to be take great liberties with the actual facts in order to be able to make quite sensational claims), raises a red flag on their overall research into and treatment of Appalachia.

VII - Archetypes

As for the characterizations of the people in the Appalachian region made by the two RTV series, we must look past superficial elements – such as clothing. To be sure, there are plenty of overalls and various camouflage clothing on the shows (both relatively common items in Appalachia and also an integral part of the stereotypic “look” of the region). Likewise, there are dialects galore on the show – some more easily penned down than others. Interestingly, the character of Tickle on *Moonshiners* noticeably tries to alter his accent a few times in Season One (to sound more like Tim) and fails miserably. But, then again, his failing and bumbling (and his reputation for doing stupid things, usually while drinking alcohol and/or in a state of intoxication) are part of his character’s makeup - so much so that Tickle is a prime example of what I will refer to as the “Comic Fool” archetype. Of course, this stock character type has a long history throughout all of human civilization - from the English “clown” (representing the peasant or farmer worker - the town dwellers’ idea of someone who lives outside the city walls, the idiot of urbanism)

back to the “stupidus” of the Roman Empire, whose duty it was to be “slapped at public expense” (Williamson 1995, 21 - 22). In *Moonshiners*, the physical abuse of the “Comic Fool” for the public (in this case, for the television audience) is typically self-inflicted, although it is usually unintentional. In fact, Tickle is shown to have fallen off the skeletal framework of a one-story building while helping his partner Tim construct it (thereby, breaking three ribs). In keeping with his always-with-a-drink-in-hand philosophy of life, he drunkenly states that “the cause and the remedy is one and the same” (S02, E06). After three seasons of such shenanigans (during which he was given a namesake spin-off show, if the reader will recall), Season Four includes in a season-spanning montage sequence of “Tickle-isms” that includes clips of him not only falling off the roof, but also accidentally spilling empty (plastic) moonshine jugs out of a pickup truck bed, scorching his arm hair while burning a junk pile on Tim’s farm and falling down at his still while carrying large sacks of grain (S04, E01). The narrator even makes a point to inform the audience that “Tickle seemed to be better at drinking the shine than making it.” Nevertheless, he keeps doing both, eventually ending up in Kentucky “with two local good old boys” (S04, E01), Chico and Tyler. Here, in a side story, Tickle is shown attempting to ride one of Chico’s horses (tellingly - a smaller, gentler pony that is said to be reserved for women and kids to ride) and falling off of it twice (while, once again, intoxicated). Furthermore, the fact that Tickle is the butt of jokes due to his small physical stature, laziness and truancy points to the symbolic emasculation common in male Appalachian stereotypes of the “Comic Fool” variety. Here it must be noted that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women (Connell 1987, 183). Thus, the symbolic emasculation of Tickle is juxtaposed

against other male characters, many of which express their masculinity by being involved in dangerous activities and through the use of overt (or suggested) violence. As such, the hypermasculine hegemonic ideal in the mediated portrayals is stressed.

Chico, as opposed to Tickle, represents a hybridization of rural American archetypes - one of the “Good Ol’ Boy/Redneck” variety. Something of an updated “Jethro Bodine” (the big country bumpkin proud of his sixth grade education from original 1960s *The Beverly Hillbillies* television series) crossed with Jeff Foxworthy’s trademark “you-might-be-a-redneck-if...” brand of comedy, his character is about as subtle as a coal truck barreling down a gravel road. He is a large, lumbering young man with broken front teeth who is shown to live in a run-down shack, the yard of which is littered with numerous items in various states of disrepair. He has the word REDNECK in large, bold red letters tattooed down his left (rear) forearm as well as another tattoo of feathers filled in with a confederate flag logo on his right bicep. Finally, Chico’s vehicle (an older model Ford Bronco) has a rebel flag front license plate with large yellow letters that also spell REDNECK. Chico is arguably the most cartoonish character/cast member on *Moonshiners*, but it must be pointed out (as Richard B. Drake wrote in his *History of Appalachia*) that such folk do exist in Appalachia, and many of the usual stereotypes of hillbillies seem to fit them fairly well. They tend to be anti-intellectual, usually having completed no more schooling than necessary, and their behavior is often characterized by a lack of control (Drake 2001, 222-223). However, Chico *the real person* is not nearly as large as *the idea of Chico* – the latter being a concept that can also be read as representing the purist form of a genre of television programming that is, by nature, a hybrid entity. This RTV hybridity, which blends fact and fiction to form something new, is a key in its

potential to manipulate and construct perceived reality. As such, Chico is not just a backwards hillbilly, he is a powerful symbol of all that is (still) not modern. As Tim attempts to teach him “the basics” at the distillery in Kentucky, for example, he says, “I mean, it’s hillbilly science, man...it’s amazing” (S03, E05), which comments both on hillbillies and science. Predictably, Chico falters at just holding down a simple “go-fer” job at the distillery, while Tim (his boss and mentor) also struggles in going straight and joining modernity (symbolized most effectively through his ongoing aversion to keeping paperwork, which by extension, echoes the general educational deficiencies common in Appalachian stereotypes). The narrator even states that “you can take a moonshiner out of the woods, but you can’t take the woods out of the moonshiner” (S03, E02), while Chico says (similarly) that “This legal distillery here, this ain’t the world he’s from” (S03, E10). Furthermore, thinly-veiled social class ideologies are apparent in this particular storyline as well, with the more advanced Appalachian character (Tim, who corresponds to the “town families” as I have described them) falling into the same class category as the more backwards Chico (corresponding to the “holler families”). Thus, there becomes one class of Appalachian people in a communal (and ongoing) struggle against the civilizing forces of the surrounding modern world.

As most Appalachian portrayals tend to rely heavily on including “traditions” and “old ways,” a discussion of the world of *Moonshiners* would not be complete without the inclusion of the character of Jim Tom - a longtime illegal moonshiner and copper still builder, who clearly fits into an “old timer” archetype (another common character type throughout the history of human dramatic forms). As knowledgeable as he is eccentric, Jim Tom is a colorful storyteller whose fantastic yarns are featured regularly on the

series. They range from an insistence of his being stung by a swarm of honey bees 154 times on one day (S02, E11) to his claim of wrecking a '37 Harley-Davidson motorcycle (without a helmet on) and the resulting injuries requiring (coincidentally) 154 stitches in his head (S03, E08). Keeping with the head injury theme, he also recalls a time as a young boy when he was swinging on a grapevine and hit a tree head-on, but sustained no lasting injuries. Finally, he says, "Why, I'm as sensible as they come!". Tall tales aside, Jim Tom does recall the "old days" saying, for example, that he was "born in 1940 on Christmas night...straw beds...no refrigerator...all we had was a rub board to wash our overalls..." (S04, E04). In the show-opening monologue for that same episode, he states that his three hobbies are making stills, making whiskey and going out with women. The latter "hobby" is something of a running joke between him and the other moonshiners that he works with, but - as he is also said to have "more than fifty years experience building stills" (S04, E03), his role on the series (other than to provide substantial comic relief with his exaggerated physical movements and oddball antics) is to symbolically embody the idea of old traditional knowledge being passed down through different generations. Throughout the series, we are constantly reminded that the moonshining is "part of American heritage" (S01, E01), that they are doing it to "keep the tradition alive" (S01, E06), that it is a "rite of passage" into "a way of life" that has been passed "down through generations of families" (S02, E01) and that (once again) they feel "a sense of heritage" around it (S03, E05). Furthermore, the series has younger characters, such as Tim, Mark and Jeff (3rd, 4th and 6th generation moonshiners, respectively), but it is Jim Tom, the "Living Legend" (S02, E01), who demonstrates to the television audience exactly how to build an old-fashioned copper pot still by hand.

Turning to *Appalachian Outlaws*, we find no equivalent “old timer” type of character, although there is a “ginseng guru” (S01, E06) named Rufus Keeney. He is always shown at his home doing tranquil farm-related activities (alone) such as tending to his cornfield (S01, E01), trying to catch catfish (S01, E02) and gathering fruit/nuts in his orchard (S01, E03). As such, he is something of a monk-type figure, always non-violent, symbolically representing a connection to nature and spirituality. As “everybody knows him (and) he knows everybody” (S01, E01), he is aware of what is happening in the area, but chooses to remain neutral. However, he is shown to be a connection between the “town” people, such as the ginseng middleman Tony Coffman (who frequently goes to him for information), and local “holler” people, such as landowner Mike Ross (who is sitting on a large amount of ginseng). Thus, his middle ground character can be read as a suggestion of an area of possible diplomatic solution to the warring factions in the series (i.e. the mountain classes fighting over their land and livelihoods). On the other end of the symbolic spectrum from Rufus is the villainous character of Sam Lunsford, which represents “The Hillbilly Monster” archetype, albeit with very heavy religious overtones. He is often shown in facial close-up camera shots (calmly exerting his authority while he outlines devious plans for his cutthroat gang) and is eerily reminiscent of past versions of the same mediated character type, including Robert DeNiro’s crazy, scripture-spouting hillbilly psychopath in *Cape Fear* (1991) (Williamson 1995, 156). Introduced halfway through Season Two of *Appalachian Outlaws*, his arrival (from the mountains of North Carolina) was foreshadowed in the series by a number of spiritually/religiously-based signifiers (or superstitious omens, depending on your viewpoint), such as ginseng roots hanging on strings (discovered at two different locations by different teams of ginseng

diggers), hanging pentagram tree branch sculptures (very reminiscent of the horror movie *The Blair Witch Project*), a pentagram fire pit with candles and numerous camera shots of serpents, including a black snake eating a rattlesnake. At one point, the narrator even tells the viewer that “Burning ginseng is believed to repel negative spirits and ward off evil, but there is no protection from the Lunsford clan” (S02, E05). In effect, the Lunsfords are the latest version of “the black hat” characters in American Westerns: the ruthless villains on the forgotten Appalachian frontier. The battle of “good versus evil” is ultimately won by the forces of good, including the characters of Greg Shook - the “good Christian” (the pure-at-heart ginseng digger who resists the temptation of accepting easy money obtained from stolen ginseng, persistently talks of the digger’s responsibility to conservation of the natural world and always looks up toward the sky to say “Thank you Lord” (S02, E03) upon finding a large ginseng root) and Mike Ross - the young “Han Solo” (another *Star Wars* reference) knight-in-shining-armor heartthrob in this western-in-disguise saga. As a “lone wolf” (who is shown to be living alone in Wolf Creek, West Virginia), this latter character is not so much a descendent of the blow-dried Duke Boys (of *The Dukes of Hazzard* television show) as he is a longhaired Bret Michaels type of figure (the singer from the popular 1980s hair metal band named Poison, who is frequently known to wear a bandana under a cowboy hat and who, by the way, had a three-season-long RTV dating show called *Rock of Love*). It would seem, then, that new versions of well-established dramatic character types, references to other media sources and direct ties to other reality shows can easily be found in both shows here. Perhaps the combination of the elements found on the RTV programs is just as important as what is missing from their narratives. Returning once again to consider R. W. Connell’s concept of “hegemonic masculinity”

with a gender-based hierarchy among men consisting of: 1) hegemonic masculinity, 2) conservative masculinity and 3) subordinated masculinity (Craig 1992, 190), we can see some examples of each. Most notably in *Appalachian Outlaws*, there is Mike Ross (hegemonic), Rufus Keeney (conservative) and law enforcement (subordinated). On *Moonshiners*, there is the team of Josh and Bill (hegemonic), Tim Smith (conservative) and Tickle (subordinated). Thus, the RTV shows present the viewer with a masculine ideal consistent with mediated patriarchal coding (not to mention the well-established Appalachian stereotypes). At the end of the final episode in Season Two of *Appalachian Outlaws*, which is “on hiatus” at the time of this writing (as opposed to *Moonshiners*, which continued on into its next season), the narrator closes out the season by stating: “In Appalachia...if ginseng season doesn’t kill you, Winter will...each year, the power struggles waged in the hollers are put on ice...but come next season, ginseng will be back...and the feuds that took root in Appalachia will only grow deeper.” Note that violence, power struggles and feuds are mentioned in connection to the (twice named) Appalachia region. As this show demonstrates, the roots of Appalachian stereotypes are buried like those of the ginseng plant, but its flowers bloom year after year in a perennial display that lasts long after the individual series fades to black.

CONCLUSION

If one were to encapsulate the two worlds of the RTV programs *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners* from key phrases used in the shows, the reconstruction would be something along the lines of the follow description:

Appalachia is “a forgotten part of America” that is “kinda like the Wild West”, where people are “cut off from the roads, hostile to outsiders and thirsty for shine.”...“It’s dangerous to go into the hollers alone” there because “there ain’t no laws” with the “inbred hicks” who “don’t take kindly to outsiders” and have “guns in every corner.” It is a place where “feuds are just as much a part of this landscape as ginseng” and “justice and the law are two different things.”

Of course, all of the pieced-together phrases are taken out of context, but that is exactly the point: as a second generation reconstruction of reality, the ridiculousness of the description becomes apparent when they are arranged as such. Unfortunately, television viewers of the programs do not get the information in the same manner as this - the messages are strewn across numerous episodes and worked into the narrative structures of the two “reality” shows. Furthermore, a full century has passed between 1913, when the silent short film *Red Margaret, Moonshiner* (also known as *Moonshine Blood*) was released, and the ongoing saga of *Moonshiners* (2011-present), which is a testament to how the same stereotypes continued to be used in the evolving media landscape and how the dominant American ideology is reinforced through our entertainment. Other than the feature-length films already mentioned (e.g. *Thunder Road*), there are many others with

stereotypic storylines (such as *Next of Kin* (1989) starring Patrick Swayze and Liam Neeson) that regularly aired on cable networks. In that movie, the storyline includes a coal mine closing and Appalachians moving to the city, where (of course) they run into problems and two brothers are killed prompting a third brother to seek revenge in line with the mountain code of feuding. Likewise, the television industry is littered with fictional Appalachian-based dramas, such as *Justified* (2010 - 2015) - a show on the FX Network, which followed a lawman dispensing his own brand of justice in Kentucky (including “Bloody” Harlan County) and, most recently, a show called *The Outsiders* (2016 - present). This latter show, which is set in a fictional town in Kentucky and boasts episodic titles such as “Decomp of a Stuck Pig” (reminiscent of the famous “squeal like a pig” line in *Deliverance*), is described by its parent network - WGN America, as:

“A struggle for power and control set in the rugged and mysterious hills of Appalachia, "Outsiders" tells the story of the Farrell clan, a family of outsiders who've been in these parts since before anyone can remember. Living off the grid and above the law on their mountaintop homestead, they'll protect their world and defend their way of life using any means necessary.”

Once again, we have the textbook Appalachian stereotypes of a “clan” of “outsiders” in the “mysterious hills” living “above the law” and defending “their way of life using any means necessary.” As I have previously stated, I maintain that television is heavily important (arguably the most important single medium) in perpetuating these common stereotypes - there is substantial evidence (here and elsewhere) to support this basic theory. However, my argument expands upon this basic proposition to claim that other mediums add to and boost the messages presented there - in effect, amplifying the textual

volume of the mediated television images, thereby creating a complex intertextual Appalachian reality of which contemporary RTV plays a part.

Appalachian Outlaws and *Moonshiners* are two examples in a RTV subgenre which I have called Rurality TV, which includes numerous rural-based television series featuring real people that send ideologically-infused messages about particular regions of the United States. There are, in fact, many current examples - including *Kentucky Justice* (which is narrated by the voice of *Moonshiners* - Jeremy Schwartz, and is set, once again, in Harlan County, Kentucky) - not to be confused with *Southern Justice* (set in Tennessee and North Carolina), *Cajun Justice* (set in Louisiana) or *Country Justice* (set in West Virginia). The important thing to remember about the programs analyzed here is that, beneath the foregrounded comedic elements and celebrification of some regular people (such as Tim Smith of *Moonshiners* fame, whose legal moonshine costs \$35 for a 750 ml bottle), there is a background examination of the relationship between the facts and truth about (as well as the meaning of) the Appalachian region and its people. Thus, far from being the mind-numbing, deceitful and simplistic genre that some critics claim it to be, reality TV provides a multilayered viewing experience that hinges on culturally and politically complex notions of what is real and what is not (Murray & Ouellette 2009, 8). There is a permanent, intertwined relationship between the people of Appalachia, the socially constructed categories they are placed into and the mediated images that are used to represent them. In fact, they are so interconnected and engrained in our collective consciousness that it is now practically impossible to completely separate them from each other. Furthermore, the one part of the equation that is overwhelmingly absent from most materials presented to the consumers of mass media is the underlying historical reasons

why Appalachian stereotypes were created in the first place. In his provocative book *The Invention of Appalachia*, author Allen W. Batteau started his conversation with the reader by stating that Appalachia is a creature of the urban imagination - a literary and a political invention rather than a geographical discovery, and went on to point out that the image of Appalachia as a strange land and peculiar people was elaborated at the very same time that the relationship of external domination and control of the southern mountain region's natural and human resources were being elaborated (Batteau 1990, 15). In the contextual sections leading up to the actual content analysis here, I traced mediated Appalachian portrayals from those politically-charged beginnings up to the present-day RTV programs and it seems that very little has really changed. The century-plus-old, heavily distorted image of the Appalachia casts a shadow across the entire continent, while the reasons behind the distortions remains conveniently obscured in the background.

In 1913 (the same year that the silent film *Red Margaret, Moonshiner* hit movie screens), economist John H. Ashworth published an essay in *The Atlantic Quarterly* (entitled "The Virginia Mountaineers"), in which he stated that "mountain people have great social, religious and educational problems to solve, but these problems, while perhaps in some respects different from, are not greater than the problems which confront the people of other sections of our country" (McNeil 1995, 203). This observation is just as true today – there are problems in Appalachia, just as there are in other regions of the United States. However, in Appalachia, the challenge in solving those problems has just as much to do with the image of the region as it does with the problems themselves. The *idea of Appalachia* (the abstract concept that serves as a negative counter example to the *idea of America*) is an obstacle of epic proportions. Given the fact that Appalachian

people still have very little power to control this juggernaut of stereotypes adds to the issue. As RTV programs, *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners* do have real people from Appalachia starring in them, but the outside production teams behind the shows control how the people and region are being presented. Appalachian people may have free choice to come to the casting calls on the Hillbilly Highway for the RTV programs, but they have limited influence over the constructed images that are in the end product. Furthermore, there is a sufficient history of outside professionals creating invidious and stereotypic portrayals of mountain people that currently it is nearly impossible for any outsider, trained or untrained, sophisticated or otherwise, well-intended or not, to create an acceptable portrait of the mountain people (Batteau 1990, 172). Taking two of the most common themes referred to in much Cultivation research as an example (virtually inescapable violence and the presentation of women in a limited number of activities and roles), we see that the two programs in this analysis fall in line with established patterns. Thus, the mediated story of the Appalachian region and its people has not changed at all. As producers can portray images of poverty, ignorance and backwardness without raising cries of bigotry and racism from civil rights advocates and the black and other minority communities, the crude and often negative hillbilly stereotype has continued long after cultural producers have abandoned previously accepted yet equally offensive and racist stereotypes (Harkins 2004, 8). It seems that America needs hillbillies as much now as ever - as a scapegoat and a reminder of the perceived perils of an uncivilized life before our typically unquestioned urban modernity. At the very least, it is a reflection of the proliferation of the RTV genre (and its sub-genres) in the post-network era, where the specificity of programs allows the culture industry to mine established stereotypes for

cheap entertainment at the expense of a generally unrecognized minority that resides in the long-ridiculed Appalachian region.

In this analysis, we have seen how Appalachian people are being portrayed on the RTV programs "*Appalachian Outlaws*" and "*Moonshiners*" as the messages and symbolic meanings of the depictions were examined, but the connected question of exactly how many people are seeing them is just as important. Although it is beyond the scope of this analysis to hypothesize about and measure potential viewer effects of watching such programming, I think it important that the reader know the basic statistics of each show's viewership. According to the available figures from Nielsen (www.nielsen.com), the last episode of *Appalachian Outlaws* that aired - "Last Chance" (which concluded Season Two), had 1.789 million U.S. viewers. By comparison, *Moonshiners* has had as many as 3.870 million U.S. viewers (with the Season Two episode called "Last Shiner Standing", which was not one of the sampled episodes here), but saw ratings drop down to 2.076 million U.S. viewers for the last rated show at the time of this writing (the fifth season episode that was entitled "Still Regretting"). Thus, there were millions of people tuned in each week to see the reconstructions of Appalachian reality on television with each of these two shows. Undoubtedly, many viewers watched both programs each week and a number of folks from Appalachia were probably in that audience, a lot of whom I am sure enjoyed the portrayals. As such, it is interesting to note that unlike other ethnic groups in American society who have developed heightened awareness and become vocal about abusive stereotyping, for the most part, Appalachians have not attacked those who have abused them – in fact, Appalachians seem to enjoy programs that have used the most degrading stereotypes against them (Drake 2001, 128-129). I read this as a reflection

of the asymmetrical power relationship at work with the media and Appalachian people. Frankly, in any power relationship there is a certain degree of compliance and acceptance by those subjected to power (Castells 2013, 11) and Appalachian-Americans are not an exception to this rule. I have to admit (critical opinions aside) that I did enjoy watching the programs to some degree and found them to be somewhat entertaining and comical, although my viewing was not done as a normal viewer would have watched them (as I have stated previously). Furthermore, as a native Appalachian-American, I have seen the same old mediated stereotypes presented for my entire life and recognize them as being such. I am also inclined to believe that most Appalachian viewers probably recognize the stereotypes as well and would rather see a distorted version of their reality (with its rather limited range of portrayals) than no version at all. The biggest problem comes in when people from outside the region (and especially those with very little or no first-hand Appalachian experience) see these reconstructed distortions. With RTV, the problem with reconstructions is that they are presented as being indistinguishable from real events and this confuses at least a few members of the audience (Holmes et al. 2004, 10). At the end of the day, many such viewers are left with a pieced-together reconstruction similar to the one that I included here at the beginning of this thesis conclusion - an Appalachia that is “a rich land of poor people,” where we don’t have much, but (to quote Tickle from the show *Moonshiners* one last time) “we got chicken and we got guns.”

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METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

This Appendix provides information related to the methodological details of the content analysis outlined in the preceding thesis. The focus of the analysis was on examining 32 episodes of two Appalachian-based reality television (RTV) programs - *Appalachian Outlaws* and *Moonshiners*, which aired on History and Discovery Channel (respectively) between 2011 and 2015. I made every effort to be as complete and thorough as possible in presenting the information contained in the following materials. Of course, many of the details contained here could not be discussed in the body of the paper due to any number of factors, including space constraints and pertinence to the main thrust of the arguments contained in the thesis. As the sole researcher, I will gladly share and discuss any of the technical and/or narrative details with any interested persons in the research community or the general public alike.

THE APPALACHIAN REGION

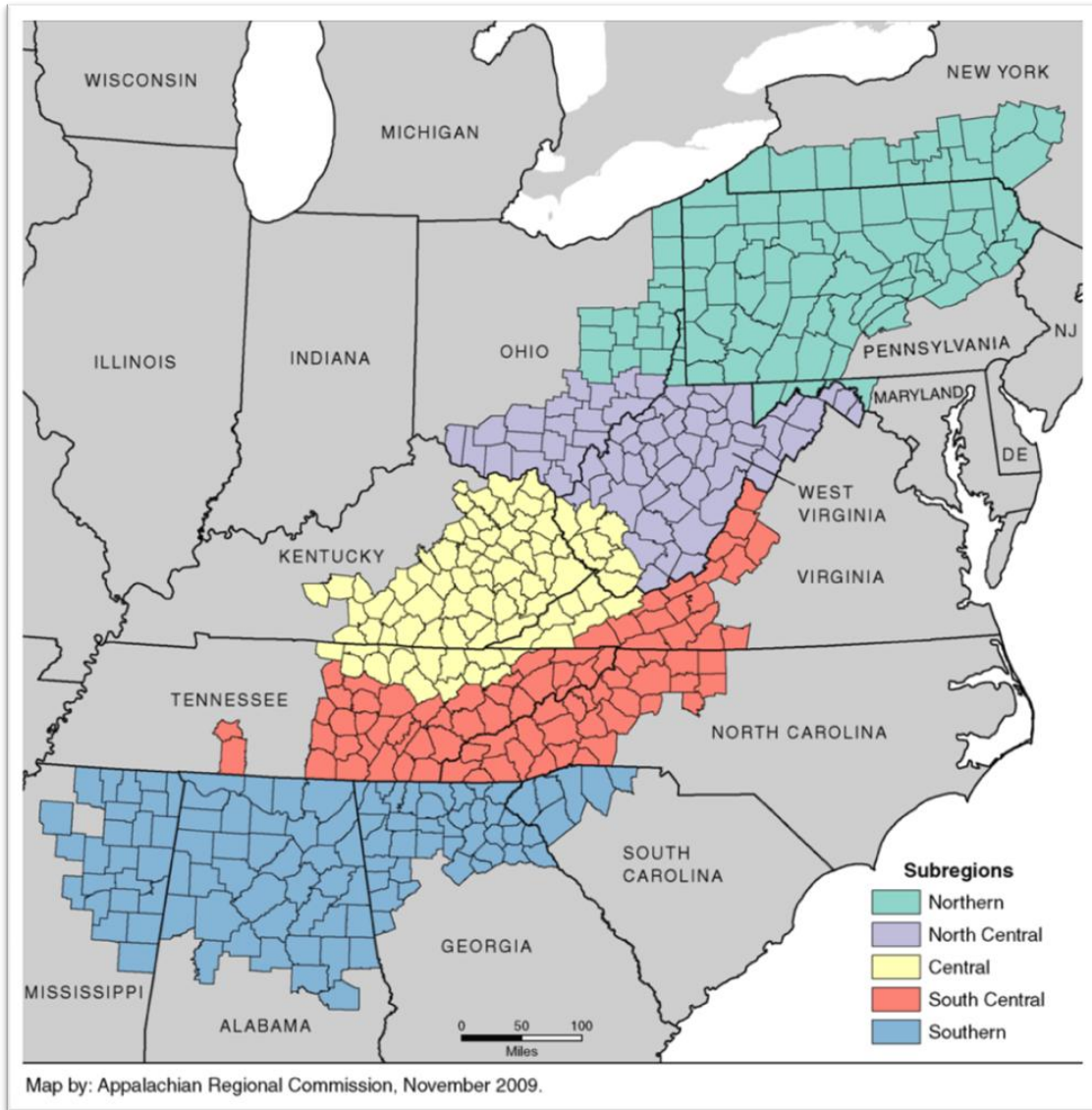


Table 1. Episodic Breakdown and Sampling Strategy

<i>Show Title</i>	<i>Season 1</i>	<i>Season 2</i>	<i>Season 3</i>	<i>Season 4</i>	<i>Total Episodes</i>
<i>Appalachian Outlaws*</i>	6 (6)	10 (10)	-----	-----	16 (16)
<i>Moonshiners^</i>	6 (3)	12 (4)	13 (4)	14 (5)	45 (16)
					61 (32)

Note: The number of sampled episodes is in parentheses.

Note: Random samples of the naturally stratified sampling frame of the *Moonshiners* seasons were made using a random number generator application, with a larger number of episodes sampled from larger seasons.

*At the time of writing, the continuing status of *Appalachian Outlaws* was indeterminate.

^At the time of writing, the 5th season of *Moonshiners* was underway, but wasn't included in the analysis.

Table 2. Sampled Shows - <i>Appalachian Outlaws</i> (History)				
Season & Episode	Premier Date	DAY	TIME	DUR
S01, E01 - Dirty Money	January 09, 2014	THURS	10 PM	1 Hour*
S01, E02 - Ginseng Fever	January 16, 2014	THURS	10 PM	“
S01, E03 - You Have Been Warned	January 23, 2014	THURS	10 PM	“
S01, E04 - Tit for Tat	January 30, 2014	THURS	10 PM	“
S01, E05 - Hunted	February 06, 2014	THURS	10 PM	“
S01, E06 - The Last Stand	February 13, 2014	THURS	10 PM	“
S02, E01 - Root Awakening	February 02, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E02 - Eye for an Eye	February 09, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E03 - Payback	February 16, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E04 - War Games	February 23, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E05 - Snakes and a Plane	March 02, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E06 - The Devil You Know	March 09, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E07 - Crossing the Line	March 16, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E08 - Unlikely Allies	March 23, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E09 - Battle at Wolf Creek	March 30, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
S02, E10 - Last Chance	April 06, 2015	MON	10 PM	“
Note: Entire 1 st two seasons viewed for analysis. Episode information from www.history.com website.				
*Actual running time of program: 42-44 minutes (without commercials).				

Table 3. Sampled Shows – Moonshiners (Discovery Channel)				
Season & Episode	Premier Date	DAY	TIME	DUR
S01, E01 - Moonshine Season Starts	December 6, 2011	TUES	10 PM	1 Hour*
S01, E03 - The Law Comes Knockin'	December 14, 2011	WED	10 PM	“
S01, E06 - A Moonshiner's Farewell	January 4, 2012	WED	10 PM	“
S02, E01 - Rise 'N Shine	November 7, 2012	WED	9 PM	“
S02, E06 - Prophecy Fulfilled	December 12, 2012	WED	10 PM	“
S02, E07 - Tickle Goes Rogue	December 19, 2012	WED	10 PM	“
S02, E11 - Hat in Hand	January 22, 2013	TUES	10 PM	“
S03, E02 - A Shiner in Kentucky	November 12, 2013	TUES	9 PM	“
S03, E05 - Hush Money	December 3, 2013	TUES	9 PM	“
S03, E08 - Rival Shiners	December 24, 2013	TUES	9 PM	“
S03, E10 - Moonshine War	January 7, 2014	TUES	9 PM	“
S04, E01 - Shine On	November 4, 2014	TUES	9 PM	“
S04, E03 - Bullet Proof	November 18, 2014	TUES	9 PM	“
S04, E04 - Risky Whiskey	November 25, 2014	TUES	9 PM	“
S04, E07 - White Lightning Wars	December 16, 2014	TUES	9 PM	“
S04, E10 - Moonshine River	January 15, 2015	THURS	9 PM	“
Note: Episode information obtained through www.discovery.com and www.epguides.com websites.				
*Actual running time of program: 42 minutes (without commercials).				

Figure 1. Example of note taking form used when viewing *Appalachian Outlaws*.

Appalachian Outlaws: S01, E01 - Dirty Money

History Channel Description:

It's the start of ginseng season in the Appalachian Mountains and every 'senger from West Virginia to Georgia is looking to get rich off the golden root, but it won't come easy. If they aren't running from game wardens or pot farmers, they're haggling for the better prices from local ginseng kingpin Tony Coffman, who's controlled the ginseng market for years...until now. Corby "The General" Patton just rolled into town and he wants a piece of the action.

1st Viewing

----- (cont.)

2nd Viewing

----- (cont.)

Figure 2. Example of note taking form used when viewing *Moonshiners*.

Moonshiners: S01, E01 - Moonshine Season Starts

Discovery Channel Description:

As the season approaches, moonshiner Tim and his partner Tickle search Appalachia for the perfect site to set up his operation. Law enforcement agent Jesse Tate is on the hunt for his first big arrest, but runs into a dangerous web of counter-surveillance.

1st Viewing

----- (cont.)

2nd Viewing

----- (cont.)

Table 4. Show Cast/Characters - <i>Appalachian Outlaws</i> (History)																
	S01, E01	S01, E02	S01, E03	S01, E04	S01, E05	S01, E06	S02, E01	S02, E02	S02, E03	S02, E04	S02, E05	S02, E06	S02, E07	S02, E08	S02, E09	S02, E10
Buyers																
Tony Coffman	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Corby “General” Patton	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Sam Lunsford											X	X	X	X	X	X
Diggers																
Greg Shook (GA)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ron McMillian	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X			X	
Obie Bennett	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Joe Simpson			X	X	X			X	X						X	
Mitch Simpson (Joe’s Son)			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	
E.J. (Greg’s Neighbor)							X	X				X	X	X	X	
Raven Tipton (KY)								X	X	X	X	X				X
Kiowa Muncie (KY)								X	X	X	X	X				X
Huston Goforth (Lunsford Clan)											X	X	X	X	X	X
Massey Brothers (Lunsford Clan)											X	X	X	X	X	

Others																
Mike Ross	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rufus Keeney (Ginseng Guru)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X					X			
Wayne Dancy (Tony's Employee)			X		X											
Byron Reese (Moonshiner)					X	X										
Neil "Tiny" Roberson (Moonshiner)					X	X										
Chris "Ewok" Carswell (River Guide)		X								X	X					
Scott (Pilot)											X					
Willow Kelly*												X				X
<p>Note: Unlike <i>Moonshiners</i>, no law enforcement officers - other than a) one instance of an anonymous Georgia game warden's presence shown from a distance, through trees and b) one instance of an unseen Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agent chasing Greg & EJ in a vehicle, were ever shown in the sampled episodes.</p> <p>Note: Individual characters must have speaking lines to be counted as being in the episode (flashbacks excluded).</p> <p>*Female Character (one of only five in all sampled episodes, the other being brief glimpses of a) Greg's wife as he leaves Georgia in the 1st season b) Greg's young daughter, as shown in a handful of episodes in the 2nd season and c) Tony's two office assistants occasionally shown working at his place of business. No Female character had more than a few lines of spoken dialog in the sampled episodes of this series (Willow had the most with 12 spoken lines).</p> <p>Note: All characters in the program (including all of the minor character not listed above) were Caucasian.</p>																

Table 5. Show Cast/Characters – Moonshiners (Discovery Channel)																
	S01, E01	S01, E03	S01, E06	S02, E01	S02, E06	S02, E07	S02, E11	S03, E02	S03, E05	S03, E08	S03, E10	S04, E01	S04, E03	S04, E04	S04, E07	S04, E10
The Law																
Jesse Tate (ABC Agent)	X	X	X													
Deputy Chuck (VA)				X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X		
Deputy Kevin Williams (KY)								X								
Campobello Police Officer															X	
Moonshiners																
Tim Smith	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Steven Ray “Tickle”	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
“Popcorn” Sutton*	X	X	X					X							X	
Mark & Jeff				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jim Tom				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Josh & Bill				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Barney Barnwell^				X	X	X	X									
Moonshiner X				X												
Lynn** (Jeff’s wife)					X	X										
Lance Waldroup (Jeff’s Son)					X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	

Howard (Still hand)						X	X											
Don Wood								X										
Mike & Tweedy								X										
Mark (Still Builder)									X									
Wayne (Amateur)									X	X	X	X						
Darlene** (Mississippi)										X	X	X						
Chico (Still hand)										X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Mike (Mississippi)												X						
Ricky (Mike's Friend)												X						
Tyler (Chico's Friend)												X	X	X	X			X
Roy (Jim Tom's Friend)													X	X	X			X
"Digger" Manes & Mark Ramsey (Tennessee)																	X	X
Others																		
JT Smith (Tim's Son)	X																	
Steve Beam (Distiller)									X	X	X		X					
Ty (Lance's Cousin)									X		X							
Chris (Darlene's Son)										X								
Troy Ball** (Legal Distiller)														X	X	X	X	X

Note: Individual characters must have speaking lines to be counted as being in episode (flashbacks excluded). The only exceptions were the pre-existing footage used of real-life moonshiners Popcorn Sutton & Barney Barnwell.

* Footage from the documentary *The Last One* (2008) was incorporated into show.

^ Pre-existing archival materials from various sources were incorporated into show.

**There were 3 women characters with fairly substantial roles in sampled episodes of the show.

Note: All characters listed in sampled episodes of the program were Caucasian. The only non-Caucasian portrayals were African –Americans as a) confidential informants and b) people in a “nip joint” raid (both in the 1st season).

Table 6. Important Show Cast/Characters - <i>Appalachian Outlaws</i> (History)				
	Clothing/Appearance	Vehicle(s)	Character Description	Characteristic Phrase/Saying
Tony Coffman	Typically wears more “town” type of clothing (i.e. collared shirts and trousers). Short hair & goatee.	Silver FORD F-150 Harley Davidson Edition Pickup*	West Virginia’s “top ginseng buyer” (S01, E01) Looking to expand his business.	“My family has been in the ginseng business for 80 years...I’ve been in it for almost 40” (S02, E02)
Corby “General” Patton	Style similar to that of Tony Coffman, but often wears baseball caps.	Green FORD Pickup*	Upstart ginseng buyer. Ruthlessly going after Tony’s business.	“Tony is the king of ginseng buyers...but I’m gonna take his ass down” (S01, E01) “I always keep my word...until I break it” (S01, E03)
Greg Shook	Camouflage and beat-up floppy hat. Long beard.	Red FORD Pickup*	Family man from Georgia. Ethical, pure-at-heart ginseng digger. Has been digging for 25 years	“...gotta do what I gotta do to feed my kids” (S01, E01) “Ginseng ain’t just a plant – it pays my bills, it feeds my kids” (S01, E05)
Ron McMillian	Older, balding, mustache. Typically wears camouflage clothing.	Small Silver Import Car with cracked windshield, (also) Volvo & Red Dodge Pickup (S02, E05)	Ex-con ginseng digger with shady dealings. Expert knife thrower. Connected to Obie.	“Living in the Appalachian Mountains, you need to be a survivor...if not, you’re gonna die back here” (S01, E02)

Obie Bennett	Olive green shirts, camouflage pants, hoodies. Long hair pulled back in pony tail. Scrappy goatee.	N/A	Knowledgeable local ginseng digger with connections to Ron.	Says he “trusts dogs more than people” and “...human is just full of greed – that’s what it boils down to” (S01, E03)
Mitch Simpson	Youngest cast member. Wears a short-brim western hat. Usually wearing various camo clothing.	Black Chevy Pickup	Wildcard, gun-toting ginseng digging youth.	“Outsiders make it hard on us...and we do our best to make ‘em know they’re not welcome” (S01, E03)
Mike Ross	Flannel shirts, tank tops, red bandana under snakeskin cowboy hat. “Manscaped” beard.	White FORD Pickup, Black FORD XLT Lariat*	Young maverick rock & roll-styled landowner. Defending the land (and ginseng “Honey holes”) against ginseng poachers.	“This isn’t just about me protecting my honey hole...this is about me protecting my family plot, my family land” (S01, E01)
Rufus Keeney	Camouflage shirts, henleys, jeans, glasses, grey hair & beard	Black Pickup - unknown brand.	“Ginseng guru” (S01, E06), “Everybody knows him, he knows everybody” (S01, E01)	“The season is short this year...and there’s not a lot of ginseng” (S01, E01)
<p>Note: All of the characters included here were in at least half (8) of the 16 episodes in this analysis. Note: All the characters included here were based in West Virginia, except Greg Shook (from Georgia).</p> <p>*Coincidence or corporate sponsorship?</p>				

Table 7. Video Production Basics: Field of View, Camera Movements, Editing Transitions & Technical Terminology

Field of View	
Steps	Abbreviation
Extreme Long Shot	XLS
Long Shot	LS
Medium Shot	MS
Close-up	CU
Extreme Close-up	XCU
Camera Movements	
Movement	Description
Pan	Turning a Stationary Camera Horizontally (Left/Right)
Tilt	Pointing a Stationary Camera Vertically (Up/Down)
Pedestal	Elevating or Lowering a Stationary Camera (Up/Down)
Dolly	Moving a Camera Toward or Away from Object/Person (In/Out) without Adjusting Focal Length of Camera
Truck	Moving a Camera Along the Scene (Left/Right)
Zoom	Changing Focal Length on a Stationary Camera (In/Out)
Hand-Held, Steadicam*, Bodycam* & GoPro*	Various Non-traditional, “Extreme”, Free-moving, Free-form & Point-of-view (POV) Camera Styles
Editing Transitions	
Device	Description
Cut	<i>Sudden</i> Change From One Image to Another
Dissolve	<i>Gradual</i> Change From One Image to Another
Fade	Change From/To Black (In/Out, Up/Down)
Wipe	One Image “Pushes” Another Off
Flash-Frame	Quick Cut From One Image to Another (Often several)
Technical Terminology	
Flashback	A Retrospection; a Cutback; a Switchback [^]
Slow-motion	An Image Made to Move in less-than-real-time
Voice-Over (or VO)	Off-camera commentary by a character or narrator
Superimposition (or “Super”)	Putting Symbols or Words on the Screen Over an Image
Character Generator (“CG”)	Electronically produced on-screen graphics
Cutaway	Neutral direction shot of an image connected to scene
*Name-brand hardware as well as terms for general camera styles related to that type of hardware.	
[^] From <i>A Dictionary of Narratology</i> by Gerald Prince.	
Note: Of these terms, camera movements are typically the most confused by viewers (e.g. any camera movement is called a “Pan”)	

Table 8. Population in the Appalachian Region by Race and Ethnicity - American Community Survey (ACS) 2009 – 2013

Area	Total Population 2009-2013	Percentage of Population			
		Caucasian, Not Hispanic	African- American, Not Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino Origin	Other, Not Hispanic
United States	311,536,594	63.3	12.2	16.6	7.9
Appalachian Region	25,305,488	83.2	9.2	4.3	3.2
Sub-regions					
Northern Appalachia		89.3	5.1	2.6	3.0
North Central Appalachia		93.1	2.7	1.3	2.9
Central Appalachia		95.3	1.9	1.3	1.6
South Central Appalachia		85.2	7.0	4.7	3.1
Southern Appalachia		69.5	18.7	7.7	4.1

Note: Data obtained through the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and available at www.arc.gov. Original survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau.

Table 9. Important Show Cast/Characters – Moonshiners (Discovery Channel)				
	Clothing	Heritage/History	Character Description	Characteristic Phrase/Saying
Deputy Chuck	Uniform.	10 years with Sheriff's Department (S02, E01)	Local deputy on the verge of busts, but "hasn't had a major bust in two years" (S04, E01)	(Moonshine Stills) "They're harder to find than they used to be" (S02, E01)
Tim Smith	Most often: Denim overalls, no shirt.	Central Character in show, longtime illegal moonshiner trying to make legal liquor, 3 rd Generation Moonshiner (S02, E01) "Moonshine Heavyweight" (S04, E04)	Virginia moonshining icon, trying to go legal. Experiences many difficulties.	"Moonshining is a special art - it's proven... what you put in is what you're gonna get out" (S01, E01) "Keep it cold, run it slow, tastes good" (S03, E08)
Steven Ray Tickle	Varies. Usually jeans & a t-shirt w/ baseball cap.	Tim's longtime still hand (assistant). Moonshining with Tim for "the past 30 years" (S02, E01)	Tim's still hand. Inherits "the keys to the kingdom". Remains illegal.	"If you really love your country, you're gonna have to love moonshine" (S01, E01)
Mark & Jeff*	Camo.	Mark: 4 th Generation Moonshiner (S02, E01) Jeff: was mentored by Jim Tom (S02, E01), 6 th Generation Moonshiner (S02, E06) Lance says Jeff is "7 th Generation" (S04, E01)	Veteran illegal moonshining team.	Mark: "The best tip about the law – stay hid good, stay out of their way" (S04, E07) Jeff: "An old moonshiners cooking secret - fresh bear fat" (S02, E01)

Jim Tom	Varies.	<p>“Living Legend” (S02, E01)</p> <p>“Making moonshine and copper moonshine stills since he was 12 years old” (S02, E01)</p> <p>“been building copper stills since he was 39 years old” (S02, E07)</p> <p>“more than 50 years experience building stills” (S04, E03)</p> <p>“born in 1940 on Christmas night” and saw 1st still at 15 (S04, E04)</p>	<p>Longtime illegal moonshiner & copper still builder.</p> <p>A colorful storyteller and “musician”.</p>	<p>“Rye whiskey, rye whiskey...don’t let me down...gonna take me a drink and then I’ll roam around...”</p> <p>(Song Lyrics) (S02, E06)</p> <p>(Different Version) S02, E07)</p>
Josh & Bill[^]	Denim overalls usually with shirts.	<p>“1st Timers”, “Rookies” (multiple episodes)</p> <p>Josh has a small dog named “Cutie Pie” (featured in many storylines).</p>	Continually struggling (& arguing) team of upstart illegal Moonshiners.	<p>Josh: “I always find myself buzzed about middle of the run... (and) wanting to pass out before the end of the run”</p> <p>Bill: “We get beat down...we knock the dust off & get back up...it’s just always one thing or another with us” (S04, E04)</p>
Lance Waldroup	Varies.	Rookie son of Jeff, says he is an 8 th generation moonshiner (S04, E03)	Fledgling illegal moonshining son.	“Running my own site is gonna help Dad and Mark see me as more responsible” (S04, E03)
<p>Note: All of the characters included here were in at least half (8) of the 16 episodes in this analysis.</p> <p>*The show claims these characters worked closely with real-life moonshiner Popcorn Sutton.</p> <p>[^] The show claims these characters worked closely with real-life moonshiner Barney Barnwell.</p>				

Table 10. Violence - <i>Appalachian Outlaws</i> (History)			
Season & Episode	# of Incidents	Show Length	Timeframe
S01, E02 - Ginseng Fever	99	44 Minutes	1 every 26.7 sec
S01, E06 - The Last Stand	53	“	1 every 49.8 sec
S02, E01 - Root Awakening	69	42 Minutes	1 every 36.5 sec
S02, E09 - Battle at Wolf Creek	142	“	1 every 17.8 sec
	Total	Total	Total
	363	2 hrs 52 Minutes	1 every 28.4 sec
<p>Note: Simple random sample of 25 % (4) the 16 episodes in analysis using a random number generator application.</p> <p>Note: Incidents include images (guns, knives and other weapons), threats (verbal or physical) and acts of violence (including intimidation). Multiple qualifying elements in a single camera shot counted as one incident.</p>			

Table 11. Violence – <i>Moonshiners</i> (Discovery Channel)			
Season & Episode	# of Incidents	Show Length	Timeframe
S01, E06 - A Moonshiner's Farewell	11	42 Minutes	1 every 3 Min, 49 sec
S03, E02 - A Shiner in Kentucky	16	“	1 every 2 Min, 37.5 sec
S03, E08 - Rival Shiners	11	“	1 every 3 Min, 49 sec
S04, E04 - Risky Whiskey	30	“	1 every 1 Min, 24 sec
	Total	Total	Total
	68	2 hrs 48 Minutes	1 every 2 Min, 48 sec
<p>Note: Simple random sample of 25 % (4) the 16 episodes in analysis using a random number generator application.</p> <p>Note: Incidents include images (guns, knives and other weapons), threats (verbal or physical) and acts of violence (including intimidation). Multiple qualifying elements in a single camera shot counted as one incident.</p>			

Table 12. Narrators - *Appalachian Outlaws & Moonshiners*

	Narrator	Region	Background	Known for	Lives in
<i>Appalachian Outlaws</i>	Robert Patrick	GA/OH	Acting in action films & the television series <i>The X-Files</i> .	Gravelly voice with southern accent	Los Angeles
<i>Moonshiners</i>	Jeremy Schwartz	TX/NJ	Founding company member of The Fire Department Theatre Company in NYC.	Voiceover work on a variety of animated TV shows and films.	Los Angeles

Note: Some information obtained from the IMDB (Internet Movie Database).

CURRICULUM VITA

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Education

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE - Louisville, KY 2013 - 2016

MA Program in Sociology,

Focus: Social Effects of Mass Media - Degree Date, May 2016

Thesis Title: "Casting Calls on the Hillbilly Highway: A Content Analysis of Appalachian-Based Reality Television Programming"

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY - Lexington, KY 1985 - 1990

BA in Telecommunications

Focus: Television Production and Social Effects of Mass Media

Teaching Experience

A/V PRODUCTION INSTRUCTOR, Fugazzi College - Lexington, KY 1998

Taught radio and television production at a junior business college.

Professional Experience

FREELANCE AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTION SPECIALIST 1990 - Present

Worked for organizations such as PBS, ESPN and Churchill Downs race track.

TELEVISION PRODUCTION SPECIALIST 1990 - 2005

Worked for network affiliate stations (CBS/ABC) and the QVC cable channel.

Areas of experience include:

- Directing / Technical Directing
- Studio Camera / Field Camera
- Electronic Graphics (Chyron)
- Linear Audio-visual Editing
- Set Design / Lighting Design
- Audio Set-up & Performance

Related Experience

APPALSHOP RADIO PROGRAMMER, WMMT - Whitesburg, KY 1992 - 1997

Created, developed and hosted a show on a local community public radio station.

Memberships

American Sociological Association (ASA) 2014 - Present

Conferences Attended

GSC Regional Research Conference, University of Louisville 2016

Appalachian Symposium, Berea College 2015

Appalachian Research Symposium and Arts Showcase, University of Kentucky 2014

Fall Graduate Research Symposium, University of Louisville 2014