



University of Kentucky
UKnowledge

Theses and Dissertations--Communication

Communication

2014

The Relationship Between Intercultural Communication Experience and College Persistence Among First Generation Appalachian Students

Meredith A. Garrison
University of Kentucky, meredith.king@uky.edu

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

Recommended Citation

Garrison, Meredith A., "The Relationship Between Intercultural Communication Experience and College Persistence Among First Generation Appalachian Students" (2014). *Theses and Dissertations--Communication*. 31.

https://uknowledge.uky.edu/comm_etds/31

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Communication at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Communication by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Meredith A. Garrison, Student

Dr. Brandi Frisby, Major Professor

Dr. Bobi Ivanov, Director of Graduate Studies

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
EXPERIENCE AND COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AMONG FIRST GENERATION
APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By

Meredith A. Garrison

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Brandi Frisby, Professor of Communication,
and Dr. Chike Anyaegbunam, Professor of Journalism and Telecommunication

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

Copyright © Meredith A. Garrison, 2014

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCE AND COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AMONG FIRST GENERATION APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

This study seeks to explore the relationship between intercultural communication experiences and college persistence in first-generation college students from the Central Appalachian region. Because Appalachia has a rich and unique culture, which is often misunderstood, the literature review seeks to establish a basis for studying this relationship as a way to understand the multi-dimensional nature of low-educational attainment in the Appalachian region, particularly Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Using a survey-based quantitative method this study examines Appalachian first generation students attending college as an intercultural communication process through the frame of acculturation theory. Specifically, the study seeks information about the students' previous intercultural communication experiences, cultural identity, intercultural sensitivity, and college persistence. This study attempts to predict first generation, Appalachian students' college persistence with their previous intercultural communication experiences, cultural identity, and intercultural sensitivity.

KEYWORDS: *intercultural communication, Appalachia, first-generation students, acculturation, college persistence.*

Meredith A. Garrison

December 2, 2014

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
EXPERIENCE AND COLLEGE PERSISTENCE AMONG FIRST GENERATION
APPALACHIAN STUDENTS

By

Meredith A. Garrison

Dr. Brandi Frisby

Co-Director of Thesis

Dr. Chike Anyaegbunam

Co-Director of Thesis

Dr. Bobi Ivanov

Director of Graduate Studies

December 2, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though this work is of my own writing and research it should also be attributed to the patience, teaching, and influence of the teachers in my life. First, my advisor Dr. Brandi Frisby should be commended for her abilities as an instructor and an advisor. Without her guidance, knowledge, scholarship, encouragement, and organization I would not have been able to complete my thesis, and I owe her deep gratitude. Secondly, my Thesis Co-chair Dr. Chike Anyaegbunam's scholarship and suggestions have helped me improve my writing and the way I think about cultural communication. Thirdly, I would like to thank Dr. Anthony Limperos for his willingness to serve on my committee and his helpful comments and resources throughout this process. Finally, I owe much gratitude to the University of Kentucky College of Communication and Information Graduate Studies Program and Dean O'Hair for acceptance into the program as a University Scholar, it has been a great honor.

In addition to the work of the scholars before me I would like to acknowledge the influence of my parents and husband. My mom, Tiffany King, ought to be recognized for her decision to homeschool, a decision that influenced the way I think about studying and academics as well as culture and identity. My dad, Jim King, strongly impacted my decision to come to graduate school and to focus my studies on Appalachia. Both of my parents and my husband, Stephen Garrison, were crucial in encouraging me as I found my own cultural identity in Appalachia while abroad in China. My husband has provided support and encouragement throughout this process. To these few and so many more I owe my gratitude.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	5
Culture of Appalachia.....	6
Appalachian College Students and Persistence	6
Acculturation.....	10
Intercultural Competence, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Identity.....	13
Hypotheses and Research Questions.....	17
Summary.....	17
Chapter Three: Methods.....	19
Participants and Procedures.....	19
Instrumentation.....	20
Demographics.....	21
College Persistence Questionnaire.....	22

Intercultural Communication Experience.....	23
Intercultural Sensitivity.....	26
Appalachian Identity.....	27
Data Analysis Plan.....	27
Summary.....	28
Chapter Four: Results.....	29
Post-Hoc Analyses.....	32
Regional Differences.....	32
Familial Education Differences.....	33
Lineage Differences.....	34
Institutional Differences.....	37
Summary.....	40
Chapter Five: Discussion.....	41
Discussion.....	41
Implications.....	48
Limitations.....	50

Future Directions.....	52
Conclusions.....	55
Appendix A.....	56
References.....	62
Vita.....	65

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1, Correlation Matrix.....	31
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Marked by banjo music, rocking chairs on the front porch, and mama's home-cooked food, Appalachia is a region secluded from many of the changes influencing mainstream American. Appalachia is a mountain region spanning 13 states in the eastern half of the United States. Central Appalachia, which includes Kentucky, is the poorest of the five Appalachian sub regions (Appalachia Regional Commission [ARC], 2011).

Kentucky as a whole from 2007-2011 had a higher poverty rate (18%) than the national average (14%) (ARC, 2011) and a similar educational attainment rate to the national average (85%), with 83% of persons over 25 with a college degree (ARC, 2011).

However, the poverty and education levels of the Appalachian region of Kentucky are markedly different than the national, state, and general Appalachian averages. Between 2007 and 2011, Appalachian Kentucky had a poverty rate over 24%, (ARC, 2011). This is coupled with a low rate of educational achievement. Specifically, from 2007-2011, only 72% of persons over 25 in Appalachian Kentucky had a high school diploma (ARC, 2011.) Thus, the Appalachian region of Eastern Kentucky shows the highest poverty rate and the lowest educational attainment in Appalachia (ARC, 2011).

Poverty in central Appalachia (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia) has persisted for over 100 years despite effort to change many of the issues. Former President Kennedy came to Appalachia while campaigning as a senator in 1960 and "was so appalled that he promised to send help if elected president" (Gabriel, 2014).

President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated the “War on Poverty” in 1964. Exactly, 50 years later the problems persist in poverty, low educational attainment, and high alcohol consumption and prescription drug abuse (Gabriel, 2014).

Poverty in the region, while significantly reduced since the 1960s, persists in the Appalachian Mountains along with low educational attainment. Many scholars, ministers, and outsiders claim that the region exhibits a “culture of poverty.” According to Jim King, the president of the Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises (FAHE) who has been working in Appalachian community development for over 25 years, the region not only lacks education and financial means but lacks hope (personal communication, April 11, 2014). The lack of hope is a part of the cycle of poverty argues King (personal communication, April 11, 2014), that exists in the culture. Further, some would argue that the region lacks diversity.

While a large number of the impoverished groups in the U.S. are minority groups, Appalachians are majority (over 95%) white (Lichter & Lisa Cimbulak, 2010; ARC 2011). The ethnic diversity that does exist is racially separated (King, personal communication, April 11, 2014; ARC, 2011). While many counties have a small non-white population, members of that population do not go to the same stores, churches, or public spaces as the white community (King, personal communication, April 11, 2014). Members of the Appalachian region have a strong heritage often do not want to be bothered by outsiders. As the region has evolved, there has been little interaction with the outside world and limited intercultural communication experience hindering the acculturation process when individuals do leave Appalachia. This phenomenon could be

one of the factors involved in the low numbers of central Appalachians obtaining college degrees.

Acculturation, defined by Organista, Marin, and Chun (2009), is the process of cultural learning that an individual experiences when he or she is exposed to a new culture (often over a long period of time). Because of the cultural uniqueness of Appalachia when compared with the rest of the United States, entering into a college or university setting exposes Appalachian students to culture distinct from the students' home culture. In support of this argument, Dees (2008) studied rural students' acculturation in college, establishing entering college for this demographic as an intercultural experience. Dees found that most students from Appalachian Ohio are from a homogenous society and lack experience handling intercultural exchanges. Previous studies have shown that lack of training for intercultural exchange could result in withdraw from the new culture because of an inability to deal with culture shock or navigate cultural differences (Sales, 1975). Other studies suggest that culture plays a bigger role in students' educational attainment at college than simply finances (Haaga, 2004). Cultural issues in helping minority groups in school are discussed frequently. But like Weller (1965) stated in his foundational book on Appalachia, the culture of Appalachia is misunderstood and overlooked. Nevertheless, students who leave Appalachia for college will experience culture shock and intercultural communication. Because they have little access to the same diversity other school districts outside of Appalachia may have, students may lack the necessary tools to discuss and negotiate cultural differences in their own minds and to others in the new college setting. Frustrations, hardships, and lack of support can lead students who are in college to drop

out and return to their homes in the mountains. Thus, the unique aspects of Appalachia that differentiate the area from the outside world are also some of the aspects that perpetuate ongoing low educational attainment and high poverty levels.

Based on this evidence and framed by acculturation theory (Padilla, 1980), this study seeks to examine relationships between intercultural communication experience and competency of Appalachian students who are attending their first semester of their first year of college. This study attempts to uncover the cultural and intercultural experiences that influence Appalachian students' decisions to complete their degree after beginning degrees at a college or university. The results of an exploratory study of this nature have the potential to provide theoretical and empirical foundations to develop interventions and support networks for Appalachian students attending college.

The next chapter will further discuss Appalachian culture and history and provide the theoretical structure for the study of the relationship between intercultural communication experience and competency of Appalachian students and their intention to persist in college.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2002, Elam identified Weller's (1965) book, *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia*, as essential reading to provide insight into Appalachian culture. Weller, a Southern Appalachian minister, said Appalachian culture has been both criticized and romanticized, but it has not been understood. He wrote "Like most of middle class America, I assumed that in our modern, mobile society, we have a fairly homogenous culture and that what, generally, makes us different is our income," (p. 1). Yet, what Weller goes on to describe in his book is the people and the culture of Appalachia—something different and unique from the rest of American culture.

The culture remains intact both in practice and in thought. Mountain regions are secluded in geography, separating them from the culture of the surrounding communities. Hard work and clan independence is important. However, over time independence became individualism as the culture became concerned with existence rather than improvement (Shapiro, 1978 & Weller, 1965 as cited in Elam, 2002). Appalachia is a difficult region and for many years the majority of jobs were in coal mining. With changes in the coal industry most of the mining jobs are now gone. In McDowell county, West Virginia only one in three able bodied adults is employed (Gabriel, 2014). Depression soars, likely linked to an inability to live up to cultural and familial values or low educational attainment, and prescription drug use and drug overdose wipe out entire families in the county (Gabriel, 2014).

Culture of Appalachia

Appalachian people value family first and the culture is highly interdependent within clans. “Kin” are the most important function of life for an Appalachian person. The family network is a fierce strength in hard times according to researchers Lichter and Cimbula (2010). Christian values and religiosity are prevalent in many regions of Appalachia, especially the central and southern regions. Fatalism often combines with Christianity in fundamentalism as a way to deal with the harsh realities of poverty (Caudill, 1963; Clarke, 1997; McVey, 1949; Weller, 1965, as cited in Elam, 2002).

The Appalachian culture makes a definite distinction between in-group and out-group and families are incredibly independent as a group and as individuals (Elam, 2002). As a result, leaving the area for school or work is often looked down upon, as it may be perceived as, at an extreme, betraying the in-group, familial culture (Gabriel, 2014). The Appalachian family values independence for the group. Historically, most people considered education to be a private matter that the state should not intervene with and no mention of education was made in the first two Kentucky constitutions (Elam, 2002). According to McVey (1949) (as cited in Elam, 2002) politicians and the wealthy lived in the cities and, consequently, few dollars were put towards education in the Appalachian regions. Taken together, Appalachian identity comes from family (kin and clan) as well as the land itself, rather than educational pursuits (Elam, 2002; Hand & Payne, 2008).

Appalachian College Students and Persistence

Recall from the introduction that in the central Appalachian region barely over 70% of persons over 25 have a high school diploma (ARC, 2011). Of those, over 50% never go on to get an Associates or Baccalaureate degree. Central Appalachia remains

one of the nation's poorest areas. The lack of educational attainment has been explained by the fact that these individuals live in the poorest counties of Appalachia (Haaga, 2004). However, according to Haaga (2004) even with full-tuition and boarding students from the area still drop out of college at a higher rate than the national average. The ARC reports:

A recent analysis of attrition of Berea College students, mostly Appalachian residents, found that even with full tuition scholarships, almost no room and board costs, and a standardized work-study program, students from low-income families were at considerably greater risk of dropping out than students from more middle-class families. (Haaga, 2004, p. 5)

For example, retention at Berea College for Appalachian students in ARC designated distressed counties has consistently been 10% lower than other counties in the United States (Berea College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2013). At the University of Kentucky only 70% of Kentucky Appalachian first generation students came back to college after their first year of school while non-Appalachian, non-first generation students came back to college at a rate of 80% (University of Kentucky Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2013). These alarming statistics can, at least in part, be explained by the cultural norms, values, and attitudes of Appalachian students who attempt to transition into college.

Because of the low numbers of college students, and eventually lower number of college graduates, in central Appalachia (ARC, 2011) the probability of coming from a family with one or more parents who graduated college is also quite low. As a result, a large number of the students from Appalachia attending college are first generation students. Hand and Payne (2008) define a first generation student as one whose parents have never attended or enrolled in college or higher education beyond high school. First

generation students not only have cultural misunderstandings to deal with but also close familial misunderstandings. For an Appalachian student, lack of support from parents, or simply a misunderstanding regarding class content could be detrimental to their college persistence because of the strong value of family may override the will to persist in college.

Most college students, both first and continuous generation students, struggle between independence and familial obligations (Hand & Payne, 2008). But the literature shows that first generation students experience a particularly strong strain on family relationships because of college (Hand & Payne, 2008). Findings from qualitative interviews with first generation students in Appalachia showed the struggle related to the cultural orientation students have towards family and the land itself (Hand & Payne, 2008).

Appalachian students who choose to attend college are already fighting cultural norms which tell them that “college is not for them” (James L. King, personal communication, November 3, 2013). Additionally, without any previous intercultural communication experiences the students may quickly leave college, even community college, because they lack the necessary skills for negotiating their cultural identity and the potentially new culture surrounding them. Unlike international students, Appalachian students may struggle with making sense cultural differences because they are from the same state or country as the majority of their American classmates. Yet, there are still cultural differences between Appalachian Americans and non-Appalachian Americans, even if they were born in the same state (Samovar et al., 1981). While international students will often face positive family pressure to complete college (100% of

international students at Berea College graduated with a degree), Appalachian first-generation students may be faced with misunderstanding from their families (Dees, 2008). That is to say that Appalachian students who chose to attend college likely have parents who do not understand why the student feels strongly about attending college or who disagree with what the student is learning.

In his qualitative study, Dees (2008) found that because the students from the rural environment were previously (prior to college) isolated from outside opinions and ideas their experience in college was an intercultural experience. Students reported that they would not often discuss college classes or experiences at home or families because of differing opinions. Some family members strongly opposed the students' exposure to new ideas and worldviews (Dees, 2008). Students also reported struggling to maintain their beliefs and worldviews while attending college. Dees (2008) stated that this study "demonstrates the complexity of rural/Appalachian students' cultural conceptions. Students struggle to form a more holistic view of the world while maintaining important cultural perspectives regarding sense of place, community, and family." (p. 10). Essentially the first-generation, rural, Appalachian students struggled to negotiate their cultural identity with their families and in the classroom.

Appalachian culture, social and economic environment, cultural beliefs about education, and lack of intercultural experience uniquely situates potential Appalachian students for a challenging first semester or first year in college. When people leave Appalachia to attend a college or university, acculturation is often difficult for a variety of reasons, and the result is often poor academic performance or high drop-out rates.

Acculturation

Appalachian students face many difficulties when choosing to enter a new culture and, according to Dees (2008), acculturation is one of the struggles of the rural student entering college. The theoretical origin of acculturation is found in the field of anthropology (Berry, 1980). The phenomenon occurs when at least two distinct cultures interact and there is a change in at least one of those cultures (Berry, 1980). The process of acculturation may involve varying levels of conflict, but even if acculturation is smooth, one will still experience conflict because values are deeply rooted in one's person and in their culture (Berry, 1980). Adaption is the reduction of acculturative conflict and it can result in one of four ways: assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation (Berry, 1980).

Assimilation into a host (new) culture involves rejecting the home culture and fully becoming part of the new culture by "relinquishing cultural identity" (Berry, 1980, p. 13). In the case of an Appalachian student attending college the student may choose to relinquish all identification with his or her hometown, family, or culture during the acculturation process. However, given the way in which Appalachian culture is engrained in its members, this may be a difficult process. Integration is the process of participating in and becoming part of the new culture while still maintaining the identity of the home culture (Berry, 1980). This is generally seen as the most positive form of adaption to culture. When dealing with Appalachian students, integration involves the student being able to function both at home and at college while maintaining a cultural identity of both places. Rejection occurs when the new culture is rejected in favor of the home culture which can result in either withdraw or segregation (Berry, 1980). High drop-out rates of

Appalachian college suggests that acculturative conflict results in the rejection of college culture or mainstream American culture in favor of the home culture (e.g. moving back home). Deculturation is not only difficult to comprehend, but is essentially ethnocide in which a person or group does not retain the home culture but also rejects positive relation to the new culture which is often viewed as a marginalized society (Berry, 1980). It is unlikely that any person or group will deculturate, and thus, unlikely for the Appalachian student to assume the process of deculturation while at college or a university.

Padilla (1980) developed a model of acculturation which predicted how well a person would acculturate based on their cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. Cultural awareness refers to knowledge and understanding about the home and the host cultures, while ethnic loyalty refers to a preference of one group over the other (Padilla, 1980). The empirical study looked at Hispanic acculturation which showed that areas with high-ethnic density were less likely to acculturate than those in low-ethnic density areas (Padilla, 1980). Essentially, in a homogenous society, persons from that society are less likely to integrate or assimilate into the host culture, according to Padilla's (1980) model. According to Padilla's model, it is expected that Appalachian students may reject college (e.g., host culture) in favor of home, family, and the land familiar to them (e.g., home culture) because they are from a homogenous culture. Others may choose assimilation and leave behind the home culture in favor of the host culture. For example, in cases where Appalachian students leave for college, persist and college, and perhaps do not return after graduation, are likely to have assimilated more successfully.

To further complicate matters, Appalachian students may experience culture shock when first attending a college or university which, if not properly understood by

the individual can lead to rejection of the host culture (Sales, 1975). Culture shock occurs when a person from one culture is immersed into a new culture and it produces a lot of anxiety (Lustig & Koester, 1999, p. 342). Severe culture shock resulting in withdraw from the new culture was suspected to be caused by a lack of intercultural communication competency skills by Sales (1975). Specifically, Sales studied a semester at sea program which began to implement a cross-cultural competencies training program for the students. The goal of the program was to (1) facilitate student emotional readiness to encounter the new culture, (2) provide numerous skills to deal with cultural differences, (3) structure initial contact with a different culture in such a way that he or she experiences the boundaries of his own culture without becoming frightened or alienated by the contrast culture, and (4) to help the student understand how his or her own culture can help or hurt in encountering a different culture. Students who were untrained in these four areas did not have the desired experience (Sales, 1975). A student coming from a highly diverse area with many intercultural experiences may already understand how to approach conversations regarding cultural differences and may not experience culture shock to the degree that a student who has no former experience would. This is to say that the expectation a person has of the intercultural experience when faced with reality mediates the outcome of that situation.

According to Dees (2008) there is a need to prepare students with limited intercultural experiences, like those coming from Appalachia, for the diversity and intercultural communication that they will encounter through the acculturation process when attending college. A positive acculturative process includes development of

intercultural competence and sensitivity, as well as a strong cultural identity (Padilla, 1980).

Intercultural Competence, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Identity

Lustig and Koester (1999) define intercultural communication as “a symbolic process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings” (p. 52). The definition supposes successful intercultural communication, when the attempt at communicating creates a shared meaning. However, not all communication is successful. Lustig and Koester (1999) offer a second definition which includes the key word “competent.” That definition is: “Intercultural communication occurs when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently” (p. 59).

Intercultural communication competency is an important part of communicating successfully with those from a different culture. Lustig and Koester (1999) give 6 components of intercultural competence: context, appropriateness, effectiveness, knowledge, motivations, and actions. Context refers to the competence of the cultural situation, while appropriateness refers to the competency involved in what is appropriate communication for that specific context regarding intercultural communication. Effectiveness refers to how successful the communication between both parties is. Knowledge refers to the knowledge of the culture. Motivations indicates the reasoning behind the intercultural interaction. Finally, actions refers to the actual communication which takes place, both verbal and non-verbal. Koester and Olebe (as cited in Lustig & Koester, 1999) found 8 behaviors linked to these components: Display of respect, orientation to knowledge, empathy, task role behavior, relational role behavior,

interaction management, tolerance for ambiguity, and interaction posture. The behaviors and components of intercultural communication competence are part of the concept of intercultural sensitivity. According to Chen and Starosta (2000), “the affective aspect of intercultural communication competence is represented by the concept of intercultural sensitivity,” (p. 4) and it refers to a person’s motivation to “understand, appreciate, and accept cultural differences,” (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 231, as cited in Chen & Starosta, 2000).

Intercultural sensitivity itself is defined as the capability of recognizing and accepting cultural differences (Bennett, 1993). Bennett’s (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity explains the process as happening in 6 distinct stages, of which the first 3 make up the construct “ethnocentrism” and the second 3 make up “ethnorelativism.”

Ethnocentrism is the view point that “other” cultures are inferior and includes the stages of denial, defense, and minimization. In the stage of denial, persons refuse to acknowledge other forms of culture as valid and may dehumanize other cultural groups (Bennett, 1993). Persons in the stage of defense acknowledge other cultures, but with hostility and prejudice because differences are perceived as dangerous (Bennett, 1993). The final stage of ethnocentrism is the minimization of cultural differences (Bennett, 1993). The next 3 developmental stages, acceptance, adaptation, and integration, make up the construct ethnorelativism (Bennett, 1993). It should be noted that a person can remain in one stage without developing to the next stage and many people do not develop intercultural sensitivity past an ethnocentric orientation.

Ethnorelativism does not assume that the culture a person grew up in is central to reality, but instead assumes culture to be relative (Mahoney & Schramber, 2004). The first stage (acceptance) stops minimizing cultural differences and moves towards respecting differences (Bennett, 1993). Adaptation is the full respect of cultural differences as well as an empathy for those differences (Bennett, 1993). Finally, integration is the process of including both cultures and retaining values from both cultures to become fully, bicultural (Bennett, 1993). Integration is the most positive form of acculturation (Berry, 1980).

Intercultural communication competence is Lustig and Koester (1999) note that intercultural communication competency plays an important role in learning. The focus of their writing is on non-white experience and challenges in the classroom, however, culture comes from more than just race. The struggles of Appalachian students in the classroom may be traced back to a lack of intercultural communication experience, and consequently, a lack of competency.

Without prior experience with intercultural communication it is exceedingly difficult to understand one's own cultural identity. According to the definition provided by Milton Bennett (1993), cultural identity is a social construction and intercultural understanding is a process. Collier and Thomas (1988) defined cultural identity as "identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct" (p. 113). Intercultural competence is then defined as the ability to negotiate these identifications in a way that creates a shared meaning with the new culture (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Furthermore, cultural identity cannot be understood until intercultural communication takes place.

Collier and Thomas (1988) said that intercultural communication is filled with the negotiation and comparisons of two or more cultures. That is to say that an individual comes to an understanding about his or her own cultural identity through the communicative process of negotiating new cultural norms which were previously foreign, and comparing the home culture with the culture one encounters.

Studies have supported that diversity affects the classroom experience in a generally positive direction and leads to a number of positive learning outcomes (Alger, et al., 2000). However, students who lack the tools to interact with those from a different culture may experience culture shock in a way that causes them to dislike that culture and draw away from it (Sales, 1975). If Appalachian students are indeed entering a culturally diverse college experience and consequently experiencing culture shock, the lack of intercultural sensitivity, competence, and anxiety from culture shock may hinder acculturation and lead to a negative first year experience at college. According to Padilla's model many Appalachian students drop out of college rejecting the host culture which is likely related to low intercultural sensitivity and students may experience denial or defense.

Central Appalachian students often have no way to frame their reality and culture against the non-Appalachian culture of a university. Unlike a student traveling to a foreign country, there may not be a culture shock or acculturation education program for an Appalachian student going to college for the first time. Studying the relationship between the intercultural communication experience prior to high school graduation and college success could easily have implications for implementing school programs, classes, or exchanges to assist Appalachian students with the transition to college by

focusing on issues of intercultural communication competence, expectations, and intercultural sensitivity. Allowing students to experience culture and develop skills to cope with small amounts of intercultural communication could give students the tools to decrease anxiety and culture shock in the future. Helping students in the central Appalachian region realize that they view the world through the lens of their own culture could strengthen the students' willingness to attend higher education institutions, and likely their success and retention rates once they are at college. Results from the study will provide knowledge and insight to create and expand educational programs to improve college success for Appalachian students.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses and research questions are posed:

H_{1a}: A student's intercultural communication experience is significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.

H_{1b}: A student's Appalachian identity orientation is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.

H_{1c}: A student's intercultural sensitivity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college?

RQ₂: What is the relationship between a student's Appalachian identity and intercultural communication experience?

Summary

Chapter two reviewed the literature leading up to the hypotheses and research question regarding the acculturation and persistence of Appalachian college students as

related to their intercultural communication experiences, competency, and sensitivity. Chapter three will explain the quantitative research methods that will be employed to study the research questions posed in chapter two.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter will outline the methods used to conduct this study. Specifically it will outline the participants, procedures, instruments, and data analysis plan. This study was a cross-sectional survey of current college students who are first-generation and Appalachian.

Participants and Procedures

After obtaining IRB approval, first generation Appalachian students at the colleges, universities, and technical schools in Appalachian regions of Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee were recruited using snowball and purposive sampling through the college and university offices specific to first generation or Appalachian student services. These offices were provided with a recruitment email and were asked to send the survey out to students via email list-serves. The participants had to be currently attending a college, university, or technical school in the region and in their first semester of their first year of college. Subjects needed to be over the age of 18 and an undergraduate student in order to participate. During recruitment, potential participants were sent information about the study via email and social networking sites which included a link to a survey hosted on Qualtrics. Participants then completed the survey at a time and place convenient for them.

Although 120 participants began the survey, only 87 completed the survey for a 28% attrition rate. Of the 87 retained the sample included males ($n = 39$) and females ($n = 48$) ranging in age from 18 to 52 ($M = 19.31$, $SD = 4.17$). Regarding ethnicity, the sample was reflective of the expected Appalachian student population with a large

majority white/Caucasian ($n = 78$) and only 10 non-white participants (4 black/African-American, 2 Asian, 2 Hispanic/Latino, and 1 unspecified “other”).

The overwhelming majority of the participants were from an Appalachian county in eastern Kentucky ($n = 59$). A small number of participants were from West-Virginia ($n = 5$) and other Appalachian states in the south-central and north-central regions including Tennessee, Ohio, and North Carolina ($n = 5$). Non-Appalachian and unspecified counties in the states with Appalachian counties made up a small majority of participants ($n = 18$). The majority of participants had lived in their respective counties for multiple generations ($n = 46$), while the other half of the participants indicated their families had lived in their respective counties for 1-2 generations ($n = 22$) or less than a generation ($n = 19$).

Slightly less than half of the participants were first-generation (neither parent attended college) ($n = 37$). The majority of participants had at least one parent who had attended college ($n = 50$). Most participants came from the University of Kentucky ($n = 39$), and others indicated their institution as Eastern Kentucky University ($n = 30$), Marshall University ($n = 8$), or Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($n = 8$). Most participants were first year students in their first semester ($n = 65$; 75%) and over 90% were in their first year or sophomore year ($n = 10$).

Instrumentation

The study employed a self-report survey which was administered online using Qualtrics. Participants received the link for the survey through an email asking them to participate. Once the participants clicked on the link they were guided to a page which explained that they could opt out of the study at any time during the survey (which took approximately 15 minutes to complete). This page also explained the study and asked for

electronic consent to participate. Then they completed the survey which included 5 sections: 1) a demographics, 2) College Persistence Questionnaire (Davidson, Beck, and Milligan, 2009), 3) previous experience with intercultural communication, 4) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000), and 5) the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992) (see appendix A for the full survey).

Demographics

The demographics portion of the survey was completed prior to the rest of the survey because the information was crucial for determining fit for the study and for analysis. The demographics portion of the survey included 11 items: 1) age, 2) biological sex, 3) race/ethnicity, 4) state and county that the participant considered home, 5) how long the participant's family has lived in the county and, 6) if/when his or her family immigrated there, 7) the education level of the father, 8) the education level of the mother, 9) if the participant was the first or only person to attend college, 10) the name of his or her institution, and 11) in what semester of college the participant was currently enrolled. The first 4 items allowed participants to enter in their response. In item 5, participants responded with answers such as "my family has lived there as long as I can remember," "less than five years," "for generations." These items were then organized into 3 categories: less than a generation, 1-2 generations, and many generations. Item 6 included responses such as "my family immigrated here during my lifetime," "my parents immigrated there," "my grandparents immigrated there," "my family immigrated over 100 years ago," "I do not know." Items 7 and 8 asked participants to select the highest level of education for each parent such as "GED/high school diploma," "some college," or "B.A. or B.S." Item 9 (if they were the first or only person in their family to go to

college) was answered as a yes or no question. Item 10 was an open response in which participants indicated the college or university they were presently attending. Item 11 asked participants to select the closest matching response to indicate their current educational status such as “first semester of freshman year.”

College Persistence Questionnaire

College persistence was measured using a portion of the College Persistence Questionnaire-Version 2 (CPQ-V2) developed by Davidson, Beck, and Milligan (2009). The original measure included 53 items with 6 factors: institutional commitment, degree commitment, academic integration, support services satisfaction, and academic conscientiousness. Version two of the questionnaire (CPQ-V2) identified an additional 4 factors that predict student attrition (Gore, 2010). Of the 10 factors, the best predictor of student retention was found to be the subscale named institutional commitment (Davidson et al., 2009; Gore, 2010). In validation studies conducted by Gore (2010), student retention was also found to be predicted by the degree commitment subscale. Thus, based on Davidson et al. and Gore, both the institutional commitment subscale and the degree commitment subscale made up the measure for intention to persist for this study. The final measurement selected was 10 items long (items 1-6 measure degree commitment, items 7-10 measure institutional commitment) and answered using a 5 point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and the option *not applicable* (as used by Gore, 2010). The original questionnaire was altered from a question to a statement to which participants responded how much they agreed with the statements. For instance the original questionnaire asked participants to respond to questions such as “how likely are you to re-enroll here next semester” on a scale of 1

(not very likely) to 5 (very likely). That question then became the statement “I am likely to re-enroll here next semester” and participants responded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to create consistent response options throughout the scale as opposed to differing response options utilized in the original questionnaire. Previous reliability for the institutional commitment subscale was .70 and .78 for the degree commitment subscale (Davidson et al., 2009). In this study, each subscale was reliable: institutional commitment, $\alpha = .83$ ($M = 8.00$, $SD = 4.14$), and degree commitment, $\alpha = .93$ ($M = 8.74$, $SD = 5.08$).

Intercultural Communication Experience

The intercultural communication experience scale asked questions regarding the participants’ previous experiences with intercultural communication. The purpose of the measurement is to gain understanding of the degree of exposure a student had with intercultural communication prior to attending college. This measure was developed for the purpose of this study and is made up of a list of 12 items that describe potential intercultural experiences. The items were scaled on a Likert-type scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). Example items are: “growing up I had a lot of friends who were of a different ethnicity than me,” “I have had a lot of teachers who were of a different ethnicity than me,” “I have lived in another country for a period of time longer than 1 month,” and, “I have been on a mission trip outside of the U.S.”

Because the scale was newly developed for the study it was subjected to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Criteria for factor and item retention were: 1) eigenvalues greater than 1.0 for retained factors, 2) primary factor loadings of .50 or greater, 3) no secondary factor loading exceeding .40 4) loading on a factor with a

minimum of two items (Comrey & Lee, 1992). Item 12 allowed for text entry for other experiences and was treated as its own variable, thus dropped from the scale for purposes of the EFA. Of the 11 retained items the Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation found 2 components which accounted for a total of 62.56% of the variance. The first component was labeled interpersonal intercultural communication experience (eigenvalue of 5.15, 46.87% of the variance) and the second component was labeled immersive intercultural communication experience (eigenvalue of 1.73, 15.72% of the variance) for their respective items. Each subscale was labeled for the common theme in the items that loaded on the respective factors. The interpersonal component is made up of 5 items with factor loadings ranging from .60 to .90:

1. Growing up I had friends who were ethnically or culturally different from me
2. I talked with my friends frequently about our cultural differences and similarities
3. I have met a lot of people who are not originally from the U.S.
4. In school (elementary, middle, and high school) I had teachers who were ethnically or culturally different from me.
5. In my classes we talked about cultural differences and similarities.

The items in the interpersonal component relate to the interpersonal relationships of the participants. The first two items are related to interpersonal friendships and communication within those friendships. The third item relates to acquaintances with non-Americans. Finally, items four and five both relate to interpersonal connections and communication within the classroom. These items differ from the second component

found by the EFA because they are related more with interpersonal connections and communication than the items in the second component.

The second component labeled immersive relates to a set of questions indicating a more intense experience than a single relationship or conversation outside of the home. The immersive component is made up of the remaining 6 items from the intercultural communication experience with factor loadings ranging from .60 to .81:

6. I speak a language besides English proficiently or fluently
7. My family has hosted an exchange student from another country.
8. I have studied abroad
9. I have been on a mission trip outside of the U.S.
10. I went on vacation to another country
11. I have lived outside of the U.S. for a period of time longer than 1 month.

The immersive subscale's six items each indicate an immersive intercultural experience. The first item relates to bi- or multi-lingualism. Speaking more than one language allows a person to interact in a fully bicultural or multicultural way in a manner that cannot be experienced through a single language. This experience is immersive. The second item relates to hosting an exchange student. Rather than simply meeting someone not from the U.S. or from the culture of the participant, hosting an exchange student allows for deeper cultural understanding and immersive experience, as that person often lives with the host family for an extended period of time. While this experience is, arguably more immersive for the exchange student, it is also immersive for the host (Stephenson, 1999).

The interpersonal subscale was reliable at .80 ($M = 14.53$, $SD = 4.54$). The immersive subscale was reliable at .88 ($M = 9.41$, $SD = 5.40$). Thus, all further analyses used each dimension separately.

Intercultural Sensitivity

The intercultural sensitivity scale by Chen and Starosta (2000) was selected for this study to measure intercultural sensitivity. This survey employed Chen and Starosta's (2000) shortened 24-item scale rather than the original 44-item scale to prevent participant fatigue. Participants completed the scale by selecting responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale measured five factors: Interaction engagement (e.g., "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures"), respect for cultural differences (e.g., "I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded"), interaction confidence (e.g., "I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures"), interaction enjoyment (e.g., "I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures"), and interaction attentiveness (e.g., "I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures"). All factors were treated as a unidimensional as done in the original study (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse-coded before summing the 24 items. The scale reliability was .86 in the original study and it also demonstrated construct validity when compared with the intercultural communication attitude scale and the intercultural effectiveness scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000). In this study, the scale was reliable, $\alpha = .89$ ($M = 90.19$, $SD = 13.48$).

Appalachian Identity

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) was used to measure Appalachian identity. For the purpose of this study the measure was slightly modified to replace the term “ethnic group” with “Appalachia.” MEIM measures ethnic identity search and affirmation, belonging, and commitment. In this case MEIM measures those constructs specific to a participant’s Appalachian identity. Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) to a series of 12 statements such as “I feel a strong attachment towards Appalachia” or “I have pride in Appalachia” The measure was tested originally for use with adolescents and had an acceptable reliability of .82 (Phinney, 1992). In this study, the scale was internally reliable, $\alpha = .96$ ($M = 35.96$, $SD = 13.19$).

Data Analysis Plan

H_{1a} hypothesized that “a student’s intercultural communication experience is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” H_{1a} was calculated by running four linear regressions to attempt to predict whether or not intercultural communication experiences, both the interpersonal and immersive experiences, prior to college have an impact on intention to persist. The linear regressions used the intercultural communication experiences subscales, immersive and intercultural, as the independent variables with both CPQ-V2 subscales, institutional commitment and degree commitment, entered as separate dependent variables. To further analyze what may influence Appalachian student persistence in college, each individual item indicative of intercultural communication experience will also be entered as predictors to identify specific experiences that are more influential.

H_{1b} hypothesized that “a student’s Appalachian identity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” To analyze H_{1b} two linear regressions were used, with MEIM as the independent variable and CPQ-V2 subscale, institutional commitment and degree commitment, as separate dependent variables.

H_{1c} hypothesized that “a student’s intercultural sensitivity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” H_{1c} was analyzed using two linear regressions with the intercultural sensitivity scale as the independent variable and CPQ-V2 subscales, institutional commitment and degree commitment, as separate dependent variables.

RQ₂ asked about the relationship between Appalachian identity and intercultural communication experiences. RQ₂ was analyzed using a Pearson correlation between MEIM and the intercultural communication experiences subscales.

Summary

Chapter three described the participants, procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis plan used for this study. Chapter four will describe the results.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The research questions posed in this study attempt to understand what and how intercultural experiences, intercultural sensitivity, and cultural identity influence college persistence. Specifically, this chapter reports the results of the research questions and analyses to show the potential effects that intercultural communication experience (interpersonal and immersive), Appalachian identity, and intercultural sensitivity have on Appalachian students' college persistence.

H1_a hypothesized that “a student’s intercultural communication experience is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” This hypothesis was tested using a two linear regressions. First, a linear regression tested whether or not the independent variables, interpersonal and immersive intercultural communication experience, were a significant predictor of institutional commitment, the dependent variable. The analysis found interpersonal intercultural communication experience was not a significant predictor of institutional commitment, $F(1, 39) = .092, p = .37$, adjusted $r^2 = -.023$. The results of the analysis also showed that immersive intercultural communication experience was not a significant predictor of degree commitment $F(1, 78) = .81, p = .76$, adjusted $r^2 = -.002$.

Another linear regression was used to analyze if interpersonal and immersive intercultural communication experience (independent variables) were a significant predictor of degree commitment (dependent variable). The results of the linear regression showed that interpersonal intercultural communication experience was not a significant predictor of institutional commitment $F(1, 38) = .002, p = .96$, adjusted $r^2 = -.026$. The

results also showed that immersive intercultural communication experience was not a significant predictor of degree commitment $F(1, 77) = .69, p = .41$, adjusted $r^2 = -.004$.

H1_b hypothesized that “a student’s Appalachian identity orientation is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college?” This hypothesis was tested using two linear regressions. The first linear regression used to test H1_b used Appalachian identity as the independent variable and institutional commitment as the dependent variable. Appalachian identity was found to be an insignificant predictor of institutional commitment, $F(1, 34) = .442, p = .51$, adjusted $r^2 = -.016$.

Next a linear regression was used to test whether Appalachian identity was a significant predictor of degree commitment. The model with Appalachian identity predicting degree commitment was not significant, $F(1, 76) = .90, p = .35$, adjusted $r^2 = -.001$.

H1_c stated that “a student’s intercultural sensitivity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” This hypothesis was tested using two linear regressions. The first linear regression sought to find out whether or not intercultural sensitivity (independent variable) was a significant predictor of institutional commitment (dependent variable). According to the model, intercultural sensitivity was found to be an insignificant predictor of institution commitment, $F(1, 36) = .72, p = .40$, adjusted $r^2 = -.008$.

The second linear regression used to test H1_c specifically analyzed if intercultural sensitivity (independent variable) was a significant predictor of degree commitment (dependent variable). Intercultural sensitivity was also an insignificant predictor of degree commitment, $F(1, 79) = .63, p = .43$, adjusted $r^2 = -.005$.

RQ2 inquired, “What is the relationship between a student’s Appalachian identity and intercultural communication experience?” RQ2 was analyzed using two-tailed Pearson correlations between Appalachian identity (MEIM) and both the interpersonal and immersive subscales of intercultural communication experience. The analysis found an insignificant correlation, $r(77) = .21, p = .07$, between Appalachian identity and the interpersonal subscale of the intercultural communication experience scale. The analysis found similarly insignificant correlation between Appalachian identity and immersive intercultural communication experience ($r = -.15, N = 77, p = .21$). Pearson correlations were also used to look at the relationships between all of the scaled variables (interpersonal intercultural communication experience, immersive intercultural communication experience, Appalachian identity, intercultural sensitivity, institutional commitment, and degree commitment) (see Table 1). There were no significant results, however, interpersonal intercultural communication experience and intercultural sensitivity was approaching significance ($r = .21, N = 77, p = .07$).

Table 1
Correlation Matrix

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1	--	.493**	0.034	.028	-0.048	-0.102	14.53	4.54
2	.493**	--	.0125	-0.146	0.008	-0.094	9.41	5.40
3	0.034	0.125	--	0.164	0.113	0.108	35.96	13.19
4	0.208	-0.146	0.164	--	-0.14	0.089	90.19	13.47
5	-0.048	0.008	0.113	-0.14	--	.796**	8.00	4.14
6.	-0.102	-0.094	-0.108	-0.089	.796**	--	8.74	5.07
M	14.53	9.41	35.96	90.19	8.00	8.74	--	--
SD	4.54	5.40	13.19	13.47	4.14	5.07	--	--

Note: 1= interpersonal intercultural communication experience, 2= immersive intercultural communication experience, 3 = Appalachian Identity, 4 = Intercultural Sensitivity, 5= intuitional commitment, 6= degree commitment.

** Indicates the correlation is significant at the .001 level.

Post-Hoc Analyses

In addition to the analyses run in SPSS to test the four research questions, a number of post-hoc analyses were used to learn more in-depth information regarding participants' demographics, intercultural communication experiences, sensitivity, cultural identity, and college persistence. The following post-hoc analyses look at regional differences in participants, familial education differences, institutional differences, and lineage differences.

Regional Differences

As noted, 19 participants either did not specify a county or specified a non-Appalachian county. Previous research suggested that the homogeneity in central Appalachia leaves Appalachian students with more difficulties acculturating into a new culture (Padilla, 1980). In order to determine whether or not there was a difference between those participants identified as non-Appalachian and the Appalachian participants regarding their interpersonal and immersive intercultural communication experience, two independent samples tests were used to test group differences.

The first independent samples test looked at the interpersonal intercultural communication experience (dependent variable) difference between those who selected an Appalachian county and those who did not (independent variable). There were no significant results between the Appalachian group ($N = 62$, $M = 14.19$, $SD = 4.28$) and the non-Appalachian/non-specified group ($N = 18$, $M = 15.67$, $SD = 5.23$), $t(78) = -1.20$, $p = .23$.

Another independent samples t-test was used to test differences regarding immersive intercultural communication experience (dependent variable) between the

Appalachian and non-specified/non-Appalachian groups (independent variable). Similar to the previously stated results, There were no significant differences between those who selected Appalachian counties ($N = 62, M = 9.51, SD = 5.34$) and those who did not ($N = 17, M = 9.00, SD = 5.76$), $t(77) = .35, p = .72$.

Familial Education Differences

According to previous research (Hand & Payne, 2008), first-generation students are less likely to persist in college. To test the difference in this sample, two independent samples tests were used to look at the differences between those students whose fathers attended college and those whose did not, as well as, the students whose mothers attended college and those who did not.

The first independent samples test looked at whether or not there was a significant difference between students whose fathers attended college and those who did not (independent sample) and their degree commitment (dependent variable). Prior to running the independent samples test, the independent variable of the father's education level was recoded from original 9 groups in the survey into two groups (those who attended college and those who did not). There were no significant differences on degree commitment between the students whose fathers attended college ($N = 41, M = 7.93, SD = 2.49$) and those whose did not ($N = 54, M = 9.35, SD = 6.33$), $t(93) = 1.36, p = .177$.

Another independent samples test looked at whether or not there was a significant difference between participants whose fathers attended college and those whose did not (independent variable) regarding their institutional commitment (dependent variable). There were no significant differences between the participants whose fathers attended

college ($N = 25$, $M = 7.36$, $SD = 2.89$) and those whose did not ($N = 17$, $M = 8.94$, $SD = 5.46$) regarding their institutional commitment, $t(40) = 1.22$, $p = .23$.

The second independent samples test looked at whether or not there was a significant difference between students whose mothers attended college and those who did not (independent sample) and their degree commitment (dependent variable). Prior to running the independent samples test, the independent variable of the mother's education level was recoded from original 9 groups in the survey into two groups (those who attended college and those who did not). There were no significant differences in degree commitment between the students whose mothers attended college ($N = 42$, $M = 8.30$, $SD = 4.14$) and those whose did not ($N = 53$, $M = 9.07$, $SD = 5.72$), $t(93) = .73$, $p = .47$.

Another independent samples test looked at whether or not there was a significant difference between participants whose mothers attended college and those whose did not (independent variable) regarding their institutional commitment (dependent variable). There were no significant differences between the participants whose mothers attended college ($N = 24$, $M = 8.08$, $SD = 3.74$) and those whose did not ($N = 18$, $M = 7.89$, $SD = 4.72$) regarding their institutional commitment, $t(40) = -.15$, $p = .88$.

Lineage Differences

The culture of Appalachia is one of the explanations for poor college persistence for first-generation students (Haaga, 2004). It was suspected that those whose families had lived in Appalachia for multiple generations would have different outcomes than the other two groups who had not lived in Appalachia as long in their college persistence, intercultural communication experience, and intercultural sensitivity. Participants in the study were asked to indicate how long they had lived in the Appalachian county where

they were presently located. These open ended responses were coded into three groups: 1) less than one generation, 2) 1-2 generations, and 3) multiple generations. One-way ANOVAs were used to analyze differences in the three generational groups (lived in their county less than a generation, 1-2 generations, or multiple generations) in each of the scaled variables (interpersonal intercultural communication experience, immersive intercultural communication experience, Appalachian identity, intercultural sensitivity, degree commitment, and institutional commitment).

First, an ANOVA was used to test for group differences in the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county had on their (independent variable) interpersonal intercultural communication experience (dependent variable). There was no significant effect on the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county and their interpersonal intercultural communication experience $F(2, 77) = 2.31, p = .106$. Students whose families had lived in the specified county for less than a generation had similar interpersonal intercultural communication experience ($M = 16.11, SD = 4.28$) to those whose families had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 15.10, SD = 4.30$) and those whose families had lived there for multiple generations ($M = 13.54, SD = 4.63$).

A second ANOVA was used to test for group differences in the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county (independent variable) and their immersive intercultural communication experience (dependent variable). There was no significant between the groups, $F(2, 76) = .44, p = .65$. Participants had similar immersive intercultural experiences when their families had lived in the county for less than a generation ($M = 10.00, SD = 6.28$), had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 10.00,$

$SD = 5.67$), and had lived there for more than 2 generations ($M = 8.85$, $SD = 4.91$) and their immersive intercultural communication experience.

A third ANOVA was used to test for group differences in the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county (independent variable) had on their Appalachian identity (dependent variable). There were no significant differences between participants and their Appalachian identity, according to the model, $F(2, 75) = .80$, $p = .45$. Participants whose families had lived in the county for less than a generation ($M = 38.39$, $SD = 14.41$), had very similar Appalachian identity with those whose families had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 33.05$, $SD = 14.37$), and those whose families had lived there for generations ($M = 36.33$, $SD = 12.04$).

A fourth ANOVA was used to test for group differences in the amount of time the participants' family had lived in their home county (independent variable) had on their intercultural sensitivity (dependent variable). There was no significant between the three groups, $F(2, 78) = 1.81$, $p = .171$. Participants whose families had lived in the county for less than a generation ($M = 94.22$, $SD = 11.67$), those whose families had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 92.05$, $SD = 12.49$), and those whose families had lived there for generations ($M = 87.63$, $SD = 14.31$) were all similar in their intercultural sensitivity, according to the model.

A fifth ANOVA was used to test for group differences in the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county (independent variable) had on their degree commitment (dependent variable). There was no significant between the three groups, however the model was approaching significance, $F(2, 92) = 2.95$, $p = .06$. Participants whose families had lived in the county for less than a generation ($M = 7.18$,

$SD = 1.71$), those whose families had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 7.69$, $SD = 2.27$), and those whose families had lived there for generations ($M = 9.90$, $SD = 6.55$) were all similar in their degree commitment.

Finally, a sixth ANOVA was used to test group differences in the amount of time the participant's family had lived in their home county (independent variable) had on their institutional commitment (dependent variable). There was no significant between the groups, $F(2, 39) = 1.94$, $p = .16$. Participants whose families had lived in the county for less than a generation ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 2.07$), those whose families had lived there for 1-2 generations ($M = 7.33$, $SD = 2.84$), and those whose families had lived there for generations ($M = 9.09$, $SD = 4.98$) were all similar their degree commitment.

Institutional Differences

The final set of post-hoc analyses used in this study were in regards to the participants' colleges and universities. There were four Kentucky schools represented: The University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, Bluegrass Community and Technical College, and Eastern Kentucky University. Only one West Virginia school was represented: Marshall University. Because each institution has its own culture and programs for incoming first-generation and Appalachian students which may differentially affect student persistence, 6 ANOVAs were used to test whether or not these differences had any significant effect on the students' interpersonal intercultural communication experience, immersive intercultural communication experience, Appalachian identity, intercultural sensitivity, degree commitment, and institutional commitment.

First, a one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the students' interpersonal intercultural communication experience (dependent variable). The model dropped the University of Louisville from this and all subsequent analyses. There were no significant differences between students' institutions and their interpersonal intercultural communication experience, $F(3, 77) = 2.73, p = .05, p\eta^2 = .10, \text{power} = .64$. However, a post-hoc Tukey test indicated that participants who were students at the Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 16.06, SD = 4.04$) indicated more frequent interpersonal intercultural communication experiences than participants who were students at Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 15.13, SD = 5.79$), the University of Kentucky ($M = 13.33, SD = 4.34$), and Marshall University ($M = 11.50, SD = 5.51$), but this difference was not significant.

A second one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the participants' immersive intercultural communication experience (dependent variable). There were no significant differences between the groups, $F(3, 76) = .124, p = .95, p\eta^2 = .01, \text{power} = .07$. Participants who were students at the University of Kentucky ($M = 9.19, SD = 4.97$), Marshall University ($M = 9.75, SD = 5.67$), Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 8.75, SD = 4.37$), or Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 9.86, SD = 6.42$) were all similar in their immersive intercultural communication experiences.

A third one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the students' Appalachian identity (dependent variable). There were significant differences between participants' institutions and their Appalachian identity $F(3, 75) = 4.92, p = .004, p\eta^2 = .17, \text{power} = .90$. Participants who were students

at the University of Kentucky ($M = 41.43, SD = 12.37$) scored higher on the Appalachian identity scale than those at Marshall University ($M = 38.00, SD = 9.56$), Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 35.33, SD = 11.48$), and Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 29.56, SD = 12.57$). Specifically, the post-hoc Tukey test showed that participants who were students at the University of Kentucky were the most different from those at Eastern Kentucky University with a mean difference of 11.87.

A fourth one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the students' intercultural sensitivity (dependent variable). The model showed no significant differences between the participants institutions and their intercultural sensitivity, $F(3, 78) = .742, p = .53, p\eta^2 = .03, \text{power} = .20$. Participants who were students at the University of Kentucky ($M = 92.38, SD = 14.91$), Marshall University ($M = 87.00, SD = 14.12$), Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 89.14, SD = 16.63$), or Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 87.78, SD = 10.76$) were all similar their intercultural sensitivity.

A fifth one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the students' degree commitment (dependent variable). There were no significant differences between the four groups, $F(3, 92) = 1.04, p = .38, p\eta^2 = .01, \text{power} = .07$. Participants who were students at the University of Kentucky ($M = 9.20, SD = 6.86$), Marshall University ($M = 7.78, SD = 2.54$), Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 10.78, SD = 3.46$), or Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 7.80, SD = 2.00$) were all similar in their degree commitment.

Finally, a one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences between the institutions (independent variable) and the students' institutional commitment (dependent

variable). SPSS dropped Marshall University from the model because too few participants completed the scale. There were significant differences between students' institutions and their institutional commitment $F(2, 39) = 11.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .38, \text{power} = .98$. Students at the University of Kentucky ($M = 13.50, SD = 6.53$) had higher institutional commitment than students at Bluegrass Community and Technical College ($M = 8.77, SD = 2.44$) and Eastern Kentucky University ($M = 6.28, SD = 2.67$). Specifically, a post-hoc Tukey test revealed a significant difference between the institutional commitment of University of Kentucky students compared with Bluegrass Community and Technical College students with a mean difference of 4.72 ($p = .033$). The post-hoc Tukey test also revealed a significant difference between the institutional commitment of University of Kentucky students compared with Eastern Kentucky University students with a mean difference of -7.22 ($p = < .001$).

Summary

Chapter four reported the results from analyses used to test the proposed research questions. Chapter five will discuss the results, as well as implications, limitations, and future directions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Results from the study revealed a lot of information regarding influences on college persistence, Appalachian identity, and intercultural communication. Specifically, the study gained insight into the relationship between intercultural communication experience and college persistence among first-generation, central Appalachian students. Most importantly, the study contributed to the literature by its being the first to study the struggles of first-generation, Appalachian students using a theory-based approach, quantitative methods, and a cross-sectional survey. Additionally, while the study was not the first to address the acculturation of Appalachian students into college (Dees, 2008), it was the first to approach the acculturation of Appalachian students from a communication standpoint rather than based on financial or educational variables. The results, generally, may indicate positive changes taking place in Appalachia and the progress that has been made to retain Appalachian students, especially at the University of Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky University. Finally, the study provides a new scale that can be utilized in future research to investigate intercultural communication experiences on an interpersonal and immersive level. This chapter will discuss the results of the study, the implications of the study's outcome, its limitations, and future directions for this line of research.

Discussion

The results of the hypotheses and research questions indicate the complicated nature of the interaction of cultural identity, communication, intercultural sensitivity, and college persistence among first-generation Appalachian students. H1a stated “a student's

intercultural communication experience is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college.” While the result was statistically insignificant, intercultural communication experience was not a predictor of college persistence, this finding may indicate a couple things about participants. Previous research indicates that acculturation is a major struggle of rural students into college (universities and community colleges alike) and that many of those students are first-generation (Dees, 2008). However, despite Padilla’s (1980) model that persons from homogenous areas will have more difficulty acculturating, previous intercultural communication experience is not the only method for working to overcome this difficulty. Sales (1975) found that students going abroad were more likely to reject the host culture in favor of their home culture if they did not have any culture shock training. The results from this study may indicate that the samples schools have programs for their first-generation and Appalachian students that provide this type of experience for them and prepares them to acculturate well. The majority of participants were from the University of Kentucky, a number of whom were recruited through the First Scholars office and the Robinson Scholars program. The Robinson Scholars program, for instance, taps bright Appalachian, first-generation students early in high school and mentors them throughout the process. Thus, the skills necessary to acculturate that are learned through intercultural communication experience begin in high school for these students and may be beneficial to ameliorate such effects when enrolled in such a program to help with the acculturation process. Such programs often provide mental, emotional, as well as academic support for students through advisers, mentors, and role-models, all of which were indicated as crucial in helping first-generation students succeed in Hand and Payne’s (2008) qualitative study.

In addition to the support from intuitional programs in the acculturation process, from the population sampled (currently enrolled college students) it is difficult to determine whether those attending college had significant differences from those who did not attend college in their intercultural communication experiences. This leaves open the possibility that Appalachian persons with more frequent intercultural communication experiences may be more likely to pursue higher education than those who do not have intercultural experiences, and perhaps consequently, did not attend college. However, this is only speculation as the sample in this study does not allow for that question to be answered.

Many scholars have also posed the idea that Appalachian culture is something that may interact with educational attainment in the region (Haaga, 2004). Because of this possibility, H1b stated “a student’s Appalachian identity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college?” Linear regressions used to test this research question showed that Appalachian identity was not a predictor of college persistence. First, the results show no positive or negative relationship, which indicates that a strong sense Appalachian identity neither helps nor hinders college persistence. This particular finding may indicate that the culture of Appalachia may be changing to include valuing higher educational attainment, thus showing that culture is not a barrier of a student from that region completing a college degree. However, another possibility is supported by the results of the post-hoc independent samples tests that indicated that there was no difference in the Appalachian identity of those who indicated being from an Appalachian county and those who did not. The lack of difference may show that the participants in this sample may not identify, necessarily, as Appalachian.

However, this should not be seen as undermining the assumption that there is a cultural predictor present in the region of college persistence. All of the participants retained for the study were from a state with an Appalachian sub-region. The states of Kentucky and West Virginia are both demographically similar, with a majority white, rural population (ARC, 2010). Institutions sampled in these areas are also largely white in population, as well as having a fairly Appalachian salient community (University of Kentucky Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 2013; Marshall University Office of Institutional Research, 2014; Eastern Kentucky University Office of Institutional Research, 2014; Bluegrass Community and Technical College Office of Planning, Research, and Effectiveness, 2013). This may indicate there are not deep differences between, for instance, a Kentuckian who is from Appalachia and a Kentuckian who is not from an Appalachian sub-region of the state. Results may differ if the study were to have compared Appalachian students at institutions outside of states with Appalachian sub-regions and Appalachian students at institutions in states with Appalachian sub-regions, as the institutions in states with Appalachian sub-regions have a much stronger presence of Appalachian students. That is to say that where there is a strong presence of like-cultural backgrounds a person may not need to identify themselves by the dominant group. This concept was supported in Sussman's (2000) study on cultural identity and cultural transition. Sussman's (2000) study indicated that when a person is in a community of people of the same or similar cultural backgrounds, their identification with that culture is not as strong within the community as it is when that person leaves the community to a more heterogeneous one.

The largely white communities present at the institutions, as well as the relatively low identification with Appalachia culture present in the sample may be a reason that H1c showed insignificant results. H1c stated "a student's intercultural sensitivity is a significant predictor of his or her intention to persist in college." Linear regressions used to test this research question yielded statistically insignificant results. With the majority of participants being white and the majority of students at their institutions also being white and from the same state, many from the same region, intercultural sensitivity may not be a crucial skill for success or a skill that they have had ample opportunity to practice and refine. Additionally, similar to the results from the previous two research questions, the results of this test may be attributed both to the support systems available to incoming students at the institutions. The support systems assist students' transition into the institution culture, releasing their need to rely upon intercultural sensitivity in order to persist. However, another likely reason that the linear regression showed that intercultural sensitivity was not a significant predictor of college persistence could be because most of the participants were in their first semester and they had not had a chance to practice their intercultural sensitivity skills.

RQ2 inquired "What is the relationship between a student's Appalachian identity and intercultural communication experience?" The Pearson correlations displayed results that showed that the two had neither a positive nor a negative relationship. This result could be the case because most participants would have answered the survey about their intercultural communication experiences based on experiences prior to college, but their sense of Appalachian identity could have been impacted by experiences during the time at college or by the acculturation into college. From the post-hoc analyses, the

participant's Appalachian identity was more impacted by the type of college experience that they had. Students attending the University of Kentucky indicated the highest Appalachian identity. For an Appalachian student, the University of Kentucky would be the institution that was the furthest away from Appalachia included in the sample, the largest, the most diverse, and possibly the most immersive environment. The intercultural experience of acculturating onto a college campus, according to these results, has a higher impact on cultural identity for Appalachian students than other forms of intercultural communication experiences that were surveyed, possibly because of the infrequency of these experiences.

As previously stated, a number of participants ($n = 19$) either did not indicate a county or did not indicate an Appalachian county as their home. However, according to the post-hoc ANOVA there were no differences between this group and the Appalachian group regarding their intercultural communication experience. There were also no differences between the 3 generational groups regarding their intercultural communication experiences. All of the groups showed infrequent intercultural communication experience. The lack of differences indicates that participants in states with regions in Appalachia have very similar experiences, interculturally, to those within the Appalachian region. Additionally, the length of time a family has lived in an area of an Appalachian county or a county in a state with an Appalachian region may not affect intercultural experiences for the participants because of most were between 18 and 20 years old, thus even living in the region for less than a generation would still severely limit their intercultural experiences. That is to say that even living in a homogenous culture for a portion of childhood would be expected to limit the frequency with which a

person could interact with those who were different from them. However, despite the similarly infrequent accounts of intercultural communication experience present among all participants, the results indicate that Appalachian students are acculturating to college better than previous results would lead to expect.

Finally, one of the most interesting and significant results from the analyses showed that students at the University of Kentucky had higher Appalachian identity than students at Marshall University, Bluegrass Community and Technical College, or Eastern Kentucky University. This may indicate that students who leave the region to go to school have a stronger sense of identity than those who stay. The experience of leaving the region may deepen their sense of identification with Appalachia. Though Bluegrass Community and Technical College is not in Appalachia, it also is not a school that a student would live on campus while attending, making the effect on cultural identity slightly different than the universities that were represented where students, particularly first year students, are likely to live on campus. The immersive experience of living on campus intensifies the acculturation of the student. This immersive experience (named cultural transition by Sussman, 2000) can lead to an affirmation of cultural identity. The affirmation of cultural identity may be especially impactful if the student seeks out other Appalachian students or on-campus organizations for friendship and support. This is supported by the ANOVA which indicated that University of Kentucky students had higher institutional commitment than the students from the other universities.

Strong support networks are one of the many reasons a student would chose to continue at a particular institution. Not only did participants at the University of Kentucky have the highest Appalachian identity but they also had the highest institutional

commitment. The support networks sought out during the acculturation process could be a reason for both of these outcomes. Though the correlation of participants' Appalachian identity and institutional commitment did not show a significant relationship, the results from the ANOVA should be noted as indicating a strong Appalachian community at the University of Kentucky, with those students dedicated to the institution.

An important contribution of this study is that a new, reliable scale was developed which measures two dimensions of intercultural communication experiences: interpersonal and immersive. The scale fills a gap in literature, where there were no previous measures of intercultural communication experiences. The closest match to intercultural communication experiences instrumentation prior to this study was the Chen and Starosta (2000) intercultural sensitivity scale. However, the intercultural sensitivity scale measures how the participant feels about interacting interculturally, but it does not measure the types of intercultural communication experience the participant has had. Furthermore, the EFA indicated a difference between experiences like having ethnically diverse friends, meeting people from other countries, discussing cultural differences in class and experiences such as living or studying abroad, or going on a mission trip. The distinction between various intercultural experiences is important in understanding how intercultural communication experiences may interact differently with other aspects of a person's life or other academic and communicative outcomes.

Implications

The primary implications of this study are that it includes a theory driven approach to understanding Appalachian experiences, presents a new scale for quantifying intercultural communication experiences, examines a deeper understanding of

Appalachian students both before and during their early college experience, supports that different programs and services offered by schools may differently affect students, and provides new evidence against some of the more negative literature and stereotypes regarding Appalachia.

The theory-driven approach to understanding Appalachian experiences is important to furthering the literature in this area, especially towards the beginning of the 21st century and 50 years after the War on Poverty. The War on Poverty has tainted the view scholars and others have had on the region, and because this study focused on the acculturation of Appalachian students, it was able to expand the literature in a direction other than focusing on poverty alone. Though it was not the first study to take this direction, it was the only study to approach the issue from an acculturation theoretical standpoint and study it with a quantitative method.

The acculturation theory enabled results that found that despite infrequent intercultural communication experience, Appalachian students have high degree and institutional commitment. This leads to an understanding that Appalachian first generation students are acculturating well to their respective institutions. The result indicates the changing landscape of Appalachia as the millennial generation attends college. These results have implications on the future research to change the way scholars approach Appalachia.

The quantitative methods used in this study led to the creation of the new intercultural communication experiences scale. The scale fills a gap in literature, where no previous scale of its kind existed. The intercultural communication experiences scale's two dimensions of interpersonal and immersive have the potential for furthering the

literature on what types of experiences help a person acculturate to a new culture. The scale will also help to further research on intercultural communication, in general.

Because the study looked at Appalachian educational attainment through a cultural perspective, new insight was gained into the experiences of first-generation, Appalachian students regarding, not only their college persistence, but also identity, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural communication experiences. While much scholarly research has been done on Appalachian people, little research to this point had been done on their personal affiliation with the region, cultural identity, or view of themselves as Appalachian. The lack of difference between non-Appalachian and Appalachians in this area may indicate that the culture of the region extends beyond the mountains. It may also indicate that the culture of poverty is changing as we know it and the culture of Appalachia is changing dramatically as well. This notion combats many of the negative views of Appalachia, likely influenced by the use of Appalachia as the face of the War on Poverty 50 years ago. The results of this study may influence the future direction of the literature to take a more positive stance on the changes occurring in Appalachia regarding education, culture, diversity, and persistence.

Limitations

As with any research, this study had a number of limitations, including the sample size and the type of survey. Only 84 participants were living in Appalachian counties, only 77 participants had families who had lived in their respective counties for more than a generation, and only 43 participants were first-generation. The original intent was to collect only participants who were both Appalachian and first-generation, however, the small sample size lead to retaining these numbers to conduct analyses. One possible

reason for the lack of participation was that no incentive was provided to students who participated in the survey.

Next, the method itself could be seen as a limitation. First, the study collected only one sample and was not longitudinal. A longitudinal study would have given a clearer picture of the interaction between intercultural communication experience, Appalachian identity, intercultural sensitivity, and college persistence. Using a longitudinal method one would be able to follow participants for an extended period of time, collecting data at two or three points in time. This would allow the researcher to find out if intercultural experiences affected high school graduation, decisions to attend college, how those students transitioned into college, and whether or not they persisted in college, rather than asking for cross-sectional self-report data.

Self-reported results may have also affected the results. Participants may have been tempted to answer dishonestly on sensitive questions. For instance, despite low levels of intercultural communication experience, participants reported remarkably high intercultural sensitivity. This can be explained in part by the self-report method, in which a person is unlikely to admit to having very negative opinions towards interacting interculturally because of social desirability or stigma, though they may feel in that way. Additionally, participants may not have answered honestly in regards to their college persistence. Further, the self-reported persistence questions focus on intent to persist, and not actual persistence. Some students in this sample may not persist regardless of their intent to complete college.

Not only may participants not have answered the CPQ-V2 scale with complete honesty, but students who would have been likely to drop-out of college probably did not

take the time to participate in the study. Additionally, this sample includes students who had not already dropped out of college. Although the data were collected early in the first semester, some students may have already experienced culture shock, performed poorly, or experienced homesickness prompting them to leave the institution early. If data collection had begun in high school, it may have been easier to gather data from more participants who may not persist in college and may leave at any time in the semester, early or later.

Additionally, the study was only able to sample from select colleges and universities. This was a small sample of institutions, and because there were some significant differences between institutions, it would be helpful to gather data from more institutions in more states in future research. Of the institutions where data were collected, the survey also did not collect information about the specific programs offered to help first generation or Appalachian students. Thus, while differences do appear to exist between the institutions, we are unable to draw conclusions about what those differences may be attributed to at the institution.

Finally, given that this study was quantitative it also lacks a non-nuanced understanding of the participants. This lack of nuance means that the study is more subject to succumbing to previous stereotypes and biases regarding the population and the region.

Future Directions

Due to the number of implications this study poses, there are also a variety of possibilities for future research in this line of study. Future directions include recruiting a

larger sample size, sampling from a wider range of post-secondary institutions, taking a longitudinal approach and mixed-methods approach, and including other theories.

Future directions for the study should include a larger sample size of first-generation Appalachian students. A larger sample size will make the results more generalizable and possibly increase the number of statistically significant findings. Those wishing to expand knowledge in this area should also gather data from Appalachian first-generation students in a wider variety of institutions, such as those outside of the central Appalachian region, but also smaller colleges in the region. The experience of first-generation Appalachian students differs from institution to institution. Future research in this area would further enable educators to know how to best work with students from the region, and what types of support is the most beneficial. Additionally, future studies may want to consider a longitudinal study beginning in high school, in order to see if differences in intercultural communication experiences influences the decision to go to college.

Longitudinal studies could potentially use the intercultural communication experience scale to collect results at multiple points, which would indicate when and where a student is most likely to have an intercultural communication experience and at what point in his or her life this experience has the most significant impact. The scale should be considered in use when measuring a participants' opinions, feelings, or attitudes towards other cultures in order to understand what types of communication experiences that person has had that may influence their opinions, feelings, or attitudes. Finally, the scale may be altered to refer to specific cultural groups for research on intercultural differences. The intercultural communication experience scale is a measure

that fills a gap in literature, is simple, and is able to address a wide-variety of experiences and can be utilized in innumerable ways.

Future researchers should also consider a mixed-method approach. Including both qualitative and quantitative methods would provide needed nuance to the present study. Furthermore, participatory qualitative methods would allow the research to include an understanding of Appalachian identity and culture which is both broad and nuanced. This understanding is necessary in future initiatives in Appalachia both in research and in education.

Finally, other theories should be considered in the next research design to address the college acculturation of Appalachian first generation students. One framework that should be considered is inoculation theory by James McGuire (1961). Inoculation theory essentially suggests that if a participant is exposed to a certain communication message at a lower intensity they will be more resistant to that message when it is more intense. The principal relates to the findings of this study which suggest that students from Appalachia are acculturating well to college, which is a possible effect of the programs available to help them transition their first year, which could be explained through inoculation theory. Many of the participants for this study were recruited through the University of Kentucky Robinson Scholars Program. The Robinson Scholars are selected at the beginning of high school for their academic performance and mentored throughout high school. Before entering their senior year the cohort is brought to the University of Kentucky's campus in Lexington, Kentucky for a college boot camp. The boot camp likely acts as an inoculation which helps them resist messages that would cause the students to want to

drop out of college. This theory should be pursued as a framework for future studies on first generation Appalachian students.

Conclusions

By addressing the problem of low-educational achievement and low student-retention among first-generation Appalachian students from a theoretical, cultural approach, this thesis was able to expand the research on the region. The knowledge gained gives new insight into how Appalachian students identify culturally with the region, their intercultural communication experiences, intercultural sensitivity, and college persistence. This research provides a view of Appalachia that combats some of the stereotypes of the region as being primarily impoverished, lacking in college persistence, culturally insensitive, and without intercultural experience. Additionally, it provides insight into the institutional experiences of first-generation, Appalachian students. Finally, the study guides future research into potentially developing a new line of research focused on the culture of Appalachia and its interaction with the rest of the world as it emerges in the 21st century, a half a century after the War on Poverty.

APPENDIX A

Survey

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. Please know that your responses will be confidential (in a locked filing cabinet to which only I have the key) and anonymous. You are free to skip any question you do not wish to answer. You may quit the survey at any time if you are uncomfortable by simply closing the web page. You may complete the survey at any time, but if you close the webpage your responses will not be saved. Please answer as accurately as possible. Thank you!

Demographic Information:

Age:

Sex:

Ethnicity:

1. White 2. Black 3. Hispanic/Latino 4. Asian 5. Middle Eastern
6. Native American 7. Pacific Islander 8. Other_____

Please select the state and county you consider home:

How long has your family lived there?

Did your family immigrate to the U.S.?

If so, when?

Please indicate the highest level of education your father has:

1. Did not complete high school
2. GED
3. High school diploma
4. Some college
5. Technical degree
6. Associates
7. Baccalaureate

8. Graduate degree: Masters/Doctoral
9. Other:

Please indicate the highest level of education your mother has:

1. Did not complete high school
2. GED
3. High school diploma
4. Some college
5. Technical degree
6. Associates
7. Baccalaureate
8. Graduate degree: Masters/Doctoral
9. Other:

I am the first or only person in my family to finish high school: YES or NO

What college, university, or institution are you a student at? _____

What year and semester are you in college?

- First semester, freshmen year
- Second semester, freshmen year
- First semester, sophomore year
- Second semester, sophomore year
- First semester, junior year
- Second semester, junior year
- First semester, senior year
- Second semester, senior year
- Other:

College Persistence:

Please respond to the following statements by selecting the most accurate response on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) or 'not applicable.'

Degree Commitment

1. My family is supportive of the pursuit of my college degree.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

2. My commitment to earning a degree is very strong.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral

- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

3. My friends and family would be disappointed if I quit school.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

4. I am certain I will earn a degree.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

5. After beginning college, students sometimes discover that a college degree is not quite as important to them as it once was. But I strongly intend to graduate with a degree either here or somewhere else.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

6. When you considering the benefits of having a college degree and the costs of earning it, I believe the benefits outweigh the costs.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

Institutional Commitment

1. I am confident this is the right college/university for me.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

2. I have given a lot of thought to transferring to a different college/university

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree

- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

3. I will likely enroll here next semester.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

4. I will likely earn a degree from here.

- (5) Strongly agree
- (4) Somewhat agree
- (3) Neutral
- (2) Somewhat disagree
- (1) Strongly disagree

*(*Item number 2 in subscale “institutional commitment” is reverse coded.)*

Intercultural Experience

Regarding your personal experience, please indicate on a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (frequently) how the following statements apply to you:

1. Growing up I had friends who were ethnically or culturally different from me
2. I talked with my friends frequently about our cultural differences and similarities
3. I have met a lot of people who are not originally from the U.S.
4. In school (elementary, middle, or high school) I had teachers who were ethnically or culturally different from me.
5. In my classes we talked about cultural differences and similarities.
6. I speak a language besides English proficiently or fluently
7. My family has hosted an exchange student from another country.
8. I have studied abroad
9. I have been on a mission trip outside of the U.S.
10. I went on vacation to another country
11. I have lived outside of the U.S. for a period of time longer than 1 month.
12. Other, please specify:

Intercultural Sensitivity Measure

Below is a series of 24 statements concerning intercultural communication, please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There are no right or wrong answers.

Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse-coded before summing the 24 items.

1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded
3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.
15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.
16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.
17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.
19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.
20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.
21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our Interaction.
22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons
23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.
24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

**Interaction engagement: items 11, 13, 15, 22, 23, 24*

Respect for cultural differences: items 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20.

Interaction confidence: items 3, 4, 5, 6, 21 and 10.

Interaction enjoyment: items 9, 12, and 15.

Interaction attentiveness: items 14, 17, and 19.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree)-5 (strongly agree) indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following 12 statements.

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about Appalachia, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of Appalachia.
- 3- I have a clear sense of my Appalachian background and what it means for me.

- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my Appalachian group membership.
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of Appalachia.
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to Appalachia.
- 7- I understand pretty well what being Appalachian means to me.
- 8- In order to learn more about my Appalachian background, I have often talked to other people about Appalachia.
- 9- I have a lot of pride in Appalachia.
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of Appalachia, such as special food, music, or customs.
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards Appalachia.
- 12- I feel good about my Appalachian background.

**Ethnic identity search: items 1, 2, 4, 8, and 10.*

Ethnic identity affirmation, belonging, and commitment: items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12.

References

- Appalachia Regional Commission. (2011). *The Appalachian Region in 2010: A Census Data Overview*. Retrieved from: www.arc.gov/assets/research_reports.
- Algar, J.R., Chapa, J., Gudeman, R.H., Marin, P., Maruyama, G., Milam, J.F., Moreno, J.F., & Wilds, D.J. 2000. *Does Diversity Make a Difference? Three Research Studies on Diversity in College Classrooms*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors.
- Berea College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. (2013, September). Enrollment, retention, and graduation: Tables and charts. Retrieved on April 19, 2014 from: <http://www.berea.edu/ira/wp-content/blogs.dir/85/files/2013/11/EnrollmentRetentionGraduationFall2013.pdf>.
- Berry, J.W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In Padilla, A.M. (Ed.), *Acculturaton, Theory, Models, and Some New Findings* (9-27). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R.M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21–71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Bluegrass Community and Technical College Office of Planning, Research, and Institutional Effectiveness. (2013). *Factbook 2012-2013*. Retrieved on 17 November, 2014 from <http://bluegrass.kctcs.edu/en/IPRE/Factbooks.aspx>.
- Chen, G.M. & Starosta, W.J. (2000). The development and validation of the intercultural sensitivity scale. Presented at the 86th annual National Communication Association conference. Seattle, WA. November 8, 2000.
- Collier, M.J., & Thomas, M. (1988). Cultural identity: An interpretive perspective. In Kim, Y.Y., & Gudykunst, W.B. (eds.) *Theories in Intercultural Communication* (pp. 99-120.) Newberry Park, CA: Sage Publishers.
- Comrey, A. L., & Lee, H. B. (1992). *A first course in factor analysis* (2nd ed). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Davidson, W. B., Beck, H. P., & Milligan, M. (2009). The College Persistence Questionnaire: Development and validation of an instrument that predicts student attrition. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(4): 373-390.
- Dees, D. M. (2008, June 28). "How do I deal with these new ideas?": The psychological acculturation of rural students. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 21(6). Retrieved Nov. 11, 2013 from <http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/21-6.pdf>
- Elam, C. (2002). Culture, poverty, and education in Appalachian Kentucky. *Education and Culture*, 18(1), 10-13.
- Eastern Kentucky University Office of Institutional Research. *Factbook 2014*. Retrieved on 17 November, 2014 from <https://irserver.eku.edu/Reports/Factbook/>
- Gabriel, T. (2014, April 20). 50 years into the war on poverty, hardship hits back. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/us/50-years-into-the-war-on-poverty-hardship-hits-back.html?smid=fb-share>
- Gore, J.N. (2010). The importance of first year students experiences in predicting student retention decisions (unpublished master's thesis). Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.
- Haaga, J. (2004). Educational attainment in Appalachia. *Demographic and Socioeconomic Change in Appalachia*. Retrieved on 30 April, 2014 from:

- http://www.arc.gov/assets/research_reports/EducationalAttainmentinAppalachia.pdf
- Hand, C. & Payne, E.M. (2008). First-generation college students: A study of Appalachian student success. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 32 (1), 4-15.
- Hurtado, S. (2001). Linking diversity and educational purpose: How diversity affects the classroom environment and student development. In Orfield, G (Ed.) *Diversity Challenged: Evidence on the Impact of Affirmative Action* (pp. 187-203.) Cambridge: Havard Educational Publishing.
- Lichter, D., & Cimbulak, L. (2010, Feb.). Family change and poverty in Appalachia. *University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research Discussion Paper Series*, DP2010-04. Retrieved on 6 June, 2014 from <http://www.ukcpr.org/Publications/DP2010-04.pdf>.
- Lustig, M.W. & Koester, J. (1999). *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures* (3rd ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Marshall University Office of Institutional Research. Bluebook 2013-2014. Retrieved on 17 November, 2014 from http://www.marshall.edu/irp/Bluebook%202013-2014/Enroll_State_f13_published.pdf.
- Martin, J.N, & Nakayama, T.K. (1997). *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- McGuire, W. (1961). Resistance to persuasion conferred by active and passive prior refutation of the same and alternative counterarguments. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63, 326-332.
- Organista, P.B., Marin, G., & Chun, K.M. (2009). *The Psychology of Ethnic Groups in the United States*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing, Inc.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: A new scale for use with adolescents and young adults from diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 7, 156-176.
- Phinney, J. S. & Ong, A.D. (2007) Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54(3), 271-281. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.271
- Padilla, A.M. (1980). The role of cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty in acculturation. In Padilla, A.M. (Eds.), *Acculturation, Theory, Models, and Some New Findings* (47-85). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Sales, T.B. (1975). The crosscultural competencies project: One approach to a crosscultural training program for college undergraduates. *International Education*, 5(2), 7-14.
- Samovar, L.A., Porter, R.E., & Jain, N.C. (1981). *Understanding Intercultural Communication*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Stevenson, H. C. (1993). Validation of the scale of racial socialization for African American adolescents: A preliminary analysis. *Psych Discourse*, 24(12), 7-10.
- Stephenson, S. (1999). "Study abroad as a transformational experience and its effect upon study abroad students and host nationals in Santiago, Chile." *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 1-38.
- Sussman, N.M. (2000). "The dynamic nature of cultural identity throughout cultural

- transitions: Why home is not so sweet.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4 (4), 355-373. doi: 10.1207/S15327957PSPR0404_5.
- University of Kentucky Office of Institutional Effectiveness. (2013, January). Graduation and retention, section II, rates by demographic characteristics. Retrieved on 30 April, 2014 from: http://www.uky.edu/IRPE/students/ret_grad/Section2.pdf.
- Weller, J. (1965). *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Wiseman, R.L., & Koester, J. (Eds.). (1993). Intercultural communication competence. *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* (17).

VITA

Education

B.A.

University of Kentucky
Major: Organizational Communication
Anticipated graduation: Dec. 2014

B.A.

University of Kentucky
Major: Chinese Language and Literature
Anticipated graduation: Dec. 2014

A.A.

Bluegrass Community and Technical College
Communication Pathway
Graduated: May 2012

Academic Awards

Trustee's Scholarship for Transfer Students- 2012
American Studies Center Student Summit Scholarship-2012
U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship-2013
University Scholars at the University of Kentucky- 2013
Project Pengyou Leadership Fellow-2014

Conference Papers

Frisby, B. N., Horan, S. M., Booth-Butterfield, M., Lin, X., **King, M.**, Byrd, D., & Furkin, J. (2014). Humor styles and shared laughter: Using humor as a post-divorce resilience mechanism. Paper to be presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.

Teaching Experience

College Instruction

University of Kentucky

Department of Communication

CIS 110- *Communication and Composition* (Fall 2014)-Primary Instructor

CHI 105- *Introduction to Chinese Studies* (Summer 2014)-Primary Instructor

COM 312- *Intercultural Communication Through the Media* (Spring 2013)-Grader

Center for English as a Second Language

Grammar 5 (Spring 2013/2014)

Highschool Instruction

Bluegrass United Academic Center

Chinese Cultural Studies (Spring 2014)

Introduction to Communication for High School Students (Spring 2014)

Physical Education (Spring 2014)

Performing Arts Instruction

Nu Revolution Dance Studio (Aug. 2013- Present)

Bluegrass United Performing Arts Company (Aug. 2010- May 2012)

Laura's School of Dance (Aug. 2005- 2008)

Copyright © Meredith A. Garrison, 2014