

Teaching Inside Out in Appalachia:
Identity Development of Insider/Outsider Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I investigate the concept of insider/outsider teacher identity, focusing on its relationship to teacher education. Having extensive experience as a student and teacher in rural Appalachia, I emphasize the regional perspective. To introduce the study, I present the research questions that guide the study, I explain my decision to present the study in two manuscripts, and I position my relationship within the research. In the first manuscript, *Teaching Inside Out: Exploring Insider and Outsider Status Among Teachers*, I explain how I developed interest in this topic and I review academic literature about insider/outsider teacher identity. In the second manuscript, *Teaching Inside Out: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Experiences as Insiders and Outsiders in Appalachia*, I use qualitative research methods (Mayan, 2016) to delve into the experiences of teachers who have come to communities in Appalachia from outside the region, and I interrogate the implications of their experiences. This study can serve as a guide to teachers preparing for or continuing in the profession, to explore the development of their own insider/outsider identities in the communities where they work or will be working.

GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

In this study, which I present in two manuscripts, I explore insider/outsider teacher identity in Appalachia. In the first manuscript, I narrate my personal experiences and look to the academic body of literature to inform the topic. In the second manuscript, I present and interpret the experiences of three insider/outsider teachers who have worked in rural Appalachian communities.

Dedication

For my parents, Mary Jane Harris Jones and Dennis Calvin Jones. I love you.

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Chapter 1

Teaching is a demanding profession, from classroom management to content delivery. Beyond these surface level challenges of teaching, the sociocultural aspects of the vocation are immense, with teacher education programs often overlooking them (Bales & Saffold, 2011). For teacher preparation with a multicultural perspective to take place, its integration must be a purposeful and an essential component of teacher education (Banks et al., 2005; CochranSmith & Villegas, 2016). Preparing teachers to work in historically marginalized communities requires even greater attention to the sociocultural context, given that dominant social structures and institutions have often ignored or trivialized their cultures (Bales & Saffold, 2011; CochranSmith & Villegas, 2016). Through critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), teachers in these communities can guide students towards combatting further marginalization of their cultures and building emancipatory narratives. I situate this study in Appalachia, my home region, where counter-narratives help to challenge narratives that perpetuate the marginalization of the region's members (Hayes, 2018).

Culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010) is a tool that teachers can use to address the sociocultural contexts of their preparation and teaching. By integrating cultural responsiveness into teacher education, teachers can better prepare for working in communities different from the ones with which they are most familiar (Bales & Saffold, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to interrogate insider/outsider teacher identity within the context of Appalachia. A large portion of this study is story-based since teachers' storied experiences are foundational for pedagogical development within the scope of teacher education

(Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). By examining these stories and interpreting them, I am providing a resource for teacher educators and preservice teachers, with emphasis on those working in Appalachian communities or communities in similar regions.

Discussions of personal identity are complex. As with any identity, there is no singular Appalachian identity, nor by extension a singular insider/outsider identity. In a democratic society, all individuals have the right to tell their stories. While stories of identity may share many characteristics or diverge completely, they all form part of the collective consciousness of a given identity experience (Hayes, 2018).

Taking into consideration the various facets of this study, including teacher education, insider/outsider teacher identity, and teaching in Appalachia, four research questions will guide my study:

1. What have been my experiences as a teacher in Appalachian communities in Southwest Virginia and southern West Virginia?
2. How does insider/outsider teacher identity inform teacher education?
3. What are the experiences of teachers who have come from outside the region to work in an Appalachian community in Southwest Virginia and southern West Virginia?
4. What advice would teachers who originally came from outside the region give to new teachers coming to the region in order to help them negotiate their insider/outsider status?

The Manuscripts

I present the findings from this study in two manuscripts to better organize my research. Throughout the first manuscript, I focus on the first two research questions. In this manuscript, *Teaching Inside Out: Exploring Insider and Outsider Status Among Teachers*, I narrate my own

experiences of arriving at the question of insider/outsider teacher identity, and I review the academic literature pertaining to this complex issue.

Throughout the second manuscript, I investigate the final two research questions. In *Teaching Inside Out: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Experiences as Insiders and Outsiders in Appalachia*, I explore the experiences of three teachers who came to Appalachian communities to work from outside the region. I focus on their identities as insider/outsider teachers, as well as the implications their experiences have for preservice teachers in similar contexts.

Central to both manuscripts is the question of insider/outsider teacher identity. Although the manuscripts can stand alone, they complement one another. For example, in the first manuscript, I provide a comprehensive examination of literature pertaining to insider/outsider teacher identity. In the second manuscript, I discuss literature about insider/outsider teacher identity in brief, in order to contextualize the manuscript if it were to stand alone for publication. Moreover, the first manuscript gives me the space to delve into my personal relationship with the topic, whereas the second manuscript incorporates the voices of others who have first-hand experiences with the topic.

Positioning Myself as a Researcher

With qualitative inquiry, the researcher's identity and experiences are inherent to the research. A discussion of the researcher's worldview helps the reader to achieve a deeper understanding of the researcher's "truth." (Lincoln, 1995). Dennis (2018) suggests the following:

[The truth] is performative and thereby inextricably involved in claiming identities. This is the sense in which agency can never totally be abstracted from an actor—Through performance, we cannot avoid claiming ourselves, our identities. (p. 109)

Research, as a “performance,” is contingent on one’s sense of identity vis-à-vis the research questions and the topic of study.

Throughout this study, I share several of my experiences, as well as the experiences of others. I conclude this introduction by narrating, in brief, my personal experiences as they relate to insider/outsider teacher identity, and to the information I sought from participants.

Personal Reflections

I grew up on the outskirts of the town of Tazewell, Virginia, on a family farm nestled in a valley between two mountains that form part of the Appalachian Mountains. My mother’s family had a long tradition of living and farming in that county. As a child, my parents instilled in me a deep appreciation for personal faith and they took me every Sunday to a small, country United Methodist church in our community, where I am still an active member.

Before I entered my junior year of high school, my parents sent me on a school trip to Italy. It was the first time I had been abroad, and during this trip I discovered what it was like to feel like an outsider in a place distant from my home.

I attended Roanoke College, in Salem, Virginia, where I majored in Spanish, minored in sociology, and obtained my teaching licensure. During the spring semester of my junior year, I participated in an exchange program in Almería, Spain.

Studying abroad gave me the opportunity to live in a community where my inability to speak the language as a native and my different cultural mannerisms made me feel like an outsider. As a response to my outsidership, I began making connections between the Andalusian region of Spain and my native Appalachia. Locals would often discuss with me the prejudices they faced from media outlets, regarding their distinct accents and “backwards” culture. The more I spoke with individuals from that area, the more I realized that our regions’ strong ties to

agriculture and rurality, sometimes considered “backwards” by others, linked us together as global regions (C. Rueda-Ramos, personal communication, July 7, 2011; Ruíz-Muñoz, 2008; Teruel Rodríguez & Fernández Cabello-Delgado, 2005;).

After having many of these conversations and building relationships with locals based on shared experiences, I began to feel more like an insider in that community. On one memorable occasion, an elderly lady with whom I was acquainted, encountered me on the street and asked me to walk two miles with her to her destination. During this walk, we bonded over growing up on farms in our respective regions. In the middle of our conversation, she linked her arm with mine, a very intimate act that I had witnessed among locals and their elderly relatives and neighbors. At that moment I felt a conscious progress towards my own insider status in that community.

After graduating from Roanoke College, I pursued a master’s program in Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. At Appalachian State, I also had the opportunity to take part in a participatory cross-cultural course that examined the cultural similarities between Appalachia and South Wales, furthering my curiosity in Appalachia’s situation as a global region. As a teacher by training and trade, I knew I wanted to someday to research education in Appalachia. While exploring this topic at Appalachian State, I realized that there was little emphasis on it in academic research and I saw an opportunity to contribute to this area of investigation. After a few years of working as a classroom teacher in Mercer County, West Virginia, I enrolled in the School of Education at Virginia Tech to pursue this line of inquiry, which has brought me to where I am in this writing today.

After finishing my master’s degree, I accepted a job in Mercer County, West Virginia. In the two middle schools where I worked in Mercer County, I always felt a strong sense of

Appalachian identity among teachers and students, as many often spoke of this heritage and about how living in the Appalachian Mountains made them feel proud.

I recognized how Protestant (White, 2019) and conservative (Lewin, 2019; White, 2010) beliefs influenced social institutions in Appalachia. These beliefs are apparent in the day-to-day operations of schools throughout the region, a trend that scholars of schooling in Appalachia observed over four decades ago (DeYoung & Porter, 1979). I also pondered how others, especially other teachers, unaccustomed to how these beliefs influenced our society, would respond.

I observed that in Mercer County, like in my home county of Tazewell, Virginia, Protestantism played an integral part in the daily instruction of my colleagues. Because the vast majority of the students and teachers were involved in church activities outside of school, one of the few social outlets in rural communities, they often overtly brought these beliefs into the classroom. Mercer County Schools was one of the last districts in the country to have an active “Bible in the Schools” program, which was popular with students during my tenure there. Although the program historically faced legal challenges (Virtanen, 2017), it continued operating until recently (Heim, 2017).

I remember discussing the topic of Protestantism in my public schooling experience with fellow graduate students who came from different areas of the country. They could not believe how my experiences contrasted from their experiences, where public schooling was strongly secularized in policy and practice. There was even an individual from Eastern Maryland who said one of his teachers commented that she attended an Episcopal church during class, and after saying it, was frightened she would face repercussions for doing so. My teachers and colleagues often went far beyond identifying their religious affiliation. While attending and working in

schools in Appalachian communities, it was very common to hear teachers proselytize their faith in the classroom. Many teachers I knew kept a Bible on their desk, with its cover facing students' desks.

The majority of teachers I had in school and with whom I worked expressed conservative political ideas in their lessons. A few self-identified Democrat teachers would complain that students only heard one side of political debates. There was even an occasion when a teacher who came from outside the region told me: "It's a damn shame most of these kids don't know any better than to be Republicans like their stupid parents."

Some of my teaching experiences outside the region included student teaching and supervising a service-learning project. In both school systems that were suburban or urban, I noticed a sense of formality to which I was not accustomed in the Appalachian schools I attended or where I taught. To enter in schools in both of these districts, there was a strict protocol. Not long ago at one of the urban schools where I coordinated a student service-learning project, I had to ring a buzzer, introduce myself, my affiliation, and purpose, and then sign the official school visitors' log. I had to do this each time, even though the administrative assistant knew who I was.

Although the Appalachian schools I had worked in also had adopted a camera entry protocol, it was not always used. When I scheduled interviews with one of the participants for the study I present in the second manuscript, she asked that we conduct the interviews in her classroom during her planning period. I had worked in the district but not at this school. When I went each time, even though there was a buzzer with a camera, the door was always ajar. I entered and asked a different administrative assistant each time where I needed to log my visit.

Each time I told the administrative assistant that I was there to visit a teacher with whom I had an appointment, and each time the administrative assistant told me not to log my visit or wear a visitor's pass.

In the schools where I student taught and where I coordinated the service-learning program, faculty always dressed in business casual attire. When I was a student and when I worked at schools in Appalachia, teachers often dressed casually, and could wear denim any day of week. My home school district implemented a strict business casual dress code, but it failed. Some of the male teachers procured doctors' excuses saying they could not wear neckties for medical reasons.

One of my former teachers in my home county told me that she was against any efforts to enforce a strict dress code. After teaching many students in poverty, she believed that business attire and nice jewelry created visual social and economic barriers between students and teachers. Through her example, I realized how some of my teachers made intentional pedagogical decisions to work towards insider status among their students, even if it meant challenging professional norms.

I have always felt like a cultural insider in the Appalachian communities where I lived and worked. Being native to the region greatly contributes to my identity as an insider. However, I have realized that there are some who are also native to the region and do not feel like insiders (Winter, 2013). Moreover, some colleagues have told me that after leaving their Appalachian communities to attend college outside the region, they returned to the region for work opportunities and felt like outsiders. Feeling like an outsider in this way has not been part of my experience. While there may have been a few times when students saw me as an outsider, I always identified, and believed they mostly identified me, as an insider.

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Chapter 2: Teaching Inside Out: Exploring Insider and Outsider Status Among Teachers

Abstract

In this manuscript, I explore what it means to be a cultural insider/outsider. I trace the tradition of insider/outsider status within the social sciences. I tell stories about my observations of outsiders and insiders in parts of Appalachia—Southwest Virginia, where I grew up and continue to reside, and southern West Virginia, where I have also spent a great deal of time in personal and professional capacities. After reflecting on these stories, I locate where I fall on the spectrum of being an insider and/or outsider in the region. I narrate these stories in a way that highlights how these experiences and my reflections on them have influenced my growth and understanding (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002). To conclude, I discuss considerations for exploring cultural outsider and insider status in the context of teacher education research and teacher development.

Introduction

As a child growing up in rural Appalachia, I was surrounded by a form of English somewhat different than what I heard on television, distinct in pronunciation and peppered with colorful expressions. As I grew older and had more exposure to other forms of English, I began to observe that speakers of my native Appalachian dialect often opted for an idiomatic expression in place of a concise statement to communicate the same idea (Puckett, 2016). I also realized that the way I experienced school was different from the representations I saw on television, read in books, or learned about through talking to new friends from other places. As a student, I pondered what it meant to be a cultural “insider” or “outsider,” terms that I did not use then, but abstract categorizes that I created in my mind.

Although I cannot point to one liminal moment when I realized that one could be an insider, an outsider, or somewhere between, reflecting on it now, I recognize that a subconscious understanding has been there all along. Having had the opportunity to travel throughout Virginia because of my father’s work, I have always been cognizant that ways of speaking, seeing the world, and learning varied across my home state. If there could be such differences across one state, I imagined how great the differences could be between my home state and the rest of the country, or of the world.

As I became older, I continued questioning what it means to interact in a culture that is not one’s own—to be an outsider. There have been many times in my life when I have felt like a cultural outsider, when travelling through other parts of Virginia, visiting other states, or journeying abroad. Through my own experiences of feeling like an outsider, I developed a curiosity about others’ experiences in cultures different from the ones with which they are most familiar.

In this manuscript, I address questions about insider/outsider status. What does being an insider or an outsider even mean, especially in social science research? Are insider and outsider statuses mutually exclusive, or can one be an insider and an outsider at the same time, even within the same culture? How do stories help us as insiders/outsiders to better understand culture? How does insider/outsider status influence teachers' work in the communities they serve?

Tracing the Insider/Outsider within the Social Sciences

Autoethnography shapes the way I envision this research. It blends elements of autobiography with ethnography to provide insight into culture. While the storied autobiography component focuses on key moments of an individual's memory, autoethnography encourages the researcher to frame those moments and memories in a way that sheds light on particular cultural trends and values, borrowing from the field of ethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Though autoethnography influences my work, I do not position this study as autoethnography.

Researchers use ethnographic and autoethnographic methods to provide cultural insight to both those belonging to the culture, "insiders," and those who do not, "outsiders" (Adams & Ellis, 2011). Attributing this line of thought to phenomenologist Maso (2001), who explored Schuetz's (1944) seminal World War II era work in social philosophy on "the stranger," Adams and Ellis (2011) have linked "insider" to "member," and "outsider" to "stranger."

Within the social sciences, there have been nuanced semantic differences in the study of newcomers to a society, including the use of terms such as "stranger" or "outsider." Although scholars have used the same words in comparable contexts, the terms are not interchangeable from one author to the next (Gusak, 2018; Kearney & Semonovitch, 2011; Marotta, 2017; Milligan, 2016).

Schuetz (1944) observed “the stranger” as an individual who comes to a community and desires to become part of it. Simmel (1908/2016) posited “the stranger” as someone who comes to the community from outside of it for extended periods of time, often for economic purposes, and who does not wish to gain full membership in the community.

Moreover, Schuetz (1944) noted that upon initial interaction with a new culture, the “stranger,” or outsider, can only interpret culture using the lens that they have used as an insider in other cultural communities. In order to work towards becoming a “member,” or insider, in their new community, the outsider must take note of these differences and work towards negotiating their prior interpretations within the new community’s accepted interpretive framework. In Schuetz’s (1944) view, the outsider must adopt aspects of the perceived accepted framework in order to work towards insider status among the group.

Contemporary researchers have further interrogated the concepts Simmel (1908) and Schuetz (1944) presented in the early 20th century. They have critiqued the earlier writings of Simmel and Schuetz, exploring how insider/outsider status varies across time, location, and society (Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012), and they have problematized notions of conformity present in those earlier works (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013).

Interrogating Insider/Outsider Status

As ethnography has grown into critical branches (Soyini-Madison, 2012), critical ethnographers and scholars have also further challenged traditional ideas about monoculture and assimilation. Often valuing pluralism, they reject, or at least challenge the notion of assimilation for community membership (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010).

Those who are critically minded still acknowledge that becoming a cultural insider can entail a degree of assimilation, and they also acknowledge that assimilation is a key experience

of those who try to understand their identities as insiders/outsideers (Noe, 2015). As social beings, our identities are tied to our relationships with others; categorizing ourselves and others as insiders or outsideers becomes a natural behavior (Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012).

Such considerations prompt me to interrogate my own beliefs with respect to monoculture and assimilation. Does someone have to assimilate in order to become an insider? Does someone have to be an insider *or* an outsider, or can someone be both an insider *and* an outsider at the same time?

When I explore questions containing the words “either/or,” I look to Dewey (1938), who rejected such dichotomies (Garrison, 1985). Without an understanding of the multifaceted qualities of schooling as a social enterprise, it is not possible to achieve nuanced educational research and practice. Therefore, with respect to my own position on pluralism and monoculture, I approach my work from an ideology that acknowledges the benefits and pitfalls of both leanings. While a pluralist view of insider/outsideer status is more inclusive, within it lies the risk of colonialism if there is an attempt change the cultures of others (Makris, 2012; McSweeney, 2019; Noe, 2015). Moreover, it may be a disservice to outsideers to depict social structure in a prescriptive manner, rather than in a descriptive way, since outsideers often use this work to guide them towards insider status (Osborne, 1989; Schuetz, 1944).

A strict monocultural stance risks perpetuating hierarchy and exclusion (Makris, 2012; Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010) and can hinder democratic education (Dewey, 1916). It can also deny how culture is fluid and shaped by interactions with other cultures (Billings & Kingsolver, 2018; Margolies, 2012; Noe, 2015; Scales, Satterwhite & August, 2018).

Dewey’s rejection of either/or also informs how teachers’ identities exist on a continuum. Within the realm of educational research, insider/outsideer identity often falls on such a

continuum (Ferguson, 2011; Hellowell, 2006; Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012; Makris, 2012; Milligan, 2016; Thomson & Gunter, 2010).

Teacher education programs offer venues where preservice teachers can interrogate (Vegh-Williams, 2013) this continuum. Stakeholders in teacher education may wish to encourage teachers to work towards insider status, while affirming that they do not have to compromise their identities or belief systems. Teachers can recognize that monocultural values may exist among students and the community where they work or will work, while simultaneously acknowledging pluralism and modeling diversity.

Where Do I Fall on the Continuum?

As a teacher, I have come to see myself along this continuum with respect to insider/outsider status in the communities of the schools where I have worked. I often have felt like an insider in the communities where I have worked because I shared similar worldviews and epistemological understandings of the community's role in schooling, and I spoke in a similar way to my colleagues and students. I also have come to realize there have been times when I have felt like an outsider, stemming from comments others have made. People who are visiting the region will tell me that they do not think I have distinct regional accent. While I am disappointed that my accent does not sound regional to them, because it is part of my Appalachian identity, I tell them that I have done so much work with English learners that I think I codeswitch, or subconsciously alter my accent, depending on my audience. However, I do not think that I change my accent for the reasons that Dunstan and Jaeger (2016) have found among Appalachian college students, including a desire to circumvent ridicule or the perception of being less educated.

One experience that stands out to me more than any other is from when I was a middle school teacher. After hearing me say something about growing up in Tazewell, one of my students, who was raised in the coalfields of far Southwest Virginia, gave me a look of surprise and exclaimed, using the unique title my students often called me: “Mr. Señor, you don’t sound like us! You sure don’t *sound* country. I think you’re lyin’.”

In almost every conversation I have ever had with colleagues from outside the region, especially those with non-Appalachian accents, they mention how students comment to them that they “talk funny.” Such an observation leads me to question the role of accent on insider/outsider status. If I walked into almost any classroom in Appalachia, I would still feel like an insider. When I have traveled to communities in East Tennessee, Northern Alabama, Northern Georgia, Northeast Mississippi, Southeast Kentucky, Upstate South Carolina, I speak similarly enough to locals and share enough cultural understandings, that I feel like an insider. While I may feel like an outsider to the town or to the institution I am visiting, I have always shared a strong kindred link to the language and culture of the region that I *mostly* feel accepted as an insider.

Storying Cultural Insider/Outsider Status

As qualitative social science research examines lived experience, which is inherently storied, there is an inextricable link between the social science research of insider/outsider status and stories (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography emphasizes storytelling as a way to create a point of resonance between the researcher and readers (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Exploring one’s own understandings is an essential component of teacher development (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016). With respect to research about insider/outsider teachers, autoethnography and narrative research can broaden educational research and prepare teachers

for introspective work, especially within these sociological and sociopolitical contexts (Ferguson, 2011; Makris, 2012; Noe, 2015). While singular, my research about insider/outsider teachers in a small section of Appalachia has the potential to foster a broader understanding of these contexts for those who work or plan to work in communities similar to the ones I describe.

I also borrow from the tradition of portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002) to inform my approach to storied research. Given portraiture's roots in educational research, as a tool to counter the dehumanization of educational topics in the research arena, portraiture is an appropriate methodology to guide an investigation of the experiences of teachers as cultural insiders/outsiders in order to humanize them. Portraiture emphasizes the retelling of stories in a way that not only engages the audience, but also clues the audience into various nuances and complexities of a topic. As a research methodology, it shines light on positive and hopeful aspects of a topic, offering counter-narratives to the negative and pessimistic interpretations often found in other modes of research.

Portraiture recognizes the authority and agency of research participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis, 2002). While the researcher using portraiture facilitates the study and interprets meaning, participants become collaborators who shape the direction and detail of the research, providing an authentic source of inspiration for how the researcher investigates a given topic. Portraiture encourages the researcher to acknowledge their position as an interpreter, a position that is intrinsically value-laden.

I have designed my research about insider/outsider teacher status to foster understanding among pre-service and in-service teachers seeking preparation and development in working in communities different from the ones to which they are most accustomed. Portraiture makes research topics more accessible to the audience, as it reaches beyond academic esotericism to

produce approachable research, merging the art of descriptive storytelling with social science research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 2002; Leavy, 2015).

All the stories I have included are my own and are the product of my retellings, inextricably personal, shaped by my worldview (Schumann & Fowler, 2002; Shields, 2012). Nevertheless, many of them feature individuals with whom I have interacted and they detail my interpretation of their feelings of being an insider or an outsider. I have also incorporated other voices “to broaden and deepen the narrative.” (Stoll, 2017, p. xvii). In many cases, I have been able to share my retellings with the named individuals, in an effort to check and verify my memories with theirs.

The stories I tell are not from the classroom. However, they provide insight into the experiences that have shaped my ideas about being a cultural insider/outsider, especially within the communities where I have lived and worked. These stories have helped me as a practicing teacher and researcher to better understand my conceptualization of the topic of insider/outsider teacher identity.

Meine Cousin Margaret

I have been a keen observer of people who have come to the region from other places, who were not born into Appalachian culture, but rather adopted it. One of the earliest interactions I can recall is with my cousin Margaret, a German who married my mother’s cousin Donnie only a couple of decades after the end of World War II. Having learned about World War I in elementary school and having been fascinated by its history, I eagerly listened to Margaret’s vivid stories of her childhood in war-torn Germany of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Listening to all these stories, Margaret’s upbringing intrigued me as it was quite different from that of

many of my relatives her age who grew up and experienced life in our *hollers*, or hollows, of Southwest Virginia.

Moreover, other cousins told me how members of our family were leery of welcoming a divorced German Catholic into the family, the trifecta of differences for our family from the rural Appalachian Mountains of the 1960s. My cousin Debbie often laughs at the irony of it all, since much of our family's ancestry is German. It has always seemed so strange to me that anyone could be anything less than welcoming to Margaret, as I have witnessed how members of my family always have treated her as one of our own during my lifetime.

Ever since I have known her, Margaret has always acted like one of us in many ways. Knowing fewer than fifty English words when she met Donnie, Margaret mastered our ways of speaking, sprinkling her slight German-English accent with Appalachian vernacular and sayings specific to our area. As Margaret became more involved in our community, she lost her German label, which some used to denote that she was an outsider, and people identified her by her name or as Donnie's wife. She kept much of her German identity by calling her mother and speaking to her in her city's *Trierisch* German dialect, making frequent visits to her family home, reminiscing about her life in Germany with her husband and family from the United States, and still attending Catholic mass, only one of the few members in our rural community to do so.

Margaret has always been present at family reunions on Donnie's side of the family. She has also served as a member of the local volunteer fire department, led a popular *bunka* embroidery club, and attended events and services at her husband's Protestant family church. She has achieved a difficult feat—gaining insider status within our family and community, while never abandoning her upbringing and core identity.

A Reverend's Reverence for Appalachian Culture

Another one of my favorite stories about someone who came from outside the region and obtained insider status in our Appalachian community is that of a family friend, Emily, who came to our county during her early teens in the 1960s, having grown up in New England. Over the twenty years I have known her, she has discussed her family's move and how she adapted to life in our community. She often speaks of her excitement upon finding out her family was moving to a farming community in the rural Appalachian Mountains, like the ones she saw depicted on magazine covers, and how her parents made her responsible for poring over the atlases and encyclopedias for more information on their new home.

After enduring a year of being called a "damn Yankee" in class by one of her teachers, Emily tells of how she then felt welcomed in our community and has grown to feel much more connected now to our area than she does to the place where she spent her formative years. When I once asked her what was the biggest culture shock was that she experienced when she first transferred to a school in Southwest Virginia, she recounted in her coy manner: "I went through the lunch line on my first day and they served me brown beans as an entrée, along with cornbread. I had never imagined that beans would be anything other than a side dish!" She grew to love Appalachia and its people, acknowledging that the region is much more than the depictions of abject poverty in the magazines she read as a child.

She has lamented that after fifty years of living in the community, people still ask her where she is from, as her accent is distinct and diverges from the local accent. She jokes: "After almost fifty years here, my accent hasn't changed. I've raised one child who speaks like me, and one, well, who doesn't." Over the years, she has become an advocate for our community, and is an elected member of many local organizations that work to support socioeconomic causes in

Appalachia. She never forgot where she came from, but has put forth much effort to participate in and operate within the cultural systems of her adopted home.

Recognized for her work as a farmer, professional photographer, and community advocate, Emily is perhaps best known these days as Reverend Edmondson. As an ordained Episcopal priest, she focuses much of her ministry on fostering respect for traditionally marginalized communities.

A few years ago, she turned to me while we were waiting in line to fill our plates at a dinner meeting for a local organization and said: “I’ve got this idea I want to run by you. I want to do a special series at my church on the topic of reconciliation.” She then spoke about how many members of her congregation had voiced their desire to participate in this series. Placing her hand on my shoulder, she asked: “Since you’ve got your master’s in Appalachian Studies, would you be interested in coming to speak about Appalachian people and how *we* have been marginalized?” Emily’s use of the plural first person pronoun affirmed to me that she felt like a cultural insider.

This past spring during the forty days before Easter, Reverend Edmondson organized a Lenten series on reconciliation, specifically in terms of race and ethnicity. I traveled over an hour, over the county line and over three mountains to lead a discussion on Appalachian identity and the historic marginalization of the Appalachian community. I began the discussion by presenting the Appalachian Regional Commission’s (“The Appalachian Region,” n.d.) definition of Appalachia as “all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.” After a group discussion on what exactly comprised Appalachia, many from the group expressed they felt that the Appalachian Regional Commission’s definition

was too formal and political (Scales, Satterwhite & August, 2018). The group also suggested that the definition did not capture the nuances of the region as a cultural entity, which they argued created a regional identity much more complex and fluid (Billings & Kingsolver, 2018; Margolies, 2012; Scales, Satterwhite & August, 2018; Williams, 1996/2002).

During the discussion, they acknowledged how Appalachia has been socially constructed (Batteau, 1990; Catte, 2018; Stoll, 2017), based on perceived notions of shared similar traditions, worldviews (Green, 2011), economic conditions, and historical experiences (Stoll, 2017). When I asked the group what made us Appalachian, many said “independent” and “isolated,” adding that they believed these qualities had to do with the rugged landscape. I commented that those words and ideas could have contributed to how those who visited the region reported back and depicted individuals living in the Appalachian Mountains as socially deviant and in need of reform (Batteau, 1990; Ledford, 2013; Shapiro, 1978; Werner, 2015). Many remarked how negative stereotypes impacted them throughout their lives, in interactions with those from outside the region, detailing the times they felt marginalized because of their association with Appalachia (Billings & Kingsolver, 2018; Gaventa, 1982/2018; Lewis, 1978; Schumann & Fowler, 2002).

Several individuals raised their hands to contribute to our discussion about what it means to be Appalachian. I called on one lady who commented: “I don’t like the term ‘Appalachian.’ I prefer to say I am ‘Southern.’ Too many people associate Appalachia with West Virginia and I can’t stand that.”

Though I disagreed with her, I thanked her for sharing, as I wanted to give everyone the opportunity to freely express their opinions and feelings. I then called on a man who had

previously raised his hand, but then lowered it. He spoke quietly, as if he were speaking only to me: “I’m from West Virginia. When I moved from to Washington D.C., I had so much trouble. Everyone treated me like I was an outsider because of where I was from and the way I talked. It was really tough.”

Others began sharing stories of leaving the region for college or work and shared how they felt like an outsider, too. After the event, one lady spoke to me in private and recalled the ridicule she faced from her professors at the University of Virginia for the way she spoke and for her educational background, singling her out and telling her that she would have to work much harder to succeed at the school. She said that after the term had concluded, the same professors bragged on her hard work ethic and performance in the course.

Another parishioner told of how even though she now felt Appalachian, she too had felt like an outsider when she first arrived in Southwest Virginia from New England. Moreover, she recounted how some individuals still tell her she is not Appalachian because she speaks with a different accent and was raised outside the Appalachian Mountains. To defend her degree of Appalachian identity, she began listing all the criteria that in her opinion that made her an insider to the region, including her involvement in the local music scene, her work to start a regional arts initiative, and her dedication to her mountain community.

Near the end of the discussion, I asked everyone to name some positive traits of being Appalachian. I heard, “neighborly,” “resourceful,” “hospitable,” and “wise.” As the session came to an end, the group agreed that if only these traits were the stereotypes for which Appalachians were most known, Appalachians would not have to continue facing belittling and dehumanizing treatment.

A Hometown Hero at Harvard

Walking into the local coffee shop, I saw a familiar face. “Emilee!” I yelled across the room: “How’s Harvard?” I smile, wanting to make sure the motorcycle tourists having coffee heard me, as I thought to myself: “That’s right folks. She’s from Tazewell and she goes to Harvard.”

Emilee Hackney, a local student who transferred from our community college to Harvard (Hackney, 2018), is a local celebrity. After all, how many students transfer from “Harvard on the Hill,” as many affectionately refer to our local community college, to the real Harvard in Cambridge, Massachusetts? According to Emilee, she has only heard of one other person from Southwest Virginia Community College attending Harvard.

There are a few examples of well-connected individuals with family wealth from the region who had gained admittance to the Ivy League school, but Emilee is different. Apart from not having a live-in housekeeper or access to a private jet, like many of her peers, or being the daughter of a former U.S. President, like her classmate, Emilee is a hardworking individual without a famous last name. There is an electricity and pride people in our town have when they speak about her endeavors. Overjoyed for her, many in our town have expressed what a magnanimous task she had before her, representing our town and studying at one of the nation’s most prestigious and coveted institutions.

Since I had been pondering the experiences of being a cultural outsider or insider, I took the opportunity to ask her if she felt like an outsider. I had imagined that someone with an Appalachian background would feel like an outsider at an Ivy League school. After all, J.D. Vance (2016) has documented in his popular, yet controversial memoir how he felt out of place at Yale.

After I posed the question, Emilee paused a moment to think before answering. She drew a deep breath and said:

Definitely. Well, obviously everyone notices the way I talk and they start talking to me about all their preconceived notions about Appalachia and the South. I try to tell them that there's so much more to us, that we have such a rich culture.

She then described how she felt so dissimilar to many of her peers with privileged backgrounds.

Emilee also acknowledged that she did not envy their privilege, feeling that her upbringing taught her how to thrive in a new and challenging environment—an ability with which she saw many of her peers struggling. She also discussed how although some individuals who attended rural schools in the region have indicated they felt their educational backgrounds were subpar, she felt as if her schooling experiences made her more resourceful and prepared for academic rigor.

I had questioned earlier on if it were possible to for someone to feel an outsider, even if others in their community labeled the individual an insider. When speaking about being an outsider or insider, Emilee also said: “You know, sometimes I feel like an outsider when I come back home. People think that I've changed and I must be uppity because I go to a nice school, but I'm still the same ole me!”

I replied:

That's really interesting, because everyone I have talked to about you, considers you one of us, and they are really proud that you are from here. You're just a hometown hero who has worked hard to get to where you are. I think a lot of folks are living vicariously through you.

Emilee gave me a look of surprise, enlightened as if what I had said made perfect sense, but also curious, as if she had never considered that others would feel that way. As she finished making my coffee, I got out my computer, took a sip of my drink, and reflected on everything she had said.

A Lesson Learned

As a sophomore in college, I learned the danger inherent in labeling someone an outsider. Natalija was a few years older than I and we became good friends while serving as officers in a campus civic organization. Born and raised in the former Soviet Bloc, she came to the United States for her college education. In terms of students at our college, she was in the minority of international students who could easily pass as someone who had grown up in the United States. Her English sounded native and she had easily assimilated to many cultural aspects while living in the United States. Natalija still had a strong affinity for her home and culture.

I admired Natalija for her professionalism and composure, an anomaly, in my opinion, of our peer group. I would go as far as saying that Natalija had a magnetic mystique about her. She was popular and intellectual, possessing a brilliant mind. She and I would joke among ourselves about our cultural differences. Natalija would sometimes make jokes about my country accent, rural upbringing, and loud personality, and I would return the favor by joking about her posh accent, city attitude, and reserved composure. This teasing helped to solidify our friendship.

In one of our club meetings, while she was serving as president, and I as vice-president, a new member made a suggestion about how to move the club forward. I cannot remember the precise details of the comment, but I felt that Natalija abruptly overturned the suggestion, in a brash manner. The new member's facial expression indicated that she was intimidated and did not appreciate being spoken to so directly.

When I returned to my dorm room, I was disheartened as I was worried this incident would discourage the new member from becoming more involved in our civic club. Everyone had worked so hard to build up the club membership and do important work on campus and in the community. I decided to sit down at my laptop and draft an email to the new member. I wrote:

Dear Sarah, I just wanted to check in with you and make sure you were okay after the meeting. I wish Natalija wouldn't have said that to you, but wanted you to know she is from Serbia and because of this, I think she is more direct than you and I are used to.

I hit send. I thought that I was doing a good deed in mediating cultural differences. A few minutes later I heard the notification of a new email. Mortified, I saw that the reply was not from the new member, but rather from Natalija. I realized that when I had been looking for Sarah's email address that I had replied by mistake to an email on which Natalija was copied. Natalija wrote: "I am very hurt that you wrote this message about me. Yes, I may be from Serbia, but that is irrelevant. If you felt that I was wrong, you should have spoken to me privately."

I searched for my cellphone and called Natalija to apologize for my insensitivity. She accepted my apology, but the damage had been done. In a position of trust as her friend, I had labeled her an outsider. I realized that while well-intentioned (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009), it was not my place to label someone else as an outsider. I learned a valuable lesson that day and have worked hard not to repeat that mistake.

Reflecting on My Stories

Given my strong connection to my Appalachian identity, where many prize good storytelling (Druggish, 2003), an autoethnographic lens of inquiry and reflection lends itself naturally to my research in this area. I have come to see through retelling my stories how I have

internalized the quality and nature of my heritage, by looking at the past to explore the present (Genishi & Dyson, 1994). Every problem I have ever encountered has been met with advice given to me by parents and grandparents through a story of the past (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017), a form of what Bochner (2016) calls “narrative inheritance.” Those who know me well know that I am a storyteller by nature. I attribute much of my narrative inheritance as coming from my parents, in particular my mother who has always said: “You ask me for the time, and I’ll build you a clock!”

As a practicing teacher, I have always used local stories to inform my pedagogy, as many of my own teachers did. One example that comes to mind is my high school social studies teacher, who asked his students to write about a topic of local importance as a capstone project, ranging from stories and legends passed down from one generation to the next, to the origins of county landmarks. Dr. Mullins later compiled and published these essays into a book entitled *Hidden Histories of Tazewell County, Virginia* (Tazewell County Historical Society, 2010). His pedagogy emphasized the local as a springboard for his students to learn and understand their place in the world, which left a profound mark on me. It is no wonder that I am so tied to exploring the role of community and the Appalachian region in schooling!

As a teacher working in Appalachia, I have come to realize that building rapport with students, parents, and colleagues requires a level of insidership. While I have possessed it, I have witnessed others who have not. My colleagues from different cultural backgrounds than their students have indicated that in order for them to have made a career teaching in the area and be successful with their students, that they have had to work towards becoming more of an insider than an outsider.

When the cultures of those in positions of power in schools, such as teachers, administrators, and other staff do not align with those of their students, a dangerous hierarchy can form that facilitates the cultural colonization of students (Aspen Institute, 2018; Ferguson, 2000; Hendrickson, 2012; Marsh & Noguera, 2018). Working towards insider status can demonstrate to students that teachers care (Glowacki-Dudka, Mullett, Griswold, Baize-War, Vetor-Suits, & Londt, 2018) about them enough to respect their cultural understandings, in particular when their cultures are maligned by others. It does not mean that teachers have to forsake their own identities, but it does suggest that they must attempt to understand and respect the identities of their students and the community where they are working.

Insider/Outsider Status in Educational Research

If a teacher arrives to a community as an outsider, there are differences that colleagues, students, parents, and the outsider teacher must work to negotiate (Makris, 2012). Outsider teachers can greatly benefit from pre-service preparation for working in a culture with which they are unfamiliar (Au & Blake, 2003; Cushman, 2009; Georgiadis & Zisimos, 2012; Gu & Benson, 2015; Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula, 2011; Stachowski & Frey, 2005). Outsider teachers experience less cultural conflict and feel they can more quickly resolve cultural conflict with cultural competence instruction and discussions about cultural identity in preservice teacher education and professional development (Brashears, 2012; Cushman, 2009; Gu & Benson, 2015; Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula, 2011; Hramiak, 2014; Stachowski & Frey, 2005; Vegh-Williams, 2013). It takes time, perseverance, and dialogue with the local community for an outsider teacher to achieve insider status (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Au & Blake, 2003; Brashears, 2012; Court, 2006; Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula, 2011; Howley, Howley, & Dudek, 2016; Osborne, 1989; Stachowski & Frey, 2005; Vegh-Williams, 2013). There is also a

professional and ethical obligation that outsider teachers have to respect the cultural norms of the community where they have chosen to work (Court, 2006; Cushman, 2009; Howley, Howley, & Dudek, 2016; Osborne, 1989; Stachowski & Frey, 2005; Vegh-Williams, 2013).

Insider/outsider status is not strictly binary nor static (Koefoed & Simonsen, 2012). Teachers have a challenging task before them working in a cultural community that is not their own, especially when working in more culturally uniform communities with a high number of students and colleagues who share similar cultural understandings. Integrating the topic of insider/outsider status into pre-service teacher preparation and professional development programs can help teachers to meet this challenge.

Exploring my own stories and looking at the stories of other teachers and researchers who have examined insider/outsider teacher status provides a better understanding of what it means to be a cultural insider/outsider teacher. Although cultural contexts may differ, by examining experiences of insider/outsider teachers collectively and holistically, it is possible to further build a body of literature that has powerful implications for teachers to find success in their schools. Future context-specific studies that investigate the nuances of other regions and cultures would be useful tools for teachers and teacher educators who intend to prepare for work in these areas. By further comparing and contrasting the results of these studies, there is potential to build deeper understanding about insider/outsider teacher preparation and development.

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Chapter 3: Teaching Inside Out: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Experiences as Insiders and Outsiders in Appalachia

Abstract

Teachers who come to work in communities different than those with which they are most familiar often face unanticipated challenges that may pose consequences for their identities, life plans, and interpersonal relationships. In this qualitative study, I interviewed three veteran teachers from outside the region, who came to Appalachian communities located in southern West Virginia and Southwest Virginia to teach. Through qualitative research methods (Mayan, 2016), I detail participants' experiences of negotiating their insider/outsider statuses in the communities they have taught, in order to provide insight for teachers in similar cultural and situational contexts. The results of this study indicate that while teachers arrive to the region with a sense of being an outsider, their identities as insider/outsider teachers evolve differently based on situational circumstances and individual attitudes. Moreover, the results suggest that interactions with colleagues are a significant component of teachers' insider/outsider identity development.

Introduction

Teachers who work in a culture distinct to that in which they grew up risk not being accepted by a new community. Their success and their students' success are intricately linked by their comfort in and acceptance by the community where they teach. Feeling like an outsider in a new community often perpetuates negative attitudes about the host culture by the newcomer. If members of the host culture view that individual as an outsider, they are likely to hold poor opinions about the newcomer and may treat them in an unwelcome manner. Feeling like or being labeled as an insider often brings about positive attitudes and interactions, and members of the host culture may be more welcoming towards them (Marotta, 2017).

Teachers who feel positive connections with the cultures in which they work, and who possess a certain degree of insider status, are more likely to feel successful and to create classrooms with higher student morale, participation, and achievement (Cushman, 2009; Hellsten, McIntyre & Prytula, 2011; Hendrickson, 2012; Howley, Howley & Dudek, 2016; Vegh-Williams, 2013). In environments where students feel their teachers do not gain insider status, students can respond by misbehaving and performing poorly in their academic work, making outsider teachers feel disillusioned (Hendrickson, 2012; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016; Marsh & Noguera, 2018).

Throughout my time as a student and teacher in the area surrounding my lifelong home in Appalachia, I have met various teachers who came to these communities from other places, often from outside the region. As I developed further interest in researching teacher education, especially in the context of the region, I recognized that there were limited resources available to prospective teachers in this situation. In this study, I broaden the discussion surrounding teachers who have come from outside of Appalachia to teach in the region. I envision this study as a

reference for those preparing for or beginning their career in the region, as well as for those working in cultures similar to Appalachia.

Although I recognize that not all individuals who grew up in Appalachia and teach in the region feel like cultural insiders (Winter, 2013), I am most interested in teachers who grew up outside of the region and have come to Appalachia to live and work. The following two questions guide me in this study:

1. What are the experiences of teachers who have come from outside the region to work in an Appalachian community in Southwest Virginia and Southern West Virginia?
2. What advice would teachers who originally came from outside the region give to new teachers coming to the region in order negotiate their insider/outsider status?

Teachers who once self-identified or still self-identify as outsider teachers may have rich experiences of cultural conflict and resolution with respect to insider/outsider status in the communities where they work. Such knowledge benefits teachers who are new to more monocultural communities (Howley, Howley, & Dudek, 2016) like those often found in Appalachia.

Methodology

A qualitative research design seemed most appropriate for this study to hear the voices of the participants coming from outside talking about whether they felt they had attained a level of insiderness. Mayan's (2016) work on qualitative research methodology guided the study.

The earliest study about insider/outsider teacher identity focused on outsider teachers working among non-Zuni teachers in a Zuni community (Osborne, 1989). This study interrogated the influence of interpersonal relationships among native and non-native teachers on

the insider/outsider teacher identities of non-native teachers, a claim supported in a more recent study (Vegh-Williams, 2013).

Many studies on the topic of insider/outsider teacher identity referred to Au and Blake's (2003) landmark study which found that preservice teachers felt better prepared for working in a culture after examining and reflecting upon their own identities. Teachers who felt culturally similar to their students developed insider identity faster than their peers and with less effort. Other studies (Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula, 2011; Stachowski & Frey, 2005), further established the correlation between preservice teacher preparation with respect to insider/outsider identity and the readiness of teachers working in cultures different than their own.

A dominant belief within educational policy assumes cultural match among teachers based on perceived similarities with their students. Researchers (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Winter, 2013) have challenged this model and suggested that explicit sociocultural preparation for teachers has greater impact on teachers' success than perceived cultural match. Moreover, outsider teachers do not always attain insider status in their adopted communities, and may stay in these communities despite continuing to feel like an outsider (Howley, Howley, & Duddek, 2016).

Context

While I position my work as part of greater Appalachian Studies scholarship, I recognize the diversity and vastness of the region (Scales, Satterwhite, & August, 2018). Scholars of the region (Batteau, 1990; Catte, 2018; Green, 2011; Stoll, 2017) have cited the formation of an Appalachian regional consciousness as the product of various social, historical, and political events. Other researchers of the region (Batteau, 1990; Billings & Kingsolver, 2018; Gaventa,

1982/2018; Ledford, 2013; Lewis, 1978; Shapiro, 1978; Schumann & Fowler, 2002; Werner, 2015) have emphasized the marginalization and trivialization of Appalachian culture and its people (Billings & Kingsolver, 2018; Gaventa, 1982/2018; Lewis, 1978; Schumann & Fowler, 2002). These studies broaden understanding about the characteristics, complexities, and contradictions in Appalachian communities.

I focused my study on the communities where I have spent the most time teaching and working: Tazewell County in Southwest Virginia and Mercer County in southern West Virginia. I was born and raised in Tazewell County and I attended K-12 schools there. Tazewell is a lush county, filled with rolling hills. Experiencing all four seasons, Tazewell has hot, humid summers, brightly painted autumns, snowcapped winters, and florescent springs. Traditionally, agriculture and coal mining have sustained the county's economy. Like many other counties nearby, the population has suffered decline and economic hardship within the past thirty years, owing to the decrease in coal production (Lewin, 2019).

For the first five years of my teaching career, I worked over the state line in Mercer County, West Virginia. While similar to Tazewell County in climate and culture, Mercer County has relied almost exclusively on coal, like much of West Virginia. Unlike Tazewell County, Mercer County has a major interstate running through it. While there is a more transient population in some sections of the county, Mercer also has deep pockets of rather isolated communities that have remained unchanged over the span of several decades due to geographic isolation.

Bluefield, West Virginia, one of the main towns in Mercer County that thrived during the coal industry's peak, has changed drastically over the past fifty years, with many vacant buildings stained by the coal dust of the adjacent railroad. Many small communities in both

counties have experienced recent economic and cultural renaissance, spurred by community interest in post-coal sustainability. Some towns have turned their focus to tourism, promoting ATV trails and motorcycle routes. In addition to Appalachian identity, there is also a strong sense of rural and Southern identities in both counties.

Within recent times, Mercer and Tazewell have experienced the devastating effects of the opioid epidemic. Many blame a lack of employment and social opportunities as a major culprit. While there are visages of coal wealth in “old money” families that amassed fortunes during the economic booms in coal, both counties also face high levels of poverty.

While both the Democratic and Republican parties have influenced the counties, there is a strong sense of thriving social conservatism (Lewin, 2019; White, 2019). There are numerous evangelical Protestant churches, and community events that revolve around them, with religion playing an integral role in community identity (White, 2019). Both Tazewell and Mercer have a small number of Catholic congregations. Unlike Tazewell County, Mercer County also has a mosque and synagogue.

Although Whites make up the majority of the population, there are pockets of thriving Black communities throughout both counties. In one of the schools where I worked for five years, and where one of the participants in this study worked, about half of the students were Black and half were White, a rarity in the region. In many parts of Mercer County, and the part of Tazewell County located on the coal seam, there is a strong legacy of Italian heritage, given the influx of immigration from Italy during the early twentieth century of miners and masons. Some areas of the counties with medical facilities also have well-established, albeit small South Asian communities, made up primarily of medical doctors and their families. Latinos, while well represented in the United States and other parts of Appalachia (Cowdery, 2010; Hayden, 2004),

do not form large populations in either county. Coal, medicine, education, tourism, and industrial commerce are the major industries that attract individuals from other areas in the United States and abroad.

Methods

Participants

I sought out participants who had come to these places from outside the region. After receiving IRB approval from my institution, I contacted five potential participants, whom I knew about through my use of strong social networks I had formed as a student and teacher in the area. Of the five, three responded and agreed to take part in this study. I knew each participant in a casual capacity before beginning this study. Although I had been either a student in the school where they taught or worked alongside them, I knew little about the details of their lives and careers as teachers who came to the region to work from outside it.

In order to protect participant anonymity, I collaborated with participants to choose a pseudonym. While I aimed to disguise identifiable details, I also worked hard to maintain fidelity to their identities and experiences (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Because some of the participants felt that changing certain characteristics could potentially harm the verisimilitude of their stories, I avoided changing those details that they asked me not change, making sure they were aware that those details could identify them to the reader.

Data Collection Methods

After making contact with the three participants, we worked together to establish a date, time, and location to hold our individual interviews. When we met for the first interview, I obtained written consent from each participant for the study. During our first and second interviews, I asked questions pertaining to the participants' experiences growing up, becoming a

teacher, moving to Appalachia, teaching in Appalachia, and their identities as insiders and outsiders in the region (see Appendix). During each interview, I asked further probing questions pertinent to the participants' initial responses.

In addition to recording these interviews, I made notes in my journal about my thoughts, feelings, and further questions. After each interview, I transcribed the recordings immediately and began reflecting on their responses (Mayan, 2016), individually and as a group.

Because I wanted to ensure that my interpretations reflected the integrity of the participants' responses, I used the third interview for a member check (Candela, 2018). I asked each participant to read my interpretations about their cases and to provide me with feedback. I used their feedback to make changes, which I implemented in the written report of the study.

Data Analysis Methods

To analyze the data, I conducted a latent content analysis of the data, evaluating the data as I collected them, making observations along the way (Mayan, 2016). Shortly after conducting each interview and transcribing it, I began synthesizing through coding the data. I also began organizing the codes into categories and I developed several categories. There were too many categories, so I chose three of the most salient ones to continue, collapsing many of them into one (Mayan, 2016). For some of the categories, I determined that they provided background context for the participants and arranged those separately to inform the contextual descriptions of the individual participants. The following three categories resulted: *Insider/Outsider Status*, *Similarities and Differences*, and *Community Integration and Interaction*.

Findings

Clara

Growing up in an Italian-American family in a small town near a major city in the Northeast, “Clara” described having “a normal, fabulous childhood.” Regarding her identity as an Italian-American, Clara said:

I'm kind of an outsider Italian. My [Italian] mother was one of eight children and her mom died in childbirth.... My father was born in Italy, but he came here when he was a toddler, which means he got all his schooling here and he didn't speak Italian because his father didn't permit it. You know, immigrants in those days, they came here and wanted to be absorbed. They didn't want to call attention to it. And so I grew up probably knowing a lot less about my Italian heritage than most did. But as I grew older, I investigated it on my own.

Clara and her siblings attended Catholic school. She remembered:

[We were] very indoctrinated by the nuns. Very much so. And I swear to you, I still carry that Catholic guilt today to this day. And my father used to try to tell us that those rules that the nuns gave this weren't God's laws. They were priests' laws.

Clara lived at home through college, commuting to a major university in the nearby city to become a teacher. She noted how she “accepted the rules and regulations” because her father paid for her education in full, and that she also “accepted the fact that, my God, if someone wanted to go out with me, there was a big investigation beforehand.”

After three years of teaching near her home, she married a non-Italian and continued teaching three more years in a nearby town. During the early 1970s, she and her husband moved

to Bluefield, Virginia, where he took a job in the coal industry. The couple raised their children there and plan on spending their retirement in this community.

Clara noted her excitement upon moving to the region, as she always had a fascination with Appalachian music and culture. She recalled:

My mother used to say to me that when I was really little, I always wanted to listen to hillbilly music. I know. There was a country station that was on the radio.

And she said I always wanted to listen to it and I always identified with it more. So when I knew we were going to move to Southwest Virginia, I was excited.

Although concerned that she would be far away from her parents, she looked forward to making her new home in the mountains. However, she felt a great deal of disappointment when she arrived, as her new neighbors were “unfriendly” towards her. A devout Catholic, Clara was most upset by not feeling welcomed in the local Catholic church, the place she thought would be respite from the “standoffish” environment where she found herself. She recollected:

I was excluded at my Catholic Church because I wasn’t from around here when the kids were babies. My husband had to do a lot of travelling for work and I remember there was a church dinner, and one of my kids was two and the other one was an infant. And I went to the church dinner and I needed help. I needed somebody to hold one of the kids so I could go to the buffet. Nobody offered to help and I did not go up to anybody and just hand them a baby. People would see me Sunday after Sunday and not say anything, so I quit going to church because I wasn’t welcome there.

A school secretary met Clara in line at a bank and arranged for her to substitute teach. According to Clara, when the teacher decided not to return to the classroom, the principal said:

“Do you want the job? Say the word and you can have the job.”

After substituting for a brief period, Clara began working full-time as a teacher in the local high school when her daughter started as a student there. Although she raised her daughter in her adopted Appalachian community, her daughter's peers treated her poorly because her mannerisms, similar to Clara's own, made her stand out as an outsider. Recalling that period in her life, Clara fought back tears, and said:

My daughter used to come to my room at lunchtime and cry.... Sorry, I mean it was hard for a while. It was hard for kids to be acclimated. So I can't expect that it was any surprise that it was hard for me.

She added: "We were just outsiders. We didn't talk like everybody else. We moved a little faster. We were northern. We were louder."

Clara was surprised at the way Protestant Christianity was present in the classroom, especially among her students who often wanted to relate classroom discussions to their faith. Although she attended Catholic school, she was shocked to see the way that religious discussion entered the secular classroom. She recalled how students would ask questions in class like, "Do you think she ought to have braids because the Bible says not to?" Clara shared that she would respond by telling the class:

"Guys, I'm Catholic. The only Bible we were allowed and we were encouraged to read was what the priest said on Sunday. I don't know. I can't answer you. And I really rather not." And then that usually stopped it. I wouldn't... I couldn't get into discussions about Bible stuff.

Outside the classroom, she was taken aback by race relations in the area. She recalled:

Black people used to go off the curb into the street when you walk down the street. I remember walking with my daughter when she was like three, and it was downtown. And

this Black man went off the sidewalk onto the street. I wasn't used to that. I still remember it.

Clara believed this experience created a consciousness within her about the vastly different ways in which Black and White members of the community interacted with one another, in stark contrast to her Northern upbringing. At a school she worked in only for a year over the state line in West Virginia, she expressed disappointment for how she never saw a larger number of Black faculty that was representative of the large number of Black students at her school. Clara also acknowledged that this particular community is an anomaly in the region, as many school districts in Appalachia have a majority of White students.

During her career, Clara believed her colleagues and supervisors viewed her as an outsider. She recalled:

As my principal told me later when she was doing an observation, "You are perceived as being gruff." And I said: "You know, I'm a lot less gruff than I was 30 years ago. So just get over it. That's me."

Clara believed her outsidership impeded career advancement for which she felt qualified:

There were things that were denied me along the way because I was an outsider. I never got a job at central office even though I had more education. Absolutely. But it didn't matter because I didn't know the crew and always friends were picked. I mean, I know there's nepotism everywhere. There was in the North, too. But, boy, is it rampant here.

Clara was proud of the relationships she built with students and attested that they did not make her feel like an outsider. She reflected: "If you were kind to them, they loved you no matter where you were from." As a parent, Clara felt she was able to model kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to her own children. She said:

My children laugh at me and say [that because I was an outsider], I got to know every kid in town who felt like an oddball. When we'd go to the mall, it was always the student who was labeled as different for some reason, either because of a disability or their skin color, who would come up and greet me. I raised my own children well. I didn't say anything, but they modeled [the way the treat people who are different] from me.

Clara also made certain to distinguish that when she first moved to the area and started substitute teaching, as well as after retirement, she had much happier experiences working in a nearby area more rural than Bluefield. She explained:

They were marvelous to me. I loved the people there. After an initial standoff, they were very welcoming and very kind. And a lot of my friends were teachers there. And the kids were really country. But for some reason or another, whenever they went to any competitions, those kids excelled, and they still do. So I was happy there. I mean, they accepted me and I accepted them. Maybe that's why I love them. They accepted me when other people in my own community did not.

When reflecting on living and working in the more populated area of the district, Clara noted that even after fifty years, she still feels like an outsider. Although she believed that while colleagues and neighbors could have been more welcoming towards her, she bore some responsibility for not working harder to build relationships with her coworkers and neighbors. Clara acknowledged: "Any enemies I made, I made myself." She attributed not being accepted by her colleagues to her rejection of humility, a trait she identified as "Northern," in direct opposition to the "Southern" trait of embracing humility. She proposed:

This is a sweeping generalization, but people around here are very humble and the rest of us aren't. And we're just like that from the get-go. Because we're not humble...No one ever told me what to do because I was just going to pretty much do it my way.

She came to the conclusion: "After a while, I realized part of that had to be me. When you meet with resistance like that, it's self-preservation that you don't put yourself out there." She also believed her colleagues were partially responsible for making her feel like an outsider. She posited:

I thought for whatever reason, and forgive me for this, that I was perceived by the fellow teachers as being smarter and more with it when it came to my field and federal or state regulations. I was looked up to, but it wasn't an equal relationship. They'd come to me with questions or problems they wanted solved. And there were a couple of teachers, like the girl I worked with next door to me. She and I got to become good friends. But there was a barrier. I was an outsider, but I was a smart outsider. They needed me for something, but they didn't include me in their parties or social events. And that never changed. Never.

She added:

We all tend to seek friends within our comfort level. And we all do that, too. I have a cadre of friends who accept me in spite of the fact that I'm an outsider and they say that [I'm still an outsider].

Clara admitted that if she had it to over again, she might interact with her colleagues in a different manner in order to find greater acceptance. She contemplated:

I would back off. Be in the shadows a lot. People love to pull you out of the shadows if you're the shy Southern Belle. But when you open up your mouth and you're not, no one's going to want you.

Although she never felt fully welcomed, Clara stayed because her husband enjoyed his work and colleagues. She asserted: "And yet he was accepted more than I was. And why do you think? What else? Because he's a man and he was accepted by the men in the local club, and he was a hunter."

Clara attributed her decision to stay to her strong will to not let anyone else determine her happiness. She concluded: "And I wasn't going to let anybody hold me down to the extent that I could do what I needed to do. I did it [be]cause I'm Italian and I'm stubborn."

With respect to insider/outsider status, Clara felt she never became a full insider. She lamented: "I'm still [mostly] an outsider, and that's incredible. Yeah, I mean, not in a good way. I mean, you know, we laugh about it."

Clara had given advice to colleagues who came to her school as outsiders. She remembered advising a colleague from a similar background as her: "If you're looking to be accepted in that group, forget it. It's not going to work."

She also believed that one must make peace with not being accepted. However, she also acknowledged that even though she felt somewhat successful as a teacher, being accepted as an insider would have enhanced her career. She posited: "But how much better would it have been had I been accepted? How much more successful would I have been?"

Vanessa

"Vanessa" was born in a small town in Haiti and arrived in the United States as a teenager. When she entered high school in Connecticut, she recalled, "I didn't know English.

My first two words that I knew were ‘no’ and ‘yes.’” At her first high school, she suffered a traumatic incident. She recounted:

Six kids attacked me because every time they talked to me, I could not understand what they were saying. Also, in the Haitian culture, you had to dress up to go to school. And I used to dress up and I didn’t know any better [about what kids normally wore to high school in the United States]. I’m not in Haiti. I’m supposed to wear jeans and sneakers. I was dressed up in a pretty dress like going to church. I was accustomed to dress up. So I dress up every day. In this case, the American kids asked me why I’m dressed up going to school. They asked if I thought I was better than them. I said: “Yes.” I did not understand what they were saying. They said: “Next time, if you don’t wear jeans and sneakers, we’re going to beat you up.” I said: “Yes.” I didn’t know what I was saying. So that actually almost killed me, but that was the favor of God.

Vanessa lamented that because of this life-altering event, her parents had to sell their home for less than what it was worth and move to another town for her to attend another school.

Although she said she was able to graduate high school without learning English, she went to college to study education, where she became fluent in the language. A few years later she moved to Southwest Virginia because her husband had a job at a community college in the area. She recollected:

When he came here, I didn’t come with him to the interview. He came himself and fell in love with these mountains. I still remember that. He called me and said: “Honey, this is heaven.” I said: “What? I never heard of Southwest Virginia.” He said: “This place is so beautiful. You will love it. So let’s pack, we’re moving.”

When Vanessa joined him, she found that she struggled to adjust to life in the mountains. Accustomed to flat roads and interstates of the northeastern part of the United States, she noted that her initial challenges were not being able to drive on the rugged terrain and not having access to public transportation. She recalled: “I could not drive when I came here, that was my biggest problem. The snow, up the hill [was different].”

Vanessa spoke of the overwhelming feeling of not feeling like she fit into her new community. She related, “Oh, I was mad. I said: ‘Honey, that’s not pretty! I don’t even see anybody. First of all, I don’t see people of my color.’” Her husband was also Black, emigrating to the United States from another country. Having experienced life in the United States in a multicultural community with many other Haitians, Vanessa felt out of place and she did not find people hospitable in her new Appalachian community. She said:

I noticed that they were not friendly at all. The fact that I have an accent like people was not open to me to talk to me. In Connecticut, they don't care if I have an accent or not. Everybody says “Hi.” Everybody. I didn't feel like they welcomed me here. I didn't feel welcome at all.

After not being able to find a job as a dental hygienist, a vocation for which she also trained, Vanessa accepted the position as the French teacher at a local high school. She recalled:

I said let me just apply as a sub. Actually, they hired me. They did so because I already had a degree in education from Connecticut. They told me because they needed French teachers, if I wanted to be a full-time teacher, they could give me a permit to work until I got certified, and it was a deal for me.

With respect to feeling like an insider/outsider when she came to Bluefield, Vanessa noted: “I think at the beginning [I felt like an outsider] because they did not know me—And I

think too, it has to do with the culture and because they were never used to hearing people with accent.” She added:

Being a woman of color and having a strong accent, I think it scared them, in one way....

I had to find my way to be here. So it's different in the beginning, my first five years when I came here.

She clarified that she used “woman of color” as a physical descriptor and not an identity descriptor.

Vanessa remembered how students and parents complained about her when she first started teaching. She commented:

They said they didn't understand anything I said. So the parents called the office and told them that the French teacher cannot speak English, that their kids cannot understand. And somebody would come to meet with me and I would tell them that I didn't have to speak English in class, I just had to speak French. I could only speak in French if I wanted to.

But I had been nice enough to explain in French and English. So, if they didn't understand, they had a book. When I was in school, I had to learn from my book. Saying they couldn't understand me was just an excuse.

Vanessa told the story of finding out that a parent had lodged a formal complaint to a county administrator, who decided to visit her class and determine whether the complaint had merit. She recalled,

One time I was teaching middle school and one of the student's mothers was a principal at some other school. And her mom tried to get me fired by saying I wasn't qualified to do this job because I didn't speak English. But that was favor of God. This guy in charge of foreign language was a fair person. I like him. He came in one day without tell me he

was coming in. He hid himself in some way and I was teaching. And finally, after I finished, I was shocked, and I said: “Where were you?” He said: “I was there by the cabinet.” And he said: “I have to do this because your job is in danger and before we do that, they sent me to do my own investigation.” He then said: “So from what I observe, you are a wonderful teacher and you did a good job. So if anybody doesn’t pass the class, it isn’t because you don’t speak clearly. On top of it the same girl who complained was sleeping and you tried to wake her up three times.” I was relieved when he said: “You’re not going to get fired because there is nothing wrong with the way you teach.” You know what? I was in shock to see that. How can somebody do something like that without letting me know. It would have never happened in Haiti. It was good in one way because at least if I’d known he was going to do that, I would have been nervous and let it get the best of me. But the fact that I didn’t know it wasn’t going on, what he saw that day was me.

During the first few years of living in the area, Vanessa admitted that she felt much like an outsider, and she continues to feel like one, albeit to a much lesser extent. She blamed the prejudices she has faced to students’, parents’, and colleagues’ lack of multicultural understanding. She believed that her dedication to her students, the importance she placed on modeling multiculturalism, and her patience has made her feel accepted as more of an insider. Vanessa has also credited her success to being able to take negative experiences and turn them into positive experiences. She offered the following example:

They called me “The woman with the accent,” and I would joke with them saying I was “The woman with the *sexy* accent.” So I’m more welcome now that they have accepted the fact that I’m here and I’m staying.

In one of our interviews, I asked Vanessa if she felt more connected to her students, many of whom were students of color, because she indicated she was “a woman of color.” She said “no” and clarified:

Let me make a correction. I define myself as Haitian. I prefer to say Haitian. I identify as a Haitian woman and not as a woman of color. I was the first Haitian teacher the students ever had in their lives. I’m still one of only two Haitian teachers [I know of] in the immediate region.

Vanessa felt that she transitioned to become more of an insider because of her background in Haiti where there were similar “poverty and the mountains.” She added: “When I was growing up in Haiti, it was just like you could still leave your door open and go out. And one thing I noticed here in Southwest Virginia was that people didn’t lock their doors.” Vanessa believed these similarities made her understand her adopted Appalachian community better and she strove to further develop her insider knowledge to help foster more meaningful relationships with her students.

She was raised Roman Catholic, but converted to Protestantism as a teenager. She identified faith as being an integral part of her life and she has always kept a Bible displayed on her desk in her classroom. She felt that she has been able to find connections with many of her students, as the overwhelming majority came from Protestant backgrounds.

Although Vanessa did not initially believe her outsider status benefited her or her students, she changed her mind in the second interview. She said:

One positive thing about it that I forgot to mention to you. It’s just like if I go somewhere, because of the accent, it’s like, let’s say one time I went to the emergency room and the doctor knew me without looking at my name. He said” “You must be

Madame.” And I said: “Yeah.” He said: “Because my son is in your class and was talking about you. I can tell the accent because it’s how he explained it to me. So I thought you must be someone he loves.” That’s a positive thing. So when I go somewhere, I don’t have to identify who I am. They already know that I am “Madame.” Vanessa realized that the ways she looked, spoke, and acted were unique to her identity. She believed her community began to accept her differences as adding to the vibrancy of the community and not detracting from it.

Vanessa viewed her outsider status as a way to offer students, parents, and colleagues exposure to multiculturalism, in a way that they otherwise would not have been able to access. She contemplated:

It’s true I feel good that I have exposed my students to multiculturalism. I have even had parents that have said at some time, “I’ve never heard anybody talk the way you talk before in my life.” And [it’s] because they’ve never been anywhere. They only stay here in Bluefield, in Virginia; they never traveled.

Vanessa felt that some of her colleagues still do not view her as an insider, although she has taught at the school for almost two decades. She stated:

I have some colleagues who didn’t like me. Why? Because they acted like sometimes it wasn’t the kids misbehaving. I just don’t understand, and I feel like it is because some of my colleagues have never been anywhere else.

She thought back to an occasion when one of her students reported to her that another teacher made disparaging comments about Vanessa in class in front of her class. She recounted:

I remember one time when one of my students was bragging about me to another teacher because I speak six languages. He said: “My French teacher is very smart.” And then my

colleague said to my student: “I hope she’s not counting English as one of them!” She said this in the middle of class, and the student got so mad. He said: “But do you know she has a master’s degree and that she got it here and not in Haiti? So how do you think she managed to get a master’s degree?” He then said: “Because she has an accent doesn’t mean she’s dumb. She’s very smart, intelligent.” So the student got in a fight with the teacher. He said: “She was talking trash about you!” I know some teachers are just jealous because I speak six different languages. So I take it in a positive way because I didn’t want to continue to get mad. You know, I said: “Don’t worry about it. I’ll talk to her about it,” but I never mentioned anything to her. I thought how unprofessional this was of her. Why did she say that in the middle of class?

Vanessa viewed her initial and prolonged status as an outsider as a hindrance to advancement in her career. She offered: “If I was born here, I would not be a teacher. I’d be principal here.”

Although Vanessa experienced some difficult moments where her students did not accept her at first, she persevered and indicated that what made her feel not accepted at first—her accent—became something that endeared her to her students. However, it was not because she became more similar to her students, but rather because she embraced her differences. She offered:

Because now, since they know I’ve been here for a while and they begin to understand me very well now. So sometimes they say: “I like your accent. I like the way you talk.” So kids, some kids would take French because they say they want to hear the way I talk. And they think I’m funny, too, because most of the time I say things they misinterpret. I’ll give you an example. One time I asked a student, “Can you close the shade for me?” Because the sun was in my face. And they all started laughing and saying: “Madame said

a bad word.” They thought I said “shit,” so everybody laughed and I tried to understand, to explain to them that I said “shade, the blinds!”

Vanessa acknowledged that although there are moments when she feels like an outsider, there are also times when she feels like an insider. She offered:

I’m still an outsider, but it’s changed a little bit because the fact that they know me now more than before. And I feel like I’m more welcome now. Nobody ever complains about me anymore; it’s been like five years now [since they’ve complained]. It’s just like they’re so used to the accent now. I feel like I can say: “Oh, I love Virginia. I love Bluefield.”

Vanessa continues teaching French in Bluefield and has no plans to leave the area.

For teachers working in similar contexts, Vanessa gave the following advice: “Be patient and don’t take negativity personally. Because when they finally get to know who you are, your background, and where you come from, they will accept you.” She felt that her own patience has allowed her to become more of an insider at her school and in her adopted community.

Bernice

Growing up in a suburban town in metropolitan New York City, “Bernice” attended a public school that was evenly divided between Jewish and Catholic students. With respect to the diversity she had in her public school and neighborhood growing up, she noted:

We had tuna fish sandwiches on Friday because we were Catholic. We had to have fish. That was not forefront in my mind. It just seems this is the way it was. They closed the school for Passover. They had to because the kitchens weren't kosher, but we had tuna fish sandwiches on Friday. And that's, you know, we just how it was, everybody accepted

it. We just went on. Nobody made a big deal about it.... I felt that religion was more evident in my schools in New York than in West Virginia.

As a young girl in a Catholic family, she attended just as many confirmations as she did bar and bat mitzvahs.

Bernice first came to Appalachia as a young adult to study at a university in northern Alabama. She noted she chose her university in Alabama:

Because there were so many kids in New York. I mean, you just have no idea what it's like to be there. New York is so populated and there's so many kids. And, you know, there's not that many colleges. And so I really think it was meant for me to go.

Sometimes I said I was a misplaced Yankee and that's how I got down here.

Bernice also worked half a year as a teacher in Alabama after graduating. Ignoring her Catholic father's plea to not marry a Baptist, she married a Southern Baptist from Alabama. She laughed as she recounted:

When my father took me down there, he said to me, "Don't come back with a Baptist!"

And guess what, I came back with a Baptist. It wasn't on purpose, but my husband was a Baptist. But I remember him saying, "Don't come back with a Baptist." Don't tell your kids things like that, or they'll come true!

Bernice relocated with her husband to southern West Virginia for his work in the early 1970s.

Recalling when she first applied for a teaching position in Bluefield, Bernice said: "The superintendent gave me the job right on the spot, so it was not difficult at all."

Bernice worked as an elementary and middle school teacher and raised her daughters in the area. She chose to retire there as it has become her home. She reflected:

My husband has passed away and my daughters have moved away, but I'm still here because this is home. I've got some good friends. I could sit here and go through a whole list. But I think I was fortunate that I had good people to work with and they were my friends and my support system—everything.

For Bernice, transitioning to life in rural Appalachia was not challenging. She acknowledged that although studying in Alabama acclimated her to a degree of Appalachian culture, it did not seem like a significant adjustment from where she grew up in the North.

Bernice stressed that northern Alabama and Southwest Virginia seemed similar to her, as part of greater Appalachia, but that she also recognized the nuances of each community and how life throughout the region varied. She elaborated: “You know, it’s a feeling. It’s just different. I really can’t explain it. It’s a different lay of the land, literally and figuratively where I was from there to here.”

For example, agriculture did not play as significant a role in day to day life where she lived in Alabama. About moving to Bluefield, she recounted: “I was so green when I got here. Everybody was talking about the stock market. For weeks, I was thinking stock exchange, and they meant a livestock market!” She added: “The students couldn’t understand me and I couldn’t understand them. That’s very true. It was hard for them to understand what I was saying, and I couldn’t understand them.”

Although there were a few things she discovered she needed to learn about the local culture, Bernice felt welcomed when she entered the classroom by colleagues, students, and parents, and never felt like people treated her like an outsider to a great extent. She said: “Everybody was really nice to me when I came here. There were still some comments over the years about me being Catholic or a Yankee, but nothing too extreme.” She added:

I fit right in in Bluefield. Down in Alabama, I didn't have any trouble either. I don't think I had trouble. I think everybody was really nice to me when I came to Bluefield. I have told my children that it took me three years to really feel at home in Bluefield. I think it takes that long to meet people and form relationships.

Bernice expressed how she came to the realization that students' cultural upbringing played a major role in their lives and this understanding was crucial to how she needed to teach them. She reflected:

I thought that all the students had the same opportunities that I had growing up, and I found out that was not the case. Their lives were very different. You know, I had kids living out on farms and it was just different.... And you know, where I grew up, it was like, you know, you went and you did. There's a lot of culture up there. There was so much in New York City. You know, on class trips. Where did we go? To art museums. We went to the opera. We went to Broadway. Kids in southern West Virginia did not do that. You know, we would take them down to the live theater every once in a while, but all those opportunities that I had was just a part of life up there.

She also acknowledged her positive relationships with her students: "They're all great kids. You know, you treat them as great kids, as great people."

Bernice believed that being labeled an outsider, because of her differences, benefited her students and helped them to garner a more multicultural perspective. She suggested:

I think, really, to tell you the truth, I was an asset because I had something else to give to students other than, you know, people who lived here because of my outside experiences. So, you know, I'm not saying they were bad. Do you understand? I'm not saying that mine is better than theirs, but it just enhanced the children's education.

Bernice attributed her success to recognizing the importance of presenting herself in a non-threatening way to her colleagues. She posited: “I did not come in here saying my way is the best way. I didn’t come in here saying: ‘This is how we did it in New York.’ You’re not going to make friends doing that.” Bernice also made a conscientious effort to make friends, adding: “I had my little certain niche of friends. You know, water seeks its own level.” For Bernice, positive attitude and perspective were vital to her in finding contentment. She revealed:

You have to bloom where you are planted. That’s what I did. There’s good things about Bluefield, there’s bad things about Bluefield. There’s good things about New York and there’s bad things about New York. You know, it’s just a give and take.

Reflecting on her career, Bernice identified as a full-fledged insider. She asserted: “I’m not an outsider. I’m just not. I’m part of the community.”

Through these findings, I learned about the participants’ liminal experiences that contributed to their development as insider/outsider teachers in Appalachia. While each participant’s development and identity was unique, by looking at each participant’s experiences individually and collectively, I gained further insight into insider/outsider identity development in Appalachia.

Data Analysis

Through the findings, participants offered insight into the experiences of being an insider/outsider teacher, as well as advice for others. I use the findings to further organize, analyze, and theorize.

Insider/Outsider Status

Clara

When Clara arrived to Appalachia, she felt like an outsider, unwelcome and different. After five decades, she continues to feel like an outsider. Although she felt like an insider in some social situations, she continues to feel like an outsider at the school where she worked and in her immediate community.

Vanessa

Vanessa came to region feeling like an outsider. It took five years for her to begin feeling like an insider. After two decades at her school, she identifies as being both an insider and an outsider at the same time.

Bernice

Because Bernice studied at a university in Appalachia, she felt mostly like an insider when she came to Bluefield. Although it took three years to feel like a full-insider, others rarely identified her as an outsider, and she identifies almost entirely as an insider today.

Cross-Participant Analysis

All participants moved to the region to accompany their husbands who were pursuing career opportunities in the area. The participants acknowledged the ease their husbands experienced in becoming insiders. Of the participants, Clara was the only one who elaborated that being a woman made it more difficult to achieve insider status than her husband.

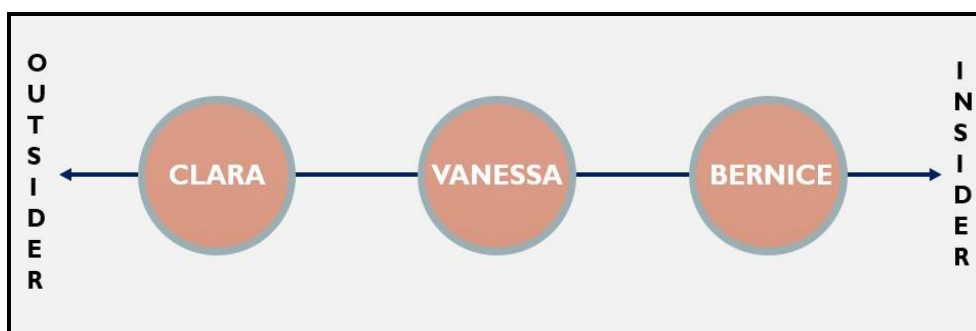
Although none of the participants had social networks in their new communities, each participant found a teaching job with little effort (cf. Hellsten, McIntyre & Prytula, 2011). All participants had a teaching license in their state or a background in education, which also contributed to them procuring employment. Being able to find a teaching job easily in the region

as an outsider may hold true today, since there are teacher shortages for qualified personnel in many Appalachian school districts.

The literature (Ferguson, 2011; Hellowell 2006; Koefed & Simonson, 2012; Makris, 2012; Milligan, 2016, Thomson & Gunter, 2010) suggests that insider/outsider teacher identity exists on a continuum. The participants' responses in this study support this claim, as each participant's identity as an insider/outsider teacher in their Appalachian communities at present varied (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Insider/Outsider Continuum



Note. Participants' self-identified positions on the insider/outsider continuum.

Though all participants arrived to the region as self-described outsiders, the rate of becoming and the extent of feeling like an insider differed. Bernice felt least like an outsider when she arrived to her Appalachian community, indicating she made the transition to insider with little effort. For Vanessa, it took approximately five years to feel like an insider, although the feeling of being an outsider never fully left her. Clara, who lived in her adopted community the longest, only felt like an insider in intimate social circles and continues to identify more as an outsider than as an insider.

Clara stayed in her community despite being never feeling like an insider. For her, the positive factors of living in her community outweighed the negative factors (cf. Howley,

Howley, & Dudek, 2016). She stated that she felt her children were safe in the region and could have a good upbringing. Moreover, she wanted to stay because her husband was contented and he felt accepted in their community.

Clara, Vanessa, and Bernice indicated that although some consider outsidership as an undesirable quality (Marotta, 2017) for a teacher, being an outsider aided their pedagogies. Clara felt she could be a better ally for students who also felt like outsiders. Vanessa's outsider status gave her the opportunity to model multiculturalism and diversity to students, parents, and colleagues. Bernice was able to build rapport with students and teachers by giving them insight into curricular topics germane to the cosmopolitan life she experienced growing up. As the participants reflected on their experiences, they indicated that their development as insider/outsider teachers was fundamental to their overarching identities as teachers.

Similarities and Differences

The participants framed the development of their insider/outsider identities around the similarities and differences they saw among themselves and others in their adopted communities. They acknowledged both apparent and latent similarities and differences, and they indicated how they saw themselves, as well as how others saw them, with respect to similarities and identities, influenced their identities.

Clara

Clara felt that she stood out as an outsider due to her Northern accent and cultural mannerisms. She resolved that colleagues and administrators were not going to accommodate her differences in worldview and that she would have to accept any conflict this created if she desired to continue working in her community. She also bonded with students who felt different from the dominant culture in some way.

Vanessa

Vanessa identified her accent, skin color, and ethnic identity as differences that made her feel like an outsider in her adopted community. She believed that colleagues perceived her as being more intellectual and multicultural, fostering a jealousy that made it difficult for her to become an insider. Although students and parents complained that they could not understand her accent, with patience and a positive attitude, Vanessa discovered that by embracing those differences and standing firm in her ethnic identity, she was becoming more of an insider. She believed that others began to accept those differences as part of what made her an asset to the community.

As one of the only Black teachers in her school with a large population of Black students, Vanessa still found it difficult to become an insider. At first, she did not feel connected to her students culturally because even she did not identify as Black or as a person of color, like many of her students, but rather as Haitian. Vanessa's experience demonstrated that a perceived cultural match to members of a community, based on being a person of color, does not indicate more acceptance or feelings of insiderness (cf. Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008). Moreover, Vanessa felt that she was better able to connect with her students once she recognized the cultural similarities between rural Appalachia and her native Haiti.

Bernice

Bernice spoke with a slight Northern accent and held Catholic beliefs, different than the majority of individuals with whom she interacted in her adopted community. She acknowledged that she shared similarities with others in her adopted community in the way she looked and behaved, making her transition to insider status uncomplicated. Bernice also attributed her

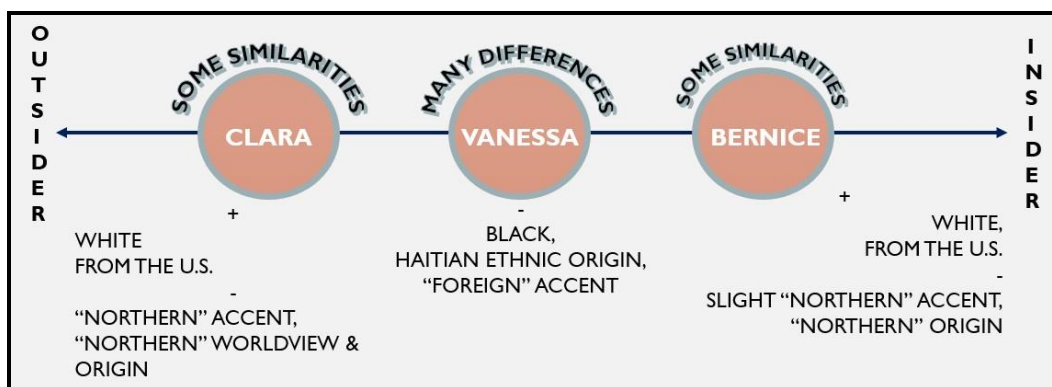
straightforward transition to insider status to not treating her worldview as superior to the worldviews of those she taught and with whom she worked.

Cross-Participant Analysis

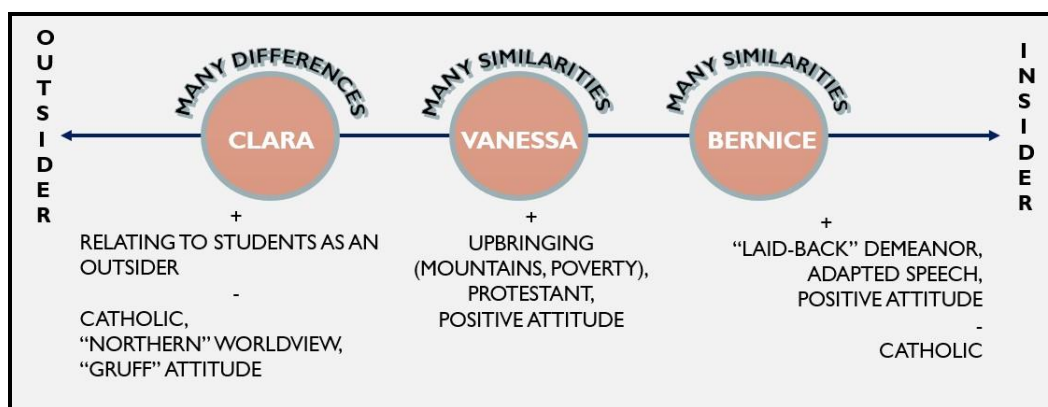
With respect to similarities and differences, all participants referred to accent as a significant, apparent factor that made them feel like outsiders. Clara chose not to change her way of speaking and Vanessa could not change her accent. However, Vanessa acknowledged that she experienced less conflict as an outsider when she slowed her speaking down so that others could more easily understand her. Although Bernice encountered miscommunications at first, she made a conscious effort to adjust her speaking in a way that made it easier for students to understand her.

Figure 2

Apparent Similarities & Differences



Note. Similarities are noted with a "+," differences are noted with a "-."

Figure 3*Latent Similarities & Differences*

Note. Similarities are noted with a "+," and differences are noted with a "-."

Clara and Bernice both came from Northeastern, Catholic backgrounds and were similar in age. Although they had similar upbringings, Bernice's identity as more of an insider teacher contrasted to Clara's identity as more of an outsider teacher. Factors that may have contributed to these differences included Clara's self-described "stubbornness" and Bernice's desire to "fit in" and "adapt." Bernice's transition to insider identity supports studies suggesting that teachers who are similar to members of their adopted communities, *and* who hold positive attitudes about them, will experience a faster and fuller integration into their adopted communities as insiders (cf. Au & Blake, 2003; Stachowski & Frey, 2005; Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). As Clara and Bernice ended up on opposite ends of the continuum, these results do not suggest that apparent similarities alone determine insider/outsider status (see Figure 2). Being willing to adopt a positive attitude and find connections to the target culture, like Vanessa and Bernice did, emerged as important factors in fostering insider status (see Figure 3).

Members of Vanessa's school community identified her as an outsider because of her accent and ethnic origin. While Vanessa's positive attitude ultimately helped her to transition to insider status, how others saw her also had an impact on her insider/outsider development.

Apparent similarities and difference can influence insider/outsider status, but they do not stand alone; teachers' attitudes, as well as teachers' latent similarities and differences, also play significant roles.

Community Integration and Acceptance

Over the course of the interviews, the codes "welcome," "unwelcome," "acceptance," and "rejection" stood out. These codes indicated how the participants' integration in and interaction with their adopted communities informed the development of their insider/outsider identities.

Clara

Clara did not feel welcome at her school or in the general community because of her selfperceived differences. She noted how colleagues and neighbors did not include her in activities or make efforts to make her feel welcome, and this exclusion and inconsideration contributed to her outsider status. Clara struggled with rejection and stopped looking for opportunities to integrate in her community after several failed attempts. She acknowledged that her attitude may have contributed to her exclusion and she came to accept that others would not view her as an insider.

Vanessa

Vanessa indicated that students, parents, and colleagues were not welcoming or accepting of her at first because of her ethnic origin and foreign accent. When individuals complained about her accent, attempted to get her fired, or belittled her in front of students, Vanessa kept a positive attitude and persevered. Vanessa worked towards creating and taking advantage of opportunities that would help her to integrate in her community and find acceptance. As she continued in her work, she began experiencing more positive interactions. These positive

interactions helped her to realize that by embracing her differences, members of her community would eventually accept her for her resilience and for maintaining fidelity to her identity.

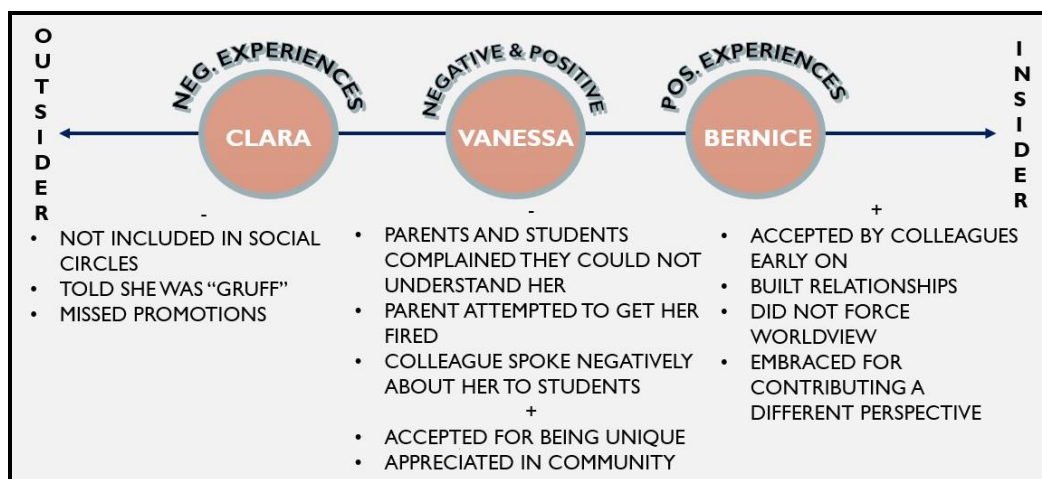
Bernice

Members of Bernice’s adopted community welcomed her almost immediately. Her positive attitude and desire to integrate facilitated the process of her becoming an insider. She put forth effort to build relationships with others in her community and ultimately felt more like an insider in Bluefield than she did where she grew up in New York. She harnessed her personal relationships to find affirmation and acceptance.

Cross-Participant Analysis

Figure 4

Positive and Negative Experiences in Community



Note. Positive experiences are noted with a “+,” and negative experiences are noted with a “-.”

Community integration and integration were fundamental to the participants as they reflected on their experienced and offered advice to new teachers in similar situations. Negative experiences appeared to foster more outsidership, whereas positive experiences appeared to foster more insidership (see Figure 4). The participants emphasized that attitude and acceptance,

or non-acceptance in Clara's case, influenced their identities as insiders/outsideers. While it was easier for Bernice than Clara to find acceptance among colleagues, the participants emphasized the importance of finding like-minded individuals who prioritize offering affirmation and acceptance (cf. Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011).

Although the participants acknowledged that one cannot force acceptance or integration, as some factors are beyond their control, if the opportunities do not come to them, they can work to create opportunities that foster integration and acceptance. Moreover, participants articulated that by avoiding antagonistic practices, one is more likely to achieve insider status (cf. Hendrickson, 2012; Howley, Howley, & Dudek, 2016; Marsh & Noguera, 2018).

Discussion

All participants in this study came to the region as outsiders. None of the participants found immediate acceptance in their Appalachian communities. Clara and Vanessa struggled to find acceptance in their classrooms. Bernice found acceptance more quickly, but she still experienced a short period when others labeled her as an outsider.

Although all participants stayed in their communities to teach, all participants did not reflect with positivity on parts of their career. Within the data, there appeared to be a correlation between possessing greater insider identity and having a positive view of professional experiences (Marotta, 2017).

While Clara indicated that she was content in her personal life, her negative experiences as an outsider in her school community paralleled the lament she expressed when reflecting on her professional experiences. Clara chose to stop putting forth effort to integrate and she chose not to change her personality in order to assimilate. Vanessa endured negative experiences with a positive attitude. She made some changes, such as slowing down the speed at which she spoke,

but she did not make changes intrinsic to her personal identity. She persisted despite challenges and indicated that it took patience to gain insider status. Bernice, who felt most like an insider, did not experience an unwelcoming environment and proactively worked towards integrating into her new community.

Despite feeling like outsiders, teachers may choose to stay in their work and community situations because they have developed some positive relationships with others in their professional settings and are content in their personal lives. While teachers do not have total control over positive or negative experiences in their professional lives, they have control over their attitudes and responses to these situations, and their insider/outsider identities are only a component of their overall satisfaction.

A disconnect arises between this study and literature about the implications of insider/outsider identity. Other studies (Au & Blake, 2003; Cushman, 2009; Hendrickson, 2012; Howley, Howley & Dudek, 2016; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016; Marsh & Noguera, 2018) emphasized the relationship between insider/outsider teachers and students. The results of this study demonstrate that while interactions with students and parents formed part of the participants' insider/outsider identity experiences, professional interactions were also significant (Osborne, 1989; Vegh-Williams, 2013).

Clara had many positive interactions with students and felt like an insider among them. Among colleagues and administrators, however, she felt like an outsider. While she did not feel disillusioned because of negative interactions with students, as the literature (Hendrickson, 2012; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016; Marsh & Noguera, 2018) suggests, she was disappointed in the way her colleagues treated her. While experiencing some positive interactions, Vanessa was disappointed by the negative interactions she had with students, in addition to the negative

interactions she had with parents and colleagues. Bernice reflected in a positive manner on interactions with students, parents, and colleagues.

This revelation from the data has implications for those working with teachers from outside the region. It suggests that their actions and attitudes can influence others in a profound manner and they should study ways to create a welcoming professional environment for colleagues coming from other cultures (Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011). There is an opportunity to use this type of study to guide teacher education programs towards implementing curricula that emphasizes how to more holistically prepare teachers for their work (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016; Hellsten, McIntyre, & Prytula, 2011; Hramiak, 2014; Winter, 2013).

This study investigates and describes the development of teachers' insider/outsider identities. As the results suggest, teachers' experiences and attitudes are crucial to their development as insiders/outsiders. This study provides some answers to the topic of insider/outsider teacher identity, and elicits even more questions about the research's implications for teacher education and professional development.

Teacher education programs could use this study to facilitate dialogue among preservice teachers about potential conflicts and resolutions they may encounter coming from outside. Through exploring the participants' experiences and the advice they give in this study, preservice teachers could gain valuable context and awareness about their development as insider/outsider teachers. Teacher education programs could also use this study to foster dialogues that interrogate the responsibilities of insider/outsider teachers.

Moreover, a school district could consider offering a mentorship program to newly hired teachers, instructing mentors to discuss the importance of interpersonal relationships and personal attitudes in their development as insider/outsider teachers. Through a mentorship

program, teachers with insider knowledge could collaborate with teachers coming from outside, to foster a welcoming environment. Teachers who once came to the region, district, or school with outsider status could serve as mentors and share their experiences and advice as the participants of this study have done.

Insider teachers, at both the preservice and in-service levels, could use this study to think about their colleagues who come to their schools as outsiders in a way they have never been prompted before. As a result, they may develop a deeper understanding of the importance of making colleagues feel welcome and included, encouraging them to take action and create more inclusive work environment.

Teachers coming to work in a school in a region like Appalachia can use this study to anticipate possible challenges they may face, as well as understand that certain factors are beyond their control. They can also explore participants' advice and examples, such as slowing down speech, to interrogate practices they may wish to implement to avoid conflict and misunderstanding.

Research Reflections

When I began this research, I anticipated finding that all participants would indicate they felt like insiders and their insider identities resulted from interactions in the classroom with their students. While all participants in this study indicated a degree of insiderness, I found it interesting that one participant, Clara, never achieved a substantial insider identity after working in her community almost fifty years. I was also surprised that the participants did not speak in more depth about day-to-day experiences in their classrooms with students, as teachers spend the most face-to-face time with their students. Had all participants been teaching when I conducted

this study, I could have observed their classrooms in order to explore their interactions with students.

As I was developing this study I envisioned insider identity as a wholly positive attribute and outsider identity as a wholly negative one (cf. Marotta, 2017). Early in the study, a colleague told me that he wondered if any of the participants would indicate advantages to being an outsider. I did not think outsidership could be positive in anyway. However, upon completing this research, I learned from participants that being an outsider, while often a negative experience, could bring with it positive attributes as it allowed them to connect with students who also felt like outsiders, and it facilitated dialogues about multiculturalism and diversity. Moreover, after reading Howley, Howley, and Dudek (2016), I thought that the participants coming from different cultural backgrounds would speak in-depth about the role of religion and politics in their Appalachian classrooms. While participants addressed these topics, as they were part of the interview questions I used, I was surprised to find that similarities and differences with respect to religion and politics did not play a larger role in the development of their insider/outsider identities.

As I was working with the data, tangential questions emerged that were beyond the scope of the participants' direct experiences with the topic of insider/outsider identity. For example, all participants indicated that their spouses, who also were from outside the region, felt more like insiders after short periods of time. If I had had the opportunity to interview their husbands, I could have explored whether or not this was true and the reasons why they felt they had less difficulty. If I could have included a male insider/outsider teacher's perspective, other than my own, I could have interrogated the role of gender on insider/outsider teacher development.

Ethically, I did not wish to pursue some of these topics with the participants as I could tell it they did not wish to offer more detail, and some of these topics would require interviews with other individuals. Although participants were very forthcoming with details surrounding their experiences, some of the participants became visibly emotional at times and one participant requested to speak off the record, asking me not to include the information she told me in the written report. I honored her wishes.

Conclusion

We believe that research should be directed at understanding the perspectives and experiences of teacher education candidates of diverse backgrounds, as the basis for designing teacher education programs that will prepare them to be successful in their work in schools. (Au & Blake, 2003, p. 202)

Through interviews with three seasoned teachers working in rural Appalachian communities, I interrogated insider/outsider teacher identity. While the reflections and responses of the participants cannot be generalized, there is great value in the implications of their experiences. This study contributes to the field of teacher education, as participants' responses affirmed insider/outsider development is foundational to their careers and therefore a vital component to teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016).

The participants indicated that while finding a job as an outsider in a new community may not be difficult, the road to finding success and happiness in those positions through gaining insider status can be challenging. While Clara, Vanessa, and Bernice all felt like outsiders to varying degrees when they arrived because of similarities and differences, each arrived at a different level of insiderness/outsiderness after many years living and working in their adopted communities. These results support assertions that the insider/outsider identities of teachers fall

on a continuum (Ferguson, 2011; Hellowell 2006; Koefed & Simonson, 2012; Makris, 2012; Milligan, 2016, Thomson & Gunter, 2010).

There are major takeaways from this study for teachers who arrive in a community feeling like outsiders. It may take a great deal of time and effort to achieve a level of insider status. The outsider may expedite this process by respecting the community's cultural norms and showing respect to colleagues, students, and parents (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Au & Blake, 2003; Hellsten, McIntyre, and Prytula, 2011; Howley, Howley, & Dudek, 2016; Osborne, 1989; Vegh-Williams, 2013).

Teachers coming from the outside must first learn about their communities and these norms by participating in teacher education programs that address the sociocultural context of where they will teach or by participating in a mentorship program. There are also factors outside of teachers' control, such as prejudice and jealousy, that might delay the transition to insider status. Patience, reflection, and self-acceptance are crucial to feeling successful in the classroom. While an outsider teacher may not have total control over their identity as an insider/outsider teacher, this study's results imply that respecting the culture of the adopted community and coming to terms with one's own insider/outsider identity are vital to working in a new community different from one's own. This study also suggests that coming to a community as an outsider may strengthen a teacher's pedagogy, as teachers can model diversity and multiculturalism.

In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of insider/outsider teacher identity, this area of research would benefit from future studies. These studies could incorporate experiences of male teachers, as well as teachers who are just beginning in their careers. Moreover, future studies could explore different regional contexts and interrogate the insider/outsider identities of

teachers who emigrate from rural areas like many found in Appalachia to suburban and urban areas.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

- 1.) Where did you grow up?
- 2.) What was growing up like for you?
- 3.) Where did you go to college?
- 4.) How long have you taught in Appalachia?
- 5.) Can you tell me about the places you have lived?
- 6.) When did you move to Appalachia?
- 7.) Why did you move to Appalachia?
- 8.) What did you notice was most different from that to which you were accustomed, in terms of culture, when you came to teach in Appalachia?
- 9.) What did you notice was most different from that to which you were accustomed, in terms of belief system and worldview, when you came to teach in Appalachia?
- 10.) Where do you feel you originally stood as a cultural insider/outsider in the Appalachian community in which you worked?
- 11.) Where do you feel you now stand as a cultural insider/outsider in the Appalachian community in which you worked?
- 12.) What advice do you have for other teachers from other cultures coming to Appalachia to teach?
- 13.) If you felt like an outsider at any point, how did you use it to your advantage?
- 14.) Can you tell me any stories about your experiences?