

**Influence of Cultural Capital in Two Rural Appalachian Towns:
A Comparative Case Study**

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

In
Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education

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July 29, 2016

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: cultural capital, community viability, community building

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Abstract

Despite natural beauty and strong ties to kinship and community, the Appalachian region has experienced economic and social disadvantages compared to other regions of the United States. Historically rural areas have been left by the wayside with little federal or state funding; rural areas received \$401-\$648 less per capita than their metropolitan counterparts in the years between 1994 and 2001 (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). 42 percent of the population of Appalachia live in rural areas, compared to 20 percent nationally (Gohl, 2013). As of 2014 the poverty rate in Appalachia is 17.2 percent in comparison to the national average of 15.6 percent (ARC, 2016). Consequently Appalachian towns have been privy to anti-poverty policies and development work by the United States government for over half a century (Farmbry, 2014). But the anti-poverty measures did very little to change the region.

In order to promote change and prosper as a region, many Appalachian towns have turned to using their cultural capital as a community development resource. As a tool in community building, cultural capital shifts the focus of a community away from its problems, towards its assets (Phillips & Shockley, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to explore how two rural Appalachian towns use cultural capital to impact their community's viability. To do so the researcher used qualitative interview methods and focus groups to understand the experiences of three leadership groups in each community. The findings of this study provide insight into how communities identify and operationalize their cultural capital, and what impact it has on their economic and social prosperity. Additional research should be done on community viability in rural areas, including community visioning, and power dynamics of rural spaces.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who participated in this study. Your insights and experiences gave this study meaning. Your time, willingness to participate, and excitement about your communities gave it life. Thank you.

Thank you to my committee members. Dr. Rick Rudd, without whom I would never be in a master's program. Thank you for giving me the opportunity and guidance I needed to pursue such an amazing opportunity. Dr. Tom Archibald, who gave me the courage to question myself and the world we live in. Thank you for supporting me, encouraging me, and pointing me in the right direction. And to Dr. Ed Jones, who always asks the right questions. Thank you for supporting me in my research.

Thank you to my mentor throughout my years at Virginia Tech, Kim Niewolny. While you were never officially my advisor, you were my professor and teacher many times. Without the Civic Agriculture and Food Systems program I would never be at Tech, and I certainly wouldn't be on the path I am today. You provided the knowledge, language, and courage I needed to work towards the future I would like to see.

To my friends, I thank you for listening to me, reading my work, guiding me in the right direction, and supporting me through this experience. Garland, you were above and beyond a friend, without you I wouldn't have made it through. Lorien, I aspire to be as intelligent, understanding, and patient as you are. Jessica, thank you for living through FFA with me, you are an absolutely wonderful friend and mentor. Clare, you're my rock, my Mr. 305 and my Mr. World Wide. Andrew, you got the worst of it, thank you for sticking by me and taking long walks, love you sniper.

My parents, Latané and Laurie, words cannot describe how much I appreciate your support and love. Thank you for the countless opportunities you provided me. And finally to my dog Mabel Rabbit, who made this process markedly harder but, infinitely more enjoyable.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Use of Cultural Capital in Community Building

The Appalachian region has been called God's thumbprint; its mountains, valleys, and forests are breathtaking and defy description. It's as if they have been formed from the direct touch of God. The region should not be summarized as a homogenous cultural entity. Appalachia contains diverse and nuanced cultures and experiences that vary from mountain to mountain, community to community. However, there are related themes throughout the cultural map of Appalachia: reverence of the mountains and natural landscape, kinship, the value of hard work, and the appreciation for safety and a slow-paced lifestyle that come with relative isolation (Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 1999; Gaventa, 1980).

Despite natural beauty and strong ties to kinship and community, the Appalachian region has experienced economic and social disadvantages compared to other regions of the United States. Historically, rural areas have been left by the wayside with little federal or state funding; rural areas received \$401-\$648 less *per capita* than their metropolitan counterparts between 1994 and 2001 (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for rural development, yet in the past, only 2-5 percent of the USDA budget has been allotted for development activities. The USDA 2016 budget allots just \$261 million to rural development, representing 1 percent of its entire budget (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). Forty-two percent of Appalachia's population live in rural areas, compared to 20 percent nationally (Gohl, 2013). As of 2014, the poverty rate in Appalachia is 17.2 percent, compared to the national average of 15.6 percent (ARC, 2016).

As such, Appalachia has been the platform for anti-poverty policies and development work by the United States government for over half a century (Farmbry, 2014). In 1964, President Johnson declared a war on poverty, and in doing so he set into motion one of America's longest running, regional development agencies (Hall, 2014). The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was assigned with the task of overseeing the development of the Appalachian region (Hall, 2014). During the war on poverty, groups like Appalachian Volunteers and Volunteers in Service to America joined forces with the ARC to collectively bring Appalachia out of the ashes of poverty (Billings & Tickamy, 1993; Farmbry, 2014). These efforts changed very little in the region. The main barrier to these organizations' success was the internal colonization of the Appalachian region, used for its natural resources and little else by large corporations and the United States government (Scanlan, 2011).

Historically, Appalachia has never been a particularly easy place to live. The mountains provide little comfort in the way of arable land or easy connection to the rest of the country. Those who lived in the mountains were driven there by the need for independence (Gaventa, 1980). Pioneers had a relationship with the land that sustained them for a better part of a century. This still resonates today. Early settlers were primarily interested in living off the land, and chose to opt out of the industrial production occurring elsewhere in the country, such as the steel mills in Pittsburgh. However, in the late 19th century, Appalachian land was sold, or taken by force from those who first settled there, to serve British interests and investments in coal (Gaventa, 1980). Mines steadily became bigger and produced a tremendous amount of coal, thereby forcing the Appalachian Mountains and Appalachian people into previously-resisted industrial production. In the late 1800s and early 1900s began what is considered the "colonization" of Appalachia (Gaventa, 1980).

This colonization set the stage for present-day Appalachia. Now, as then, the power of absentee landowners and local elite dictates the development and structure of coal communities; the same relatively small group of elites own the mineral, land, and timber rights for many of the mountains (Gaventa, 1980). The coal companies, and their many branches of power effectively bred a pre-disposition for quiescence in some communities, while in others it spurred rebellion. The companies, and local elite who benefited from complying with the company's position, used power in such a way that it created a tyranny within a democratic United States (Gaventa, 1980). In the past, people who refused to sell land disappeared, unions were targeted with violence from the coal companies, and protests against unfair treatment were stifled. Furthermore, coal miners were taxed relentlessly by the coal companies who paid them in scrip, which was only good to buy goods from the company store. Coal companies were subject to little oversight from the government, and used wealth and power to remain unchallenged by most (Gaventa, 1980).

The effects of immense socioeconomic and decision-making power of the coal companies over workers and coal communities still exists today in many Appalachian coalfield communities, including barriers to land ownership and lack of access to new industry. The repercussions of coal company control and non-diversified industrial development has led to the boom and bust economy with which coal-producing Appalachia is so familiar. In turn, a boom/bust economy has led to the volatile economic and social terrain that many coalfield communities face today.

To compound the historic and present-day situation of Appalachia, in the minds of many Americans, the region is seen as a place where impoverished towns are left behind the rest of the country (Billings, et al., 1999; Fritz & Johannsen, 2004). Held up by the American people as the quintessential example of simple and overtly authentic living, Appalachian rurality is becoming

both a tourist attraction and a myth (Fritz & Johannsen, 2004). People take to the hills and valleys to experience a by-gone era, and in doing so they essentialize the Appalachian experience, commodifying it and turning it into an attraction for an afternoon (Billings, et al., 1999; Fritz & Johannsen 2004). Appalachia is especially plagued by the gaze of outsiders, writers, mass media, artists, and politicians appropriating Appalachian experiences (Billings, et al., 1999; Billings & Tickamyer, 1993).

Culture can be used as a tool to empower individuals, encourage reflection, and promote community (Stephenson & Tate, 2015). “Cultural capital,” the way in which we know the world and how a community cultivates creativity, influence, and innovation (Emery & Flora, 2006), is a community development tool that has been used for decades (Blejwas, 2010; Green & Haines, 2012; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). However, due to the outside interpretation of Appalachian traditions and rurality, mass media and the national rhetoric, current use of Appalachian culture is to reify the mountaineer motif (Wilson, 1999). This misrepresentation of culture and heritage, twisted and misdirected, is harmful to the region and the people living there (Billings, et al., 1999).

The arts, theater, crafts, cuisine, and geography are all considered tangible cultural capital (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2005; Rhodes, 2004). Language and vernacular, heritage, traditions, and family backgrounds reflect intangible cultural capitals (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2005; Rhodes, 2004). Currently, the approach to using cultural capital in sustainable community development is to increase financial capital, or the financial resources available to a community, using eco-tourism and rural tourism to market the culture of rural spaces (Cochrane, 2005; Fritsch & Johannsen, 2004; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). Moreover, cultural capital serves as a catalyst for community conversation, empowerment, and a connecting factor between

community members (Stevenson & Tate, 2015). Flora, Flora and Gasteyer (2016) emphasize that the community capital framework is to be used holistically, and each capital needs to be taken into account when using the framework. However, in this study, cultural capital is isolated in terms of the frame of inquiry. That does not mean that highlighting cultural capital and its use in community development negates its impact on the other constructs. This study merely focuses in on culture and cultural assets, and assesses the impacts they will have on a community, whether those impacts are financial, natural, political, or so on.

As a tool in community building, cultural capital shifts the focus of a community away from its problems, toward its assets (Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Community building is the enhancement of a community through the engagement of individuals and organizations, and is used here as a category of “community development” (Saegert, 2004). Green and Haines (2012) define “community development” as what happens when a group of community members come together to create social change. A theory that resonates with the goals of this type of community development is psychological sense of community (PSOC) (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The theory is framed by four constructs: membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs. These constructs revolve around the feeling of ownership and investment in the community (Bess, Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002). PSOC provides insight into the ways in which communities are structured and how individuals are involved in the process of structuring (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). PSOC acts as a catalyst for community action and individuals’ participation in community development and community building (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

The goal of community building is to build capacity and viability in communities (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Saegert, 2004). “Community viability” is a community’s ability to

endure through time in a way that is cohesive with the values of the community. It is the measure of longevity, sustainability, collective well-being, ability to lead meaningful lives, and resilience of a community. In the face of internal and external influences of change, a viable community is able to negotiate those challenges and find ways to mitigate negative effects of economic and social changes. In turn, communities will utilize changes to their benefit. (Block, 2009; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Green & Haines, 2012; Wall, 1999).

Community viability has been crafted into a conceptual framework grounded in four constructs: community sentiment, capable leaders, community vision, and sustainable infrastructure (Hogg, Bush, & Rudd, unpublished). “Community sentiment” is defined by the presence of a shared community identity, civic engagement, and celebration of cultural heritage (Blackshaw 2010; Block, 2009; Hogg, et al., unpublished). Culture-based community building is an essential factor in garnering community sentiment within a community.

Community building with an emphasis on culture, positions people to be change agents, where they use the assets they possess to create change in their community (Cochrane, 2006). Community-led development, from the bottom up, leads to sustainable community development and community viability (Green & Haines, 2011). Further, building and utilizing existing cultural capital engages community members and encourages them to become active participants in community building (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Through cultural capital, community building is able to embrace culture, values, and unique attributes in the community, which solidifies community pride and identity (McGehee & Meares, 2010; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Richards & Dalbey, 2006; Wall, 1999). As such, positive community development through the use of cultural capital shifts the context of a community from hopeless to restorative (Block, 2008; Phillips & Shockley, 2010).

Economic down turn, the restructuring of coal companies, and the failing of federal programs have led to hardships in rural Appalachia (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993; Scanlan, 2011). The gaps left by these forces have led communities to create change on their own. Holes that have been created by an imperfect structure are now open to be filled by communities' assets (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). An asset like cultural capital can be effectively used as an economic solution or as a method to bring a community together to enhance its collective wellbeing (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). Exploration of the use of cultural capital in two communities with differences in their economic and social health may have implications of how culture impacts a community's viability.

Problem Statement

Rural Appalachia has been deeply affected by widespread poverty and mistreatment by coal companies (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993; Gaventa, 1980). Towns that once had full store fronts, now struggle to keep stores open at all; too many vibrant town centers are now dwindling. Communities struggle to mitigate the problems associated with extraction-based industry, including economic disparities, health issues, and pollution (Scanlan, 2011).

In contrast with the region's general trend, some Appalachian towns are doing relatively well. Despite the downturn in coal-driven economies, rise of mechanized agricultural production, and national reliance on global capitalism, some towns are surviving (Robinson, Lyson, & Christy, 2002). Even communities neighboring those in decline and struggling with the same social and environmental issues have found ways to remain independent. For example, the communities examined in this study are Summerset and Mount Pleasant, located three miles apart in a rural area of the Appalachian Mountains. A historic perspective shows that Mount Pleasant was once home to primarily coal mine managers and owners, who were able to own

land and had the freedom to choose which businesses they frequented. Whereas Summerset was predominately made up of people who worked in the mines, lived in company owned housing, and were encouraged to spend their money at company owned stores.

Prevalent economic and social issues of Appalachia in general are reflected in these two communities. However, a comparison of the two communities indicates that one is doing markedly better economically than the other. Census data for Summerset for 2013 shows the population is 1,727, which is a 6 percent decrease from 2000; median household income is \$25,740, and the average value of a house is \$52,634; there is an 8.9 percent unemployment rate, and 28 percent of families live below the poverty line (United States Census, 2014).

Conversely, from 2009-2014, Mount Pleasant had 5,475 residents, the median household income is \$31,002, and the median house value is \$102,529. The population below the poverty level is 29 percent, and the unemployment rate is 4.6 percent (United States Census, 2014). It should be noted that in 2000, the population in Mount Pleasant was 4,800 and the 2000 median household income was \$21,500, and the poverty rate was 26 percent (Deel & O' Quinn, 2007). The population in Mount Pleasant has increased between the years 2000 and 2014, and the median income has risen.

Compared to Mount Pleasant, Summerset has a 4 percent higher unemployment rate, a smaller population, and lower median income and house value. These differences are especially interesting considering the towns' close proximity to each other. How can Appalachian communities in the same region, often in the same county, be on such different development paths?

Purpose of the Study

Communities that are directly next to each other have different experiences in terms of viability. There have been few studies that compare Appalachian towns to investigate what they are doing that may impact their viability. In particular, this study focuses on just two townships and their operationalization of cultural capital. This study's purpose is to discern the role of cultural capital in the similarities or differences between two Appalachian communities.

Objectives of the study are to:

- 1) Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.
- 2) Determine the ways in which the two towns operationalize cultural capital in terms of community development.
- 3) Compare the differences and similarities between the two towns.

Limitations of the Study

This study compares two distinct communities placed in a specific time and sociopolitical space. All generalizations and implications derived from this study are limited by the time and places in which it was conducted, therefore limiting the generalizability for future research to the degree to which the communities and participants are similar to those in this study.

Basic Assumptions

The following basic assumptions were relevant to this study:

- 1) The participants provided honest and accurate information in the focus group.
- 2) The participants were credible, reliable, and knowledgeable about their community.
- 3) Facilitation of focus groups is a justifiable method of gathering information for a comparative case study of two communities.

Some personal assumptions were present as well. The researcher is a lens through which the research is viewed. It is highly subjective and influenced by the researcher and the researcher's assumptions about the research. The researcher in this study assumed that participants in the study would be able to clearly identify what culture is present in their community. It was also assumed that there would be rich examples of culture because of the geographic location of the communities. The researcher also functioned on the basis that culture would be easy to define and understand as an outsider of the community. Also, the research assumed that coal and the coal industry abused the region of the world that is being researched, and that those who live there would have at least minimal disdain for the companies and coal.

Significance

This study will provide insight into the disparities between two Appalachian towns that have very similar conditions and opportunities. In doing so, the research is adding to the literature of culture-based community building and community viability. The research has very specific impacts on the communities in question, potentially identifying strengths and opportunities for them to improve economically and socially. Broader impacts include implications for the Appalachian region, and the need for more research on community viability in rural America.

Manuscript #1

Influence of Cultural Capital in Two Rural Appalachian Towns: A Literature Review

Abstract

Appalachia, which is rich in beauty and culture, has economic and social struggles that surpass those of the larger United States of America. The region has been privy to a multitude of anti-poverty policy and development work. However, due to largely unsuccessful nature of that development work, and the lack of federal and state funding, rural Appalachian towns are turning inward for community development and economic revival. Utilizing cultural capital is one way to use a community's assets in a positive way to ensure a community's viability.

Community viability is the capacity of a community to endure through time in a way that is cohesive with the values of the community. It is the measure of longevity, sustainability, collective well-being, ability to lead meaningful lives, and resilience of a community. In the face of internal and external influences of change, a viable community is able to negotiate those challenges and find ways to mitigate negative effects of economic and social changes. In turn, communities will utilize changes to their benefit.

This study uses Wall's (1999) *Factors in Rural Community Survival: Review of Insights from Small Towns*, as guidance to determine some aspects of rural community survival. Theory of psychological sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), is used to understand how communities work. And the indicator for community viability is utilized as a conceptual framework. One section, "community sentiment," provides reasoning for focusing on cultural capital as an important resource for communities.

Use of Cultural Capital in Community Building

Appalachia is home to rolling mountains, diverse wildlife, and rich cultural heritage. Despite these positive aspects, the region has been considered “a region apart” from the rest of the United States (Hall, 2014). Historically, Appalachia was never a particularly easy place to live. The mountains provide little comfort in the way of arable land or easy connection to the rest of the country. Those who lived in the mountains were driven there by the need for independence (Gaventa, 1980). Pioneers had a relationship with the land that sustained them for a better part of a century. This still resonates today. Early settlers were primarily interested in living off the land, and chose to opt out of the industrial production that was occurring elsewhere in the country, such as the steel mills in Pittsburgh.

However, in the late 19th century, Appalachian land was bought, taken, or coerced from those who first settled there to serve British interests and investments in coal (Gaventa, 1980). Mines steadily became bigger and produced a tremendous amount of coal, thereby forcing the Appalachian Mountains and Appalachian people into previously-resisted industrial production. So in the late 1800s and early 1900s began what is considered the “colonization” of Appalachia (Gaventa, 1980). While the industry surrounding coal prospered, the people of the Appalachian region suffered from poor economic and social conditions (Morrone & Buckley, 2011).

For over half a century Appalachia has been privy to anti-poverty policies and development work through the United States government (Farmbry, 2014). In 1964, President Johnson declared a war on poverty. In doing so, he set into motion one of the longest running, and largely unsuccessful, regional development agencies (Hall, 2014). The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), was designated with the task to oversee the development of the Appalachian region (Hall, 2014). The ARC gave great hope to Appalachia, with promises of jobs to end

unemployment, better access to health care and education, and ending poverty (Billings & Tickamy, 1993; Hall, 2014).

During the of the war on poverty, the Appalachian Volunteers and Volunteers in Service to America groups joined with the ARC to collectively release Appalachia from the grips of poverty (Billings & Tickamy, 1993; Farmbry, 2014). These efforts came with varying degrees of success. While some areas did see improvements, it isn't possible to draw strong causal links between the ARC's work and these improvement (Hall, 2010). The ARC has failed to make systemic changes in the region, the main barrier being Appalachia's an area of internal colonization, used for its natural resources and little else by large corporations and the United States government (Scanlan, 2011). To make progress, the Appalachian region needs economic freedom from these outside entities (Hall, 2010).

Rural areas historically have been given very little funding, receiving marginal amounts of money from large federal budgets (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Compared to metropolitan areas, rural communities are all but forgotten in terms of development dollars (Newstead & Wu, 2009). Between 1994 and 2001, rural areas received \$401-\$648 less *per capita* than their metropolitan counterparts (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for rural development, yet historically only 2-5 percent of the USDA budget is allotted for development activities. Just \$261 million of the 2016 USDA budget is allotted for rural development, a mere 1 percent of its entire budget (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016). Nationally, 20 percent of people live in rural areas, compared to 42 percent of the population of Appalachia who live in rural areas (Gohl, 2013). As of 2014, the poverty rate in Appalachia is 17.2 percent; the national average is 15.6 percent (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2016).

In tandem with the largely unsuccessful governmental anti-poverty measures, outside fixation on traditions and rurality has haunted Appalachia (Billings, et al., 1999). Mass media and the national rhetoric use Appalachian culture to reify the mountaineer motif that has been so carefully cultivated for the region (Wilson, 1999). This use of culture and heritage is harmful to the region and the people who live there (Billings, et al., 1999). When Appalachians reclaim their culture and heritage, they can empower one another, encourage individual reflection, and promote civic participation (Stephenson & Tate, 2015). “Cultural capital,” the way in which we know the world and how a community cultivates creativity, influence, and innovation (Emery & Flora, 2006), is a community development tool that has been used for many years (Blejwas, 2010; Green & Haines, 2012; Stephenson & Tate, 2015).

Economic down turn, abuse from large corporations, and the failings of federal programs have led to hardships in rural Appalachia (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993; Scanlan, 2011). However, the gaps left by neo-liberal forces have potential to be filled by communities’ assets and community building (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). Community assets, like cultural capital, can be used as economic solutions, or as a way to bring a community together to enhance its collective wellbeing (Phillips & Shockley; 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). Exploring the use of cultural capital in two communities with differences in their economic and social health may have implications of how cultural capital impacts a community’s viability.

Methods

A narrative literature review is being used to coherently report on a diverse body of literature. Green, Johnson, and Adams (2006) write “narrative overviews are helpful in presenting a broad perspective on a topic and often describe the history or development of a problem or its management” (pg. 103). Because there are different understandings of the same topics, it is important to clarify which bodies of literature are being used to support this study. This literature review focuses on literature describing aspects of successful communities, cultural capital as a community development or community building strategy, and how the two intersect. This literature review primarily used the Virginia Tech Library system, including Summon and Addison, Journal of Rural Studies, Journal of Rural Studies, and Google Scholar.

Community Viability Explored

Community viability is the capacity of a community to endure through time in a way that is cohesive with the values of the community. It is the measure of longevity, sustainability, collective well-being, ability to lead meaningful lives, and resilience of a community. In the face of internal and external influences of change, a viable community is able to negotiate those challenges and find ways to mitigate negative effects of economic and social changes. In turn, communities will utilize changes to their benefit. (Block, 2009; Berkes & Ross, 2013; Green & Haines, 2012; Wall, 1999).

There are many indices of community viability. “Factors in Rural Community Survival: Review of Insights from Small Towns,” (Wall, 1999) provides excellent indicators of viability. Though focused in the Great Plains of the United States, these indicators are useful for any domestic or international community. Wall (1999) proposed 20 characteristics, categorized into

six groups: community attitude, economic enterprise, political and social inclusiveness, forward thinking, use of traditional institutions, and internal leadership.

Highlighted are seven of the 20 clues for rural community survival. These seven were chosen because they most closely reflect the phenomenon that will be discussed later in this literature review. The seven that have been isolated here are: evidence of community pride, emphasis on quality in business and community life, willingness to invest in the future, awareness of competitive positioning, knowledge of the physical environment, strong multi-generational family orientation, strong presence of traditional institutions that are integral to community life, and conviction that you have to do it yourself (Wall, 1999).

Evidence of community pride is strongly linked to the success of a community. Communities that have festivals and large events celebrating the town and the community are far more likely to be successful and endure through time (Wall & Luther, 1987). Communities that value their towns and shared heritage are likely to feel connected to one another and use those aspects to promote themselves economically and socially (McGehee & Meares, 2010; Phillips & Shockley, 2006).

Pride in community influences the quality of business and community life (Wall, 1999). Communities that prioritize the quality of the businesses in the community and emphasize sound structural aspects of a community will build a thriving community. The community will decide the caliber of business pursued in their area, the schools and hospitals will be made to last, and residential areas will be well kept (Leyden, 2003, Wall & Luther, 1987). Communities that are concerned with the quality of life and business are willing to invest in their future.

Viable communities use forethought and planning in consideration of how the actions of the community today affect the community tomorrow. Planning and investing in the future are

important for the future generation of community members (Wall & Luther, 1987). Investment in the community shows faith in the community from local leaders. This faith often translates into a vision for the future of the community. It is particularly useful when the visioning process is opened up to member of the community. This type of community development is participatory and instills that there is a community-wide dedication to make it a viable entity (French & Gagne, 2010).

In addition to investment in the community, local leaders and businesses must be aware of their community's competitive positioning (Wall, 1999). The term "competitive positioning" focuses on knowing what other communities have in terms of business, which can impact local economic development. Beyond attracting consumers, competitive positioning also refers to a community's health care, access to jobs, food security, and good public schools (Shaffer, Deller, & Marcouiller, 2006). Institutions of higher education are also beneficial to communities. A nearby university or community college allows community members access to higher education, while staying close to home (Ley, Nelson, & Beltyukova, 1996). Geographic positioning of the community, an attribute of competitive positioning, considers the community's physical environment, which is an important component in the community's success (Wall, 1999). The location, rurality, and isolation of the community will require different approaches to open up the community to outside investments and ideas.

Physical environment can be a positive draw for businesses, tourists, and new residents. The isolation, topography, and mountain culture associated with the region is attractive to tourists or future residents (Bascom, 2001). But it can also determine the limitations of a place; accessibility to Appalachian communities and low population rates discourage industry from establishing or serving in the area (Fritsch & Johannsen, 2004). For example, the internet is vital

for individual and community success today, yet rural areas are often ignored by broadband providers (Whitacre, 2010).

Natural resources shape the physical environment, but these resources are also deeply connected to people who use them. Harnessing physical aspects is just as critical as harnessing the social and cultural aspects of a community (Fritsch & Johannsen, 2004). Utilizing the natural resources of an area in a sustainable manner reflects back on the investment the community made in its future. Knowledge of how to utilize the physical environment without permanently damaging it is very valuable for the suitability of a community (Gregg, 2010).

Past the natural aspects of a community's surroundings, traditional institutions that are integral to community life are often fundamental to the continuation and socio-economic success of a community (Wall, 1999). These institutions take the form of churches, business, schools, and service clubs (Wall & Luther, 1987). Just like community pride, this is an important part of keeping communities rooted in their values, and thus more likely to be a viable community. Traditional institutions tend to relate closely to the values of the community and have long-standing relationships with the members and a deep understanding of the culture in a community (Wall, 1999; Bascom, 2001). Traditional institutions can make it easier to integrate new institutions, like businesses, clubs, and organizations, while still paying homage to tradition and the original structure of the community.

Wall (1999) also postulates that for a community to persevere and become more viable it must acknowledge that to persevere and become more viable, it must have conviction to make changes for itself. This is a "self-help" type of community development strategy often found in rural communities as they are underfunded, underserved, and underrepresented (Green & Haines, 2012; Farrigan, Hertz, & Parker, 2014). This is an active form of community development. Small

rural towns must envision their future and take the steps to change to be viable (Wall, 1999). Help from outside sources is neither a guarantee nor a reality for most of these communities, so they must make the change they want to see a reality for themselves (Wall & Luther, 1987; Farrigan, et al., 2014).

Theory of Psychological Sense of Community

Using Wall's (1999) list of attributes of successful communities, I used a theory that supports these macro- and micro-sociocultural phenomena. The foundational theory used in this research is the theory of psychological sense of community (PSOC). Presented, defined, and theorized by McMillan and Chavis (1986), sense of community is framed by four elements. Those elements are membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The first of these constructs, membership, includes those who feel they have the right to be a part of the group, but also involves boundaries, often demarcated by people who have fallen beyond the boundaries and are no longer welcomed back in (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These boundaries mark the standards and norms for social inclusion, and “protect group intimacy” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, pg. 10). Emotional safety stems from these boundaries; the boundaries provide structure and an agreement between members not to step out of the boundaries. Interpersonal trust is then easier to cultivate. Within the boundaries of membership comes an understanding of symbols. A common language between members is agreed upon (Bess, et al., 2002). These common symbols uphold community and communicate the boundaries set forth by the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The second construct acknowledges there is a dichotomy between the influence of a singular person over the group, and the influence of the group on the members. Both must exist

for a cohesive community to thrive. Ownership of the group by the members ensures a sustainable community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The dichotomy that exists must happen concurrently so that everyone's needs are fulfilled and the group remains viable (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Influence of community exists externally. The combination of skills, power, and knowledge is used to change policy, larger decision-making processes, and resource allocation (Heller, 1989; Bess, et al., 2002).

The third construct continues in the same vein. Community must integrate and fulfill the needs of its members.

One such directing concept is *shared values*. Our culture and our families teach each of us a set of personal values, which indicate our emotional and intellectual needs and the order in which we attend to them. When people who share values come together, they find that they have similar needs, priorities, and goals, thus fostering the belief that in joining together they might be better able to satisfy the needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek. Shared values provide the integrative force for cohesive communities. (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, pg. 13)

Integration and fulfillment of needs, based on shared values of the community, provides a reinforcement of the value of membership (Bess, et al., 2002). As shared in the quote above, culture and family direct us toward a set of community values. Values reflect the needs of the community. Sharing a set of values allows the community to more efficiently meet those needs (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This ability to identify needs, locate them in a value system, and mobilize a community to meet them is an essential part of successful community development (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

Shared values lead to shared emotional connection, the last element of community in McMillan and Chavis' (1986) article. Identifying with the same shared history is powerful. It provides contextual knowledge, spiritual bonds, and investment in the community. The community has had significant events. The importance, salience, and time period of these events

influence the emotional connection among community members and connection to the community (Bess, et al., 2002).

PSOC is used as a theoretical base for this research because it captures community context as well as the motivations of people to remain, participate, and engage with their community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Nowell & Boyd, 2010; Bess, et al., 2002). In terms of community development, PSOC acts as a catalyst for community action and individuals' participation in community building (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). Moving forward, this theoretical frame work acts as a basis for the conceptual framework to follow.

Community Viability a Conceptual Framework

Informed by the theoretical framework developed above, the Community Viability Indicator was chosen to design the research. The community viability framework encompasses sustainability and resiliency in a community, as well as the interlocking constructs that provide the basis for viability in communities. Rural communities are in need of a comprehensive way to determine their viability as a community and identify where their strengths can support their weaknesses (Hogg, et al., unpublished). The conceptual framework, illustrated by Figure 1, is meant to be used as a tool by Extension agents, community leaders, and grass roots organizations to locate their strengths and identify areas of opportunity for development (Hogg, et al. unpublished).

The indicator uses four constructs that are both independent of one another and overlapping. These constructs are meant to represent what makes a community successful. Capable leaders, community vision, sustainable infrastructure, and community sentiment all must be present for a community to be considered viable (Hogg, et al., unpublished).

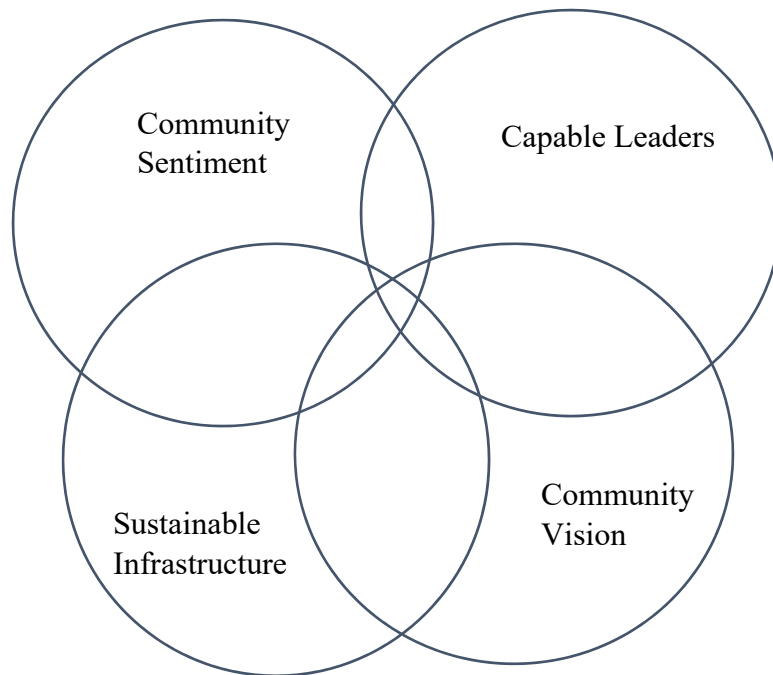


Figure 1. Community Viability Indicator Framework

Capable Leaders

In terms of achieving social and economic stability, a community has many tools. One of the most important is the leaders in the community (Beer, 2014). These leaders can be both formal and non-formal, members of the power elite or champions from the grassroots level. No matter the type of leadership, community leaders must be capable, and put the interests of the community before their own self-interest (Ricketts & Place, 2009; Beer, 2014). Networking within the community and with outsiders, transparency, and a dedication to collaborative community development are aspects of capable leaders who are dedicated to the vision the community has created for itself (Ricketts & Place, 2009).

Capable leaders encourage sustainable infrastructure and provide opportunities for community engagement without adhering to boundaries like minority status (Ricketts & Place, 2009). In addition, capable leaders involve the community's youth to participate and learn how

the community is run, thus encouraging them to remain involved and eventually take on leadership roles (Ricketts & Place, 2009). Involving everyone in the process of making a community successful is a mark of a capable leader.

Community Vision

Developing clear goals for a community can be difficult. With new technologies and globalization constantly changing the equilibrium that rural communities have become accustomed to, it is difficult for them to react positively to change (Smithers, Joseph, & Armstrong, 2005). However, the key to success in communities is the ability to adapt and appreciate change (Herbert-Chesire & Higgins, 2004). Community vision fosters the capacity to look toward the future, set goals and ideals, and then adjust as necessary. Vision is meant to change and grow with the community. It is a reflection on the past, understanding the present, and envisioning the future without attachment to one singular outcome (Herbert-Chesire & Higgins, 2004).

Capable leaders and engaged community members can use strategic thinking to mitigate some of the obstacles that come with the changes that so many rural communities are facing (Herbert-Chesire & Higgins, 2004). Strategic thinking and developing a community vision also affects sustainable infrastructure. To plan how a community is going to thrive, the physical realm must be addressed as well as the social infrastructure that keeps citizens healthy and able to lead meaningful lives (Berkes & Ross, 2013).

Sustainable Infrastructure

Due to their often-traditional foundation, rural communities center around historic downtown areas. Ensuring these historic places work for the community is highly important. In this case, “sustainability” means that throughout time the existing infrastructure will continue to

work for those who live in the community. To make historic downtowns viable for communities, it is in their best interest to make them attractive and safe to be in and around. Historic downtown areas have become a way to preserve community heritage as well as a source of economic development (Luloff & Wilkinson, 1990). In addition to preserving what already exists, communities should prioritize safe buildings that act as schools, hospitals, and community centers (Cabrera & Najarian, 2015). Roads and road upkeep, as well as trash collection, sewage, and maintenance, are seemingly mundane parts of community development, but still serve as a vital part of the safety and happiness of community members.

Planning for the longevity of a community is the basis of growth, making it very important in the process of community development (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). When considering growth, the utility of the tangible community should be considered as well. Leyden (2003) asserts that if a community is more accessible for pedestrians, people become more engaged with the community as they walk around it. How community members interface with the infrastructure of the community is highly relevant to community success. Classically the word “infrastructure” invokes images of buildings, roads, and sidewalks, but less-tangible social infrastructure is important as well (Keczmerski & Sorter, 1983). Access to health care, food security, job access, and ease of transportation are all important structural pieces of a community.

Community Sentiment

Lastly, and most relevant for this research, community sentiment encompasses cultural values, community dynamics, and community identity. Community sentiment leads to community engagement and citizenship, which is described by Block (2009, p.63) as “one who is willing to be accountable for and committed to the well-being of the whole.” Citizenship and community sentiment enable capable leaders to do their work. They care deeply about the future

of the community, and the well-being of their fellow community members. Citizenship cultivates community identity, or the ways in which community members view their role in the community as individuals, and how the community as a whole reflects back on itself (Blackshaw, 2010). Lines are formed in this way, between “member” and “other,” delineating between those who identify with the community and those who do not (Blackshaw, 2010).

Community sentiment includes an enthusiasm about the community, which then creates a sense of pride in the community. Pride and connection to a community fosters resiliency in times of trial (Wall, 1999; Lysgård, 2015; Magis, 2010). In addition, traditions and cultural heritage strengthen the bonds between community members, creating more community sentiment, and long-lasting positive relationships between community members and the community itself (Lysgård, 2015). As the emotional grounding of the community and community members, sentiment can be difficult to identify. However, cultural capital acts as a way to understand what residents identify as culture in their communities and how it ties them to their towns.

Cultural Capital

Culture is a central part of the community sentiment construct. Influential in the way people see the world, culture impacts the use of natural resources, political structures, innovation, heritage, and traditional knowledge systems (Berkes & Folke, 1992). Common examples of tangible cultural capital are the arts, theater, crafts, cuisine, and geography (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2005; Rhodes, 2004). Intangible examples of cultural capital are language and vernacular, heritage, traditions, and family backgrounds (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2005; Rhodes, 2004). We interact with tangible and intangible cultural capital all the time. It affects the ways we see the world around us (Rhodes, 2004). Cultural capital plays another role in cultural identity as well. It shapes the way we interact in our community and each other (Beljwas, 2010).

Cultural capital is inextricably tied to social capital (Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Social capital reflects the relationships between people and between people and institutions (Emery, Fey, and Flora, 2006). As a factor in determining the norms of reciprocity, social capital reinforces cultural capital (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Emery et al., 2006); Putnam, 2003).

These cultural patterns play an irreplaceable role in defining individual and group identity and provide a shared “language” through which the members of a society can communicate on existential issues which are beyond the reach of every day speech. (World Commission on Culture and Diversity, 1996, pg. 21)

Culture provides a shared story that strengthens social capital and reifies the boundaries of membership and community (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). A shared “language,” or exchange of stories and social understandings, fosters community sentiment and strengthens the system as a whole (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). A cultural language creates a deep bond among community members, and within the community as a whole (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; World Commission on Culture and Diversity, 1996). A shared cultural language includes values and rules of reciprocity (Bess, et al., 2002). Phillips and Shockley (2010) write that for sustainable development to occur, cultural values must be respected.

Cultural Capital in Use

Currently, the popular approach to utilizing cultural capital in community development is incorporating it into eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and rural tourism to enhance economic capital and to market the culture of rural spaces (Cochrane, 2005; Fritsch & Johannsen, 2004; Shaffer, et al., 2006). However, as a community-building tool, communities and individuals use culture to empower people, encourage reflection, and catalyze citizen agency (Stephenson & Tate, 2015).

Community building with an emphasis on culture positions people to be change agents, where they use the assets they possess to create change in their community (Cochrane, 2006).

Community-led development, from the bottom up, leads to sustainable community development and community viability (Green & Haines, 2011). Further, building and utilizing existing cultural capital engages community members and encourages them to become active participants in community building (Blejwas, 2010; Cochrane, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010).

Community building through the use of cultural capital embraces culture, values, and unique attributes in the community, which solidifies community pride and identity (McGehee & Meares, 2010; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Richards & Dalbey, 2006; Wall, 1999). As such, positive community development through the use of cultural capital shifts the context of a community from hopeless to restorative (Block, 2008; Phillips & Shockley, 2010).

Recommendations

Rural areas of Appalachia, especially those that rely heavily on resource extraction as an economic determinant, are struggling economically and socially (Scanlan, 2011). The response to these hardships is a constant struggle to remain viable and successful as a community (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993, Wall, 1999). As a result, towns are in need of community building that recognizes the values and traditions of the area (Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Cultural capital as an asset used in community building leads to civic engagement and builds community sentiment (Phillips & Shockley; 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). Community sentiment is a key component in the viability of an area (Block, 2009; Lysgård, 2015; Wall, 1999).

Appalachia is a region with access to a deeply rooted cultural system that has the potential to be a vehicle of development (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993; Stephenson & Tate, 2015). There are currently no studies that explicitly explore the ways in which rural Appalachian towns identify and operationalize their cultural capital, or how that effects the community as a whole. A gap in the literature of this kind leaves rural communities at a disadvantage. While it is

well accepted that culture can build civic engagement as well as serve as a pull for tourism, there is little in the way of understand exactly how and why Appalachian communities are using their cultural capital.

A comparative case study between two rural Appalachian towns is recommended. A study which explores their identification and use of cultural capital. Comparative case studies provide differing perspectives on similar issues that affect both communities. This study would also serve to illustrate the differences in the two communities' approaches to utilizing their assets, and the impact that has. Broadly this study would influence how cultural capital is used in community development and help other rural towns assess their own use of cultural capital as a community building tool.

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Manuscript #2

Influence of Cultural Capital in Two Rural Appalachian Towns: A Qualitative Study

Abstract

Appalachian communities are rich in culture, traditions, and heritage. Those assets combined are referred to as cultural capital. When cultural capital is used in community development, a few things happen in communities. They can build financial capital, attract outside attention, and cultivate community engagement. However, there is currently no study that compares a rural Appalachian communities in terms of operationalization of cultural capital. This study examines a community that is doing well in terms of socioeconomics, and a community that is struggling, and how those two communities differ in their use of cultural capital.

This study uses qualitative research methods, utilizing primarily focus groups because they allowed for the interaction of ideas, and potential for new understandings of the phenomenon to inform the research, as well as two interviews. The findings of this study provide insight into how community leaders view their community, the way they identify their cultural capital, and how they operationalize their cultural capital. The findings also express the impact using cultural capital has on the future of the community. Recommendations are made for future research in the area of power dynamics in rural Appalachia, as well as the importance of community visioning for a town survival. Additional research should be conducted in the area of community viability to create a holistic tool for rural community survival.

Use of Cultural Capital in Community Building

The region of Appalachia has been manipulated for centuries, used for its numerous natural resources (Gregg, 2010). More recently, Appalachia has been privy to government anti-poverty initiatives and the misappropriation of its supposed homogenous culture (Billings, 2013; Hall, 2014). In the wake of the downturn in resource extraction industry, the largely failed government interventions, and misuse of their culture, rural Appalachian towns are struggling (Billings & Tickamyer, 1993; Hall, 2014; Scanlan, 2011).

This gap left by federal funding and economic downturn leaves opportunity for development guided by the community (Green & Haines, 2002; French & Gagne, 2010). Community-driven development is sustainable because it is based on its values and community assets (Green & Haines, 2002; Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Cultural capital is one such asset. It is the way in which we know and interact with the world (Emery & Flora, 2006). The use of cultural capital in community building empowers individuals, creates cohesive communities, encourages use of agency, and catalyzes reflection (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015).

Cultural capital is a component of sustainable development and community viability. "...culture is gradually emerging out of the realm of social sustainability and is being recognized as having a separate, distinct, and integral role in sustainable development. Cultural sustainability implies that change occurs when cultural values are respected" (Phillips & Shockley, 2002, pg 93). As such, culture is a nuanced asset that can't be separated from time and context (Phillips & Shockley, 2010). Because of the complexity and specificity of cultural capital, it is essential to understand its use from community members' perspective and in the context of the community itself.

A Psychological Sense of Community

This research was based on the psychological sense of community theory. McMillan and Chavis (1986) asserted that there are four main principles to be aware of when examining the concept of community. Membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs are four constructs that frame sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In this research, psychological sense of community has shaped the ways in which the methods for the study were designed.

While the theory of psychological sense of community was used as a theoretical framework for this study, the 40-item Sense of Community Scale was not used for this research. The research aimed to understand how people make sense of their own experience of cultural capital and community, using their own words. The excerpt below is from the introduction of *Psychological Sense of Community: Research, Applications, and Implications* (Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002) provides justification for using qualitative methods of research.

For example, phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches offer alternatives consistent with the values and epistemological stance of community psychologists. These approaches are concerned with the psychology of everyday living and explicitly recognize that knowledge is contextually bound by 1) the particular perspectives of time and place 2) perspectives of the stakeholders 3) cultural and historical influences (Bess, et al., 2002, pg. 13).

This research is grounded in human experiences and perceptions of a phenomena, a goal that positivism and quantitative methods would have difficulty accomplishing (Bess, et al., 2002).

Purpose

Communities that are directly next to each other have different levels of socioeconomic health. There have been very few studies that compare two Appalachian towns to each other to ask why they are, or are not doing well. This study's purpose is to discern the role of cultural

capital in the similarities or differences between two Appalachian communities. The two communities are Summerset and Mount Pleasant. Historically, Summerset was home to folks who worked in coal mines and their families, they lived in company owned housing and shopped and company stores. Mount Pleasant had residents who were coal mine owners and managers, they owned land and were able to shop in independently owned stores. Mount Pleasant is doing markedly better in terms of town financials and socioeconomics than Summerset. This purpose of this research was to explore and compare the two communities' use of cultural capital in their community development activities.

Objectives of the study were:

1. Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.
2. Determine the ways in which the two towns operationalizing cultural capital in terms of community development.
3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two towns.

Limitations

This study compares two distinct communities, place in a specific time, and social/political space. All generalizations and implications derived from this study are limited by the time and places in which it was conducted, therefore limiting the generalizability for future research to the degree to which the communities and participants are similar to those in this study.

Basic Assumptions

The following basic assumptions were relevant to this study:

1. The participants provided honest and accurate information in the focus group
2. The participants were credible, reliable, and knowledgeable about their community.
3. Facilitation of focus groups is a justifiable method of gathering information for a comparative case study of two communities.

Methods

This research aims to aid in understanding of how cultural capital is operationalized in two communities, and to illustrate the differences and the similarities between them. The researcher employed qualitative research methods in an attempt to gain insights on the role of cultural capital in communities. By using qualitative research methods, multiple perspectives and understandings of phenomena can inform the research questions posed (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This research was an attempt to explore the differences and similarities between two communities that are very close geographically, but divergent in terms of economic demographic statistics.

The research is formatted as a qualitative comparative case study using focus groups and guided interviews. This design allowed for the examination of a phenomenon and how it influences two communities across and within contexts (Goodrick, 2014). Comparing the two communities allowed the differences and similarities between the two communities to become context for understanding how the operationalization of cultural capital affects these communities (Baxter & Jack, 2008). To analyze the data collected, constructs borne from the theoretical and conceptual frames presented in the literature review were used. Find the accompanying *a priori* table in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The researcher used two in-depth interview styles, focus groups and guided interviews, to observe and compare the use of cultural capital in the communities of Mount Pleasant and Summerset. Demographic information was gathered from participants, and a one hour focus group with guiding questions followed.

In-Depth Interviews

Focus groups

Focus groups functioned as the primary mode of inquiry. Focus groups worked well for this research because they allowed for the interaction of ideas, and potential for new understandings of the phenomenon to inform the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Differing perspectives of the same phenomenon expressed in the same room were descriptive of what is going on in the community on a holistic level. Because the research is based on cultural and social structures, a focus group acts as a microcosm of what occurs in the wider community (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Further reasoning for the use of focus groups as a data collection method is the methodology's propensity for interaction between the participants. Interaction is as informative and rich in data as the information provided by the participants (Kitzinger, 1994). Data emerges in focus groups through communication between participants, their conversations, arguments, and the words they use to discuss a topic. "The forms of communication that people use in their everyday life may tell us as much, if not more, about their knowledge and experience" (Liamputtong, 2011, p.9).

Focus groups encourage a wide range of opinions, reactions, behavior, and perceptions (Liamputtong, 2011). Access to a broad spectrum of personal experiences allowed rich data to emerge from multiple sources at the same time. How participants interact, whether in a positive way or a negative way, lends to an in-depth examination of a phenomenon that happens in the community sphere, and exists at a deeply personal level.

Interviews

In addition to focus groups, guided interviews were conducted. Guided interviews were used as a data collection method because a particular population was difficult to find in numbers. Due to the limited number of participants, two one-on-one interviews, instead of focus groups, were conducted. The interviews provided the researcher with similar breadth of information with increased depth and understanding of the experiences of a single participant in the hard-to-reach population, from each community.

These interviews closely followed the structure and questions that the focus groups shared. However, because the interview was with a singular participant, the researcher was able to go into more depth than with the focus group. The purpose of interviews are to help uncover the participant's views and experiences with a topic. In an interview with a singular person, as opposed to a group with multiple people, the participant is able to explore their experiences at length, and give specific insights into their perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Grouping

The focus group populations chosen were civic leaders, opinion leaders, and young leaders. Young leaders are of particular interest because they are in a position to leave their community, potentially for the rest of their lives, or stay in their communities to make a living. One of the current problems facing Appalachian communities is the outmigration of youth, and an important factor in the success of a community is its involvement of youth (Ley, Nelson, Belyukova, 1996; Ricketts & Place, 2009). In this case, the differences in plans for the future were of interest, as well as how the community involves these young community members in planning, leadership, and community events. Young leaders were identified by people in the community and the county Extension agent, and are between 18 and 25 years of age.

Civic leaders were chosen because they play many roles in a community. They are frequently in charge of community events, they have institutional knowledge, and they are community members themselves (Ricketts & Place, 2009). This group had unique perspective on the current status of the community, as well as the past and future of the community. Next, the opinion leader group is essential to a community because they aide in determining what innovations are adopted and which are not (Rogers, 2008). Opinion leaders can have a range of occupations and ages, but they are well respected within their community and their word holds great power. For this study, opinion leaders are not elected officials, as that is what distinguishes civic leaders in this case. Opinion leaders are considered ordinary citizens and are highly respected and do a great deal for their community.

These groups have a unique understanding of their community's cultural capital and differ in how they view their community as a whole. Focus groups allowed for comparison between members of the groups, between groups in the same community, and across communities. Because of the dense, rich nature of the data that comes from focus groups, they serve as an ideal vehicle to not only compare across communities, but between them as well. As a comparative case study, ease of comparison between communities is ideal.

The focus groups were community-specific, homogenous groups. Mount Pleasant had a separate focus group from Summerset. These focus groups were conducted in a way that aimed to uncover how people perceive their community's cultural capital, how that cultural capital is operationalized, and what that means for the community as a whole. Participants were asked to reflect on their interactions with their cultural roots in the community, as well as the culture of the community as a whole.

The researcher's intention was to understand how individuals perceive their community's culture and cultural capital, and their understanding of how that helps or harms their community. The research objective was to uncover participants' perceptions of their community's use of cultural capital, their perception of the success of their community, and their own role in the community.

After obtaining Internal Review Board approval to proceed with the research, recruitment emails were sent out to potential participants identified by an Extension agent in the county on May 16, 2016 and follow-up phone calls were made in subsequent days. The participants are all community members of their respective towns, and were either identified as civic leaders, opinion leaders, or young leaders in their community. In total, 16 participants were interviewed, 14 in focus groups of three to four, and two in individual interviews.

The interviews were audio recorded, and then transcribed by the researcher in Microsoft Word ©. Transcripts were then coded by hand, and themes emerged throughout the data analysis process. The analysis for Mount Pleasant and Summerset were analyzed separately for comparison purposes. Pseudonyms have been assigned to every participant and those they mention to protect anonymity.

Findings

Four themes emerged from the focus groups, guided interviews, and content analysis from each community. While they were analyzed separately, the two towns share thematic categorization. However, the narrative of each town differs, and they should be considered two separate stories. Findings will be reported first for Mount Pleasant, and the findings from Summerset will follow. A comparison is included in the discussion section.

Emergent Themes from Mount Pleasant

Theme one: Culture in the town is identified similarly between leadership groups.

When describing the culture of their community, almost every participant began by saying how safe, quiet, and slow their towns are. Often the phrase “bedroom community” came up. The phrase is meant to describe a town without central industry, a place where people would leave during the day and return at night to sleep. But in this context, it takes on a colloquial role in describing the town as slow paced, with safety and community values as a focal point. Jack, an opinion leader, describes his impression of the town that he has lived in for 81 years:

For years people have said it's a bed room community. It's a sleepy little town, we didn't lock our doors, we didn't lock our cars up, everybody knew each other, small school. It's a good town to raise a family.

Andrew, who has only lived in Mount Pleasant, echoes Jack's sentiment of the town being a bedroom community and how it compares to other places in the United States later in the focus group:

I do feel that it is very safe, I grew up in a city in California, very big place. I guess growing up you don't know how unsafe it is because that's all I knew. But after you get the experience of going away and going different places, you realize it was a pretty scary place, there was a lot going on. I was a little afraid of coming to such a small town, but we, my wife and I, do enjoy the quietness or sleepiness of the town, because it is very calm and we don't worry.

From the civic leader focus group, the sentiment of safety and comfort is reiterated. Linda describes how close knit the community is and how that factors in to raising her children in a safe environment:

I think it's a wonderful place to grow up Stuart and I both grew up here, of course he's much older (Laughs), anyways we grew up here, and we both went away for college, and we both chose to come back here and raise our families. I had two boys and both of them are gone from here now. I think it's a very close community as a far as keeping up with each other I know when my kids were little, they played and if one of them strayed off

from the path I got a call that evening, you know, “Neil was riding his bike where he shouldn’t be” you know stuff like that.

While “safe,” “quiet,” and “slow paced” may not appear to be pieces of cultural capital, they do dictate the choices the community makes for itself. Those descriptions are what the people of Mount Pleasant value about their town, and what they would like to keep intact as they move forward as a community.

Mount Pleasant also has connections to its historic and modern-day cultural artifacts, whether it’s their museums, institutions, buildings, or people. The town is rich in tangible pieces of culture, which they can point to as a way of showing what their culture consists of. David, a civic leader, paints a picture of the cultural history of Mount Pleasant:

My senior thesis was on (Famous Author). So I learned quite a bit about the establishment of Mount Pleasant, by studying (Famous Author) and his novels, and thinking about the culture of the mountains and how Mount Pleasant represented that. And I always think about it being established as part of an industrial movement, you know at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, when coal was king, or was being discovered, and all the coal properties were being snapped up by entrepreneurs mostly from the north who were coming in and buying up lands and rights to property from the farmers who owned the land at that time.

As a historic figure, the famous author that David talks about shaped the culture of the town. The author brought early recognition of the area, and the novels themselves described what the town was like in that time period. Another example of tangible cultural artifacts are the town’s many museums and cultural exhibits. One of which is an open-air theater that has become renowned in the region and has become part of the Crooked Road. One particular piece of cultural history stands out. In Mount Pleasant there was a diner that everyone in town knew and loved. It was a gathering place of sorts that Jack remembers fondly:

When I was growing up in high school, we had a place called Don’s. Your parents worry where you were as long as you were going to Don’s. But, when you came home, they knew where you had been because in Don’s with frying all those hamburgers and stuff,

that smell got all over your clothes, you hair the whole works, and when you walked in the door your parents knew where you were and they didn't ask questions

Don's has been reconstructed in the town and converted into a music venue and information center. Those types of cultural institutions, even reconstructions of them, bring people together in the community

Linda, from the civic leaders focus group, also remembers a gathering place much like Don's, called the Mountaineer. All of the young kids would go there to park their cars and spend time with their friends. The following conversation illustrates the importance of cultural institutions like these burger joints:

David: That points to another part of the local culture, when you were growing up what did you do?

Linda: You cruised Mount Pleasant!

Stuart: There was the Mountaineer over behind the train information center. People would go round and round and round, and get a parking spot sit on the hood of your car and watch people go around and around.

Linda: and you would buy a coke, the people that owned it didn't really care for that because they didn't make any money on it. But, I have to tell this story. When I was away at college and the Mountaineer closed for good, my mother wrote me every week, and she wrote me and she said "well the Mountaineer closed this week, thousands were left homeless." (Laughter)

These memories of the cultural institutions of the past are highly influential in the shaping of the culture today. A shared cultural history within the community bonds those who live there, as illustrated by the joyful conversation between the civic leaders.

Another example of what was shaped and developed the culture in Mount Pleasant is coal and the coal industry. In conversation with Stuart, David speaks about the people who lived in the town during the early 20th century:

David: But that's what gets me started thinking about it. Of course there were some people who, the way I understand it, Mount Pleasant and Summerset... another town just

up the holler here, sort of grew up together, or were established at the same time. But one of them tended to be more for workers, and one of them more for managers. Wasn't Mount Pleasant where the managers lived?

Stuart: There's no coal on this side of the mountain, and the management tended to live here. And you had the multiple camps up in Summerset, with the town being the sort of community center.

David: And I heard that, that had all sorts of repercussions, like what sorts of churches people attended. For example the people in the managerial or white collar jobs tended to be Methodist or Presbyterian, as opposed to Baptist or maybe Catholic.

Historically, the people who settled in Mount Pleasant shaped the community to suit their needs, such as which churches were around. Which leads to an important point in Mount Pleasant today: The managers who live in town presumably made a high living wage, so the infrastructure and culture in Mount Pleasant reflects that, which impacts the present state of the town. A young leader named Pat also emphasized that point:

Maple hill, which whether most people realize it or not, is a really integral part to Mount Pleasant's history, and even how Mount Pleasant works today, it was first filled by a lot of the capitalist, and the coal mine managers

Even today the town recognizes how the town's past influences the present in terms of culture and community development.

The participants in Mount Pleasant all gave similar answers to describe the culture of the town, how they feel living there, and what the community is like today and what it was like in the past. Consistency between leadership groups that create a spectrum across the community indicates that the community is relatively uniform in what is identified as important cultural aspects.

Theme two: The community promotes a strong sense of membership and identity.

The feeling of kinship and community connection is a cornerstone of many Appalachia and rural areas. Community bonds create a strong sense of membership and a shared community identity, which follows many people throughout their lifetime. Place-based identity is why many people stay, or come back to places like Mount Pleasant. Pat, a young leader, left town to pursue an education in traditional folk music at a university, and then he returned home:

I think the majority of people who play traditional music, they think about their, whether they realize it or not, they're thinking about their sense of place in the world. You know our music is so connected to people who are hardworking and have had hardships, people who are connected to the land, just the whole music itself is a tradition that's been passed down orally through families - being part of my community is still something I carry in my music.

I feel very connected in my community, in Mount Pleasant, and really the entire region, but especially here in town. I think that's something... I don't know that I purposefully do it, but it's something that comes through in my music, it's this feeling of being connected to the world around me, even if it's just being friendly to your neighbor or seeing people at the grocery store on a weekly basis.

Pat clearly feels connected to his community in many ways, through traditional music, his connections with the community, and being a part of history and his community's culture. The feeling of belonging and connectedness are what has kept him in his home town.

In addition to the feeling of connectedness and belonging in the community, family connection also plays a large part in what makes people feel like they want to remain in Mount Pleasant. Will emphasizes that as one of the contributing factors to returning home after living in a city:

I was gone for a few years, it's a good place to raise a family. I went to a big city for a few years and then went up to another big city for a few years, but a babysitter was raising my son. We would leave at 6:30/7 in the morning, and not make it back, if you didn't bet the traffic, before 6,7,9 at the earliest. So you would come home and its bed time almost for a toddler. So I just decided... I talked my wife into moving back here. It is safe, my family is here, that was probably the biggest thing. My parents are retired, my

dad was a teacher and a coal miner, wasn't a teacher for long. Just the ability to have family help raise your kids. You could do it in a big city but it just didn't feel right

The family connection and fulfillment of needs that comes with moving back to the small community he grew up in was what was important for Will. He needed to be able to spend time with his children and have the help of his family to raise them. Jack added to the conversation with his experience in the community:

But I'm just an old country boy I like it here. I've been here 81 years. It's enjoyable, you speak to people on the streets, they speak to you, you go into restaurants and people are joking and carrying on with you right here. Everybody seems to know each other, and it's just a good attitude about the whole thing around here.

Jack's experience of comradery and friendship throughout the community is reiterated by many. David illustrates how cultural institutions like church play into the creation of membership and connection within the community:

There are still some traditional sort of mountain and Appalachian culture left. They're not unique to Mount Pleasant but they are threads that pass through the whole fabric of the region. So when you think about food and how people connect, think about church socials, that might be what you called covered dish dinners. The church where I go, we eat together at least twice a month, and we all bring a traditional dinner, and that keeps us abreast to each other's lives, and I think that is still a very important part of the way people live here.

Churches act as a hub for social and cultural gatherings. As institutions, churches have always served as a gathering point and a place where communities form, integral to the formation of cultural habits and values.

Additionally, in a conversation between David and Stuart, the connection between coal miners came up as an influence on the culture of the area, as well as an explanation for the closeness of the community:

Stuart: The coal industry brought black lung and health issues to this region, that you don't have once you leave this area, you don't see it at all. Black lung has been a real bad thing in previous years.

David: And it's hard to separate. It's kind of dark side of our character. And the fearfulness that it brings. If you've ever hear coal mine blues songs...that's a dark vein in the culture. Fatalism, and what's going to happen, you know the insecurity and poverty that can result from it. As well as the comradery and the strong communities, and the unions that were very powerful, and that gave people identify. Those were very powerful. I know men who were a generation before me who were in the Union, and that was their main identity. They were brothers and also workers and so on.

Hard times brought by years of working in coal mines and the boom and bust of extraction-based economies creates a certain reliance on your neighbors and fellow miners. The comradery and identity created in those times still exist today.

The people of Mount Pleasant have created a very strong sense of membership and identity within the community. Whether it is expressed through traditional music or stopping to have a chat with other community members in the grocery store, the community of Mount Pleasant is connected. With the help of cultural institutions like churches, or through hard work and a tough environment, comradery is cultivated and cultural capital influences a sense of belonging.

Theme three: Leaders acknowledge the need to pivot toward new ways of bringing economic prosperity to their community

Mount Pleasant, like many towns in the coalfields of Appalachia, is confronted with the failure of the coal industry. With coal no longer being extracted from many mines that use to keep towns prosperous, jobs have been lost, income has disappeared, and the coal severance tax is quickly disappearing. The coal industry also created a work force without a formal education that quickly ran out of options when the coal industry rapidly declined. David describes the

intersection between the culture of the coal, job opportunities, and the impacts of coal on the community:

Some people think that the coal industry it's self has been a curse for the people and culture in Appalachia, I know there's some culture that is tied to the coal industry that has risen through it and from it. But also, it's been an opportunity for young people to go and work as soon as they mature, and not having to get an education, and they can make more money, or they could make more money working in the coal mines...all of those people were tied to the mines, and sometimes to the ill health that comes with that, even though it comes with prosperity for many years at a time. You know it would be prosperous, and then there would be a bust and everyone would lose their jobs, and it would be really hard times, but then it would come back usually, and it would be prosperous again, and everybody would be gung-ho, but that boom and bust economy is a source of poverty, wide spread poverty, and insecurity in the way we think about life here.

The leadership and community members in Mount Pleasant have been slow to come to terms with the decline of coal and the need to move toward something else for economic stability.

Andrew explains how he sees a need for change, but others are resistant:

It seems that whether it's the town council or it's just the community in general, there was a little bit of resistance of wanting people to come in here and "we would like you to stay out because we are a small town and that is how we would like to stay." So that was the mind set for so long, and now that things are dying as far as the economy around here because of the coal obviously because that was driving everything in this area, it's hard for them to open their minds to other things like how can we get people here, for so long they've thought of keeping people out, but now we have to change, we need to bring people in here or the whole town is going to die off. And also there's not enough around here to keep the younger people around, that's what's happening, our young people who are educated, who are successful or have a good career. Sometimes it's slow, they're working in the city but still living here, but next thing you know they're working in this city or that city, and now they don't live here anymore, and so I think we're losing those people and we have to have that change to keep them here.

Andrew recognizes the need to pivot toward something new, something other than extraction industry, a new economic plan that can keep young people in the community. All of the leaders in this study agreed that something needs to change for the community to continue to thrive. Pat ran

for town council, and when asked about his motivation for doing so he provided insight from the younger generation:

I think a lot of people in Mount Pleasant, of course the town is made up of mostly older people, you know a lot of millennials are not anywhere in the Appalachian region, they're not staying in their home communities, they're fleeing to cities and urban areas where jobs are more plentiful. And I think when that happens it send a negative message to older people in communities, like the community is not good enough. And I really wanted to show that there are young people who stay in these communities and who do care about the future and who want to try and see these places make an economic transition.

Pat cares about keeping his peers in the area, to help secure the future of Mount Pleasant. He continues:

I'm really inspired to see that transition done, but in a way that it effects everybody in a really positive way. I think often in smaller Appalachian communities that are predominately white or predominantly Christian, we forget about the other people who share our communities with us. I mean Mount Pleasant is home to several different people from different races, there's a small LGBTQ community that lives here. So I'm inspired to make sure that those people still have a voice when it comes to this transition. Because I don't want to see the effects of gentrification really take place in Mount Pleasant. I don't want to see it become this sleek mountain town that only wealthy white people get to come vacation at. I want it to be a place where we all benefit from the move away from coal mining.

As a young leader in his community, Pat feels passionately that Mount Pleasant should be an open community that supports the future of all its community members. Any transition away from coal toward something that is positive and sustainable, and respects the voice of people in the community, is ideal for Pat.

Finally, David proposes that the town needs to pivot toward the assets available to them, and bring the rest of the region up with them:

To recognized your strengths and build on them, and tie them with the strengths in some of the other communities around to benefit everybody, I think it kind of raises all the votes if people from inside the region.

The various leaders in this study recognized that coal was no longer a viable option. They acknowledge the need to pivot toward something that builds on their assets, and positively impacts the residents of the town and the region.

Theme four: Use of cultural resources is prevalent and well accepted as a means of survival for the community.

Following the recognition that the community must transition away from coal, the leaders in this study communicated the need to use Mount Pleasant's assets for economic revival of the town. These assets were identified as pieces of cultural capital, and their use was motivated by cultural values of the town. Largely the cultural capital mentioned are the museums in town and Mount Pleasant's natural surroundings.

Linda describes Mount Pleasant's strategic five-year plan and the plans for using the visitors center that is modeled after a historic cultural institution, Dons restaurant.

Oh yeah, we do. 5 year plan. We just opened our visitor center. It's very nice, in the back of that... it was an old gas station, and in the bay... we've got several options that we're looking into, to provide a music venue there. If not every week, maybe once a month. We rushed to get the main part open with the season coming up. There's still some work to be done in the bay area, but that's going to be able to be used as entertainment. We're hoping at some point to have that be part of the crooked road. Because right now Mount Pleasant does not have an indoor venue for music and that is a qualification to be part of the crooked road.

The Crooked Road is a music trail, along the trail are music venues and tributes to Appalachian heritage. The Crooked Road is an excellent way to attract tourists into town, and provide places for entertainment for those who live in town as well. Linda, a town council member, believes that having an indoor music venue that is part of the Crooked Road would help Mount Pleasant turn the corner toward prosperity.

Jack also believes that tourism and using their cultural assets are the best way toward an economic transition:

We look at what we've got today and we need a shot of something, and I still say, tourism is the only way to go for this town now and if we don't get things connected with tourism, we're going to be in rough shape.

He goes on to describe the types of tourism he thinks would work best for Mount Pleasant:

One would be the dam, our water supply, there's 72 cabins sittin' on the other side of it. They won't let them come by there to let them come out, they have to go a farther distance. If they were to come out this way it would be 20-30 minutes quicker, and they're gunna shop down here. Now that's a shot in the arm. And, we're behind schedule on it but the train track that runs between Mount Pleasant and Summerset has been given to Summerset and Mount Pleasant. Now that's 3 mile little trip of walking or biking, but the train track is dead from Summerset to Fort Plain, that's an extra 12 miles, we have 15 miles here that we can actually open up the exact thing that the creeper trails got over there. That's bicycles, that's hiking, also our streams around here have been utilized for fishing ever since I was a kid they stocked certain places. But like I say we don't say what we've got here, and we've got to, one way or another tell the rest of the world what we've got and what we want to do.

Jack would like to see an ecotourism industry build up in Mount Pleasant, and the other opinion leaders agree with him. They believe that one of their richest resources are the mountains around them. Jack was also very proud of the many museums and historic places in town.

David, from the civic leader group, agrees that tourism should be a way to keep the town prosperous, and he believes cultural capital is already doing its part. David sees Mount Pleasant as a cultural hub of the region:

The novel and the stage adaptation are something people know Mount Pleasant for and it has drawn people in from around the region. You know, and generation after generation comes to see the outdoor drama. And it's given it a kind of lure that other places don't have, they don't have a kind of hub to keep people coming back. And the regional museum, it's a state park that other communities don't have, that's kept Mount Pleasant vibrant and the coal museum, I think is just a real gem.

David sees the impact this cultural capital has on the town. He believes that the town is already well known, and already doing well by using these cultural resources that the community already has. Pat, a young leader, echoes David's sentiment:

I think that it would be really wonderful to see Mount Pleasant focus more on its cultural arts and historical assets, and even some on its environmental assets. Though we don't have any sort of hiking trails connected directly to town or anything of that nature. But I think those opportunities are still there to get people out into the environment around town. I've always thought that with us being so close to the valley, and the valley's had this history of having a couple of dairy farms there, that it would be really wonderful to see some kind of ag tourism done there that could bring people.

Pat has vision for what the community could be like, and ways in which Mount Pleasant could partner with other places in the county to positively impact more than just his community. Using the town's cultural capital, such as the natural environment, historic land marks, and arts as a way to support the town has the interest of Mount Pleasant's leadership. Lastly, the leaders in the town have a keen sense that in order to make the changes they would like to see, they must implement change themselves. As Pat so aptly put it:

*No matter who people like to blame for the problems that the coal industry has brought upon us, I think that most people can agree that it's not a problem that anybody at the federal or **even** state level can address, or nobody in the private sector is willing to address it, so it's going to be left to the communities themselves to come up with the solutions to these problems.*

And so far, the solution to the problems Mount Pleasant is facing is its cultural capital assets.

Emergent Themes from Summerset

Theme one: Culture in the town is identified similarly between leadership groups.

The leadership groups in Summerset were extremely passionate about their town. When describing the culture of their community, everyone had something to add to the conversation. It is very clear the Summerset residents prides themselves on their heritage and the pieces of culture they have in their community. Each person had a story to tell to provide insight into what makes Summerset unique and wonderful. Brian, an opinion leader in the community, began by saying:

The people around here are unique in themselves, they're compassionate, they care for each other, they help each other out, and that's the way we survive, that's the way we survived back in the days which it was rough, and now that it's gotten kind of rough again with the coal mines closing down we're doing the same thing, 92 people have come together to serve as volunteers in town, to see things going, to keep things going, to plan, and that just the nature of the people here.

Helping neighbors, volunteering, and survival permeate the culture in Summerset. Richard goes on to add how the community is like a family:

Greatest things in this town is the love of people for each other, it's this town, more so than probably any of the rest of the towns in the county. This town is more like a family, and people that are from here and that have moved away from here are still... you feel like you're part of the community.

The feeling of kinship of belonging was found throughout the participants' responses. The culture of kinship has had an impact on the survival of this town. Love and pride in their community has kept these opinion leaders fighting for their home.

A young leader in the community, Gary, is in line to run the town funeral home. He describes the culture of Summerset in terms of his experiences growing up:

Oh I love it, there's not that many people here, and it's kinda quiet and kinda slow, not much crime. We used to go out and ride bikes and that kind of stuff all summer. I mean my parents didn't really worry about me being out and running around. Now I guess people are worried about their kid being out and getting picked up by some creeper or something, they used to let us do whatever we wanted to, go to the swimming pool, ride around on bikes.

The safety Gary associated with the town comes from the culture of kinship and caring for one another. This is what has brought Gary back from school in Atlanta, the feeling of safety and family connections.

Scott is a civic leader in Summerset, and he brought up the importance of their downtown cultural arts center:

The Summerset Cultural Arts Center up here is the crown jewel of the town, it's the one thing that's already running, it's a beautiful facility, it is a historic facility. And it's there

to promote the cultural arts. And you mentioned things we have here that we can work with and I think we're rich in cultural arts in many different ways. Whether it be music, our plays; so we've got a really good facility.

Beyond the cultural assets of volunteerism, kindship, and values that emphasize safety and caring for one another, Summerset residents also identify some tangible and traditional culture. They identify the buildings downtown, their local talent, artist, musicians, storytellers, and more as cultural assets.

Lastly, the surrounding mountains are an important piece of the cultural landscape. Many leaders in Summerset build their plans and visions based on the use of the mountains. Their descriptions of their town revolve around the mountains, which indicates that their natural assets are an integral part of their cultural capital. Brian paints a picture of the area's natural assets and how important they are to him:

The good Lord gave us the most beautiful part of the country that there is. And there's a lot of resources here, there's fishing, there's hunting, we've got snakes, we've got bears, deer, we've got turkey, pheasants, we've got coons. All kinds of birds. I was raised here and I still get a thrill when I go into the mountains and I see a deer track, or a bear track, or a beaver track. Those things that a lot of people don't ever see.

Brian is attached to the surroundings of his home town. He loves the mountains and the life that grow there. Unfortunately because Summerset is largely a grouping of coal camps, the large coal companies still own most of the surrounding land, minerals, and timber.

Millie provides an example of how difficult coal ownership can make not only development, but life: "I got that whole mountain out behind my house, 2 acres of nothing but trees. And you can't cut a tree down because they will get you, it's in the deed that they own the mineral rights and the timber rights." Millie lives on her property but does not truly own it. If she cuts down a tree, the coal company has the right to sue her for stealing their property. This creates a tension in the community that has been a long-running undercurrent in Summerset.

Cultural assets that are so important to the community cannot be used by the people who live in town.

In a discussion between the civic leaders, a few exchanges sums up their memories of growing up in the area and their connection with, as Donald says, “kin people”:

Fred: When I was a teenager, in the summertime, we would just pack ourselves a knapsack and head for the mountains, and we would stay out there for a week, walk around back there enjoying nature.

Charles: In the summer I ate more meals at Miss Gardener’s house than my own

Fred: I’ve done the same thing, Miss Miller’s, I couldn’t walk by there without her wanting me to come eat.

The people of Summerset appreciate the mountains and the natural abundance of resources it has brought to them. They have a strong sense of safety and kinship in their community, which shows itself through caring neighbors and shared meals. As understood through the comments of community leadership, the people of Summerset are proud of where they live, where they are from, and the culture that stems from their traditions and residents.

Theme two: The community promotes a strong sense of membership and identity.

Corresponding to the identification of community bonds and kinship as main attributes of Summerset’s culture, leaders expressed a sense of membership and identity in their community. They expressed their feeling of membership and identity through describing intense connection to their community, returning home after many years, and describing the sense that home could be nowhere else but Summerset.

Every community leader described their intense love for their hometown, and how the people there make them feel like family, even when most of their family has moved out of the region. Millie has family on the Eastern Seaboard yet she has stayed in Summerset because as she puts it:

Well I lived in the same house my whole life and I'll be 59 in December, I wouldn't consider living anywhere else. I wouldn't move to any other town! My home is Summerset. And it bothers the heck out of me that I'm going to be buried in Mount Pleasant! I don't like that at all!

Millie's unwillingness to move, and dismay at being buried somewhere other than Summerset shows how connected she is with the place she lives. It has become an integral part of her identity. Autumn has a similar reaction to leaving Summerset:

I got married last weekend, and I changed my address from Summerset to Mount Pleasant it was hard! I walked through this town every day and it's different in Mount Pleasant, I have not found it. I could leave out at 10 o'clock here in Summerset and walk anywhere I wanted to go and speaking to people all along the way. I have not found that so far in Mount Pleasant. I've been a little home sick.

Even though Mount Pleasant and Summerset are located just under three miles away from each other, Autumn feels like she isn't a member of the Mount Pleasant community, but instead is still strongly connected to Summerset. Most of the town was involved in some way for her wedding. It was impossible to get anyone on the phone that week leading up to the event because everyone was prepping for her celebration. And as she says above, Autumn talks to everyone in the community when she sees them, which promotes a feeling of belonging and closeness in the community.

Membership and identity have also impacted Gary. When he talks about Summerset, he has this to say:

It's always been home, my dad went to high school here, my mom went to high school here. My grandparents went to high school here, my great grandparents went to high school here. I mean it's just a small town, there's not really any crime or anything around, I mean a little bit you know, that's really what it is, it's just home.

Gary's feeling of home and generational ties to the area lead him back to Summerset even when his friend offered him a job in North Carolina on the beach. He rejected the offer, saying, "and I told him I said- I'm going home, my grandparents still live here, all four of my grandparents live

here, my mom and my dad live here, my sister lives here and her kids. And that's where I want to be."

Civic leaders are aware of the feeling of membership and identity with the town, and the pull to come home after being away. Fred, the mayor of Summerset, left for a while before returning home. He echoes Gary's sentiment:

It's a nice little town, I grew up here, I left here for 13 years but I came back for family reasons. But it's a good little town to live in; we've got some problems like every other town. I could live anywhere I wanted to right now, but I want to live here!

Fred is retired. He could have settled elsewhere in the country, yet he came back to Summerset and was elected mayor. His identity is tied to the place where he grew up, and he wishes to help it thrive. Brian also returned home and explains why in this conversation with Richard:

Brian: Do you remember what I told you when you asked me why I moved back here?

Richard: You told me you moved back here because of your brother, your family and your heart never actually left here.

Brian: That's right, my heart has always been here.

As demonstrated by those excerpts, Summerset and the community fulfill the needs of those who live there through family ties and cultural connections to the town. The people who live there dedicate their time, heart, and soul to their community.

Theme three: Leaders acknowledge the need to pivot toward new ways of bringing economic prosperity to their community

While the leaders in Summerset clearly feel strongly about their community and believe in its survival as a town, they have been hit with the failure of the coal industry in more ways than one. Companies still own the majority of the land surrounding Summerset and will not allow the community to buy or use it. As Fred, the mayor of Summerset, explains:

They're just sitting on the land, and for years, they've paid pennies per acre, and like I said they're just sitting on it. For about a hundred years the coal company and the rail

roads prospered here, and when they left they didn't put nothing back. They took everything. They made, well it's hard to say how many Billions of dollars they made here.

The coal industry has left the community of Summerset in a difficult position. When coal extraction dwindled, jobs were lost and the economy tanked. Yet to try to improve and move past coal, the town needs access to its assets. However, as Fred says, the coal industries own most of the land around. Further, the coal companies won't sell their rights. Richard, an opinion leader, has similar thoughts about the failure of the coal industry:

Everything that has happened in this town is not because of the people that are here, it's outsiders that have done what they've done to our town. Because the coal business has gone down, because the government doesn't want to coal anymore, and everything that's been pulled out of here has been from outsiders, it's been beyond our control, it's not that you can blame anybody locally because it hasn't been a local thing, you know. We're all suffering for the same reason. It's not because of the local people, they love what they do, and they're proud people. We've always had people here who are proud of what they're doing. They worked on the rail road, they worked in mines, they were proud, they held their head up because they were doing an honest day's work. We've got good people that are still around that are doing their best, and trying to survive, but that's where we're at now, we're in survival mode.

What Richard would like to see is for the people in the community to be able to walk away from the damage that the coal industry created, and find a job that gives them dignity. There is a culture in Summerset that emphasizes the importance of hard work. Richard would like to see something new that supports that.

Gary also believes there needs to be a transition away from the reliance on coal in the community, because he has seen what the decline has done:

The changes in town are mostly linked to the coal industry. Coal has steadily declined, the last 10 years it's really declined. So there's not as much coal leaving here so money's not circulating here, in this town guys are out of work and they're having to find jobs in other places, and it's really hurt the economy here.

The leaders in Summerset see that they need to pivot towards something that is more economically stable than coal. They hope to transition toward something that is more positive and something that will rebuild their economy and town.

Theme four: Use of cultural resources is prevalent and well accepted as a means of survival for the community.

To pivot away from the extraction industry and toward something that is more stable and available to the community, Summerset leadership is keen on ecological and cultural tourism. The reason the community is looking toward ecological and cultural tourism is because those are assets they have access to, and those avenues fit within the cultural values of the area. There are barriers, such as the inability to develop recreational areas in the mountains because of company ownership, yet development spearheads in the community are undeterred. Brian explains his motivation behind supporting the economic transition:

Well what we're trying to do to survive, is to create things to bring revenue into town such as trails, railroad trails, walking trails, we're in the process of trying to get some property that hopefully we can grow a little bit because we are landlocked. That's one of the things that we are doing to survive. We're trying to create a situation to utilize what we have, which are the beautiful mountains, and all the other natural resources we have here. And we have a few volunteers that are working on that.

The opinion leaders are behind the movement toward using their cultural and natural resources to attract people to the region. Gary agrees. As a young leader, he sees that manufacturing will not work for the area any longer, and supports the town's move toward tourism. "The town is doing a good job getting the trail down by the river, there's natural tunnels down through there, and you know they're trying to get something going, trying to focus it more towards tourism."

Similarly, a civic leader named Charles said that there will need to be a lot of pushing the town to the outside to be recognized for what they have to offer:

Our name is unique but it's worldwide known I think, so that's one thing we're trying to figure out with the Grow Summerset committee volunteers that we've got, how can we push that name and grow and market that name to tourism or industry or whatever. And as far as tourism and trails I think we're unique how we're geographically set up in this little town, because we've got the trails and one side of the river is just great for hiking, horseback, and biking, and the other side of the river is ideal for ATVs.

Charles isn't completely sure how to wrap his head around how to use all of the assets they have, but he is sure they will be able to. He mentions that eventually they will have to reclaim the land from the coal companies to survive as a community.

Likewise Scott, a civic leader, has ideas to keep community members connected and entertained using cultural assets:

I think we're rich in cultural arts in many different ways. Whether it be music, our plays; so we've got a really good facility. We've got one facility here that's up and running and we need to mine it for all that we can, and some of these programs like the open mic. Or the community jam sessions, where we can invite people who are here as tourists to have something to do, if they're musicians or if they like to listen to music they can come in and sit around and listen to people play music... I've proposed a story telling program and an art gallery showing. We have a lot of artists here, a lot of our talent in this area is hidden because we don't have venues for it. And that's one of the things with the open mic, we're creating another venue for local musicians to come out and share their talents and interact with other musicians, and maybe people who have things going on can invite that musician to come play somewhere else...

Scott wants the Cultural Arts Center to be a meeting place for the community, as well as a place to share art, stories, and music. He believes that this will strengthen the ties in the community, and give the town an attraction for tourists. Scott goes on to talk about how it is important to him to create a place for young people in the community, as well as a way to help the community pivot toward positive development:

We've opened our arms to the young people and we hope we can get more and more young people in, and give them something to do, something positive to do, and I know that's a desire for everybody here because Summerset has been especially by the loss of the coal industry, and the slow demise of the train industry because that survived off of coal. And it's left the community with very little for the young people to do besides grow

up and hope they can leave. Which just continues the demise of the town, we can't stop all of that obviously, but I hope that programs like this can make an impact on that.

Scott believes that involving young people in cultural activities that focus on creativity will help keep them out of trouble and connected to their community.

In the opinion leaders group, Brian speaks mainly of using a few of their ecological surroundings as ways to attract people to come into town. He believes that if Summerset gets a start, the benefits of pivoting will be numerous. He shares the rest of his vision:

Let me tell you my vision. I can see tourism being the hub of the Town of Summerset, I can see Mom and Pop shops coming back into business in town. It's a long process, it's hard to do, it takes a lot of people to do. My vision is, start where we're started and show people that we can accomplish something, and then it will catch on, and it'll catch on. Meanwhile we're working very hard to do something with our old buildings around town that are sitting around and people are just using them for collateral, so we're trying to do something about that. And we do get an awful lot of volunteers in the area, without volunteers I don't know what we do. That's my vision, to see Summerset as a tourism town, to have the facilities around it that we'll draw, and to have the mom and pop shops downtown to keep the businesses in town. That's my vision and it was my vision when I came back here, and that will be 21 years next month.

Brian sees not only the use of the town's natural resources as a way to promote stability, but also local business and using historic buildings to benefit the community. He wants the town to prosper and remain a close-knit community with a tourism industry.

Finally, there is the recognition that for the community to survive, the community members must do it themselves. This "do-it-yourself" attitude stems from the culture of hard work, and also the culture of comradery in the community. As illustrated by a conversation between Brian and Autumn, they realize that it will take a community effort to keep the town alive. They talk about the community in Summerset and what assets they have, which brings them to talk about the only restaurant in town. To keep tourists around, towns like Summerset need places to eat, so they discuss how they are helping the restaurant remain open:

Brian: Another example right here now. Our little restaurant down here, she's striving to make it mostly because we need a restaurant. We have three committees we serve on. And we decided instead of having meetings here, we would go down and help her business and she stays open the nights we have our meetings, some of us eat, some don't. But anything we can do to help.

Autumn: We do try to help, my brother is off on Wednesday, and they've been going down here every Wednesday to eat at her restaurant. He announces from church the other day, when he's dismissing he said "Hey by the way if anyone is looking for food, stop in there and say hi to her." And I thought "From the pulpit really?" But I mean he wanted to help her, if you send three or four people that's that many hamburgers, that 6 dollars.

Brian: And that's the way we survive.

This conversation is an insight into the culture of the town. People care to see each other do well. They want their town to be vibrant and thriving. To see those things happen, the leaders in town know they have to put in the work and find volunteers to do projects, create new revenue through what they have, and support one another along the way.

Discussion

Cultural capital is a way to understand a community's actions. It is an asset for tourism, and it is a community-development tool. Culture in the coalfields of Appalachia can be traced back to the late 1700s and through the era of the boom and bust of the extraction industry, to today. The communities in this study are Mount Pleasant and Summerset, which are located three miles away from each other. The two towns have similar social issues, and while Mount Pleasant has been showing an upward economic trend, Summerset has not been so lucky. The purpose of this study was to investigate the two communities' culture and compare the towns in terms of operationalization of their cultural capital.

First research objective: Identify how the two communities identify their cultural capital.

Theme one and theme two both showed the ways in which each community identified its culture and cultural capital. In Mount Pleasant, many leaders pinpointed safety, slow pace, and

quietness to be some of their most valued qualities of their community. Appalachian towns have always been somewhat isolated and insulated. This has created a community culture based on aspects of a “bedroom” community. The ability to raise children in a safe environment, to know who the neighbors are, and to have a casual chat in the grocery store all relate to that slow-paced, quiet culture that was formed by isolation.

A young leader in Mount Pleasant also identified the importance of traditional music to the region and the importance of kinship within the town. A civic leader also mentioned the importance of food and cultural institutions, like churches, in a small mountain community like Mount Pleasant. And an opinion leader reminded his group of how important historic museums are to the town, how the famous author who lived there shaped the cultural value of the town, and reminisced back to the important cultural institutions of the past like the burger joint and the pharmacy.

In Summerset, similar examples of cultural capital emerged throughout the first two themes. Summerset has been largely impacted by coal, more so than Mount Pleasant, which associates its cultural connection to the mountains. While they have been unable to access parts of the mountain due to company holdings, the community still holds the mountains as one of its strongest assets. These mountains are home to passionate people. Community members have an intense connection to their community. One opinion leader is distraught because she won't be able to be buried in Summerset, a thought that makes her reel. A young leader described a strong feeling of home and connectedness to his family and hometown and the safety those provide. To keep young people close to home and provide community spaces, one civil leader is trying to promote cultural arts and storytelling in the town. Another civil leader made it clear that Summerset has a strong culture of hard work and perseverance, which will help the community

survive. One opinion leader emphasized the unique and compassionate people who are willing to help one another to survive, thriving off of the culture of comradery and kinship in the town.

Second research objective: Determine the ways in which the two towns operationalize cultural capital in terms of community development.

The third theme in the analysis encompasses the two communities' acceptance of the need to pivot away from coal and toward something new. And the fourth theme describes the ways in which the two communities envision themselves transitioning their communities toward something new.

In Mount Pleasant, civic, opinion, and young leaders acknowledged the need to transition away from extraction-based economies. Instead of coal, they hope to move toward something stable and consistent with the cultural values of the area. Mount Pleasant leadership noted tourism as an avenue that they are exploring as new industry for the community. Many identified their natural resources as something that was important to their community, and can be used as an attraction to bring tourists into the area.

In addition, Mount Pleasant leadership hopes that the cultural arts and historic aspects of the town could be used to bring people to the region. In some cases, those pieces of the community are already being used to bring in revenue and attention to the town. With enough momentum, the town hopes to see positive change in the coming years with more tourism, better health of downtown businesses, a burgeoning job market, and connected citizens.

Summerset had a similar understanding of the need to transition to something that would stabilize the economy, create jobs, and create a thriving downtown. However, unlike Mount Pleasant it does not have nearly the same physical cultural capital to use to its benefit. The town leadership still believes that they must move toward tourism, especially eco-tourism. However,

without land permissions from the coal companies, the town is essentially land locked, unable to use most of its natural resources. There is a community cultural arts center that has been doing its part to connect the community and create a music venue to attract tourists. The cultural center acts as a place to share music, stories, and art. It has also acted as a gathering place for the community and youth in the area.

In discussing the first two research objectives, Summerset and Mount Pleasant were presented side by side, allowing for comparison of how they fulfilled the research objectives. A more explicit comparison finds that the two communities are not so different from one another. They are both struggling with the exit of the coal industry from the region, the out-migration of youth, and overall a poor economic situation for the town. Both have indicated the need for change, and they are moving in similar directions, toward tourism.

In Mount Pleasant, a novelist settled in the area and wrote a bestselling novel, launching a cultural tidal wave for the town. Mount Pleasant has a history in which wealthy people left tangible cultural capital in the town, which present-day residents can now use to attract people into the town. And because there is no coal on the side of the mountain Mount Pleasant is nestled into, it has land rights to those mountains, allowing for development of recreational areas.

The same is not true for Summerset. The town was originally the center community for 10 other coal camps. The mountains surrounding the town have (or had) coal in them, and they were not left with the same cultural infrastructure that Mount Pleasant has. However, what it lacks in resources it makes up in pride and hard work. Mount Pleasant has been doing better economically in the last few years. It has capitalized on its assets and moved forward to better the community. While Summerset still struggles economically, the leadership in town is doing its best to utilize its assets to improve the community.

History plays a part in the story of these two towns, and the people in Mount Pleasant and Summerset have separated themselves from each other in part because of that history. Those who lived in Mount Pleasant in the past were wealthy mine executives and managers. Wealthy citizens were able to own their houses and the land in town. In contrast those who lived in Summerset were coal mine workers and operators, living in company housing, unable to own much of anything. This has affected their access to cultural capital; Mount Pleasant has many well preserved historic buildings, sites, and museums. Mount Pleasant also has the opportunity and ability to develop the surrounding land however they wish, as the town and private citizens own the land. Summerset however, does not have those resources readily available because of their history as a coal mining town, surrounded by mountains containing coal.

The difference in history between the two towns has had lasting effects on the towns today. Leaders in Mount Pleasant and Summerset see themselves as very different from those who live in the opposite town. The luxuries the Mount Pleasant has been afforded have not spread into Summerset, and there may be some underlying resentment. However from a wider frame of reference, the two towns are really not so different. Both have passionate people who are connected to their home place, who care about the region, and want to see the area return in full. What the mountains need is the people living there to work together to lift the region up, instead of trying to work as isolated communities.

Cultural capital can be used to bring communities together within the community, and between communities. Which would be ideal between Mount Pleasant and Summerset. Both communities have cultural capital and have plans for operationalizing it. In doing so, each community is building community sentiment. Community sentiment is also inextricably linked to how each community is identifying their cultural capital. Community pride, citizen engagement,

and connectedness influence community sentiment, and were also tied to how Mount Pleasant and Summerset leadership describe their towns' culture. Community sentiment is important to the viability of a community. Mount Pleasant and Summerset leadership are using their community sentiment like a positive feedback loop. Utilizing community sentiment strengthens their cultural capital, operationalizing cultural capital in turn strengthens the feeling of community sentiment, making their towns more viable.

Limitations

The focus groups and guided interviews were comprised of community members in two communities in the Appalachian region. The results are limited in their generalizability. However, the situations that the two communities encounter are not necessarily unique to those two specific places. Therefore, this research may be interesting to other communities in similar situations.

The groups were made up of individuals who were identified as civic, opinion, and young leaders by a county Extension agent. Because of this, the researcher may have missed key players in the leadership of both communities. The researcher also struggled with attendance in the focus groups, resulting in a lower number of participants than anticipated. In addition, due to the relatively low population of young people, only one young leader from each community was available to be interviewed. This, of course, leaves out the other voices of young people who may have had interesting insight. There was also a lack of diversity in the participants, which limits experiences and insights available to the researcher.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this research was to explore how two rural Appalachian towns use their cultural capital, and understand how that impacts their communities. The first recommendation: Cooperative Extension and other public agencies should be proactive in engaging communities and their needs. Extension is not particularly active in Summerset because many people there do not think to contact their county Cooperative Extension agent to address the problems they are facing, and the extension agent isn't present in the community. Cooperative Extension is an asset to all community development and education, and agents should take initiative and be active in their county's communities. This includes conducting needs assessments and engaging with community leaders more regularly.

Additionally communities and public agencies like Cooperative Extension should be encouraged to pursue more economically viable alternatives for community development. Many small, rural towns are struggling with the exit of major industries. Communities facing these conditions may consider partnering with agencies like Cooperative Extension, to identify new directions for economic and community development. To help find new alternatives, communities are encouraged to identify and develop specific community assets. Community identified assets could be used to find new industry, business, or opportunities for the community and its residents.

Finally, communities and public agencies are encouraged to develop capable leadership. Leadership in small towns can be stagnant and at times outdated principles may remain in practice for too long. Capable leadership is essential to the viability of rural communities. Cooperative Extension would be a useful resource for leadership training and education. In addition Extension can provide opportunities and venues for young people to learn and practice

leadership skills which may encourage them to become more active in their community. A close partnership between communities and their county extension office would be beneficial.

Recommendations for Future Research

As rural Appalachian towns fight for the survival of their communities, researchers should examine the power dynamics in the communities. Small towns have a unique power structure, where the most powerful are not always in elected positions. These towns also have an ageing population. Where new leadership may be needed, those who have held office are still there, unwilling to give the reins to a younger group of people. Lack of young people in positions that influence the community means that the change that needs to happen may not. Consequently, young people are uninterested in remaining in a town that is uninterested in progressing. Thus, an exploration of power in local government and researching the nuanced power structures of small towns would be beneficial to understanding change in rural Appalachia.

Secondly, an investigation of how rural communities use visioning to map out the future of their community and how that impacts long-term community viability should be conducted. Vision is something that was mentioned frequently throughout this study. Mount Pleasant even has a strategic plan. The problem is, the strategic plan is never updated, and it is not being completed in the time that was allotted. In what ways has visioning helped this rural town? And in what ways has the community blocked progress toward change? Many rural towns have official or unofficial plans for the future of their town. Exploring how communities are communicating their vision and how they are making change would be benefit rural development efforts.

Lastly, more research on an indicator for rural community viability and how it can be used as a tool for rural communities would benefit many rural development projects. A comprehensive tool or assessment could prove to be what small towns need to identify their assets and where they need to build to be a more viable community. There is a need to explore the 4 constructs, capable leadership, community vision, sustainable infrastructure, and community sentiment, separately. There is also a need to explore the how the four constructs relate to one another, and the effects the interactions have on rural communities. The body of research in this area is small and needs to be expanded for the sake of struggling rural communities and their leadership.

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Chapter 4

Conclusion

Study Summary

The region of Appalachia contains diverse and nuanced cultures and experiences that vary from mountain to mountain, community to community. There are connecting themes throughout Appalachia: connection to the mountains and natural landscape, the appreciation for safety and a slow-paced lifestyle that come with relative isolation, home place, kinship, and the value of hard work (Billings, 2004; Gaventa, 1980).

The region has also experienced economic and social disadvantages compared to other regions of the United States. As such, Appalachia has been the platform for anti-poverty policies and development work by the United States government for over half a century (Farmbry, 2014). The policies have changed very little in the region. Historically, rural areas have received very little in the way of federal and state funding. Rural areas received \$401-\$648 less *per capita* than their metropolitan counterparts between 1994 and 2001 (Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Forty-two percent of the population of Appalachia live in rural areas, compared to 20 percent nationally (Gohl, 2013). As of 2014, the poverty rate in Appalachia is 17.2 percent compared to the national average of 15.6 percent (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2016).

Appalachia has never been an easy place to live. The mountains provide little comfort in the way of arable land or easy connection to the rest of the country. Those who lived in the mountains were driven there by the need for independence (Gaventa, 1980). Pioneers had a relationship with the land that sustained them for a better part of a century. This still resonates today. The culture of Appalachia is what has kept many communities afloat in times of economic distress (Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 1999).

This study examined the operationalization of culture in two rural Appalachian towns, using the theoretical framework provided by McMillan and Chavis (1986), psychological sense of community, and the conceptual framework of a community viability indicator (Hogg, Bush, & Rudd, unpublished). Psychological sense of community provided the scaffolding that shaped what a community is and what it feels like to be part of a community. The community viability indicator guided the research team to look into what it means to have community sentiment and what part cultural capital plays into that.

The researcher worked with a county Extension agent to locate civic leaders, opinion leaders, and young leaders in the towns of Mount Pleasant and Summerset. A qualitative study was conducted to examine how the two towns identify and operationalize their cultural capital and how it affects the town (Baxter, & Jack, 2008). The research involved focus group interviews and two singular interviews with participants. The focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were then coded and analyzed for emergent themes. Literature-based codes were also used in the categorization and thematic analysis. Each leadership group was asked about their town, cultural capital, and vision for the future of their town.

The study was guided by three research objectives:

1. Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.
2. Determine the ways in which the two towns operationalizing cultural capital in terms of community development.
3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two towns.

Findings from the study highlighted four themes for both communities.

1. Culture in the town is identified similarly between leadership groups.

2. The community promotes a strong sense of membership and identity.
3. Leaders acknowledge the need to pivot toward new ways of bringing economic prosperity to their community.
4. Use of cultural resources is prevalent and well accepted as a means of survival for the community.

While every leadership group was made up of different ages and professions, they agreed on the identification of their cultural capital as well as the ways that it can be used in the future to benefit their communities.

Discussion

Research objective one: Identify how the two communities identify their cultural capital.

Participants referred to similar cultural values that they hold dear, leading to the theme: *Culture in the town is identified similarly between leadership groups.* In Mount Pleasant, leaders pinpointed safety, slow pace, and community connectedness as some of their most-valued qualities of their community. Appalachian towns have always been somewhat isolated and insulated. This has created a culture based on aspects of a “bedroom” community, which is the idea that a community is a place where people sleep and work elsewhere. In this case, it is a colloquialism that puts emphasis on the slow pace and easygoing attitude of the community. Many leaders say that they live in the community because it is home, and they value the cultural aspects of the community that make it a good place to raise a family. How members describe their community, in this case as safe, quiet, and home, reflect their community sentiment (Blackshaw, 2010; Block, 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wall, 1999). The words the leaders in Mount Pleasant use to express what their community is like illustrate their community sentiment.

Similarly, only people in the community can identify cultural capital (Emery & Flora, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rhodes, 2004). How leaders in Mount Pleasant chose to communicate what their cultural capital is, and which parts of their community they identify as cultural assets, is entirely based on their experiences in the community. For example, a young leader said that traditional music is important to the region and the community. He also emphasized the importance of kinship within the town. A civic leader echoed the importance of kinship and added the role of food and cultural institutions like churches in a mountain community like Mount Pleasant. Further, an opinion leader reminded his group of how important historic museums are to the town, how the famous author who lived there shaped the cultural value of the town, and reminisced back to the important cultural institutions of the past. Mount Pleasant identifies the community's cultural capital and is in tune with how those cultural assets influence them personally and as a community (Flora, Flora, & Gasteyer, 2016).

In addition to the influence of culture and cultural capital in the town, community members feel a strong sense of membership and community identity. This leads to the second theme: *The community promotes a strong sense of membership and identity*. This was expressed in various ways; for example, people have returned to Mount Pleasant after having been gone for extended periods of time because they feel a strong sense of belonging. The community acts as part of members' identity. It comes through in the young leader's music, and the opinion leader who has lived in town for 81 years says that it is the only place he will ever live.

The people who live in Mount Pleasant express the psychological sense of community that McMillan and Chavis (1986) write about. They have membership and a community identity, their needs are filled by the community and other residents, and there are shared community values. Using cultural capital, such as the feeling of kinship, membership, and identity, increases

the likelihood of engagement with the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999). For example, a young leader in Mount Pleasant ran for town council because he felt like his membership in the community was strong enough that he could have a positive impact on the town and its residents.

In Summerset, similar examples of cultural capital emerged. Also resulting in the theme: *Culture in town is identified similarly between leadership groups*. Summerset has been largely impacted by coal, to a much greater extent than Mount Pleasant, which has affected its cultural connection to the mountains. While the community may not be able to utilize the land that surrounds them, the mountains still hold a cultural significance to the community. The mountains serve as a home place, and as a place many never want to leave. Many leaders described their town as safe and quiet, much like Mount Pleasant. They also described its struggle to remain a viable town and how passionate the people are to revive it. The way Summerset leadership describes the community supports the *a priori* propositions that the ways community members describe their community reflect their community sentiment and their sense of community (Blackshaw, 2010; Block, 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wall, 1999). It is clear that, while the town is struggling, its residents still have a sense of pride in their community.

Summerset also shared the second theme: *The community promotes a strong sense of membership and identity*. A young leader in Summerset described a strong feeling of home and connectedness to his family and hometown and the safety those provide. And a civil leader mentioned that to keep young people close to home and provide the community a cultural center, they are starting to promote cultural arts and storytelling in a historic building downtown. Another leader made it clear that Summerset has a strong culture of hard work and perseverance, which has helped it survive the era of coal, and it will help them survive now. One opinion

leader emphasized the unique and compassionate people who are willing to help one another to survive, thriving off of the town's culture of comradery and kinship. This supports the *a priori* proposition that the ways in which a community identifies its cultural capital is unique to that community (Emery & Flora, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rhodes, 2004). These examples of kinship and how important home is to so many people is another example of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) psychological sense of community. Through membership, community identity, shared values, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection to each other and the town, Summerset has survived difficult times in recent years.

Research objective two: Determine the ways in which the two towns operationalize cultural capital in terms of community development.

The third theme in the analysis encompasses the change that needs to happen in the community: *Leaders acknowledge the need to pivot toward new ways of bringing economic prosperity to their community.* In Mount Pleasant, civic, opinion, and young leaders acknowledged the need to transition away from extraction-based economies. Instead of coal, they hope to move toward something stable and consistent with the cultural values of the area, which leads to the fourth theme: *Use of cultural resources is prevalent and well accepted as a means of survival for the community*

Mount Pleasant leadership noted tourism as an avenue that they are exploring as new industry for the community. Many identified their natural resources as something that was important to their community and can be used as an attraction to bring tourists into the area. In addition, Mount Pleasant leadership hopes that the cultural arts and historic aspects of the town could be used to bring people to the region. In some cases, those pieces of the community are already being used to bring in revenue and attention to the town.

With enough momentum, the town hopes to see positive change in the coming years with more tourism, better health of downtown businesses, a burgeoning job market, and connected citizens. This acceptance of transitioning away from coal, and toward operationalizing cultural capital, supports the *a priori* proposition: Emphasizing culture and using cultural capital in a community can impact individuals and their engagement in the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999). Leadership hopes that residents will support downtown businesses, appreciate the community, and become more connected with what is happening in the community. By doing so, the community will not only improve its economy, but it will also have a more engaged population. This supports the *a priori* proposition that the impacts of operationalizing cultural capital and using it in community building may have beneficial effects on community sentiment, which in turn may impact the community's viability (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999). Celebrating and using cultural capital will build community pride and residents' identity with the community. Using cultural capital will also raise financial capital by improving the economy, building appreciation for natural capital by building recreation areas, and promoting eco-tourism. Using cultural capital will also improve social capital in the community by bringing groups of people together through community building.

Summerset had a similar understanding of the need to transition to something that would stabilize the economy, create jobs, and create a thriving downtown, or theme three: *Leaders acknowledge the need to pivot toward new ways of bringing economic prosperity to their community*. However unlike Mount Pleasant, they do not have nearly the amount of physical cultural capital to use. The town leadership still believes that it must move toward tourism, especially eco-tourism, which presented itself in theme four: *Use of cultural resources is*

prevalent and well accepted as a means of survival for the community. Without land permissions from the coal companies, the town is essentially land locked, unable to use most of its natural resources. There is a community cultural arts center that has been doing its part to connect the community and create a music venue to attract tourists.

The cultural center acts as a place to share music, stories, and art. It also acts as a gathering place for the community and youth in the area. The use of the cultural arts center and the involvement of community members and youth is an example of how the *a priori* proposition emphasizing culture and using cultural capital in a community can impact individuals and their engagement in the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999). Community members in Summerset attend events, play at open mics, and tell stories at this central location. Becoming involved at a community center may lead to further involvement in other activities in the community.

Summerset also has a strong volunteer base, which is grounded in the culture of hard work, kinship, and self-reliance in the town. Using cultural capital like this to motivate volunteers to work on projects that benefit the community will ensure further engagement and development. Volunteerism and involvement with cultural events support the *a priori* proposition that the impacts of operationalizing cultural capital and using it in community building may have beneficial effects on community sentiment, which in turn may impact the community's viability (Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999). The use of natural assets, the culture of hard work and kinship, and promoting the cultural arts are already accomplishments that community leaders are proud of. They hope to continue to help the town thrive.

Research objective three: Compare the differences and similarities between the two towns

Discussing the first two research objectives Summerset and Mount Pleasant were presented side by side, allowing for comparison of how they fulfilled the research objectives and supported *a priori* propositions based in the literature. A more explicit comparison finds that the two communities are not drastically different from each other. They both struggle with the exit of the coal industry from the region, the out-migration of youth, and an overall poor economic situation. Both communities have indicated the need for change, and they are moving in similar directions, toward tourism. Both towns wish to utilize their cultural capital to create financial capital, promote their natural capital, and cultivate ways to engage their citizens in the change.

A novelist settled in the Mount Pleasant area and wrote a bestselling novel, which launched a cultural tidal wave on the town. Mount Pleasant has a history in which wealthy people left tangible cultural capital in the town, which present-day residents can now use as a way to attract people into the town. And because there is no coal on the side of the mountain Mount Pleasant is nestled in, it has land rights to the land in the mountains, allowing for development of recreational areas.

The situation in Summerset differs in some ways from that in Mount Pleasant. The town was originally the center community for 10 other coal camps, the mountains surrounding the town have coal in them, and they were not left with the same cultural infrastructure that Mount Pleasant has. However, what they lack in resources they make up in pride and hard work. Mount Pleasant has been doing better economically in the last few years. The community has capitalized on its cultural assets and moved forward to better the community. While Summerset still struggles economically, the leadership in town is doing its best to utilize cultural assets to improve the community as well.

History plays a part in the story of these two towns, and the people in Mount Pleasant and Summerset have separated themselves from each other in part because of that history. However, the two towns are really not so different. Both have passionate citizens who are connected to their home place, who care about the region, and want to see the area return in full.

Recommendations for Practice

This research explored how two rural Appalachian towns use their cultural capital, and created an understanding of how that impacts their communities. The first recommendation for rural communities is: Cooperative Extension and other public agencies should proactively engage communities and their needs. Cooperative Extension is an asset to all community development and education, and agents should take initiative and be involved in their county's communities. Conducting needs assessments and engaging with community leaders more regularly would lead to a stronger relationship between extension agents and community leadership.

Additionally communities and public agencies should pursue more economically viable alternatives for community development. Many small, rural towns are struggling with the exit of major industries. Communities facing these conditions may consider partnering with agencies like Cooperative Extension, to identify new directions for economic and community development. To help find new alternatives, communities are encouraged to identify and develop specific community assets. Community identified assets could be used to find new industry, business, or opportunities for the community and its residents.

Finally, communities and public agencies are encouraged to develop capable leadership. Leadership in small towns can be stagnant and at times outdated principles may remain in practice for too long. Capable leadership is essential to the viability of rural communities.

Cooperative Extension would be a useful resource for leadership training and education. In addition Extension can provide opportunities and venues for young people to learn and practice leadership skills which may encourage them to become more active in their community. A close partnership between communities and their county extension office would be beneficial.

Recommendations for Future Research

As rural Appalachian towns fight for the survival of their communities, researchers should examine the power dynamics in the communities. Small towns have a unique power structure, where the most powerful are not always in elected positions. These towns also have an ageing population. Where new leadership may be needed, those who have held office are still there, unwilling to give the reins to a younger group of people. An exploration of power in local government and researching the nuanced power structures of small towns would be beneficial to understanding change in rural Appalachia.

Secondly, an investigation of how rural communities use visioning to map out the future of their community and how that impacts long-term community viability should be conducted. Vision is something that was mentioned frequently throughout this study. Many rural towns have official or unofficial plans for the future of their town. Exploring how communities are communicating their vision and how they are making change would be benefit rural development efforts.

Lastly, more research on an indicator for rural community viability and how it can be used as a tool for rural communities would benefit many rural development projects. A comprehensive tool or assessment could prove to be what small towns need to identify their assets and where they need to build to be a more viable community. There is a need to explore the 4 constructs, capable leadership, community vision, sustainable infrastructure, and

community sentiment, separately. There is a need to explore the how the four constructs relate to one another, and the effects the interactions have on rural communities. The body of research in this area is small and needs to be expanded for the sake of struggling rural communities and their leadership.

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Appendix A
A Priori Table

Civic Leaders

Focus Group Question	Research Question	Proposition	Related Literature
Please share how you would describe your community.	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	How community members describe their community reflects their community sentiment and their sense of community.	Blackshaw, 2010; Block, 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wall, 1999
How would you identify your community's cultural capital?	RQ1. Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.	How culture and cultural capital is identified is unique to each community and cannot be identified by a non-community member.	Emery & Flora, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rhodes, 2004
In what ways does your community use this cultural capital?	RQ2. Determine the ways in which the communities are operationalizing their cultural capital.	There are many ways to use cultural capital in a community that will impact the community.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Rhodes, 2004
In what ways do you engage with your community's culture as a leader in your community?	RQ2. Determine the ways in which the communities are operationalizing their cultural capital.	Community leaders will engage with cultural capital on a personal level as well as an organizational level.	Bonjean & Olson, 1964; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Ricketts & Place, 2009
What impact does culture have on you, personally or professionally?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Emphasizing culture and using cultural capital in a community can impact individuals and their engagement in the community.	McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999

Civic Leaders

Focus Group Question	Research Question	Proposition	Related Literature
What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital having?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Impacts of operationalizing cultural capital and using it in community building may have beneficial effects on community sentiment, which in turn may impact the community's viability.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999

Young Leaders

Focus Group Questions	Research Questions	Proposition	Related literature
Please share how you would describe your community.	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	How community members describe their community reflects their community sentiment and their sense of community.	Blackshaw, 2010; Block, 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wall, 1999
How would you identify your community's cultural capital?	RQ1. Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.	How culture and cultural capital is identified is unique to each community and cannot be identified by a non-community member.	Emery & Flora, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rhodes, 2004
In what ways did/do you engage with your community's culture growing up?	RQ2. Determine the ways in which the communities are operationalizing their cultural capital.	Children growing up in these communities will have a unique perspective on how the younger members are engaging with the community.	Ley, Nelson, & Belyukova, 1996; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Ricketts & Place, 2009

Young Leaders

Focus Group Questions	Research Questions	Proposition	Related literature
What impact does culture have on you?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Emphasizing culture and using cultural capital in a community can impact individuals and their engagement in the community.	McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999
What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital having?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Impacts of operationalizing cultural capital and using it in community building may have beneficial effects on community sentiment, which in turn may impact the community's viability.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999
In what ways has your community and the culture of your community impacted your plans for the future?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	How a community involves its youth and what opportunities are afforded them may impact the aspiration of the community's youth.	Ley, Nelson, & Beltyukova, 1996; Ricketts & Place, 2009

Opinion Leaders

Focus Group Question	Research Question	Proposition	Related Literature
Please share how you would describe your community.	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	How community members describe their community reflects their community sentiment and their sense of community.	Blackshaw, 2010; Block, 2009; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Wall, 1999

Opinion Leaders

Focus Group Question	Research Question	Proposition	Related Literature
How would you identify your community's cultural capital?	RQ1. Determine how the two communities identify their cultural capital.	How culture and cultural capital is identified is unique to each community and cannot be identified by a non-community member.	Emery & Flora, 2006; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rhodes, 2004
In what ways does your community use this cultural capital?	RQ2. Determine the ways in which the communities are operationalizing their cultural capital.	There are many ways to use cultural capital in a community that will impact the community.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Rhodes, 2004
In what ways do you engage with your community's culture? Have you always engaged with your community's culture?	RQ2. Determine the ways in which the communities are operationalizing their cultural capital.	Opinion Leaders are the first to accept new innovation so how they engage with their community may change over time. And they may be the first to embrace new cultural activities or new iterations of cultural activities.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Rogers, 2008
What impact does culture have on you?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Emphasizing culture and using cultural capital in a community can impact individuals and their engagement in the community.	McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999
What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital having?	RQ3. Compare the differences and similarities between the two communities.	Impacts of operationalizing cultural capital and using it in community building may have beneficial effects on community sentiment, which in turn may impact the community's viability.	Phillips & Shockley, 2010; Stephenson & Tate, 2015; Wall, 1999

Appendix B
Internal Review Board Letter of Approval

Found on next page.

Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board

North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech 300 Turner Street NW

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959

email irb@vt.eduwebsite <http://www.irb.vt.edu>**FROM:** Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Influence of Cultural Capital in Two Rural Appalachian Towns: A Comparative Case Study**IRB NUMBER:** 16-481

Effective May 5, 2016, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:**Approved As:** Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**Protocol Approval Date:** May 5, 2016**Protocol Expiration Date:** May 4, 2017**Continuing Review Due Date*:** April 20, 2017

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required

Invent the Future

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

Appendix C
Recruitment Material

Hello,

I am conducting a study for my master's research and I would like to ask you to consider being part of a focus group (small discussion group). Because you are a community member of the town I would like to hear about your experiences living there. I am interested in rural Appalachian towns and their use of culture and traditions in their communities. I would like to spend about 1 hour and 15 minutes with you in a small group setting, discussing your experiences and insights about the culture and traditions in your community. We will meet on a weekday evening in late May or early June.

This is entirely optional, and any information you choose to share with me will be confidential, and no identifying personal information will be included in any publications or reports. The focus groups will be audio recorded. Please know that you have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time, in which case all records of your participation would be destroyed.

Your experiences are important to me and I hope that you will agree to be part of this study.

If you would like to be a part of this study, please email me at danaeh2@vt.edu, or give me a call at 585-469-5994

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Dana

Appendix D
Informed Consent Form

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of the project: Influence of Cultural Capital in Two Rural Appalachian Towns:
A Comparative Case Study

Investigator(s): Dana Hogg danaeh2@vt.edu 585-469-5994
 Dr. Rick Rudd rrudd@vt.edu 540-231-6836

You have been asked to participate in this research study as a community member. Please read this form carefully and do not hesitate ask any questions you may have before your participation in this study. Your experiences in your community will provide a valuable understanding of how culture, heritage, and traditions are used, and the impact it has on your town.

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this study is to learn how two towns use heritage, traditions, and culture in their community. This study is part of my master's thesis, and the results may be published.

II. Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be part of a focus group (small discussion group). The focus group will meet for about 60 to 90 minutes. The discussion will be audio recorded, transcribed (written out). Notes will be taken by the researcher. After the focus group audio is transcribed, all audio files will be destroyed.

III. Risks

Because there are multiple people in a focus group, we cannot guarantee confidentiality within the group. Please respect the privacy of the other participants and do not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Otherwise, there is minimal risk in participating in this study.

IV. Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study, and no promise or of benefits will be made to encourage your participation. The stories and experiences you share may help the Appalachian region.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

At no time will the researcher release your identity or the identities of anyone you mention. In the final report pseudonyms (false names) will be given to all participants, and other individuals mentioned. The researcher does have the right to break confidentiality if an instance of abuse or threat to a participant’s self or others is revealed in the interview. Under no other circumstance will confidentiality be broken.

VI. Compensation

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study. If you would like a copy of the finished report the researcher will give one to you.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate. If you choose to withdraw from this study, any information and data that has been collected will be destroyed.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study’s conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991

IX. Subject’s Consent

I have read the consent form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered and hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____

Subject Signature

Subject printed name

Appendix E

Interview Schedule

Civic Leader Focus Group Guideline

1. Please share how you would describe your town.
 - a. What are its main attributes?
 - b. In what ways is it doing well or not doing well

2. How would you identify you community's cultural capital?
 - a. Cultural capital definition: the way a community cultivates creativity, influence, and innovation.
 - b. What are some specific examples of culture in your community?
 - c. In what ways would you say your cultural capital is unique in comparison to other communities?

3. In what ways does your community use this cultural capital?
 - a. Please describe in detail the different uses.
 - b. What is the purpose of using cultural capital in this way?

4. In what ways do you engage with your community's cultural capital as a community leader/organizer?
 - a. Please describe how the use of culture in the community begins and continues.
 - b. Are cultural events planned by large groups or singular people?
 - c. Besides the large events, what are ways in which cultural capital is used in your day to day leadership?

5. What impact does the culture of your community have on you personally?
 - a. In what ways are you personally engaged with the cultural capital in your community?
 - b. In what ways do you personally contribute to the cultural capital in your community?

6. What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital as having?
 - a. Specifically, what do you think cultural capital adds to your community?
 - b. What role do you think culture plays in your community?
 - c. Do you think your community does better socially or economically because of the use of cultural capital?

7. What is your vision for your community's future?
 - a. Vision could be hopes or plans, or opportunities you hope to see.

Young Adult (18-25) Group Guideline

1. Please share how you would describe your town.
 - a. What are its main attributes?
 - b. In what ways is it doing well or not doing well.
2. How would you identify you community's cultural capital?
 - a. Cultural capital definition: the way a community cultivates creativity, influence, and innovation.
 - b. What are some specific examples of culture in your community?
 - c. In what ways would you say your cultural capital is unique in comparison to other communities?
3. In what ways does your community use this cultural capital?
 - a. Please describe in detail the different uses.
 - b. What do you perceive as the purpose of using cultural capital in this way?
4. In what ways do you engage with your community's cultural capital as a young adult in the community?
 - a. What was your experience growing up in this community in terms of engaging with cultural capital?
 - b. Has that changed as you have grown up?
5. What impact does this culture/cultural capital have on you?
 - a. In what ways are you personally engaged with the cultural capital in your community?
 - b. In what ways do you personally contribute to the cultural capital in your community?
6. What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital as having?
 - a. Specifically, what do you think cultural capital adds to your community?
 - b. What role do you think culture plays in your community?
 - c. Do you think your community does better socially or economically because of the use of cultural capital?
7. In what ways has your community and the culture of your community impacted your plans for the future?
 - a. Do you plan to stay in the area?
 - i. Or return if you leave?
 - b. What do you think you will bring with you (mentally, emotionally, or physically) if you leave your community?
 - i. Does it represent your community and its culture?

8. What is your vision for your community's future?
 - a. Vision could be hopes or plans, or opportunities you hope to see.

Opinion Leader Group Guidelines

1. Please share how you would describe your town.
 - a. What are its main attributes?
 - b. In what ways is it doing well or not doing well.
2. How would you identify you community's cultural capital?
 - a. Cultural capital definition: the way a community cultivates creativity, influence, and innovation.
 - b. What are some specific examples of culture in your community?
 - c. In what ways would you say your cultural capital is unique in comparison to other communities?
3. In what ways does your community use this cultural capital?
 - a. Please describe in detail the different uses.
 - b. What is the purpose of using cultural capital in this way?
 - c. Historically, in what ways has the community utilized cultural capital?
4. In what ways do you engage with your community's cultural capital as a community member
 - a. Please describe the ways you have engaged with your community's cultural capital throughout the stages of your life (spent here)?
 - i. In what ways has it changed?
 - b. How do you engage with cultural capital now?
5. What impact does the culture of your community have on you personally?
 - a. In what ways do you personally contribute to the cultural capital in your community?
6. What impacts on your community do you perceive cultural capital as having?
 - a. Specifically, what do you think cultural capital adds to your community?
 - b. What role do you think culture plays in your community?
 - c. Do you think your community does better socially or economically because of the use of cultural capital?
7. What is your vision for your community's future?
 - a. Vision could be hopes or plans, or opportunities you hope to see.