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Abstract

In the 1930s, while in the midst of a severe economic depression, life in the rural mountains of Virginia was far removed from events in more populated and progressive areas of the United States. While much of the Commonwealth of Virginia had spent the approximately fifty years following the Civil War focused on re-building and establishing new economic endeavors in the state, in the mountains of Virginia much of the population continued to work as farmers and loggers, unaware of the modern adaptations occurring beyond their borders. As the U.S. looked for ways to put people back to work and create a sense of unity and pride, the concept of a new national park was introduced and various locations were suggested. The decision to create a new park close to the nation’s capital created the opportunity for an intersection of the mountain culture and outside modern ideals. As the Commonwealth and federal government worked with developers to build the new Park, those inhabiting the mountain lands were forced to uproot themselves and resettle in the “lowlands”. An examination of what knowledge and information, obtained in formal and informal ways, provided the means for the mountain people of Greene County, Virginia to evolve from isolated mountaineers to residents of the lowlands of rural Virginia.

This narrative inquiry, framed by conflict theory, and collected as individual interviews to gather oral histories, examination of personal correspondence, and listening to additional interviews gathered by other researchers, tells the story of the Greene County mountain people and their learning experiences. From lessons taught by mission school teachers, to agricultural and medical knowledge passed down from older generation to young, the stories analyzed and related in this research explain the lives of the mountain people and show the importance they placed on both literacy gained in formal schooling and survival skills such as planting and food
preservation taught by parent and grandparents. That importance, related in almost every field observation, is combined with obstacles that still exist between the mountain people and those in positions of authority, where an air of unawareness about the mountain culture still leads to policy implementation that is not effective for the County’s population. This research highlights some of those obstacles and seeks to provide insights to help resolve the conflict and improve educational opportunities for all of the County’s population. As one interview subject told me her father used to say, “Planting a garden is easy, gettin’ it to grow is the hard part.” The findings and conclusions from this research outline some potential ways of helping to allow the garden to grow.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The following took place in a small county library when I was 12 years old:

Appalachian Father: “Could you please help us? My son has a report due for school and we need some help finding the books he needs.”

Librarian (to this day I remember the displeased look she had): “It is not my job to do your son’s homework. If he needs books to do his work, YOU help him find them.”

Appalachian Mother (the Father had turned without a word and left the building): “We want to help him but we can’t. We don’t read. We don’t know how to read.”

After that exchange, my Mother stepped in and helped the family. I found myself thinking we could teach the parents to read and solve the problem. However I became aware that this was a problem, not just around this one family, but around an entire cultural group in my home community, known as the “mountain people”. Understanding the mountain people, the culture in which they exist, and how that culture has adapted even while being marginalized has emerged as a driving force in my life.

Statement of the Problem

Being immersed in the mountain peoples’ community, simply by virtue of my residence has provided me a unique understanding of how they live on a daily basis. Interacting with the mountain people, combined with an extensive background in the education field, has granted me the ability to see why blanket educational policies, especially those policies that are made by legislatures far more knowledgeable about urban environments then rural ones, do not necessarily have a positive impact on the educational aspects of all of the schools the policy is
established to include. By gaining a deeper insight into the mountain peoples’ beliefs and mindsets, especially as they relate to education, I will position myself to be a translator between the policymakers and the population being impacted by the policy.

If Carol Dweck’s (2010) research were to be applied to the mountain people of Greene County, the vast majority of the population would likely be classified as fixed mindset learners. The literature reviewed for this research describes a population of people who had limited educational opportunities. While there were schools established in the mountain areas, many mountain children missed school due to work on the family farms and businesses. In addition, information illuminated by Shifflett will show a school environment that was not welcoming or inclusive of the mountain children. Researching the impact of resettlement on the mountain people, and how education impacted the resettlement experience will provide invaluable information to educational administrators in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Educational leaders need to always understand the people and the cultures they are educating, in order to maximize the learning experience for every person and this research will fill gaps in the available knowledge about the mountain people.

**Purpose of the Research**

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the impact that losing their land and being resettled has had on the older mountain people and their sons and daughters, as well as to better understand how that impact affected them culturally. In addition to understanding the impact of resettlement, this research seeks to uncover what type of value the mountain people place on formal and informal education. Gaining clarity on the mountain peoples’ feelings about education and learning will grant me the ability to advise educational leaders on strategies to improve educational offerings and knowledge attainment within the community of the mountain
people of Greene County Virginia. To gain this understanding, I will determine how the Greene County mountain people describe losing their land and how that experience shaped their continued existence. These questions should allow for a greater understanding of how to capture existing knowledge and cultural history before it disappears forever.

**Research Questions**

My research questions are:

1. What kind of knowledge allowed the mountain people of Greene County Virginia to survive being relocated from their land between 1935 and 1937?
2. What kind of value, if any, do the mountain people place on “scholarly” or formal learning?
3. What kind of value, if any, do the mountain people place on informal learning?
4. What knowledge, if any, do the mountain people consider “lost” compared to what knowledge they have kept and passed down to younger generations?

**Significance of the Study**

When I settled on my research topic, I truly believed that the individual stories of the people who were relocated to build the Shenandoah National Park were important and valuable, but probably only applicable or interesting to a small population in rural Virginia. I understood that the work would have impact on some rural counties in Virginia, but it felt to me that the research I was conducting may only contribute value within the realm of the Commonwealth of Virginia. However, I have come to realize that the study and the research has a far greater significance and potential impact then I originally believed. In my time at Penn State, I have
come to attain a deeper understanding of marginalized populations, as well as deeply studying the concepts embodied by place based education. I realized that incidents experienced by the mountain people in Greene County, Virginia were hauntingly similar to incidents experienced by the Native Americans, as evidenced by LaDuke’s (1999) writing about the impact of the Native American tribes being forced to move off “their” lands, “…our leadership and direction emerge from the land up” (p.4). In the same vein, according to Ng (2002), Japanese-Americans raised questions about the legality of their interment, during World War II

…the US Constitution guarantees citizen and noncitizens certain equal rights under its laws. To have those laws apply only to people of Japanese ancestry, whether citizen or not, was in violation of their being treated equally in comparison with the rest of the population in the country (2002, pp. 82-83).

The resettlement and relocation experienced by both the Native Americans and the Japanese Americans indicate that similar incidents are experienced by many other small and marginalized populations while other US citizens are unaware of the life experiences of their neighbors.

It was not until I was defending my dissertation proposal that the depth of the significance of this study was realized. My dissertation committee is comprised of brilliant educators and scholars and yet all of them were unaware of the experiences that the mountain people lived while the Park was being constructed. One committee member commented that this was a vital but little known piece of American history that many citizens were completely unaware of.

This research was always significant to me because the evictions and resettlements happened to my friends and neighbors, and their descendants are people I grew up with, so the
information was personal. The research is significant to the scholarly community because it contributes to the knowledge of the impact of policy and government on all sorts of people, as well as adding a wealth of information to the education sector about extending educational opportunities to marginalized populations. Finally, this research is significant because the American people are often wont to overlook the impact of leadership decisions on individuals, thinking instead that if the decisions are best for the greater good, then it is the correct decision. In 2016, as we watch the politicians in the United States making campaign promises that seem very much like history has the opportunity to repeat itself in horrible ways, this research adds significance to the academic and general population’s knowledge base, sharing the Greene County mountain peoples’ histories and stories, in the hopes that their history is not repeated with another marginalized population.

**Definition of Terms**

1. Informal Learning—learning that occurs outside of the traditional classroom environment; perhaps a skill taught from father to son (i.e.—how to ride a bike) or skills learned in a club environment (i.e.—learning how to care for livestock in a 4H club)

2. Formal Learning—learning that occurs in a formal environment following a standard curriculum (i.e.—a high school earth sciences class)

3. Mountain People—the people who inhabited the lands of the Blue Ridge Mountains in rural Virginia (Note: many refer to this group as “Appalachian” people but that is not a correct designation as the Appalachian Resource Council only applied the label of Appalachian to a very few counties in Virginia)

4. Moonshine—distilled grain alcohol, made illegally on stills, often a large source of a mountain family’s income

5. Mission Schools—schools established by the Episcopal and Brethren churches to provide formal learning opportunities in rural areas. In this research, the mission schools were
the only educational endeavor known to the Virginia mountain people prior to their resettlement

6. Industrial Schools—schools that taught skills like sewing, food preservation, logging, and agriculture; known today as more vocational schools

7. Resettlement—the process by which the mountain people were evicted from their land and moved to new cabins and land in the lower land of Greene County and other mountain counties of Virginia

8. Eviction—the process of being forcibly removed from a property

9. Improvements—additions and buildings erected on land (fences, barns, wells, and outbuildings would all be considered improvements)

10. Barking Trees—a procedure in logging where bark was removed from, typically, chestnut trees. The bark was used in some products, while the remaining wood could be used in carpentry projects and for things like roof shingles

11. Relocation—moving from one place to another, in this case, moving from one parcel of land and home to another

12. Rosebrook—the resettlement village in Greene County, Virginia, today a successful bed and breakfast and outside event venue

13. Blue Ridge School—currently, a private, all-male exclusive school in Greene County, Virginia, attended by the sons of some of society’s elite and wealthy members. Blue Ridge School was the site of one of the original industrial schools in the county and is located in Dyke, Virginia

14. Hollows/Gaps—geographically created spaces between and within mountains that form small valleys and pockets of land. Within Greene County and the neighboring counties, there exist countless gaps and hollows and many of them were legal addresses for the mountain people (i.e.—I was born in Simmons Gap or Mutton Hollow). Hollow is sometimes pronounced “hollar” by some mountain residents
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study was entered into with certain assumptions and as the research was conducted, many limitations became evident. As the research progressed, I found myself becoming more aware of the delimitations involved in the study as well. I entered into this study believing I was heading towards a destination, that at some point the research would conclude and I would reach a finish line. Now, as I write my findings and explain my research thus far, I realize this research is a journey, with views and scenery that need to be appreciated and the end of the journey may never be reached. This scope of this research was also defined, to some degree, by the limitations and delimitations I encountered and utilized as I framed the research. Chapter 3 will have more detail about the process I used to determine what delimiters I needed to employ as well as the limitations I experienced that created parameters for the research.

Study Assumptions

In the beginning of this research undertaking, I expected that I would hear the life stories of individuals and that the stories would have similar themes. I held the naïve assumption that people who lived the same experience would have the same types of stories. I assumed that land records would clearly indicate property ownership. I assumed that people would be glad to have transparency and clarity provided to historical events. Each of those very specific assumptions is an example of a general theme that I found being wound through the oral histories and stories I collected. The theme is simple, many of the assumptions I had made were false. I assumed I would conduct research and find answers. Instead, as Chapter 4 will show, I discovered information that led to many more questions to be answered. While I was able to glean information that answered my original research questions, I also discovered areas where I have many new questions. My assumption that this research would be started, finished, documented,
and presented to my committee tied with a beautiful bow was mistaken. Creswell (2007), cites other researches, including Edel (1984) when he writes:

It takes a keen eye to identify in the source material gathered the particular stories that capture the individual’s experiences. As Edel (1984) comments, it is important to uncover the “figure under the carpet” that explains the multilayered context of a life (p.57)

Creswell’s description perfectly describes the assumption that I found being dispelled, I assumed I would hear a person’s story and it would be linear and clear, Instead, the pieces that construct a “multilayered context of a life” are the bulk of my field research and I found that I needed to unpeel the layers to understand the experience.

Throughout the research and dissertation process I found that my assumptions changed, my scope needed to be adjusted, and I had to modify my research plan on more than one occasion. The first time I encountered an issue that caused me to make modifications I felt like it was a failing on the part of my original research design. The longer I conducted my research, the more I can to understand that collecting data from human participants is a fluid process and one must be flexible in order to be prepared for circumstances that will cause the research methodology to need adaptation.

**Background of the Problem**

Understanding the background of the problems addressed in this study requires an understanding of how the Shenandoah National Park came to be created. Furthermore, just as the mountains have stood tall for millions of years, so to have individuals inhabited Park lands for centuries. Lambert, writing in detail about the history of the lands that became the Park explains about the Native American people that were living on the mountain lands, even as the
first colonists and explorers crossed the peaks to start the trek further west. The mountains in
Greene County, Virginia are rich with the history of people and animals who inhabited the land
long before anyone ever considered creating a national park.

Creating the Shenandoah National Park

Many of the mountain people originally lived in the Commonwealth of Virginia and
settled onto the land starting in the 1700s and had created an existence based primarily in
farming and hunting. These farms stayed in a particular family for generations. However, in
many cases the original deeds of the land did not exist because at the time of the settlement and
creation of farms, there was not a “county seat” or established government with which to settle
claims. Instead, the land was cleared, worked, and passed down between family members in a
pattern that had existed for hundreds of years. For the mountain people this was a trend that
seemed to be harmonious until the 1920s when the United States government determined they
had other uses for the land in the mountains. Horning (2007) describes the transformation of the
mountain land from privately owned parcels to one large national park:

In the 1930s, Shenandoah National Park was pieced together from over 3,000 individual tracts of
land, purchased or condemned by the Commonwealth of Virginia and presented to the Federal
Government. In the process, at least 500 families -described as "almost completely cut off from
the current of American life" were displaced in what was considered by some to be an
humanitarian act (p.1)

While Horning paints a brief picture of the families who owned the land that became the
Shenandoah National Park, the stories of the mountain people are much more detailed and
complicated than the original one line description provided. In fact, Powell portrays the variety
and diversity of the mountain families that inhabited the land that became the Shenandoah National Park. Powell (2007) explains the creation of the Shenandoah National Park,

In the early 1930s, the Commonwealth of Virginia condemned the homes of and displaced some five hundred families from eight counties (Albemarle, Augusta, Greene, Madison, Page, Rappahannock, Rockingham, and Warren) so that the federal government might form a national park in the eastern United States and near the nation’s capital. The families living in the mountains varied in their socioeconomic standing: some were wealthy orchard owners, while others were small farm owners, tenant farmers, or sharecroppers (p.1)

Figure 1 shown below is a map of Greene County, Virginia taken before the Shenandoah National Park was built. The map details each parcel of land, indicating the owner of the land, as recorded in the Land Ownership Records in the Greene County Courthouse, as well as how many acres of land were included in each plat. Further discussion will be addressed in the literature review chapter of this dissertation but this map is a direct contradiction of the records and recollections of George Freeman Pollock, who worked with the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States government to have the Virginia lands selected as the location of the new federal park. This map also supports Powell’s findings about the various socioeconomic statuses that were held by the mountain people, as some of the plats consisted of hundreds of acres and some were only a few acres large. My research uncovered a vast array of types of housing on the mountain lands, ranging from one room shacks to two story homes with many rooms and tin roofs covered in shingles. In short, there were all sorts and conditions of residences located on the mountain lands that became the Shenandoah National Park.
Eisenfeld (2014) elaborates on the roles the Commonwealth and federal government respectively held during the creation of the Park:

In May 1926 Congress passed and President Calvin Coolidge signed a bill to authorize the secretary of the interior to accept a minimum of 250,000 acres and a maximum of 521,000 acres for Shenandoah National Park in Virginia…
There was one condition in the bill: the federal government would buy no land. The Commonwealth of Virginia would have to gain titles from the landowners-the nameless and faceless mountaineers whom no one could envision protesting, whom no one could envision suing in a court of law, whom no one could envision refusing to leave what many outsiders considered their godforsaken, hardscrabble homes-then donate the deeds to the federal government. Though it could not know about the protracted battle that would ensue, ending with arrests and the Civilian Conservation Corps boys torching families’ homes-‘the matter of moving the people out will take care of itself,’ one park promoter had said-Uncle Sam washed its hands of the dirty work (p.34)

![Swift Run Gap Entrance to the Shenandoah National Park](image)

**Figure 2: Swift Run Gap Entrance to the Shenandoah National Park Greene County, Virginia**

**Displacing the Mountain People**

Given the federal government’s condition that they would buy no property, the Commonwealth of Virginia had to determine a way to gain access to the land without incurring expenses. With few options, the Commonwealth’s legislators determined that the best course of
action would be to condemn all of the properties located in the tract of land they desired for the new national park. The condemnation of the working land and the forced removal and displacement of so many families created a tension between the mountain people and the United States government that, in fact, continues, in many cases to the present day. According to the National Park Service, Sherman and Henry wrote the book *Hollow Folk* in 1933. In *Hollow Folk*, the authors describe their findings during their explorations of the lands that became the Shenandoah National Park, “families of unlettered folk, of almost pure Anglo-Saxon stock, sheltered in tiny, mud-plastered log cabins and supported by a primitive agriculture.” Residents had "no community government, no organized religion, little social organization wider than that of the family and clan, and only traces of organized industry." They were "not of the 20th century." While some of these claims were later found to only apply to some of the properties and people, the publication helped support the Commonwealth of Virginia’s position that the lands that would become the new park were worthy of condemnation. Regardless of the questionable validity of Sherman and Henry’s work and other writers of the time, their work was accepted as fact by many located outside the immediate vicinity of the Virginia mountains, leading to a disparity between the mountain residents and the government officials, both from the Commonwealth and the federal governments. This disparity eventually became a state of anger and distrust on the part of many of the mountain people that has become ingrained in the culture of the people and exists even to the present day.

**A Sense of Distrust**

Provence (2011) cites the work of Horning as she explains some of the basis for the level of distrust, “It was a series of sociological studies imposing Dogpatch history on the Shenandoah National Park region, that succeeded in fostering widespread support for the removal and
effective disenfranchising of residents.” This portrayal of the mountain people as “Dogpatch”, or “uneducated” and “hillbilly” citizens and the propaganda that was told to the general public as evidence of the need to “civilize” the mountain inhabitants laid the foundation for generations of resentment and distrust. There are always multiple versions of a story that one encounters on the path to the truth, and my findings do support the concept that some of the mountain people never achieved even a basic level of literacy. However, the Episcopal church had established mission schools in the mountain regions, so there was some educational activity occurring in the mountains of Greene County prior to the creation of the Park. In addition, Reeder and Reeder (1991), sharply contrast the Dogpatch description, documenting the Hull School:

It was a small building, but it was right lively,” remembered Bessie Compton Woodward. “We had all grades, from the ABCs to American history, and anywhere from 12 to 20 students. We each had a speller, a dictionary, a reader, and geography and arithmetic books. There was no fussin’ or fightin’ or carryin’ on at school in those days. If you didn’t behave, the teacher would punish you by making you stand on one foot on a stick of wood, or you’d have to stand in the corner. Then the kids would tease you about that at recess. And your parents’ motto was, “If you’re not going to learn, you might as well stay home and work” (p. 101).

Beyond the educational presence, Reeder and Reeder (1978) further dispel the Dogpatch notion, addressing the question of how civilized the mountain people were, by citing the work of Mozelle Cowden, “Several times I’ve met a problem too big for me to handle without assistance and never has one of our mountain people turned away without offering to help and making the offer good….” (p.24). Yet Williamson and Arnold (1994) explain in Interviewing Appalachia, how some of the mountain people take a different approach to the “hillbilly” stereotype:
Many of the voices gathered here refer to themselves as “hillbillies”; and all are aware of the mass-culture American perception that sweeps them up into a collective identity. Indeed many of them publicly contribute to the shaping of that identity through their writings, their films, their music, and their politics. At the heart of many of these presentations is the individual negotiation with perception and reality, the hillbilly’s knowledge held out to—or confronting—the doubting public. Their voices are various but sharp to answer, often prescient, often prophetic (pp.x-xi).

Throughout my research, I discovered artifacts that illustrate a civilized and educational presence within the community of mountain people, as shown in Figure 3, which is a primer used in the mission schools.

Figure 3: Primer from Greene County Episcopal Mission School

I also heard repeated memories of people making and selling moonshine, illegal, bootleg whiskey, which was related to me as a primary source of income for many mountain families.

Conclusion
Just as the types of residences located on the mountain lands varied in their states and conditions, so too did the morals and ethics of the mountain people vary. Some were literate and law-abiding citizens, while others lived in a state of disarray and chaos. My research process leads me to believe that the emphasis on the latter by the federal and Commonwealth governments has contributed to the air of distrust held by the mountain residents. However, there are many gaps, even within the archives of the Shenandoah National Park itself, leading to areas of uncertainty and a lack of clarity when it comes to understanding the events leading to the resettlement of the mountain people. However, as I collected these oral histories, and explored the letters, audio interviews and documentation surrounding the evictions and resettlement of the mountain people of Greene County, Virginia, I discovered more educational experiences and a greater variety of educational opportunities than I expected. I also discovered that the homes and properties that were provided as new residences for those that were displaced were, in many cases, not equivalent to the properties that people were forced to vacate. In multiple cases, I heard that the resettlement properties did not contain enough space for people to plant gardens, which required a people who subsisted on hunting and farming to adjust their ways of life. One of my study participants said her father often said, “Planting a garden is easy, getting it to grow is the hard part”. This sentiment, in many ways, could be the overarching theme of this research.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter of the dissertation will focus on an analysis of the existing literature about the mountain population of Virginia and the critical issues surrounding the resettlement of the mountain people from their land in order to create the Shenandoah National Park. In addition, this chapter will discuss the two distinct types of educational opportunities and teachers that were afforded to the mountain people after their resettlement, both the traditional academic offerings of math, language arts, history, etc, and the industrial schools and teachers that focused on improving livelihoods by teaching the mountain people skills such as food preservation, fiber working, and other capabilities. This chapter explores the issues that were created for the mountain people when they were resettled, examines the strategies the mountain people employed to survive resettling, and considers the educational experiences the mountain children lived both before and after resettlement. In addition, this chapter will explore the conflicts and political aspects that the mountain people, the Commonwealth of Virginia’s government, and the federal government endured in the building of the Shenandoah National Park.

Existing Literature

The existing literature about the mountain people of rural Virginia is as vast as the types of people themselves. The literature review included exploring literature and stories of the mountain people that extended beyond Greene County, Virginia because, as the research progressed, one of the discoveries made was that, inevitably, some of the individuals who were resettled and relocated migrated to other geographic areas of the Commonwealth. Those families still had relatives located in Greene County, but they also afforded a glimpse into what life experiences they encountered as they acclimated to life outside the mountains of Greene County.
In many cases, these stories highlighted a way of life that mirrored that of the people who remained in Greene County. Interestingly, in some cases, I had to be very careful with my documentation because it was difficult to differentiate the information I gathered from the literature from the information I gathered during my field research; the experiences were so very similar.

**Identifying Appropriate Literature**

The search for existing literature began by exploring my personal collection of stories of the Greene County and other mountain people in Virginia. My personal library is extensive and includes many collections of oral histories collected by writer and researcher Lynn Coffey, who has been collecting oral histories and writing about the mountain people for over two decades. Coffey’s works lean more towards narratives and, as she began her career writing for newspapers, eventually taking those pieces and combining them into book collections, each individual’s information is limited to only one or a handful of pages. One of the aspects of Coffey’s work that makes it so powerful is that she includes a photograph of each of her piece’s subjects, giving the reader the ability to see, not only the person, but in many cases, their residences and farms. The images and photographs allowed me to see how the land and buildings weathered and changed over time, which granted a unique perspective as I was afforded the ability to review Coffey’s writings and then visit some of the same locations in present day for comparison. This unique experience will be discussed further in the Findings section of this dissertation.

The mountain counties of rural central Virginia are, typically, close knit communities where information travels quickly and is shared between “insiders”. “Insiders” are residents whose families are established through multiple generations residing in the same locale and
many insiders can trace their family’s rural Virginia roots back to the late 1700s and early 1800s. There is a particular distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders” that is critical to understand. An “outsider” is typically someone who has relocated to the area, and while they may have resided in the area for a long period of time, they are not awarded the same level of trust that an “insider” is. As unfortunate as it seems, in many cases, particularly when the “outsider” is originally from a northern state, they are viewed in much the same manner that “carpet baggers” setting up residence in Virginia were immediately after the Civil War.

Having lived in Greene County, Virginia for most of my life, my family and I have “insider” status. I will go into further detail about why this status was critical for my research in Chapter 3, but with regards to my research, the significance of my status was that I was afforded a deeper level of access and information than an “outsider” would have been. As work of my academic pursuits and dissertation research spread, my family and I were often contacted by Greene County residents who suggested people to talk to or books I should be reading. In this manner, people who knew I found Lynne Coffey’s work valuable directed me to explore Peggy Shifflett’s books. In Shifflett’s work I discovered the narrative descriptions of mountain children and their experiences in the Virginia educational system. Shifflett’s work became a starting point for me to explore the aspects of educational policy, leadership, and the culture of the mountain people, to gain an understanding of where the policies made by leadership did not always translate effectively to rural communities.

As I delved deeper into the issues that occur when policies and procedures are applied to a variety of locales and socioeconomic groups I began reading books about authority and power especially in Appalachia and other rural mountain areas. My search for those books was, in part, driven by suggestions from faculty and readings done in my doctoral course work, and I
especially, studied portions of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* to gain more perspective on how political leadership and mountain lifestyles interacted.

**Critical Selection of Appropriate Literature**

In every stage of the dissertation process, I needed to be hyperaware of the fact that my “insider” status carried with it an inherent bias. I had been raised hearing the life stories of my friends and neighbors, many of whom had relatives who had been resettled. Their life experiences were shared in casual conversations, snippets at a time, in much the same way close friends and neighbors share stories and information when they gather in social situations or find themselves in the same locale. Those who have experienced resettlement, and their children and grandchildren, frequently have shared values and lifestyles that differ from their neighbors who did not live through the evictions when the Shenandoah National Park was built. In order to create a work that explored my research questions in the most balanced and unbiased manner, I searched for books and pieces that focused on the creation of the Park and on George Freeman Pollock. I found Pollock’s biography *Skyland*, and read multiple works published by the Shenandoah National Park Association. In addition, I studied the writings of Audrey Horning, an anthropologist who wrote extensively about the creation of the present day restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and the displacement and creation of the Shenandoah National Park. I owe a debt of gratitude to Horning, because in contacting her to request permission to cite her work, she granted the permission and included a list of other works she believed might be relevant to my research. In addition, I relied heavily on the works of Eisenfeld and Powell, as well as the research conducted in the 1980s by Dorothy Noble Smith. All three of the above mentioned are female researchers who write about the rural mountain people in Virginia. Powell edited a collection of letters between the Park officials and residents of the
Park, written between the time when the creation of the Park was announced and the evictions and resettlements took place. Powell’s work is referenced heavily in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. In the same manner, Smith’s work was to record oral histories of those who were resettled. Smith conducted her research in the 1980s and the work is housed in the special collections library at James Madison University, but she also published a volume of her findings that was invaluable to my work.

Beyond all of the literature I accumulated on the mountain people, education in mountainous rural Virginia, and the creation of the Shenandoah National Park, I had other literature to delve into. I invested a significant portion of time reading the works of qualitative researchers to determine the best methodologies and manners in which to map out my research plan. In particular, Creswell’s work was very valuable. I also focused on Bogden’s work to help determine which theoretical framework would be the best fit for this research.

**Narrowing the Scope**

Locating and selecting the literature to review for this research was a longer process than I anticipated. In truth, there are many many additional volumes I could and plan to read that delve into the lives of the mountain people, the circumstances surrounding the resettlement, and the evolution of rural education in Virginia. The literature reviewed and cited here represents that which is the most applicable to this research and those pieces which most closely contribute to answering the research questions I posed. The literature review, is very much a part of the aforementioned research journey and there is no destination one reaches where all reading has been exhausted. I selected the most applicable pieces of literature for this research and have been cataloguing works I would like to examine in further research, as described in Chapter 5. Yet all of the literature reinforced the knowledge that every person involved in the creation of the
Shenandoah National Park has a story and a voice and each of those stories is valuable and contributes to the scholarly world.

**Theoretical Framework**

In the proposal stage of this research, determining a theoretical framework proved to be the most difficult aspect of the project. For a significant portion of time, it felt like I was trying to wear a shirt that was slightly too snug. I could select a theory to frame this research, but it felt forced and the sense was that I was trying to make something fit when it just did not. To overcome this issue, I relied on the guidance of my dissertation committee, who offered a variety of suggestions to arrive at a theory that supported the work and framed the research in the appropriate manner. Roberts’ (2010) work explains the importance of a theoretical framework, “…it [the theoretical framework] acts as a filtering tool to select appropriate research questions and to guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings.” (p.130). Roberts continues by citing Merriam’s (2001) work, “All aspects of the study are affected by its theoretical framework.” (Merriam 2001 p.47 as cited by Roberts, 2010 p.130). Roberts (2010) also establishes the value of selecting the most correct theoretical framework,

Miles and Huberman (1994) defined it this way: ‘A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in a narrative form, the main things to be studied—the key factors, constructs, or variables—and the presumed relationships between them (p.129).

Roberts continues her explanation by stressing the importance of the framework to the reader, “Making your conceptual or theoretical framework explicit provides clarity for the reader as to exactly what your study is about and provides the focus and content for making decisions about your study’s design” (2010, p.129). Keeping in mind the importance of the framework for every
portion of this work, a significant portion of time was invested in determining the correct theoretical framework. As this framework would serve as the lens for readers to view the experiences of the mountain people during their resettlement, the framework needed to at once both reflect the honest experiences and also focus the researcher to eliminate as much personal bias as possible.

**Conflict Theory**

During one of my field work experiences, I encountered a Greene County resident who was well versed in the resettlement history of the area. In describing my research, he made the comment that “The folks in Greene County have, at this point, accepted the Park, for the most part, however, the people in neighboring Madison County are still fighting the war”. This sentiment stayed with me as I conducted my research and spoke to people who had experienced the evictions and resettlement. While nothing I discovered supported the idea of “war”, there were many instances that revealed a tug-of-war and a competition for resources. I focused on the questions I wanted to study in this research and decided upon conflict theory as the framework for this dissertation. Friesen (2010) explains conflict theory as

In a given group, say conflict theorists, smaller groups develop as they compete for scarce resources, be they tangible (land, trees, minerals) or intangible (power, prestige, influence) (p.58).

Applying this theory to my research, one could say that one small group that emerged was comprised of Pollock, Byrd, and the collection of businessmen and politicians who desired the land acquisition for the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. The other significant small group would have been the mountain people who occupied and resided on those same lands.
The land itself is the scarce tangible resource the two groups competed for while power is the intangible resource. Friesen describes the outcome that is typically seen in conflict theory:

Eventually, one group gains a leg up on the others and secures more of these resources for itself. In turn, they use their control of these resources to control others in society (p.58).

Frisen’s explanation almost perfectly describes much of what I discovered in my field work. In reading Horning’s findings and her assessment of the circumstances surrounding the displacement of the mountain people, her discoveries support Friesen’s statement, “In any society, elites gain access to such resources as political power and money, and then use their superior position to control masses of other people.” (2010, p.58). In the current research, evidence of the presence of political power were found in the literature review. Pollock, documenting his first visit to Free State Hollow:

“I [Pollock] come from the City of Washington where the President of the United States lives’…

“Wal, George, I reckon you and the President is good friends if he is your neighbor.’ (said by Old Man Nicholson)

‘Yes, surely we are good friends. Everybody is a friend of the President. He is the great ruler of this country, yours and mine” (1960 p.15).

While Pollock may have been speaking in broad theoretical terms, the residents of Free State Hollow may not have fully understood that. The initial impression upon reading the exchange is that Pollock has a close personal friendship with the greatest political power in the United States. If a conflict later escalates between the mountain people and the Commonwealth and federal governments, conflict theory indicates that those with political power would be categorized in the “elite” group. The mountain people may have assumed, based on the
conversation between Pollock and Nicholson, that Pollock was supported by no smaller power than the President of the United States.

Since the residents of Free State Hollow and other mountain locales had limited contact with the outside world, they likely would have accepted Pollock’s words as truth. Friesen (2010) discusses the concept of an ideology as, “An ideology is a belief that, if internalized, benefits some people more than others.” (pp.58-59). Friesen mentions “consequences” that arise from ideologies and those consequences may explain some of the actions that took place, or failed to be used, when the Shenandoah National Park was built, “As long as the elites get people to believe what they want them to believe, ordinary citizens will not fight the system that puts them at a disadvantage.” (2010, pp.58-59). Put in simpler terms, one interview participant related a saying her father oft repeated, “The government is going to do what the government wants to do”. As the literature and findings will illustrate, the mountain people were, in many ways isolated and insulated from the outside world and thus, ill prepared for conflict outside of the realm of their base reality. As previously stated, most of the outsiders that arrived in the mountains of Virginia were mission workers from church organizations, who came to offer help and education to the mountain people. The interaction with outsiders, historically, would have been one of mutually beneficial relationships. By approaching the dissertation and the collected field research from the view of the conflict theory, I was able to categorize the data I collected and some overarching themes emerged, which will be further discussed later in this document.

**Review of the Literary Research**

The research conducted on the existing literature was loosely organized into several categories. These categories included: the mountain peoples’ family structure, life on the mountain lands prior to resettlement, encounters between Pollock and the mountain people,
educational opportunities prior to the resettlements, selection of the Virginia mountains for the new national Park, the evictions and actual resettlements, the culture of the mountain people, and the educational and economic prospects available to the mountain people after they were relocated. The literature review was organized, to the best of my ability, in chronological order, so that those reading my review could see the impacts of policy and progress on a population of people over the passage of time.

The Family Structure of the Mountain People

Since the research question guiding this work focused on education, learning, and knowledge that helped people survive the experience of being evicted from their land and resettled, the starting point for reviewing the literature was the family structure of the mountain people. Lambert (2001), describes the tightknit family environment the mountain people enjoyed. He explains, relating a story of two sisters, how this type of environment may have been formed early on. They were born Varners, descendants of a German family that settled in the mid-1700s, one of the four families welcomed by the Ione Indian medicine man whose fellow villagers had disappeared (2001, p.132).

Lambert’s work indicates that many of the residents of that mountain area were descendants of those original four families, making a large group of people related by blood.

Descriptions of the Mountain Residents

While the existing records and literature indicated that many of the mountain people were related to each other, the circumstances of their lives were as varied as the personalities of the individuals. Much of the literature described a group of people that hunted game including deer
and squirrels, as well as farming the land and growing cash crops. Pollock describes his encounter with the mountain people upon his arrival in 1887,

Bare-footed mountain men from all around came to visit us and each carried a gun, for at that time and for twenty years afterwards you never saw one of those mountaineers without a gun over his shoulder (1960, p.20).

Pollock’s writings support the other literary descriptions as he further says

They brought squirrels, cherries, wild strawberries, and raspberries for which we paid cash and probably this was the first money that they had ever seen, although some few of them did get money for bark, chestnut ties, and chestnuts (1960, p.20).

Pollock describes a singular type of person, one that supports the “Dogpatch” and “hillbilly” stereotypes that other literature indicates, research conducted at the Greene County Historical Society and with several residents of Greene County, as well as further exploration of the existing literature indicate that there was a wide variety and array of socioeconomic status levels enjoyed by the mountain people. The vast array of types of people may be the cause of some of this uncertainty, and Horning’s (2004) work supports this idea:

Throughout the hollows, the universal presence of an array of kitchen and dining wares, pharmaceutical glass, military items, mail order toys, 78 RPM record fragments, specialized agricultural tools, store-bought shoes, and even automobiles all suggest that mountain residents were as equally bombarded by mass consumer culture as were other early 20th-century rural Americans. Hollow residents clearly participated within that milieu on their own terms - terms that were dictated not so much by environment or regional identity, but by disparate local and household economies (p.1).
Horning’s work supports other literature and research that describe a population of varying socioeconomic status. Even within the same families, some individuals lived in better circumstances than others.

**Mountain Families: Extended, Extensive, and Tightly Knit**

Shifflett writes in several locations about waking up with mountain children in her sleeping loft when she was growing up. She relates the sleeping arrangements she had with her various brothers and sisters, with the youngest, typically a baby, sleeping downstairs with the parents and the older children sleeping on the second floor of their home in a loft. She describes orphaned children who would be homeless, and often taken in at night by other family members so the children did not sleep outside. Relatives who “took in” the orphaned children were sometimes older siblings and sometimes aunts or uncles, but the family unit tried to take care of its members. To be able to support additional mouths to feed would have required families to either closely ration their existing resources or the family members would have needed to have enough money and resources to be able to help the children without sacrificing anything. This example of orphaned children can at once support the idea of a close family environment for the mountain people illustrates one of the initial circumstances that established the conflict when the Shenandoah National Park was built. By providing a sense of security for the orphaned children, the mountain people utilized resources instead of saving them. Those resources, once used, were gone, leaving the businessmen, developers, and politicians who supported building the Shenandoah National Park in a position to be the “elite” as Friesen describes.

**Hollow Folk Families**
If the “outsiders” were elite, conflict theory indicates that another group must be less elite, and of a lower status. In any situation where there are two groups, obvious comparisons will consciously and unconsciously be made. In this case, the comparisons were seen by looking at the socioeconomic status and the achieved educational level the mountain people had. While Pollock’s description of the residents of Free State Hollow and the mountaineers he encountered are his true beliefs, his autobiography described the mountain people who visited him and worked for him, but it is not a complete representation of all of the people who resided in the mountains of rural central Virginia. Some of the literature explored about the creation of the Shenandoah National Park indicates that the information shared with the public indicated a lack of intelligence and culture of the mountain people. Horning’s work, which included a study of life in three of the mountain hollows, shows that there was a wide range of cultural experiences and possessions among the mountain people. Combining this literature with the writings of Peggy Shifflett, one starts to get a picture of hollows inhabited by large families, living in cabins and homes, with multiple generations inhabiting the same space. Shifflett has several publications that elaborate on being raised in the presence of multiple aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents, and she relates stories of her immediate family going to sleep at night, only to be awakened by relatives needing shelter in the night. Shifflett relates the concept and idea in more than one publication that, “You never knew when you went to sleep in you would wake up with more people in your bed in the morning then you started with the night before”.

Pollock Meets A Mountain Hollow Family

The reviewed authors are all describing large extended families who either resided under the same roof, or lived in close proximity to each other. Pollock’s (1960) writings add support to
the concept that the mountain people lived in homes that were close in vicinity as he describes his first encounter with Old Man Nicholson, the patriarch of Free State Hollow:

..when he extended his hand, I knew that we were going to be friends. By this time, the barking of the dogs had attracted the members of his family and they and the occupants of several other cabins below on the banks of the stream were now coming forward to see the stranger who had come into their midst (pp.13-15).

Pollock’s work focused on the creation of Skyland, originally a resort camp established by Pollock, and today a lodge on the current Park lands, and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but it is imperative to note that even his first encounter with mountain people, in Free State Hollow, involved a moment of educational significance. Pollock (1960), relates a story where Old Man Nicholson asked Pollock if he could spell the word “scissors” and his response when Pollock complied with the request:

He turned around, gazed at his sons, daughters and friends and…remarked to one and all: “This here is really and educated boy.”

He next turned to his eldest son and said, “Only one man has ever been in Free State Hollow who could spell that word and he was a schoolteacher who visited Sue Nicholson several years ago in the Hollow down near Nethers Mill” (p.16).

**Critical Concepts From Pollock**

Pollock’s writings provide two valuable pieces of information that other literature and research supports. First, the mountain people did isolate themselves in hollows and gaps that were not easily accessible to the “outside” world, but were still populated by large extended families. Second, by the late 1880s, schoolteachers had indeed traveled into the lands inhabited by the
mountain people. While there is not sufficient documentation to indicate how frequently teachers interacted with the various mountain people, and Pollock’s writing indicates that at least in Free State Hollow, interaction between educators and mountain people was severely limited, the profession of teaching and the concepts of education were known even in isolated mountain communities. This information provides some contrast to the “Dogpatch” concept of an inbred and illiterate culture in the mountain people.

Daily Life in the Mountains Before the Resettlement

Gaining an understanding of the lifestyle and beliefs of the mountain people can best be achieved by exploring the daily lives of the mountain people prior to the resettlement. Carolyn and Jack Reeder, a husband and wife team of writers with longtime ties to the Shenandoah Valley, have authored several books that describe the way of life for the mountain people. Reeder and Reeder (1978) write about the inhabitants of the land prior to the Park’s creation:

The majority of the mountain people were subsistence farmers, cultivating less than five acres. They grew enough vegetables to eat in season and store for winter, and they raised a pig or two to butcher in the fall. Most also had a cow and some chickens (p.43).

As farmers, the condition of the land that was being worked was vital to the survival of the mountain people, but as Reeder and Reeder indicate, many of the mountain people had smaller parcels of land. Therefore, as land was planted and harvested in a continuous cycle over time, the productivity of the land may have suffered:

Without the use of fertilizers or crop rotation, farmland ‘wore out’ in a short time. The custom was to let the field lie fallow for a few years and break new ground for planting. Often the
abandoned field would grow up in bluegrass and be used for pasture (Reeder & Reeder, 1978, p.43).

That same bluegrass can be seen growing in the Shenandoah National Park today, as the fields that were once used for crops are now meadows intersected by hiking trails.

**Family Farming**

Reeder and Reeder’s work also indicates that working the land was not an activity reserved for just the men, but a task the whole family participated in, “Twice during the growing season the farmer plowed between the rows while his wife and children cultivated between the plants with hoes.” (1978, p.44). Reeder and Reeder’s writing brings to mind images of a large family, backs bent over rows of dirt, while the sun beats down on them. These images convey the sense that the work required to survive was difficult and required every able body. Reeder and Reeder support this:

Growing crops required constant toil; raising livestock was easier. Chickens required little care. Pigs ran wild, foraging in the woods until they were rounded up for butchering. (Notches in the pigs’ ears indicated who their owners were.) Cows could graze most of the year and needed to be fed and sheltered only in severe weather (1978, p.44).

These descriptions highlight a life of hard work, but they also highlight a life of self-sufficiency. This is further cemented by Reeder and Reeder’s statement, “The mountain people needed only salt, coffee, and a few other staples to supplement their homegrown meat and vegetables and meal ground from their corn” (1978, p.44).

Reeder and Reeder are describing farming life among families. The portrayal is of groups of people that worked the land, together, to insure survival, but they mention little contact
with non-mountain residents. For some of the mountain people, this isolation is very true, as the only access to their locales were animal trails that had been walked enough to become footpaths for the residents to move lumber to Elkton, Virginia for processing. Eisenfeld’s research supports that of Reeder and Reeder in her work describing the assessors who worked for the creation of the Shenandoah National Park.

The men also learned about tenants, residents who did not own the land at all but whose families had been living on and working the same land for numerous generations. In a centuries-long custom, off-site owners often allowed tenants to live on and work their land. These tenants did not pay rent not owe any portion of their farm or timber products to the landowner; the owner benefited by having free caretakers of their land and cabins. Sometimes owners inherited tenants from previous owners; the tradition was to keep the same tenants on the land even as ownership changed hands, meaning that the tenant families often knew the land better and felt more deeply attached to it than the landowner (2014, pp.52-53).

**Mountain Education Prior to the Park’s Creation**

While the descriptions from Free State Hollow are of a people who did not have many educational opportunities, that was not the case for all of the mountain people. During my field research, one interview subject, who was relocated when she was five years old related that while her father never learned how to read or write, her mother was literate prior to being resettled. Additionally, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, many of the mountain people communicated with state and federal officials via letters, using written communication to ask questions of logistics and personal natures, particularly in the time period between the announcement of the selection of the land to become the Shenandoah National Park and the time the evictions began. This letter writing contradicts the earlier impressions that all of
the mountain inhabitants were illiterate and in desperate need of education. However, it is factually represented that the majority of education accessible to the mountain people prior to their resettlement was provided by mission schools from the Episcopal church. The question of the condition of schools available to the mountain people may best be answered by Powell’s writing:

According to William Link, a prominent historian of Virginia’s progressive education movement, “Local power over education was more apparent in rural schools, which between the mid-nineteenth century and World War I, flourished in isolation from their urban counterparts (2007 pp.21-22).

Powell describes some of the materials that would have been used in rural mountain schools, a representation of which can be seen in Figure 4 below:

![Figure 4: Reproduction of a Primer Used in Mountain Schools Pre-Resettlement](image-url)
Powell (2007) further explains about the Commonwealth of Virginia’s educational system at the time of the creation of the Shenandoah National Park:

…the Commonwealth of Virginia enacted compulsory education for children ages 5-18 in 1908, which included attendance for only several months of the year. However, several schools existed in the mountains before this legislation, schools that were funded primarily by parents and local communities (p.22).

Powell again cites Link’s work by explaining where a conflict would have arisen between the mountain people and the government enforcing educational requirements,

…in a region that more than any other valued individualism, familial identity, and personal honor among white males, hostility toward public control of youth socialization was a virtual certainty (2007, p.22).

**Swift Run Gap, Virginia Pre-Resettlement**

Select any area of the United States and you will find a tremendous mixture of people. From religion, to skin color, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, the mountain people, even while living in close proximity to each other and many being related by blood, as individuals, are unique and varied people. Not every mountain family lived the life of a subsistence farmer. Swift Run Gap, located in Greene County, Virginia, is located at the top of one of the mountains on the Shenandoah National Park. Swift Run Gap today, is at once, both an entrance to the Shenandoah National Park and a living testament to the past, but it is also mainly a highly wooded area with only the entrance booths of the Shenandoah National Park built as improvements on the land. Present day Swift Run Gap, shown in two of the figures below, is comprised of forest and streams, with clean pure water tumbling over mountain stones
as it cuts through towering oak, chestnut, and pine trees. Figure 5 below shows the remnants of a barn, erected and used prior to the resettlement in the 1930s.

![Abandoned Barn Swift Run Gap, Virginia](image)

If not for the modern “Private Property” sign posted on the barn, the image could have been taken at any period in time. The ivy and ferns are seen throughout the Gap, and the picture shows the natural hills and slopes that define the Gap’s landscape. If one stands with their back to the barn, they are facing a stream that feeds into the South River (see Figure 6 below). The water in the stream runs over a bed of stone. Those stones were often used by the mountain people to create chimneys, fireplaces, and foundations for their homes while the trees provided lumber for buildings and the logging businesses the mountain residents used for incomes.
The land of Swift Run Gap is almost unchanged from how it appeared a century ago. Rural and natural, with easy access to fresh clean mountain water, the Swift Run Gap is beautiful, but located at the top of a mountain, accessing the locale would have been a journey in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The journey may have been a worthwhile venture, however, as Reeder and Reeder (1991), describe a bustling location inhabited by Zeda Haney and her family: Before the Fern Hill Church was built across the road from their home, the Haney family walked several miles to the village of Swift run for Sunday services. But in the 1920s the neighbors raised money to build their own church, and Zeda’s mother boarded the carpenters who worked on it. After the church was finished, the Swift Run Gap area where it stood became known locally as Fern Hill instead of just ‘the top of the mountain’. With its store, post office, gas station, and church, Fern Hill was a center of community life (p.23).
Reeder and Reeder are discussing a community of people who worshiped together, worked the land, and interacted with each other on a regular basis. The presence of churches and stores disprove the notion of a dirt poor “Dogpatch” culture.

**Choosing the Shenandoah National Park Location**

Provence (2011) explains that the Shenandoah National Park was created primarily for two reasons. First, the government wanted a national park east of the Mississippi River and the draw of having a park so geographically close to the nation’s capital was intense (Provence 2011). Second, developers, including George Freeman Pollock who owned a resort in the mountain area called Skyland, wanted the national park and the roadways the park entailed as a means to bring more auto traffic and more visitors to their recreation areas, providing them personal financial gain (Provence 2011). However, in order to convince the American public that the park project was a good idea, it had to be presented as beneficial to society.

Provence (2011) explains how that was accomplished.

With that sociological backdrop, it was no great leap to portray the folks living in the mountains as backward hillbillies. Not only that, but those who wanted the park, like resort owner Pollock, made it appear that taking the residents’ land and forcing them to move from their homes was doing them a big favor (Provence 2011).

Powell (2010) explains how the government and businessmen worked together to take the concept of a new national park to a reality.

While the decision to create Shenandoah National Park (SNP) was a government initiative, it was facilitated by Virginia businessmen. In the 1920s, the National Park Service announced that it wanted to establish a park in the eastern part of America, and prominent Virginia landowners,
led by Skyland Resort owner George Pollock, seized on the opportunity. Pollock proposed Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains—with their panoramic views, waterfalls and proximity to Washington, D.C.—as an ideal location for a park. In 1924, Pollock and other businessmen formed a group named Shenandoah Valley Inc. to lobby for the idea and successfully persuaded the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee (part of the Department of the Interior) that the mountains of central Virginia could be a major draw for tourists in cars. That was the genesis of SNP, which would come to encompass land owned by Pollock (Powell, 2010).

In Pollock’s own writings, he indicates that many of the guests at his Skyland resort were military and government officials, as well as prominent members of Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia society. These guests spent their summers at Skyland, escaping the heat of the flat cities by traveling to the Blue Ridge mountains and cooler temperatures. Pollock employed many of the mountain people at Skyland and he was enchanted with the cabins and the rustic sense of the land. However, Pollock also indicates that he told many of the mountain people he encountered that nothing would change and their way of lives would continue on their mountains. To be told by Pollock that their homes and livelihoods were safe and then find out that was not to be the case may be one of the root causes of the conflict experienced as the Park was being built and it may be part of the basis for the distrust that the mountain people still hold. A significant amount of that distrust may be the manner in which the mountain people were made aware of the creation of a new park, and thus, their fate:

Not surprisingly, many of the mountain residents were completely unaware of the goings-on in Washington that led to their displacement. Indeed, they didn’t get the news until the Condemnation Act was passed and the state began surveying their land. At first, the residents were led to believe that they could stay on their property with conservation easements—but that
proved not to be the case. Many of the homes on the 200,000 acres would be destroyed—and all the families in that area would have to move. Needless to say, the mountain families were shocked by the development, but resistance was futile: The state and federal government had already begun to move forward with the building of Skyline Drive and the development of the park (Powell, 2010).

The initial shock was replaced by a multitude of questions. Researcher Katerina Powell has assembled a collection of letters from the mountain residents that showcase the depth and breadth of questions that the mountain people asked of the government officials as they prepared to be resettled. The questions ranged from the time frame of the resettlement to questions involving what improvements the residents could take when they moved off of the mountains. The letters Powell located and analyzed will be reviewed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

**Outside Perceptions of the Mountain People**

In almost all of the literature describing the creation of the Shenandoah National Park, the people in favor of the Park, including Pollock and his partners, were described as “wealthy developers” or “wealthy businessmen” and “people in positions of power” either by virtue of their family’s background and financial status or by their jobs as politicians. By the same token, most researchers, including Sue Eisenfeld, describe the mountain people as mostly tenant farmers and the indication is that many of the mountain people lived in poverty. There were also some wealthier mountain residents, as can be seen on the Greene County, Virginia, land records map, which indicates some of the mountain people owned large tracts of land on which they farmed cash crops and built large homes. Considering Eisenfeld’s findings, the knowledge that
many of the mountain people were poorer tenant farmers does explain an unbalance in the socioeconomic realm that would lead to conflict when the Shenandoah National Park was built.

**Tenant Farmers and Landowners**

If one considers the “elites” to be the landowners, politicians, and businessmen, the mountain people are positioned to be below the landowners in a socioeconomic status. While Eisenfeld’s explanation of the mountain people is that they were deeply tied to the land, many of them had sweat equity but not monetary equity tied to the land. When the time came for the land to be sold, many of the mountain people were not in a position to argue against it, nor could they, if given the opportunity, afford to purchase it. This concept of land lived on and loved by mountain people of a low socioeconomic status, but owned by elite landowners, far removed from the actual land and people that worked it, has prevailed and impacted even present day policy issues according to Charles and Nancy Martin-Perdue:

…we were told by an ARC[Appalachian Regional Commission] official several years ago that a number of counties which lie along the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge and which, by geography, should be included in Appalachia, were specifically excluded at the request of the local county governments. These governmental bodies felt that inclusion in the designation was too stigmatizing and misrepresented their actual condition with regard to poverty (1980, p.85).

The Perdue’s research shows another aspect of the conflict within which the mountain people may be engaged. The mountain people may self-identify as members of the Appalachian population, but the government officials chose to not keep that identity, as to avoid the public perception of counties filled with poverty.
The “Fable “of the Mountain People

Both Charles and Nancy Perdue’s work continues to show the conflict that may be occurring between the mountain people and the government officials they strive to avoid: The nature of the people of Appalachia- including their physical and mental traits, behavior, history and culture- has provided material for another type of fable. A major assumption of this fable, regardless of the extent of the geographic bounds used to define the region, has been that the people of Appalachia constitute a culturally homogeneous group, most often said to be Scotch-Irish and English, mostly Presbyterian, independent, fatalistic, and culturally and geographically isolated (1980, p.85).

Some of the traits listed above are not surprising and were discussed earlier in this document. Yet, the “fable” the Perdues talk about shows a problem that perpetuates the conflict between the mountain people and the government officials. Charles and Nancy Martin-Perdue (1980) explain the problem

These notions are part of a generalized complex of stereotypes that have been held about the so-called "hillbilly" or "mountaineer" and that have been applied by different writers at various times to the people in specific sub-areas of the region.” (pp. 85-86).

While the mountain people are not the first to have to be described by stereotypes, the way individuals interpret those stereotypes is experienced differently. For instance, the Perdues cite the writings of an individual working with the Appalachian people of West Virginia and how he referred to those people, “A psychoanalyst, working in West Virginia, discussed what he termed ‘cultural primitives.’ This group, which he thought could be ‘regarded as approximating the legendary ‘hillbillies’’” (1980 p.86). The term ‘cultural primitives” is a harsh depiction for
any individual, and the psychoanalyst continued his description by writing, “The tendency was, and is to till the smallest possible amount of land, and to maintain the smallest amount of livestock to achieve the barest of subsistence.” (Perdue & Perdue 1980, p.85).

This surviving description of individuals who worked as little as possible, with the goal of only producing enough for a bare survival is a contrast to the works of Reeder and Reeder, who, as previously mentioned, wrote about family units that worked together, with all individuals engaged in the tasks, to plant, harvest, and preserve the food they used to sustain them.

Katrina Powell also explains how the mountain people were described to the rest of the United States’ population. Powell, in relating the process of how the government selected the location for the new national park in the 1920s, discusses a questionnaire that Pollock completed for the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee (SANPC). (2007, p.28). Powell (2007) writes, “George Pollock…responded to SANPC’s questionnaire about possible locations for an eastern park. In his response, he described the area by saying, ‘There are within this area, of course, a few small mountain farms, of no great value.’” (p.29).

This statement will be evaluated in Chapter 4 in greater detail, but the Greene County, Virginia land records of the time do not support the answer supplied by Pollock. In addition, Powell provides a statement that can also illuminate some of the origins of the conflict between the government officials and the mountain people.
The Park: Politics and Government

Discovering this information, combined with the descriptions of forcible evictions that the mountain people experienced provide a possible explanation of why some of the mountain people have a sense of distrust and anger that is still very much in existence eighty years later. This will be explored in further detail within this chapter and in the Chapter 4 of this work, but the introduction of an educational presence early in the literature lends credence to the concept that to some degree, acquired knowledge is what helped the mountain people survive being resettled. Powell (2007) describes the results of a brochure published by the Shenandoah National Park Association as the location for the new park was being determined:

Meant to persuade local communities to support the park, the brochure included only minor mention of the people who inhabited the area or what might become of them should a park be approved, and it misrepresented the diversity of housing and socioeconomic status of the residents living there. It also created a sense that “small mountain farms” were of no value, that the homes themselves and the people living there could easily be moved, dismissed (p.29).

In addition, Powell shows some of the confusion that may have contributed to the conflict between the mountain people and the government officials. One area of confusion, according to Powell, citing the work of Reed Engle, arose due to the change in presidential leadership in Washington, D.C., from Hoover to Roosevelt:

[President Herbert] Hoover’s Secretary of the Interior, Ray Lyman Wilbur, stated that residents would not be forced to move unless in the direct path of development. However, in 1934 and under the Roosevelt administration, new NPS [National Park Service] director Arno Cammerer
said that all residents *would* have to leave in order for the federal government to accept title to the land (2007, p.32).

For a group of people who were geographically removed from daily news and updates, the confusion between which policy applied to their residences may have been extensive. This confusion was potentially compounded by the fact that many of the land condemnations and evictions were conducted by Commonwealth of Virginia officials and not federal officials. This process ensured that Commonwealth authorities could acquire the land and then “gift” the land to the federal government, therefore fulfilling the federal government’s initial condition in agreeing to the eastern park, that the federal government would not forfeit any money to purchase the land.

**The Government Describes the Mountain People**

By all accounts, both from the National Park Service researchers and independent scholars, the brochures and information shared with the American public misrepresented the living conditions of the mountain people. Powell explains what occurred when the development of the park lands reached a point that required people to be resettled from their lands, demonstrating the information that would have contributed to a conflict for the mountain people:

Later, when the issue of families living within proposed [Park] boundaries could no longer be ignored, they were represented in a way that reinforced assumptions made about them: that they could not appreciate the beauty of the where they lived and that they ‘needed’ the middle and upper classes to help educate and conform them (2007, p.29).

A letter published in the Greene County Record (local newspaper) January 1, 135 edition, by J. Everett Will, a republican congressional (state) candidate from the Luray, Virginia districts elaborates:
I am in favor of the Shenandoah National Park, but the Shenandoah National Park, for 10 years has been a political football among Virginia politicians. I, myself, have personal knowledge of hundreds of injustices within the Park area (p.1).

Will elaborates on his feelings about the politics surrounding the creation of the Park and its impact on the mountain people, while also introducing some of the probable foundations for the conflict between the government and the mountain people.

After all, the purpose of the park is for a playground for the citizens of this Country and I have no idea the President of the United States or a Congress, if injustice is brought to their attention, would want to see suffering and injury for the sake of a playground (p.1).

**Resetlement Documentation**

Reed Engle, a historian who works with the Shenandoah National Park, emphasizes the lack of documentation around the evictions and resettlement,

Actual number of residents in Shenandoah will never be precisely known because many moved before December, 1935, the issue of the forced resettlement of 465 families between 1935-1937 represents a classic case of bureaucratic ineptitude. (n.d.).

While Engle’s frustration is clear, maps that record land ownership in Greene County, Virginia prior to the Park’s creation indicate that, from the standpoint of land records, the documentation was clear and up to date. Yet Engle is correct in his statement that the actual number of individuals who were resettled is unknown, as are the locations where those individuals decided to move. During the course of my research it became clear that discovering the true number of resettled residents may be impossible, due to the passage of time, so my research focus turned to some of the more known entities.
Mission Schools in the Mountains

While the actual number of residents may not be known, there are some other facts that are clearly recorded. For example, James (2014) documents an established educational presence in the Simmons Gap:

In the 1890s, Rev. Frederick W. Neve, a transplant from Kent, England, was serving Episcopal congregations in the Ivy, Greenwood and Ragged Mountain areas of Albemarle County. When communicants directed his attention toward the remote ridges of the Blue Ridge Mountains, exploratory trips into those heights convinced him of the genuine needs and daunting challenges. After much thought and prayer, Neve came to envision a network of mountain missions and schools planted every ten miles along the Blue Ridge crest, the first one being at Simmons Gap (2014 p.1).

Simmons Gap is located in Greene County Virginia and, according to James (2014), Neve’s vision did come to fruition:

At Simmons Gap, the simple wood-framed schoolhouse doubled as a chapel until 1911 when a more substantial cement block school and separate church were erected, each protected from the harsh elements by roofs of iron shingles. Consecrated as “The Church of The Holy Innocents”, the solid building with its opalescent green stained-glass windows quickly became the centerpiece of that community (2014 p.1).

Neve not only created a center of learning in Simmons Gap, he established a center of religion and education for the mountain people in Greene County. In Chapter 4 of this document more time will be spent focusing on the educational opportunities afforded to the mountain people. During one conducted interview, a female Greene County resident who was resettled
with her family when she was five years old, related to me that her father never learned to read or write, but interestingly enough, her mother did know how to read and write and she learned at a mission school run by the Episcopal church at Simmons Gap. While the “Dogpatch” stereotype was being applied to the mountain people by government officials, no one brought to the forefront Neve’s creation of mission schools and churches for the people of Simmons Gap and Greene County. This could be explained by the concept that the Shenandoah National Park officials being unaware of the existence of the mission schools, but James (2014) dismisses that as a viable option:

The missions’ beneficial endeavors continued to expand for two more decades before ominous whispers of a pending government intrusion filtered into the mountains. The State of Virginia was considering condemnation of the property of private citizens in order to host a national park. All who lived in the community along Simmons Gap Road were threatened with eviction. The processes of surveying, valuations, authoritarian double-speak and individual court challenges kept those families in limbo for nearly a decade. In 1935 the last shoe finally dropped.

We are trying to adjust ourselves to the new conditions caused by the Shenandoah National Park running through the middle of our territory, taking two of our missions and leaving the others divided into two groups, one on each side of the Park Area,” wrote Rev. W. Roy Mason, who had oversight of the mission work in 1935. “Now, what was formerly the mission house [at Simmons Gap] is the home of the Park ranger… Park officials were good enough to allow us to move Holy Innocents Chapel from Simmons Gap to our new point at the Cross Roads [west of Free Union] (2014, p.1).
Mission Schools Meet the Government Officials

While the writers and reporters who were responsible for disseminating information to the nation’s people as a whole failed to inform the public of the educational opportunities the mountain people had; the Commonwealth and federal government officials working to create the Shenandoah National Park were aware of the presence of the mission school at Simmons Gap. The school was commandeered and used as living quarters for park personnel once the condemning of property, evictions, and resettlements began to occur. The general public were either misled about the educational opportunities available to the mountain people, or they chose not to explore what the true state of the mountain culture was at the time of the Park’s creation. However, by closing the mission school and using the building as a residence, the Park officials and the government left a huge gap in the availability of schooling for the mountain children. Reading Lambert’s assessment, one could almost draw the conclusion that the agents of the Shenandoah National Park deliberately chose to perpetuate the “Dogpatch” myth and turn it into a reality by choosing to close the Greene County mission school (Lambert, 1989). Although that conclusion is probably not likely, and instead, the mission schools may have been another casualty of the change in governmental leadership. Hoover had been, by Lambert’s (1989) account, interested in educational opportunities for the mountain people and the impact the resettlement would have on them:

When President and Mrs. Hoover personally established the mountain school, they hired a top-notch teacher, Christine Vest, who helped prepare some of the people for a different life. Miriam Sizer, a teacher and social worker also tried to help the people (p.232).

Officials at the present day Greene County Historical Society informed me that Miriam Sizer was not a teacher but a researcher. The depths of Sizer’s opinion of the mountain people
can be seen in her personal letters. Reed Engle describes Miriam Sizer, “an educator hired to study the mountain residents in Nicholson, Weakley (Old Rag), Corbin, and Richards Hollows, and to make recommendations as to solutions to the problems inherent in relocation” (1996). Engle (1996), explains, “On September 21, 1928, a short letter was sent to William E. Carson, the Chairman of the Virginia State Conservation and Development Commission, the agency charged with the survey and purchase of land for the proposed Shenandoah National Park”. An excerpt of the letter shows the elevated status Sizer felt she had when compared to the mountain people:

*This one-room school [Old Rag] was in session three months last winter [1927-8] and two months this summer, making a total of five months. With approximately seventy children of school age, thirty seven were enrolled in the vacation school with an average daily attendance of nineteen.*

*Some of the causes of non-attendance are: conditions that make it unwise to enforce the compulsory education law; the ignorance of the parents to such degree as to render them practically non-responsible for their children's training and education; the idleness of the men that throws the burden of labor on the women and children; inadequate school equipment and teaching force; and sometimes, the incompetency of the teacher....*

*The school has instilled in the children no sense of citizenship; there is no school flag, and neither children nor parents, until this summer [due to Miss Sizer] had ever heard "America" sung....*

*Descendents of the original settlers, cut off from civilization by environment, neglected by the State - the population of the proposed park area, several thousand in number, represents a static*
social order. These mountaineers have aptly been called "our contemporary ancestors." They are a modern Robinson Crusoe, without his knowledge of civiliza-tion. Steeped in ignorance, wrapped in self-satisfaction and complacency, possessed of little or no ambition, little sense of citizenship, little comprehension of law, or respect for law, these people present a problem that demands and challenges the attention of thinking men and women....

The attitude of the people toward the park acquisition by the Federal Government is one of passive acceptance. They say that what is going to happen will happen.... The taking over of this area means the uprooting of a whole population permanently attached to the soil, an event unique in the history of America [Native Americans not considered by Miss Sizer].... It means the scattering of a people who have a primitive comprehension of what law means and who have little sense of the responsibilities of citizenship. It means the casting abroad of men largely a law unto themselves, a majority of whom donot [sic] have the habit of work, who gamble and above all, who know how to make alcoholic liquors. It would seem that if these people are sent out without some preparation, a majority may become either paupers or criminals.... (Engle 1996).

Today, the officers at the Greene County Historical Society consider Miriam Sizer to be a researcher and not a teacher, but that distinction may not have been clear if she identified herself as an educator to the mountain people. Given the geographic distances between hollars and locations of mission schools and churches, word of Sizer's presence may have spread quickly but her true purpose may not have been known. While President and Mrs. Hoover supplied teachers and helped to prepare for the mountain people to be relocated, George Freeman Pollock was finalizing preparations for the expansion of his Skyland resort and creating the Shenandoah National Park.
Pollock’s Education Connection

George Freeman Pollock was the son of a business man who owned property on the Stony Man Mountain tract that is located in Greene and Rockingham counties in Virginia. Pollock (1960), according to his own autobiography, wanted to create a resort camp on the Stony Man tract, where people living in the cities of Richmond, Virginia and Washington, D.C. could escape the heat and busyness of the urban areas for the peace and cooler temperatures of the mountains. By his own accounts, Pollock enjoyed meeting the mountain people and got to know their culture and the amount of education available to the mountain children while he ran his camp (Pollock 1960, p.17). Pollock must have known that the educational opportunities offered to the mountain children prior to the creation of the Shenandoah National Park were limited to mission schools and the school opened by President Hoover, but his own [Pollock’s] background was vastly different. In fact, Pollock has deep ties to a significant educational movement in the United States. According to Reed Engle (2003), Pollock’s grandfather, “…a Prussian army officer, was a firm advocate of education.” (p.38). Engle explains that Pollock’s grandfather, whose surname was Plessner:

…and his Hungarian born wife were concerned about their American grandchildren’s [including George Freeman Pollock] education and therefore sent Louise (Pollock’s mother) ‘everything that had been published’ on the popular Froebel system of early childhood training. Developed by…Froebel…his Kindergarten was a school “for the psychological training of little children by means of play”(2003, p.38).

Engle (2003) continues by explaining that the system had been, “advocated by Scottish industrialist Robert Owen as a response to the need to care for and educate his mill workers’ children.” (p.38). Engle’s work illuminates the information that Pollock’s family introduced in
the United States a method of education that was developed for what Americans today would consider “blue collar” workers of a lower socioeconomic status, much like the population of mountain people Pollock would encounter as he built his Skyland resort. Engle’s writing also highlights the role that Louise Plessner Pollock played in impacting the structure of the current American educational system:

In 1862, Louise opened one of the earliest kindergartens in the United States in the Allen Brothers’ English and Classical School in West Newton, Massachusetts, nine miles from Boston. Started by Nathaniel Allen a decade earlier, the school was remarkable for the time because it was both coeducational and interracial (2003, pp.38-41).

The knowledge that Pollock’s family made access to early childhood education available, not only to white privileged male children, but to multiple genders and races is anecdotal but also critically important to this research. With Pollock’s family background, he was undoubtedly aware of the value placed on teaching children from an early age. Therefore, in reviewing Engle’s work, I was able to ascertain that the mountain residents of Greene County may have been introduced to the concepts and importance of educational opportunities not only from the Episcopal Church’s mission schools, but from Pollock if he related his experiences to the mountaineers.

**Announcements of the Resettlement**

Once the decision had been made to build the Shenandoah National Park, the determination had to be made about what was to happen to the residents of the mountain lands. As previously mentioned, the literature explains that the federal government’s primary condition of the eastern park was that they would not spend federal funds to secure the land. This left the
seizure of the property to the government of the Commonwealth of Virginia. While Pollock and many members of the Commonwealth government referred to the mountain people as “squatters”, Charles and Nancy Martin Perdue’s work shows another approach.

The point here is simply that most of the earlier references to squatters came out of legitimate conflicts which were often resolved in favor of the claimant with the most money and influence at court, but which were also sometimes settled in favor of the so-called "squatter." Beyond the issue of conflicting claims, it should be pointed out that in Madison Co. between 1799 and 1930, there were 267 deeds involving Nicholsons buying land and 209 deeds involving Nicholsons selling land - hardly the activities of squatters (1979, p. 97).

Madison County, Virginia, is located adjacent to Greene County, Virginia and the population and culture is mirrored between the two counties. The Nicholsons that the Perdues reference are also relatives of the family that Pollock encountered on his first trip to Free State Hollow. The court cases that the Perdues describe were also encountered in Greene County, Virginia, where some residents questioned the legality of the evictions.

The governmental solution to the problem of the existence of the mountain people was to resettle them off the mountain land and down onto the flat county land below. Lambert (1989) writes of Miriam Sizer’s initial impression of the process of the relocation:

She [Sizer] envisioned government-sponsored relocation communities short distances outside the park, but most of the involved state and federal leaders promptly said relocation communicates would be unnecessary and more trouble than they were worth, even to that strange mountain ‘culture’ itself (1989, p. 232).
Culture of the Mountain People

The “strange culture” of the mountain people of Appalachian Virginia has been in existence for hundreds of years. In terms of survival, they could serve as the poster children for how to survive and function without reliance on government intervention. Many of the displaced mountain people settled into hidden crevices and valleys (also known as “gaps” and “hollows”) tucked into the mountainsides. The hollow locations were selected because of how hard, geographically, they were to discover unless an individual was intimately aware of the mountain land. The culture continued to be shaped as the mountain people were relocated from the mountains and is seen in the locations mountain people selected to reside in, once they resettled. The displaced mountain people could literally settle into a hollow locale and be completely aware of when a stranger entered their area without the non-hollow folks having the slightest realization that they had been discovered. Living in mountain hollows allows mountain people to virtually disappear and avoid detection.

These mountain people have existed and achieved by a strong sense of history, tradition, and community. Shifflett (2004) explains,” I was fortunate to be taught several ways to survive….I was taught to survive by hunting and gathering around the calendar year,” (p.120). This sense of self-reliance is a good study in how to help people in a struggling economy. The mountain people have encountered several roadblocks along the way. The loss of their land due to the Shenandoah Park creation removed their ability to hunt, gather, and garden as freely as they could have in the past. More detail will be provided in the Findings chapter of this document, but multiple interview participants related that the residences they were provided with upon eviction were essentially just walls, no doors or windows, and the lots were too small to allow for gardens to be put into the land. For a population of people that survived by farming
and hunting, being moved to land that was not able to sustain a garden eliminated one of their main ways of feeding their families.

Coupling this with their former property being utilized for National Parks and hunting being banned on the government’s land, the mountain people suddenly found themselves in dire economic straits that were not of their own making. This was further complicated by the fact that the Commonwealth government had originally planned to acquire a larger swath of Greene County for the Park and no one was completely sure what was Park land and what was still privately owned. One interview participant relayed to me a story of some men being arrested just a few years ago for making moonshine on federal lands. In reality, their stills were located on land not very far behind their present day homes, but many people are still unaware of where the Park boundary lines meet private property lines in Bacon Hollar in Greene County, Virginia. Shifflett (2004) illuminates quite clearly the historical impact an executive leadership decision had on an entire cultural group:

Unfortunately I was also a witness to the painful loss of autonomy and individualism brought on by factory work and assembly line production. The consequences reverberated throughout the community with major effects on family life and childhood experiences. The people changed by necessity not by free will or a desire to become one with the changing world around them (p. 120).

Today, many of the mountain people live in homes without electricity and are taught the basics of making moonshine (grain alcohol distilled illegally) and farming the land almost as soon as they can walk. They rely on the land and shy away from assistance and formal government programs at every turn. Mountain people fear strangers and outsiders and they have a self-reliant spirit and a hard strength that characterizes them. This research was hindered at
times because of this fear, and was reflected in some of the information collected from “official” sources (such as the Greene County Historical Society) later found to be untrue.

Yet, this same self-reliance keeps the knowledge of how to survive, even after being marginalized by the government, locked away in mountain hollars where it fades further into the past as each generation dies. Without the type of research I am currently conducting, the loss of skills, history, and cultural knowledge will perhaps not be understood until it is irretrievably gone, leaving a gap in the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Perhaps even more troubling is the repression of a traditional culture and the cultural knowledge of Greene County’s mountain people that has been forever lost.

**The Evolution of Mountain Culture**

The confusion around the facts and conditions of the Park’s creation was compounded by the dire straits of the American economy at the time the Park was built. The United States was deeply mired in the economic Great Depression at the time and many citizens were struggling to find ways to support their families. Survival, at times, was by any means necessary. The level of distrust and disdain that the mountain people maintain can be rooted in very act of being displaced from their homes, because the loss of the farm lands had a direct impact on the mountain people’s survival. Losing the land that they lived on and used for their livelihood was a harsh occurrence that drastically impacted the mountain people.

Yet the distrust and the hesitation to engage with government officials was likely born of a variety of things. Included in the events and situations that created the long lasting rift is the indelible truth that even some of the people sent to help the mountain people were conducting their work in a less than ethical manner. For example, Katrina Powell, in her 2010 work,
explains some of the frustration the mountain people experienced between the time they were informed of the creation of the Shenandoah National Park and the time the residents were forced to relocate--

Many families were promised homesteads if they sold their land to the park. Later, after doing that, they were assessed by the Resettlement Administration and often did not qualify for the government loan needed in order to purchase the homestead. This kind of bureaucracy frustrated many residents because they felt they weren’t given adequate information. That was the case with Gird Cave of Stanley who wrote Mr. Lasiter on December 1, 1937:

> the welfare woman was just hear and Says they Cant buy us a place but wants us to go and rent for our Selves but you Know as for our Contract that I had Signed up for a homestead at ada and now bin turned down...So you know that this is not fair as there is people lots younger than I that they have bought homes for and we have had no work for a good while and we don’t feel able to go out to rent. So we are ready at any time to now to move iff they will furnish us a place...So ii am willing to do any thing that is any ways right but I cant see that this deal is any ways right So I amnot willing to accept it. So use your influence iff you please as we would like to moved or Setteleed Soon as we Could as you Know how it would be to be always on a dread not Knowing what to do....

Cave’s letter shows a man who was desperately trying to understand what impact the creation of the Shenandoah National Park would have on his family. He describes being anxious to be settled and essentially get on with the business of living, a sense likely shared by most of the mountain people, as the struggled to find ways to support their large extended families.

**Moonshine Culture**
To free themselves from a depressed lifestyle, people will often turn to any possible avenue, including activities not necessarily sanctioned by law. In one of the above citations Shifflett mentions the “moonshine” industry that some mountain people turned to in an effort to earn enough money to feed their families once their land was revoked.

Shifflett (2004) describes a typical situation that was related to her by her uncle Folks often died young in those days and left young children who were on their own for survival. My mother died when I was ten, then my father died when I was thirteen. I had to live, so I stayed with my brother. Me and my cousin worked together for hourly wages (Note: the work he mentions is later identified as a laborer making moonshine). I got paid seven and a half cents an hour and my room and board. My cousin had a place to stay, so he got paid fifteen cents an hour (pp. 160-161).

The reliance on an illegal activity to support and feed one’s family creates a societal issue that was not well-considered prior to the relocation decision. Worse still, almost one hundred years after the relocation decision was made, the cycles of poverty, illiteracy, and struggle continue to impact the mountain people, creating a situation that will not quickly be remedied but must eventually be fixed, lest the entire Commonwealth’s economy continue to be impacted negatively.

**Lawlessness Amidst Condemnations**

The knowledge that moonshine was being distilled on the mountain lands contributed to the idea that the mountain people had no regard for the law and lived in any manner they chose.
This perceived attitude of lawlessness would have likely caused government officials who were carrying out the evictions to enter the situation with an air of defensiveness. Perhaps because of the belief that the mountain people leaned more towards the Dogpatch culture then one of law-abiding, God-fearing citizens, government officials encountered multiple issues between the time of the decision to resettle the Park occupants and the time that the actual relocations took place.

While there is documentation supporting the lawlessness and the moonshine culture, there were also established churches throughout the mountain gaps and hollars that had been in existence long before the idea for a new national park was created. As previously stated, the Episcopal Church had a significant presence in the Blue Ridge mountains. The Brethren church was also firmly ensconced in the mountain area, with many of the mountain people stating they were raised in the Brethren ways. Figure 7 shows Evergreen Church of the Brethren, established and erected in 1896.

![Figure 7: Evergreen Church of the Brethren Bacon Hollar Greene County, Virginia Established 1896](image-url)
Despite the presence of churches and religion in the mountain people’s culture, Reeder and Reeder (1978) describe an era of “lawlessness” that occurred after the establishment of the Park:

An interesting observation is that several murders, considerable vandalism, and a rash of fire settings occurred during the years immediately following the establishment of the Park. At this time the people were ‘living on borrowed time,’ not knowing how long they would be allowed to remain in their homes. A sociologist might explain some of their lawlessness at this time as the result of ‘social dislocation’ (p.50).

Reeder and Reeder also describe fires being set after people were relocated and resettled. However, as will be discussed further in the Findings chapter, much of my research led to the discovery that government officials set many fires of their own as they burned the homes from which the mountain residents were evicted. More than one source related a relative turning around as they were evicted to retrieve one last item from their home only to find it in flames when they were only steps away. Morris (1992) sums up the mountain people’s culture well, Greene County was a land of ancient ways and beliefs. Moonshining, shootings, knifings, and knock-down drag-out fights characterized daily lives. Yet, in contrast to the violence, there was a code of neighborliness and caring that outsiders could only admire (p.16).

**Importance of Formal Schooling**

The creation of mission schools and the school established by President Hoover indicate a value that was placed on formal learning for the mountain people. President Hoover clearly felt that education was going to be critical to helping the mountain people as they were being resettled. When the initial livelihood of hunting and gathering was taken, the mountain people turned to other options to feed their families. Yet often, the
moonshine culture and the ideals of formal education clashed, with the students suffering the cost of those clashes. Shifflett (2004) relates an incident that occurred often in the mountain culture:

Cousin John’s father took him out of school. He was an alcoholic and a moonshiner who wanted his son to ride the roads with him to deliver moonshine. Having his young son with him made him look more legitimate, and the police were less likely to stop him and search his car. This went on for years as John missed out on his education (p.239).

This sense of missing school, and being left uneducated is reflected further in Shifflett’s (2004) work as she explains, “Cousin Herman and I were the only “Gap” children left in the third grade picture” (p.239). She indicates further on that Cousin Herman completed seventh grade but no further schooling (p.239). A lack of schooling creates several problems, including abject poverty and an inability to understand the rights and responsibilities one has in a democratic society.

**Resettlement Schools**

When the evictions of the mountain people took place, a few of the resettlement locales Sizer had envisioned were established. One of those was located at what is now the Rosebrook Inn in Greene County, Virginia. Rosebrook had at least two teachers and at least eleven residences for the mountain families. The Brethren Church established an industrial school nearby, and a brochure published by the Church around 1926-1927, prior to the resettlement, indicates that the school had:

- 7 WORKERS
- 43 children in our family
103 children enrolled in our school

120 homes visited during the summer

58 baptized in 1926

H. C. Early, a superintendent of schools for the Brethren Church wrote about the mountain people in 1926

They have mental capacity beyond their birth and environment…But there are those—and they are not few—with the keenest and most alert minds, able to learn in any field to which they apply themselves (1926, p.356).

Early’s description is of a population that is capable of learning, with the potential to succeed. The culture of the mountain people is one of hard work and effort, where they applied themselves daily to the necessary tasks of survival. The question of whether they would apply themselves or not, if based on previous knowledge, is answered with a resounding yes. The challenge became motivating people to want to apply themselves. The educator who rose to that challenge most especially was Miss Nelie Wampler.

**Miss Nelia Wampler aka Miss Nelie**

The Greene County Historical Society supplied a pamphlet from 1911 that explained the work and mindset of Miss Nelie as she was known:

On August 21, 1923, Miss Nelia Wampler stated in her handwritten diary, “[I] Only pray that the Lord will use me in my own little field.” Her own little field was the mountains of Greene County, Virginia, where she helped to establish four Brethren Churches: Evergreen Church (pictured previously and still in existence), Haneytown Church, Mt. Herman, and Shady Grove,
as well as a church sponsored boarding school, the Church of the Brethren Industrial School. (1911).

The industrial school Miss Nelie helped establish is still in existence today and has grown into the all-male private institution of The Blue Ridge School. Morris (1992) describes life at the industrial school, “Things hummed at the school. Beyond their classes, the children were kept busy with farm and garden work, and learning all sorts of useful skills and trades.” (p.19).

Morris continues by describing the farming and cleaning chores Miss Nelie performed, all in the work of caring for and providing for a large population of mountain people. The outcomes could be measured by shelves of canned produce and lines of clean clothes, but Morris explains another less tangible product, “In all this dawn-to-bedtime activity, Miss Nelie drove before her a heard of boys and girls who learned well the value of work” (1992, p.19).

**Industrial Arts and Academics—“Everybody Works”**

Miss Nelie and the teachers from the Brethren church focused on the academic subjects like math and grammar, but they also relied heavily on lesson plans that taught life-skills in their industrial arts classes. By accounts, the lessons were successful, as students learned to plant and preserve food, as well as livestock rearing and sewing. In an article Miss Nelie herself wrote for the Brethren church, she outlines some of the core concepts at the school, “The slogan ‘Everybody works’ is being carried out from Master Lester and Lady Ressie, five-year-olds, with their little duties of helpfulness, following up the line to the more grown-up children, including every worker of the institution.” (1926, p.360). Miss Nelie (1926) continues her description of the accomplishments of her students:
Twenty-five girls were enrolled for sewing during the year, six of whom have completed the four years’ work as outlined by the State 4H Club Work. Our girls are doing work equal to any girls in the State, and have won both ribbons and cash prizes in the county and the State. These girls are not only learning to make their own clothes, but to mend and care for them as well (p.361).

Clearly, Miss Nelie’s efforts were focused on creating individuals who were not only academically prepared to enter society, but also able to take care of themselves and their families’ basic human needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Yet, as any educator knows, keeping young children occupied and helpful is not always an easy task. Miss Nelie’s policy and attitude that “Everybody works” has been discussed, but her attitude was not one of domineering dictator and instead appears to be one of compassionate role model. Chapter 4 will support this determination, but the Miss Nelie’s own experiences speak for themselves. In fact, in an article for the Brethren community, Miss Nelie, writing in 1928, reflects on the previous summer:

Pea picking and shelling were the tasks that held every youngster down, from the smallest child to the largest. Sometimes the task became tedious and tiresome and the children were excused for a race around the building, or story telling and songs often helped to keep up the interest. An all-day sucker was given to those who worked faithfully until the peas were all shelled (p.348).

The impact of Miss Nelie’s work can be seen in her writing, “In fact, the entire school is showing improvement along many lines. Our classes are larger and more uniform, and it makes quite a difference in working with them.” (1928, p.365).

Miss Doris Whitham

Additionally, Miss Nelie was not the only expert in industrial arts to be working at the school. The Blue Ridge School archives provides an unsourced article discussing Miss Doris
Whitham. Miss Whitham was unique for the time period as she was a female trained in agriculture. The article comments:

Miss Whitham holds a unique place among the workers at the B.R.I.S. (Blue Ridge Industrial School) for she is our outdoor dependence in much that pertains to the farm and we are very proud of her. Trained for her work at the University of Wisconsin, with practical farming experience also, she can back her words by the bullet of achievement…. (n.d.)

**Mountain Children in Public Schools Post-Resettlement**

One of the most important aspects of education is understanding the place/community in which you are working in an educational capacity. In fact, Gruenewald and Smith (2007), write, “They (students) are, furthermore, learning that they have the capacity to use their minds and energy to make contributions to their communities that are valued by others and that promise to improve people’s lives” (p.xviii). The work of Miss Nelie and her peers was designed to help the mountain people find self-value by working as a community to meet their needs. This basic concept of students using their abilities to make their home communities better and more productive creates a cycle of learning, acquired pride, and the creation of a sustainable community both economically and personally. This is a cycle that would fail without the educational piece, and one that needs personal investment to continue, but it also requires the incoming educators and officials to dedicate their time to learn about the community they live in.

An example of educators and educational policy makers creating conflict by failing to understand the mountain community they are working in is clearly seen in Shifflett’s *School Days* section of *The Red Flannel Rag*. Shifflett (2004) writes
For several years as part of our health class, the teachers gave lessons on the appropriate food to have at each meal. They put large charts up in the room showing the ideal breakfast that consisted of one over-easy egg, a slice of toast, two slices of bacon, and a glass of orange juice. Then they placed a chart next to the classroom door that had all of our names with columns to place check marks if you had eaten the “ideal” breakfast. As you know by now, I had learned to lie to avoid humiliation (p.241).

In Shiffett’s 1940’s rural Virginia classroom, which should have been an oasis of learning and exploration, was instead, a place where she had to lie to her teachers about the most basic information from her home life. In contrast to the environment Miss Nelie created, where the students and residents worked together to plant, harvest, and preserve their food, the public school Shifflett attended catered to rural and urban children, with each socioeconomic group having little knowledge of how the other lived. The message being sent to Shifflett was that her contribution to her class, her sharing of what food she had for breakfast, either had to conform to the classroom expectation or she would be wrong. Her true contribution contained no value in the eyes of her teachers. This perception, particularly to a young child, can have devastating consequences to their educational self-worth, as Shifflett illustrates when she relates the experience of her Cousin Herman.

In Appalachia and the mountain regions of Virginia, there is a deep rooted belief in Christian values, especially the values and rules in the Old Testament. Attending church, praying before meals, and reading and quoting the Scriptures are typical scenes in mountain households, with the children having the Ten Commandments instilled in them as rules for daily living. As has been previously stated, in the isolation of the Virginia mountains, much of the contact residents
would have had with outsiders came from missionaries from the Episcopal and Brethren churches. With this in mind, Shifflett’s writing that she had, “learned to lie” demonstrates an internal struggle between living the values she had been taught at home versus the desire to not be mocked by her teacher and classmates at school. Shifflett’s Cousin Herman chose a different path to follow in the classroom:

At the end of the first week of this [ideal breakfast] exercise, one teacher asked Herman in front of the whole class, “Herman why didn’t you check the breakfast chart?” She seemed concerned that he may be hungry. All heads in the room turned toward Herman.

Herman answered, “What I eat for breakfast ain’t on the charts so I had no reason to place a check by my name.” “Well Herman, what do you eat for breakfast?” asked the teacher. He innocently answered her, “I eat brown beans, fried potatoes, and canned peaches” (p.241).

In considering Cousin Herman’s response and as I have explored the concepts of education and life in Appalachia, I have found myself looking at breakfast menus in restaurants, paying more attention to the mention of breakfast food at events I attend, and keeping mental track of what types of foods people around me choose to eat for breakfast. In particular, items like chicken and waffles, huervos rancheros, and sausage and gravy are all perfectly acceptable breakfast foods in various regions and places in the United States. Yet, each of those are also meals that contain ingredients that would seem inappropriate for breakfast, particularly if one is following the “ideal breakfast” chart. The three dishes listed above may well appear on a breakfast table but none of them would get the students in Cousin Herman’s class a check for having eaten the “correct” foods. What constitutes breakfast may well vary by locale and geographic location.

I would argue that the foods that one eats may be heavily influenced, if not by a person’s community, then by the place they are located. Theobald and Siskar (2007), contributing to the
work of work of Gruenewald and Smith (2007) offer this writing, which to some degree supports my argument:

But the larger rationale for using the phrase “place-based” has to do with the fact that the full range of an individual’s humanity will unfold someplace, whether or not we would choose to call that place a community. That place then becomes a kind of stage on which political, social, economic, educational, and religious lives become manifest, however well- or ill-developed these might be. And the interaction between these lives in that place contributes to a certain kind of enacted story told time and time again whenever the place is described (p.198).

What Theobald and Siskar are describing is vividly seen in Greene County, Virginia today. Long known as a rural central Virginia county with a lower socioeconomic status, newcomers to the area often regard the established community as poor and less educated then their urban counterparts. Shifflett and her family saw their humanity unfold in a “gap” area in the mountain regions of Virginia. The Shifflett family, like other rural Virginia mountain families, are so rooted in this place, and the education they received in the schools so viciously disagreed with the lessons they received at home in the Gap that those disagreements developed into stories to be hashed and rehashed when the Shifflett family is asked to recount their school days. Those stories, do not always have a happy ending. For example, in Cousin Herman (and Shifflett’) case, the teacher had no knowledge of what the home conditions of her Gap students were like and that lack of knowledge is shown clearly in the enactment of the Ideal Breakfast story’s ending:

[after Herman told the teacher what he ate for breakfast], Herman’s classmates began to snicker. The teacher seemed to start to get sick to her stomach as she said, ‘Those things are not breakfast foods.’ Then the whole class laughed at Herman including the teacher. It was as if that incident was the straw that broke Herman’s back. He dropped out of school shortly thereafter (p.241).
Shifflett indicates in her writing that the harsh treatment of the Gap students came as a result of her peers mirroring how they saw their teachers behaving. Theobald and Siskar would explain inappropriate behavior that the teachers displayed as being a result of the teachers not being members of the Gap community. The authors (2007) explain a community as:

…the criteria for its [a community’s] existence resides largely in the subjective realm of feeling, which accounts for the popular reference to a “sense” of community. The degree to which a particular place in fact constitutes a community depends not on the number of people living in close proximity to one another, but on the amount of life circumstances that are shared (p.198).

In Greene County, Virginia, the amount of life circumstances that are shared by the mountain people is countless. These shared experiences, lived by those in Greene County, Virginia as well as the Shifflett family in Hopkins Gap, includes hunting wild game before school, participating in hog butchering both at you own home and at your neighbors, harvesting produce and canning it for the winter, drinking from dippers on the back porch, using outhouses, and a host of other daily tasks that were vastly different than those of the students from more populated and easily accessible regions of Virginia. Mountain children may have had handmade dresses, shared lunch pails, and had limited access to hot running water. All of these things would make a child stand out as “different” if the other students could not relate to their experiences. That combined with the teacher drawing attention to the differences, such as with Cousin Herman and the breakfast, is sure to create a divide between students and make sure some students know they are less worthy than the others. Shifflett (2004) relates a personal example of how this divide was made obvious to her:

On tooth inspection days, she [the teacher] checked everybody’s teeth and usually gave each of us a sample tube of Pepsodent toothpaste. One time she used my teeth to show the other kids why
they needed to brush everyday. She had everybody line up and look in my mouth at my dirty teeth. She had no idea how cold my house was on winter mornings. I hated that teacher with her yellow-pencil pointer. I felt she was damned lucky I got all my clothes on in the cold house much less brush my teeth everyday (p.240).

Beyond having no concept of how cold some of the students’ houses were on winter mornings (primarily because the houses were heated with wood fires and stoves and the fires would die down overnight and need to be stoked in the morning), they also lacked the knowledge of what items students had in their homes. For instance, Shifflett (2004), elaborating on the tooth situation writes, “The kids from Hopkins Gap probably knew what to do with the toothpaste, but they didn’t have toothbrushes at home” (p.240). The teachers were creating a divide in their “classroom community” purely by failing to be aware of the living conditions of their students. These divides continued past graduation and assisted in perpetuating the stereotypes held about the mountain people.

**Fact versus Fiction for the Mountain People**

These stereotypes, along with some of the research outlined above, may have laid the foundation for the continued distrust and anger seen today in the rural Virginia mountain regions. While the government categorized the residents of the mountain lands as “hillbillies” and minimized the actual number of mountain inhabitants prior to the creation of the Shenandoah National Park, Provence (2011) relies on Nancy Martin-Perdue’s description:

They were living a life that was common in the early part of the century. To take land from people considered lower class— it was a subsistence viewpoint put against the middle class who wanted to get out in nature.” These people already were living in nature. Yet it turned into, ‘We
have the right to make decisions for them.' People justified taking their land and gave them very little for it (p.1).

Martin-Perdue’s statement about the government officials feeling they had the “right” to make determinations for the mountain people summarizes perfectly the cause of the conflict that ensued and continues today. The attitude that the government and developers had the right to make decisions for people who had been surviving and thriving on land for hundreds of years was and continues to be one of the major issues that has created the rift between the government and the mountain people. Some of the impacts of the rift include an economic stagnation of the displaced mountain people, a loss of the knowledge of the lifestyle and culture of the mountain people, and a disregard and lack of awareness of government programs by the mountain people. As the population that experienced the resettlement dies off, the history and culture of the mountain people is vanishing.
Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Qualitative Narrative Inquiry

This chapter of the dissertation describes the research design, setting, methodology, sampling, data collection, and research analysis. In addition, this chapter outlines the measures that were taken, and continue to be utilized, to insure that the collected data will remain protected and confidential. In addition, this chapter of the dissertation includes information pertaining to the Institutional Review Board’s approval for data collection. Finally, this chapter provides the interview protocol for the research participants, an explanation of how the research participants were recruited for participation, and an explanation of how the collected data was handled.

Rationale of the Research

This qualitative study, conducted as a narrative inquiry, seeks to discover the story of the mountain people of Greene County, Virginia who were evicted and resettled when the Shenandoah National Park was built. The events surrounding the creation of the Shenandoah National Park and the experiences of the people who were resettled in order for the Park land to become available are often overlooked in the fabric of United States history, but the stories of those that lived through the resettlements are rich and powerful and they deserve to be recorded and related.

Narrative Inquiry

There exists in Appalachia, a long tradition of storytelling. This tradition, combined with the typically slow pace of life in the American southern region, generally means that encountering a new person will involve a significant time investment, and likely, the granting an audience to hear the new person’s life story. These encounters that lead to the exchanging of life
stories, can be described in academic terms as narrative inquiry. Trahar (2009), cites the work of Andrews, Squire, and Tambokou when she describes narrative inquiry, “Narrative inquiry is based firmly in the premise that, as human beings, we come to understand and give meaning to our lives through story” (p.2). Collecting the stories of the mountain people who were resettled, and examining those stories for recurring themes is at the core of this research. Finding these themes, and gaining an understanding of how the mountain people perceive the events that they experienced in the resettlement is the overarching goal of this dissertation.

Trahar (1996) says that Josselson, “suggests that narrative inquiry should be mutual and collaborative, within a relationship that is being established over time, which allows for the telling and re-telling of stories.” (2009, p.13). By virtue of my living in Greene County, Virginia, and having “insider” status, I discovered two key insights during this research. First, while everything Josselson states is correct, based on my experience, the relationship that is mentioned is necessary if one even hopes to begin to gather other individuals’ life stories. Second, with regard to the mountain people of Greene County, Virginia, the “story” that is revealed to “outsiders” is vastly different than the story told to trusted insiders. These trusted insiders attain that status only after being embedded, in a neighborly fashion, within the culture and vicinity of the mountain people for a long and significant period of time. This led to me sometimes questioning the validity of the information I was collecting. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discuss this as a “tension” that surrounds certainty in narrative inquiry (p.31). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain how to approach this uncertainty. Any one interpretation would need to be treated as tentative. Thus, the attitude in a narrative perspective is of doing ‘one’s best’ under the circumstance, knowing all the while other ways of explaining things are possible (p.31).
This guidance, to do my best to interpret the data and verify its validity via cross-checking and triangulation was a direction I paid close attention to throughout my data collection and analysis. I especially focused on triangulation, which Glesne (2011) describes as, “relying on multiple methods” of data collection (1989, p.47), by talking to a variety of people in various positions for my data collection. This use of triangulation allowed me to cross-check my findings to insure I was seeing the same patterns emerge from multiple approaches to the data.

**Relationships and Conflict**

Many times over the course of conducting my field research and locating interview participants the question of, “Who is asking?” was presented. Once I was discovered to be the researcher, people were very willing to share their stories with me. However, I quickly came to realize that the stories and documentation I was being provided differed greatly from published sources I had explored. When I questioned these incongruences, the answer consistently was, “You are a Greene County girl, we trust you, so we will tell you our truth”. Even in the midst of data collection, conflict was brought to light, as the years of living in conflict with the government led the mountain people to tell outsiders a story of their experience that was not always true.

Trahar continues to reference Josselson in her writing. However, Josselson suggests challenging a concept of narrative inquiry that I find to be imperative, “what we seek in narrative research is some understanding of the patterns that cohere among individuals and the aspects of lived experience that differentiate.” (Josselson p.5 as cited by Trahar p. 9). These patterns and differences are almost precisely what I worked to discover. Learning what patterns and customs characterize the mountain people, as well as uncovering what differences exist between people
are critical discoveries. Clandinin and Connelly explained this in a manner that applies directly to the mountain people of Greene County:

As researchers, we come to each new inquiry field living our stories. Our participants also enter the inquiry field in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue. Furthermore, the places in which they live and work, their classrooms, their schools, and their communities are also in the midst when we researchers arrive. Their institutions and their communities, their landscapes in the broadest sense, are also in the midst of stories (2000 pp.63-64).

These lived stories, and the environment the stories occur in, added a layer of rich detail while they concurrently provided raw data that was analyzed to help find answers to my four research questions.

**Research Questions**

The goal of this research is to understand the impact that being evicted and resettled from their Greene County, Virginia mountain land has had on the older mountain people and their sons and daughters. In addition, this research seeks to better understand how that impact affected them culturally and from an educational leadership perspective. To gain this understanding, I listened to how the Greene County mountain people described losing their land and how those experiences shaped their continued existence, into present day. These research questions should allow for a greater understanding of how to capture existing knowledge and cultural history before it disappears forever.

As previously stated, my research questions are:
1. What kind of knowledge allowed the mountain people of Greene County Virginia to survive being relocated from their land between 1935 and 1937?

2. What kind of value, if any, do the mountain people place on “scholarly” or formal learning?

3. What kind of value, if any, do the mountain people place on informal learning?

4. What knowledge, if any, do the mountain people consider “lost” compared to what knowledge they have kept and passed down to younger generations?

**Research Methodology**

If you want to understand a culture, you need to listen to the stories of the people within that culture. In order to understand the mountain people, and their lived experience of being resettled from the land that they lived on and worked when the Shenandoah National Park was built, this research was conducted as a case study. I captured the oral histories of the surviving people and their families by collecting data during interviews conducted with the mountain people who experienced resettlement, and in some cases, with the surviving descendants of those who experienced the resettlement. Once the interviews were conducted, the collected data was analyzed, following standards that will be further explained later in this chapter of the dissertation.

This method of data collection allowed me to capture the data using a first person approach and also experience the facial expressions, body language, and mannerisms the people subconsciously expressed as they shared their experiences with me. In addition, conducting this research in rural Virginia afforded me two unforeseen benefits. First, listening to the narratives in the mountain setting granted me the ability to be geographically aware of the area. In portions of the interviews, when individuals related traveling from their homes to the closest store, or the
process used to move chestnut trees for processing, I was, quite literally, able to turn around and realize that those journeys involved walking miles up and down steep mountain inclines. This is a fact that would be overlooked if the research was conducted from a distance. Second, hearing people’s stories and listening to them describe hunting, farming, and preserving food, and having that visit conclude with a tour of the family’s food storage rooms is an unrivaled experience. These rich experiences, details blending into the story that defines each family provided the details that make this narrative study valuable and worthwhile.

**Qualitative Research**

This research lends itself to a qualitative methodology nicely, as Schram (2006) indicates questions which are “well suited to qualitative inquiry” include [those that], “…are aimed at understanding how participants in a setting make sense of and give meaning to their lives and experiences” (p.87). Following Schram’s guidance, this research was conducted in a manner that asked questions and allowed individuals to highlight the aspects of the resettlement that they felt were most important. In almost all cases, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the most important aspects that emerged focused on survival tasks obtaining food, clothing, shelter, and self-improvement (acquiring skills and knowledge). In part, this research strived to determine if each oral history applied meaning to the same aspects, and at what point in their individual narratives did the interview participants indicate an aspect that was of greater importance than any other.

**Locating Study Participants**

The first step in conducting these oral histories was to locate the participants needed for the study. In the case of the mountain people, locating interview participants was particularly
challenging for a host of reasons. Some of the primary reasons that it was difficult to locate Greene County residents who were displaced when the Shenandoah National Park was built included the fact that this is an aging population and some of the residents have died, also some of “the displaced” have illnesses that impact their memory. Kashouty, (2015), quotes Craig Lam, who founded Blue Ridge Genealogy, about the issues with capturing some of the oral histories:

We are facing an aging generation that is slowly leaving us,” he said, noting many who have relative narratives are not only elderly, but sometimes suffering from Alzheimer’s disease or dementia. “Some won’t talk and there are others who can’t [due to memory altering diseases or other disabilities] (Kashouty 2015 p.1).

Lam is absolutely correct about the issues of aging and memory-impacting diseases creating obstacles for the work of those researchers seeking to study the mountain people who experienced resettlement. However, an unexpected complication also arose during the course of the field research, one of difficulty in collaboration that initially created significant limitations to my data collection.

**Study Limitations**

The greatest limitation of the study was locating participants. Since the population that was resettled is now elderly, one of the hardest limitations to overcome was the fact that many of the people who had been resettled have either died, or are suffering from afflictions such as Alzheimer’s disease, which significantly impacted the ability to capture their oral histories. In order to compensate for this limitation, I modified the original study parameters to capture oral histories from the children and grandchildren of the Greene County mountain population that had
been relocated. In some cases, I was able to locate family members who had written records of the experiences their ancestors had encountered when they were resettled, which added a unique perspective to the study.

Another limitation to the study occurred when difficulty was encountered gaining access to the Shenandoah National Park archives. An initial Freedom of Information Act request and waiver request were addressed with no comment on the request itself but a denial of the fee waiver for the documentation. Access to the Shenandoah National Park archives was not approved and granted until Virginia Senator Timothy Kaine intervened on my behalf with the federal Department of the Interior. The process of gaining access to the archives took a much greater amount of time than initially anticipated and that proved to be a significant limitation to the study as well.

**Study Delimitations**

The study delimitations were driven by my research goals. As my research focus is on education and specific aspects of education that need special consideration for rural education, the study was framed to collect information about formal and informal learning. As I progressed along my research, I discovered a distinction between what I refer to as “academic” schools and what were known as industrial schools in Greene County. I purposely chose to collect as much information as possible about both of those types of schools in part so that I could determine if industrial schools fell into the category of formal or informal learning. I needed to set a boundary that excluded oral histories from people outside of Greene County, which was a deliberate choice. While there are nine counties where land was utilized to build the Shenandoah National Park, and three counties that held large populations of displaced residents, I had to narrow the scope of this research to focus on only one county in order to complete this work in a
timely manner. I chose Greene County because it is the county I reside in personally and it houses the educational system I was taught in, therefore I was afforded the luxury and hindrance of being intimately aware of the existing system. I also purposely decided to only interview and capture the stories of the people who were resettled and not the experiences of the officials and people who carried out the evictions, specifically because those performing the evictions did not experience the same events and circumstances, nor was there a likelihood that the evictors and politicians had a cause to adjust their learning as a means of survival. The lived experiences of the evictors was not relevant to this research.

**Sampling**

Locating a population to interview is a strategic endeavor, particularly when the research participants lack electricity and telephones, much less a social media or electronic presence, as is the case with the mountain population. Finding the initial participants proved to be the most challenging and stressful aspect of the research process. The initial sample for this research was purposive. Tongco (2007) cites Allen when describing purposive sampling, “Criteria are set on what would make a good informant, and what would make a bad informant. Based on these, a list of qualifications is composed. It is especially important to be clear on informant qualifications when using purposive sampling” (p.151). Even more critical when choosing a purposive sample, according to Tongco, is “The informant must also be as near as possible to the theoretical norm of the sampled population (e.g. as close as possible to the typical woodcarver), and able to communicate often with other people of his or her craft” (Allen 1971, Lewis & Sheppard 2006 as cited by Tongco 2007 p.151).
Therefore, this study needed to find individuals who could clearly articulate the experiences and impacts of being resettled, in addition to the necessity that the research participants be “typical” mountain people.

**Snowball Sampling**

Due to the issues outlined by Lam, compounded by the fact that many mountain families in Greene County, Virginia live in houses that lack electricity and phone capabilities, locating oral history candidates proved to be extremely difficult. Every effort was made to locate as many interview participants as possible but many of the typical methods of interview scheduling were not useful for this study. To address this issue, I employed a type of sampling known as snowball sampling. Frank and Snijders (1994) provide an option for locating members of a population that is difficult to reach, snowball sampling:

> A very small subpopulation or a subpopulation of individuals who are unwilling to disclose themselves will here be referred to as a hidden population. Very few members of a hidden population can usually be found by standard sampling methods. Often, however, there exists a contact pattern between the members of the hidden population, which means that they know, or know of, each other. If these contacts could be used for finding members of the hidden population, then new estimation problems arise because of the nonstandard sampling procedure. Snowball sampling is a way of having initially sampled individuals lead you to other members of the hidden population, which in turn could lead to further members, etc. (pp.53-54)

Atkinson and Flint (2001) expand on Frank and Snijders explanation in their writing:

Snowball sampling may simply be defined as:
A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 1999).

This strategy can be viewed as a response to overcoming the problems associated with sampling concealed populations such as the criminal and the isolated (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Snowball sampling can be placed within a wider set of link-tracing methodologies (Spreen, 1992) which seek to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts (Thomson, 1997). This process is based on the assumption that a ‘bond’ or ‘link’ exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance (Berg, 1988, p.3).

Snowball sampling proved to be a very useful technique in this research. Atkinson and Flint (2001) make the point that

Snowball sampling contradicts many of the assumptions underpinning conventional notions of sampling but has a number of advantages for sampling populations such as the deprived, the socially stigmatised [sic] and elites (2001, p.1).

While snowball sampling may not be the preferred choice of locating study participants, Atkinson and Flint (2001) explain why the technique could be the ideal option for a study involving the mountain people:

Treading an uneasy line between the dictates of replicable and representative research design and the more flowing and theoretically led sampling techniques of qualitative research, snowball sampling lies somewhat at the margins of research practice. However, the technique offers real benefits for studies which seek to access difficult to reach or hidden populations. These are often
obscured from the view of social researchers and policy makers who are keen to obtain evidence of the experiences of some of the more marginal excluded groups (pp. 1-2).

As described in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, very few populations in the United States fit the description of “hidden” better than the mountain people of Virginia. The geography of mountain gaps and hollows make reaching them difficult. The terrain can be impassable depending on the weather conditions. The conflict that is felt by the mountain people has created for them, an attitude of suspicion, where knowledge of the arrival of an outsider is shared quickly between the residents of the hollow. During one afternoon, while conducting field research in an unfamiliar area, I realized I had lingered too long in one particular spot when the elderly mountain woman standing on her front porch raised her shotgun and pointed it at my vehicle. With that knowledge in mind, snowball sampling is perhaps one of the only methods that would have been successful in locating research participants.

Atkinson and Flint (2001) express quite well why these techniques held the greatest chance of success for this research, “Snowball-based methodologies are a valuable tool in studying the lifestyles of groups often located outside mainstream social research” (p.4). However, relying solely on snowball sampling was not a strategy that would have insured the greatest number of oral histories are captured. Therefore, I also attempted to find research participants by contacting and networking with members of the Mountain Memories project, the Blue Ridge Heritage project, and the Children of the Shenandoah. The overarching goal was to use the snowball technique in conjunction with personal contacts in various mountain heritage projects to insure that as many surviving members of the Greene County displaced mountain people’s population are able to share their histories with the researcher.
Social Media and Snowball Sampling

After a significant portion of time passed while I tried to locate interview participants, I began to search for other avenues to attain the oral histories. On January 5, 2016, I posted the following message on my personal Facebook page:

“Greene County folks--I could use some help please! My dissertation is an oral history project for the families that were evicted and relocated to Greene County when the Shenandoah National Park was built. I’m trying to locate family members who would be willing to share their family's stories with me. It is a critical piece of our country's history that very few people know about and I want to make sure that the families that were impacted are honored and respected. If you know of any families that were displaced, or if you have a family member that was evicted from the land that became the Park and you would be willing to talk to me, please send me a message! I would be forever grateful!”

That message started a process of discovery that continues today. Some of my personal friends shared that message on their own Facebook pages, instructing their friends to direct any questions or suggestions to me. I was also contacted by multiple friends who live (or lived) in Greene County, Virginia with relatives that had experienced being resettled. One former teacher suggested contacting the Greene County Historical Society as well. Each response was acknowledged and considered as I sought to identify appropriate interview candidates. In the true nature of snowball sampling, one individual often suggested another person to contact, until I began to feel that “the floodgates have truly opened”. I received interview leads from my Facebook post, from personal friends, and from the Greene County Historical Society. I was also able to gain permission for access to the Shenandoah National Park archives after Virginia Senator Tim Kaine intervened on my behalf. Finally, Katerina Powell’s collection of letters,
bound in the text Answer at Once, Dorothy Noble Smith’s captured audio oral histories and text from the 1980’s, now housed in the Special Collections Library at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and George Freeman Pollock’s autobiography, Skyland, were used as first level resources in the process of data collection.

**Document Review and Analysis**

Many documents and artifacts were examined throughout the course of this research. Part of the observational portion of the data collection process included retrieving maps of the Shenandoah National Park from the Swift Run Gap entrance of the Park. The Greene County Historical Society and the Greene County Chamber of Commerce provided maps showing the initial land proposed for the Shenandoah National Park (a tract that was much larger than the final Park ended up being) as well as maps showing the land records of Greene County, Virginia prior to the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. The Blue Ridge Heritage Project and the Greene County Chamber of Congress as provided and approved the inclusion of the spreadsheet referenced in Chapter 4 that tracks the land and material possessions of each Greene County family/individual that experienced the resettlement. Dorothy Noble Smith, working with James Madison University undertook an oral history project in the 1980s for the resettled mountain population of Rockingham Virginia, which, geographically, is adjacent to Greene County, Virginia so transcripts and publications from that research project were explored. In addition, the autobiography and papers of Pollack were included in the reviewed documentation. Additional documentation selected for review was a collection of letters written by the mountain people to Park officials asking questions about issues pertaining to the resettlement and their livelihood. These letters are one of the best representations of the mindset of the mountain people as they faced relocation. The archives of the Shenandoah National Park are located in
Luray, Virginia and, by all accounts, they are not organized or catalogued and are only viewable with permission and by appointment, which is another example of the conflict between the government and the mountain people. Therefore, the truest representations of the experiences of the mountain people were found in the stories from the individuals themselves.

**Field Research Observations**

During the interviews and in addition to verbal interview, data observations were recorded to enable me to provide a thick description of the environment, living conditions, and habits of the mountain people. I took extra precautions to insure that the data observations that were recorded can in no way be used to identify study participants. However, in some cases, as is seen in Figure 8 below, the field research led to locations that are thriving business today. For example, Figure 8 is a picture of the Rosemont Inn, which is currently a fully operating bed and breakfast, along with an events venue. Rosemont Inn was also the site of one of the original resettlement “villages” that the mountain people moved after they were evicted from the Park land. The current owners of Rosemont Inn were gracious and incredibly helpful, as they took me on a guided tour of the property, provided multiple sources of documentation, and granted permission for me to take and use any photographs I wished. I am indebted to them for their kindness and assistance.
Many of the areas that were used for the resettlement are properties that still hold private residences today. Extreme care was taken to not capture any personal or identifying information as I collected photographs and performed field observations. In many cases, locating resettlement properties required four wheel drive vehicles. In cases where the terrain would not even allow for four wheel drive to be passable, observations were collected by hiking in to the remote locations. An example of the observations in these remote locales can be seen in Figure 9 below:
Figure 9: Resettlement Property in Greene County Virginia Present Day

This residence includes the tin roof, wide front porch, shade trees, and wooden construction that are so often described in writings about the mountain people. Chapter 4 of this dissertation will include a much greater depth of explanations with regards to the data observations. However, it is important to note that aspects of the environment were captured at every possible opportunity. The data observation included notations of the sights, sounds, smells, and even temperatures experienced while in the field. One interview, conducted in the subject’s basement, was done on a particularly cold day and the basement was not heated, so the room was chilly. The temperature led to a conversation between the interview subject and myself about how much we preferred a fireplace as a heat source as opposed to oil or electric heat. Collecting this level and specificity of data enabled me to provide rich descriptions that complemented the words my interview participants were sharing.
Research Participants

The research participants were carefully selected and recruited. The temptation to capture as many oral histories as possible reared but was controlled, in part due to the necessity of managing the scope of this research. Maxwell (2013) sums up the rationale behind my strategy of combining interviews and observations, “…observation is often used to describe settings, behavior, and events, while interviewing is used to understand the perspectives and goals of the actors.” (p.102). In order to achieve the clearest understanding of the impacts of resettlement on the mountain people, I needed to select participants who have experienced the resettlement, but who also had made Greene County their residence post eviction. These participants, and in some cases, their immediate descendants, were sharing with me their memories of the events surrounding the resettlement and their daily lives after they had been resettled. Maxwell (2013) explains why this is only one portion of the information that is needed for this research. Generating an interpretation of someone’s perspective is inherently a matter of inference from descriptions of that person’s behavior (including verbal behavior), whether the data are derived from observations, interviews, or some other source such as written documents (1992, pp.102-103).

The selected participants therefore, were people that I could either speak to face to face, or individuals who had been told directly by an immediate relative about their experiences when they were evicted and resettled. Every interview participant was alive prior to 1935, was a resident of Greene County, Virginia, and had been, or their immediate family member had been, relocated during the creation of the Shenandoah National Park.
Encountering and Eliminating Bias

One key consideration during data observation and collection was how I, as the researcher could avoid having bias and remain impartial, particularly when the data was being collected in the locale where I have spent most of my life. This becomes even more crucial when one considers that the data being collected is the life story of a certain number of individuals. Merriam (1995) explains

Qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional, and ever-changing; there is no such thing as a single immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured. Thus, there are interpretations of reality; in a sense the researcher offers his or her interpretation of someone else’s interpretation of reality (1995, p.54).

Merriam (1995) provides the researcher with some strategies to help insure the integrity of the data that is collected, the most valuable of which in this circumstance may be member checking. Merriam explains member checking as taking some of the initial findings of the data back to study participants to check and make sure that the data analysis matches the intention of the study participant’s words (1995 p.55). In my case, I read back my notes to each individual throughout the interviews, to insure I was capturing their true meaning. I also told every participant that they were welcome to read my work once it was completed.

Multiple Perspectives

Another strategy outlined by Merriam, used during this study is data triangulation. By triangulating the data that was collected during interviews with data that was collected during field observations and comparing those findings with the patterns and information that emerged
during the document review, I was able to ascertain if the conclusions and findings that emerged from the data are valid (Merriam 1995 p.55). In this case, I took careful precautions to gather information, not only from the mountain people, but also from professionals at the Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge School. Many individuals I encountered during data observations had lived in Greene County for twenty to thirty years, but they were not relatives of people who had been resettled. Instead, they may have purchased properties that were key locations during the resettlement era. For example, the current owners of the Rosebrook Inn, the site of a resettlement “village”, purchased the property in the 1980s but had made a significant effort to collect as much historical background as possible on their property. They provided me with the image in Figure 10, which shows what Rosebrook looked like in the resettlement era.

Overcoming the inherent bias I had, by virtue of my personal residence and interactions with the mountain people, proved to be the most difficult aspect of this research. At times, I experienced an internal conflict that mirrored my framework as I struggled to find agreement between that which I had been told was fact and the facts my research uncovered. Yet, in order to provide this research with the justice and honor it deserves, I needed to manage the bias and remain as impartial as possible. This was achieved by a constant conscious decision to double check each piece of information I received and a significant portion of time being dedicated to gaining the perspective of Pollock and the government officials who selected the location for the new national Park.
Interviewing Research Participants

Data was collected as interviews were being conducted. One aspect of the data collection that I anticipated being challenging was capturing the data accurately at the time of the interview. There was a distinct likelihood that the mountain people being interviewed would not consent to audio recordings because they lack electricity and are, by nature, suspicious of technology and modern conveniences. In addition, some of the mountain people are illiterate and are not willing to consent to people writing extensively in front of them. The conflict that is described in the literature review is evidenced by the mountain population not believing what authority figures tell them and the mountain people sometimes lack the ability to determine for themselves what has been written. The following standards were submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board.
Consent

Timing and Location of Consent

Interviews with participants were conducted at the participant’s residence, unless the participants requested otherwise. Informed consent was obtained at the residence prior to the beginning of the interview/observation process. No data collection occurred until consent was obtained. Participants were constantly reminded during the process of the data collection that they had the right to refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. In true Southern manner, where data observation was conducted, those who generously gave me their time and access to their property/information were told that, if at any point they felt I had, “overstayed my welcome” they were to let me know and I would cease my research immediately. Before taking any pictures or exploring any artifacts, I asked for expressed permission to take the photos and collect the data and the participants were aware this was being used for dissertation research.

Coercion or Undue Influence during Consent

The participants were contacted and approached in a respectful and calm manner. The purpose of the study, the process of the interview and observation were all explained using terms and vocabulary that the potential participants were able to understand. Participants were allowed to ask any clarifying questions they wanted and it was stressed that their participation was strictly voluntary and there was absolutely no penalty for not participating. In addition, interviews and observations were scheduled ahead of time, giving each interview subject the opportunity to change their mind and withdraw their consent to participate. In one case, an interview participant’s spouse passed away the day before our scheduled interview. Once I was
made aware of these circumstances, I contacted the participant and let them know I understood completely if they chose to withdraw from the research. The individual indicated that they very much wanted to continue in the study, and only asked that we re-schedule the interview to allow time for final arrangements to be made. That interview was conducted five days later, at the request of the participant. Interview participants were also made aware that they had the right to decline to answer any questions they chose.

**Data Security**

Collected data was stored on an encrypted laptop and backed up on an encrypted hard drive that is always in the possession of the researcher or locked in secure storage when not in use and the only individuals that will have access to the data will be the researcher, the faculty advisor, and the members of the dissertation committee. The data was also backed up to a password protected and secure cloud storage system that is only accessible to myself. The rationale for utilizing cloud storage was that it provided an additional backup of the information, in a separate location from the laptop and hard drive. This insured that in the event of catastrophic disaster (flooding, fire, etc), the collected and analyzed data was still secure and available to be retrieved. Data that is publically available, such as the maps and land records that were utilized, were not stored as securely, given the fact that they are accessible to any individual. The handling of land records, and all questions pertaining to them, were addressed to a former Clerk of the Greene County Court and were determined to be information that could be accessed by any individual who had the names of both the land seller and the land purchaser. The following pages include the interview protocol that was used in all interviews, to insure and protect the validity of the data.
Interview Protocol

Below are the interview questions that were submitted to and approved by the Institutional Review Board. These questions will be asked of every interview subject and no additional questions will be asked of any individual.

1. How old were you when you moved off the mountain land?
2. Do you remember what your mountain home/farm looked like? Can you describe it for me?
3. How did you start your day when you lived on the mountain? Did you work on a farm? Did you have daily chores?
4. When you lived on the mountain, did you go to school?
5. What time did school start? How did you get there? How far was it from home?
6. How long was your school day?
7. What was your teacher’s name? Did you like her? What did you like/dislike about her?
8. What was your favorite thing to study in school?
9. Did you go home for dinner?
10. If not, what type of lunch did you take and how did you get it to school?
11. Did your parents teach you things at home (how to sew, or farm, or work lumber, etc?)
12. What did you do after school?
13. What type of evening chores did you do?
14. How did your family eat supper?
15. When you moved off the mountain, how did you start your day?
16. Did you have chores?
17. What did you do?

18. Once you moved off the mountain did you go to school? Was it a different school? How did you get there?

19. What did the school look like? Were there desks?

20. What was your teacher like? What was her name?

21. Once you moved, did you have the same kids in your class?

22. What did you do once you got home from school?

23. What were your evenings and weekends like?

**Data Analysis**

Once the data was collected, a variety of analyses were performed. First, each set of field notes was read immediately following the data collection and then re-read twenty-four hours later. In the second reading of the data, any pertinent questions that arose were written down in separate notes. The next step was to code the data using a variety of keywords. The coded data was then read again, to discover the emerging themes within the data. The results of that coding will be discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, but some of the major themes/code words included: skills, learning, survival, wood (logging/barking), walking, mountains, family, and church. The themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were similar, if not identical, to the themes that emerged, both in the literature review and the field observations that did not include interviews.

While this research was a narrative inquiry and not an ethnography, Spradley’s (1979) guidance on data analysis was very useful
In order to achieve our goal of describing a cultural meaning system in its own terms, the ethnographer must analyze cultural data in a way that is distinct from other forms of analysis used in social sciences (1979, p.92).

**Conclusion**

The selected methodology determines how the study will progress. The experience of being resettled when the Shenandoah National Park was built is one that lends itself to qualitative methods and specifically narrative inquiry. In essence, I set out to collect the life stories and oral histories of a select group of individuals and compare that with historical documentation to apply that information to my stated research questions. I was most interested in the educational aspects of the resettlement experience and organized my data collection around sources that would aid in answering those questions. Yet, I needed to be careful not to have pre-determined expectations. I followed the guidance of Glesne, who quotes Savyasaachi’s 1998 writing:

**Friendship in the Field**

It is not indifference, but care, concern and involvement that sustains a continuous discourse with people and prepares the ground for the legitimacy of an inquiry.

(Savyasaachi 1998, 110) (p.146).

This care and concern needed to be carefully monitored and managed so as to not detract from the credibility of the research. This management was accomplished by following the guidance of Emerson, Glesne, Creswell, and Spradley as well as by a variety of mentors I trusted. A final failsafe was conducted throughout the data analysis by analyzing documentation and then determining if other independent researchers recognized the same patterns and outcomes that I
did. When I found references that indicated an ongoing conflict and combined that with the knowledge that a change in government leadership occurred during the period of resettlement, leading to what some researcher labeled “confusion” I started to come to the realization that I was approaching the research and data with my bias as controlled as possible. That aspect allowed me to examine and analyze all my data in a manner that was both respectful, and as much as possible, impartial.
Chapter 4 Research Findings

In various sections of this dissertation, acknowledgement has been given to the fact that Greene County, Virginia is my home residence and I have intimate knowledge of the locations and people that comprise the county. During my childhood, it was not unusual to find me sitting on the front porch of one of our neighbors, drinking Coca-Cola from glass bottles with my bare feet swinging off the edge of the porch while our elderly neighbors sat and rocked and told me stories. Many of the stories included experiences that occurred during the evictions and resettlement, passed down from generation to generation and told in a calm and matter of fact way to entertain a child as chores were being done. I was able to recognize the same tactics utilized by Miss Nelie, as these stories were told to me to pass the time as I shelled peas or took the strings off of green beans. The traditions of the rural mountain people repeated themselves, as time passes, and yet still, everybody works and contributes and time is not wasted. It was difficult to “forget” those stories and experiences, or more accurately, actively work at not comparing those stories to the data I was collecting as I conducted my field research.

This internal comparison was further complicated when I was forced to accept that there are huge variations in the information surrounding the events of the resettlement. As I considered the letter Sizer wrote and some of the false facts that have been published about the mountain people, the argument was easily made that the mountain people have been repeatedly marginalized and socially stigmatized. This idea was cemented for me when I visited the Greene County Historical Society to see their resettlement display. The display contains a number of artifacts that the Society implies are from various mountain people during the resettlement. However, when pressed for details, members of the Society acknowledged that the “artifacts” were actually reproductions that were created and donated to the Society by other members.
This led to me having some concerns about the validity of the data I was collecting, but I was able to rely on my qualitative research training to find insure the integrity of the data I collected. As the research progressed, I was able to gain confidence in the sampling I had done, in part because I began to realize I was hearing similar types of events being described in multiple interviews. Each subject described a type of childhood, educational experiences, and lived experiences that mirrored descriptions I read for the literature review and information I had heard in other data collection sessions.

The data collected is most certainly cultural and as I analyzed the information I had found, I discovered I was analyzing the interview transcripts very differently than I was analyzing the documents and letters. A large portion of the data that was collected outside of the interviews was tinged with a sense of fear. The distrust that is alluded to in Chapter 2 appeared as individuals questioned what I planned to do with this data. Pollock’s autobiography expresses a sense of uncertainty, particularly as he ventured to Stony Man Mountain the first time, as well as when he describes his first trip to Free State Hollow. The maps displayed at the Greene County Historical society and the Greene County Chamber of Commerce show the land that was “intended” to be included in the Shenandoah National Park, as well as the actual land that was collected in order to build the actual Park. The intended area was much larger than the final Park, supporting the themes of uncertainty and internal conflict people experienced between the announcement of the planning of the Park and the building of the Park.

If I am being honest with myself, it was a constant process to be open to what the data showed me, and not just uncover in the data what the results I expected to find. The process became much easier once some “surprises” emerged during my data collection and those surprises granted me the ability to become much more open. The surprises that were revealed
were, perhaps, the most powerful tool I had to combat my inherent bias and the more data I discovered and collected, the more my bias dissipated.

**Field Research Setting**

Almost all of the data that was collected was done in the field, while I was in residence in Greene County, Virginia. Much of the data was collected outside, in fields and pastures filled with grass. I collected data in May and June of 2015 and in December and January of 2016. The contrast was striking, as in the summer months the land was dry but loud, with the buzzing of insects and the sounds of birds and wildlife. I remarked many times that it was difficult to be unobtrusive while dry grass and undergrowth snapped beneath my feet. There was also a strange combination of historical and modern items joining, that I experienced. In many places, the land seemed untouched by modern advances, as field research took me deep into the woods with no hint of electrical lines or sounds of mechanical objects. Yet, feet away, the kiss of modern civilization was seen, as Figure 11 shows how a modern conveniences places its mark on the land.
This intersection, literally, shows the converging of the traditional names of the mountains, used for hundreds of years, and the modern requirement that all government maintained roads are named and labeled. In many ways, this image is the pictorial representation of the conflict that has occurred as history and tradition meet progress. This image also illustrates what Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) are describing when they state, “This has led Gunaratnam to argue for the value of a move from an emphasis on “commonality” to the ways in which “connectivity” is established between the researcher and members of settings (2003:97)” (p. 165). For this work, I need to connect to the research setting in order to connect to the people who inhabit that setting.

The data collected in January 2016 was, at times, gathered by scrambling through the woods, sinking in mud up towards my knees. I had to carefully plant my booted feet as I climbed around the foundations of the resettlement cabins of Rosebrook village. At one point, the current owner of Rosebrook and I both dodged thorny blackberry bushes that scratched down our faces and arms as we explored the area where the resettlement village barn had stood. Being in the woods, where the sounds included dripping water, wind whipping through pines trees, and
birds calling to one another, gave me a real sense of the lived environment that Clandinin and Connelly discuss, and it also allowed me a glimpse into what life in those woods in 1935 might have sounded like.

Unexpected Personal Findings

As I conducted field research, I was determined to keep my eyes and mind open. I had no blood connection to people who experienced being resettled, so I believed that I could remain impartial as I collected my data. However, life is full of irony and this experience was no different. In the course of my field research I discovered that my great grandparents, who I believed had settled in the Midwest, instead had lived on the mountains that were claimed for the Park. Their graves, I learned, were located in Madison County, Virginia, which is adjacent to Greene, County. I had not expected to uncover any information that had a personal connection and this finding, which, could have been expected to increase my bias, instead, clarified to me that I needed to be open and receptive to all of the information I received in order to create the narrative that best represented the educational aspects of the resettlement.

George Freeman Pollock Makes Promises

George Pollock, according to his autobiography, discovered that his father owned a tract of land that included Stoney Man Mountain in the late 1800s. Pollock decided to make the trek to observe the tract of land and see what, exactly, his father owned in 1886, when he was sixteen years old (p.3). Pollock writes that when he discussed the land with his father

My father told me that he understood that native ‘mountaineers,’ other ‘squatters’ and Shenandoah Valley residents were helping themselves and selling to the tanneries of Luray and Sperryville large quantities of chestnut and oak tanbark from the Stony Man Tract. Also, he had
heard that thousands of chestnut ties were being cut and hauled away and that many cattle were being pastured on the Tract (1960, p.3).

Pollock describes his trip to Luray, Virginia to locate some individuals who could provide him information about the land. In describing his first encounter with some of the people living on the land his family owned, Pollock wrote

This, my first, was a very friendly visit but I doubt whether it would have been so if the mountain people had been aware of the fact that my father and Mr. Allen owned most of the land upon which they were living (1960, p.17).

Pollock continues his remembrance of how he came to set up a camp that would eventually become the Skyland Resort by relating his arrival and establishment on Stoney Man mountain. He describes the original campsite he set up with a friend, and the encounters and business arrangements he enters into with the mountain people, all the while being aware of his tenuous position with the mountain people.

The story of our arrival, and that Mr. Allen and my father claimed to be the owners of the land spread over the mountains and sometimes, undoubtedly, we were in danger. Bare-footed mountain men from all around came to visit us and each carried a gun, for at that time and for twenty years afterwards you never saw one of those mountaineers without a gun over his shoulder (1960, p.20).

Pollock seems to attribute his safety to being a smooth talker and a generous employer who provided income opportunities to the mountaineers who were always looking for ways to earn more money (1960). Pollock does provide some explanation for why some mountaineers were more welcoming towards strangers then would be expected,
There was a boom going on at this time in all of the towns in the Valley of Virginia and building lots in small places like Luray were being sold to northern people at fabulous prices (1960, p.23).

As people in the Shenandoah Valley realized they needed money for survival, the opportunity to raise money was paramount. For those that had available land to sell, the ability to bring in income was hard to resist and the influx of “new” neighbors was a necessary adjustment. With this account, the acceptance of Pollock as a camper on a mountain is plausible. This combined with the knowledge that many of the mountaineers Pollock mentions encountering on the mountain were people who had rarely encountered outsiders or strangers may explain why no one challenged Pollock’s arrival or development of a summer camp. Certainly, the arrival of one more “stranger” and his promise of work and the chance to earn money may have been factors in Pollock’s welcome. Although there is no evidence I could uncover from the mountaineers’ perspective, I suspect that the mountain men Pollock encountered also believed that he [Pollock] was grossly outnumbered should they be required to “take a stand” against Pollock’s intrusion. The mountain people comprise a culture that institutes its own rules, laws, and governance, so it is probable that the notion that Pollock would use business and legal grounds to impose his will never occurred to the mountain people. In fairness, Pollock also relates bringing a preacher to the mountain and inviting the mountaineers to listen to him preach, participate in the choir, and partake of a free meal provided by Pollock’s camp dining tent (1960, p.33). Pollock offered jobs, food, and, by his accounts, a friendship to any mountaineer who was interested. Pollock’s autobiography reveals that he built a sense of community and new experiences for the mountain people, which, considering the tremulous financial and emotional state the country was in at the time would have, perhaps, been welcomed
by the mountain people. Providing weekly meals for the community would have also established a distinct sense of good will.

**Interview Subject #1 “The Saint Family”**

My first interview subject, a member of the Saint (pseudonym) family, related the experiences of their parents and grandparents. When I asked what types of information and skills were taught in the home, the answer reflected a variety of skills required to garden and farm. The interview subject, Jennifer Saint, is an older female, now a grandmother, who was born and raised in Greene County, Virginia, and a graduate of the Greene County public school system. We discussed raising livestock, a livelihood that continues today with their own grandchildren as their family business is horse farming. When I asked about daily life while they lived on the mountain, the Saint replied that first she wanted to make sure I understood the character of their family. A story was related to me about her grandfather (“PaPa”) who walked five miles to the closest store to purchase supplies prior to being resettled. PaPa gathered his purchases and walked the five miles home, at which time, he realized that he had been drinking a Coca-Cola while in the store (talking to the storekeeper) and forgotten to pay for the beverage. PaPa immediately walked the five miles back to the store to pay the five cents that the beverage cost and then returned to his home. It is not unusual for a family to think the best of their relatives, so I notated this story and commented on the integrity and honor their family possessed, while waiting for more details to emerge and focusing on listening actively to capture all of the information and details.

However, the most surprising and powerful data I collected from my first interview came as Jennifer was discussing her family’s life after the resettlement. Saints family was also one of the first families in Greene County to have television in their homes. She related to me the
events surrounding the last days of her grandfather’s life. Saint started this story by mentioning that PaPa had gone on a walk of many miles to visit his brother on Snow Mountain not long after the television was installed in the family home. PaPa never returned home and in broken words my Saint explained the events surrounding the discovery of what happened to her grandfather:

“2 week search (um, er), my daddy hired a pilot, from er, out from Charlottesville to um, fly over the mountains but um, one day the search party found him and the paper stated that he was in a cave but they didn’t state he had shot himself, where he had er gone, was like, deep rocks, formed to stacked leaning on each other or whatever and it was like a little hole you could crawl in and he uh crawled in there and he shot himself, and killed himself, so, um like I said, we thought he had had an asthma attack but he had killed himself. It was such a terrible time for us, because we lived right beside of him and he had moved down from High Top [Mountain].”

Saint explained to me that each time her family watched the news, PaPa would become very agitated and say, “they are going to come again and take everything we have”.

The events described above are indicative of a personal struggle experienced by an individual who had been resettled. PaPa Saint’s suicide created a need for the family to place blame, and in turn, paved the way for the family to feel a sense of conflict with regards to the Shenandoah National Park. This conflict evolved into an “us” (the mountain people who were resettled) versus “them” (the Park officials and people who were not resettled). When I asked questions about formal education, many of my questions were answered with anecdotes of children from resettled families not receiving the same level of education and educational opportunities that
other children did. The perceived conflict was seen as an imbalance, with children from resettled families being passed over for opportunities ranging from editing the high school yearbook to being placed in more academically robust classes. Yet each incident that was related to revealed another aspect of their family’s culture.

There was a pride related, an aspect of getting knocked down and rising back up. There was also another theme that emerged, one of stubbornness and determination that would appear in multiple interviews and across different families. When I coded my data, I noticed I was notating the words family, change, and accept (ance) more frequently than I had anticipated, but the revelation was valuable. In discussing that change, I steered the conversation back to questions about learning and education, only to see the concept of acceptance appearing again. This time, favorite subjects to study were discussed, and a love of English and literature was uncovered, but so too, was the acceptance that every member of the family would learn to care for livestock and work on the farm. In this way, I could see the convergence of the formal and informal learning I was so curious about. A family had gone, in just a few generations, from walking everywhere and not all highly educated, to a family of high school graduates and successful farmers. The farming skills were passed down from elder generation to younger generation, with an understanding of the importance of the work being bred since birth, but an emphasis was also placed on formal education, with encouragement to be involved in extracurricular activities as well as coursework. For the first time, I began to see that Jennifer’s family had tried to move past their external conflict with the government and the Park and find a measure of harmony in their circumstances. However, that conflict was still ingrained, as each family member learned informally the skills they would need for survival, regardless of the circumstances they might encounter in the future, even as they indicated a high value of the
importance of education. In almost every memory that was shared with me, the sense of coping and surviving emerged as driving forces behind the family’s efforts.

“Answer At Once”

The sense of coping and conflict are expressed deeply when listening to my first interview subject’s answers, but there was also a murkiness in the memories. Some things were apparently “talked about” and other things were not. This is also reflected in Katerina Powell’s edited collection of letters from mountain people who were facing resettlement. Powell explains her findings within the letters:

Although this direct resistance to the taking of families’ homes and property is unusual in the collection of letters, it reveals the underlying tension in many of the letters printed here. The correspondence between mountain residents and government officials tells a unique story about the people displaced from their mountain homes in order to form this national park and tourist attraction. The letters in the collection are diverse, wealthy landowners asked to continue their orchard operations, tenant farmers requested to remain in their current homes for another year, and neighbors desperately sought assistance in settling disputes with one another. As they wrote these requests and others, the residents revealed the magnitude of the effects of the displacement process on their lives. These never-before-published letters provide a rare glimpse into the lives of the mountaineers as “condensed autobiographies”—they provide in their words an account of how they continued to cope with the challenges of their looming displacement (2009, p.25).

Powell, who has invested countless hours investigating the letters written by those who were resettled, explains this coping, which I also feel is necessitated by the conflict experienced by the mountain people as she writes:
While many residents conceded to the power enacted by the federal government and by the rangers and superintendent working under the federal government’s auspices, many others neither participated in nor reinscribed the order of discourse dictated to them. The park and its mandates did not hold power for them, and they resisted their neighbors, the assumptions about them, and ultimately the park itself (2007, p.112).

Powell makes it clear that, while the letters were not all written with perfect grammar and spelling, the mountain people who chose to question the resettlement used a variety of methods to express their concerns about the events they were experiencing. This revealed, again, the concept of determination and the idea that the creation of the Park, the lands’ residents, was very much a conflict to their existence. The level of literacy and the complexity of their requests, however, varied widely, as evidenced by the letters below. These letters were selected from the almost 300 Powell included, partially for their content and partially because, in the preface of her work, Powell (2010) asks her readers to, “…look deeply at the rhetorical sophistication of the letters, to see the stories implicit in them, the pride in them.” (p.xvi). The selected letters are obviously written several years apart and by individuals who varied in their educational levels. In the first, the impression is the author is a businessman, aware of the way the federal government operated, while the second and third were written from a different perspective. Of particular note is that the first letter examined was addressed, not to a Park official, but to Virginia Senator Bird. The conflict and struggle felt by the author is evident, but so too is the desire to work, and the determination to carry on:

“Beaham, Virginia   August 21, 1933

My dear Sir:

I have been unable to get anything to do this year on the Sky line Drive I think owing to my politics there is plenty of work and lots of men in this locality who want employment.

I am asking that better arrangements be made for employment of local men without favor of color, party, or race.

My property as well as my neighbors is handicapped from a commercial standpoint by the Shenandoah National Park Condemnation procedure which is void and empty as a gourd.

I have never acquiesced to it in any way but have been suffering by it now. I humbly ask for a light job and good wages where I won’t be exposed to the weather and where I can be home where I now live at night. Or in other words I must have all that I ask for. Otherwise I will go to court and ask the Judge to set the whole condemnation procedure aside as it conflicts with the Constitution of the U.S. and our Good President will see that its declared void.

I am not making this letter public at all at present it is a matter between you and I and you have only three days to decide I’ll expect to hear from you Friday morning the 25 of August or I’ll proceed and out she goes.

Respy. HM Cliser

Beaham, Va” (2010, pp. 24-25).
The letter illustrates the clear presence of an education, or at the very least, an awareness of the governance of the United States (with references to the Constitution and the judicial system). At the same time, the letter shows a lack of education and understanding of how the mountain people figured into the world as a whole. By mailing a letter from rural Virginia with an expectation that a decision will be reached, enacted, and related back within three days, the letter indicates a complete lack of comprehension with regards to distance, policy, and the actual workings of the government. In 1933, the actuality is that the letter would not have reached Senator Bird within three days. Yet, the knowledge of who the Senator was, and the understanding that the actions being employed by the government may not be legal shows an effort at understanding the options the mountain people had at their disposal. Figure 12 shows an example of the notices to vacate/eviction letters the mountain people received from the Shenandoah National Park officials. Note that the received letter is typed and on official letterhead, while the letters sent by the mountain people likely were handwritten. Even this small difference highlights the imbalance in resources between the mountain people and the government.

Deeper than the imbalance is a convergence that is seen. While I studied formal and informal learning, the informal learning was the premiere source of knowledge for the mountain people prior to the resettlement. The knowledge that individuals had was shared, both with family and friends, so that all information was “property” of the community. In this way, small knowledge, such as who was visiting or who was butchering that day, collided with “larger” and “deeper” knowledge, like how to read and write and how to interpret the letters that were shared by government officials regarding the resettlement. While today, children are formally taught in school systems, there is another lesson to be learned from the experiences of the mountain
people. Sharing and combining knowledge allows an entire community or culture to expand their horizons. If we examine knowledge and consider it a shared resource, the community can expand its horizons and work to increase the knowledge base of each individual without depleting any resources.
STATE COMMISSION ON CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
RICHMOND, VA.

SHEPHERD NATIONAL PARK

NOTICE OF VACATE

To all persons living within the Shenandoah National Park Area, who have signed "Special Use Permits" permitting them to use certain buildings and campsites in the park area for a period ending not later than November 1, 1964.

Please be advised that the premises occupied or used by you under your "Special Use Permit" must be vacated and left in condition at least as good as when you entered, and vacating the premises.

[Signature]

Mr. W. H. Storey, Chairman
STATE COMMISSION ON CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

SPECIAL NOTICE TO APPLICANTS FOR HOMESTEADING PRIVILEGES

Special notice to persons now holding "Special Use Permits" who may desire to make application for Homesteading Privileges.

A new "Special Use Permit" may be issued to any person now holding a "Special Use Permit" who will make application to Mr. Ferdinand Zerkel, Assistant Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, Project, Division of Subsistence Homesteads at his office, Trumbull, Virginia, if such person purposes or desires to apply for Homesteading Privileges.

Under this new "Special Use Permit" the time allowed for vacating the premises in the "Special Use Permit" may be extended to April 1, 1966, but such extension will only be made on application to Mr. Zerkel; and unless a new permit is issued the premises must be vacated by November first.

[Signature]
The letter clearly shows the conflict the mountain people experienced, both with the government and with their neighbors, as they questioned whether their lack of employment was a result of their politics and beliefs. Powell (2010) explains this finding:

The fact that the residents engaged with high-powered government officials despite their informal language skills illustrates the power that written literacy held in their community as they insisted on being heard by those who made decisions about their livelihoods (2010, p.23).

This clash of cultures, and the wielding of literate power is further seen in the second and third letters, written by another mountain resident, and so to, do the letters reveal a sense of desperation as the mountain people strived to move forward with their lives:

“Swift Run, Va. December 5, 1935

Mr. W.C. Hall

Chairman of the State Conservation and Development Commission

Richmond, Virginia

Dear Mr. Hall:

Mr. Hansbrough and I are moving. I have got me a place but I am asking you could I have some of these old buildings and also Mr. Hansbrough wants some to for to build some things for our fowls and stock. The land owners in the park has been asking for the old buildings and they gave them to them if they wanted them. And also some of this old wire to fence up a place to hold my stock. Which is the place I am go to has not got no fence and has no buildings for fowls and to store away my crops. If you are not
the right man please send it on to the right one. I would more than appreciate your kindness hope to hear from you soon.

Very Truly Yours,

Ambrose W. Shifflett” (2010, p.61).

Shifflett’s requests may seem odd, until I compared them with information collected during my field research, where individuals explained that the houses in the resettlement villages often had no doors or windows, just walls and a roof. Transforming a “cabin” into a home and location to raise animals and livestock required a significant amount of wood, wire, and other building supplies. Living in Swift Run, Mr. Shifflett would have been a resident of Greene County and his mountain property likely was land he had inherited from his parents. The desperation Mr. Shifflett felt can be seen in a second letter, dated in the same month, but from a different address, indicating Shifflett had vacated the mountain property but had not resolved the issues surrounding his farming needs:

Nortensville, Va. December 11, 1935

J.R. Lassiter

Luray Virginia,

Dear Mr. Lassiter,

I am enclosing to you Mr. Hall letter which I ask him for some of the old buildings and some wire to fence to keep my stock in where I moved to and he referred me to write to you. Where we have moved to we have no place for our fowls and cows. I would be
awful thankful if you would help me out in the wire and lumber which the buildings is not much good. Please let me hear from you on return mail.

Very Truly yours,

Ambrose W. Shifflett” (2010 p. 60).

Shifflett’s letters indicated two critical pieces of information. First, the letters support the information I attained in my interviews, that the “homes” in the resettlement villages did not have enough land to support livestock and growing produce. Without enough land to plant food, a large portion of the mountain people’s livelihood was in jeopardy. In the course of one interview I related to my subject that another Appalachian farmer had told me, “If I break my leg tomorrow I will most likely starve to death because I won’t ask for help from anyone and if I can’t work my land I have nothing to eat.” The interview subject nodded and indicated the same concept had often been voiced in their own family. Figure 13 shows a cabin that was built at the time of the resettlement. Of particular note is the area that appears to be added onto as well as the small front yard and lack of front porch.
The letters were not just sent from mountaineers. Other individuals tried to intervene on behalf of the mountain people, especially as the realization occurred that the resettlement villages would not be as utilized as government officials had anticipated. The following letter describes the dire straits some of the Greene County residents found themselves in between the time of the notices to vacate and the time that the evictions took place:

**ARCHDEACONRY OF THE BLUE RIDGE**

*Diocese of Virginia  Charlottesville, Va., November 19, 1934*

*Mr. Ferdinand Zer[ke]l,*

*Luray, Va.*

*My dear Mr. Zirkel [sic];*
I am writing to ask permission to have some dead and down wood around the mission and adjoining place at Simmon’s Gap, cut for fuel for the mission workers. I warned the men not to touch anything but dead wood, which I feel you would be glad to have removed.

Secondly, I want to consult you about the situation at Simmon’s Gap. I was there yesterday and the people seem much upset. Many of them have been unable to shuck their corn because of the dry weather and it would be very difficult to haul the feed out from where they live, so I am asking you please to give permission or get it for them to let them stay till sometime in the late winter or early spring provided that they cut no living trees and do no damage to land or building; and provided further they sign an agreement to get out not later than April 1st. I can give guarantee that they will get out and I will make them sign such an agreement, but it would work a real hardship if they had to get out now. I talked with a number of them and I am afraid they are very few at Simmon’s Gap who will sign up for the homestead [resettlement village]. I am sure that this plan which I suggest will be the wisest and best way to get them out. Please let me hear at your earliest convenience.

With all best wishes I am,

Sincerely yours,


The letter from Mr. Mason indicates a higher level of literacy, but more critically, it reveals the conflicts being experienced by the mountain people as they weighed survival tasks, like shucking their corn for harvest, against the necessity of moving and relocating. Mason is suggesting a
compromise to help ease the conflict but at the same time clearly communicates that the resettlement villages would most likely not be utilized. The actual reasons why many of the mountain people chose not to take advantage of the resettlement homes are not uncovered in this research, but there are strong indications that the small plots of land that accompanied the resettlement cabins were not sufficient to support the farming lifestyle the mountain people followed. Their primary livelihood skill of farming and agriculture would not be available in the resettlement villages, very probably increasing the conflict experienced by each mountain family, of deciding where to move when the evictions occurred.

**Dorothy Noble Smith’s Oral Histories**

As previously stated, one of the major challenges encountered during the data collection was locating interview participants. To supplement and overcome this issue, the letters collected by Katerina Powell were analyzed, as were the oral histories collected by Dorothy Noble Smith in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Smith interviewed mountain people in multiple Virginia counties, including Greene, Madison, and Rockingham counties. Her recordings are housed in the Special Collections Library at James Madison University and Smith also transformed her transcripts into a text called *Recollections: The People of the Blue Ridge Remember*. Smith’s work was considered data transcription and was coded and analyzed in the exact manner used for my own personally collected interviews, described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Of particular interest was the data from a chapter Smith entitled, “Unlettered But Resourceful”. In that chapter, Smith sums up one of her findings in a manner that perfectly illustrates the conflict between the mountain people and other Commonwealth residents with regards to education:

> It was not until the 1880s that Virginia was able to set up a system of education for all children. Each county was responsible for educating its children. From necessity, they first made schools
available in the most populated towns; outlying areas, such as the mountains, were of secondary importance (1989 p.37).

In this singular paragraph, Smith relates the imbalance and conflict that I saw emerging as well. The education of the mountain children, and other rural Virginian children, was not as important as the education of students located in more populated areas. The conflict between socioeconomic groups is clear, even as the Commonwealth law was established to promote the education of every child in Virginia.

**Nicholson Hollow Schooling**

While Nicholson Hollow is not located in Greene County, Virginia, but neighboring Madison County, the data pertaining to education in that hollow was examined, due in large part to Pollock’s references to his encounters with the Nicholson family. Smith recounts speaking to four men who lived in Nicholson Hollow about their schooling (1983). Smith (1983) includes comments from Edward Nicholson, Sr:

There was a church right down the hollow where we had a preacher once a month. That building was our school where I went through fourth grade. You see they had to hire a teacher so they got one who taught in the winter and was free in the summer. Summer was right at the time the crops and everything needed to be taken care of (p.39).

Several things about this statement immediately stood out. First, in each interview I personally conducted, the individuals spoke with a lot of “jargon” that I expected as almost a dialect specific to rural Virginia. There are often a lot of ers and ums, and portions of words are either condensed or dropped off, overlaid with an accent that can only be described as southern. Smith’s quotation contained none of the indications I expected and knew from my encounters
with the mountain people. It caused me to compare the above quotation to the conversation included in Chapter 2 between Pollock and one of the Nicholson family’s patriarchs. I noted significant differences that cannot be explained. The more striking and important finding from Nicholson’s statement is seen in how the school calendar ran. Clearly, educational opportunities were scheduled around the harvest and farm work. The conflict between educating the mountain children and using those children as a necessary labor force for each family’s survival is evident, as is the shift in priorities over several generations. In the present day, according to the Virginia Department of Education, children in Virginia are expected to attend one hundred and eighty school days annually. However, Edward Nicholson Sr.’s comments explain that in the 1930s, school met in the winter. As a resident of the Virginia mountains, I know that a “winter” will typically run from November until the end of March approximately. Based on that information, it would be impossible to have more than a maximum of approximately one hundred and thirty school days in a winter. In three generations, there has been a shift from a deep focus on farming, with school being scheduled around the agricultural calendar, to a focus on education, with farm duties playing a secondary role. For families who only know farming as a means of support, this educational requirement could put a hardship on their livelihood, thus continuing the conflict between the mountain peoples’ culture and that of other Virginia residents from more urban settings with stronger educational opportunities.

Smith’s findings support this educational disparity and the level of literacy attained by the mountain children in the time period of the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. This is evidenced by another one of her interview subject’s commentaries on the level of achievement reached by another of the mountain children:
A store owner in Nethers [located near Brokenback mountain], who did not wish to be identified, said, ‘There was a church in Nicholson Hollow which was used as a school. I remember asking a girl how she was coming along in school. She said, ‘I can write pretty good but I can’t read a damn word I’ve written.’ School wasn’t that regular—too bad because most of the people were pretty intelligent (1989, p.39).

The store owner is explaining something that was often reflected in other findings. The mountain people, while perhaps not literate by the standards of the American public, were certainly not dumb. A distinction needs to be made between illiteracy and intelligence. The field data I assembled seems to indicate that the two concepts were considered interchangeable, which is what prompted me to look for the differences between informal and formal learning. The formal learning, as stated in Chapter 1 would include schooling organized by the Commonwealth of Virginia or the mission schools, while informal learning would include skills passed down from older family members and neighbors to younger generations. These skills would include things like farming, cooking, hunting, carpentry, sewing, and food preservation. Informal learning was best described for me in the words one interview subject told me their father used to say frequently, “Planting a garden is easy, getting it to grow is the hard part”.

Whether the children were taught using informal methods or enrolled in formal schooling, there still existed a hierarchy in terms of availability of opportunity, even for the mountain children. Smith (1989) explains this with regard to the children in Greene County: Children living near a good road, such as those at Swift Run Gap and Thornton Gap, received a better education. The Swift Run Gap school was two miles down the mountain and Thornton Gap school was at the top of the mountain. Both schools were one-room. These schools went
through seventh grade. Arithmetic and spelling were the primary subjects, though history and geography were also taught (p.39).

Smith’s data answers, in part, one of the most important research questions I attempted to determine. The schools described in her transcripts and interviews were either mission schools or ones where the teachers were paid for by the mountain people, according to information addressed in Chapter 2. While almost every mention of the mountain people and their lifestyles while on the mountain lands includes a description of an agricultural lifestyle, money, while scarce, was invested into their children’s education. This decision to spend their financial resources on teachers shows a high level of value that was placed on formal schooling. By Smith’s accounts and my data analysis, there was an extreme importance placed on learning to read, write, and do basic math. Shifflett and Smith both describe schools that only went to either fourth grade or seventh grade. This led me to conclude that there is another perceived conflict between mountain children and other children in the Commonwealth of Virginia, with children in more industrialized and populated areas achieving a higher level of education then the mountain children. In a society that, in part, defines people by their occupation and educational attainment, those that are less educated or more “blue collar” (such as tenant farmers) fall lower in the hierarchy. Yet this perception may does not equate to reality, as Smith quotes Carl Shifflett, “…He called the mountain people ‘the most enterprising, the most thrifty people’ he ever saw.” (1989, p.40). In this case, less formal education does not equate to lazy, nor does it point to the “Dogpatch” description that had been assigned to some of the mountain people. As Smith writes, “The ingenuity required to survive in adverse conditions reveals the people of the Blue Ridge, though unlettered, and without ready cash, possessed a very practical intelligence” (1989, p.40).
Informal and Formal Learning in Smith’s Findings

Smith’s interviews also explain that the conflict between the mountain people and the non-mountain people was recognized by mountain people of all ages. She includes comments from Charlie Snow, a resident of Greene County who was resettled:

Charlie Snow never went to school until the coming of the National Park moved him from his home in Pocossin Hollow. He made a poignant statement about having to start school at the ripe old age of ten: “There had been no school up there [in the Hollow], even Ma had no chance to go to school. I was ten years old when we moved out and it was all kinds of embarrassment when I started school. I was big and all the rest of the school kids were small. It wasn’t much fun for me so I only went through sixth grade” (1989 p.40).

Charlie felt uncomfortable, being the oldest/biggest child in the school and that feeling of not “fitting in” caused him to cut short his education. Another of Smith’s findings, incorporating family knowledge passed down to multiple generations, led to an analysis of the differentiation between formal and informal learning. Smith (1989) includes the following description of her subject, “Granny Lulu Roach lived on Brown Mountain, eight miles south of Swift Run Gap, until she was sixty-one.” (p.41). In the data from Granny’s interview, Smith outlines some of the skills the Roach family continued to use in their daily lives:

While Granny is still with her family, they use her as a guide for most preparations used by generations long ago…Granny admits the ‘correct’ methods were often laborious, but were necessitated by a lack of modern conveniences such as, refrigeration, pressure cookers or microwave ovens (1989, p.41).
This knowledge, which Smith elaborates on, includes topics of preserving wild game, preserving produce, butchering hogs, and using animal skins for clothing and goods is not information that would have been taught in schools. Yet these tasks, and the knowledge of how to accomplish them, would likely have meant the difference between life and death for the mountain people, making informal learning a priceless commodity.

**The “Charles” Family**

The second interview conducted came from the “Charles” family (pseudonym) of Greene County, Virginia. The family owned thirty-five acres of mountain land that was included in the tract of land that was requested for the Shenandoah National Park. One of the first things to emerge from my interview with the Charles family was the condition of the resettlement home they were provided. The Charles family was resettled in the month of December, during a snowstorm and described their new home:

“To [the family’s] surprise, the home was small and had no window panes to protect them from the harsh weather. The gaping holes that should have been filled with glass were open to the freezing temperatures and allowed snow to blow onto the floor.”

Further complicating matters, the Charles family supported themselves by farming and were in possession of several hogs that were turned loose (and presumably lost) by the Park workers who relocated them. The conflict the family still feels was expressed in the following sentiment:

“In one short afternoon, the government wrested the family’s means of earning a living, their sources of food, and their contentment from them without so much as a hint of compassion for their plight.”
The Charles family was not sure whether the government officials were Commonwealth of Virginia or federal employees, but the idea that a governing body had created this disruption was forefront in their feelings. The patriarch of the Charles family, Allen, now deceased, related to his family members that consented to be interview before he passed away that he wished, “to walk back to where we lived and look down on the land below”. This sentiment of wishing to return to their home lands was one that was repeated in other interviews as well. One member of the Charles family, explaining what the patriarch who had experienced resettlement felt, said, “He remembers how the happiness so many mountain families knew ended when the Park developers evicted them from their homes.” This concept of happiness ending illustrates the conflict felt by the mountain people as they were resettled. The next sentiment also highlights that conflict, “The once happy, thrifty people became saddened and disheartened after leaving the mountains they so intensely loved.”

The Charles family patriarch also highlighted the skills the family used to thrive on the mountains, “We always had plenty. Life sure was better on the mountain than it is now…there was always food and work for the people if they knew how to get it.” The same skills and knowledge that emerged in Smith’s findings, coupled with the information about harvesting and requesting materials in Powell’s findings, appeared in the Charles family recollections about the resettlement. The skills involved in hunting and farming provided the ability for the mountain people to provide for themselves and they passed that information down from generation to generation according to the Charles family. The figure fourteen below shows a home belonging to a neighbor of the Charles Family, located in Greene County, Virginia. The home was built prior to the resettlement and, in stark contrast to the resettlement cabins that lacked windows, the house’s construction is sturdy and the building has been standing for well over a century.
Charles Family Knowledge

The Charles family did have a unique schooling experience compared to other individuals who experienced the resettlement. The patriarch of the Charles family was resettled when he was twelve years old. While living on the mountain, he attended school and had studied through the fourth grade. The family sent their children to school but also had them work the land. The children of the Charles family were taught, by their parents, how to accomplish certain “life skills” prior to being resettled and those included, “sewing, cooking, gardening, simple construction/home maintenance projects”. Yet once they were relocated, the Charles family children did not attend school any more. Instead, all efforts in the family were focused on making their resettlement home habitable. In this case, the Charles family did place a value on
formal education, but it was the informal education, the “life skills” that were taught at home that allowed the family to survive being resettled.

**Interview with Penny Wise**

Penny Wise (pseudonym) is a lifelong resident of Greene County, Virginia. As we sat in her unheated basement, on long wooden benches with an oilcloth on the easily twelve foot dining table, she smiled at me and told me how much she loves to read. Now in her eighties, she vividly remembers both her life on the mountain and being resettled to the Rosebrook Village. She tells me how much she loves a wood fire and we discuss how much we both enjoy stacking firewood in the summer, knowing the logs will provide great worth in the winter. Stacking the wood, we both discover, does not seem to be a chore to either of us, but rather a satisfying way to spend an afternoon, where at the finish, we can see our accomplishments. With snow on the ground a foot deep outside her kitchen door, she comments that her oil heating never makes her feel warm, but a fireplace warms her bones quickly.

I asked Penny what she liked to read and she gave me a list of contemporary authors, mostly female, mostly from the romance genre, and slipped in the mention that her father never learned to read or write, but that her mother was literate and she thinks that is where she got her love of reading. The casual discussion of academics continued as she remarked on not liking math very much. Despite her dislike of math, she expressed pride that her son could calculate large sums in his head with great accuracy, a skill he employed on every trip to the grocery store. I caught the note of pride and ask about educational accomplishments with other family members. Penny explained to me that she was the only one of her twelve brothers and sisters that survived to graduate from high school but she did not linger on that detail and I was quickly told:
“My granddaughter has always wanted to be a teacher. She studied athletic training in college and has been working at a school. She is taking the steps she needs to be a certified teacher. Oh, and she is starting school in the fall to get her Ph.D. and be a teacher”. I tried to school my face carefully as my mind raced to the realization that in less than three generations her family had gone from one high school graduate and one literate parent, to a granddaughter earning her doctorate. Penny was proud, and the pride showed on her glowing face, but the accomplishment is so much more than I think she even realized. The value her family placed on formal education is crystal clear. Becoming highly educated is important, it is necessary.

The Wise Family Resettlement

Penny explains to me that her family lived on FlatTop Mountain before the resettlement and how her family engaged with the government officials, “When they first started building the Park, my Daddy and my 2 eldest brothers helped build the park and that is how my Daddy learned to set off dynamite”. Penny told me her birth certificate says “Simmons Gap” and she moved to the resettlement village when she was five years old, in 1938. When asked about her memories of the actual move she told me, “I remember Mama said when we came down, they counted everything we brought down to each knife and fork”. This inventory of items was extensive and was applied to every mountain family in Greene County who was resettled, a table itemizing the possessions of each family. The data in the table, when analyzed, showed the same types of themes that emerged from other collected data. The possessions included implements for farming, lumber, and household goods and there was a wide variation in the amount and value of each family’s possessions.
“Wise” Family at Rosebrook

I asked Penny what she could tell me about the home the family moved to at the Rosebrook Village and she told me, “They had porches, on the back of the cabin, but not the front, and no screens or nothing”. As far as I can remember, there was 5 rooms to that house and there was no baths, no toilet at the house in the Resettlement (State Route 810 in Greene County). Figure fifteen shows the remnants of one of the Rosebrook home’s foundations, stones and random bits of metal.

Penny and Miss Nelie

I eagerly asked Penny if she remembered Miss Nelie. She responded to my question by telling me, “Miss Nelie was a mission worker from the Brethren Church and she used to come and have sewing lessons for the women, in fact, that is where I learned to embroider was with Miss Nelie Wampler.” Without any prompting, Penny continued talking and she told me, “She
taught the women cooking and things. You see, honey, years ago, way before the Park, the only education my Mama had was the Episcopal churches came in and taught the students. My Daddy never learned to...to read or write but my Mama could read thanks to the Episcopal Church. The game wardens took over the Episcopal Church (stone) at Simmons Gap for their use on the Park.” Those statements confirmed the findings in Katerina Powell’s letters and Lambert’s work from the literature review as well. The educational presence in the mountains prior to the Shenandoah National Park was provided by the Episcopal Church’s mission schools. In Penny’s family, there is an implication that they greatly appreciated the efforts by the church missionaries, in fact, Penny elaborated, “We were raised Brethren, the folks on the mountain, the old folks did not believe in “sprinkling”, you had to be baptized full in the water, although the Episcopal were the only ones that taught them anything. My sisters, Ruth Elizabeth and Hazel Priscilla were named for the 2 ladies that taught for the Episcopal Church way before they brought the Park through. I always thought Priscilla was such a funny name.” Clearly Penny’s parents thought enough of the female missionaries that they honored two of them by naming their daughters after the teachers. This acknowledgement points directly to the appreciation for and value of formal educational opportunities felt by the mountain families of Greene County. I asked Penny what she remembered about Miss Nelie and she told me, “Miss Nelie was a little bitty lady and she taught the ladies how to can and preserve.” She elaborated on her time with Miss Nelie, “Miss Nelie served lunch for the kids and soup was mostly whatcha got. Miss Nelie was a tiny little lady. Miss Nelie taught the girls embroidery, and she taught us to shell peas, anything you could do with food in the garden Miss Nelie taught us.” The opportunity to hear stories about Miss Nelie, especially remembrances that held the same details that the articles discussed in the literature review contained was priceless. Figure sixteen below shows the
kitchen at modern day Rosebrook, with the original cabinets that Miss Nelie used to store her cooking implements while Figure seventeen is a picture of the original kitchen’s walls and the holes where steam pipes were placed to heat the main house at Rosebrook.

Figure 16: Miss Nelie's kitchen cabinets at Rosebrook village
Figure 17: Original steam pipe holes in Miss Nelie's kitchen at Rosebrook village
Penny’s Life at Rosebrook

Penny spent a lot of time telling me about her educational endeavors and her daily life at Rosebrook after the resettlement. When asked about other Rosebrook residents she told me, “They called the area where the resettlement was the “lowlands”. I went to the school with the Colliers, there was a Ralston family and I know they lived next to us in the Resettlement but I don’t know what happened to them.” I asked her what a “usual” day at Rosebrook was like and she told me, “School at the resettlement went until after lunch. It was all one room with different tables. I guess 3rd or 4th grade was as high as it went because nobody had had any schools until then.” I asked what the school day was like and what materials they used to do their school works (primers, slates, books, etc.) and Penny paused for a few moments and then told me, “Miss Garth was the teacher and Miss Nelie did cooking and sewing (embroiderer and quilting) and those are the only 2 teachers I can remember. I can’t remember having, you know, any books. We had papers that we learned to write on, you know, and things, but I cain’t remember any books.”

With the mention of Miss Garth, I became aware that Rosebrook resettlement village had more than one teacher on staff. Penny explained to me that Miss Nelie spent a lot of time, not only working with the children, but also helping the mothers and other mountain women who had been resettled. I began asking about Miss Garth and Penny’s thoughts about her first resettlement teacher, “Miss Garth had “picks”, some children she liked and some she didn’t. She was a good teacher but I never liked a teacher that had “picks.” Penny continued her recollections by telling me, “School was during the week. On weekends, we played around the house, with so many kids, we played around the house with toys we made. We didn’t have store bought toys, we played with toys we made. We made mud pies, kids today would probably die if
they saw the toys we had.” Penny’s memories were full of images that included lots of people, due in large part to her large family and she referred to the large family size and how her family’s interactions with their neighbors continued to the present day, “Of the 14 [children in Penny’s family], 12 of us lived to be grown and I was the only one that graduated. The 2 younger than me made it to high school but they quit and the older ones didn’t have an opportunity to go to high school or graduated. [Penny] graduated from William Monroe in Stanardsville in 1952, her son graduated in 1977 and her granddaughters in 2000. The people I went to school with, our kids then went to school together and then our grandkids.” After being resettled, Penny’s family established themselves as members of the Greene County community and they continue their County ties today. The educational opportunities that were first offered at the resettlement village were, at least by Penny and her descendants, grabbed and utilized, showing a strong value placed on formal education and structured learning.

Life at Rosebrook

While formal schooling is obviously important to Penny, there were other skills that were just as vital and critical to her family’s survival and there was also some knowledge that provided the family income. Penny’s father made moonshine (illegal grain alcohol) as one way to support the family, but he ceased operations, as Penny related to me, “My Daddy made moonshine. I’m afraid he did and Mama told him they would have to move off the mountain. My Mama and Daddy fought about it, she told him, “you stop it right now or else I will take all my babies and leave this mountain and so my Daddy quit making it”. My brother, he died 5, 6, 7, or 8 years ago and he still had his still that he made moonshine on.” The ability to make moonshine was also knowledge passed down from one generation to the next. I asked about other ways the family supported themselves and Penny explained to me that her father was a
farmer by trade and the children were expected to help with the tasks involved in that endeavor, “Did you have chores—oh Lord yes…. We had to milk cows, chop wood, haul wood, there was only one boy younger than I was in the family so the girls did the same work as the boys. We had our own hogs. I didn’t know what beef was growing up. Our beef was milk (dairy cows) All of the older ones hunted and to this day we all still love deer meat” Penny explained to me that today one of her granddaughters hunts and still provides her with deer meat, which the family preserves and eats throughout the year. One thing of particular interest, often seen within the mountain culture is the use of the words deer meat. Mountain families usually refer to the source of meat as its type (i.e.—deer meat) instead of referring to it as venison. This continued use of “plain” words to describe things is a vivid example of how tradition and culture is alive and well for the mountain people, even eighty odd years after the resettlement. Penny’s own words show that culture and how it was ingrained in her from a young age, “You grew up with having to cook, make fire, hunt, canning, planting a garden, etc., your parents taught you because everybody had to do it to live.” These survival skills, hunting, planting, canning, fire making, were the types of informal knowledge that were learned, not in the classroom, but in the home and it is by using a combination of that informal and formal knowledge that Penny’s family was able to survive and thrive after being resettled.

**Family Living**

Penny’s memories continued as she told me about her family’s life in the resettlement village, “My family listened to the battery radios in the evenings. We didn’t have electric but we sat around always and listened to the radio like people do TV today. And believe you me honey, people went to bed early. When you worked hard all day you didn’t feel like sitting up all night.” Her story was reminiscent of the television program *The Waltons* which is not surprising
when one considers the Hamner family the show is based on were from nearby Nelson County.
Penny told me about being exposed to modern conveniences too, after her family moved away from Rosebrook, “I was 19 years old, the first house I lived in that had electricity but it didn’t have any bathroom. We went outside to the toilet, before electricity we used oil lamps to see at night. Having electricity, it was glory, turning on a light at night and you could see. Oil stamps and wood stoves that is what we lived on. If I had a place to put a woodstove, I’d still like to have it.” This appreciation for modern advances, blended with a wistful longing for some of the trappings of her past is indicative of the ways mountain people have learned to cope with progress. Penny’s wish for a woodstove was not specifically repeated by other interview participants, but the desire to return to their mountain lands and lifestyles was often heard. Penny described her father’s wish to return to the mountains, “My father got Alzheimer’s at the end and he begged to go back home so they took him to the Park… They tore down the home we had on the Park. I don’t know how they tore it down, but they tore it. My Daddy had 17 acres. My son went back up with my brother one time and they found the spring we got water from when we lived there”.

Life After Rosebrook

Penny and I talked about her family and what they did after being resettled. She told me the resettlement cabins did not have room for gardens, which supported the data collected in other interviews, but she stressed the problems the lack of gardening space created for people that counted on the food they grew in order to survive. Penny told me about the jobs her father worked as a tenant farmer once the family left Rosebrook village, “Then my Daddy worked on farms, we had a house provided that was furnished and he could raise whatever animals he
wanted and he planted the grains and vegetables and he got to keep so much (a percentage she is not sure of) to keep for farming the land someone else owned.”

Penny and I also discussed Stony Man Mountain, the tract of land Pollock used to establish his Skyland resort, which sparked the idea of using the mountain lands for a new national park. I made a comment to Penny about being surprised that Pollock never mentions the surname Shifflett in his writings about the people he encountered on the mountains. Shifflett is a very common name in the mountain families of Virginia, so I had found the absence of the name strange and Penny’s recollections helped me to verify this curiosity. When I told her Pollock’s autobiography included his rigid assertion of his family’s ownership of the Stony Man land she immediately told me, “Oh no they ain’t owned that land… Stony Man Mountain was owned by Wyatt Morris/Wyatt Shifflett, that whole mountain was only Shiffletts and Morris. “No way did he come up on that mountain and not encountered a Shifflett or a Morris.”

This conversation helped me decide that the first step in my further research will need to be examining the land ownership records for the Greene County lands that were claimed for the Shenandoah National Park. However, regardless of what those land records show, Penny shared one of her father’s often repeated sayings, indicating their attitude about their mountain land being used, “The government take whatever they want, there is no use in fighting them.” The statement itself shows another lesson learned and knowledge passed down from the people who were resettled to their children and further generations, that events in life will happen, and when they do, the focus should be, not on resistance, but on survival.
Conclusion

The stories from the mountain people, both those that were told directly to me and those that were found in letters and other interviews with other researchers, contained many of the same themes. The words farming, preservation, survival, cabins, school, reading, writing, and lumber appeared over and over again in the data analysis. As the words I was using as a coding guide continued to emerge from the data, I initially used that as a guide to tell me I was on the right track in my findings. Then I went back multiple times through my notes, my field journals, and my data and looked for details, for the bits of information that craft a story, the phrases that flesh out decades of a life and I found words that were said repeatedly in a different context.

I discovered many individuals who related a love of reading, people who expressed such pride in their land and continually commented on how beautiful the places in the mountains were. I saw glimpses of excitement that accompanied a butchering day, when neighbors all gathered to share the work and the reward. The mountain people whose words I analyzed thought school was important and they expected their children and grandchildren to graduate from high school at least.

Yet they also thought the “old ways” were important and I was shown store rooms full of produce that had been canned, apples and potatoes in bins and stored to be eaten in the winter, wood piles stacked high with firewood, ready to help heat homes. It is a combination of the old and the new, a blending of acquired knowledge and passed down skills that allowed the mountain people to survive and there is, in some ways, a wish that those “old ways” could be shared with all of the current school aged children in Greene County. This wish, if brought to fruition, could be the basis for a new educational approach in the 21st century rural Virginia.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Future Research

Introduction

In order to craft research that could be utilized for this publication, the scope had to be narrowed significantly from some initial plans. This narrowing made it possible to focus on the questions that were most critical and crucial from an educational standpoint. Focusing the research was vital, in part, because as more and more data were collected, more and more questions and topics for further study emerged. This final chapter encompasses the applications of the findings to the research questions and uses the original questions as a springboard to launch future research endeavors. This chapter, while including final thoughts about this period of field research, is not so much a finale, instead it is the establishment of a bridge between that which has been discovered and the path to future discovery based on the journey thus far.

Conclusion - Research Question #1

The field research and data observations pointed to some inherent knowledge that allowed the people of Greene County, Virginia to survive the relocation. Both the Charles family and the Wise family described the cabins in the resettlement village as lacking windows and basically being four walls and a roof. The mountain people who had a family history of “barking trees” and cutting lumber had the capability to perform the necessary carpentry improvements that were required to make the resettlement cabins inhabitable in the winter. While the agricultural and livestock knowledge was not immediately applicable, due to the lack of available property to farm in the resettlement villages, the knowledge of farming and planting was very useful to secure the families’ eventual survival. All three families I personally interviewed still either
support themselves through farming or carpentry. That information indicates that the farming knowledge not only allowed the mountain people to survive being relocated but it also provided the means to support future generations. The most significant finding and conclusion from the data for this question was that all of the knowledge that the people used to deal with their resettlement was attained through informal learning methods. Many Greene County people who were resettled never attained a high school diploma or became completely literate, but their informal learning provided the means to survive the resettlement experience.

**Conclusion- Research Question #2**

Based on the findings that indicated many of the resettled mountain people did not achieve a high school diploma, my initial impression was that they would not put a very high value on formal learning. The writings of the 1930s, found in letters and journals, pointed to parents who sent their children to mission schools if they could spare the time away from farm chores. Shifflett’s writings reveal many families where the children were kept home from school to hunt and gather, or to help add credibility to moonshine deliveries and she casually relates many examples of her family members dropping out of school. The implication was clear that survival trumps school, which is to be expected. My perceptions changed in the course of my field research.

All three of the families I interviewed now have a college graduate in their ranks. In three generations, some of these families have gone from near illiteracy to achieving levels of higher education. In each scenario, when I explained why my research was being conducted, I was congratulated for my educational endeavors and each interview subject asked me to keep them informed of my progress, as they wanted to celebrate my achievements with me. In each interview there were expressions of appreciation to particular teachers. The Wise family counts
a teacher in their number and the family is incredibly proud that someone chose that profession. In each interview, the names of respected and remembered teachers were shared, accompanied by fond stories of wisdom the teacher had instilled. There is a deep appreciation shown for teachers in the culture of the mountain people, shown extensively when I was asked repeatedly if I would be returning to Greene County to work in the educational system. Today, the children in the mountain families are expected to graduate from high school. Many of the mountain family children prefer to return to work the family farms after graduating from high school, but the parents expect future generations to continue their formal learning. In this, the resolution of the conflict between governmental requirements and mountain culture is to take advantage of educational opportunities while appreciating the family heritage of farming, leaving a harmonious balance.

Conclusion - Research Question #3

Achieving a harmonious balance is always a wonderful ideal. However, when one is contemplating means of survival, there will inevitably be a hierarchy, a ranking, if you will, about which tasks are the most vital for survival. This was clearly reflected when I drew my final conclusions about the value the mountain people place on informal learning. Without question, the skills and knowledge that are passed down from generation to generation as informal learning are the most valuable to the mountain people. In my interview with Penny Wise, she expressed a love of deer meat and talked about how her father and brothers hunted when she was a child. That tradition of hunting continued with her own son and she proudly relayed to me that her granddaughter now kept her stocked with deer meat. Penny asked me if I wanted to see what her “hobby” was and took me on a tour of her larder, the neat jars in perfect lines, their contents shining like priceless gems. Penny would probably say the contents of the
larder were more valuable than gems, as the preserved fruits, vegetables, and meat were stockpiled to provide a means to sustain her family when the ground was frozen and fallow. In each field observation a casual mention of a favorite author was thrown in and a love of reading mentioned, but the work of tending animals, of storing food, of splitting firewood were skills described as being learned by parents and older family members. It is this knowledge, this education attained not in the classroom but at the shoulder of the older generation that allowed the mountain people to survive being resettled. Therefore, while there is a deep respect and admiration for formal learning and higher education, the informal learning is the most important and crucial to the survival of the mountain people.

Conclusion- Research Question #4

The data that was collected did not reflect a lot of information that was lost or no longer taught. In many families, the information I expected to hear was “lost” is instead still being shared between the generations. The moonshine culture that flourished in the depression era is still alive and well today, and still impacted by legal regulations. Penny Wise laughingly told me that one thing that was forgotten or unclear was where exactly the boundary lines for the National Park and the property of the mountain people who resided in some hollows met. She told me that caused issues for some of the mountain people who continued to make moonshine on their stills in the woods, as they occasionally were discovered brewing on federal government property, which is a felony offense. The research I conducted indicates that what is lost is more along the lines of documentation and records that could clarify land ownership and transfer of property, than any cultural knowledge. It appears that the mountain people have invested a lot of time and energy into making sure their knowledge and lessons are shared with future generations, whether it is in practical applications, like Penny’s food preservation, or in abstract
ways, like the stories that are shared about family members who were healers and midwives. Just as a modern Italian family’s matriarch might pass down her sauce recipe to her grandchildren, so do the older generations of mountain people teach their descendants to hunt, to ride horseback, and to preserve the information that grants a means of survival. My concerns that information would be lost as the generation that was resettled dies off were alleviated as I realized that tradition means many things to many people, but at its core, the common goal is to always remember that which is important to one’s own family and history. So it is true with the mountain people, the knowledge is not lost, but it is shared with those who will respect and uphold it.

**Implications for Future Research**

Capturing the oral histories of the displaced mountain people is only the first step in researching the impacts of displacement on the educational and learning aspects on the culture of the mountain people. Further research includes exploring how the lobbyists for the Park were able to enact legislation without working in the best interest of all of the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In addition, a study with considerations for whether or not policymakers currently understand the mountain culture and the implications of creating laws and policies for a misunderstood population would be a further research endeavor. Finally, multiple publications about the creation of the Shenandoah National Park and the displacement of the mountain people describe human rights’ issues including the involuntary sterilization of many of the mountain children and schools designed to alienate children from mountain holler locales. Many questions that arose during my field observations can perhaps be answered by information contained within the archives of the Shenandoah National Park. The top priority for
me will be to examine all of the federal Department of the Interior documentation and data surrounding the resettlement of the mountain people.

I arrived at Penn State already involved with a group that is tasked with creating a memorial to the mountain people of Greene County who experienced the resettlement. By virtue of that involvement, I was aware of a variety of individuals like Craig Lam who had knowledge of the mountain people and were researching the events surrounding the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. All of the individuals I encountered prior to leaving for Penn State in 2013 told me to contact them when I was ready for my data collection. I began reaching out to those individuals after I obtained IRB approval, in an attempt to begin scheduling interviews. What I encountered was unreturned phone calls, ignored e-mails, and in many cases, absolute silence. Eventually, I pursued other avenues to secure participants in this research, but it is a sad commentary on the rural Virginia research community that collaboration is a foreign concept. I am left wondering how much more productive the work would be if researchers chose to collaborate instead of duplicating efforts. In my experience, what is occurring is the same oral histories and stories being collected multiple times while other oral histories are ignored and lost forever. These experiences helped me to clarify what the limitations and delimitations of my research were. One opportunity for all future research, both for myself and other mountain culture researchers, will be to collaborate with each other to maximize our potential data collection and analysis opportunities.

This collaboration could lend itself to the opportunity to combine my love of technology with my love of rural education. I would very much like to explore the technical solutions that have been attempted to increase distance based educational opportunities to remote rural locations. Collaborating with other scholars to see what approaches have been utilized to bring
new educational methodologies into existing cultural groups would be a first step in this research. Once I have reviewed the lessons learned and determined the appropriate methodology to implement, I can hopefully learn what types of distance based offerings would be the most beneficial and well received for and by the mountain people.

**Implications for Practice**

Exploring the injustices that were carried out on a marginalized population provides ample opportunity to conduct further research into the mountain people and their culture. Beyond all of those topics, the most vitally important research for me is to continue exploring the culture of the mountain people, and the inherent knowledge of survival skills that is ingrained within that culture, to find ways to incorporate that knowledge into current educational endeavors within Greene County, Virginia. My own experiences in locating research participants is an indication that the knowledge the mountain families have accumulated needs to be recorded and captured before the generations that live in the “old ways” disappear forever. Gathering that information, and using it in practical applications within the Greene County educational system would grant me the ability to merge my research findings into practice that could have immediate impact on the current children participating in formal learning in Virginia.

Leveraging the agricultural and preservation skills the mountain people have, and using those skills to implement a vocational program in the schools that teaches current students how to prep the land and put in a large community garden, with the produce being harvested, preserved, and utilized in the school cafeterias to feed the students would be an ideal way to move from research to real-life application. By the same token, the forestry and logging information that is ingrained within the mountain families can be provided to all students, where they can study environmental impacts and “green” economic endeavors on the wooded land.
Throughout my data collection and field observations, I returned to the concepts of educators having favorite students, those that were pets or, as Penny called them, “picks”. All too often, I heard recollections of mountain students being passed over for gifted programs, not being selected for extracurricular activities, and generally looked down upon when compared to students from “lowland” families. As a participant in the Greene County educational system, I saw this occur frequently as well. Many times, the “honors” track classes did not include my peers who came from the hollows and gaps and spaces in those classes went to students in families that had relocated into the county. A major implication for real life practice would be to fully integrate students from the mountain culture into Greene County public schools and insuring that mountain children are provided the exact same opportunities as other Commonwealth of Virginia students. This integration can only be achieved by studying and understanding the culture of the mountain people and building on the similarities all students have in common.

**Implications for Policy**

It is easy to ignore that which does not immediately impact us as individuals. Those who are oppressed are usually weaker, poorer, smaller in number, less educated, and less powerful. Moving a given society from “why should we care” to a stance of “you should care” is complicated but it is crucial because the United States is ripe with examples of marginalized groups being mistreated by those in positions of leadership and power. That mistreatment is often justified because the information shared with the American public about a particular marginalized group, is represented as truth to the general public, even if there is no basis in fact. A brief amount of research into the treatment of marginalized populations within American history uncovers examples of atrocities against Native Americans, especially with the Trail of
Tears, the internment camps experienced by Japanese Americans during World War II, and the decades of oppression experienced by African Americans. At any given point, any cultural subgroup could find themselves becoming a marginalized population. If this crucial aspect of American history is to be captured and remembered, the conflict between the mountain people and the government officials must be overcome. Resolving that conflict requires addressing the disparaging views that the government shared regarding the mountain people, as well as tackling the issues arising from the lack of trust and respect the mountain people project toward the Commonwealth and federal government programs. Finding a resolution to this conflict, by gaining a deeper understanding of mountain people’s heritage and lived experience of being resettled, using that understanding to create educational opportunities that respect the mountain culture and bridge the divide between culture and government has been a guiding force of this research.

Using the information collected from the participants lived experiences, leaders and policymakers have a deeper ability to inform policy and laws. Including this cultural data assists a governing body in enacting policy that will be beneficial to a group of people, rather than creating further marginalization. In order to achieve this crucial end result, one must start by listening to each person’s (or at minimum each family’s) personal recollections and stories, which is what this research provides.

Regardless of which topic I chose to move forward with next, I know that Penny Wise and I, along with many of the mountain people I spoke with and studied, will continue our efforts to have outside populations gain an appreciation of the mountain culture and the beautiful landscapes. The sentiment and appreciation is best expressed in Penny’s own words, “I visited
Texas once and I said, you could give me the deed to this State and I won’t take it., take me back to my mountains.”
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If You Knew My Story


If You Knew My Story


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**Publications**

2016 Co-editor: Facilitating Higher Education Growth through Fundraising and Philanthropy *IGI Publishing Company*  
2016 Contributed a Case Study to Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education: Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas, Fourth Edition. Authors Shapiro and Stefkovitch. Published by Routledge.  
Mann, B, & Stark, S. (2014). Implementing K-12 Online Training in Teacher Preparation Programs: Recommendations Based on the Literature. Published in EdIT LIB as a conference paper (http://www.editlib.org/j/ELEARN/v/2013/n/1/)

**Presentations**

Implementing K-12 Online Training in Teacher Preparation Programs: Recommendations Based on the Literature. *Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education, World Conference in E-Learning* New Orleans, Louisiana October 2014 (co-submission with Bryan Mann who served as presenter)  
Online Learning From the Student's Perspective: Three Successful Online Students Share Their Knowledge *Sloan-C Annual International Conference*; Orlando, Florida November 2013  
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**Peer Reviewing/Technical Program Committee Participation (Continued)**

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