

A Study of West Virginia Values and Culture



By Bill Barker

Appalachian Regional Ministry

Prepared June 1, 2004

Why Study West Virginia Culture and Values

The word culture is taken from the word *agriculture*. Agriculture is what is done to raw land to make it better than it was originally – to plow, fertilize and till the land without changing its nature. Agricultural practices do not grow plants; they create conditions for plants to grow. In the same way, we do not grow churches or leaders; we create conditions for churches and leaders to grow. All we can do is plant. The growth and harvest are out of our hands.

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (1 Corinthians 3:5-10 KJV).

A Cultural View of West Virginia

Introduction

From an airliner, West Virginia appears to be one vast mountainous forest broken by an occasional cleared valley and with a vista marred only by whiffs of smoke from distant power plants. From an auto, West Virginia is again the forest of beech, yellow poplar, sugar maple, oak, and hemlock, either sparkling with dogwood and redbud blossoms in the spring or daubed with gilded maple leaves in the autumn.

West Virginia is the third most heavily forested state in the nation and driving through this forest demands skill and care, for the narrow, twisting roads laid out in hollow bottoms and over gnarled ridges confront the driver with the dangers of the road and the danger from his companion on the road -- the tri-axle coal truck. Moreover, the driver is likely to be distracted from the forest's glories by the abandoned refuse of industrial civilization -- piles of coal tailings or "gob" and the strewn remnants of rusted metal around former glass making, mining, and refining facilities that once processed the coal, sand, limestone, natural gas, and oil abundant in the state.

West Virginians are exceedingly friendly, helpful, and eager to invite you to a local ramps supper. Most of them love West Virginia and are proud to call themselves Mountaineers. However, they are realists. They know that the state's economy historically has been one of the weakest in the nation, that incomes are relatively low, and that their children will most likely have to leave the state to find good-paying jobs.

Often, they blame out-of-state business interests for the state's economic woes and complain that their elected officials do little to curb the influence of out-of-state coal, timber, and natural gas firms. Also, in the past they have experienced widespread corruption of the public sector. Frequently they wonder, is government my friend and acting for me? Or is it in the employ of powerful interests?

West Virginians suffer from more than just a weak economy. The state's rates of teenage pregnancy, maternal health problems, occupational injury, obesity, and deaths from heart disease, cancer, lung diseases, and accidents are all above the national average. Also, many state citizens are not prepared for employment in white-collar jobs.

The state's college attendance rate is last among the states. Recently, however, the state has focused additional resources on primary and secondary education by building new schools, increasing teacher pay, and introducing computer-assisted instruction. The dropout rate of high school students, once among the highest in the nation, is now among the lowest. Although once at the bottom of national rankings in teacher pay, teacher compensation has been increased to only slightly below the national average. Also, West Virginia has an exceptionally low crime rate, a fact not lost on its citizens.

West Virginia is a very rural state. Only 41 percent of the state's 1.8 million people live in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, far less than the national average of 79 percent. Only eight other states have a more rural population. There are no large cities; indeed, Charleston, the state capital, is the largest city in the state and it has fewer than 53,400 residents.

West Virginia's population is overwhelmingly white (95 percent) and ethnically homogeneous. The population is largely descended from North Briton stock, including Lowland Scots, Ulster Scots, and English from the northern shires. Contributing to its homogeneity, West Virginia has the second lowest percentage of foreign-born population in the nation, and the state's African American population is very small and decreasing. Fewer than 56,000 African Americans reside in the state, less than 3 percent of the state's population.¹

West Virginia is the only state that lies completely within the Appalachian region. The Appalachian region is a section of the eastern United States that is dominated by the Appalachian Mountains, which stretch through a thirteen state area extending from Mississippi to New York covering 200,000 square miles. To understand the culture of West Virginia it is necessary to look at the larger context of Appalachian subculture, and while West Virginia is shaped by Appalachian culture in general, it also has its own unique worldview and values.

¹ Adapted from an article titled "Understanding Mountain State Politics".
<http://www.polsci.wvu.edu/faculty/dilger/PS321/INTRO.htm>

Various Views

The view of West Virginia culture will vary depending on whom you ask. If you ask a West Virginian about “Appalachia culture,” they are apt to reply that it is “somewhere else, perhaps over in Kentucky or down in Tennessee.” If you ask someone outside the state you will get a response based on his or her understanding of the state or an opinion based on the stereotypes portrayed by media.

The various views of West Virginians are interesting. The stereotypes reveal as much as they conceal. In the book Mountain Heritage, Betty Crickard identifies four common views that have been adapted for this paper (pp. 203-204)².

1. *The Popular National Image* is generally one of a backward shiftless people who talk “quare” and practice strange religious customs – a land of poor people living in the midst of rich natural resources. This image has been propagated by the mass media: television, documentaries and caricature programs, comic strips and feature writers, together with political candidates, the War on Poverty, religious television, and commercial tourism. Across the nation West Virginia has become synonymous with coal mining, welfare, and poverty, with images of barefooted children and empty refrigerators shown in documentaries and broadcast through media.
2. *The Official Government Image* reflects an underdeveloped, lagging state, one that lags behind rural, urban, and metropolitan America. As such it has been the target of many developmental type programs designed to provide jobs, improve health and education, build roads and reclaim stripped lands with the idea of bringing the state up to the level of the rest of the nation. West Virginia’s two senators have assisted by directing several key government projects and programs to the state.
3. *Industry’s Longstanding Image* of West Virginia appears to be one of a land of rich natural resources awaiting development to serve the needs of the nation. Coal, oil, gas, timber, and water abound in substantial amounts. The importance of these in West Virginia is dramatically attested to in the absentee corporate ownership of over two-thirds of the non-public land and its natural resources.
4. *The Self-Image of West Virginians* likewise is a varied one. Educated, middle-class West Virginians generally see themselves as no different from other middle-class Americans, with little or no acknowledgement identifications with Appalachia. These West Virginians have acquired the amenities and identified with mainstream society.

On the other hand, many West Virginians of heightened cultural sensitivity identify with, and take justifiable pride in, their Mountain State heritage. In reality West Virginia is best characterized by a wide degree of diversity and undergoing the throes of change. It

² Maurer, B. B., Mountain Heritage, Fourth Edition. “*The Mountain State*”, by Betty Crickard. McClain Printing Company, Parsons, WV. 1980. Ninth Printing, 1999.

is a state filled with artists, craftsmen, writers, and musicians who see life in West Virginia as a good life worth preserving, practicing, and passing on to future generations.

A Bicultural People

Like other Appalachians, West Virginians have developed the ability to function biculturally. Exposure to the values of the greater society in addition to those of their own heritage has provided them the opportunity to utilize whichever values give most meaning to the immediate situation. While studies on one hand provide substantial evidence, the major factors that contributed to the development and maintenance of Appalachia culture have all but disappeared under the leveling impact of mainstream society over the past fifty years; on the other hand they indicate that the Appalachian culture and values in West Virginia have demonstrated a remarkable persistence. Across the state there is a kind of cultural underlay that permeates life with varying degrees of intensity.

Consequently, seemingly contradictory conclusions may be drawn from a study of West Virginians. While it is still possible to find isolated communities where the residents fully reflect the culture of the past, it is equally possible for other West Virginians to move with the greatest ease and freedom in mainstream modern society without showing or professing any personal identity with their cultural heritage. Yet, while many West Virginians can be found who no longer identify with the culture, they still carry many of the values they learned while growing up in West Virginia.

In the face of growing depersonalization accompanying the urbanization of American society at the dawn of the twenty-first century, it is increasingly important to retain the person-orientation, family and kin relationship, and basic religious beliefs that give meaning to life. Thus, West Virginians have much to contribute to the urbanization culture of mainstream America.³

Pattern of Values

In general terms, culture is defined as a way of life. The Appalachian subculture thus embraces those distinctive patterns of living found in the region that give it an identity and set it apart from mainstream American society. Cultural values represent the goals of social behavior that give life meaning and purpose. Values are deep seated and resistant to cultural change. It is through values that Appalachian culture is most readily identified. It is through values that West Virginians can also be readily identified.

³ Adapted from "*The Mountain State*", by Betty Crickard, pp. 205- 206.

The Appalachian value pattern has been the subject of study by West Virginia Extension agents, Loyal Jones with Berea College in Kentucky, and other writers. Twelve cultural values have been identified as basic values in West Virginia. Individually each of the values is not unique to Appalachia. The cultural distinctiveness exists in the specific pattern of the values, their interrelationships, and the intensity with which they are held.

West Virginia Value Pattern

In the study of cultural values by The West Virginia Extension Agents they discovered that the West Virginia agents showed a greater sensitivity to the Appalachian value pattern than the agents from other regions. They also found that the older, more experienced and more effective Extension Agents in West Virginia showed greater sensitivity to the pattern of values than did the younger, less experienced West Virginia Extension Agents. The findings of the study indicated that awareness, sensitivity, and utilization of the Appalachian Value Pattern, and success of the work with the West Virginia education program, were related.⁴

For the purpose of this study of West Virginia values, we will use the model developed by the West Virginia Extension Agents. For their study they considered nine values, while Loyal Jones, in his book Appalachian Values lists ten values. For this study we will consider twelve values that are pertinent to West Virginia, for it is out of the values that a worldview is developed. These values also affect how we interpret the scriptures.

Twelve Values Common to West Virginians

Why study the values of West Virginians? Behavior stems from what we think – our attitudes, beliefs, values, and opinions.

1. Traditionalism or Heritage – a Strong Love of Tradition.

Traditionalism is defined as a respect for tradition, traditional values, principles or standards followed and revered by a people continuously from generation to generation. It is the love of things as they are. Change comes slowly. When there is a change, you must allow for process time.

Jack Weller, in the late 1960's, in writing about his observations as a Presbyterian pastor in Whitesville, West Virginia, characterizing the people as "Yesterday's People." He observed that while much of American culture has faced so many changes within the last one hundred years that it has left many people virtually rootless. Mountain life has preserved the old traditions and ideas.

⁴ Crickard, p. 207

“While writers have generally agreed that traditionalism is a dominant value in Appalachian culture, they have not always recognized its interdependence with other values.”⁵

However, no matter how strong this value may have been a generation ago, under the pressure of progress and electronic technology reaching deep into the rural areas of West Virginia, it has been substantially weakened in recent years.

2. Strong sense of family or Familism

Familism is family centered and loyalty runs deep. The strength of West Virginia heritage lies in the family and kin group relationships. Here are found, preserved and passed on attitudes, patterns of behavior, outlook on life, and ways of dealing with everyday problems. Personal ties, identity, loyalty, and well-being are often found within a given family and tend to remain similar generation after generation.

West Virginians often feel an obligation to family members and are more truly themselves when within the family circle. Family loyalty often runs deep and wide, extending to grandparents, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins, and in-laws. Family members gather when there is sickness, death, or a disaster.

The extended family provides additional outlets for fulfillment of children’s emotional needs and affection. While children may be raised by their parents, often close relatives share affectionate roles with them. The value of the extended family grows out of an early era when it was necessary for kin groups to rely on one another in times of need. As a result, today there is a deep respect and abiding loyalty to “kinfolk.”

Through the years, this value has served as a means of transition for many families from the mountains to city life. The migrant family not only performs the function of informing relatives of job opportunities, but also helps them in the socialization and adjustment process, often allowing the new migrating family to live with them “until they can get on their feet.”

The strong sense of family responsibility may extend beyond immediate family and is often expressed as "blood is thicker than water." Relationships are very important. This is still reflected in the twenty-first century when people who have moved from West Virginia are absent from their jobs to come back home for the funeral of a distant relative or friend.

Crickard writes, "The extended family provides the individual with a haven of safety in time of economic crises and a social psychological cushion in time of personal stress. Recent evidence suggests that the traditional patterns of family behavior are being disturbed and the stability of the rural Appalachian family is under pressure from the forces of change."⁶ Yet, while the typical West Virginia family is subject to the same stresses and strains that affect all American families, and there is alienation, divorce, and abuse here as everywhere, there is

⁵ Crickard, p. 208

⁶ Crickard, p. 208

still a strong attachment and commitment to the extended family, which is becoming rare in America.

In the Extension study, the West Virginia agents who were more effective in their work reflected a greater sensitivity to familism as a cultural value than did the lesser effective agents.⁷ This fact would hold true for each of the nine values considered in the study.

3. Neighborliness and Hospitality

Closely related to the familism and the extended family is the basic quality of neighborliness and hospitality. In the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, survival often depended on, and at times required, people to be hospitable – to take people in at night or to allow them to live with you “for a spell” when their house burned. Neighbors also joined together to build houses, raise barns, exchange farm implements, and share supplies. Today, as then, while neighbors are quick to help each other, and are spontaneous to invite people for a meal or to spend the night, they, like their forefathers, are suspicious of strangers.

In West Virginia a high value is placed on having good neighbors. It is important to lend a hand, to have someone to turn to when needed and someone to trust.

Three principles can be formed from this value. First, West Virginia people are friendly and neighborly, but not open to strangers. Second, trust is important and West Virginians tend not to ask your advice until they trust you. And if you give them your unsolicited advice, they may stand and listen politely, and then ignore it. Third, relationships are important and deep relationships are developed slowly. It takes time, years in fact, to develop deep, trusting relationship with most West Virginians, especially those who live in the rural areas of the state.

4. Love of the Home Place

Like most Appalachians, West Virginians have a strong attachment to the land, the “the old homeplace.” They love the hills and every holiday is marked by the large number of out-of-state license plates back in the community, returning home to visit family and kin. They just get lonesome for home and have to get back to the “homeplace.”

Though thousands of West Virginians leave the state each year to find employment or in search of a better life, they still call West Virginia home. Ask a West Virginian where he or she is from and they usually do not say, “West Virginia.” Instead they will give you the city or town and often county where they grew up. For example, “I’m from Ashford, in Boone County, you know, between Charleston and Logan.”

For West Virginians the homeplace is symbolic of the family and reinforces the strong family loyalty felt. There seems to be a lifelong tie between them and the experiences

⁷ Crickard p. 208

associated with the homeplace. This is reflected in the numbers of West Virginians who return for family reunions, holidays, church and community homecomings, after retirement, or to be buried in the family cemetery. This is a part of West Virginians that they do not boast about or even talk about, it is just there. This is characteristic of the cultural values that make up West Virginians.

This love of the homeplace often keeps people living in places where there is no hope of maintaining decent lives.

5. Individualism, Independence, Self-Reliance, and Pride

These values to the outsider may seem like an oxymoron or conflicting values when placed alongside the values of familism and neighborliness. However, to the West Virginian there is no conflict. It was the desire for independence that drove our forefathers into the frontier seeking to get away from the encroachments on their freedom. While our forefathers banded together to help one another in communities, they also pitied the person who did not or could not look after himself and his family.

Loyal Jones speaking of Appalachians, writes, “Our belief in independence and self-reliance is still strong whether or not we are truly independent. We still value solitude, whether or not we can always find a place to be alone. We also value self-reliance, to do things for ourselves, whether or not it is practical to do so – like make a dress, a chair, build a house, repair an automobile, or play a banjo, fiddle, or guitar. We get satisfaction from that, in the age when people hire others to do work they used to do, even to provide entertainment.”

Jones continues, “Pride is mostly a feeling of not wanting to be beholden to other people. We are inclined to try to do things for ourselves, find our way without asking directions when we are lost on the road, or suffer through when we are in need. We don’t like to ask others for help. The value of independence and self-reliance, and our pride, is often stronger than desire or need.”⁸

Crickard notes that “The study of West Virginia Extension agents indicates that individualism, long recognized as a distinctive Appalachian Cultural value, may be increasing in importance throughout American society almost as though in reaction to the dehumanizing effects of mass society.”⁹

The spirit of this value is reflected in the strong work ethic found among West Virginians. This value also means we usually consider our way to be the best and if we are forced to do it your way, we will undo it and do it our way after you leave.

⁸ Jones, Loyal. Appalachian Values. The Jesse Stuart Foundation, Ashland, KY, 1994, pp. 63, 68.

⁹ Crickard, p. 210

6. Personalism

In West Virginia, like the rest of Appalachia, the person is of primary importance. The major goal of Appalachian people is to have meaningful relationships with other persons as total individuals.

Appalachians will go to great lengths to keep from offending others, even sometimes appearing to agree with them when in fact they do not. It is more important to get along with another person than to push one's own views. In West Virginia, for example, they will give the appearance of agreeing to meetings that they have no interest in or intention of attending, just because they want to be agreeable. This tendency has led outsiders to accuse them of being unreliable. However, if an issue is important enough, West Virginians will push the issue. For if there is one thing they do not lack, it is courage.

For Appalachians time is secondary; it becomes meaningful only in the context of relationships. Therefore, in West Virginia you will find people are tolerant of personal differences, and when respecting the right of other people to be themselves, we expect them to respect our right to be ourselves.

West Virginians tend to accept others on face value as human beings rather than on credentials, looks, or accomplishments. Unlike urban oriented people who often see other people in specific roles, West Virginians place a high value on personal standing and one's reputation with other people, unencumbered by role definition.

7. Modesty and Being Oneself

West Virginians value modesty in terms of one's personal attributes or accomplishments. They believe they are as good as anyone else but no better. They believe that one should not put on airs, boast, or try to get above their raising. They tend to be modest about their abilities. Those who are really accomplished, such as in playing music or singing, are often reluctant to perform until it is determined that you really want to hear them. Then when they do perform, they will preface the performance with disparaging words about their voices or their instruments. Statements such as, "I've had a cold this week and hardly have any voice." Or, "I can't keep this guitar in tune tonight." Then they will perform with vigor and skill.

This is often heard among native West Virginia preachers. They will talk of their unworthiness for the task at hand and hint that there are others in the audience who probably could do a better job, but conclude, "With your prayers and the Lord's help, I'll try." Then having dispensed with the formalities will cut loose with energy and enthusiasm.

West Virginians have a pretty realistic view of themselves and have learned not to take themselves too seriously. They tend to temper everything with humor. Since they do not consider themselves to be perfect, they do not become cynical when they fail.

8. Sense of Beauty

Some who travel across West Virginia are appalled at the neglected houses, run down and boarded up store fronts, or the old cars parked at the edge of woods, never stopping to see the beauty of the people in the mountains or their artistic ability. Like many other regions of Appalachia, West Virginians have many avenues for artistic expression. They take great pride in the beauty of a hardwood chair, the inlay and carving on a gun stock, the stitchery, design and variety of color in a quilt, or the skill of the potter in creating a piece of pottery.

This artistic expression can be seen in other areas as well. West Virginians love their music and play a wide variety of stringed instruments such as the fiddle, banjo, dulcimer, or mandolin with skill. They have created beautiful songs in folk music, preserved the great British ballads, and made new ones based on local tragedies. Many have made a name for themselves in folk, country, and gospel music.

They have also displayed their artistic beauty through poems, folk tales, literature, and colorful metaphors like, "I'm as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a roomful of rocking chairs." Across the state are many great storytellers who love to use their imaginations when telling a story. They will often take liberties in telling a story to emphasize a truth or point they are attempting to make.

9. Sense of Humor

West Virginians have a good sense of humor, even if it is sometimes delivered in an expressionless fashion, in keeping with their sense of modesty and understatement. Humor is more than fun, it is a coping mechanism. Humor has sustained West Virginians in hard times, through sickness, and is often used to cover up personal pain or disappointment.

They tend to poke fun at themselves, but resent outsiders telling jokes or making fun of them. Their humor can be filled with sarcasm. They love practical jokes.

10. Strong sense of solidarity

Labor unions have a long history in West Virginia and as a result of hard fought labor wars in the early part of the twentieth century the state is a strong union state. West Virginians have stood together against industry, government intimidation, and abuse. After years of standing together, solidarity has become an important value.

This solidarity is strongly felt in politics and in the church. For example, while West Virginia is considered a conservative state in religion, it still votes Democratic in politics. This value is reflected when people will vote with a key person or authority figure for the sake of unity.

Solidarity is also felt in the church where members see the church functioning as one committee and will hotly debate issues that come as recommendations from a committee. Often the pastor is seen as a shop steward.

11. Strong sense of Patriotism

Like other Appalachians, West Virginians have a special feeling about the flag of the United States. This is the land that gave them the freedom to be themselves, and when that freedom was threatened, they led in seeking independence.

Following the Revolutionary War many veterans were given land in the mountains in lieu of money for their service. Because of strong feeling for the Union, as well as an aversion to slavery, West Virginia seceded from Virginia and became a Union State.

Since 1863, when West Virginia became a state, her sons and daughters have fought in every American war. During the Vietnam conflict Appalachian soldiers were killed at a higher rate and won a higher percentage of Medals of Honor than other Americans. For example, in Vietnam the national average for battle deaths was 58.9 for every 100,000 males in the 1970 Census, but for West Virginia it was 84.1.¹⁰

West Virginians strongly support their military personnel and country. They value their military relationships and their patriotism shows up in community celebrations and festivals.

12. Strong Religious Beliefs

West Virginians are religious people. This does not mean that they always go to church regularly, but that they are religious in the sense that most of their values and meaning they find in life springs from the Bible. To understand West Virginians, you must understand their religion.

“In the beginning,” writes Jones speaking of Appalachia, “they were mostly Anglican, Presbyterian or Baptist, with some Brethren and Lutherans, all rather formally organized churches with confessions of faith and other creedal documents.”¹¹ These churches did not serve the spiritual needs of all, and so locally autonomous groups were formed, depending on local resources and leadership.

“The Methodists rose to prominence in the First Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, stressing the work of the Holy Spirit on human emotions, along with intellectual ideas. The Second Great Awakening, beginning in 1801 in Kentucky, won many

¹⁰ Jones, pp.107-113. Adapted from the chapter titled “Patriotism”

¹¹ Jones, p. 39

Presbyterians and Calvinistic Baptists over to the belief that all who seek the Lord can be saved. Several churches split over the doctrines of predestination and free-will.”¹²

West Virginians, like other Appalachians, in large numbers joined the more optimistic Methodist and Free-Will Baptist churches, churches created to an extent by and for the general population. The members depended on the grace of God to help them through a hard world and to save them in the end, even though they at times were weak and sinful.

Across West Virginia, other churches soon developed to meet the needs of the isolated people. The Churches of Christ and the Pentecostal-Holiness movement at the turn of the twentieth century added many others, the last group going beyond the Methodists in stressing holiness and the work of grace from the Holy Spirit. During this same time other Baptist groups that stressed free-will also begin to flourish across the state.

For most West Virginians, religion is something that has shaped their lives, but at the same time they have shaped their religion, since religion and culture are always intertwined. Many tend to look upon religion with a fatalistic view believing that outside factors control one's life and fate, believing things happen for a reason and will work out for the best. Their religion sustains them in hard times.

Mountain religion simply says, “Get religion – that is get saved, and try to keep the faith and endure, hoping for a sure reward in the hereafter.” Moreover, they believe the Good News is that even though we fail, God loves us anyway, and if we believe, we will be saved. There is a strong belief in the Golden Rule.

While religion has played a major role in the lives of West Virginians for generations, its value has been diminishing in influence since the 1960's. Today, West Virginia is a state of religious, but unchurched people. Over 1.2 million people or seven out of ten West Virginians are unchurched.

The Strength of These Values across West Virginia

The influence of the above values will vary as you travel across the state. While at the core of their being, the typical West Virginian holds dear these values, the expression and intensity of these values will differ. Several factors contribute to this fact.

¹² Jones, pp.39, 43

The first is the urban versus the rural. West Virginia has a number of towns and small cities located along the Interstate and Corridor Highway systems. These towns and cities have tended to be more progressive, while much of rural West Virginia has experienced long term economic decline and migration. This has led to a changing appreciation for the values among many of the urbanites as they have been exposed to differing values and worldviews.

The second factor is education. A number of significant colleges and major universities exist across the state. While most of the institutions offer studies related to the interruption of the culture and values found in West Virginia, they also present a challenge to their preservation. These institutions are also attended by a large number of students from outside the state. This includes a number of international students. The influx of new ideas, values, and worldviews, plus the exposure to other cultures tend to diminish the West Virginians own values.

Media has been the third factor that contributes to the varying degrees the values are held too. The satellite dish and the World-Wide-Web (www.) have linked the remotest home, located up in the head of a hollow, with the outside world. Today with a computer a young man in McDowell County, using a computer can travel around the world, chatting with a wide variety of nationalities and experience exposure to multiple cultures, worldviews and values. With the press of the remote button, the world is brought into the living room and with it the broad value base of today's complex world system.

A fourth and final factor to consider in this paper is the various types of West Virginians living within the state and how their background influences the intensity of their values.

- The urbanite who lives in one of the towns or cities located along one of the major highway systems within the state. This group was addressed above.
- The branch water or rural West Virginian. This group lives alongside a highway or in a small town in the rural West Virginia. They are always trying to get ahead and want a better life for their children than what they had growing up. They encourage their children to get an education and are active in their communities. They are usually either retired or employed in a factory, mines, timber industry, or small business.
- The hollow or extremely rural West Virginians. This group is identified as those who still live up in the hollow or in the hard to reach areas of the state. They struggle with poverty and unemployment and tend to deemphasize the importance of education. They are often described as those who are too poor to move and too poor to stay.
- The returning West Virginian. This group is composed of two subgroups – those who leave the state and later unemployed return. The second subgroup is composed of those who left the state in the 1950's and 60's and are now retired. These move back, exposed to different subcultures and values.

West Virginians

West Virginians are first and foremost people. People with a long standing, rich tradition deeply rooted in the American birthright. Second, West Virginians are a people whose mountain environment, interacting with their ancestral cultural background and the exploitation of their natural and human resources by outsiders, has created a distinctive American subculture. Yet, across the state, West Virginians take pride in their values and way of life.