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CRITICAL REGIONALITY & ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGIES IN
EASTERN KENTUCKY

By

Zachary Shelton

B.A., University of Louisville 2018

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of the
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for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In Anthropology

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A Thesis Approved on

11/20/2023

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ABSTRACT

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Zachary Shelton

11/20/23

This study examines the history of several Appalachian educational institutions, their approaches, and how that may influence contemporary Eastern Kentucky students (the Appalachian region in Kentucky). Eastern Kentucky today suffers from high rates of poverty and low rates of educational attainment, with a postsecondary attainment rate less than half of the nation's average. This study proposes looking at Eastern Kentucky's educational history and proposing ways to alter the current standardized pedagogies in secondary schools to cultivate higher rates of academic interest and motivation.

I approach Eastern Kentucky's complex history with the institution of education and its contemporary implications through a review of primary and secondary literature and interviews with secondary school educators in Eastern Kentucky. The overarching conclusion arrived at with this study is that pedagogical approaches that utilize the student's experiences, such as critical regionality, are effective at cultivating educational motivation within a locale like Eastern Kentucky.

Key Words: Critical Regionality, Settlement Schools, Alternative Pedagogy, educational inequality, educational attainment, Eastern Kentucky, Appalachia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement	1
Background to Problem	3
Theoretical Framework	10
Critical Regionality	11
Paul Willis's Impact	12
Local Power Dynamics	17
Methods	20
Purpose & Study Location	20
<i>Research Locale</i>	20
<i>Interviews</i>	20
Research Questions	21
Interview Questions	21
Data Analysis	25
Organization of Thesis	25
CHAPTER 2: SCHOOLING IN EASTERN KENTUCKY	27
Overview	27
History of Urban Missionaries	28
Cultural price of settlement schools	31
Alice Lloyd: Pro-Appalachian Pedagogies	34
Hindman	36
Moonlight Schools	38
Foxfire	42
Highlander	44
The Kentucky Educational Reform Act of 1990 (KERA)	47
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS FROM TEACHER INTERVIEWS	51
Introduction	51
Summary of Data	51

Altering the standardized Pedagogy	53
Building Rapport to Combat Resistance.....	55
Parental Involvement effect on Academic Motivation	59
Socioeconomic Issues in Eastern Kentucky.....	62
Conclusion	66
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSSIONS	67
Introduction.....	67
Pedagogical Innovations on Balance	67
Why Critical Regionality	74
Limitations	76
Summary and Conclusion	76
REFERENCE.....	80
Appendix.....	88
List of Study Participants.....	88
Experts	88
Teachers	89
List of Eastern Kentucky Counties	92
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	95

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

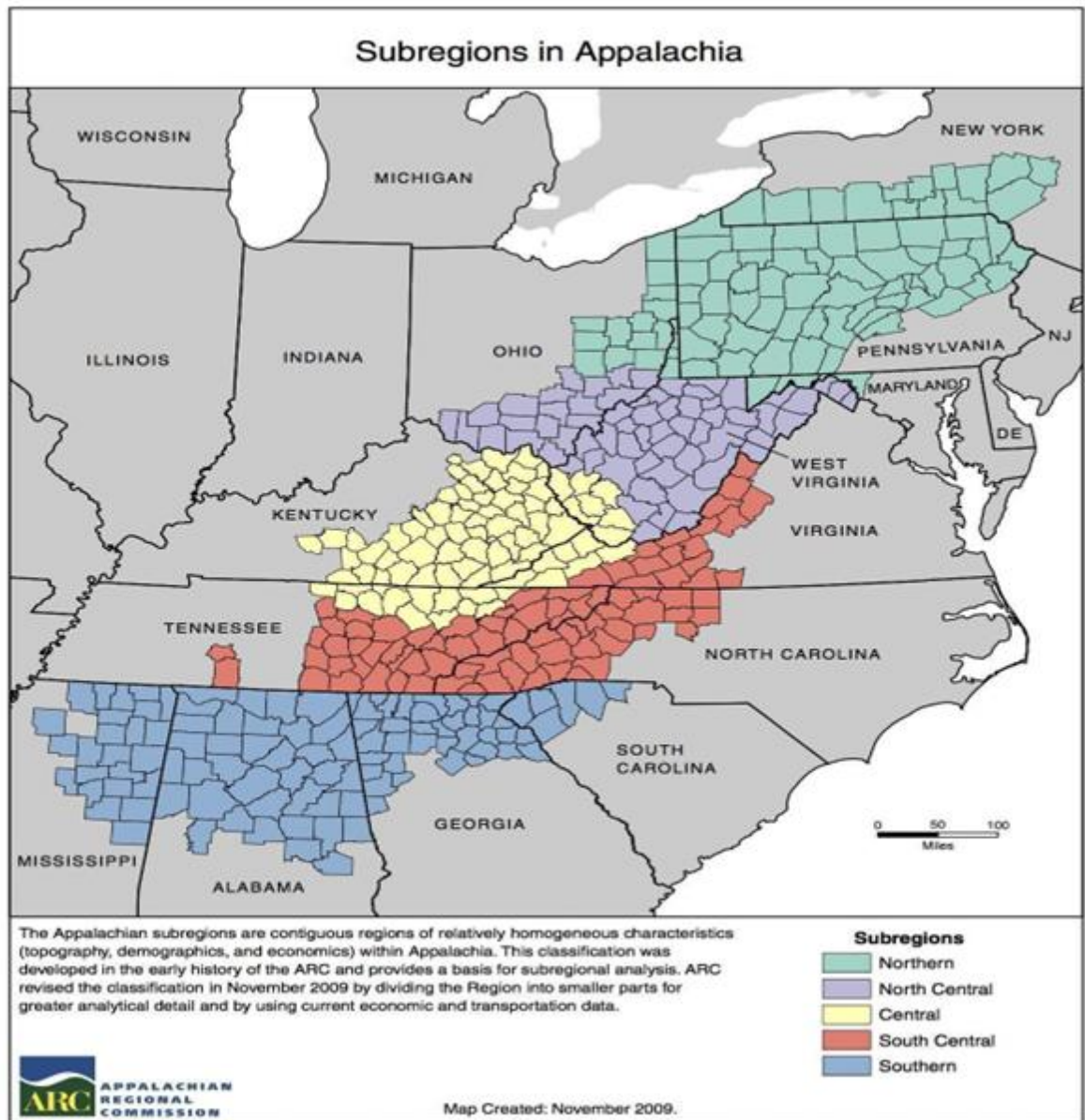
Problem Statement

Eastern Kentucky is a region with a rich and tumultuous history in relation to education. Education in Eastern Kentucky has deep roots in settlement schools and the urban missionaries who created them. Kentucky, particularly Eastern Kentucky, is an interesting location to analyze as it is not only home to some of the most respected surviving settlement schools, but it was also home to the first, the Hindman Settlement School (Green III 1981). These missionaries often shaped their pedagogies in a reformatory way and were used to convert rural Kentuckians to more urban sensibilities. Even though many of the missionaries came to Eastern Kentucky with pure intentions, their urban-centric pedagogies have contributed to rural cultural erosion, difficulty in establishing rapport between teachers and rural students, and even educational resistance among rural students. In this thesis, I approach this complex history and its contemporary implications through a review of primary and secondary literature and interviews with secondary school educators in Appalachian Kentucky. Teachers provided an extensive view of the broad experiences of the student body while detailing their efforts to promote student engagement. This study also offers a historical analysis of several formative schools in Eastern Kentucky, and the pedagogy of the founding educators. Further, this project analyzes aspects of these educators' individual approaches and how they might be

applicable for today's teachers in developing their own pedagogies. Some of this history suggests that the implementation of standardized, impersonal pedagogies may result in apathetic student bodies and create difficulties for educators as they endeavor to motivate their students.

As shown in **Figure 1**, there are 423 counties in the United States that constitute Appalachia, fifty-four of which are located in Kentucky. I chose participants from several counties in Eastern Kentucky, a region that constitutes the Appalachian region in Kentucky. I interviewed three local historians and four Morehead State University professors regarding the region's educational history. Further, eleven secondary school educators were interviewed about their experiences with schooling in Eastern Kentucky to learn about their approaches for engaging the interest of their students.

Figure 1. A Map of Appalachian counties in the United States



Source: Appalachian Regional Commission, November 19, 2021. "Subregions in Appalachia."

Background to Problem

Educational attainment, or the highest level of education an individual has completed, past high school "has become the key determinant of economic opportunity

and social mobility" (Lumina 2023a). This is a sweeping statement that does not factor in the lack of opportunities in impoverished, rural areas. Nevertheless, high school completion increases the odds of an individual achieving economic betterment, even if that means leaving their hometown to pursue those opportunities. Though this latter outcome is not ideal and contributes to a phenomenon known as rural "brain drain," an export of college-educated youths to areas with more occupational opportunities, it is generally in the individual's interest to further their education in terms of their socioeconomic situation (Picchi 2019). That said, options for rural Appalachians to further their education are limited. In this regard, making postsecondary education more accessible to the broader population is a priority, and this process begins at the secondary level.

Depicted below in **Table 1** is the average rate of educational attainment of individuals twenty-five years or older in the United States compared to the average educational attainment rates of Kentucky, and then Eastern Kentucky specifically. I went through census data regarding attainment rates in Kentucky. Averages specific to the fifty-four Eastern Kentucky counties were then calculated, then those findings were compared against the averages of every Kentucky county. The average attainment rate for the United States was then produced from the census data and compared to the averages of both Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky, as can be seen in **Table 1**. These figures paint a grim picture as Eastern Kentucky is not only significantly behind the rest of the nation in terms of educational attainment, but the region is also behind the rest of Kentucky.

Table 1.

	The United States	Kentucky	Eastern Kentucky
Graduate or Professional Degree	13.1%	10.6%	7.05%
Bachelor's Degree	20.6%	15.1%	9.54%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	33.7%	25.7%	13.73%
Postsecondary Attainment	51.3%*	46.6%**	23.44**
High School or higher	88.9%	87.7%	75.23%

Source: United States Census Bureau 2021. "American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1501, 2021." Census Website, March 3, 2023. <https://www.census.gov/data/>.

*Lumina Foundation. 2023a. "A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds American Talent." <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/KY>.

**Lumina Foundation. 2023b. "Kentucky" <https://www.luminafoundation.org/state/kentucky/>.

While 88.9 percent of those in the United States aged twenty-five years or older have a high school degree, its equivalent, or higher, only 87.7 percent of those in Kentucky within the same age range can claim to have the same level of educational attainment (Census 2021). This places Kentucky forty-third out of fifty-one (fifty states and the District of Columbia) when it comes to educational attainment. However, the

secondary school attainment rate in Eastern Kentucky is 75.23 percent, significantly below any other state's average attainment rate (Census 2021). At a glance the difference between the United States' and Kentucky's attainment rate may appear miniscule but the United States struggles with educational inequality, and its average attainment rate reflects this.

The educational attainment rate in Kentucky varies substantially when comparing one county to another, but what is to be said about Eastern Kentucky specifically? Examining the postsecondary educational attainment of Kentucky today, fifty-three counties have attainment rates that are 25 percent or lower at a time when the United States average rate is 51.3 percent and thirty-four of these are in Eastern Kentucky (Lumina Foundation 2023a: Lumina Foundation 2023b). The state's goal is to raise the state's attainment average to 60 percent by 2030 (Lumina Foundation 2023a). Clearly, educational systems must be addressed in Eastern Kentucky for that goal to come to fruition. This is made evident when comparing the example of the attainment rate of Oldham County, located in Central Kentucky, with the attainment rate of Elliott County, located in Eastern Kentucky (Zimmerman 2019: Lumina Foundation 2023b). Oldham County's attainment rate of 55.5 percent eclipses that of Elliott County's 13.4 percent, highlighting the extent of disparities among Kentucky counties. Oldham County currently has the state's highest attainment rate, and only a few nearby counties have comparable percentages, e.g., Fayette County with 55.1 percent and Campbell with 51.8 percent (Lumina Foundation 2023b). Only five counties have a higher attainment rate than 47 percent, while twenty-five have less than 20 percent (Lumina Foundation 2023b). If the state truly wishes to raise the average postsecondary attainment rate to 60 percent, then

the inequities in Kentucky's school system must be addressed. One of the primary causes of these educational inequities is the high poverty rates in Eastern Kentucky.

In 2023, the United States' fixed average poverty rate is 12.8 percent and Kentucky's average is 16.9 percent (United States Census Bureau 2021). But again, if this seems dire, then what of Eastern Kentucky? Every single Eastern Kentucky county is above the United States's average rate of poverty, and all except for Greenup County, with a rate of 16.6 percent, is above Kentucky's average rate of poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Economic hardship strongly affects the landscape and gains regional specificity considering the region's history of natural resource extraction and labor exploitation.

During the nineteenth century, urban capitalists and entrepreneurs “played a game of trespassing, squatting, and sometimes asserting rights to ownership” (Stoll 2018 165). Eventually, this evolved into the large-scale extraction industry that completely changed Appalachians' way of life. After lumber companies “ripped out the forest and hauled it away” (Stoll 2018, 165), coal mines would be constructed on that same ground, permanently closing off land previously used for hunting and gathering (Stoll 2018, 165). This massive assault on their forests consigned Appalachians to wage labor, which Alonza Brooks (1910) mourned: “During a comparatively few years, nearly the whole population which originally earned its living from the ground has been pushed out from places of seclusion into a whirl of modern industry” (Brooks 1910, 44: Stoll 2018, 174).

The salt in the wound regarding making Appalachians dependent on extraction labor was that once the goods were extracted, and the coal industry imploded, Appalachia was left with nothing. Of the thirteen top-producing coal mines in the United States in

2018, not one was located in Appalachia (Stoll 2018, 269). In fact, in 2022, 41 percent of America's coal was produced in Wyoming and only 21 percent of America's coal came from Appalachia (United States Energy Information Administration 2022).

Eastern Kentucky specifically has a troubled history with extractive industries, one that extends to the modern day. A striking example comes from Martin County at Wolf Creek, a beautiful body of water that was a popular spot to conduct Christian baptisms. It was said Wolf Creek "connected people to God's creation at the very moment they took the quick, backward plunge into a new life" (Young 2020, 91). On October 11, 2000, an impoundment operated by Martin County Coal let loose 300 gallons of toxic sludge that poured down Wolf Creek well into the nearby Tug Fork River, making the water in nearby towns undrinkable for a long stretch of time after the incident (Young 2020, 91). The American Society of Civil Engineers stated that it would take over \$8 billion in investment to make Kentucky's water drinkable.

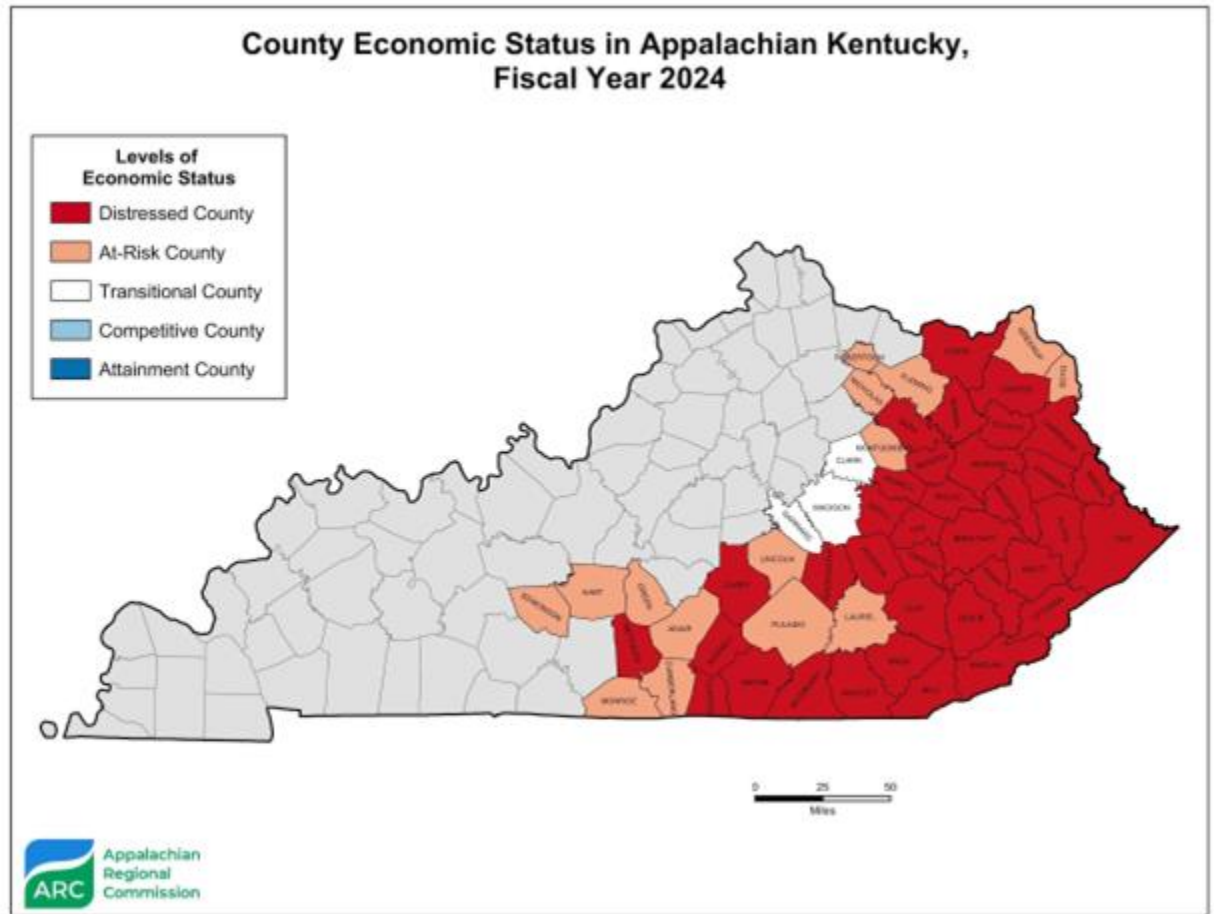
Undrinkable water alone has serious implications beyond health-related ones. Regarding the economic implications of extractive industries' continual abuse of Kentucky's land, and more specifically the largely undrinkable water, author Jeff Young (2020) said it best when he said, "how do you bring in people and businesses if you can't promise them a clean glass of water?" (90).

But how does this poverty impact the high school student's schooling experience? The poverty experienced by Eastern Kentucky has an enormous impact on the region's academic landscape. Students from an impoverished household will likely attend an underfunded high school (Ayers 2022). The school being underfunded leads to a lack of resources, which would result in the facility being less equipped to deal with students

who display symptoms of learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, or even students that are more difficult to motivate (Ayers 2022). There is an observable connection between socioeconomic standing and academic achievement, as “education level reduces poverty” (Shi & Qamruzzaman 2022, 3).

This pertains to the economic situation of Eastern Kentucky counties. The Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) reviewed the economic status of each county in Eastern Kentucky in the 2024 fiscal year, the results of which are shown in **Figure 2**. By the ARC's metrics, only three counties can be categorized as “Transitional,” fifteen counties as “at-risk,” and an overwhelming thirty-six counties as “distressed” (Appalachian Regional Commission 2023). In Zhing Shi and Md. Qamruzzaman's (2022) exhaustive analysis on the correlation between education and poverty, they determined that investment in education was a decisive factor in reducing poverty (3), and as discussion of The Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 later on in this chapter will reveal, investment in education is poor.

Figure 2. An economic map of Eastern Kentucky counties



Source: “Appalachian Regional Commission, 2023. “County Economic Status and Distressed Areas in Appalachian Kentucky.”

Theoretical Framework

In my study of schooling in Eastern Kentucky, I draw on three frameworks. Critical regionalism is the primary approach I adopted for data analysis toward developing salutary pedagogies. Second, I discuss *Learning to Labour* by Paul Willis (1977), an important educational ethnography that inspired this research study as well as

the work of other authors cited. Third, I discuss how Power and Powerlessness by John Gaventa (1982) can be used to frame the interactions between Eastern Kentucky students and the educational system.

Critical Regionality

Critical Regionalism, as both a pedagogical approach and methodology, attempts to negotiate "linking individual moments of cultural struggle" to larger historical patterns of politics and culture and to connecting them to stretches of time and space through relationships of power (Powell 2007, 20, 97). As a pedagogy, critical regionalism informs students how to connect their personal experiences to that of other cultures, both similar and unlike their own (Billings, et al. 2019, 215; Powell 2007, 8). Being able to create such connections would help students understand "the global" through the lens of the local (Billings, et al. 2019, 214). Powell (2007) asserts that critical regionalism is a method of presenting regionalism in a way that does not seem parochial, pointing out that critical regionality should be a pedagogy that allows students to "draw their own regional maps" (7) to connect themselves, and their experiences, to that of "others both near and far, both like and unlike themselves" (8).

Critical regionality revolves around creating an environment where the learning is mutual in a way that does not accentuate the division between the educator and student. Perhaps most importantly, critical regionality does so while also connecting the students' lived experiences and understanding of local culture with other cultures (Billings, et al. 2019, 215; Powell 2007, 8). To be effective, an educator practicing this approach should

work toward the development of a relationship between themselves and students via a genuine interest in the individuals that make up the student body and the region's culture.

When practiced correctly, regionalism allows the student body to make "claims about how spaces and places are connected" (Powell 2007, 4) rather than promoting an isolationist mindset. Uncritical regionalist pedagogies are another matter. When mishandled, these pedagogies can support a "shallow" (Billings, et al. 2019, 213) kind of diversity, promoting impoverished examples of their community that can either be dispelled as "antimodern" (214) or as an "antidote" (214) to modern lifestyles. This results in a "postcard fetishization" (Billings, et al. 2019, 213) of the region in question. When taught poorly, a regionalist pedagogy could support insular thought within the student body, providing students with a distorted perception of their place in the world and reinforce negative stereotypes about the region (Billings, et al. 2019, 214). Though many students may enter the classroom with problematic or toxic investments into their community or region, through the effective use of a critical regionalist pedagogy, those same students may leave the classroom with the understanding that their region can be utilized as an instrument to better understand the world (Billings, et al. 2019, 213, 214).

Paul Willis's Impact

Learning to Labour (1977) by Paul Willis is largely the inspiration for this study. When I read it as an undergraduate, it inspired me to pursue educational studies about rural Appalachia. The book, a culmination of Willis's ethnographic work, reveals several ways in which various factors of working-class culture in England funnel secondary school students into a future in working-class jobs. Paramount among the ideologies

presented in *Learning to Labour* is that of the teaching paradigm, differentiation, and integration. The teaching paradigm is the set of behaviors and incentives determined by principals and teachers to encourage student obedience, with the desired outcome being upward social mobility for the obedient student (Willis 1977,64-77). Differentiation is the working-class students' rejection of the teaching paradigm, as they view it as not satisfying their needs and interests (Willis 1977, 62,63,72). Integration then is the teachers' continual effort to prove the worth of education in the lives of students and assert their authority over their students (Willis 1977, 62,63). In large part, *Learning to Labour* can be seen as the day-to-day interactions of students, families, and educators and administrators engaged in a constant battle between working class students' differentiation and educators' attempts at integration. This extensive analysis of the deeply rooted systems and origins that perpetuate certain conditions within a given society inspired me and made me want to explore these dynamics in Eastern Kentucky. This ethnography provides a solid foundation for ethnographic studies conducted in educational settings and serves as the bedrock for my views on educational inequality, participant observation, and power relations. However, where this study differs from *Learning to Labour* is that a stronger focus will be placed on contextualizing the behaviors of those being studied into the deeper historical reality of their respective region.

Another key work in the foundational literature for this study is *Hollowing out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America* by Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas (2009). Of particular interest from this work are the four classifications of high school students in Ellis, Iowa, the rural town where the authors conducted their

research. The authors devised these classifications to portray the nuanced array of behavioral patterns present in students' decisions towards how they interacted with their education. Two of these classifications represent an educationally resistant, or apathetic, student population- that of stayers and seekers -and two represent a non-resistant, compliant, or acquiescent population- that of achievers and returners. The authors refer to "stayers" as small-town citizens that refuse, or once refused, to out-migrate to another town once they have completed their high school education, and do not pursue a college career (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 20,21). They stated that Ellis and many more small towns dealing with a mass emigration of their college-bound citizenry, poorly invested in its working-class population and were more interested in enticing those that left to pursue opportunities elsewhere to return (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 21).

Interestingly, Carr and Kefalas (2009) draw comparisons between their stayers and Willis's lads. Primarily, the authors posit for many "working-and lower-class kids whose family incomes put them in the bottom quarter of the income distribution" (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 59), simply "surviving high school" (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 60) is a major achievement on its own. Carr and Kefalas further state that there are many similarities between their rural stayers and their suburban or urban counterparts; particularly, the authors draw attention to the fact that both bodies of educationally resistant students typically earn lower grades and things of that nature and point out that both student bodies expressed that they "lacked a sense of control over their own lives" (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 60). Students resistant to their schooling often feel a sense of detachment from the educational system they are part of and question its role within their lives and

may practice resistance as a way to express these feelings (Hendrickson 2012, 37: Carr & Kefalas 2009, 60).

Can a similar comparison be made between Willis's lads and Eastern Kentuckians? Predominant among the differences between the lads and Eastern Kentuckians is that we can directly attribute school resistance, within rural Eastern Kentucky, to a sense of local pride (Hendrickson 2012, 38). Essentially, with the decline, or absence, of jobs within the fields of farming or coal mining, the employment opportunities for many Appalachians, and Appalachian Kentuckians specifically, remain extremely limited (Hendrickson 2012, 39). Therefore, those that do well in school are encouraged, or essentially forced, to move outside of the community to pursue more fruitful career options, similar to the decisions facing Ellis's students (Hendrickson 2012, 39: Carr & Kefalas, 2009).

Sources seem to differ on how conscious this resistance is; Carr and Kefalas (2009) assert that stayers reject their education as they are insistent that they "choose their paths for themselves" (60), thus becoming unknowing victims to the class patterns that "reproduce themselves generation after generation" (60). It has indeed been understood that most educational resistance is a direct result of the social reproduction enacted through schools (Willis 1977, 128; Hendrickson 2012, 38). Hendrickson (2012) claims that the decision for a rural Appalachian to resist their education is a calculated decision in accruing social capital and prestige, serving to further cement the rebellious student into their community (Hendrickson 2012, 39). Hendrickson (2012) states that "students whose family knowledge and experience conflicts with school ideology, school success means giving in to the dominant middle-class culture and rejecting the family"

(39). Further, for some, to become compliant in one's education is to give in to the ideology prescribed by the school, which can be seen as prescribing to the dominant middle-class American image, which can be in direct opposition to ideas within their community (Hendrickson 2012, 39). This draws a further comparison to Carr and Kefalas's (2009) stayers, as they contend that it is a belief of many stayers that college educated individuals look down on where they came from, and such views "contributed to an uneasiness towards schooling and its transformative influences" (62).

I maintain that, at some conscious level, educationally resistant Appalachians understand they are discarding their chance at social mobility. I do not believe that it is a wholly calculated decision to oppose one's education with the trade-off of increased social prestige, but I believe many of these resistant Eastern Kentuckians are prioritizing community values over socioeconomic advancement (Hendrickson 2012, 39). The influence of Paul Willis's (1977) *Learning to Labour* can be observed in the other works found in my bibliography. Some of these works, like *Hollowing out the Middle* and Katie Hendrickson's (2012) article *Student Resistance to Schooling: Disconnections with Education in Rural Appalachia* explicitly cite Willis, other works, notably Douglas Reichert Powell (2007)'s *Critical Regionality* and Fulkerson and Thomas (2014)'s *Studies in Urbanormativity*, I would call kindred spirits.

Eastern Kentucky is a region embedded in systemic forces that serve to reproduce social class, akin to the locality analyzed in *Learning to Labour*. Willis addressed the impact of historic socioeconomic exploitation and the resulting work environment, and how that engendered an educational resistant body of students in his study setting (Willis 1977). I believe pairing Willis's focus on how global processes converge on individuals

with a critical regionalist approach will lend itself to a holistic analysis. For instance, both approaches examine different parts of local processes. Willis has a focus on how global processes affect individuals at the local level, but critical regionality would focus on local processes and examine their origins at a global level. Willis maintained a constant vigilance on the world and how it may have affected his participants, a thoroughness I will not be able to achieve at my current station. However, I offer an analysis of neighboring Eastern Kentucky counties and how their academic landscape might be affected by its history, and an argument for what parts of that history should influence Kentucky's future.

Local Power Dynamics

In *Power & Powerlessness* (1982), John Gaventa discusses the self-sustainability of capitalist exploitation in the Appalachian region. Gaventa's model holds that there are three dimensions, or faces, of power: participation in decision-making, how the public agenda is regulated, and the shaping of how the subordinate group perceives sociopolitical issues (Gaventa 1982, 12-15). The dimensions are interrelated as power in one dimension creates power for the other dimensions; inversely, powerlessness in one dimension reinforces powerlessness in the others (Gaventa 1982, 22). The establishment of such power relations can be hard to undo given their self-sustaining nature and the challenges the exploited face in attempting to rise above the second and third dimensions of power in order to alter power relations between themselves and elites (Gaventa 1982, 23,24).

Gaventa's (1982) exhaustive study of the cycle of power and powerlessness in Clear Fork Valley, an Appalachian locality, vividly depicts how Appalachians' many attempts to overcome great inequalities are blocked or repeatedly prevented. This study ultimately concerns itself with how this long history of capitalist exploitation may impact individual educational localities in Appalachia and how this may shape how students and teachers perceive their respective academic landscapes. However, some concepts are missing from Gaventa's work that would be essential to creating a theoretical approach towards comprehending the relationship between power, powerlessness, and social institutions. By his admission, the greatest weakness of his book is that the boundaries that "separate power and structure" were not considered when it was written, in addition to his neglect in exploring the "impact of socialization institutions – especially education and religion" (Gaventa 1982, x). I wish to expand on Gaventa's model to connect the power relations at play in Eastern Kentucky and how these relations may directly impact the individual's experience within institutions of secondary education.

One way I wish to expand on Gaventa's model is by adding definitions, and ideas from James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1987). Scott (1987) defines class resistance as "any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims ... made on that class by superordinate classes ... or to advance its own claims ... vis-a-vis those superordinate classes." (Scott 1987, 290). This definition of class resistance allows for the analysis of power imbalances and resistance on both the individual and a collective sense of the term. Additionally, this definition acknowledges that a valid motivation for resistance is to garner prestige and respect (Scott 1987, 290). This form of resistance would seem to be with the purpose of

challenging the systems that create these hierarchies rather than fully taking over the positions of power. This definition focuses more on “intentions rather than consequences”, which recognizes that “many acts of resistance may fail to achieve their intended result.” (Scott 1987, 290). This definition pairs well with Willis’s concept of student differentiation, as the lads’ acts of resistance could be seen as actions without thoughts of the long-term consequences. It is my assertion that rural Kentucky educational resistance, and perhaps educational resistance at large, is not a wholly conscious act and may be performed simply with the intention to challenge the institution of education.

I think Scott’s (1987) definition of class resistance can be used to characterize the academic landscape of localities studied. With the focus on a group’s intentions rather than solely on conscious decision-making geared towards a desired result, Scott’s (1987) definition can be used to better capture the more mundane forms of defiance. This goes beyond the nuance of resistance and can be used to classify the general behavior and attitudes of how different members of a locality interact with an institution like education. We will see later on in the study how economic opportunities in a given area affect how students interact with their education, and likewise how these opportunities affect the teachers’ approach to their work. In this way we can observe how socioeconomic forces like global demand for coal from Appalachia, may affect individuals within a given locality.

Methods

Purpose & Study Location

Overall, I have endeavored to qualitatively analyze the accounts of Eastern Kentucky secondary school educators and experts on the culture and history of Eastern Kentucky with the aims of providing insight into specific characteristics of educational engagement and aspects of the region's academic landscape. My data collection included semi-structured interviews and the review of primary and secondary source materials.

Research Locale

Eastern Kentucky was chosen as the research site for this study as the region has a storied history of alternative educational movements. Working closely with both educators and historians in this region assisted in documenting local alternative education experiments from the early and mid-twentieth century. I sought to expand on regionally founded pedagogies, their implementation, and their potential utility through this.

Interviews

The primary method of data collection was interviewing. Clarifying and probing questions were asked in the interviews to fully explore the subject that participant was discussing. In this way I was able to provide a synthesized narrative of the participants' perception of secondary schooling in Eastern Kentucky and facilitate a conversation with teachers about how they adapt to that unique environment. Interviews were conducted with local historians and university professors. I will refer to these participants as "experts," as each of these participants were sought out for their given expertise

regarding secondary education in Eastern Kentucky. Further interviews were conducted with secondary school educators who had been teaching within Eastern Kentucky. Interviews with the experts lasted on average over an hour, with the interviews with the educators lasting approximately forty-five minutes on average.

The interview questions were designed to examine how the region's characteristics may influence the academic needs and demands of the student body therein and whether standardized pedagogies meet these, and to explore regional history for alternative pedagogies. To accomplish these objectives, certain questions needed to be asked.

Research Questions

The questions that guided this research were:

1. Do the experiences of contemporary Eastern Kentucky secondary school educators reflect a need for a critical regionalist approach to constructing alternative pedagogies?
 - a. What are the challenges particular to the region?
 - b. Does the student's community have a direct effect on their schooling experience?
 - c. Does the identity of the region impact how secondary school educators approach teaching?

Interview Questions

Interviews were designed to address the central question guiding this research. Two sets of questions were prepared, one for the Eastern Kentucky secondary school

educators and one for the local experts and academics that were consulted during the study. Both sets of questions were developed with the intent of fully capturing the narrative of the participants regarding their experiences and expertise. I chose to keep the language informal and conversational so participants would feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions freely. I have listed the interview questions below and corresponded each to one of the research questions for this project. I have only listed the correlations between the questions asked to the educators in **Table 2**, as the questions asked to the local experts were not uniform and were subject to change based on the participant's area of expertise. The expert interviews were conducted for their guidance through the literature, the region's history and academic landscape, as well to learn more about their experience-based perspectives on the region's education system.

Table 2

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Interview Questions</u>
<i>What are the challenges particular to the region?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● How do you approach challenging students? Not just the disruptive ones, but also the ones that can be difficult to reach or ones that offer a challenge to you as an educator. Are there some students that you feel are pulling away from their education, but in more quieter ways than the typical disruptive student?● Do you have issues with your students being truant? If so, how do you approach this situation?● How do you assess the students' understanding of what you are teaching? (If they mention some form of assessment before or after the lesson) How do you assess understanding while you are actively teaching?
<i>Does the student's community have a direct effect on</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Do you often communicate with the parents of your students? If you do, how do you build a relationship with those parents?● Does parental involvement influence a student's academic performance or is it more dependent on the dedication of the individual student? Either way, what do you think the ideal

<p><i>their</i></p> <p><i>schooling</i></p> <p><i>experience</i></p> <p><i>?</i></p>	<p>situation would be outside of the classroom for the student to better process what was taught in the classroom?</p>
<p>Does the</p> <p>identity of</p> <p>the region</p> <p>impact</p> <p>how</p> <p>secondary</p> <p>school</p> <p>educators</p> <p>approach</p> <p>teaching?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would you describe the area you teach in as rural or urban? Do you attach any significance to the difference between the two? ● How does being from Eastern Kentucky play a role in how you approach your work? ● Do your fellow educators talk about their experiences with disruptive students? If they do, have you gotten any insight into teaching you would not have received otherwise? What general advice would you offer to a teacher struggling with a disruptive student, or to a teacher that is preparing for the possibility of a disruptive student arising over the course of the school year?

Eighteen individuals participated in the study: eleven Eastern Kentucky high school educators and seven local experts. Each participant was asked whether they would like to remain anonymous in the study. The secondary school teachers were intentionally chosen from their respective high school's website and were messaged through their school email. The initial local experts consulted for this study were individuals that were known to me before reaching out, either through their contributions to the area of

research I was pursuing or through preliminary searches for individuals of interest. From there, I used snowball sampling to identify additional experts.

Data Analysis

Each of the eighteen interview transcriptions were thoroughly read through several times and analyzed for similarities and recurring themes. The initial readthrough was used to familiarize myself with the data. The subsequent readings were conducted with the intent to code the data into identifiable categories and subcategories. Inductive coding was performed for this study, where I documented themes as they arose in the data analysis and then assigned codes to them. The themes from the literature and the extant public data served as a lens to view the teachers' comments.

Organization of Thesis

The current chapter offers a background to the study: the theoretical framework; data regarding Eastern Kentucky schooling; and an overview of data collection. Terms frequently used in this study, such as critical regionality and urbanormativity—the idea that what is urban is progressive and what is rural is regressive (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2014; Seale & Mallinson 2020, iv)—are defined here to inform discussion in later chapters. In **Chapter Two** I survey the history of educational initiatives, drawing from interviews and primary and secondary sources to show the development and influence of alternative pedagogies relevant to Eastern Kentucky. **Chapter three** centers on the teachers. I introduce them and share their experiences and perspectives on the themes that emerged during our interviews. In **Chapter four**, I connect the research findings to the research question and the sub questions. Further, these conclusions are contextualized

within a critical reflection on the approaches detailed in **Chapter two** and Eastern Kentucky's socioeconomic reality.

CHAPTER 2: SCHOOLING IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

Overview

This chapter will focus on the history of urban-centric pedagogies in Appalachia, then on the evolution of pedagogical innovations within the region. However, the institutions will not be discussed in the chronological order in which they were established. Instead, the sections will be ordered in such a way that illustrates a progression in the ideologies of the institutions toward a pedagogical approach resembling Critical Regionalism. I start with a discussion on Urban Missionary schools in Appalachia and how their approach to education was antithetical to a critical regionalist approach. Then I discuss outliers within that movement, specifically Hindman Settlement School and the Alice Lloyd College, and how they progressed the pedagogies of the urban missionaries while still succumbing to the pitfalls in that movement. I sketch both schools' histories, pedagogical approaches, and their impact on the area in which they taught.

Next, attention turns to an analysis on the history and pedagogies of Cora Wilson Stewart's Moonlight Schools in Eastern Kentucky. Designed to teach English literacy to adults, these schools reveal further movement toward a pedagogy specialized for the community being educated. Then I describe Foxfire, an educational organization that created foundational guidelines for a more communal classroom with an emphasis on student-teacher communication. The final institution analyzed is the Highlander Folk

School. Myles Horton– the better-known co-founder of the Highlander Folk School– is the last innovator examined and the one whose approach is the most similar to critical regionalism. I then end the chapter with an overview of the KERA act of 1990, touching on the following points: the condition of Kentucky’s education system that necessitated the reform; the immediate positive influence the act had on Kentucky schools; and how its slow dissolution over the decades following the act affects students today.

I would also like to emphasize the value the expert interviews added to the study. These interviews were especially helpful with the first and second chapters, as many of the crucial topics investigated were by the recommendation of an expert. This is especially true in regard to the KERA act of 1990, as several experts emphasized its importance to Kentucky schools when it was formed, and then how its deterioration defines the landscape today. The experts interviewed were essential for the literature reviewed in this section, as many of them offered unique insights and recommended literature relevant to the investigation of the studied institutions.

History of Urban Missionaries

Kentucky, and Appalachia at large, began the formative years creating their educational landscape during the late 19th century. This stage of the Industrial Revolution precipitated an insatiable need for coal on Appalachia, primarily Central and Southern Appalachia. After the possibility of railroads in Appalachia was considered by wealthy capitalists from New York and North Carolina in 1886 (Gaventa 1982, 53) a dendritic profusion of tracks (Stoll 2018, 3 & 34) quickly began to creep through the countryside to transport these natural resources away (Stoll 2018, 85 & 132). This infiltration of the

mountains by industrialists dramatically changed Appalachia's economy, society, and altered Appalachians' relationship with their land (Eller 1985, 27). The familial, cultural, and communal values placed on the land were rapidly being supplanted by the "modern" conception of the land as a commodity, something that was relegated to a quantifiable good that was to be "sold and used for urban-industrial purposes" (Eller 1985, 27). The "penetration of the mountains by railroads, speculators, land developers, and industrialists" was at the helm of this revolution in land ownership and perception of the land (Eller, 1985, 27). In this way, possession of the land was transferred from Appalachians to the urban industrialists, inseparably binding Appalachia to urban and industrial society (Eller 1985, 27). However, the railroads were not only used for the transportation of natural resources, but they would also herald the arrival of New England progressives and the creation of settlement houses. In this way, the railroads can be viewed as a catalyst for historical and cultural change within Appalachia (Eller 1985, 27).

Possibly the most relevant product of this large influx of urban elites into the Appalachian region was the settlement schools. Primarily, these settlement schools were established in the early twentieth century with the intent of educating isolated, impoverished rural areas. The settlement schools offered educational opportunities, health services, and counseling to rural Appalachia. The beginnings of the school systems in Appalachia were largely funded, and opened, by this burgeoning urban missionary movement (Searles 1995, 3,5). Between 1902 and 1933, nineteen settlement Schools would be established in Appalachia (KET 1995). The urban missionaries behind these institutions wished to improve rural quality of life, and to be able to initiate programs like the ones offered in the settlement schools in northern, urban settings (Fesak 2016, 4,8).

Largely, settlement schools placed less emphasis on grades and quantifiable progress, instead pushing for programs revolving around Christian religious history and ideologies, literacy and classic literature, handicrafts, and self-improvement (KET 1995: Whisnant 1983, 9). However, settlement schools would often teach their materials in such a way that impressed urban middle class ideals onto Appalachian students, treating the values held by the rural citizenry as inferior.

Urban missionaries also held power in the sense that they endeavored to reshape the cultures of their host communities. Even the founders of the Hindman Settlement School, May Stone and Katherine Petit, paragons amongst their contemporaries regarding cultural preservation, would impose notions onto those they served. One of the larger examples of Petit and Stone reshaping the area's culture was when the staff forced the banjo to the foreground of the local culture, when the community at large heavily disliked the instrument (Whisnant 1983, 47). This is a large pitfall of the settlement schools: that even well-intentioned individuals like Petit and Stone at some level abused the power imbalance between themselves and Appalachians to reshape their culture into one that better suited their perception of what the area should be. Did this approach to education endanger the culture of these rural communities?

The way these urban missionaries imposed their culture can be seen as an act of urbanormativity -the idea that what is rural is regressive and what is urban as progressive- that jeopardized Appalachians' hold on their values. Even many well-intentioned participants, I contend, were doing so through an urbanizing lens. This is not to say that settlement schools like Hindman and the Alice Lloyd College had no positive effects on their students. Nonetheless they, as an urbanizing force, changed the culture of the

Appalachian region. Whisnant (1983) contends that despite these educational innovators' "reverence for traditional culture and their wish to forestall the cultural effects of impending industrialization," they were themselves powerful instigators of cultural change" (48). Further, of the types of schools that emerged from this era of mission work, those supported by the local church(es) or those funded by the state put no emphasis on regional consciousness or culture, leaving the preservation of regional culture in the hands of sympathetic missionaries (Branscome 1976; 216,217).

Cultural price of settlement schools

What are the cultural values of Appalachia, and how do they conflict with the sentiments and intentions of urban missionaries? In their 1994 volume, *Appalachian Values*, Jones and Brunner assert that primary among Appalachian values are solitude, neighborliness, hospitality, independence, love of place, and sense of beauty. The authors depict a community that tied their values with the natural beauty of their land, and a strong sense of community that helped maintain one another's independence (32). In this romanticized vision, Appalachia is a region with cultures that revolve around music and handicrafts; fine craftsmanship was used to create the fiddles, and dulcimers that reverberated through the rolling countryside (Jones & Brunner 1994, 72). To this, Jones and Brunner (1994) said: "great pride was taken in the handicrafts-in the beauty of the wood in a chair, the inlay and carving on a rifle, the stitchery, design and variety of color in a quilt or a vegetable-dyed coverlet" (72). These values would come to be jeopardized with the increased urban presence.

Unequal power dynamics formed between rural and urban areas as metropolitan areas quickly developed what has been termed an urban dependency, or a reliance on

food and raw materials from rural communities in order to exist (Fulkerson & Thomas 2021, 1,2: Fulkerson & Thomas 2014, 6). In situations where an urban dependency develops, urban normativity can take root as the culture of the metropole heavily outweighs that of the connected rural communities (Seale & Mallinson 2020, 184). As was discussed earlier in relation to Appalachia's turbulent history with the extraction industry, an intense urban dependency gripped the region. The perpetuation of stereotypes and the deprioritizing of sentiments and ideals of rural people and places served to justify exploitation of rural citizens and of their land (Seale & Mallinson 2020, xv).

Not only did these schools have a remarkably high cost for the population regarding their sociocultural ties, but ultimately, it can be argued for the very land itself (Searles 1995, 146). Starting in 1886, rural Appalachians, unseasoned in the dealings of the northern capitalists, failed to perceive the danger their cultural values were in (Gaventa 1982, 53). Communal property was exchanged with urban elites for paltry sums, with one of the largest coal mines in Tennessee exchanged for a single rifle to an individual mountaineer (Gaventa 1982, 54). However, it was not Appalachians alone these urban elites were manipulating, but also the urban missionaries. These firms manipulated the naivete of New England educational crusaders as a way to disguise their exploitative activities within the area (Searles 1995, 146). It is no coincidence that many of these missionaries were the daughters of the urban elites (Searles 1995, 147). By funding the seemingly altruistic urge of their children to reshape mountain culture to better suite modern sensibilities, these urban elites were able to surreptitiously embed well-intentioned apologists for the exploitative upper class as an integral part of Appalachian society (Searles 1995, 147).

Let us now analyze the potential consequences of the urban missionary movement for a moment. In his book *A College for Appalachia: Alice Lloyd on Caney Creek*, David Searles (1995) questions whether a movement like the urban missionary schools, one fueled by such enthusiastic ethnocentrism, could be worth it if there was some good accomplished within the process (147). Though an interesting question, his answer is that it is decidedly not worth it; these schools pressed upon a population the middle-class values of urban, northern Americans with the intent of modernizing said rural population, with the end effect being the devaluing, the demonization, and the erasure of the local culture. This can be seen as an example of Gaventa's second face of power at play as this benevolent movement can be seen as a barrier that obstructed the accomplishment of important local works (Searles 1995; 147). As Searles (1995) puts it: "The energies that could have been enlisted to create structural change in the economic and political realms were diverted to the treatment of symptoms, not causes, and to the creation of a romantically conceived culture that had its reality only in the women's imaginations" (147).

The modernization efforts of Appalachia by the naïve missionaries were hastened by the assistance of economic entities that were either already exploiting the Appalachian area or had an interest in doing so (Searles 1995, 147). In this way, settlement schools became a seemingly benevolent entity where urban capitalistic intrigue was able to obtain a hegemonic foothold. With the overview in mind, we will look at several educational institutions, their pedagogies, and a quick analysis of their history as it pertains to the study. Primarily, I will discuss the Alice Lloyd College, the Hindman Settlement School, the Moonlight Schools, the Foxfire movement, and the Highlander Folk School.

Alice Lloyd: Pro-Appalachian Pedagogies

There is much we can learn from the pedagogies of urban missionaries, making it ironic that we can find several effective Appalachian educational facilities within that very same movement. For example, situated in Pippa Passes, Kentucky, Alice Lloyd College is a 4-year liberal arts college that has focused on offering leadership training to Appalachian students since its establishment in 1923 (Searles 1995, 60,61). Alice Lloyd college offers many degrees, including bachelor's degrees in business and commerce, administration, English, history, sociology, etc. But what sets the Alice Lloyd college apart from the other schools established by urban missionaries? It offered leadership training to Appalachians with the intent on assisting the population in the bettering of their local communities instead of forcing urban middle-class values onto them. This sentiment can still be observed today, as the institution has a generous financial aid program that fully covers the cost of ten semesters for qualified students within a service area that covers 108 counties; students can offset tuition costs by participating in their service work program (Alice Lloyd College, 2022a).

Moving from Boston, MA to Eastern Kentucky in 1916, Alice Lloyd saw that the region was sorely lacking in educational opportunities (Alice Lloyd College, 2022a). Also seeing that the region was in a poor state financially, Lloyd ensured that students could attend her classes through student work programs (Alice Lloyd College 2022b). It is made apparent over historical reflection that Alice Lloyd was not an agent of capitalistic development in the region, nor was she any sort of “representative of the metropole” (Searles 1995, 149). Though this was the case for many of her contemporaries, Lloyd received no financial backing from any sort of industrial business

or capitalist entity (Searles 1995, 149). In fact, Lloyd actively fought against many such entities in the area. For example, Lloyd believed that for Appalachians to regain control of their natural resources they must “equip” themselves with a “workable knowledge of business and finance” (Searles 1995, 149).

But what separated Alice Lloyd from her starry-eyed contemporaries? And does Lloyd’s school serve as an example to other regional education facilities that claim to be culturally conscious? Regarding the first question posed here, Lloyd conducted her work during a time when many female missionaries from New England came down to Appalachia to reform their society. Lloyd, however, did not intend on replicating the society from which she came, but instead came to Appalachia to provide the rural population with the tools for their own betterment through a quality education (Searles 1995, 148). Through aggressive fundraising, expansion, and low-cost tuition, Alice Lloyd was dedicated to fighting rural brain drain and effectively taught thousands of students who would go on to lead successful careers as doctors, lawyers, educators, activists, etc. (Beebout 2023). However, it should be noted that Lloyd did not see her students as her equal, and in fact would ignore families that, in her estimation, had suffered “genetic deterioration beyond the point of redemption” (Searles 1995, 4). Alice Lloyd was a firm believer in eugenics and ran her school with a firm hand, and an “obsession” (Searles 1995, 4) with producing graduates who would mold the area to better fit her image of the culture. Though she treated her students with more respect than other urban missionaries, it is by a slim margin.

Despite the unsavory aspects of her approach, Lloyd stood amongst her peers as she was able to discern the difference between region-specific dilemmas that individual

Appalachian communities were experiencing and local beliefs and practices (Searles 1995, 148). Regarding the second question, the benevolent missionary workers became one of the “major influences in the destruction of the distinctive mountain culture,” (Robie 1991, 10) and though Alice Lloyd is certainly guilty of contributing to this cultural erosion, her model stood out as it placed an incredible amount of emphasis on providing communities with the tools for self-betterment.

Hindman

On August 4, 1902, the first settlement school, the Hindman Settlement School, was established in Knott County, Kentucky by May Stone and Katherine Pettit (Green III 1981). It was met with open arms by the community and in its first year of service enrolled approximately one hundred-and-fifty students (Jurgens 1996, 40). Not only was the institution not forced upon the community, but it was also requested by them. As the story goes, an eighty-five-year-old man nicknamed Uncle Solomon Everidge walked the approximate twenty-one miles from Hindman, Kentucky to Hazard, Kentucky where Katherine Pettit and May Stone had established Camp Cedar Grove to teach “domestic arts” and kindergarten (Moses 1978, 234). Several participants that attended Camp Cedar Grove insisted on the school to be founded in their area, but ultimately the pair set their sights on Hindman largely due to the memorable trek of Uncle Solomon Everidge (Stoddart, Pettit, & Stone 1997, 38).

The fact that the participants of the temporary summer camp in Hazard, Kentucky pleaded for Katherine Pettit and May Stone to form a permanent school would alone be a perfect example of the desire for education (Jurgens 1996, 40). However, the fact that an

elderly man walked over twenty miles “bare foot” (Jurgens 1996, 40) in the hopes of obtaining educational opportunities for his grandchildren demonstrates that the Hindman Settlement School was fully invited into Kentucky. Uncle Solomon Everidge even claimed he had been looking for his lifetime for individuals like Pettit and May (Stoddart, Pettit, & Stone 1997, 38). The community quickly became involved in the Hindman Settlement School from its foundation, assisting either financially, or by volunteering their labor (Jurgens 1996, 66).

But what was the pedagogical approach Pettit and Stone used that immediately garnered so much of the community’s respect? The method they utilized would come to be known as learner-centered, or student-centered learning today (McCombs & Miller 2007,16), an approach designed around building an “equitable” system that meets each individual student’s “unique needs” (Kaput 2018, 7). Additionally, Pettit and Stone believed that it was never too late or early to learn, drawing a parallel to Cora Wilson Stewart’s approach to adult literacy teaching discussed below. However, Pettit and Stone set out to teach the community through their students, utilizing techniques of repeating information until it became strongly rooted in the students’ minds (Tasker-Brady 2018, 21: Stoddart, Pettit, & Stone 1997).

To summarize, two uncertified educators journeyed to a disadvantaged area of Appalachia and opened the first permanent settlement school, which arguably was the first institution to utilize student-centered learning, and in so doing avoided some of the pitfalls inherent in educational missionary work. Many of these qualities should be emulated in today’s teaching, as Pettit and Stone not only generated pedagogies to incorporate and validate the local culture, but they fired many of the teachers they

brought with them who upheld negative stereotypes about local residents (Tasker-Brady 2018, 21).

Today, the Hindman Settlement School practices a modified version of their founders' teaching methods. They are perhaps best known for their intensive Dyslexia Intervention program that touts school-based reading corps, after-school tutoring, summer tutoring, and even dyslexia screenings for students (Hindman Settlement School, 2023a). Beyond this, they still support the area's culture by sponsoring folk-art festivals and promoting events, individuals, and works that are relevant to Appalachian culture on the home page of their website (Hindman Settlement School, 2023b). The pedagogies used by Petit and Stone more closely resemble that of the critical regionalist approach, and in that sense, they would be further along in a progression toward the sort of pedagogical framework of interest to this study. Pettit and Stone implemented the progressive pedagogies that they were avid supporters of, such as those of Jane Addams, and adapted them to Eastern Kentucky.

Moonlight Schools

There have been several of what author Samantha NeCamp terms "literacy crises" throughout the history of the United States, wherein a population that is perceived as illiterate becomes the target of educational movements to increase the population's literacy and/or deride that community for not being literate in the first place (NeCamp 2014, 15). NeCamp addresses adult literacy movements, responses to these movements, and how they play into American identity in her analysis, *Adult Literacy and American Identity: The Moonlight Schools and Americanization Programs*. She begins with one

such crisis between 1900 and 1920 involving a large influx of illiterate European immigrants (NeCamp 2014, 15). Their illiteracy was portrayed as the “doom of American democracy” in that the illiteracy of European immigrants was perceived to go against the American way of life (NeCamp 2014, 15).

This rage aimed at illiterate immigrants soon came to be supplanted by a country-wide identity crisis as many came to realize that Appalachia, a region some would describe as home to several of the United States’s most recognizable cultures, had a sizable population of illiterate citizens (NeCamp 2014, 15). There then came a push for a movement to educate Appalachians, as both they and immigrants came to be framed as threats to the American identity, which made the general public view both populations “unsuitable for democratic citizenship” (NeCamp 2014, 142). The simple existence of illiterate Appalachians upset public narratives constructed upon the belief of individual effort and achievement being the sole factors that could launch a citizen into a successful way of life. False narratives such as this paint populations like Appalachians and immigrants as lazy and easily content while also obscuring the existence of a large southern underclass suffering a lack of vital resources (NeCamp 2014, 142).

From this social environment emerged two primary literacy-based educational movements: The Moonlight Schools and the Americanization Movement, or what NeCamp terms “Americanizers” (NeCamp 2014, 15). In response to the myriad discussions revolving around how to approach the then-contemporary literacy crisis, both the Moonlight Schools and the Americanizers developed pedagogies and “counter-rhetorics” (NeCamp 2014, 142) that, revolutionarily, framed the adult citizen as

“educable” (NeCamp 2014, 142). However, these two movements were very much at odds with one another.

Stewart began humbly as an elementary school teacher at the age of 20 in 1885, then progressed to being Rowan County’s first female superintendent for their schools, then successfully pressured the governor of Kentucky into forming the United States first illiteracy commission, to then becoming the director of the National Illiteracy Crusade, and then becoming a chairwoman of President Hoover’s National Illiteracy Committee where she successfully championed literacy training for Native Americans, soldiers, and prison inmates (Baldwin, 2006, 21,22,53,54,67,161; Stewart 2018, 55). But perhaps the accomplishment she is most known for is the creation of the Moonlight Schools. On September 5, 1911, a late evening school was established –hence the name-- with the aim of teaching illiterate Rowan County residents how to read and write (Tabler 2017). The Moonlight Schools were an Appalachian-based volunteer school organized so locals could casually attend a class after work (NeCamp 2014, 13). These schools were free to attend and were staffed by local unpaid educators who volunteered to work under Wilson’s cause (Tabler 2017).

Cora Wilson Stewart was pivotal in the development of the unique pedagogical approach of the Moonlight Schools to adult literacy, having played a large part in creating reading materials that did not demean the adult students. At the time most materials for teaching literacy were created with children in mind, so learning with that material as an adult could be embarrassing. (NeCamp 2014, 10). In contrast, the Americanization programs and schools across the country had an entirely different approach to literacy pedagogies. For example, the Americanizers did not believe in

volunteer teachers; their curriculum was geared towards assimilating immigrants, and occasionally illiterate American Whites, into the greater American culture by providing history on the American government, teaching childcare methods, and even teaching how to cook (NeCamp 2014, 10). Though the Americanizers were not involved in Appalachians, their more institutional, standardized approach to adult literacy education, and these more conventional methods came to dominate the discourse around American identity regarding English literacy (NeCamp 2014, 10). The Moonlight Schools, though they were extremely effective, were eventually phased out. This can be attributed to the Americanizers' successful attempts at producing a working and standardized definition of literacy, which "devalued basic literacy skill and emphasized the necessity of advanced instruction," something that only university-taught teachers could provide (NeCamp 2014, 14).

Samantha NeCamp (2014) argues that there is great potential in studying Stewart's pedagogies and the trajectory her Moonlight Schools followed. NeCamp (2014) states that by "incorporating the Moonlight Schools" (158) into our disciplinary knowledge, we can "better understand our place in a continuum of literary research" (158). Though NeCamp says this regarding the ideological differences between the importance the Americanizers and the Moonlight Schools placed on the professional training of their instructors, the same phrase is still incredibly applicable to the current study. Much like I use *Learning to Labor* as a critical reference point for works involving participant observation and ethnography regarding education, so too do I use Stewart's work through her Moonlight Schools as a reference point for other alternative education movements examined for this study. Utilizing the positive aspects of the Moonlight

Schools' approach to alternative education would provide solid groundwork for alternative pedagogies, while the negative aspects could be of equal worth as a cautionary example (NeCamp 2014, 154).

Cora Wilson Stewart is in company with figures like Alice Lloyd, May Stone, and Katherine Pettit in terms of being tragically marginalized by history and not being rightfully recognized for her contribution to the progress made for Southern education - the major difference being that Ms. Stewart was born in the area where she began her work (Baldwin 2006, 1).

Foxfire

Another Appalachian alternative education movement I would like to analyze for its utility is the Foxfire movement, one that many of the interviewed academics respected and were aware of. Though it is a name known by the public for the millions of copies sold of its various publications, it began in a rural Georgian classroom in 1966 by Eliot Wigginton (Hatton 2005, 2). Students in Rabun County, Georgia were asked to interview and photograph older members of their community. This would evolve into a rush to collect accounts across Appalachia of folkways, foodways, and folklore of lifeways that were slowly dying out. However, for the purposes of this paper I want to focus on the impact this approach had on the students. That class of 1966 -later known as the "Foxfire Class" (Hatton 2005, 2)- through conducting and publishing these accounts from older Appalachians, grew confident in their abilities in reading, writing, photography, editing, and interviewing, while also helping them become more invested in their community.

It is important to note that during the height of Foxfire's popularity, the magazine offered a complimentary depiction of Appalachian culture when a good deal of popular media regarding the region portrayed it negatively. This point is amplified by the fact that the first Foxfire book and the highly popular film *Deliverance*, a film that depicted Appalachians as dim-witted sexual aggressors, were both published in 1972 (Heard 2019). The Foxfire magazine, and subsequent books, came as a benevolent force for Appalachia that preserved its local history and culture and gave this rare, flattering perspective a much wider audience than it would have enjoyed otherwise.

It is even more impressive that the magazine was founded as an experiential learning experiment to try to engage students in their community. The approach Eliot Wigginton took to education is one very similar to the one I have been advocating: a critical regionalist approach. At its core, Foxfire is an approach to education founded on the mutual respect of student and teacher, and the development of "meaningful learning" (Hatton 2005, 2) from that relationship that inspires genuine interactions in the classroom and higher involvement in the community. Foxfire's "core practices," (Foxfire 2019) as of 2019, consist of choice, collaboration, connection, climate, critical reflection, and community. Of interest to the study are their tenets of choice, connection, and community. Their tenet of "Choice" (Foxfire 2019) reflects the student's decisions regarding choices in the classroom, scheduling, and how to "exhibit learning" (Foxfire 2019). "Connection" impresses upon the student to connect what they are learning in the classroom to their lived experiences and to "the land, community and place" (Foxfire 2019). This enables the student to apply knowledge of their community and lived experiences to the world at large, an approach very similar to the Critical Regionalist

approach. “Community,” then, is the approach of cultivating relationships with the community to engage the student “in a sphere beyond the classroom” (Foxfire 2019). This tenet is the “foundation” of the Foxfire Approach as it builds a reciprocal relationship between the educators and students, gearing the pedagogy towards creating a “lasting impact on both the student and the public” (Foxfire 2019).

Highlander

In 1932 Myles Horton, along with co-founder Don West, established the Highlander Folk School in Appalachian Tennessee (Preskill 2021, viii). The Highlander Folk School would go on to support its students through instigating social change within the area, changes that included helping organize labor unions and supporting the civil rights movement, for which the local press branded them communists (Durham 1993, i; Preskill 2021, viii). Named a socialist educator, Horton taught several generations of social activists and because of this, James Bevel, a major leader in the Civil Rights Movement, said that Horton was instrumental in breaking racial barriers regarding schooling (Preskill 2021, 11; Schnorr 1988). It should be stated that the state of Tennessee did not want the Highlander Folk School, and in fact they were able to successfully shut it down in 1961, but thankfully it was reopened the following year (Preskill 2021, viii). Today, its name has been changed to the Highlander Research and Education Center where it now primarily operates in New Market, Tennessee as a cultural and education center for social justice leaders (Preskill 2021, viii).

What was Horton’s approach to education then that inspired this social protagonism among students? One of the main influences on Horton’s approach to

education was his disdain for the exploitation of the working Appalachian poor (Hale 2007, 315; Preskill 2021, 28). Horton spoke on the injustice of the impoverished and overworked laborers: “It (the wage system) was very unjust for somebody to have to work so hard and get so little, and for somebody else to have so much” (Hale 2007, 315). Unlike the aforementioned educational missionaries, this was a plight that Horton had personal experience with as he was born to a poor family in Savannah, Tennessee (Preskill 2021, 11). At the age of fifteen, Horton left his home to pursue an education (Preskill 2021, 12,13). He worked several manual labor jobs, including at a sawmill and a box factory, to support himself through several college programs, attending the University of Chicago and Cumberland University (Preskill 2021, 22,53).

During this time, Horton began to formulate what would become the founding ideologies of the Highlander Folk School. In fact, one of the largest inspirations for the Highlander Folk School approach was John Dewey (1916), and specifically Dewey’s idea of the individual’s freedom in a democratic society (140). Dewey is perhaps better known today for his progressive techniques and philosophies towards education, particularly in his integration of the students’ culture and the larger society they inhabited into the pedagogy (Dewey, 1916). Pressing that idea further, Dewey believed that teaching in the classroom should take the form of a social encounter, and that crafting the classroom to be a natural social environment for the students would gain their interest and motivate them to participate (Dewey 1916, 45). Dewey (1916) believed that one’s individual freedom within a democratic society relied on the individual’s action towards shaping how their society operates (24,25,44-46). However, Horton did not fully embrace this philosophy that relied so heavily on individualism, and when he found further inspiration

from Jane Addams and his own lived experience, he would refine the definition into the one he used for the Highlander Folk School (Durham 1993, 21,28,29).

During his time in Chicago between 1930-1931, Horton became a frequent visitor to Jane Addams's Hull House, an inspiration that lay at the root of both his and Pettit and Stone's pedagogy (Durham 1993, 28,29). Addams was well-connected to the directors of many settlement houses as many were heavily inspired by her, so through Horton's acquaintance with Addams, he gained the support of many settlement houses in his efforts (Durham 1993, 28,29). However, Horton did not want an exact copy of a settlement school, but the ideologies they represented marked an interesting starting point for the construction of his more democratic, regionalized pedagogy. In the fall of 1931, Horton visited Denmark (Durham 1993, 21). While there, Horton saw school facilities that were largely unburdened by legislation –and to this day Denmark has many school facilities that do not have government mandated curriculums– a structure that invited many informal social interactions that allowed for the forging of social capital and the opportunity for peer learning (Durham 1993, 29,30). As stated before, his initial approach to the Highlander pedagogy was more individualistic, but through his experiences with beginning the Highlander Folk School, his formal and informal education, and his visit to Denmark his eyes were opened to the possibility of a democratic model for his community, instead of one that focused on the individualism of each of the society's members (Durham 1993, 29,30).

Horton's relevance to the evolution toward a critical regionalist approach is an interesting one, as he taught under Jane Addams for a time, and actively altered her pedagogical approach to better suit the needs of the students in his region (Durham 1993,

28,29). However, it should be noted that Myles Horton was not confident that his form of teaching would work in a public school setting (Thayer-Bacon 2004, 19). For one, he had no intention of teaching children (Thayer-Bacon 2004, 19). The Highlander Folk School was an adult education center geared toward leadership and civil rights advocacy to a small group of adults; translating that into a curriculum for a large class of teenagers and producing the same quality results did not seem feasible. His was a very personal approach and could perhaps work in a private school setting where the student-to-teacher ratio is not quite so overwhelming. Applying the same methods in a classroom with well over thirty or forty students would be daunting. Though we can apply much of what Horton taught to larger environments, his educational approach should serve to provide an ideological foundation for an educator's pedagogy rather than one to fully emulate.

The Kentucky Educational Reform Act of 1990 (KERA)

Kentucky educators deserve much of the credit for the passage and implementation of KERA. Educators at this time were often trying to keep their heads above water in an educational system that many found criminally underfunded. In fact, in 1985 sixty-six Kentucky school districts leveled a lawsuit against the state for their lack of funding, known as *Rose v. Council for Better Education* (Clark 2003, 6). This learning environment had led to a steady decline in the quality of education. Indeed, Dewey (1916) would have attributed the decline to the structure of the formal education system, in light of his statement that “(t)he organization of the school has been the primary structural vehicle for achieving values embedded in compulsory education for U.S. children within the schooling system” (3). The lead-up to KERA, according to Brown (1993), was a time in which educators and principals had a deep mistrust for the state's

Department of Education (2,10). Further, Kentucky educators were doubtful about how accurately standardized testing evaluated academic attainment (Brown 1993, 4-8).

The Supreme Court went beyond criticizing the unconstitutional finances and found all aspects of Kentucky's school system lacking, saying it was "underfunded and inadequate" and "fraught with inequalities and inequities" (Supreme Court of Kentucky 1989, 9). The Supreme Court ruled in 1989 that the Kentucky legislature had to create a more equitable education system, resulting in the 1990 passage of KERA.

KERA threw out Kentucky's standardized test program in favor of an annual statewide performance-based assessment (Din 1996, 2). It was a revolutionary act and marked a unique moment in the United States' history as a state "rebuilt its entire school system from scratch" (Krauth 2020). To fund this reform, a \$1.3 billion tax increase was approved, which enforced assessing property at its full market value (Krauth 2020), bridging the financial inequity between school districts. Unfortunately, this boost in Kentucky education's funding, which "enabled vast equity and achievement gains in education," did not last long (Baumann 2020a).

Current accounts from frustrated Kentucky educators sound similar to those leading up to the enactment of KERA in 1990. In Kentucky, there is a shortage of primary and secondary school teachers (University of the Cumberland 2021). The causes of which are known: classes are overcrowded as the number of students grows and those of teachers decreases; overreliance on test scores to meet the national standards puts pressure on already overworked educators, and those two factors combined create an environment where underpaid teachers are scrambling to grade and prepare their lesson plans to satisfy those national test standards to the point where they are often unable to

teach in the way they would like (Boyce 2019; University of the Cumberland 2021: Blair 2022, 18:01-18:33).

Teachers complained about having to be continually conscious of test scores, which came into conflict with fulfilling the individual needs of students or serving students in ways that diverged from the standardized pedagogy. This created a learning environment in which increasing test score trumped the satisfaction, or even the skill level, or comprehension, of the student. (Boyce 2019; University of the Cumberland 2021).

After KERA passed, Kentucky's General Fund, or the pool of revenue the state generates for itself, spiked. As a share of the economy, Kentucky's General Fund went up from 6.4 percent in 1990 to 7.3 percent in 1991, but every subsequent year thereafter it decreased until by 2017 it had lowered to 5.9 percent (Baumann 2020a). Calculating for inflation, that means that the Kentucky school system would have had an additional \$2.6 billion in its budget had the general fund revenue stayed consistent (Baumann 2020a). To view this funding issue in terms of socioeconomic inequity, in 1990 the funding per student difference between Kentucky's poorest and richest county was \$1,558 (Baumann 2020b). In 2020, if we adjust for inflation this same funding per student gap would have been \$1,477, a gap nearly the same size that initially necessitated the KERA reform (Baumann, 2020b). Kentucky's education has historically been underfunded, with a brief period in the early nineties where the funding was more equitable between school districts. However, educational funding has become better in recent years. In 2022, Kentucky expended \$11,110 per student on average, which means we are only marginally below the United States average expenditure of \$12,600, resulting in Kentucky being

ranked 30th among the states in terms of per-student funding (Hanson, 2022).

The Hindman, Allice Lloyd College, Moonlight Schools, Foxfire, and the Highlander all share a genuine empathy toward those that they taught. However, it is evident that the Highlander Folk school was more conscious about how it approached the region's culture and the inherent power imbalance that can form between such an entity and those it teaches. The success of the Highlander approach communicates a great need for a more culturally appropriate pedagogy to be adopted by other educational institutions. Foxfire, Alice Lloyd, Highlander, Hindman, and the Moonlight Schools are all notable for their ability to be adapted to better fit the composition of the region or the more immediate area. The interviews with experts were enlightening regarding Eastern Kentucky, and the interviews with secondary school teachers revealed their empathetic, personalized approaches to the unique needs of their students.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS FROM TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Introduction

To answer the driving research question of this study –that of whether the experiences of contemporary Eastern Kentucky secondary school educators reflect a need for a critical regionalist approach– an accurate perception of Eastern Kentucky’s academic landscape is required. Many of the area’s characteristics impacted the needs of the students, needs that were not met by the anti-rural, standardized pedagogies. The prevalence of the ideology of urbanormativity has made standardized education a mostly urbanizing force, which, in turn, may make it harder for rural students to succeed or to motivate them to succeed.

The experts interviewed for this project provided information regarding Eastern Kentucky historical events relevant to education especially regarding the creation and course of institutions and educational reform efforts as well as guiding the research toward relevant resources. The Kentucky Reform Act of 1990 was a subject that came up in many of the interviews, and the participants offered context and information regarding the events building up to the reform and its aftermath.

Summary of Data

Teachers and experts from various Eastern Kentucky counties– specifically Rowan, Greenup, Lawrence, and Elliot County as shown in **Figure 1**– participated in semi-structured interviews regarding their respective expertise as educators. These data

contribute to a body of work that seeks to show how empathetic pedagogical approaches may foster motivation among students in one of the country's poorest regions.

Figure 1: Map of Kentucky Counties Consulted for the Study



As discussed in **Chapter 1**, inductive coding was performed on the data gathered from the study participants, starting the process by documenting the themes as they emerged from the data, identifying categories and patterns within the data, then assigning those patterns codes. Doing so revealed themes that likewise came up in the literature consulted for the study. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to discussing four major themes that emerged from the review of the transcripts: 1) The need to alter the standardized pedagogy; 2) Rapport building's impact in combating educational resistance and cultivating academic motivation; 3) Parental involvement's effect on the academic

motivation of the student; and 4) The socioeconomic forces that serve to perpetuate the inequalities faced by the students. These four themes will be used as a framework to present the interview data collected for this study. Transcript data illustrates several interconnected themes that paint a holistic picture of the region's schooling, and how educators adapt to the region's unique obstacles.

Altering the standardized Pedagogy

Melanie Blair, a special ed collaborating high school instructor from Rowan County, spoke to the effect that with a change in students from one school year to another, a change in educational needs comes with it. "Kids change and their learning styles change, and their environments change. So, you got to try to find different ways to educate and we got to find different ways to motivate them" (24:16-24:28). She stated that such changes necessitated large alterations to her lesson plans and pedagogies saying that educators had to "do lots of planning in the summertime," (24:29-24:41) which requires them to altruistically work long hours of their "own time" (24:41-24:50). Blair stated that for most of her career, she would arrive several hours before the workday began, and stay several hours after it had ended, which is a sizable amount of effort that she was not paid for (18:20-18:33). She had to discontinue this practice due to the constraints it placed on her personal time; the work she found essential to creating a pedagogy that would work for the unique needs of her students was interfering with her time with her family (18:01-18:33).

Bob Newlan, a math teacher at Greenup County High School, likewise discussed creating lesson plans curated to the unique needs of that school year's students. Newlan

took what Blair said about editing the standardized pedagogy a step further, saying that educators who did not largely make their own lesson plans could find themselves in a cycle of time constraints. This is not to say that the interviewed educators are selectively teaching mandated materials, but that they are finding unique ways in which to provide their students with this information. Newlan believes that creating your own lesson plans is something that an educator would have to “power through for the first couple of years,” (52:55-53:04) but afterwards the extra effort would be rewarded as the lesson plans would not need extensive modifications at the beginning of the school year (53:04-53:13). This method still requires time outside of class to edit, as the custom lesson plans would still need revisions to adjust to the unique needs of the students. Newlan solidifies his stance on custom pedagogies when he claimed that educators that are using standardized pedagogies, or “borrowing from other people,” (53:19-53:24) will “spend so much time just trying to get it all right for tomorrow” (53:24-53:34).

Dr. Wayne Willis, a retired professor of education at Morehead State University, voiced his dissatisfaction with the philosophy of modern education. Naming several authors cited earlier in this study, Dr. Willis stated that education in America is largely shaped “not by Dewey, or Maxine Green, or Giroux, or Freire or any of those folks” (23:29-23:43). Dr. Willis claims that much of modern education is led mostly by the philosophies of Edward Thorndike. Dr. Willis asserts that modern pedagogies revolve around Thorndike’s idea that “everything that exists, exists in some amount and can be measured,” which laid the foundation for philosophies like behaviorism and logical positivism (23:43-24:01).

For context, Edward Thorndike (1874-1949) is often credited as the “father of Educational Psychology” (Columbia University, 2003). Thorndike’s Stimulus-Response learning theory has very much helmed the way for a school system revolving around standardized testing. Thorndike’s Stimulus-Response theory holds that learning occurs from establishing a connection between the response from a given stimulus (Columbia University, 2003). This created an environment, as Dr. Willis maintained, where all achievements can be quantified, and their value measured against a standardized measurement. Dr. Willis critiques the over reliance on Thorndike’s ideals, stating that in terms of educational philosophies most of the “people who run schools” (24:43-24:50) seemed to be “stuck in 1920” (24:50-24:55) The extra efforts of educators like Bob Newlan and Melanie Blair display that this quantifiable, standardized approach is not always effective for meeting the academic needs of every student within the classroom.

In short, the standardized pedagogy is one to alter. Both Newlan and Blair spent extensive time outside of working hours to find functional alternatives to the standardized pedagogy that cater to their students’ needs reflecting the inflexible nature of the standard pedagogy. Both educators agreed that the standard pedagogy was not successfully motivating the student body toward educational attainment. However, to properly gauge the needs of the students, the educators would need to build rapport with their current students.

Building Rapport to Combat Resistance

The teachers interviewed spoke about the amount of improvisation that is required in the classroom. Each student is an individual, so the needs of the student body will vary

from school year to school year, and some topics will be more easily digested by one group than another. Many teachers spoke of their strategies of building rapport with students so that they could more easily assess their understanding to determine any changes that need to be made to the lesson plan or on the spot.

None of the teachers interviewed seemed to struggle with an excess of disruptive students, but each dealt with students who aired their frustration in quieter ways. Truancy was an issue that sprang up in each locality, and a majority of the educators interviewed spoke of the difficulties of motivating some of their student body. Socioeconomic status was a recurring theme, and nearly all of the participants tied this to the difficulty in motivating the students. Most of the teachers associated quiet disruptive behaviors like truancy to the student's life at home, particularly those of poor socioeconomic standing. Approximately half of the participants attributed a student's cynicism toward education to the lack of job opportunities in rural Kentucky.

I asked the teachers about their strategies for addressing educational resistance within the classroom, and most responded that they would try to reason with the disruptive student as an individual. By far, the most mentioned form of educational resistance was truancy. Gina Rice, an English teacher at Greenup County High School, discussed her strategies regarding truant students. "As a whole, attendance is an issue," (9:09-9:14) Rice said, "I have kids who have already missed probably 10 days of school and we're in November" (9:14-9:27). Rice described how she first kept all students, including the truant ones, up to date on the lesson plan with online documents accessible to everyone (8:29-8:38). This technique "puts a lot of the responsibility on them rather than me having to track everybody down with all of their late work" (Rice 2022, 8:38-

8:51). She recognized that truancy can often come from forces that are beyond the student's control, like inconsistent means of transportation and missing the school bus. However, despite the intent of the student, being truant can often lead to a detachment from the coursework or a lack of interest or involvement in what is occurring in the classroom.

Gina Rice also discussed her strategies to generate rapport with her students, with the hope of also bolstering academic motivation. She recognized that some disruptions were from those seeking attention and attempts to level with the student as an individual so that she could continue with the lesson. "They typically are just trying to get attention for whatever reason, so usually I can just go over and talk to them and be like, 'Dude, what's the deal?' Or 'listen, if you're going to act like this, you're going to have to get out of here. I got stuff to do and you're not going to act like this.'" (12:20-12:35). However, Rice admitted that in her experience it is much easier to establish rapport with students when you are an "older teacher" (12:37-12:39).

To encourage motivation and engagement within the classroom, Gina Rice would try to find relevant pieces for her students to read that reflected their lived experiences. "I do try to find things that I know my kids can relate to, or if I find something just by chance that I think my kids can really relate to and understand, I try a little bit harder to work those things into my curriculum" (3:24-3:47). Rice's efforts correspond to both the Foxfire method and the Critical Regionalist approach outlined earlier. Randy Wallace, the Community Education Director at Rowan County High School, furthers this idea by stating that building a rapport with the students is essential in stopping disruptions in the classroom before they can happen. "The biggest thing is if kids think you care about

them, they're going to care about what you're doing," (8:41-8:48) "and also if they think that you can relate to them" (8:48-8:53).

As Gina Rice's approach emphasized bringing relevant literature and topics to her students to accrue rapport, Michael Sammons endeavors to expose his students to the outside world toward the same effect. Sammons stressed the importance of making students aware of the outside world through trips and incorporating such experiences into the school year. He preaches the importance of procuring such experiences for his students and pushes for the incorporation of such trips into the curriculum (35:01-35:12). Not only would such experiences enrich the students' lives by educating them on other cultures, but this also is a way for educators to build positive rapport with them. "The kid may not necessarily remember what they learned in your class, but they'll remember how you made them feel" (35:29-35:53).

Another benefit of utilizing a pedagogy that cultivates rapport within the classroom is that it may also motivate the student to excel academically. Melanie Blair discussed the importance of developing a relationship when teaching. "It's all about developing relationships before you can really teach the kid because you're not going to get it if you don't have that relationship" (30:25-30:43). William Salyers furthers this point by emphasizing that all students are individuals, and that you will not know what approach may work for a student if you do not fully understand what it is they need. "You need to learn every theory, and then you need to realize that some kids, the theories don't matter, you just got to figure out that kid." (26:45-26:23).

These educators detailed their strategies of how their approaches constantly evolve with the cycling of new students each school year. Melanie Blair stressed that it

was essential to develop a baseline understanding of the individual student's behavior and their interests (30:03-30:20). "It's all about developing relationships before you can really teach the kid, because you're not going to get it if you don't have that relationship" (30:20-30:43). It is clear that the standard pedagogy alone is insufficient to motivate the students and major efforts need to be made on the part of the educators to engage the students with the course material. However, is it the teacher's duty alone to motivate the students?

Parental Involvement effect on Academic Motivation

When asked about parental involvement, Michael Sammons observed that parents did not seem as involved with their child's highschool education as they were when the child was in in middle and elementary school (29:37-29:45). He went on to recollect the open house event for parents in 2020 (the open house event in 2021 was canceled), saying that that year had a "pretty good turnout" (30:08-30:19) but after the open house there were some parents that he never saw again.

Sammons said that the most difficult aspect of being an educator was motivating his students, "It's just keeping them motivated and on track is the biggest challenge" (37:53-37:57). A teacher at Rowan County Senior High School who wished to remain anonymous would attribute this to environmental factors for the students. The anonymous teacher said: "I truly believe it has to do with what happens in the hours outside of school, do you have family who supports you?" (35:14-35:27). When asked about how home life impacted the student's academic motivation and success, the same teacher said this: "I think we have a lot of brokenness in our families, and I think that's a big factor as

far as student success is the home life. So, if I could think of one thing, that's what I would say, is the home life" (33:00-33:15).

Randy Wallace spoke to how home life has a strong impact on the ways in which the children interact with their education. Wallace spoke to how the opinions of the parents regarding education are often perpetuated onto their children. If the parent did not graduate high school and believed that their degree would not serve them in their working life, that same belief would pass onto the child. Moreover, the same concept applies towards parents who did graduate as those who valued their education would pass that same outlook onto their children. For students who did not show interest in college after graduating, Randy Wallace impressed upon them other options such as vocational schools or apprenticeships instead, thus keeping students engaged in high school.

Both interviews with Sammons and Wallace echo a discussion I had with Dr. Wayne Willis, a retired professor of education at Morehead State University, located in Rowan County, Kentucky. During our interview, Dr. Wayne Willis referred to a study that he was an investigator in. In this study, participant observation was conducted in localities in England, the USA, and Russia. The findings were published as *Motivation, Engagement and Educational Performance: International Perspectives on the Contexts for Learning* (2005). The investigators analyzed global and local factors to see what elements impacted students' motivation, engagement with the material, academic aspirations, peer influences, and the pedagogy that was utilized in their locality. The main locality in the United States was Eastern Kentucky. Willis recalled their findings with exasperation: In the Eastern Kentucky schools, they were getting less than four hours' worth of homework a week, and, he adds, that "the teachers in Eastern Kentucky were

saying, we can't give them more homework because they won't do it! They don't do the homework we give them already! (53:43-54:03).” In the Russian locality, it was viewed as shameful to be ignorant. So much so that the Russian educators would state that one of the larger barriers they faced regarding preparing for their lessons every night was the students’ families, “because the parents and grandparents are always calling me to see how well their kids are doing” (Willis 2022, 54:08-54:24). Inversely, Willis states that in Eastern Kentucky that school faculty have a difficult time even getting the “parents to go to these PTA meetings” (Willis 2022, 5:30-5:36). It may come as no surprise that the rural Russian locality achieved higher academic success than the one in Eastern Kentucky.

From Willis’s comments, it is apparent then that in Eastern Kentucky, motivational issues seem to be the “real rub,” (54:50-54:59) both for students and parents. Another regional scholar of education, Dr. Edna O. Schack of Morehead State University, addressed the consequences of this lack of motivation. She affirmed that when families were “engaged meaningfully in the schools,” and when communities are similarly invested in the schools, then the quality of education and the rate of academic motivation increase dramatically (8:06-8:36). The first way these benefits manifest is increased attendance, which corresponds to Sammons’s example of low attendance and low parental involvement (Schack 2021, 8:36-9:16). When the parents become involved in their child’s schooling, it begins a reciprocal cycle wherein the child sees their parents care about their education and become more academically motivated, and the teachers become more invested in teaching as their students are more meaningfully engaging with the coursework (Schack 2021, 9:44-11:01).

It is apparent then that the students' time spent outside of class and the environment they are raised in have a significant impact on both academic motivation and success, but do regional factors impact the student's environment?

Socioeconomic Issues in Eastern Kentucky

Largely, secondary academic achievement is something that Eastern Kentucky struggles with when compared to both the United States and the rest of Kentucky. However, Rowan County, one of the primary counties studied, seems to be an exception in terms of the lack of educational opportunities that plague its neighboring counties. Rowan County Senior High School, the largest high school in the county with nearly a thousand students, has a graduation rate of 95 percent while Kentucky's average graduation rate is only 91 percent (Public School Review, 2023a). It should be pointed out that the nation's graduation rate is approximately 87 percent, so not only does Rowan County Senior High School exceed national graduation rates but is also in the top 20 percent of schools in Kentucky. (Public School Review, 2023b).

In my interview with a teacher who wished to remain anonymous, I asked about possible reasons behind why Rowan County Senior High School had such a high graduation rate compared to other Eastern Kentucky counties. He stated that the opportunities available in Morehead made it an outlier as compared to other Eastern Kentucky cities (Anonymous, 2021; 6:06-6:16). He stated that with so many academic resources and job opportunities available there, even the majority of their "low-achieving" students have a higher likelihood of graduating than in neighboring counties (3:44-3:58). Not only is the four-year university, Morehead State University nearby, but

the local Maysville Community Technical College offers opportunities for individuals to acquire certification in skilled trades to those that do not see the utility in acquiring a bachelor's degree (Anonymous, 2021; 6:29-6:34). Being at the confluence of job opportunities, high academic achievement, and trade specialization, Rowan County, in general, has "a lot more access" than surrounding counties, and it would seem that with those opportunities being so close and "visible" the importance of graduating is impressed upon Rowan County Senior High School students (Anonymous, 2021; 6:45-7:22).

However, despite the high graduation rate and access to opportunities denied other Eastern Kentucky counties, the anonymous teacher still met opposition. For him, the "resistance" (18:27) he met came in the form of student apathy or cynicism about the utility of what was being taught. The anonymous teacher voiced his frustration with a student who is disinterested in class participation because they have already set goals for becoming a contract plumber, and saw the education provided as unnecessary (18:19-18:59). The anonymous teacher approaches students like this with understanding, as he tries to communicate that even students don't use math from his lessons, then they can use the ability of developing solutions to new problems and the ability to persevere (18:59-19:35).

Kyle Alvey, an English teacher at Greenup County High School, touched on the socioeconomic compression of rural Eastern Kentucky. Greenup is poorer than Rowan County, and Alvey calls it a "very rural" and small community (13:00-13:13). Alvey spoke on the visible class differences between members of the student body. "So, we have a population while being rural, you know, even out here in the rural parts of

Kentucky, there are still those kinds of clear-cut class distinctions that you can see” (14:01-14:19). Alvey noted that a sizable population of students relied solely on the resources provided by the school to be able to engage in their learning, such as having no means of transportation besides the buses and using school issued Chromebooks to study. (13:21-13:40).

Bob Newlan, a high school teacher in Greenup County who moved from Chicago, Illinois, also spoke of his experience with economic difference, explaining that in this rural area individuals from various socioeconomic statuses intermingle more than in a city; “So you have impoverished, and you have rural rich” (40:25-4:30). He clarifies his term “rural rich” as “people that own contracting businesses and restaurants and that sort of stuff” (40:30-4:37). He compares the children of these rural elites with his students that occupy a lower socioeconomic class who “live outward, there's no internet, in a holler somewhere” (40:45-40:56). Newlan contends that rural Eastern Kentucky had more extremes when it came to social classes than Chicago. In cities like Chicago “you have the inner-city ghettos, compared to the rich suburbs,” but in areas like Greenup County, Kentucky “you have the guy that has the fifty-acre farm, that owns an electrical contracting business living next to somebody in a trailer that still has, you know, a forty hour a week job” (42:35-43:02).

Melanie Blair, from Rowan County, discussed how opportunities can be few in a rural setting, and that many of those opportunities are saved for a small minority of the student body (12:19-12:25). Blair remarked that teaching potentially was her opportunity to “help others have opportunities and see that they can do things and go above and beyond what it is that they think they can do” (12:25-12:40). Her comments strike a

chord with the notion of student differential presented in *Hollowing Out the Middle*: the Achievers, the students in a rural setting perceived as being upwardly mobile garner more investment (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 21). Blair noticed that perhaps more effort was put into these achievers to ensure their future than tending to the needs of those that are not upwardly mobile, or those that are struggling with the school material (12:40-13:06).

This lack of resources did not only affect the students, but also the teachers. By the terminology used in *Hollowing out the Middle*, teacher William Salyers could be classified as a Returner, or successful students who chose to move back to their small town (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 21). Salyers (2022) genuinely enjoys being from Greenup County, but there are not a lot of job opportunities (1:36-1:44). He excelled in school and his parents always encouraged him to seek a college education so that he could avoid a future in manual labor (2:06-3:19). Salyers pursued a career in education as he liked “working with kids” and felt that he could perform well in such a career, and it was a pursuit he felt he would enjoy (4:08- 4:27). He started teaching at Greenup in 2021 after graduating from Morehead State University as he “didn't want to leave Greenup, I didn't want to leave Kentucky... there were not a whole lot of other options” (5:05-5:13).

In the introduction to the study, I outlined the socioeconomic standing of Eastern Kentucky compared to both the U.S. and the state of Kentucky. It is evident that the socioeconomic issues the region faces greatly impact how students interact with their education. The area’s lack of economic opportunities influences how students who are not heavily invested behave in the classroom. The example of the anonymous teacher's student who was not applying himself toward their coursework as he had aspirations of

being a contract plumber perfectly illustrates the cynicism such an academic landscape perpetuates.

Conclusion

Divided into four major themes, this chapter sought to provide an overview of the data collected from the interview participants. These themes were: 1) The need to alter the standardized pedagogy; 2) Rapport building's impact in combating educational resistance and cultivating academic motivation; 3) Parental involvement's effect on the academic motivation of the student; and 4) The socioeconomic forces that serve to perpetuate the inequalities faced by the students. The perspectives and insights offered in the conversations afford an understanding of the problems besetting Eastern Kentucky highschool students and the ongoing efforts of their teachers to help them overcome these.

Behind the scenes and largely unknown to the student body, secondary school educators work hard to accommodate the students' needs within the classroom. They are made to adapt, improvise, and create their own strategies to overcome the region's inequalities and the discrepancies between the provided pedagogies and the needs of the students in order to motivate kids to attain an education. The interviews provided rich insight into their reality and that of their students. Each educator demonstrated empathy in accounts of their daily efforts to foster a healthy and positive culture within their classrooms.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter will connect the findings to the research question and sub questions, how the literature consulted, and the data collected pertain to the various parts of the study's inquiry. I interviewed educators and local academics and historians in Eastern Kentucky and collected data concerning the academic landscape of Eastern Kentucky. The interviews in particular revealed educators' efforts to motivate their students and to tailor the provided pedagogies to be more relatable to them, as well as how socioeconomic factors come into play. I used the data I collected to highlight certain aspects of Eastern Kentucky schooling and examine effective teaching styles. This raises the question, do the experiences of contemporary Eastern Kentucky secondary educators reflect a need for a critical regionalist approach to alternative pedagogies? The following research sub-questions guided this study: What are the academic challenges particular to Eastern Kentucky? Does the student's community have a direct effect on their schooling experience? Does the identity of the region impact how secondary school educators approach teaching?

Pedagogical Innovations on Balance

In this section I consider the contributions and weaknesses of the Appalachian educational innovators across the 20th century, and there is much to unpack in their

individual practices. What of Stone and Pettit, the founders of the Hindman Settlement School? They were not only welcomed by their community, but the Hindman community openly demanded that these missionaries establish the missionary school in their area. The school is known as being a cultural hub for the Hindman area and for teaching its students with a commendable amount of empathy. Despite this, Stone and Petit were not wholly mindful of the power imbalance between them and their students, which led to the improper handling of some of the area's culture, such as the example provided with the banjo in **Chapter 2**.

What about Cora Wilson Stewart from the Moonlight Schools? Stewart created the Moonlight schools to combat widespread adult English illiteracy in Appalachia, and the success of her approach found her expanding out of the region into other demographics. The strength in her pedagogical approach lay in how her materials factored in the targeted demographic's values and aspects of their reality for reference. A criticism of her approach is that if it were not practiced in a critical fashion, then it could "perpetuate a damaging process of blaming the victim for their "failure" to learn" (NeCamp 2014, 154). Where Stewart presented her school as a cure for illiteracy, those who continued to be illiterate despite the efforts of the school were seen as rejecting educational opportunity and were "illiterate by choice" (NeCamp 2014, 152). It is crucial as an educator to recognize that a student "failing" to respond to their pedagogies may "represent flaws" in the educator's thinking rather than the students' "willingness or ability to learn" (NeCamp 2014, 154).

Why not champion the Foxfire approach then? Foxfire began as a student-ran magazine in a classroom in Appalachian Georgia where students were tasked to archive

the cultural accounts from community elders. This began an educational movement centered on involving the community in the pedagogy of those who practiced their approach. It should be said here that unfortunately, the Foxfire name has quite a bit of controversy attached to it: the founder, Eliot Wigginton, admitted to child molestation in 1992 (Smothers, 1992). Foxfire has tried to separate itself from this scandal and has seen great success after Wigginton's involvement. However, it should be pointed out that the same man that preached for co-learning between teacher and student and making the classroom an equitable environment abused the power imbalance inherent in a traditional student-teacher relationship in the worst possible way. Despite this, is the approach itself a sound one, or does it have its weaknesses?

Once the magazine that started the Foxfire approach flourished, it would seem greater emphasis was placed on publication rather than student achievement. Either students' writing received editorial help, or editing occurred independent of the author when the editor would "put it in the right words" (Pucket 1989, 74). In regard to this, John Puckett (1989) said: "If students acquire or refine these English skills, particularly writing, they do it fortuitously rather than by design" (74). By this, we can see that not as much emphasis was placed on the students' autonomy as was originally thought. Further, it can be said that the Foxfire approach effectively brings the community into the classroom, but it is not equally as effective at allowing students to see how their community is connected to a larger world. In this way, the Foxfire approach can be seen as a regionalist pedagogical approach, and to avoid spreading a parochial mindset the educational approach must use the students' region as a tool to better understand the world.

What about Myles Horton's approach? Horton began the Highlander Folk School with Dewey's theories regarding the individual freedom of individuals within a democratic society in favor of a practice that placed the individuals within the larger social reality. Utilizing Dewey's ideologies as a foundation for his approach, Horton created a pedagogy that used a locality's lived experience and culture to place them within the larger society without cultivating a clannish or ethnocentric mentality. Of the approaches I have examined, Horton's pedagogical approach most resembles the critical regionalist approach presented in the introduction. Horton, much like critical regionalists, used the local lived experience of the student body to examine global issues, such as Appalachian labor exploitation and the Civil Rights Movement. In this way, we can see the Highlander Folk School approach as a pedagogy that progressed upon the ideologies of good-intentioned settlement schools like the Hindman Settlement School, which in the best-case scenarios, only preserved the culture of the area. The Highlander's involvement with the labor movement specifically demonstrates how a locally rooted pedagogy can be used to reverse the negative effects of urbanormative forces and is a great example of how critical regionality can be used to instigate positive change for a community. Despite this, it is a pedagogy that was designed for a small classroom, and it would take great effort on the part of the public school teacher to adapt this into a working pedagogy for their classroom.

Are there barriers within a community that may prevent a student's success? As I discuss in **Chapter 3**, an adult's guidance is beneficial to a student's academic success. Teachers in Eastern Kentucky face multiple challenges, and as mentioned in the introduction, one of them is an erosion of local or even familial support for education.

Widespread narratives call into question the value of higher education. Wallace and Diekroger (2000) conducted a survey with 127 students, 91 of whom were from Appalachian regions within Ohio and Kentucky. They found that many of the participants had to deal with discouraging messages regarding higher education from their parents (142). Approximately one-quarter of the students surveyed were being pressured to prioritize work over their educational advancement (142,143). Jobs proposed to these participants by their parents were in explicit opposition to their academic career and schedule (Diekroger & Wallace 2000, 142,143). That same quarter of participants receiving discouraging remarks from their parents also indicated that their parents believed obtaining a college degree was a waste of time (Diekroger & Wallace 2000, 143). The narratives spread within small town America that convinced the “stayers” that “college wasn’t for them” seems to also haunt a small portion of those that, at least initially, thought otherwise (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 65).

Scholars have found that small towns in America are somewhat responsible for perpetuating issues of avoidance, school-leaving, educational resistance, and overall educational apathy (Schack 2021, 46:43; Carr & Kefalas 2009, xiv). The authors state that though the socioeconomic cycles that expand and constrict what options are available to the citizenry of a small town, it falls on the shoulders of that same citizenry if their town “hollows out” or not (Carr & Kefalas 2009, xiv). What I wish to focus on in this is not the phenomenon of small-town brain drain specifically, but the narratives required to make such a phenomenon possible. Carr and Kefalas (2009) posit that it is not entirely reflective of a young person’s “individual preferences” if they decide to leave or continue to live in their hometown (9). Instead, it is a reflection of that town’s resources and “the

messages they receive from their social networks” (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 9). Such messages can come in the form of discouraging comments from educators about a student’s academic future or a cynicism regarding academic achievement adopted from those of prior generations.

In Carr and Kefalas’s (2009) observations, when a stayer drifted off course in their schooling, it was not “without the complicity of adults” (65). No one looked for them when they skipped class, their parents did not chide them when they did not turn in homework assignments, and staff often wrote them off as rebellious and lazy, “dooming them to their limited prospects in the region’s dying economy” (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 65). In sum, the resistance enacted by stayers is one that was taught to them by the adults of their community, and even though these stayers may not have been cooperative in their courses they were paying enough attention to internalize the judgment given to them by their educators when they were told “college wasn’t for them” (Carr & Kefalas 2009, 65).

The narratives expressed by the adults in the stayers’ lives may underlie much of the student alienation in Appalachian locality. A generation’s negative experiences with schooling can create a cyclical and intergenerational apathy toward the value of an education. I theorize that Appalachia’s tumultuous history with urbanizing movements, such as New England missionary campaigns that attempted to educate Appalachians, have played a significant role in transforming the region’s educational structure into what we see currently. While students in Appalachian schools might not be conscious of this history, rural students may still see the institution of education as an urbanizing force.

Even a cursory understanding of school as an urban force could lead many rural Appalachians to believe that their schooling is nonessential or inappropriate to their life

circumstances. Such deductions may lead to school leaving and the pursuit of a career in manual labor. Based on that, there appears to be a difference between the rural Appalachian's preferred education and accessible schooling. This set of perspectives suggests a need to implement or strengthen specific community pedagogies that incorporate the importance of local culture to rural Appalachian students.

Parental involvement, or its equivalent, is integral to the academic success of the individual student. Kyle Alvey, the English teacher at Greenup County High School, deconstructed the conventional structure of the family. “I think the idea of a nuclear family, it sounds great on paper, but it just is not a reflection of what we have,” (7:37-7:48) Alvey (2022) said. He went on to note the potential risks inherent in the standard of measuring modern students' success based on traditional household compositions. He asserted that rooting our standard of success in the assumption of the nuclear family is damaging to the student body (6:30-6:43). “If you tell a group of students that they should have their parents' support all the time,” (6:43-6:51) Alvey (2022) said, “for the kid who doesn't have who, as you said, you know, live with their grandparents or something, it's just going to call attention to that their lives are missing something” (6:52-7:05). Given Alvey's critique, I was curious about what he considered the ideal situation at home for students to excel within the classroom. “In an ideal world, everyone would kind of have multiple sources of guidance,” Alvey (2022) said (4:47-5:01). When confronted with the question of parental involvement, Alvey (2022) stated that the “shape or presence” (7:29-7:32) of the families is substantially less important than the “intentions and purposes” (7:41-7:50) of those the student has in their family or support group.

Why Critical Regionality

To answer the research question posed by this study, it is essential to ask if the approaches of the study participants resemble that of a critical regionalist approach. Critical regionalism is an empathetic approach that seeks to utilize a student's community and experiences in such a way that garners knowledge and sympathy for other cultures. Several educators gave examples of their practicing tenets of the approach. Specifically, the anonymous teacher (2021) from Rowan County spoke about the merits of locally based pedagogy, in that it is important to make the education "as real as possible" to the student (15:50-15:59). In math, a subject which the educator described as one that students often did not relate to, the younger anonymous teacher (2021) found that finding ways (in his case, incorporating local businesses into the lesson) benefited his students as it made what was being taught "real" to them (16:00-16:17). "Students have to feel connected to their material," (18:00-18:05) Kyle Alvey (2022) argued, "if you really want it to stick" (18:05-18:09). Alvey's comments signal the kind of empathetic awareness of local social dynamics consonant with Critical Regionality. He is not alone among the educators in this study who consciously or not employ aspects of this approach.

In **Chapter 3**, Blair's empathetic approach to education was discussed. Blair (2023) stressed that it was essential to develop a relationship with the students before you could truly teach them. This approach echoes that of the Foxfire approach, specifically the "Connection" tenet (Foxfire 2019). However, though both Foxfire and the Critical Regional approach encourage creating an environment where the learning is mutual between the student and teacher, the Foxfire approach could easily lend itself to an isolationist perspective. The Foxfire approach preaches connecting the community into

the education, however the culture and history of a given locale should not simply be a tool for teaching students, but a starting point for the students to understand and empathize with other cultures and understand their place in global forces. The core practice of Connection briefly states at the end that connections should be made to the “world beyond their classroom” and the surrounding communities, however, this aspect of their approach should be more prevalent and not just a footnote in one of their tenets (Foxfire 2019).

One of the key tenets of Critical Regionality is helping students understand global processes through the lens of local history and activity. Alvey specifically spoke on how he accomplishes this within the classroom. Before Alvey (2022) would teach from a novel set in an unfamiliar locale, he would make attempts to “broaden their horizons,” but if he were to teach a similar lesson from a novel that sounds like “a small farm in Kentucky,” then there would not be a “learning curve” (18:25-18:37). Teaching based on the students’ prior knowledge and lived experiences greatly benefits the student’s learning. In the example provided by Alvey, it can be inferred that the place that is similar to a farm in Kentucky is in fact not Kentucky, and that by using the lived experience of the student body, Alvey could successfully understand and sympathize with the history and culture of this new locale. Progressively, from there Alvey could use examples of locales incrementally different from the one he used before, until he could successfully assist students in empathizing with areas and cultures different from theirs.

Despite the work of several exceptional individual contemporary educators in Eastern Kentucky, they are just that, individuals. In chapter 3, each of the educator’s efforts were detailed and analyzed, but what was most evident was that these educators

were going well beyond what was expected of them and were actively overcoming institutional barriers in the attempt to teach the provided material in a meaningful way. Though the teachers would seem to hold ideologies incredibly similar to those of critical regionality, their strategies are fixed within the immediate classroom. The adjustments these educators consider necessary do not lend themselves to institutional change. It still stands that the standardized pedagogy within Eastern Kentucky is something that needs to be altered, but if events are to unfold in much the same fashion that they have since KERA, then this standardized pedagogy will remain largely unchanged. Even with recent funding bumps under the teacher-friendly Beshear administrative Kentucky is still far from adopting elements of a critical regionalist approach. In short, Kentucky is currently barely beyond the ideologies within the Moonlight Schools in terms of the evolution towards critical regionalism, and a good deal more needs to get done before it is an approach that is adopted by education at large rather than a caring minority.

Limitations

I originally sought to interview secondary school students within Rowan County, however, the outbreak of Covid-19 shortly after this study began in 2020 led to many insurmountable barriers. The pandemic complicated communications with Rowan County schools regarding permission to interview the students. This greatly affected the study as it now lacked firsthand narratives of the Eastern Kentucky schooling experience. I then decided to focus on interviewing teachers. Again, the pandemic-based difficulties required expanding the recruitment pool to all Eastern Kentucky counties.

Because the research locale was expanded, the conclusions are likely more

general than they could have been if a single city or county were studied. Preferably this study would associate itself with one locality and gain a sense of its unique social dynamics and needs. Further, with a small number of representatives from four neighboring Eastern Kentucky counties, part of Eastern Kentucky's educational narrative is potentially missing from this study.

Summary and Conclusion

A history of extraction led to a deficiency in resources available, which in turn led to low-quality schools and poor academic achievement (Shi & Qamruzzaman 2022, 3). It has been found that parents with low academic achievement are less likely to educate their children, or to assist in their children's education (Shi & Qamruzzaman 2022, 3). This could be because parents with low academic achievement may place a lower value on education than those with higher attainment rates. The findings by Shi and Qamruzzaman (2022) suggest that education is a "critical instrument for preventing and alleviating poverty" (3). Eastern Kentucky is the most impoverished region in a state that falls below the United States' average per student spending. This is a primary reason why consulting these educators was essential to answering the driving research question: Do the experiences of contemporary Eastern Kentucky secondary school educators reflect a need for a critical regionalist approach to constructing alternative pedagogies?

This study concerned itself with the expertise and experiences of educators from Eastern Kentucky communities and how these intersect with and are influenced by the region's history. Teachers, as individuals who directly interact and contribute to the academic landscape of Eastern Kentucky, have great insight into how the region's

socioeconomic inequality relates to educational inequality. The experts provided rich perspectives that allowed a cohesive analytical record of the region's educational history. This study probed the lived experience and expertise of eleven secondary school teachers and seven experts on Eastern Kentucky history or education, seeking to understand the academic landscape of Eastern Kentucky, one molded significantly by its lack of economic opportunities and high rates of poverty.

This study provides evidence that Eastern Kentuckians face several barriers unique to the region based on its history, culture, and low level of trust in institutions like education. Further, I pulled from data and the expertise of the educators and experts to elucidate approaches being taken by teachers, and the ways alternative pedagogical approaches help motivate students overcome barriers unique to their locale. Educators agreed that they are being heavily enervated with attempting to motivate their students over these barriers and there is much more that needs to be done at an institutional level for them to be able to continue without the risk of burnout.

The overarching conclusion arrived at with this study is that pedagogical approaches such as critical regionality are effective at cultivating educational motivation within a locale like Eastern Kentucky. Educators should use empathetic approaches like those proposed by Foxfire, Highlander, and John Dewey to create an environment that is safe for the students to express themselves and for knowledge to be mutual between themselves and the educator. It appeared in the data that by adopting empathetic approaches to teaching, educators were able to avoid educational resistance and rather, engage their students. altogether. This study adds to a large body of work regarding socioeconomic barriers in education while adding to the smaller body of work regarding

how those same barriers manifest in Eastern Kentucky, and how they affect the students and teachers. It is my hope that substantial overhauls are made to the institution of education in Eastern Kentucky as, based on the lived experiences of their secondary school educators, they desperately need a critical regionalist approach in their classrooms.

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Appendix

List of Study Participants

Experts

1. Dr. Yvonne Baldwin

Retired Professor of History at Morehead State University. Author of *Cora Wilson Stewart and Kentucky's Moonlight Schools: Fighting for Literacy in America*. Interview conducted on April 4, 2022.

2. Gary Lewis

Founding Member of the Rowan County Historical Society. Interview conducted on April 2, 2022.

3. Dr. Kim Nettleson

Associate Professor in Early Childhood and Special Education at Morehead Interview conducted on December 22, 2021.

4. Edna O. Schack

Professor Emeritus of Education and Mathematics at Morehead State University,

Co-director of MSU-Teach, and 2020-21 ARC Appalachian Leadership

Institute

Fellow. Interview conducted on May 25, 2021.

5. Alana Cain Scott

Associate Professor of History at Morehead State University. Interview conducted

on February 24, 2022.

6. Dr. Wayne Willis

Retired Professor of Education at Morehead State University. Co-author of Elliott,

Motivation, engagement and Educational Performance: International

Perspectives on the contexts for learning. Interview conducted on May 18, 2021.

7. Steve Young

Founding Member of the Rowan County Historical Society. Interview conducted.

on April 2, 2022

Teachers

1. Kyle Alvey

English Teacher at Greenup County High School. Interview conducted on

November 9, 2022

2. Anonymous

Math teacher at Rowan County Senior High School. Interview conducted on November 11, 2021

3. Anonymous (older man)

Mathematics teacher at Montgomery County High School. Interview conducted on February 20, 2023

4. Melanie Blair

Special Education Collaborating Instructor at Rowan County High School. Interview conducted on September 2, 2022

5. Lindsey Casey

Personal Finance, Accounting, and Aviation Teacher at Lawrence County High School. Interview conducted on February 28, 2023

6. Patrick Johnson

Special Education Teacher at Bath County High School. Interview conducted on February 8, 2023

7. Bob Newlan

Math teacher at Greenup County High School. Interview conducted on November 8, 2022.

8. Gina Rice

English Teacher at Greenup County High School. Interview conducted on
November 10, 2022

9. William Salyers

Special Education at Greenup County High School. Interview conducted
on November 3, 2022.

10. Michael Sammons interview

English Teacher at Elliott County High School. Interview conducted on
October 18, 2022.

11. Randy Wallace

Community Education Director at Rowan County High School. August
23, 2022

List of Eastern Kentucky Counties

1. Adair
2. Bath
3. Bell
4. Boyd
5. Breathitt
6. Carter
7. Casey
8. Clark
9. Clay
10. Clinton
11. Cumberland
12. Edmonson
13. Elliott
14. Estill
15. Fleming
16. Floyd
17. Garrard
18. Green
19. Greenup
20. Harlan
21. Hart
22. Jackson

23. Johnson
24. Knott
25. Knox
26. Laurel
27. Lawrence
28. Lee
29. Leslie
30. Letcher
31. Lewis
32. Lincoln
33. McCreary
34. Madison
35. Magoffin
36. Martin
37. Meniffee
38. Metcalfe
39. Monroe
40. Montgomery
41. Morgan
42. Nicholas
43. Owsley
44. Perry
45. Pike

- 46. Powell
- 47. Pulaski
- 48. Robertson
- 49. Rockcastle
- 50. Rowan
- 51. Russell
- 52. Wayne
- 53. Whitley
- 54. Wolfe

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