

Reading, Writing, Rhetoric: A Rhetorically Emplaced Study of Writing Education in an
Appalachian Region

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KATIE BETH BROOKS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation, *Reading, Writing, Rhetoric: A Rhetorically Emplaced Study of an Appalachian Region*, explores the themes of ideology, stereotypes, and rhetorical emplacement through a study of education in Southwest Virginia. In this project, I used two methods of data collection: historical research and interviewing. These two methodologies employed together construct a sweeping scope of Appalachian Virginia's experiences with rhetorical emplacement in relation to educational practices and ideologies by encountering some of the earliest stories told about the region and contemporary accounts of teachers who currently work in Appalachian Virginia. My main research questions ask how stories told about Appalachia have affected educational practices within the region, and to answer that question I sought out the history of the stories told about Appalachia through historical research, then, in order to attend to the present realities of the region, I interviewed high school English teachers who identify as Appalachian and work in Appalachian Virginia high schools. The historical and ethnographic methods I employed in this dissertation study allowed me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto and developed within (Hsiung) the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives exist in the world today. By using grounded qualitative coding, I created codes from the historical data set—the codes were: isolation, language, education, expectations, culture, and literacy—and compared them to the interview transcripts, I conclude that while illiteracy has long been a stereotype of the region and one that Appalachians will likely combat for the foreseeable future, the teachers in my study build their pedagogies to support rhetorical thinking and rhetorical situation.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This dissertation, *Reading, Writing, Rhetoric: A Rhetorically Emplaced Study of an Appalachian Region*, explores themes of ideology, stereotypes, and place through a study of writing education in Southwest Virginia. In this project, I used two methods of data collection: historical research and interviewing. These two methods construct a sweeping scope of Appalachian Virginian's experiences with stereotypes that are tied to place by encountering some of the earliest stories told about the region and contemporary accounts of teachers who currently work in Appalachian Virginia. My main research questions ask how stories told about Appalachia have affected educational practices within the region, and to answer that question I sought out the history of the stories told about Appalachia through historical research, then, in order to attend to the present realities of the region, I interviewed high school English teachers who identify as Appalachian and work in Appalachian Virginia high schools. The historical and ethnographic methods I employed in this dissertation study allowed me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto and developed within the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives exist in the world today. I conclude that while illiteracy has long been a stereotype of the region and one that Appalachians will likely combat for the foreseeable future, the teachers in my study shape their classrooms to support students in combatting stereotypes of Appalachia by employing critical thinking activities in their classrooms.

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Dedication

To Dolly Rebecca Parton, whose magical lyricism brings me much needed peace

Table of Contents

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction to Appalachia and Rhetorical Emplacement</i>	1
Defining the region	4
Positionality	7
Purpose of Study	12
Conceptual Framework	13
Methods/Methodology	16
Archival Methods	17
Interview Methods	18
Qualitative Coding.....	20
Code 1: Isolation.....	21
Code 2: Language	21
Code 3: Education	21
Code 4: Expectations	21
Code 5: Culture.....	21
Code 6: Literacy.....	22
Definitions of Terms	22
Significance of Study	23
Limitations of Study	25
Study Organization	26
<i>Chapter 2: Literature Review</i>	28
Literature Review: A Study of Appalachian Rhetoric and Writing Studies	31
Literacy Studies	31
History of Literacy Sponsorship in Appalachia	33
Literacy and Education	35
Educational Attainment and Identity Performance	42
Literacy and Identity.....	44
Entering the Conversation	48
<i>Chapter 3: A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement and My Methods</i>	51

Theoretical orientation	51
A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement	55
Research Approach	61
Methodology	61
Methods	62
Historical Research	63
Interviews	65
Qualitative Coding	71
Limitations of the Study	74
 <i>Chapter 4: A Historiographic Account of Stereotypes, Ideology, and Education in an Appalachian Region.....</i>	 76
Narratives of Ideology.....	83
Method.....	86
Qualitative Coding	89
Grounded Coding	90
Analysis	93
Code 1: Isolation.....	93
Code 2: Language	95
Code 3: Education	99
Code 4: Expectations	102
Code 5: Culture.....	104
Code 6: Literacy.....	106
Conclusion and Implications.....	108
 <i>Chapter 5: Comparing the Codes: Historical Data and Interview Data from Appalachia</i>	 110
Interview Subject Population	114
Methods/Methodology	116
Analysis of Codes	120
Conclusions and implications	127

<i>Chapter 6: The Role of Place-Based Pedagogies and Stories in the English Appalachian Secondary Classroom.....</i>	<i>128</i>
Theoretical Orientation.....	130
Findings	131
Culture.....	132
Language	136
Education.....	140
Pedagogy	142
Implications	146
<i>Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications</i>	<i>148</i>
Takeaways	150
Limitations of the Study	152
Contribution to the field	154
Further Research	156
<i>Bibliography.....</i>	<i>158</i>
<i>Appendices.....</i>	<i>167</i>
Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter	167
Appendix B: Interview Recruitment Script.....	168
Appendix C: IRB Approved Consent Form for Interviews	169
Appendix D: Interview Protocol	173
Appendix E: Appalachian Regional Commission “Data Snapshot: Appalachia’s Population”	175

Chapter 1: Introduction to Appalachia and Rhetorical Emplacement

During the 2016/2017 academic year, I worked with Dr. Sheila Carter-Tod on planning and facilitating a weekend workshop to be held in Wise, Virginia, for secondary English teachers from Wise, Lee, Scott, Dickenson, Smyth, and Tazewell Counties. This workshop was coordinated through Virginia Tech's College Access Collaborative (CAC), a unit of Virginia Tech that is "dedicated to college access and the university's commitment to supporting and enhancing a more diverse undergraduate student body" ([College Access Collaborative](#)). The CAC, upholding Virginia Tech's land-grant mission, collaborates with schools across the commonwealth of Virginia to support teachers in preparing their students for higher education. Dr. Carter-Tod brought me in to help support the growth of the CAC into Southwest (Appalachian) Virginia because 1) my research interests exist at the intersection of rhetoric and composition and Appalachian studies and 2) I have ties to the region and community because I grew up in the town of Appalachia in Wise County. In this collaborative effort, I reached out to invite English teachers from secondary schools in southwest Virginia to participate in a weekend-long professional development workshop, and I coordinated the logistics of the event. One winter weekend that year Dr. Carter-Tod and I stayed at the Inn at Wise in Wise, Virginia, with twenty teachers from counties across the western-most tip of the commonwealth. The year that I helped facilitate this workshop for Virginia Tech, I had just begun my PhD program.

During this workshop, I spoke with teachers about their own experiences being Appalachian and teaching at schools whose student populations mirrored their own life experiences. Often, the stories they shared described experiences with difference and

stereotypes, especially stereotypes of illiteracy and accents. For example, when she was an education major at a private college less than an hour from her home in Appalachian Virginia, Imboden¹ was told that she needed to change the way she spoke before she entered into the classroom. Her supervising teacher, a nice woman teaching in the town next to the city in which she had grown up, advised her to change the way she spoke “so administrators and others” would take her seriously. Having a strong Appalachian accent, the teacher warned, would lessen Imboden’s credibility in the classroom, not for the students who often sounded just like Imboden, but because outsiders to her classroom—from administrators to parents to other stakeholders—would not take her seriously, especially, as her supervising teacher noted, since Imboden was planning to teach English.

Proud of her Appalachian dialect and accent now, Imboden regrets listening to the teacher. Imboden, while still having a pretty recognizable Appalachian accent, lamented changing the way she spoke. She not only changed her accent, but she changed her dialect—substituting words and phrases that she had grown up using like “nabs” for crackers or “pop” for soda. Choosing to change the way she spoke affected her family, who she says often took on her new way of speaking, while not providing her with any real benefits—she teaches at a high school with teachers and students whose Appalachian accents remind her of the one she modified. Imboden’s experiences with the stereotypes of Appalachia pushed her to make pedagogical choices that validate and empower her students’ voices.

¹ Names have been changed to provide anonymity for all interview participants. I chose names from communities in my home county of Wise as the pseudonyms for my participants. Imboden attended the weekend workshop and is one of my interview subjects in this project.

Many of the teachers in the workshop shared similar stories with me during breaks and meals. My interest in the subject of identity and pedagogy was sparked after listening to these teachers talk about their students, the realities that they face as teachers in Appalachia, and the experiences that they had with ideas of deficit and difference, and I was especially interested in the way they spoke about these experiences shaping their pedagogy. Although I attended elementary school and high school at schools named after my hometown and the region—Appalachia High and Appalachia Elementary—I do not remember a single teacher asking me to reflect on or engage with my own Appalachian identity. The teachers I met through my work with the CAC described ways that they took their own stories and embodied the lessons they learned in their own pedagogy.

After that workshop, I knew that my dissertation would be an opportune place to not only explore how identity shapes writing pedagogy, but I could also use the dissertation to learn more from the teachers from far southwest Virginia and to share their stories with others. In this dissertation, I relied upon historical and ethnographic methods to construct a full picture of the persistence of stories and the ways in which people speak back against them. Through the use of archival research and teacher interviews, I 1) contextualize the research site within a larger historical narrative of literacy and educational experiments that occurred in Southwest Virginia, 2) observe the ways in which writing pedagogical practices may have been or are still influenced by ideologies about the greater Appalachian region, 3) understand how teachers mitigate different stakeholder and ideological expectations, and 4) view the ways in which place guides teachers' understandings of their identities as teachers within the region.

Defining the region

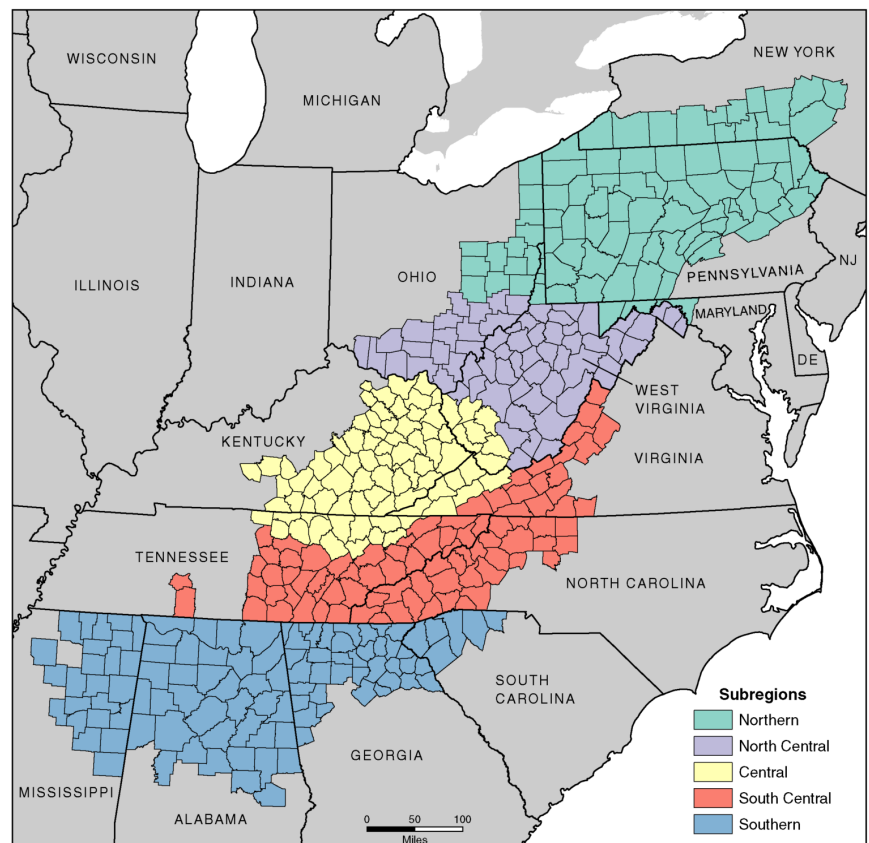
Before European colonizers came to America in the 1600s, Central Appalachia was home to several indigenous nations, and what is now Wise County, Virginia, is located on S'atsoyaha (Yuchi) and **DWJᎠᎵᎳ** Tsalaguwetiya (Cherokee, East) land. In the 1540s, the Cherokee people totaled close to 30,000 indigenous people who lived in Central Appalachia (Williams 21). During the 17th century, British colonies did not think about the interior mountains or the people who lived there. When the British began expanding their colonies they were blocked by both the geography of the mountains and the indigenous nations who lived there (22). Before this, what was known about the interior mountains and their inhabitants was shared by traders who bartered with the indigenous people. As John Alexander Williams writes in *Appalachia: A History*, "The European and native peoples that collided in Appalachia during the latter half of the eighteenth century were on each side multiethnic, multilingual societies shaped by earlier generations' experience of warfare, migration, and disease" (25). The region was a contact zone of sorts where the groups met.

Williams describes what other scholars describe as an era of "frontier and settlement" was actually an age of "displacement and repopulation" (30). Over the course of 100 years, Appalachia saw "four geographic phases" of movement into the mountains and the displacement of the people who already lived there. Between 1820 and 1840, the Cherokee nation, who lived predominantly in Central Appalachia, "was expelled from its lands in southwestern North Carolina, southeastern Tennessee, north Georgia, and both the Great Valley and the Cumberland plateau lands of northeast Alabama" (30). In Appalachia today, the Appalachian Cherokee Nation Tribe work "to enlighten and enrich the public's understanding of the diversity and richness of Indian life, its history and ACN's contributions to our Society, our Nation and our World"

([Mission Statement](#)). As a nonprofit, members of the nation work with schools and groups in the region to understand the violent history of European colonization and the forced removal of indigenous people from the land. Understanding this history of the land, European colonization, the displacement of indigenous peoples, and current work in the region are important factors of my dissertation study because if the people who originally cared for and lived in the mountains of Appalachia had not been moved, my study would look very different.

Appalachia is vast. Spanning thirteen states, and containing 420 counties, according to the Appalachian regional commission, Appalachia runs from Alabama to New York. This map (see figure 1) shows the scope of Appalachia and the different

subregions associated with the region. This project keeps as its focus counties in Virginia that are labeled “Appalachian” by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). In an attempt to address economic inequity in Appalachia, in 1963 a group of Appalachian governors reached out to President John F. Kennedy to request that he create a presidential commission that would support the growth and care of the Appalachian region in the United States. In



Map by: Appalachian Regional Commission, November 2009.

Figure 1: Map of Appalachia created by the Appalachian Region Commission, Nov. 2009

response, President Kennedy created the Presidential Appalachian Regional Commission, a group tasked with addressing economic and social inequities within the Appalachian region. In 1965, the group became the Appalachian Regional Commission and took on the task of responding to President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty—legislation introduced by President Johnson that would react to the increasing poverty rate in the United States during his presidency.

There are other counties in Virginia that are Appalachian counties but chose not to join the ARC because the leaders of those counties and communities did not want to be classified as “Appalachian” because of the negative connotations of difference and lack that come with that moniker. Appalachia is often associated with negative stereotypes. Jeff Biggers, in *The United States of Appalachia* argues that “four paradoxical images [of Appalachia] have enjoyed incredible staying power”: 1) “pristine Appalachia” or forested mountains—although this does not recognize the extractive industry's removal of mountains and timber; 2) “backwater Appalachia” or the home of the “strange land and peculiar people” that populate so many popular culture representations of the region (Harney qtd. in Shapiro 20); 3) “Anglo-Saxon Appalachia” or the description of Appalachia as a home to “white natives” that all but erases the indigenous people who lived

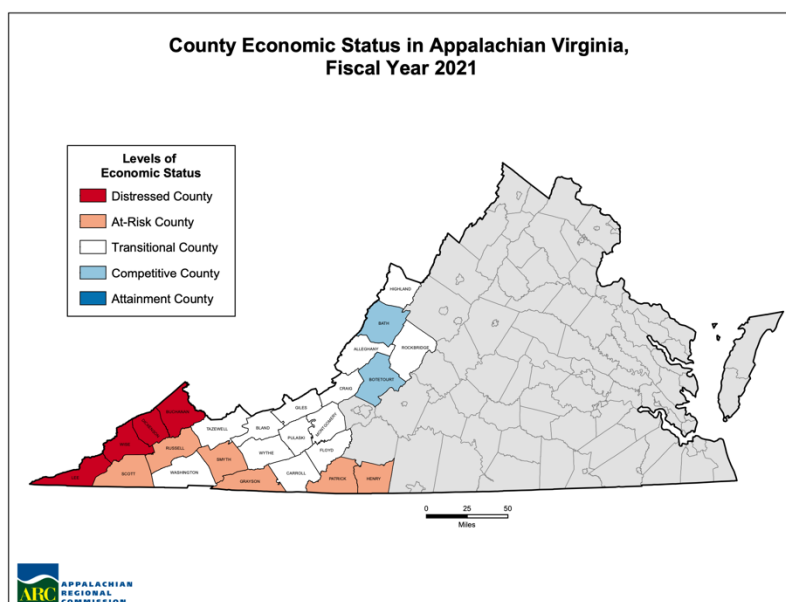


Figure 2: Map of Appalachian Virginia Counties

on the land before whites settled there²; and 4) “pitiful Appalachia” or images of Appalachia as impoverished and behind modern times.

As it would be difficult to cover the entire region in this study, this project keeps as its focus counties in Virginia that are labeled “Appalachian” by the Appalachian Regional Commission. Figure 2 shows the economic status of Appalachian Virginian counties. However, for the purposes of this project, this map is intended to show you the location of the different counties that were considered in this study.

Positionality

I call Wise County, Virginia, home. Bordering Kentucky, Wise County is designated as part of Central Appalachia. The idea that the rest of Virginia believes that the commonwealth ends at Roanoke is a running joke in far southwest Virginia because often, people do not feel like Southwest Virginia gets much representation in statewide legislature. My experiences with education in the region have been varied but all occurred in public schools in Appalachia. I attended Appalachia Elementary and Appalachia High School in my hometown of Appalachia, the only town named after the mountains. I then attended the University of Virginia’s College at Wise for my undergraduate degree, and I have spent my entire graduate school education at Virginia Tech—both are situated in Appalachia.

At Appalachia Elementary School, we went on field trips to local coal mines and learned about the importance and value of coal in our science classes. I did not know until graduate school that the teachers were probably given a stipend by local coal

² Biggers describes Appalachia as a “crossroads of indigenous cultures and vast immigrant and African American migrations for centuries”, *The United States of Appalachia*, pp. xiii.

companies to incorporate positive information about coal into their classroom lessons. At Appalachia High School, my peers equated what I now understand as their Appalachian identities to southern or country identities. Boys drove jacked-up trucks, and everyone listened to country music like Hank Williams, Jr. and Kenny Chesney. I remember when I first joined the varsity volleyball team at my high school, one of the seniors tried to put “Redneck Woman” by Gretchen Wilson on our game-night warm-up CD. Our coach did not okay that musical selection. But, I was so worried about the possibility of that song playing for the whole town while we warmed up serving and passing. I, always being obstinate, refused to listen to country music aside from Dolly Parton and Loretta Lynn until I went to college. I hate to admit this, but in high school I tried to distance myself as much as I could from an identity that popular media had taught me was backward and unintelligent—it did not help that my family was one of only a handful of openly Democratic families in a conservative stronghold. It was not until I took Dr. Amy Clark’s “Appalachian Literature” course at UVA Wise did I even know that Appalachia was more than the butt of so many popular culture jokes let alone a field of study.

I come from a long line of people who have supported and cared for their community in the mountains. My family has lived in the Appalachian Mountains so long, I’m not sure what generation Appalachian I am. My mom works as a nurse practitioner in a rural, federally-funded health clinic that began as a community clinic to help coal miners and their families receive health care on a sliding-fee; they still use a sliding-fee. She has intermittently served as the clinician of her clinic’s Black Lung program, helping coal miners receive their health benefits and healthcare. My pop, my mom’s dad, is a retired health inspector who helped regulate the water quality in the

region when the coal industry was dumping slurry³ into the Powell River. My nana, her mother, was a nurse at a local hospital. My dad is a small-business owner and contractor. He created, ran, and/or coached in several youth sports programs including softball, volleyball, and basketball. His dad held odd jobs including police officer and coal miner, and my mamaw, his mom, was a homemaker until she had to get a job at the Magic Mart to help supplement my pap's odd-job income. I was the third generation of my mom's family to attend college and the second of my dad's. My dad was a first-generation student. All of this happened in Wise County, Virginia.

I am invested in the region. What I write about is important to me and my family. I cannot be unbiased in my research because my personal ties to my research topics and my research subjects are strong. What I can do is acknowledge these biases and hold myself accountable to them. One way that I hold myself accountable is to think critically about my own assumptions and thoughts about the Appalachian region. This constant reflection allows me to see my own biases. When I began my PhD study, I took a course in Appalachian Studies with Dr. Emily Satterwhite. That course really made me reckon with my own perceived notions of Appalachia, especially the ways in which I bought into the education bootstrap mentality, that if people were educated that they would improve. That course really encouraged me to think beyond my own preconceived notions and to understand how I shape my own pedagogical choices in the classroom in giving students room to share their own experiences free from judgment or critique.

³ Slurry is the name given to the bits of mountain (trees, soil, rocks, flowers) removed in all forms of mining.

While I have strong ties to the region where my research takes place, I have never quite been a complete insider to that group. Because both of my parents are college educated, my mom being a nurse practitioner and my dad having an undergraduate business degree, my relationship to education was quite different than my friends. College was an expectation for me, not a way out of the region as some of my peers perceived it to be. By “a way out,” they didn’t necessarily mean out of the hollers and hills where we grew up, but “a way out” of the cyclical poverty into which they were born—one of the smartest boys in my graduating class skipped college for a manager position at our local Walmart. I grew up with some really smart people who have gone on to do amazing things that I hope their families are proud of them for—one of my good friends was the first in her family to finish college, and she even earned her Doctorate in Physical Therapy from Radford a few years ago. Because those of us who seek education were sometimes considered “going above our raisings,” the cost of education is socially and culturally high. For my peers who left the region, moving away cost them familial and social ties to the region. For my peers who remained, staying in the region with a degree allowed them to keep strong family ties, but those relationships changed. Katherine Sohn’s work with Appalachian women who sought a college education highlights the disruption educational attainment can cause for families and friends.

Although college was always an expectation for me, what Loyal Jones defines as familism, the familial tie to the region that Appalachians feel, kept me from looking into colleges too far from home. I received an academic scholarship that covered all of my costs to attend UVA-Wise, a school that both my parents and my maternal grandpa attended. It’s twenty-minutes away from my childhood home. So, although I was an outsider in some ways, I still feel tied to the mountains and to my family. I feel this tie

especially as I wrote this dissertation three hours up I-81 in Blacksburg, VA. Familism, and money, kept me in-state and still pretty close to home.

All of this is important for me to acknowledge because I am defined by the region. I am close to the region. Like many other Appalachian scholars and authors, I feel the call of the mountains, the call to return home, the call to help my community. My positionality allows me to inhabit an interesting space of informed-but-committed pseudo insider. Appalachia has a long history of outsiders speaking for her, so, as is to be expected, Appalachians are not keen on outsiders coming into their spaces. As an insider, whose family is so invested in the prosperity and health of the region, I am allowed access that others may not have. I have lines of communication, networking, access, and insider knowledge that others may not ever have access to.

But, as I noted, I am a pseudo insider. I have been gone for a while, although I go back frequently. I am seeking a level of education that some folks back home, some of my family members even, never knew existed. Attaining this education, as Kathy Sohn describes in her influential text *Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices Since College*, has distanced me from some of my family and friends. This education comes at a cost. By studying writing practices in my home, I could be further distancing myself from the "insider" claim because I am seeking a degree that not many people back home know about. I also acknowledge that as I continue my research, I cannot be completely unbiased—although I do not believe any research project is ever truly objective. But, my attachments to that community and acknowledging my positionality in relation to it will help me keep myself accountable to a fair study.

Purpose of Study

Often, the research conducted in the field of rhetoric and writing that centers Appalachia focuses on issues of literacy and literacy sponsorship. These studies have had a major impact on understanding the history of stereotyping and sharing the realities of the region both historically and contemporary. While foundational for correcting images of illiteracy in Appalachia, I believe that expanding study of Appalachia to include writing pedagogy and critical thinking can move the field of rhetoric and writing to a better understanding of the multifaceted ways in which place-based pedagogy is crucial for students at all levels. Focusing solely on literacy when studying Appalachia provides a limited view of the research significance of the region.

After facilitating a workshop for Appalachian high school English teachers in Virginia with Dr. Sheila Carter-Tod and Virginia Tech's College Access Collaborative, I became very interested in the ways that English teachers in the region saw their own Appalachian identity shaping their pedagogical choices. During the workshop, the teachers described their own experiences with difference—how Imboden was not considered for the gifted and talented program when she was in elementary school because her family lived on a farm or when she went away to school, Stonega was asked to read out loud because of how interesting her classmates found her accent. Their stories, the narratives that they weaved of their own experiences with difference and othering, pushed me to think about how narratives, stories told by us or about us, shape the way we think and interact with the world. In order to meet the purpose of this study, I devised the following research questions in order to explore the role that narrative has played in the stereotyping of people from Appalachia, and more importantly, to understand the ways in which stereotypes of Appalachia have affected writing pedagogy in the region. My research questions are

- How have outsider narratives constructed or shaped notions of education in Appalachian Virginia?
- How have narratives constructed from folks from Appalachian Virginia shaped our understanding of the realities of education in the region?
- How have Appalachian Virginians described educational practices in the region?
- How is writing pedagogy implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of Southwest Virginia (SWVA) today?
- How do Appalachian writing teachers mitigate the different ideologies and stakeholders who affect their teaching?
- How might place-based pedagogies inform writing pedagogy in Appalachian Virginia and further rhetorical theory?

These questions helped me to structure a study that led me to understand how what is written, said, believed, or told about Appalachia—really any place—affects the ways in which people, especially teachers, respond.

Conceptual Framework

While I delve deeper into my theory in Chapter 3, here I will briefly explain the theory I am positing in this research. Kundai Chirindo, in his 2016 *Women's Studies in Communication* article titled "Rhetorical Places: From Classical Topologies to Prospects for Post-Westphalian Spatialities," writes that "It is in the turn to specificity and locality, accessible only by attending to the corporeality of the body and how it is taken up, that the richest potential for broadening rhetorical scholarship lies" (130). He calls on rhetoric to engage with the emplaced nature of existence: "One way rhetoricians of space can extend the territory covered by the discipline is by increasingly grounding

their thinking about both space and its subjectivity in the rich diversity and contingencies of bodily emplacements and presentations” (130). The research I conducted in this dissertation project responds to this call by exploring the ways in which emplacement, being of a place, provides an exigency to respond to the way that place is represented.

For this project, I began with a theoretical framework that centered ideology, stereotyping, and place. The work I conducted in this dissertation study led me to build upon a theory of “Rhetorical Emplacement” that has been posited by others (Ott 2011; Columbini 2019; Gorsevski’s 2012 emplaced rhetoric). While researching the history of the region, I noticed that both the historical texts and the teachers I interviewed were engaging in rhetorical emplacement because they found it necessary to respond to the stories told about Appalachia either in their writing or their pedagogy. After the Civil War, travel writers entered different regions of America to write stories to expand a mythos of the United States. These stories, often fictionalized accounts mistaken for reality or exaggerated nonfiction, left an impression on the region of Appalachia in the form of stereotypes and stories that have been used by outsiders as an exigence to enter the region for whatever mission they were on (education, industry, religion, etc.).

The theme of rhetorical emplacement has been described before. For example, in a 2011 review essay, Brian J. Ott argues that rhetorical emplacement is an attention “to how rhetoric’s situatedness in cultural and consumer spaces, in the built or virtual environment, and in local and global information flows enables and constrains what can be said, how it can be said, and by whom” (345). Ott highlighted the significance of place to what he calls rhetorics of social resistance: “A third concern in studying rhetorics of social resistance, beyond consequentiality and modality, is the matter of locality. Rhetoric is a situated activity, one that is profoundly shaped by the time and

place of its enactment. Serious engagements with resistive rhetorics need carefully to consider not only the cultural moment, but also the cultural emplacement of symbolic action."

Expanding on Ott's description of rhetorical emplacement, Crystal Columbini's 2019 *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* article "The Rhetorical Resistance of Tiny Homes: Downsizing Neoliberal Capitalism" argues that "situated rhetorical-ness of the tiny home" can be understood as an act of resistance against "dominant meanings" and can "displace[s]" rhetorical understandings of place" (453).

I build from this earlier work and Edward Said's *Orientalism* to better understand and expand rhetorical emplacement as the process by which a people group resists a set of ideas, stereotypes, and ideologies about a place from that place via a more textured recognition of that place. As such, my use of "rhetorical emplacement" has much in common with Gorsevski's "emplaced rhetorics" which resist displacement and fragmentation by message-making about the environment that reconnects beings and ecosystems to postcolonial contexts. My definition here is very much indebted to Edward Said's description of Orientalism as above all a discourse (3). While based on some semblance of reality, some locations that have been othered—like the Orient or Appalachia—are discursive constructs that have been re-imagined for the West or colonialist culture to define itself against. This othering, this orientalism is a discourse that is produced by and exists in relation to power structures (12). As I explore in Chapter 3, many of the ideas set forth about Appalachia were defined and constructed by what Said describes as "facts of textuality," meaning texts—both fiction and nonfiction—perpetuated representations of how local color writers described Appalachia in their texts (13).

The teachers in this study all engage in a type of “speaking back to” the stereotypes of the region. Because of their own experiences with stories placed onto them—Imboden describes going to a different, non-Appalachian part of Virginia with her extended family and, because of her Appalachian accent, a server at a restaurant did not believe that she was from Virginia. These teachers have all experienced stereotypes of difference for simply being of a place. The idea of rhetorical emplacement furthers the field’s discussions on place theories by focusing on three things: 1) the way that stories can shape a group of people or an idea of a place/people, 2) the staying power of stories, and 3) the way that folks respond to these positioned stories, particularly in their pedagogy. This term helps me to understand that people, particularly the teachers in my study, engage with the negative stories and stereotypes of Appalachia by responding to it in their own work. The stories of Appalachian deficit and difference come from many sources—i.e., television, movies, music, books, articles, elites within their own communities, etc. The teachers in this study respond to stereotypes that have existed for over 200 years through their pedagogy. I describe this term in more detail in Chapter 3 “A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement and Research Methods.”

Methods/Methodology

This study relied upon two methodologies to get both a historical and contemporary understanding of the ways that stories told about Appalachian Virginia have affected the people who live there in relation to education. I limited the scope of this study to Southwest Virginia⁴ because I wanted to continue the research that I had begun with the College Access Collaborative and to share the interesting pedagogical

⁴ The northwest mountainous tier is Appalachian according to some non-ARC definitions.

choices being made in response to stereotypes of Appalachia. I describe these methods in further detail in Chapter 3.

Archival Methods

The first method I use in this study is historical/ archival. I chose this method in order to respond to the first three research questions above:

- How have outsider narratives constructed or shaped notions of education in Appalachian Virginia?
- How have narratives constructed from folks from Appalachian Virginia shaped our understanding of the realities of education in the region?
- How have Appalachian Virginians described educational practices in the region?

The goal of using archival methods in this dissertation was to provide a wide scope of the persistence of Appalachian stereotypes and their continuous effect on education and identity in the region.

Because my study is invested in place, I focused my historical data collection on exploring the special collections and archives at two libraries located in Wise County, Virginia: The Wise County Public Library and the library at the University of Virginia's college at Wise. In the fall of 2019, before I entered the libraries in Winter 2020, I began communication with the special collections librarian at The University of Virginia's College at Wise in order to get a good grasp on the types of documents located in the special collections and archives at the college. After a lengthy conversation with the special collections librarian, I decided that the archives at the college would not yield what I was interested in finding—early accounts of the region. So, instead of looking through archive collections, I spent a few days in the special collection reading room at UVA Wise with different texts about Appalachia and Southwest Virginia.

Interview Methods

For this particular project, I chose interview participants using a very specific criterion: Appalachian teachers who teach English in Appalachian Virginia high schools. I wanted to talk to English teachers in high schools located in Appalachian Virginia who are Appalachian themselves. I chose this specific population because the teachers who are themselves Appalachian have a particular insight into and knowledge of the world and how it perceives students and people from Appalachia. Their world experiences, even if those experiences took them to colleges not too far from home, underscore their teaching and pedagogy. After receiving IRB approval from Virginia Tech's IRB, I emailed the teachers who participated in the College Access Collaborative workshop in Winter 2017; about 20 teachers in Southwest Virginia (Recruitment Script in Appendix). Ultimately, I interviewed five high school English teachers from Southwest Virginia. Three of the teachers participated in the CAC workshop, and the other two participants are friends who teach in the region who were interested in my dissertation project. While I did have other teachers interested in participating earlier in the research, Covid-19 and the move to online school caused a hitch in their participation.

The five teachers in this study all spoke to how their own experiences with stereotyping or stories about Appalachia and how those stories underscore their teaching and engagement with their students. I was able to conduct five interviews with teachers from Virginia counties labeled Appalachian by the Appalachian Regional Commission. For the purposes of this study, I was interested in speaking with and hearing the stories of teachers of English who identified themselves as Appalachian who teach in Appalachian Virginia schools. I chose this population in order to answer the following research questions:

- How is writing pedagogy implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of SWVA today?
- How do Appalachian writing teachers mitigate the different ideologies and stakeholders who affect their teaching?
- How might place-based pedagogies inform writing pedagogy in Appalachian Virginia and further rhetorical theory?

The teacher-participants in this study all told stories about their own experiences with difference and stereotyping and how those experiences inform their teaching.

The hour-long interviews were conducted via Zoom, and I recorded the sessions using Zoom and the Voice Memo app on my iPhone. I then used Otter.Ai to help transcribe the interviews. But I had to revise the Otter.Ai transcriptions because it did not understand my accent or my participants' accents. The interview was structured into three, very loose sections: 1) teacher's experiences with education, 2) teacher's pedagogy, and 3) teacher's interactions with folks other than students or other teachers.

The questions were broken down as follows:

1. Teacher's personal experiences with education
 - i. How did you become an English teacher? Who influenced you?
What influenced you?
 - ii. What was your education like? What did you learn? Not learn?
What factors influence what you teach in the classroom? How
you teach?
 - iii. How long have you lived in Appalachia? Taught in Appalachia?
2. Teacher's Pedagogy
 - i. Does the fact that your students are "Appalachian" affect what
you teach? If so, how?

- ii. Who are some of the “nameless/faceless people” (Schreiber and Worden *Composition Studies* 47.1 2019) or future audiences you are trying to prepare your students to write for?
 - iii. Have you experienced any issues/problems/hiccups in your teaching due to misconceptions about Appalachia?
 - iv. What constraints do you face in the classroom based on student population, expectations from other (institutional, familial, etc.) stakeholders?
3. Teacher’s interactions with folks other than students or other teachers
- i. Can you share any experiences you have with outsider misconceptions (or accurate assumptions) of your students and the region?
 - ii. Who are the nameless/faceless people (or named and faced outsiders) who affect what you can/cannot teach in the classroom? How do you interact with these people?
 - iii. Do you make accommodations in your pedagogy for outside influences? If so, can you share a story of a time you’ve had to make accommodations?
 - iv. Do your beliefs about writing and teaching writing change based on outside influences? If so, how?

Qualitative Coding

After collecting both data sets, I used qualitative coding methods and rhetorical analysis in tandem for analysis. Qualitative coding allowed me to see themes and trends in the data across the different data sets (archives, interviews, etc.). In reviewing the segments chosen from the archival data, I used Excel. The texts from this data set were all books, so I had to type up all of the segments into an Excel file and then code the segments there. For the interviews, I relied upon MaxQDA, a coding software, to help me code for themes in the interview data set.

The codes emerged first in the archival data set. Because I was interested in the persistence of stereotypes and stories about Appalachia, I used the codes that emerged from the archival data in my analysis of the interview data. The codes that emerged from the archival data were

Code 1: Isolation

- Code as isolation each segment discussing geographic isolation
- Code as isolation each segment describing Appalachia as being set apart from the rest of the world
- Code as isolation each segment that refutes isolationist ideas of Appalachia

Code 2: Language

- Code as language each segment that suggests language supremacy
- Code as language each segment with an eye towards dialect
- Code as language each segment that describes language differences
- Code as language each segment where language is corrected (by self or others)
- Code as language each segment that suggests linguistic heritage

Code 3: Education

- Code as education each segment that mentions institutionalized education
- Code as education each segment that mentions school

Code 4: Expectations

- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected behaviors
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected outcomes
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expectations not met

Code 5: Culture

- Code as culture each segment that indicates a particular view of Appalachian Culture

- Code as culture each segment that compares Appalachian Culture with Outside Culture
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having industry
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having social programs
- Code as culture each segment that represent Appalachia as a non-homogenous culture

Code 6: Literacy

- Code as literacy each segment that features reading outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that features writing outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of writing
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of reading

Tracking the codes from the archival data to interviews allowed me to see the variances in the stories and ideas about Appalachia. Chapter 4 describes the codes in more detail while providing examples from the text. Chapter 5 details how the codes changed or remained the same between the historical and ethnographic data sets.

Definitions of Terms

In this section, I identify and define a few terms that are instrumental to the study I wish to conduct—especially the term “place”—and provide a caveat for the Appalachian scholarship I review. I follow Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of place from *Space and Place: The Perspectives of Experience*: “centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest and procreation are satisfied” (4). In the text, he discusses the differences between the intertwined terms space and place by suggesting that place is concrete, lived, experienced whereas space allows for movement, growth, and the abstract. Tuan argues that space becomes place when “it acquires definition and

meaning” (136). “Definition and meaning” are posited onto place through time and culture. In other words, space becomes place when the place has people living there who experience history and are enmeshed in a culture. Tim Cresswell in *Place: An Introduction* defines place simply as “spaces which people have made meaningful. They are all spaces people are attached to in one way or another...a meaningful location” (12). Place is material.

Following Amanda Hayes’ 2017 *English Education* article “Place, Pedagogy, and Literacy in Appalachia,” I define place-based pedagogy as “a theory of instruction that advocates situating schools and curriculums within their geographic, social, and cultural surroundings, as a means of improving both student learning encouraging community sustainability” (75). In this piece, Hayes argues that the field of place-conscious education and place-based pedagogies in particular have been the benefactors of knowledge created by educational experiments conducted in the Appalachian region.

Significance of Study

This dissertation puts into conversation theories of place and place-based pedagogy while expanding the scope of Appalachian focused rhetoric and writing scholarship. Predominant stereotypes of illiteracy have pushed scholarship to disprove that image. However, as my data suggests, issues of illiteracy have been replaced by of critical thinking and rhetorical choices for the teachers I interviewed. The Appalachian teachers in this study not only speak back against stereotypes, but they make pedagogical choices with the intention of preparing students to combat stereotypical ideas of their Appalachian identities.

For this project, I used two methods of data collection: historical research and interviewing. These two methodologies employed together reveal a sweeping scope of Appalachian Virginia's experiences with rhetorical emplacement in relation to educational practices and ideologies by encountering some of the earliest stories told about the region and contemporary accounts of teachers who currently work in Appalachian Virginia. My main research questions ask how stories told about Appalachia have affected educational practices within the region and to answer that question I sought out the history of the stories told about Appalachia through historical research; then, in order to attend to the present realities of the region, I interviewed high school English teachers who identify as Appalachian and work in Appalachian Virginia high schools. The historical and ethnographic methods I employed in this dissertation study allowed me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives exist in the world today. By using grounded qualitative coding, I created codes from the historical data set—the codes were isolation, language, education, expectations, culture, and literacy—and compared them to the interview transcripts, I conclude that while illiteracy is a consistent stereotype that Appalachians combat, the teachers in my study build their pedagogies to support critical thinking skills because illiteracy is not the primary issue in their classrooms.

This dissertation study furthers Cristina Cedillo and Phil Bratta's "positionality stories" by exploring the ways in which positionality stories play a role in shaping the teachers' pedagogy. For example, Dunbar describes how her own lived experiences of being Appalachian influence her pedagogy. Repeatedly in the interview she mentioned how one of the most important things she could do for her students was to relate to

them, to bring her own experiences into the classroom in order to shape her lessons. By doing this, Dunbar underscored how place-based pedagogies are embodied in the ways that teachers shape their pedagogies as a response to outside stories that have been positioned onto them and their students because of their relationship to a place, Appalachia. The teachers construct activities that help their students combat stereotypes while understanding their connection to the rest of the world. For example, Exeter, while centering his pedagogy on student choice—particularly in book choice—remarked that he brings in books that he knows his students will relate to. By doing this, he helps his students see themselves in the texts in his class, which ultimately allows them to interrogate notions of identity and difference.

Limitations of Study

This study focuses only on a small sample of data from Appalachian counties in southwest Virginia. While the interviews do have larger implications, there are only five teacher voices in this study, four women, one man, and all white. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), people of color make up 18.2% of the region's population (see Appendix E for ARC's Appalachia's Population Data Snapshot). Along with this, my research participants are high school English teachers from the Appalachian region; this group is predominately white. Personally, I did not have a teacher of color until I attended UVA Wise for my undergraduate degree, and I did not have a Black teacher until graduate school. All of the participants being white is a limitation of this study because a more robust and diverse study population would tell much more complex and intersectional styles of teaching and responding to stereotypes of Appalachia. Appalachia is often described as homogenously white and

rural, but my next step with this project is to seek out more teachers of color in order to understand how they negotiate their own identities while Appalachianness is often associated with whiteness. By expanding the study population, I hope to highlight the connections and applicability of this pedagogy and theory.

When I began my historical data collection in December 2019 in Wise County, Virginia, I had hoped to continue my research over Spring Break, but the spread of Covid-19 caused the shut-down of many of the libraries that I wanted to visit. So, the books that I explore in Chapter 4 were all found and analyzed after the initial data collection in the libraries in Wise. Similarly, while I had planned to conduct interviews with teachers in their home communities, meeting them where it was easiest for them—their homes, schools, or local coffee shops—the pandemic forced me to revise my methods. Virginia Tech’s IRB put a pause on all in-person research that was not Covid-19 related. Because of that, all interviews were conducted online, and I chose Zoom as the platform to interview and record the interviews with my participants. While I came to appreciate the flexibility of the digital platform, I wonder what would have been discussed during in-person interviews.

Study Organization

This dissertation consists of seven chapters including this introduction. In Chapter 2 “Literature Review,” I set forth a literature review that explores studies of Appalachia from the field of rhetoric and composition. Often, these studies center literacy and literacy sponsorship, work that has been foundational in reversing stereotypes of illiteracy and underscoring the multitude of literacies that exist (Donehower, Hogg, Schell 2007 and Webb-Sunderhaus and Donehower 2015), but in

this dissertation I describe both the persistence of stereotypes in relation to Appalachia and different pedagogical choices that teachers make in order to speak back against those stereotypes. By listening to the experiences and stories of the teachers in this study, I understand place-based pedagogy to be an embodied and responsive choice that these teachers make. In Chapter 3, "A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement and Research Methods," I offer up my theoretical framework that engages with narrative, stereotypes, and responses to those stereotypes and an explanation of my ethnographic and historical methodology. For this study, I have chosen "rhetorical emplacement" as my theoretical framework and provided my definition of the term in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4 "A Historiographic Account of Stereotypes, Ideology, and Education in an Appalachian Region," I provide a historiographic retelling of the region in which I explore the role of storytelling—from both Appalachians and folks from outside the region—in shaping Appalachia, note the fictional accounts that grounded an American understanding of Appalachia, and juxtapose the realities of the region to a popularized novel, by comparing several texts written by folks from within the region from the twentieth century. Chapter 5, "Comparing the Codes: Historical Data and Interview Data from Appalachia," compares the qualitative coding schema set forth in the historical chapter to data collected from interviews with five English teachers from Appalachian Virginian High Schools. Chapter 6, "The role of Place-Based Pedagogies and Stories in the English Appalachian Secondary Classroom," dives deep into the stories told by the teachers in order to understand how they shape their pedagogy to prepare their students to combat stereotypes of Appalachia. The final chapter includes the conclusion and implications of this study and what they mean for Place-Based Pedagogies and rhetorical theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since 2015, really since the Republican nomination of then-candidate Trump to the party's presidential ticket, memoirs, books, and think pieces about Appalachia and rural America flourished. A main example of this trend in published writing, J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* became the favorite book to explain the problem of Appalachia. In the memoir, Vance describes his early life with his eccentric, extended Appalachian family (including a set of grandparents who raised him because of his mother's drug addiction and an absent father) through attending Yale Law School. Places throughout the memoir verge on American Dream propaganda with his success story used evidence for bootstrapping his way out of the holler. Along with Vance, the Trump Country think piece genre (Catte) grew as yet another way to explain away a group of people who seemingly voted against their own interests. However, as Elizabeth Catte, in her response to Vance *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, notes, this is nothing new. When our country has entered an era of political turmoil or unrest, political pundits turn to the region of Appalachia as a foil, a bellwether for the nation's problems.

But, nothing new ever comes out of these expository journalistic pieces. The same stereotypical notions of illiteracy, backwardness, and isolation have cycled through and about the region since the local color writers of the late 1800s and early 1900s sought to share Appalachia with the rest of the country. Appalachian Studies scholar Henry D. Shapiro, in *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, looks to the ways that travel writing created a national consciousness about Appalachia. Shapiro argues that after the Civil War, the reading public sought perceptions of unknown places and peoples, and while the line between travel sketch and short story blurred during this time the

stories existed to fill a need while still creating a national understanding of these underrepresented areas. Readers wanted literary excursions into the peculiar pockets of America, and the local color writers gave them just that. Emily Satterwhite's *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878* takes a deeper look at the texts themselves and the way they construct images and identities about the region. Satterwhite describes the three major functions of popular fiction as "producing authentic place, enabling a sense of identity and belonging, and maneuvering the flow of power" (220-221). Satterwhite's argument is that regional fiction gives its readers a way to relate back to the past, to a simpler time.

What does this have to do with rhetoric and writing studies? Kenneth Burke explained that rhetoric's sole purpose is not persuasion; rather, rhetoric's primary function is identification (23). Language itself functions as communication in order to co-construct knowledge with other humans. In *Inessential Solidarity*, Diane Davis suggests that identification is the space between I and the Other, and that gap is a rhetorical problem because identity is created in response to this gap. Elizabeth Weiser, in her essay "National Identity Within the National Museum: Subjectification Within Socialization" writes, "Identification, in other words, is not easy; confronting commonalities and divisions means raising difficult issues for both sides, and this is Burke's 'characteristic invitation to rhetoric' (25), persuading each other toward recognition of ambiguous consubstantiality" (391-92). These commonalities and divisions aid the circulation and re-circulation of identities within a given culture.

Identities are constructed through the circulation of language. As Chapter 4 explains in more detail, the local color writers who entered Appalachia at the turn of the 20th century wrote and circulated stories about Appalachia and its people; thus, they circulated particular identities that they felt would appeal to their upper-middle class

readers. Shapiro notes that “at the heart of local-color writing is comparison, a perception of alternative modes of life, a confrontation between the ‘we’ readers and the ‘them’ read about” (14). The stories gave readers something to identify against. Because of the backward, uneducated, and unreligious pictures painted by these writers, missionaries sought to save the souls of the Appalachians, industrialists sought to profit from the naiveté of the mountaineers purportedly for their own benefit, and educators found a prime location to experiment educational practices. As Chapter 5 acknowledges, the stories of backward mountaineers persist to this day as an identity that the rest of America can dis-identify with. In other words, the perpetuation of these stereotypes from the late 1800s to common day United States highlights the rhetorical function of identity and the persistence of these identities. Discourse and circulation are key components of identification and identity performance.

Often, studies of Appalachia within the field of Rhetoric and Writing focus on literacy, illiteracy, and literacy sponsorship. In this dissertation project, I argue that studying Appalachia in our field can lead to better understandings of place-based pedagogy and the ways in which stories become embodied and spoken back against. This literature review exams rhetoric, writing, and composition studies scholarship about Appalachia that examine the intersection of identity, educational attainment, and literacy. Studies across the scope of this scholarship have highlighted literacy practices in Eastern Kentucky (Sohn), literacy practices of displaced residents of the now Shenandoah National Park (Powell), educational attainment in West Virginia high schools (Snyder and Slocum), historical studies of outsider literacy sponsors (Hayes and Bryson), and literacy and identification (Griffey), among others.

This chapter contains a literature review of exploring the ways in which the field of rhetoric and writing intersects with Appalachian studies. Because my study exists at

the intersection of ideology, place-based writing pedagogy, and Appalachia, conducting a review of the work in rhetoric and writing that deals with Appalachia is important for an understanding of my contributions to the field.

In the following sections, I provide a literature review that highlights the ways that scholars in the field of rhetoric and writing, and some adjacent scholarship, intersect with Appalachia and Appalachian studies. This literature review situates my study at the intersection of rhetoric and writing and Appalachian studies while highlighting how rhetoric, ideologies, and stereotypes affect how the rest of the country encounters and defines Appalachia. My study is heavily influenced by the place in which it is situated, but it does have interesting implications for cross-cultural explorations of rhetorical emplacement.

Literature Review: A Study of Appalachian Rhetoric and Writing Studies

In the following section, I introduce different studies in the fields of rhetoric and writing, composition, and pedagogy, to implicate my study in this conversation. The literature review that follows explores different themes typically associated with rhetorical studies of Appalachia including, but not limited to, literacy studies, histories of literacy sponsorship, language and schooling, educational attainment and identity performance, and literacy and identity.

Literacy Studies

Because of the numerous stereotypes of illiteracy that are associated with the Appalachian region, and rural America in general, Appalachian rhetoric and writing studies often work to combat these stereotypes. Literacy is a wrought concept,

especially when it is considered while emplaced in rural locations. Literacy has long been the beacon of the American Dream: work hard, go to school, and move up the socioeconomic ladder. Kim Donehower, Charlottee Hogg, and Eileen S. Schell, in their work, *Rural Literacies*, define literacy as

the skills and practices needed to gain knowledge, evaluate and interpret that knowledge, and apply knowledge to accomplish particular goals. In this sense, 'reading' refers to the ability to gather and process knowledge from a variety of 'texts'; 'writing means the ability to transform knowledge to achieve a particular purpose, just as writers transform ideas and information to accomplish rhetorical goals. (4)

Literacy practices are no longer simply defined by having an ability to read and write but include "the particular kinds of literate skills needed to achieve the goals of sustaining life in rural areas" (4). Their definition of both literacy and rural literacies are localized definitions based on the needs and wants of the lived realities of people. A common trend in research on literacy in Appalachia examines the history of literacy sponsorship in the region.

In one of the few edited collections that center Appalachia, there is a pattern of speaking back to stereotypes of literacy. *Rereading Appalachia: Literacy, Place, and Cultural Resistance* is the first collection of literacy scholarship that focuses solely on Appalachia and its people. Edited by Sara Webb-Sunderhaus and Kim Donehower, the collection features ten pieces of literacy scholarship written by eleven scholars who identify as Appalachian or who hail from the region itself. Sunderhaus and Donehower define literacy as "the ability to do things with written texts for a wide range of purposes in a variety of social, cultural, and institutional settings. It includes the ability to create rhetorical space, when needed, for those activities to occur" (8). The collection displays

“Appalachia literacies...as practices that continually resist and reshape the local, the nonlocal, and the relationships between the two” (8).

History of Literacy Sponsorship in Appalachia

Along with negating the stereotype of illiteracy, often scholarship will focus on the role that sponsors play in literacy attainment within Appalachia. In her chapter in *Rural Literacies*, “Rhetorics and Realities: The History and Effects of Stereotypes about Rural Literacies,” Kim Donehower examines the ways in which the history of stereotypes of the Appalachian region and Appalachian people functioned as an exigency for literacy sponsors to enter the region as agents of change, bringing literacy to the poor, uneducated Appalachians. Amanda Hayes’ recently published *English Education* article, “Place, Pedagogy, and Literacy in Appalachia” focuses on the history of literacy sponsorship by examining the ways that certain literacy sponsors in the region contributed to place-based pedagogy by practicing it within the region, ultimately crediting the region as a place ripe for understanding and innovating the pedagogical method.

Particular focus is often paid to the role of literacy sponsors and the schools they created within the region. In “Conflicted Rhetorics of Appalachian Identity in the Kentucky Moonlight Schools,” her chapter of *Rereading Appalachia: Literacy, Place and Cultural Resistance*, Krista Bryson studies Cora Wilson Stewart’s exigence in creating the Kentucky Moonlight Schools and the ways those schools constructed identity for their participants. Stewart created books and schools to help raise the literacy rates in Kentucky. However, her books were indicative of her understanding of the people in the region as the writing activities in her texts focused on ways to modernize the region

and on proper hygiene. Through historical and textual research, Bryson argues that “when a marginalized population is taught to unquestioningly attribute its own problems to a lack of opportunity, it becomes personal failure when opportunity arises and the problems are still not solved” (49). Ultimately, Bryson calls for a re-understanding of literacy as a “rhetorical construction and an enactment of identity” that would allow researchers to “see the ways in which well-intentioned, highly successful literacy crusades such as Stewart’s can cause long-lasting damage to the identity of the population targeted for reform” (40). Even when literacy sponsors meant well, they still perpetuated stereotypical ideologies of lack and otherness. Within this dissertation study, instead of focusing on the role outside literacy sponsors played in literacy attainment, I worked with teachers and educators who identify as Appalachian. This identity gave a unique insight into how teachers from the region are uniquely positioned to support students in thinking critically about Appalachian stereotypes and Appalachian identities.

While Bryson looks at the ways in which literacy is a rhetorical construction, Howes examines the ways that literacy sponsorship experiments only tell one narrative of the people that the sponsorship affected. Emma M. Howes, in “Appalachian Identities and the Difficulties of Archival Research,” examines the role of literacy sponsorship as both exploitative and liberatory. Researching literacy sponsorship in mill towns located in the Southern Appalachian and Piedmont regions, Howes looks to the ways that the division of labor within Appalachia has affected the role of literacy. Using a materialist feminist lens, Howes argues that “historiographers of literacies...honor the lived complexity of ideologically defined identities like that of the Southern Appalachian mill worker and address the limited sources available to reconstruct the lives of working-class women, men, and children” (63). Both pieces are

inherently place-based because they focus on the ways in which literacy sponsorship occurred in their particular places within Appalachia. However, they do not explicitly highlight any place-based theory in their work.

Sara Webb-Sunderhaus builds on Deborah Brandt's notion of literacy as an individual development and an economic one (1601). Interestingly, Webb-Sunderhaus reframes inhibitors of literacy as not really inhibiting literacy as a whole, but a particular type of academic literacy (1609). Webb-Sunderhaus writes, "While many individual family members were encouraging sponsors of their students' literacies, some of these same individuals also worked to inhibit the students' emerging literacy beliefs and practices" (1602). While the studies above explore the role of place, literacy, sponsorship and learning, the following section points out the role that place plays in educational attainment and writing. Where people are born and educated affects their writing and educational goals. In the next section, I examine scholarship that attempt to understand the intersection of place and education.

Literacy and Education

The extractive industry impacted the relationships between people and education in central Appalachia. Todd Snyder suggests, in his chapter in *Rereading Appalachia*, "The Transition to College for First Generation Students from Extractive Industry Appalachia," the historic control extractive industries have over Appalachia, particularly Central Appalachia, has impacted everything from the economy to education attainment. In this piece, Snyder works his way through the history of the Appalachian extractive industry, internal-colony theory, and a case study he conducted with first-generation college students from his home county of Webber, West Virginia.

Snyder writes, "I've come to understand many of my college literacy struggles as by-products of the extractive culture that defined my small-town Appalachian upbringing" (79). His narrative-based exploration of the impact of the extractive industry illustrates the nuanced effects of the extractive industry. Snyder writes that his parents pushed him to go to college, but their ability to help him succeed in attaining that dream was diminished due to the lack of college resources available to them. Snyder, following in the steps of many Appalachian scholars before him, explains the internal colony theory of the Appalachian extract industries: during the industrial revolution, "early captains⁵ of Appalachian industry shaped the socioeconomic realities of life in the region" by buying up land and mineral rights for cheap and moving in a workforce of cheap labor (Snyder 81). However, I find the use of internal colony theory in discussions of Appalachia to be problematic because Appalachia is predominantly white, and the land on which they live was taken from the indigenous people who once lived there.

Similarly, Kate Hendrickson's essay, "Student Resistance to Schooling: Disconnections with Education in Rural Appalachia," reveals three themes that impact educational attainment for Appalachian students: "family values and expectations, quality and relevance of education, and misunderstandings between teachers and students" (41). All three of these themes are underscored by the impact of the socioeconomic struggles that these students deal with on a daily basis. Hendrickson looks to the 2001 US Census and notes that the average income for the region of Ohio in which this high school is located is \$19,971 compared to the national average of \$41,994

⁵ These early captains of industry included outsiders who came into the region to mine minerals and the Appalachians themselves who became operators of these operations. Typically, these Appalachians came from families of a higher socio-economic class than their workers.

(40). This study is very place-based, noting that the particular people of this region face many different obstacles to educational attainment.

According to Hendrickson's analysis, the socioeconomic makeup of this area impacts the student's resistance to education in a few ways. First, students find it difficult to connect with their teachers because the teachers typically come from middle-class backgrounds (Hendrickson 38). One important point Hendrickson underscores is the discord created by different linguistic patterns within the classroom (38). The teachers and students have very different ways of speaking and this causes complications. Well-meaning teachers from middle class families come into these schools with every intention of helping these students, but their methods do not align with the way the students learn. Second, students do not see a need for formal education because their area and their parents encourage work that does not require a college degree (coal mining, family business, farming, etc.) (44). Third, the schools "typically advocated college attendance, moving away from home, and gaining experience in the world" (43). These students' parents encouraged participation in the family business instead of going to college so that the family would remain cohesive and their children would remain in the area. By contrast, the teachers I worked with teach their students concepts like code-switching and how they can switch between different ways of speaking in different situations. By not only embodying their pedagogy, but having lived through stereotypes of difference and lack, the teachers are uniquely prepared to have their students think critically about stereotypes that are typically associated with Appalachia.

Similar to the studies of high school education above, the students do not lose their cultural ideologies once they enter university settings. Katherine Sohn's analysis in her essay, "Silence, Voice, and Identity among Appalachian College Women," focuses

on her non-traditional, female Appalachian college students' dialect sensitivity. Sohn claims, "Sensitivity about dialect occurs when outsiders' attitudes are internalized by insiders trying to 'better' themselves" (129). This sensitivity comes from years of being told that their Appalachian dialect is not proper or, worse, incorrect. Culturally, these women do not want to "get above their raisings" and thus be labeled as trying to appear better than their families and communities (132). Students, specifically Appalachian Women, use language to define themselves and create community (130). Sohn argues that if the student's language is stifled or considered incorrect a large part of the student's identity is taken away, leaving the student insecure and incapable of participating in their own culture. Different locations evoke different types of language use, so understanding regionality in language supports an understanding of place-based affordances and constraints on language.

Similarly, the role of the classroom has served as a site of identity mimesis and construction through literacy for students. Audra Slocum, in "Look What They Said About Us: Social Positioning Work of Adolescent Appalachians in English Class," examines the writing of three West Virginian students in her advanced-level senior high school English class. In examining their writing, Slocum noticed how the students were able to position themselves through insider/outside discourses that circulate in the culture of the area. These students were able to position themselves through their writing by evoking a sense of "self-as-other," highlighting their understanding of audience and identity conventions. Slocum writes, "It is important to deepen our understanding of how young Appalachian residents understand themselves in relation to academic literacies through continued and expanded classroom-based research" (205). This call asks that researchers examine the ways in which students position themselves with or against academia based on their home discourses and cultures.

Audra Slocum, as teacher-researcher, analyzed identity as social positioning in a high school/college class that was a rhetoric-based composition course centered on an Appalachian identity theme. Slocum's study, while not indicative of teacher attitudes or teacher-university partnerships, does give insight into the types of issues teachers face in the region. She states, "This is not a study of how a pedagogical approach taught students how to respond to marginalisation. Rather, it is a study of how these students drew upon their identity positioning work while engaged in a critical place-based literacy curriculum" (203). Slocum focuses on three students who, at the same time, were representative of their classmates but engaged with material and issues through their own lived experiences. Kevin, while intellectually curious, grappled with the demands of working-class conceptions of masculinity. Chayla, coming from a 'middle-class family,' was outspoken and not afraid to share her opinion. Her family embraces both traditional practices (like hunting) and sought higher education. Tracy is an 'outsider' with familial ties to the region. Slocum notes, "As a newcomer with speech patterns differing from typical patterns in her peer group, Tracy helped to make explicit views on language and difference from multiple "insider" and "outsider" perspectives" (196). The students in this study understood the way that outsiders perceive their homeplaces. The role that place plays in this study underscores the way that students perceive themselves from both the inside and outside.

Gore, Wilburn, Treadway, and Plaut, in "Regional Collectivism in Appalachia and Academic Attitudes," looked at the connection between collectivism and academic attitudes. They examined 605 university students in Appalachian areas of Kentucky and Georgia to determine academic attitudes. The study looked at the correlation between academic success (or failure) and the embodied identities of Appalachia. While focusing on academic attitudes, not ability, the researchers measured academic efficacy, school

connectedness, and fear of academic success. The researchers found that the students' "attitudes are influenced in part by the internalization of collectivistic attitudes, values which are emphasized by their regional culture" (392). Like Slocum, they found that the cultural identities the students choose to perform and cultural expectations impede educational attainment for students from Central Appalachia.

Emplaced obstacles to education come not only from the ideologies that denigrate academic identities, but the very emplacement of language impedes educational success. In "Voices in the Appalachian Classroom," Amy Clark quotes Walt Wolfram and Donna Christian: "Certain parts of the writing process may reflect the influence of vernacular dialect" (Clark qtd. 113). If students silence their dialects due to fear of being incorrect, part of the writing process is silenced and subdued. The means of production are impacted because students are not allowed to embrace their culture and identity. Some people who speak differently than Standard American English (SAE) learn early in their lives to switch to SAE to avoid harsh judgments on his or her "intellectual capabilities" (Clark 113). As Clark suggests, most writing instructors "tend to look at language prescriptively instead of descriptively" (115). She goes on to state, "We [writing teachers who work in Appalachia] mistakenly believe that we own the rights to how language may be used, an ideology that is passed down from teacher to student" (115). This shows a cultural inclination to stifle what is deemed incorrect usage of language to perpetuate ideas passed down from teacher to teacher. The inclination to deem different dialects as incorrect creates a distance between the student and her instructor. Stifling a student's voice or forcing a student to deny his or her own language can be detrimental to the writing process. When teachers understand their students' language uses as whole, place-based, and valuable, not just a derivation of

standard American English, students get the support that they need to continue their education.

Along the topic of language obstacles, Anita Puckett discusses the connectedness of language and power in her aptly titled essay “Language and Power.” Puckett discloses her perspective on language: “Languages, whether spoken or written down in some way, should be viewed as always doing ‘cultural work’” (141.) Through the use of language, Puckett asserts, we “create ‘places’ for ourselves in the social world around us” (141). This essay focuses on an analysis of local varieties of Appalachian English and standard broadcast American English (SBAE). By continuing to use their local languages and dialects people are able to exercise power and make meaning. Puckett puts these languages into context together, stating that these and many other types of English “coexist” with one another (142). These power differentiations are discussed in Amanda Hayes’s 2011 *TETYC* article “Op’nin’ the Door for Appalachia in the Writing Classroom.” In this piece, like Puckett’s, Hayes argues that despite the changes instituted by the CCCC resolution “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” Appalachian English never was considered a distinct dialect on its own, so students were encouraged to adopt Standard English in school or be considered incorrect in their studies. If students have a right to their own language, then our pedagogical practices need to reflect that acceptance. Understanding that language use suggests power structures can guide composition studies to encourage dialectical variations in the classroom.

Many studies of Appalachia tend to focus on the ways in which the scholars themselves have grown in their ideas of literacy and literacy attainment from when they were students. Amanda Hayes and Meredith McCarroll, in personal essays, argue that Appalachia’s literacy problem was a construction of outside forces. McCarroll recounts

her experiences as a student a hundred miles away from home in her personal essay “On and On: Appalachian Accent and Academic Power.” Amanda Hayes, in “Splintered Literacies,” describes her experiences with teachers who do not believe Appalachian English and Appalachian literacies to have a space in academia. These home literacies are devalued by educators, creating a disconnect between students and their families. Literacies like farming, preserving, quilting and the like are consistently discouraged in the wider world ultimately erasing these literacies which in turn erases people and their stories. Describing her experiences in a course titled “Experiencing Appalachia,” McCarroll reveals how identifying herself as coming from Haywood County became an important part of her identity. Ruminating on her language and place-based experiences as a self-identified “mountain girl,” McCarroll acknowledges the nuanced experiences of Appalachia and Appalachian-ness rather in contrast to the homogenization of Appalachia perpetuated by mainstream media. Devaluing regional variants of English devalues the places from which they come. So, when a student is told that their English is incorrect, they perceive that incorrectness as extending to their families and home places. These reflective essays are useful in acknowledging how schooling can help students see value in their identities, but the purpose of my dissertation is to see how teachers support this valuing of identities in their classrooms while embodying their own pedagogies and the experiences they have had with stereotyping.

Educational Attainment and Identity Performance

Many of the studies that feature Appalachia in education or rhetoric and writing engage both gender and socioeconomic status in their analysis. Performing specific

gender identities influences students' ability to participate in education. In "'Rednecks,' 'Rutters,' and 'Rithmetic: Social Class, Masculinity, and Schooling in a rural Context,'" Edward M. Morris describes his ethnographic research of the academic gender gap between Appalachian students. Morris began his research looking for connections between the suggested academic gender gap in a rural setting. A gender gap has been reported in multiple "studies of educational inequality among economically disadvantaged urban students" (Morris 729). The girls in these poor, urban areas are more likely than their male counterparts to "go to college, make higher grades, and aspire to higher status occupations" (729). Female students are more likely to go on to college while male students tend to go the blue-collar route with jobs that do not require college degrees. While Morris states that the gender gap is obvious throughout all incomes and social strata, more research has been conducted observing the urban poor. However, not a lot of research has been conducted exploring the gender gap in rural, low-income settings.

To study the concept of the gender gap in a rural setting, Morris studied the students of Clayton High School in rural, Appalachian Ohio. During his ethnographic study of this Central Appalachian high school, Morris found, "Rather than gender having a specific effect on the educational behaviors of girls and boys, educational behavior itself became a vehicle for the construction of gender" (736). The girls exerted effort and attention in school while the boys "took pride in the *lack* of academic effort" (736). This information is important to the understanding of the proposed gender gap between male and female students. In rural Appalachia, education is considered feminine because of the stereotype and idea that real men participate in so called masculine work (coal miners, mechanics, electricians, etc.). Educational behavior is used to construct masculine or feminine performances.

Morris not only focused on his observations and interviews with students he also referenced teacher comments. Teachers in the school notice the disparity between the two sexes. A science teacher stated, "I think the girls are more conscientious. They will work more and do more of what you ask them...[the boys] they're smart, but they don't do a whole lot" (737). In this specific place, the gendered academic behaviors emerge from "a discourse that framed masculinity as something that should not include academic effort" (737). Performing gender in poverty-stricken places influence the way students approach academics.

Often, though, these studies of Appalachia and literacy do not acknowledge race. That is one of the major limitations of the field and my project. If the assumption of whiteness is not acknowledged and challenged, then that is a perpetuation of the stereotype of a homogenous Appalachian region.

Literacy and Identity

Many of the studies mentioned here work from a historical position to understand the function of literacy in Appalachia looking at the ways literacy works in the region (Donehower and Bryson) or the way that the history of the region has affected educational attainment (Snyder and Slocum). However, the studies that overtly examine literacy as a means of identity construction stand out for my particular interests. One exemplary rural literacy study is Katherine Kelleher Sohn's essay, "Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices since College." In this essay, Sohn interviews eight Appalachian working-class, nontraditional female former students to see how they shaped the literacy practices they learned in college to their personal and professional lives. The women in Sohn's study claim that through literacy

and education they were transformed; the transformations gave them a voice and made them stronger advocates for themselves. Sohn's title is taken from an old Appalachia adage which she references: "Whistlin' women and crowin' hens, always come to no good ends" (qtd. in Sohn 423). This adage suggests the importance of silence in women. However, Sohn concludes that these women, "mothers, coal miner's wives, and high school dropouts," turned "discomfort with academic literacy into the bluster of confidence and improved self-esteem as they progressed through the academic program" (424). By exploring the literacy narratives of these three women, Sohn is able to give evidence to a particular type of student that few colleges have ever considered: strong, intelligent, and determined Appalachian students.

Another source that stands out as a rethinking of the functions of literacy is Katrina Powell's *The Anguish of Displacement: The Politics of Literacy in the Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park*. In this book, Powell examines letters created by the people displaced by the creation of the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia and argues that the authors of those letters displayed an ability to use literacy as a means of identity construction. Their letters to the government exhibited an understanding of form and genre that is counter to stereotypes of illiteracy associated with people in the region.

In "How Reading and Writing Saved a Gay Preacher in Appalachia," Gregory E. Griffey describes how he was able to work within the accepted masculine identities for Central Appalachia to live his life as he wanted to. Griffey writes, "The ways in which women and men—and, for the purposes of this chapter especially, male preachers—practice, value, and even shun various types of literacy are integral to the ways in which Appalachian communities and individuals might wrestle with gendered identities and identifications" (107). Like the literacy and educational studies at the

beginning of this inquiry describe, literacy is a gendered act. Griffey felt the call of God and, thus, was able to work from a pre-existing, Appalachian masculine identity to be himself, a gay, literate man. In a religious context, Griffey argues, “publically affirmed [his] masculinity while exempting [him] from traditional masculine practices” (108). Griffey attributes his Godly calling as an aid in coping “with a budding gay identity” (106). Griffey writes,

No one seemed surprised if a woman...enjoyed reading novels or writing poetry. But a man who found enjoyment in such practices might be called a *sissy*, especially if he preferred such things to the more traditional masculine activities. Even reading and writing for high school homework lessons generally were not practices that men prioritized above more normative masculine activities. (106)

By feeling the call of God to be a preacher, Griffey performed a different type of masculinity available to him in his culture, which gave him good reasons to not participate in non-masculine indexed activities like reading, writing, and helping his mother in the kitchen and garden. Griffey felt the call of God and, thus, was able to work from a pre-existing, Appalachian masculine identity to be himself, a gay, literate man. In a religious context, Griffey argues, “publicly affirmed [his] masculinity while exempting [him] from traditional masculine practices” (108). Griffey was able to work within the pre-existing masculine identities within his home culture’s ideology to find a place for himself.

In her article “‘Let the Girls do the Spelling and Dan Will Do the Shooting’: Literacy, the Division of Labor, and Identity in a Rural Appalachian Community,” Anita Puckett argues, “Literate interactions provide a context for negotiating personal identities, supporting the claim that literate practices in the rural eastern Kentucky community of Ash Creek are strongly linked to symbolic values assigned to self

through the gender-based division of reading and writing labor” (137). This gender-based division of literate practices places literacy in the realm of women, while relegating men to more masculine indexed endeavors. Puckett writes that the women in eastern Kentucky “walk a literate tightrope, called upon to assert an identity that affirms ‘good’ reading and writing skills but constrained by cultural norms and social practices” (143). In other words, the women in eastern Kentucky are given the task of literacy but must perform it within the confines of their gender identities. Women can read and write but must not get above their raisings or move from their sphere.

Digital identity, a topic explored by many digital rhetoric scholars, reveals the nuances of identity formation in relation to discourse. This field has not been left unexplored by rhetoricians and composition scholars interested in Appalachia. In her 2014 article “[E]ppalachia: Rural Ethos, Online Discourse, and Cyber-Frontiers,” Jessie Blackburn looks to digital spaces occupied by Appalachian folks to examine the way that Appalachian internet users reframe their identities within the discourses provided to them online. Like the women in Sohn’s study, digital Appalachians develop new literacies by engaging with digital literacy practices. Blackburn looks to how Appalachian locale’s digital identities are constructed in order to affect digital commerce that is dominated by discourses used by power elite. Blackburn argues that the online commodification of Appalachia is both empowering and disempowering because while the Appalachian identities created on these websites are creations of Appalachian people, they still circulate identity stereotypes in order to respond to outsider expectations of Appalachian-ness (217). Similarly, Katherine Vande Brake’s *Through the Backdoor* not only dives into the history of the Vardy Community School, but she ties that history to the ways that Melungeon identified people engage with that

particular identity online. Online chat forums function as sites of deliberation and discourse for Melungeon people to identify themselves and to find community.

The location of place in meaning-making activities is one area of the scholarship that would benefit from a study of Appalachian Virginia's relationship to literacy and composition. For example, Nathan Shepley, in "Places of Composition: Writing and Contexts in Appalachian Ohio," acknowledges that while the field has made strides toward acknowledging the location of our students' knowledges (like Anzaldua's *Borderlands* or Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways With Words*), but the role of place in our pedagogies have not been accurately examined. Grounding himself in borderland theory, Shepley argues that a place-based pedagogy (much like the settlement school experiments in Haye's "Place, Pedagogy, and Literacy in Appalachia") would help our students "who identify strongly with a specific locale and culture that are apart from academe" (76). Rather than expecting first-year writing students to engage in academic identities from the first day of class, Shepley argues that "a more responsible pedagogy would need to value the society or societies that students come from" (88). This type of pedagogy becomes especially important in understanding how teachers from marginalized places or groups shape their pedagogy so that Appalachian identity is not erased or othered.

Entering the Conversation

While not an undervalued area of research for many types of rhetoric and writing scholarship, Appalachia's breadth remains unexamined. Studies about literacy sponsorship, educational attainment, and the role of literacy in identity performance highlight expectations about identities within the region. This dissertation argues that

stories told about the region of Appalachia have affected perceptions of the region and the ways in which teachers make pedagogical decisions in their classrooms. Through “rhetorical emplacement”—which I define and elaborate upon in Chapter 3—I underscore the pervasiveness of stories told about Appalachia and the stereotypes from those stories that seem to persist and affect writing education in the region. This study, using both historical and ethnographic methods, attempts to weave together a story of Appalachia, particularly Appalachian Virginia, and how people from the region have interacted with the stories that have been positioned onto Appalachia. In Chapter 4 I go back to understand the creation of stories about Appalachia told from the point of view of outsiders to the region in comparison to stories of the realities in the region. In Chapter 5 and 6, I use the coding schema that emerged in the history chapter to understand the persistence of stories about Appalachia and how current teachers of English use their own experiences with difference and stereotyping to shape their pedagogies in order to prepare their students for what they may encounter in the world.

Ultimately, the goal of this dissertation was to expand the discourse in conversations about Appalachia and rhetoric. This project lends new insights into the ways in which teachers make pedagogical choices in relation to stereotypes told about Appalachia. A larger goal for this study is to further the changing conversation about Appalachia through rhetoric and composition. Instead of focusing on the region as one of lack or Otherness, my study contributes to a new conversation, one that focuses on the important work being done in the region by homegrown educators and the ways in which identity shapes and is shaped by those discourses. Ellen Cushman writes, “We need to take into our accounts of social change the ways in which people use language

and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life” (12). We must pay attention to the present, so those voices are not missing in the future.

Chapter 3: A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement and My Methods

As the previous chapter describes, much of the research in the field of rhetoric and writing that centers Appalachia focuses on literacy, literacy sponsorship, and literate practices. The research I conducted for this dissertation expands what we can learn from Appalachia practices through the lens of rhetoric and writing by focusing not on literacy or literate practices, or on students, but rather, on the ways that teachers empower their students by shaping their pedagogy to reflect their own experiences with difference and stereotype. In order to understand the ways in which teachers respond to stories of difference and lack, I examined ways in which :

- writing pedagogy is implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of Southwest Virginia today, and ways that Appalachian writing teachers navigate the different ideologies that constrain their teaching

To answer the first question, I employed historical methods-archival research. To answer the remaining questions, I interviewed five high school teachers from Appalachian counties in Virginia. In answering these questions, I expand upon a theory of rhetorical emplacement in order to understand how folks respond to the, often negative, stories positioned onto places—or people groups. In this chapter, I describe the theories that explicitly underscore my understanding of rhetorical emplacement; then, I describe my historical and interview methods and the qualitative coding schema that arose from the data.

Theoretical orientation

As I collected data via the archives at UVA Wise, the special collections at the Wise County Public Library, and interviews with high school English teachers in

Appalachian Virginia, I noticed the importance that place played in my understanding of education in the region. I began this project with a theoretical framework that centered ideology, stereotyping, and place. While researching the history of the region, I noticed a trend of rhetorical emplacement—stories and rhetoric that exist in a given space to which people respond as Pamela Pietrucci describes it in her 2014 dissertation *Rhetorical Topographies of Post-Earthquake L'Aquila: Locality, Activism, and Citizenship Engagement*. After the Civil War, travel writers' stories, often fictionalized accounts mistaken for reality or exaggerated nonfiction, shaped perceptions of the region of Appalachia. Their stereotypes and stories have been used by outsiders as an exigence to enter the region for whatever mission they were on (education, industry, religion, etc.). This positioning of stories onto a place or a people, and people's response to those stories, is what I understand as "Rhetorical Emplacement."

In the following section, I explore the role of place in different theories associated with rhetoric and writing. I describe the theories here because they are important to understand the long lineage of and connection to place in rhetorical study. While I will attend to different theories throughout my study, my study relies heavily upon rhetorical emplacement and place-based practices. By building upon theories of rhetorical emplacement and putting them into conversation with place-based pedagogies, this study provides insight into the ways in which privileging place can support teachers in prioritizing critical thinking and writing.

First, I will define place-based pedagogy. In her 2017 *English Education* article "Place, Pedagogy, and Literacy in Appalachia," Amanda Hayes defines place-based pedagogy as "a theory of instruction that advocates situating schools and curriculums within their geographic, social, and cultural surroundings, as a means of improving both student learning encouraging community sustainability" (75). In this piece, Hayes

argues that the field of place-conscious education and place-based pedagogies in particular have benefitted from the knowledge created by educational experiments conducted in the Appalachian region. Similarly, in *Writing Places*, Paula Mathieu, Tim Lindgren, George Grattan, and Staci Schultz describe assumptions behind place-based pedagogies: “We believe that mindfulness about places—critical thinking, close observation, and personal reflection—can help us better understand ourselves and our environment while we also hone the very skills necessary for academic success” (xv). By privileging place as a theme or focus in the writing classroom, teachers, like the ones in this study, support critical thinking and responses to the stereotypes that their students may face.

Particularly, teachers in Appalachia use place-based pedagogy to highlight the importance of writing in their classrooms. Amy Azano notes that relevance, meaning the relevance of school in the lives of students, increases when teachers implement place-based pedagogical practices in their classrooms. Often, Appalachian teachers of English work in places that privilege labor-intensive jobs and where families downplay the importance of education in relation to their lives. For example, my study participant Dunbar, who works in the high school from which she graduated, said that students often do not see a relevant connection between their own lives, the expectations of their families, and literature like Shakespeare. But, Azano’s study reveals that place-based classrooms may help rural students to see just how education can impact their lives. All of the teachers in this study have found place-based writing pedagogies extremely useful for educational attainment in the region.

The role of place in the writing classroom has been explored by many Appalachian scholars in our field and these studies evoke the possibilities that a study of place can play in the classroom. Appalachia is not a homogenous region by any

means, but the researchers who explore the rhetoric, composition, and literacy in our field underscore similar themes throughout their scholarship. To understand the literacy and Appalachia, I first needed to understand the role that 19th century American travel writers and their stories played in defining the region. Appalachia, like the American West, was rife with opportunities for authors of all sorts. These authors described Appalachian as backward and violent, churchless and amoral, innocent and ignorant. One of these authors, John Fox Jr., a Kentucky bluegrass native, wrote the novel *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in 1908. This novel displays several of the stereotypes often associated with Appalachia: from the violence of outlaw Devil Judd Toliver to the naivete and raw beauty of June Tolliver. The stories told about Appalachia, like the stories told by John Fox, Jr., despite often being fictionalized accounts or novels, still created the idea of Appalachia as an illiterate and often backward area that needed to be saved.

When rhetoric and writing scholars write about Appalachia in relation to place, oftentimes, as the previous chapter illustrates, the authors highlight the negative effects place has on literacy, writing, or educational attainment. Appalachia is perceived as being a place of lack, lacking modernism, lacking diversity, lacking opportunity. To this point, Amanda Hayes writes,

According to the deficit ideology too often shaping perceptions of Appalachian discourse, maintaining Appalachian place-literacy, including language and social values, will inhibit students' futures by keeping them underemployed and tied to an undesirable region. It's a belief that extends beyond Appalachia to other nonmainstream communities throughout the country. (86)

This notion of lack, of deficit, is one that the teachers in my study stride to combat in the implementation of their own story as pedagogical impetus. Hayes suggests that "the

English classroom, by asking students to think critically about local literacies, has the potential to play a prominent role in whether or not children learn to see themselves as connected with places and the natural forces sustaining them. It can be a space in which students learn how to conceptualize literacy and identity” (87). Fostering local literacies and place-based writing in the K-13⁶ English classroom can guide students to feeling connected to their identities or even allow them to embody / see other identities

My study pushes the conversation further to understand how teachers’ experiences with stories that set Appalachia apart as different or deficient shape their pedagogies. The teachers I spoke with in this project are uniquely situated—they identify as Appalachian and they teach in Appalachian schools. I chose to focus this project on teacher experiences because I am interested in the way that teacher see their own stories and experiences with stereotypes of Appalachian difference and deficit shape their pedagogical choices. This unique insight gives teachers the opportunity to make pedagogical choices that will prepare students to think critically about and respond to stereotypes of the region. In the next section, I describe my definition of rhetorical emplacement and how I understand that theory to be at work in my data.

A Theory of Rhetorical Emplacement

In order to answer my research questions, I put together a methodology and theory that reflect the place-based nature of the phenomenon I came across in the data. In my archival research, I noticed that many of the texts felt like they were purposefully responding to illustrations of Appalachia that had been created by travel writers after

⁶ I use K-13 here to include the dual enrollment college first-year writing courses that some of my teachers teach.

the Civil War⁷. Here is a table listing the information of the books I explored in this study:

Book	Date Published	Author	Genre	Values
<i>The Trail of the Lonesome Pine</i>	1908	John Fox, Jr.	Fiction	National
<i>A Curriculum Study in a Mountain District</i>	1937	Helen Ruth Henderson	Dissertation turned book	National
<i>School Bells From the past: Bits and Pieces of School History in Wise County, VA Vol. 1</i>	1985	Bill Porter	History	Local
<i>Go and Come Again: Segregation, Tolerance, and Reflection: A Four-Generation African-American Educational Struggle</i>	2011	Jerry L. Jones	Memoir and Cultural Critique	Local
<i>The Heritage of Wise County and The City of Norton 1856-2001 Vol. 2</i>	2001	Wise County Historical Society	Historical Collection	Local

Table 1: Books Used in Analysis

The same phenomenon occurred in the interview data when teachers described how they shaped their pedagogies in response to stereotypes and media stories of Appalachia. This response to narratives about Appalachia from both the authors in

⁷ For example, in the next chapter, one of the texts I analyzed is a dissertation study by Helen Ruth Henderson that seems to be responding specifically to the stereotypes of the region- both combatting and enforcing stereotypes.

Chapter 4 and the teachers in Chapters 5 and 6 led me to building upon a theory of rhetorical emplacement (Chirindo 2016; Martinez 2017; Pietrucci 2018; Ott 2011; Gorsevski 2012; Columbini 2019). I understand and define rhetorical emplacement as the moves that teachers make to refute or combat set ideas, stereotypes, and ideologies that are positioned onto their community by popular media and folks often unaffiliated with that people group. This positioning of stories often creates a misaligned idea of the realities of that people group that the teachers and authors in this study feel called to respond to. This emplacement can then affect an understanding of the group of people and their encounters with the world, which can lead to unsupported claims and ineffective policies in support of those people. While this emplacement could be based on sex, gender, race, sexuality, etc., my study focuses on the role rhetorical emplacement played and still plays on our understanding of Appalachia, particularly how the rhetorically emplaced stereotypes of difference and lack have affected the educational practices of English Teachers in Appalachian Virginia.

Building from Edward Said's "facts of textuality" from his landmark text *Orientalism*, many of the stories and stereotypes of Appalachia came into existence when local color authors wrote stories that their readership perceived to be true, and journalists and academics then relied upon those stories as if they were factual (Altina Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia," *Appalachia in the Making*). While based on some semblance of reality, some locations that have been othered—like the Orient or Appalachia—are discursive constructs that have been re-imagined for the West or colonialist culture to define itself against. This othering, this orientalism is a discourse that is produced by and exists in relation to power structures (12). As I explore in Chapter 4, many of the ideas set forth about Appalachia were defined and constructed by what Said describes as "facts of textuality," meaning texts—both fiction and

nonfiction—perpetuate representations of how local color writers described Appalachia in their texts (13). Rhetorical emplacement highlights how people speak back against these “facts of textuality” and the perpetuation of stories.

To understand this theory, I reviewed place-based rhetorical theories and storying as described in our field. Theories of rhetorical ecologies, as posited by scholars like Sidney Dobrin (2001) and Marilyn Cooper (1986) have been furthered by discussions of rhetorical regionalism, a theory with roots in cultural geography and critical regionalism proposed by Jenny Rice. Rice defines regional rhetoric as a theory that “disrupts given narratives of belonging that are framed on a national level and between individuals. Regional rhetorics provide alternative ways of framing our relationships and modes of belonging” (203). Rice’s rhetorical regionalism, while a useful theory for helping create an understanding of the ways in which place affects meaning, the role of place in her work tends to err on the side of hypothetical. The experiences with place that both the authors I examine in the historical chapter and the teachers I interviewed have encountered are genuine and demonstrable. Place, particularly being from Appalachia, shaped and shapes their experiences in the world. In her 2014 *College Composition and Communication* article “Emplacing Mobile Composing Habits: A Study of Academic Writing in Networked Social Spaces,” Stacey Figg, citing Thomas Rickert, writes, “the move toward emplacement has led theorists such as Thomas Rickert to define environments as “not just the setting for activity but as a participant’ [41]. This move further positions places as dynamic, evolving, and mediated—an alternative vision to more static rhetorical conceptions of place associated with topical invention [Jeff Rice 10] or rhetorical situation [Edbauer]” (255).

The role that the physical location of these teachers plays in their pedagogy is concrete. So, I turned to land-based literacies in order to understand the role that place

plays in shaping experiences with the world. In her 2015 article, Gabriela Raquel Rios describes her concept of land-based literacies and rhetorics as “ultimately build a theory that 1) recognizes the ways in which land can produce relations and 2) recognizes the value of embodied ways of knowing” (60). This piece is particularly helpful in understanding the ways in which place helps construct reality and relationships among people.

Along with regional rhetoric and land-based literacies, place-based pedagogies and positionality stories are an important concept for my work. In her 2017 *English Education* article “Place, Pedagogy, and Literacy in Appalachia,” Amanda Hayes defines place-based pedagogy as “a theory of instruction that advocates situating schools and curriculums within their geographic, social, and cultural surroundings, as a means of improving both student learning encouraging community sustainability” (75). Hayes, in *The Politics of Appalachian Rhetoric*, suggests that “the English classroom, by asking students to think critically about local literacies, has the potential to play a prominent role in whether or not children learn to see themselves as connected with places and the natural forces sustaining them. It can be a space in which students learn how to conceptualize literacy and identity” (87). Fostering local literacies and place-based writing in the K-13 English classroom can guide students to feeling connected to their identities or even allow them to embody / see other identities available to them in their writing. Place-based pedagogies, land-based literacies, and rhetorical regionalism all underscore my complication of a theory of rhetorical emplacement which are the ideas, stereotypes, and ideologies that are positioned onto a people by folks who are both affiliated and unaffiliated with that group. The teachers and writers in this study speak back against the rhetorically emplaced stories that circulate about Appalachia.

While my description of rhetorical emplacement is built on several theories, I have found the term described in brief by a few rhetoric and writing scholars. In his 2016 article, Kundai Chirindo calls for rhetorical scholars to attend to the “roles that emplacement plays in inscribing bodies with meanings” (129). Simply being of a place inscribes a person and their body with different experiences and meanings. In a 2011 review essay for the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Brian J. Ott argues that rhetorical emplacement is an attention “to how rhetoric’s situatedness in cultural and consumer spaces, in the built or virtual environment, and in local and global information flows enables and constrains what can be said, how it can be said, and by whom” (345). Expanding on Ott’s description of rhetorical emplacement, Crystal Columbini’s 2019 *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* article “The Rhetorical Resistance of Tiny Homes: Downsizing Neoliberal Capitalism” argues that “situated rhetorical-ness of the tiny home” can be understood as an act of resistance against “dominant meanings” and “displace[s]” rhetorical understandings of place” (453).

In her 2011 appraisal of Wangari Maathai’s speeches, Ellen W. Gorsevski describes “emplaced rhetoric” “as a theoretically productive construct for assessing environmental rhetorics” (3). While emplaced rhetoric is not the same as rhetorical emplacement, it is important to note the ways in which scholars in the field of rhetoric and writing have already employed the term “emplaced” to understand the function of rhetoric in the world. That being said, Gorseveski defines emplaced rhetoric as “discursive and symbolic communication purveyed through public statements, visual imagery, and embodied forms of activism that emphasize the physical, lived world of earthly existence, and the numinous experience many persons gain from substantive connections to nature” (5). Gorsevski’s description of emplaced rhetoric is marked by a connection to nature and is public. The goal of emplaced rhetoric is to affect

environmental change and to decenter Western notions of knowledge in relation to the environment. I build from previous scholarship on rhetorical emplacement by examining the ways in which people respond to emplaced narratives and ideas. The historical accounts that I analyzed and the teachers that I interviewed in this project all engage in a type of “speaking back to” the unnecessarily negative stereotypes that are typically associated with Appalachia and other rural locations in the United States.

Research Approach

In this dissertation, I relied upon historical and ethnographic methods to create a full picture of the persistence of stories and the ways in which people speak back against them. Through the use of archival research and teacher interviews, I 1) contextualized the research site within a larger historical narrative of literacy and educational experiments that occurred in the region, 2) observed the ways in which writing pedagogical practices may have been or are still influenced by ideologies about the region, 3) understand how teachers mitigate the different stakeholder and ideological expectations of their role as writing teachers, and 4) viewed the ways in which place guides teachers’ understandings of their identities as teachers within the region.

Methodology

My project attempts to connect pedagogies of the past with those of the present. So, before I can look to the present, I need to ground myself in a history of the ways in which writing was taught in the far SWVA region. In order to do this, I explored the archives at the University of Virginia’s College at Wise. This study uses historical and ethnographic methodologies to weave a narrative of the perpetuation of stories about

Appalachia and how it has affected people in the region, particularly in relation to education. First, I collected archival data from after the Civil War to the mid-twentieth century. This helped me see how the stories about Appalachia began with travel writers and how folks from the region responded. Then, I conducted five interviews with current Appalachian High School English teachers in southwest Virginia. The earlier historical research helped me to see trends and themes in the stories told about Appalachia which highlighted the ways in which my teacher-participants described their own education and their pedagogy.

Methods

This project employs two methods of data collection: historical research—both archival and textual analysis—and interviewing. These two methodologies employed together contextualize Appalachian Virginia’s experiences with stereotypes of difference and deficit in relation to educational practices and ideologies by putting into conversation some of the earliest stories told about the region and contemporary accounts of teachers who currently work in Appalachian Virginia. My main research questions ask how stories told about Appalachia have affected educational practices within the region, so in order to answer that question I first explored the beginnings of the stories told about Appalachia through historical research, then, in order to attend to the present realities of the region, I interviewed high school English teachers who identify as Appalachian and work in Appalachian Virginia high schools.

The historical and ethnographic methodological approach of this dissertation study allowed me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives

exist in the world today. The methods described here are only a brief summation while lengthier discussions of the methods can be found in their respective chapters.

Historical Research

In order to fully understand the perpetuation of stories and stereotypes about Appalachia, I conducted historical research to create a history of the region of Southwest Virginia at the turn of the twentieth century. I conducted historical research to answer these research questions:

- How have outsider narratives constructed or shaped notions of education in Appalachian Virginia?
- How have narratives constructed from folks from Appalachian Virginia shape our understanding of the realities of education in the region?
- How have Appalachian Virginians described educational practices in the region?

The first iteration of this project included archival research; however, “serendipity” (Kirsch) encouraged openness to other means of obtaining historiographic information about the region. Because of the place-based nature of my study, I contextualized the nature of literacy and education in the region by using the special collections and archives at two libraries located in Wise County, Virginia: The Wise County Public Library and the library at the University of Virginia’s college at Wise. In the fall of 2019, before I entered the libraries in Winter 2020, I began communication with the special collections librarian at The University of Virginia’s College at Wise in order to get a good grasp on the types of documents located in the special collections and archives at the college. After a lengthy conversation with the special collections librarian, I decided that the archives at the college would not yield

what I was interested in finding—early accounts of the region. So, instead of looking through archive collections, I spent a few days in the special collection reading room at UVA Wise with different texts about Appalachia and Southwest Virginia.

I entered the libraries in the Town of Wise and at the College with the goal of contextualizing my project within the history of the region while paying particular attention to the role of story and narrative on education in the region. In their introduction to *Working in the Archives* titled “Invigorating Historiographic Practices,” Cheryl Glenn and Jess Enoch provide three suggestions for conducting archival research: first, begin with a hypothesis, not an archive; second, be conscious of other agents in the archives; and third, be consistently reflective on personal identity as a researcher (13). The hypothesis that began this study was that ideology—particularly the ideology that was crafted by post-bellum stories of Appalachia as told by travel writers who entered the region—affected writing instruction in Appalachian Virginia at the turn of the twentieth century.

This methodology led me to analyze different books that focused on the region that were located in the special collections at the two research sites. While I poured through at least fifty different historical texts about Appalachian Virginia across the two libraries, I found four non-fiction texts and one fiction text that relayed accounts of learning and education in the region.

- *A Curriculum Study in a Mountain District* (1937) by Helen Ruth Henderson
- *The Heritage of Wise County and The City of Norton, 1856-2001 vol. 2* (2001) by the Wise County Historical Society
- *School Bells From the Past: Bits and Pieces of School History in Wise County, VA. Vol. 1* (1985) by Bill Porter

- *Go and Come Again: Segregation, Tolerance, and Reflection: A Four-Generation African-American Educational Struggle* (2011) by Jerry L. Jones
- *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* (1908) by John Fox, Jr.

Because the stories told about Appalachia were often told via fiction, I decided to compare the codes created from a close reading of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* that paid attention to and made clear the many stories told about Appalachia, particularly about education, to real accounts from the region. The role that fiction plays in the shaping of Appalachia and a more detailed explanation of the methodologies are described in Chapter 4.

Interviews

The purpose of this project is to further discussions of Appalachia in the field of rhetoric and writing that move beyond literacy sponsorship and student educational attainment. So, I interviewed five English teachers located in high schools in Appalachian Virginia counties in order to answer the following research questions:

- How is writing pedagogy implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of SWVA today?
- How do Appalachian writing teachers mitigate the different ideologies and stakeholders who affect their teaching?
- How might place-based pedagogies inform writing pedagogy in Appalachian Virginia and further rhetorical theory?

These questions necessitated interview as a method for this project. Following Cyndi Selfe and Gail Hawisher's chapter in *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*, I agree that while

Most researchers recognize that large-scale statistics provide on picture of salient educational trends...If we, as researchers, depend solely on such information we tend to miss the human and very personal face of social, cultural, economic phenomena that so fundamentally chapes the project of education and the nature of institutions, departments, and classrooms. (36)

Interviewing as a methodology allotted me the room to understand contextual and ideological nuances that might not be revealed through other methods of research. Since I am not a high school English teacher at an Appalachian school in Virginia, I do not have the knowledge or experience to pull from to respond to my research questions.

The best way to respond to these questions—to understand the lasting effects of stories about Appalachia on Appalachian education—was to talk to current or former high school English teachers from schools within the study's region. To do this, I recruited five high school English teachers from Virginia counties described as "Appalachian" by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The teachers selected for this study are all Appalachian themselves, with three of the five participants teaching at the high schools from which they graduated. Four of the five teachers identified as female, one male, and they are all white.

For this particular project, I chose interview participants from a very specific criterion: Appalachian teachers who teach English in Appalachian Virginian high schools. I wanted to talk to English teachers in high schools located in Appalachian Virginia who are Appalachian themselves. I chose this specific population because the teachers who were themselves Appalachian have a particular insight into and knowledge of the world and how it perceives students and people from Appalachia. Their world experiences, even if that experience took them to colleges not too far from home underscore their teaching and pedagogy. The five teachers in this study all spoke

to how their own experiences with stereotyping or the rhetorical emplacement of stories onto them by others underscore their teaching and engagement with their students.

After receiving IRB approval for human-centered research, I reached out to teachers with whom I already have a relationship. During 2015-2017 I worked with Virginia Tech's College Access Collaborative, where I helped Dr. Sheila Carter-Tod facilitate composition workshops for teachers in Appalachian Virginia high schools. That work involved me trying to contact and recruit English teachers from schools in Appalachian Virginia for workshops conducted in 2016 and 2017. The experience of recruiting teachers for this study was surprisingly difficult. Since I am from the region, I expected teachers whom I knew personally to be willing to participate in the workshop. However, none of my prior teachers or the teachers at the consolidated school that was created from my high school and our neighboring town's school participated. Other teachers did not respond to my emails or phone calls to their administrators. I was only able to recruit teachers once I decided to reach out to them on Facebook. I attribute the responses I received via Facebook to the personal nature of the social media platform. Corresponding via email decontextualizes my affiliation with the region, but Facebook allowed the respondents to see our mutual friends and my "about me" information.

Following this previous work recruiting teachers, I reached out to participants via email first then on Facebook. I sent recruitment emails to about fifteen teachers with whom I am familiar, but I ended up with only five teacher-participants for the study. I interviewed five teachers from counties labeled Appalachian by the Appalachian Regional commission in Southwest Virginia: Montgomery, Lee, Scott, Smyth, and Russell Counties. All teach or have taught high school English courses; three of the five are teaching in the high schools from which they graduated.

To protect my participants' identities, I chose aliases for my participants. The names I have chosen are all from different hollers⁸ and coal camps surrounding my hometown of Appalachia, VA. None of my participants were from or taught in Wise County, VA, so the participants cannot be traced back to the names of the hollers. The interview participants' aliases are:

- Andover- Female teacher
- Stonega- Female teacher, Teaches at her alma mater
- Imboden- Female Teacher
- Dunbar- Female Teacher, Teaches at her alma mater
- Exeter- Male teacher

Part of my IRB protocol included the use of aliases and removal of all names and other identifying information so I could protect my participants' identities to the best of my ability.

Due to the arrival of Covid-19 in the United States, IRB put a hold on all projects that required face-to-face research—unless the research was in response to Covid-19. While I align with Katherine Sohn's perception that location is a critical component of interview success (Sohn 15), unfortunately—due to our present circumstances—I conducted the interviews via Zoom, a video meeting platform that we are all very familiar with now. While I would have preferred allowing the participants to choose the sites of our interview, Zoom allowed increased flexibility and engagement from the participants. What I mean here is that by using a platform like Zoom, the teachers and I

⁸ A holler is typically a small community nestled between two mountains.

were able to make accommodations for their schedules (teaching, childcare, and other responsibilities).

While I did have an interview protocol to help guide the conversations, I relied upon open-ended questions and oral history methods to gather stories rather than just solicit answers from my participants. The structure of the interview was loose with an interview protocol. The interview was structured into three, very loose sections: 1) teacher's experiences with education, 2) teacher's pedagogy, and 3) teacher's interactions with folks other than students or other teachers. The questions were broken down as follows:

4. Teacher's personal experiences with education

- i. How did you become an English teacher? Who influenced you?
What influenced you?
- ii. What was your education like? What did you learn? Not learn?
What factors influence what you teach in the classroom? How
you teach?
- iii. How long have you lived in Appalachia? Taught in Appalachia?

5. Teacher's Pedagogy

- i. Does the fact that your students are "Appalachian" affect what
you teach? If so, how?
- ii. Who are some of the "nameless/faceless people" (Schreiber and
Worden *Composition Studies* 47.1 2019) or future audiences you
are trying to prepare your students to write for?
- iii. Have you experienced any issues/problems/hiccups in your
teaching due to misconceptions about Appalachia?

- iv. What constraints do you face in the classroom based on student population, expectations from other (institutional, familial, etc.) stakeholders?
6. Teacher's interactions with folks other than students or other teachers
- i. Can you share any experiences you have with outsider misconceptions (or accurate assumptions) of your students and the region?
 - ii. Who are the nameless/faceless people (or named and faced outsiders) who affect what you can/cannot teach in the classroom? How do you interact with these people?
 - iii. Do you make accommodations in your pedagogy for outside influences? If so, can you share a story of a time you've had to make accommodations?
 - iv. Do your beliefs about writing and teaching writing change based on outside influences? If so, how?

Often, I did not have to ask these interconnected questions as they just arose naturally from the stories the teachers told.

The interview served as a necessary method to answer the research questions mentioned above because interviews “draw on feminist understandings of interviewing as a process not of extracting information but of sharing knowledge” (Selfe and Hawisher, 36, drawing on Olesen, Reinhartz, Visweswaran, Nielsen, Oakley). Interviews are a means of creating knowledge with participants, a “world-making” that does not necessarily exist through other methods of research in such profound ways. Ellen Cushman writes, “We need to take into our accounts of social change the ways in which people use language and literacy to challenge and alter the circumstances of daily life”

(12) and to do that, we must talk to those people. The stories my teachers told me in our interviews describe their use of “positionality stories” or what Christina V. Cedillo and Phil Bratta describe as the sharing of stories of lived experiences. Positionality stories “are open invitations to student-teacher dialogue that constellate the instructor within a network of potential resources from which students may draw as they see fit” (216). My teachers’ stories expand Cedillo and Bratta’s concept of positionality stories in that the teachers not only related their stories to their students, but they explicitly used their positionality stories to underscore and shape their pedagogies.

Qualitative Coding

The data chapters (4, 5, and 6) give a more detailed explanation of the comparative coding I completed in this project. After collecting both data sets, I used qualitative coding methods and rhetorical analysis in tandem for analysis. Qualitative coding allowed me to see themes and trends in the data across the different data sets (archives, interviews, etc.). In reviewing the segments chosen from the archival data, I used Excel. The texts from this data set were all books, so I had to type up all of the segments into an Excel file and then code the segments there. For the interviews, I relied upon MaxQDA, a coding software, to help me code for themes in the interview data set.

I coded the data from a position of prior knowledge of and personal experience with the stereotypes often associated with Appalachia. People have asked me if I have running water at my house or have been surprised when I say I live in Virginia because often Appalachia is not associated with Virginia. Peter Smagorinsky, in “The Method Section as Conceptual Epicenter in Constructing Social Science Research Reports” argues that “Coding establishes the researcher’s subjectivity in relation to the data and

the framework through which data are interpreted” (399). Having been an Appalachian researcher for the last seven years and my own personal experiences with popular culture representations of Appalachia—like *Deliverance* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*—gives me a unique insight into the region.

As I read through the historical data, I noticed that the authors were responding to ideas of Appalachia that stereotype difference or deficit because I myself have experiences with a similar response to stereotypes. First, with the immense popularity of John Fox, Jr.’s *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*⁹, this is a novel set in Southwest Virginia, written by a man who lived in the town of Big Stone Gap for most of his life after moving from his home in the Bluegrass of Kentucky. I read the novel looking for instances where typical stereotypes of Appalachia were described—common stereotypes include but are not limited to illiteracy, violence, lack of modernization, etc. Because the novel was so popular when it was first published—it eventually became a movie—I decided that a comparative coding schema that looked at the stereotypes that were presented in the novel and how the authors of the other texts responded to those similar themes. I read and reread each of the texts and coded for segments that were obvious rebukes or affirmations of the stereotypical themes from *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. After I analyzed the codes that I pulled from the historical textual analysis for themes, I then employed the same coding schema on the transcripts from my interviews. This helped me to see the persistence of stereotypes and stories that exist about Appalachia and to understand how teachers respond to those stereotypes pedagogically in their classrooms. The codes are as follows:

⁹ The popularity of this novel is described in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Code 1: Isolation

- Code as isolation each segment discussing geographic isolation
- Code as isolation each segment describing Appalachia as being set apart from the rest of the world
- Code as isolation each segment that refutes isolationist ideas of Appalachia

Code 2: Language

- Code as language each segment that suggests language supremacy
- Code as language each segment with an eye towards dialect
- Code as language each segment that describes language differences
- Code as language each segment where language is corrected (by self or others)
- Code as language each segment that suggests linguistic heritage

Code 3: Education

- Code as education each segment that mentions institutionalized education
- Code as education each segment that mentions school

Code 4: Expectations

- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected behaviors
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected outcomes
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expectations not met

Code 5: Culture

- Code as culture each segment that indicates a particular view of Appalachian Culture

- Code as culture each segment that compares Appalachian Culture with Outside Culture
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having industry
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having social programs
- Code as culture each segment that represent Appalachia as a non-homogenous culture

Code 6: Literacy

- Code as literacy each segment that features reading outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that features writing outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of writing
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of reading

Tracking the codes from the archival data to interviews allowed me to see the variances in the stories and ideas about Appalachia. Chapter 4 describes the codes in more detail while providing examples from the text. Chapter 5 details how the codes changed or remained the same between the historical and ethnographic data sets.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations to this study that I would like to acknowledge here. First, one limitation of my study is three-fold in relation to race (see Appendix E). First, for the most part, studies of Appalachia in rhetoric and writing typically indicate gendered and socioeconomic nuances that affect their participants or research sites; however, most do not mention race. According to the Appalachian Regional

Commission (ARC), a governmental body tasked with recording data on counties deemed Appalachian, Appalachia's minority populations make up 18.2% of the region's population (see Appendix E for ARC's Appalachia's Population Data Snapshot). The lack of attention to race in the studies is a limitation for my own research because the studies are limited in scope. Along with this, my research participants are high school English teachers from the Appalachian region, they are predominately white. Personally, I did not have a teacher of color until I attended UVA Wise for my undergraduate degree, and I did not have a Black teacher until graduate school. Third, the archival and historical information I found is predominately white, with one exception¹⁰

Also, over the course of completing this study several issues arose because of the Covid-19 global pandemic. When I began my archival data in December 2019, with the hopes to continue that research over Spring Break, the spread of Covid-19 caused the shut-down of many of the libraries and archives that I would have had access to in Wise County, Virginia. So, the books that I explore in the Chapter 5 were all found and analyzed after the initial data collection in the libraries in Wise.

Similarly, while I had planned to conduct interviews with teachers in their home communities, meeting them where it was easiest for them—their homes, schools, or local coffee shops—the pandemic forced me to revise my methods. Virginia Tech's IRB put a pause on all in-person research that was not Covid-19 related. Because of that, all interviews had to be conducted online, and I chose Zoom as the platform to interview and record the interviews with my participants.

¹⁰ *Go and Come Again: Segregation, Tolerance, and Reflection* by Jerry L. Jones, EdD recounts Dr. Jones' family's relationship to education in SWVA.

Chapter 4: A Historiographic Account of Stereotypes, Ideology, and Education in an Appalachian Region

In the late 19th century, after the Civil War, travel journalists entered the Appalachian region to find stories their Northern, middle-class, urban readership would buy. The region was rife with “ready sales” for the popular magazines at the time—like *Lippincott’s*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Harper’s*). From labor exposés set in the “mountains” of South Carolina to fiction set in Marietta, Georgia, Elizabeth Engelhardt argues that stories about Appalachia “were so tempting that marketing departments at presses willingly stretched the boundaries of Appalachia to fit a novel or story into it” (35-34). Post-Civil War Americans yearned for an understanding of their shared nationality and sought any way to believe that they were all unified under the American flag. In *Appalachia on Our Mind*, Henry Shapiro argues that Appalachia both as idea and place would not exist if not for the post-Civil War Local Color movement. Shapiro writes, “The process of reification, by which the perception of Appalachian otherness became transformed into a conception of Appalachia as a thing in itself, occurred within the context of the conventions of local-color writing, and in particular of the claims of that genre to verisimilitude” (18-19).¹¹ Following in the footsteps of medical and scientific travel accounts that attempted to name and find new to them flora, fauna, and medicine, local-color writers wrote stories to transport their urban

¹¹ Katie Algeo, in her 2003 *Southern Cultures* article “Locals on Local Color: Imagining Identity in Appalachia,” defines local color writing as “a style of fiction or travel writing that takes as its starting point a place or region and attempts to convey the essence of that locale through detailed depictions of the geographic setting and through characters that supposedly represent essential qualities of the place” (30)

readership to different parts of The United States. Appalachia, like the American West, was a region that was new to Northern writers. Shapiro notes that the invention of Appalachia came in large part because of the popularity of author Mary Noailles Murfree's gothic and romantic East Tennessee stories (19)¹². Early travel writer Will Wallace Harney, in his 1869 *The Atlantic* article, described Appalachia as a "strange land" inhabited "by a peculiar people." The Appalachian local color movement led authors to "discover" Appalachia and led their readership to see their accounts as "accurate representations of reality" in Appalachia (Shapiro 20).

After 1886, the subject matter and themes of Appalachian local color writing turned into examinations of Appalachia in relation to the rest of America and American values. As Kim Donehower notes in her chapter in *Rural Literacies*, "The region defined as Appalachia did suffer from poverty and a variety of ills that spring from poverty. But the ways in which these problems were characterized, and the solutions that were offered reveal more about the cultural agendas of the groups who sought to 'fix' Appalachia than they do about the region itself" (40). Katie Algeo argues that

The writings of outsiders, mainly local colorists and the early academics who studied the region, created a canonical set of ideas about Appalachia. Using similar descriptive language these authors freely exchanged themes and imagery across the boundary between fiction and nonfiction, creating tropes that continue

¹² Murfree's stories, Shapiro describes, set a melancholic mood for writing about Appalachia. Shapiro writes, 'Murfree's stories took the fact of Appalachian otherness as their *donnée* and sought to describe aspects of life 'among an interesting primitive and little known people in a wild and secluded region'" (19). Despite being set in antebellum East Tennessee, her work was regarded as "the chronicler of Appalachia in the present" (19).

to resonate in American popular culture, influencing depictions of mountain folk in movies, television shows, and comic strips. (28)

Authors described Appalachia using a plethora of stereotypes: backward and violent, godless and amoral, innocent and ignorant (Algeo; Shaprio; Satterwhite; Snyder; Engelhardt, etc.). In *The United States of Appalachia: How Southern Mountaineers Brought Independence, Culture, and Enlightenment to America*, Jeff Biggers describes the plethora of stereotypes as “four paradoxical images [that] have enjoyed incredible staying power: *pristine Appalachia...backwater Appalachia...Anglo-Saxon Appalachia...and pitiful Appalachia*” (xii-xiii). Emily Satterwhite, paraphrasing Raymond Williams, argues that “fiction does not simply and accurately reflect the world around it (if and when it is crafted by an appropriately authentic representative reporting upon real-life experiences). Fiction constructs the realms it represents. It actively shapes readers’ desires, attitudes, and lenses for interpreting and acting upon the world” (10). So, through this local color writing, what was clear to readers was that the problem of Appalachia needed to be fixed, despite not knowing the realities of the region. The polarized accounts of Appalachia—often fictionalized or exaggerated reality—led middle- and upper-class readers to view Appalachia as a place that needed saving via missionary work, industrial revolution, or social programs. The stories told about the people of Appalachia provided the exigencies for missionaries and progressive educators to use the region for their educational experiments, for religious missionaries to bring religion to what they understood to be a godless area, and for industrialists to capitalize on the presumed ignorance of the landowners of the region.

For the purposes of this project, I will focus on how educational realities compared to the circulation of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, one example of these local color and travel writing accounts of Appalachia. I chose *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* as

a source of comparison because it is one of the more popularized books about the particular region of Appalachia about which I am interested, Appalachian Virginia, and it displays the ways in which fiction and nonfiction blurred to create one canonical set of traits for the region.

The persistence of these popularized narratives demonstrates the pervasive nature of stories. These stories that circulated about Appalachia in the 19th century persist today stories as excellent examples of what Johnathan Bradshaw describes as rhetorical circulation or as rhetorical persistence (Bradshaw). Kim Donehower writes that these stories are indeed as much a part of the history as what is generally viewed as historical and suggests that “[p]erhaps we need to...read art as research, to see what gets told under the guise of fiction” (41). Through the telling of stories exists the potential for speaker and listener to (dis)identify with one another; stories and storytelling allow us to put into words our differences and similarities. Diane Davis argues that, for Kenneth Burke, identification is driven by man’s desire for the social, where identification is “symbolic action that resides squarely within the representational arena” (125). What Burke and Davis reinforce is the idea that storytelling is instrumental in the creation of commonalities, identifications. But, beyond what comes to be understood as common identification of a social group or people through stories, these stories also reveal how mainstream cultures perceive marginalized groups.

Because of their power, the stories told about Appalachia by people with more societal influence often carry more social weight than narratives Appalachians share about themselves. For example, Elizabeth Engelhardt, in her book *The Tangled Roots of Feminism, Environmentalism, and Appalachian Literature*, describes some of the writing that occurred in Appalachia at the same time the region became popularized and

ingrained in the national consciousness by national outlets—“from publications with national distribution such as Hampton Institute’s *Southern Workman*...to private student publications such as Hampton’s *Talks and Thoughts* written by its Native American students for one another” to African American published newspapers like “*The Mountain Gleamer* of Asheville, North Carolina” (17). Nedra Reynolds, in “Interrupting Our Way to Agency: Feminist Cultural Studies and Composition,” writes, “Agency is not simply about finding one’s own voice but also about intervening in discourses of the everyday and cultivating rhetorical tactics that make interruption and resistance an important part of any conversation” (898). However, the stories with staying power, the ones that have invented and reinvented Appalachia continuously, are the mainstream stories told about Appalachia—especially the stories of literacy and education, which often run counter to the realities of the region.

By the early 20th century, the stories of Appalachia had moved from tales of discovery—“describing the flora and fauna (Barton 1807; Drake 1815; Pollard 1870; etc.), interacting with the people whom the authors considered simple and untouched by the evils of society (Herney 1873; Davis 1861; etc.)—to stories of feuding and violence. What was once a “strange place and a peculiar people” were no longer innocent, but rather had been defined as lawless and godless by authors entering the region. Fictional narratives reveal much about our understandings of a place or a people by reflecting ideological stances and stereotypical beliefs, often laying them bare for critique. For example, Emily Satterwhite, in her work *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878*, suggests that “While different sets of readers made best sellers out of different kinds of Appalachian stories, under very different historical circumstances, every generation produced an American audience hungry for a romantic version of Appalachia and eager to consume it in the form of popular stories and novels” (2).

However, much of the writing about turn-of-the-century Appalachia exists in order to explain away the problem Appalachia posed for America's national identity.

One story of Appalachia that gained popularity in the early 20th century is John Fox Jr.'s *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. John Fox Jr. was a Kentucky bluegrass native who came to Big Stone Gap, Virginia, to take advantage of the growing coal industry. Darlene Wilson, and other Appalachian scholars, describe John Fox Jr. as a "mythmaker of Appalachia" whose work was effective in shaping American popular culture representations of Appalachia (9). This 1908 novel propagates all the stereotypes popular media associated and still associates with Appalachia: from the murderous outlaws, the familial feuds, the ignorance of the mountaineers, to the innocence of the beautiful June Tolliver. The novel was a national bestseller, ranking third in 1908 and fifth in 1909 (Satterwhite 57). Its popularity was so widespread that it remained a best seller "for at least half a century after its publication...[inspiring] so many musical, theatrical, and cinematic crossovers—including two popular songs, two plays, and three movies" (57). The novel follows Jack Hale, a bluegrass Kentucky native with a pioneer spirit entering southwest Virginia in search of coal—a very obvious reflection of the author himself. Consistently throughout the novel, Jack mentions his drive to "build a town" in order to industrialize the mountain folk (41). As the outside world begins to enter the region, due to the colonialist discovery of coal as a useful power source and the capital that could be made from the mineral, Jack encounters two feuding families, a beautiful young girl, and a lawless place.

What is interesting in *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* is Fox's description of education and language in the region. For the purposes of this study, I use Fox's descriptions of education and language as ideological indicators of beliefs about education and language in Appalachia. While fiction, the novel—along with other fictional accounts of

Appalachia—both reflected and shaped contemporary cultural and popular beliefs and ideologies held about Appalachia. Through historical retelling and coding, I argue that how Appalachia was rhetorically situated in the minds of mainstream American readers did not adequately reflect the realities of the region. Because of the ways in which stories about Appalachia circulated, many of the authors whose texts I analyze here felt called to speak back against the stories told about Appalachia.

While narratives of Appalachia's lack and deficiencies circulated among the rest of the country—images of illiterate, violent folks living primitive cabins and feuding with a rival family—several mountain counties were implementing comprehensive public-school systems. In *School Bells From the Past: Bits and Pieces of School History in Wise County, VA. Vol. 1*, Bill Porter collected and reported on information about schooling in Wise County Virginia. In his book, published in 1985, Porter writes that before 1870, in the more southwestern counties of Virginia, schools were known as “field schools” (5). Schools were sponsored by more affluent families in the region, meaning they funded a teacher to come, live on their land, and teach their children from a schoolhouse usually built in a field adjacent to the home. The 1860 census notes that there were six teachers in Wise County, VA. Along with these six teachers, there were roughly twenty preachers, and as Bill Porter notes in *School Bells from the Past: Bits and Pieces of School History in Wise County, VA. Vol. 1*, preachers were often teachers, too. In 1870, Virginia adopted the “free school system” (Porter 6). This free school system created a line for funding for public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The number of teachers in Wise Country rose to eleven out of 7,772 according to the 1880 census and there were about twenty-five schoolhouses in Wise County. By 1901, there were seventy-five schoolhouses in Wise County.

With this more accurate depiction of the actual schooling situation in a county in the heart of Appalachia, this chapter explores how ideas about the Appalachian region rhetorically situated Appalachia as a place of lack and difference and how the rhetorical idea of Appalachia affected the ways in which people within and outside of the region interacted with Appalachia. Through comparative coding, I explore the ways that Appalachia was rhetorically structured in fiction as compared to accounts from people from the region. The goal of this chapter is to create a historiographic account of education in the mountains of Virginia by exploring the ways that stories told about the region differ from the stories told by people from within the region. While this is not an exhaustive analysis of every piece of text that mentions education in Appalachia, it does explore the realities and stereotypes of the region as they are situated against the expectations of education and industrialization. This nuanced understanding of Appalachia creates a framework from which we can understand just how the realities and the stereotypes of the region both affect what occurs in Appalachian Virginia.

Narratives of Ideology

The stories told by both the authors from the region and the authors outside of the region engage in a shared ideological discourse on what Appalachia is and should be. If ideology can be defined as a system of ideas and ideals that forms the basis for political theory and policy, I argue that ideology is a belief system that both constructs our social world and how we interact with that social world. I come to this argument from Göran Therborn's definition of ideology as discourse. Therborn defines ideology as the medium through which can be communicated "that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees. Ideology is the medium through which this

consciousness and meaningfulness operate" (2). In other words, ideology is a way through which humans make meaning about themselves and the world around them. Therborn's theory of ideology describes ideology as a discourse: "ideologies subject and qualify subjects by telling them, relating them to, and making them recognize: 1. *What exists...* 2. *What is good...* 3. *What is possible*" (18). In defining ideology as discourse, as the medium through which we make sense of the world, ideology can be understood as a means to define our realities; what I mean here is that ideological systems guide the construction of stories and those stories, about specific people or places, circulate and construct how the topics of those stories are understood. That being said, popularized narratives—narratives that sell—often dominate discourses over the lived experiences of unfamiliar¹³ groups.

For example, the local-colorists who entered Appalachia for sellable stories did not engage critically with their source material. Rather, the writers, building on existing ideologies of others, constructed and shared an idea of the region and the people about whom they were writing; ultimately, they created and defined Appalachia as a place in opposition to the experiences and realities of their middle-class, Northern readership. From Mary Noailles Murfree's popular 1884 collection *In the Tennessee Mountains* (which saw sixteen reprints along with critical and scholarly acclaim) to William Goodell Frost's anthropological 1899 *The Atlantic* article "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains" ideas of Appalachia told by writers not from the region began to circulate as fact. The stories circulated by local colorists crafted Appalachians/Appalachia as a place "in but not of America" (Shapiro XIV). Because the vast majority of readers of these pieces had never been to Appalachia and did not know

¹³ By unfamiliar, I mean groups that are not known to the readership.

anyone from Appalachia, the authors of these stories were seen as interpreters of an unknown, underexplored region of the United States. The circulation of these stories encouraged some well-meaning Americans from the north to enter Appalachia in order to correct what they perceived as deficient behaviors and ways of living to bring the mountain people into the industrialized modern era.

For this particular project, ideology can be defined as a language through which humans come to understand the world. Ideologies are rhetorically emplaced onto groups of people or regions through the act of storytelling, often narratives of difference are rhetorically emplaced onto groups that code as other than the dominant group. For example, ideologies of Appalachia tend to define the region as illiterate (i.e. the texts of Murfree, illiterate (Fox, Harney, etc.), violent (Fox), and impoverished (this stereotype emerges in the 1960s coinciding with President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty¹⁴) because those are ways in which that Appalachia has been apart from the rest of the country by writers, educators, and policy makers. Ideas and stories about Appalachia rhetorically situated the region as apart from and different from the rest of the United States. So, the ideas that perpetuate in the mainstream consciousness about Appalachia typically come from sources that hold more cultural weight. The texts that I examine in this chapter all respond to typical stereotypes of Appalachia, so I constructed a methodology that compares themes in a work of fiction (*The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*) to themes in nonfiction accounts of Appalachia.

¹⁴ More on this in chapter 5.

Method

Beginning this project, I planned to look for examples of writing and reading assignments and writing that discusses writing and literacy in Appalachia in order to respond to my preliminary research question: How has writing education been described, implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of SWVA? In order to answer this question, I decided to explore the archives at The University of Virginia's College at Wise and The Wise County Regional Library in Wise, VA, to try to make sense of and create a historical account of writing education. But first, I need to explain my positionality and purpose in the methods I chose.

The research I conducted for this chapter is close to my both my personal identity and my identity as a scholar. I grew up in the town of Appalachia, in Wise County, VA. I spent many afternoons at our local libraries, and I graduated from The University of Virginia's College at Wise in 2014. My Appalachian research interests are immensely personal for me, and the research conducted in this chapter in particular held a deep nostalgia for me. In the introduction to *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan make the case for the role of serendipity, family connections, and cultural memory in the historical research we conduct in our field. While I relied upon the special collections at both UVA Wise and the Wise County Regional Library, I would be remiss if I did not mention the contextual help that I have relied upon both on my own experiences with education in the region and the family stories about education that I have been told all my life. Stories told about Appalachia almost always identify the region as lacking in both literacy and education, often conflating the two to indicate that institutionalized education leads one to acceptable literacy. But the stories I grew up hearing from my parents, grandparents, and extended family highlight the opposite. My purpose in comparing a national best-seller written

by a man who spent the majority of his adulthood in Appalachia but chose to capitalize on the stories of others in order to benefit his own class (Fox was an industrialist and capitalist), to published accounts from folks who have lived in Appalachia all of their lives from the region itself is to highlight the realities and uplift the experiences of people from the region.

My goal in exploring the archives at UVA Wise and Wise County Public Library was to find instances in text where folks talked about their experiences with writing/language pedagogy. However, I was also open to serendipity (Kirsch). With the help of the special collections librarian at The Wise County Regional Library, I was introduced to several texts that described the existence of education in the region in both fiction and nonfiction. For nonfiction the texts, for the most part, included recollections from teachers, students, and parents on how writing instruction touched their lives. Along with historical knowledge about the implementation of education in Wise County and Norton, VA, The Wise County Historical Society's heritage collection gave great insight into the attitudes and beliefs regarding education in the region from the recollections of citizens in the county. For example, this included the 1920 diary of a one-room schoolteacher named Allena Flanery who taught in East Stone Gap, Wise County, VA (1915-1985). This diary was a daily log of her own life, the ups and downs of being a single woman and schoolteacher in the county. Another section of the heritage collection included letters from the Coeburn High School 1948 graduating class (1960-1965). With the knowledge of educational realities of the region, I came away with quite a bit of information about the realities and beliefs of the region. In these special collections, I moved through text after text about the early days of different Appalachian counties in Virginia, and the sources revealed varying ideologies that persisted within and about Appalachia. For example, Allena Flanery's diary revealed

that her pedagogical focus in 1920 was for students to successfully pass spelling tests and learn to read. The recollections from Coeburn High School's class of 1948 was full of graduates reminiscing on their school days and privileging the ways of the past: like including daily prayer in schools and reading religious texts in courses. Dr. E. E. Gene Rorrer's essay in the heritage collection indicates how his family privileged education in the 1930s. He quotes his father's lament, "Boys on a coal miner's salary, I know I can't send all three of you to college, but to college you will go" (902-903).

Before working in the library at The University of Virginia's College at Wise, I had several discussions with the special collections librarian to help me contextualize my project. After searching the archives and speaking with the research librarian about the collections, my project, and what I was looking for, we both agreed that I would have better luck just exploring the books written by authors from Appalachia that the college kept in the special collections. In that special collections room, I found many different texts that mentioned schooling in some way. This approach to the special collections proved useful because I came across several texts written by Appalachians about their experiences in Appalachia, and many of these texts indicated a more nuanced understanding of educational practices in the region. However, narratives that focused on pedagogy directly or referenced specific academic activities were few. Luckily, a phenomenon arose from the research conducted at The Wise County Public Library and The University of Virginia's College at Wise: the role stereotypes and stories from non-Appalachians about Appalachia played on conceptions of education in the region.

Qualitative Coding

In order to fully flesh out the nuanced realities of schooling in Appalachia as compared to the stories told about Appalachia at the turn of the twentieth century, I used qualitative coding to underscore clear themes in the texts. For this data coding exercise, I followed the steps mapped out by Cheryl Geisler in *Analyzing Streams of Language: Twelve steps to the Systematic Coding of Text, Talk, and Other Verbal Data* in order to answer two of my research questions: 1) How have narratives about Appalachia constructed or shaped notions of education in Appalachian Virginia? 2) How have some Appalachian Virginians described educational practices in the region?

My main inquiry is inferential because my research questions call for an examination of the site that was “more interested in what can be said about the phenomenon in general” (Geisler XV). Originally the phenomenon I searched for an idea of how education was rhetorically situated in Appalachian Virginia. Over time, the phenomenon focused on how stories about the region provided an incomplete survey of Appalachia. Because of my research in Central Appalachian Virginia, I chose a criterion-based sampling that allowed me to search through texts that focused on the counties of Wise, Lee, Scott, Buchanan, Russell, and Dickenson in Virginia. My goal in this research was to create a more nuanced understanding of how the region was portrayed in popular texts versus the realities of the people who lived there. I read and coded different writing education sections of 5 books (as shown in Table 1). I chose sections of the books that addressed or mentioned education, language/literacy, etc.

Book	Date Published	Author	Genre	Values

<i>The Trail of the Lonesome Pine</i>	1908	John Fox, Jr.	Fiction	National
<i>A Curriculum Study in a Mountain District</i>	1937	Helen Ruth Henderson	Dissertation turned book	National
<i>School Bells From the past: Bits and Pieces of School History in Wise County, VA Vol. 1</i>	1985	Bill Porter	History	Local
<i>Go and Come Again: Segregation, Tolerance, and Reflection: A Four-Generation African-American Educational Struggle</i>	2011	Jerry L. Jones	Memoir and Cultural Critique	Local
<i>The Heritage of Wise County and The City of Norton 1856-2001 Vol. 2</i>	2001	Wise County Historical Society	Historical Collection	Local

Table 2: Books Used in Analysis

Grounded Coding

For the purposes of analysis, I relied upon a grounded coding schema that compares the presumed lack within Appalachia to the realities of the region. Each thematic code exhibits the nuances of the rhetorical ideas that are associated with the region. Using *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, I pulled segments of text that mention language, literacy, education, and culture in order to understand how a popularized work of fiction helped in the creation of the idea of Appalachia for its readership. This novel was immensely popular at the time of its publication, so it gives insight into how the larger American public conceptualized Appalachia and mountain culture. Readers

outside of the region of Appalachia turned to the novelizations of Appalachia for the romantic themes and for entertainment, but the book also concretized a rhetorical understanding of Appalachia as primitive and Othered.

The thematic codes that developed upon analyzing each textual segment pulled from *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* were: isolation, language, education, expectations, culture, and literacy. Using these codes, I analyzed segments from six nonfiction—memoir, history, dissertation study, etc.—sources written by members of the Southwest Virginia Community. Following Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch’s definition of rhetoric as social praxis, the codes help guide an understanding of Appalachia as nuanced and rhetorical utilizing what they discuss in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, as “understanding rhetoric more overtly as social praxis encourages us to look again and again at rhetorical situations and events with the deliberate intention of positioning and repositioning ourselves to notice what we may not have noticed on first, second, third, or next view” (135). These segments pulled from the nonfiction segments often underscored a different history and understanding of Southwest Virginia than what Fox represented in his novel. The authors in this chapter, I argue, share an exigency and purpose with the rhetoric and writing scholars I reviewed in Chapter 2 in that they are engaging in a speaking back to the stereotypes with which they have always been confronted. Their texts are meant to serve as a foil to more popularized stories of Appalachia.

The codes are as follows:

Code 1: Isolation

- Code as isolation each segment discussing geographic isolation
- Code as isolation each segment describing Appalachia as being set apart from the rest of the world

- Code as isolation each segment that refutes isolationist ideas of Appalachia

Code 2: Language

- Code as language each segment that suggests language supremacy
- Code as language each segment with an eye towards dialect
- Code as language each segment that describes language differences
- Code as language each segment where language is corrected (by self or others)
- Code as language each segment that suggests linguistic heritage

Code 3: Education

- Code as education each segment that mentions institutionalized education
- Code as education each segment that mentions school

Code 4: Expectations

- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected behaviors
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expected outcomes
- Code as expectations each segment that describes expectations not met

Code 5: Culture

- Code as culture each segment that indicates a particular view of Appalachian Culture
- Code as culture each segment that compares Appalachian Culture with Outside Culture
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having industry
- Code as culture each segment where concern is shown over the region not having social programs
- Code as culture each segment that represent Appalachia as a non-homogenous culture

Code 6: Literacy

- Code as literacy each segment that features reading outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that features writing outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of writing
- Code as literacy each segment that indicates a lack of reading

In the following sections, I analyze the codes in more depth and argue that despite the rhetorically emplaced assumptions of Appalachia at the time, authors from the region told their own stories in order to combat what have become harmful stereotypes.

Because fictional narratives about Appalachia were pervasive and often the only insight some readers had into the region, the fiction became understood as fact. Comparing a popular fictional account that features education prominently, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, guides an understanding of what readers were told and believed about the region itself. The following analysis explores the duality of each code as represented by different texts about and from the region. The stereotypes of the region often affect the way that aid or support comes into the region, despite the lived realities of the folks within that region.

Analysis

Code 1: Isolation

Local color writers defined Appalachia as isolated or set apart from the rest of the country. That is what made Appalachia so intriguing for readers at the beginning of the twentieth century—it was a place set apart from the United States, one of the last frontiers ready for exploration. The code “isolation” emerged as I noticed the numerous times that John Fox, Jr. describes the mountains and mountain people being isolated from the rest of the world. In *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, Judge Samuel Budd—a local who rhetorically slips in and out of the local vernacular— describes a typical understanding of the mountain people: “You see, mountains isolate people and the effect of isolation on human life is to crystallize it... They have been cut off from all communication with the outside world” (42-43). The mountains have always been described as isolated due to their mountainous terrain and lack of thru roads. In 1893, William Goodell Frost, Berea College’s president at the time, spoke at a banquet in Cincinnati where he described the “discovery” of Appalachian America—a phrased he

is credited with coining (Shapiro 119). As Henry Shapiro notes, this was not so much a discovery of Appalachia, but rather the invention of the region¹⁵ (121). Frost attempted to procure monetary support by describing Appalachia and her people as isolated and backward, suggesting that they were in need of saving. What is really interesting about Frost's use of Appalachian stereotypes to raise money for the college is that Berea was an integrated school with a proud history of supporting both white and black students. However, to procure money from northern elites, Frost downplayed that storied history and relied upon the idea of the white, illiterate but virtuous mountaineer. This suggests the white supremacist notions surrounding education.

Throughout the nonfiction texts, the idea of isolation appears frequently. Similarly to Berea's President Frost, Helen Ruth Henderson's *A Curriculum Study of a Mountain Region*, published in 1937, describes the isolation in Buchanan County, Virginia, in order to secure curricular changes that would help students from the more impoverished regions of the state. Henderson blames isolation of the county (24) for the lack of roads (100) and the lack of social programs (28). Henderson writes, "These children in Hurricane Magisterial District are living in a comparatively isolated area because their opportunities for communication and transportation are so limited" (111). She credits the topography of the county to its isolation (112). She states that "not until recently was there any highway development in the County because of the difficulty and expense of construction and the lack of any influential demand for better roads" (112).

Dr. Jerry L. Jones's memoir *Go and Come Again Segregation, Tolerance, and Reflection: A Four-Generation African-American Educational Struggle* lays bare the

¹⁵ See also Allen Batteau *The Invention of Appalachia*

educational segregation and differences felt by Black Appalachians from the early twentieth-century through his schooling. What his memoir does not do is buy into the isolationist ideas set forth by the travel-writers of the turn of the twentieth century. Out of the fifty segments of data coded from this memoir, only one segment was coded as isolation. Describing school trips to different parts of Virginia, Jones notes that the number of Black students increased upon moving east in Virginia. He writes, “In some ways, we felt like we were ‘Tennessee cousins’ rather than actual Virginia residents” (57). His recollections actually describe how un-isolated the region was around mid-century, 1950s/1960s. Jones’s family placed great importance on education—often sending siblings to live with relatives in Virginian cities that held more opportunities for Black students. I argue that this indicates that the region itself was not particularly isolated in that communication flowed into and out of the region, allowing folks to know where opportunities were for their children. His aunts and uncles went to study in Roanoke, which held the closest Black high school to their family in Washington County (about two and a half hours away).

Code 2: Language

Trail of the Lonesome Pine is an interesting book for a lot of reasons, but one of the most peculiar themes within the novel is that of language supremacy. The protagonist, Jack Hale, often corrects the speech of the mountaineers he encounters both out loud and in his mind. For example, while talking to June about the changes she must make upon entering school, claiming that she will need to change her appearance and the way she speaks, Jack says, ““You will want to talk like them anyhow, because everybody who is learning tries to talk the same way” (47). Hale tells June, “You said, ‘I

SEED you when I was A-LAYIN' on the edge of the cliff'; now you ought to have said, 'I SAW you when I was LYING--" (47). By overtly correcting June's speech, he displays his beliefs about language superiority. Between Jack correcting her every chance he gets and his claims that people who seek education all talk the same way, June frequently polices her own language. For example, in one of their conversations about botany, June corrects her own speech before Jack can correct her: "'Hit's'—she paused for correction with her lips drawn severely in precision—'IT'S a mountain poppy'" (73). Jack's consistent policing, an attempt to make June a more fit partner for his station in life, June overtly chooses to police herself. June even polices the way she thinks: "That wouldn't happen NO more, she thought, and straightway she corrected that thought. 'It won't happen ANY more,' she said aloud (82). The pressure Jack applies to June's speech is present in the way she both mentally and verbally sifts through pronunciation to accommodate his language supremacy.

What is interesting about this code is that the fictionalized policing occurring in the conversations between June and Jack also exhibits itself as codified in curricular studies. In Helen Ruth Henderson's *A Curricular Study in a Mountain District*, several instances of ideologies surrounding language supremacy can be found. Henderson writes, "The children hear incorrect English spoken in their homes and communities, and naturally their language includes these incorrect and provincial forms" (111). While she does not include any examples of "incorrect" or "provincial" language, the ideologies remain resolute. There is a proper way to speak English and the children of this community are not doing it. One of Henderson's curricular suggestions for this mountain school district is to encourage "The ability to speak in clear, accurate and complete sentences" (168). Her phrasing indicates that she believes there to be accurate and complete ways of phrasing to which the children in this district just do not adhere.

Fox, Jr. uses eye dialect with the speech of the mountaineers to indicate difference. Indexing social, economic, and educational differences does not solely rely on visual or geological descriptions of the mountaineers, although the visual does have an impact on the reader. Alexandra Jaffe, in "Non-Standard Orthography and Non-Standard Speech," suggests that "the politics of linguistic identity illustrates that for non-standardized language varieties, there is a fundamental -- perhaps unresolvable -- tension between an emphasis on difference vs. an emphasis on sameness" (Jaffe 506-07). The use of eye dialect is common in texts describing turn of the century Appalachia. As Michael Ellis notes eye dialect consists of using "unconventional spellings that have no phonetic significance but are used to give readers the impression that characters¹⁶ are illiterate" (165). Eye dialect, "gratuitous respellings," suggests difference in education and economic class (Jaffe and Walton 565). For example, using "yore" or "yer" in lieu of "your" index illiteracy. "Your" is still pronounced the same but the misspelling indexes lack of intelligence or education. The language represented using eye dialect is used to separate and elevate ideas of Standard American English over English spoken by mountain people. In the scene between Jack and June mentioned above, June says, "'Ef you don't like my clothes an' the way I talk, I reckon I'd better go back home" (47). The eye-dialect used here is for the word "if", Fox chooses to use "ef" instead. There is not a large pronunciation difference between "if" and "ef", so the eye-dialect simply serves to illustrate difference and lack.

¹⁶ Here, Ellis refers to eye dialect use in the treatment of Appalachia in literature in the 18th and 19th centuries. Contemporary authors avoid using eye dialects and phonetic spellings, choosing to rely on regional words and usages along with some grammatical forms (Ellis 173).

Henderson's understanding of their language deficiencies exhibits itself when she describes the community's reactions to outsiders, whom she describes as "furriners" (117). Using eye dialect here indicates linguistic supremacy in that she writes the word "foreigner" as she hears the members of the community saying it. Again, she does not reference or quote a specific instance of the word being used, rather it exists in the text as an indicator of difference and language supremacy. This is a spelling of the word "foreigner" that is not unique to Henderson's account of Appalachia. In *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, Fox, Jr. relies upon this eye dialectical spelling to index difference and lack. In one of June's many introspective reflections, she describes the changes she has undergone due to education: "She had taken sides with 'furriners' against her own people. That was why, instinctively, she had put on her old homespun with a vague purpose of reparation to them" (53). Her father, when eating at a restaurant with people from the town is describe as being so embarrassed by the "presence of so many 'furriners' and by the white cloth and table-ware, and so fearful was he that he would be guilty of some breach of manners" (68). Despite these moments taking place in the heads of the characters themselves, Fox, Jr. relies upon the use of eye-dialect to symbolize difference and language superiority.

In his memoir, *Go and Come Again*, Jerry L. Jones describes meeting other African American students when he entered college at Virginia State College—a college that was established under the Morrill Act to establish a school for Black people in the Commonwealth. Jones writes, "It was in Petersburg that I first learned that I had a 'southern' accent. During my freshman year, there were a few instances of name calling—the perception that I was not 'hip' enough and little bit too country" (68). Accents that are deemed "southern" are often associated with lack of intelligence. Barbara Johnstone describes enregisterment as the process by which "a set of features

associated with an accent can come to be represented collectively in the public imagination as a stable register” (Johnstone 160). Kathryn Remlinger argues that Enregisterment is a language-ideological approach: Dialect seems to be enregistered meaning people seem to be able to point to it; establishing a local identity and reinforce the notion that there is one, common dialect spoken by the residents; “the features are recognizable, and more so, commented upon” (126). An enregistered dialect “embodies cultural values associated with the area” (Remlinger 119).

Code 3: Education

The third code, education, features segments from the texts that mention institutionalized education and schooling, including when school buildings are describe. Appalachia, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was in the late 19th century often described as a region with no educational opportunities or institutions. However, that was not the case. In 1870 Virginia adopted a free school system for all citizens of the commonwealth (Porter 6). Before then, schools in the county were called “field schools” as they were erected in the fields of private citizens and a teacher was sponsored by the local landowners in order to give their children some type of education. As previously mentioned, Wise County alone had 75 schoolhouses in 1901, a jump from the roughly 25 schools in the county in 1880 (Porter 7-8).

However, travel writers and local color authors, building on reports that were economically and politically motivated¹⁷, described the mountains as filled with uneducated people with no educational prospects. For example, in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, Jack Hale is surprised when he learns that June Tolliver can read because

¹⁷ See Altina Waller “Feuding in Appalachia” *Appalachia in the Making*

of the lack of access to institutionalized education in the region. June has plans to attend the new school being built in Big Stone Gap in the winter. Often throughout this text Jack Hale refers to his work as “building a town” (41). This work includes laying the foundation for a school to be built in Big Stone Gap. Fox, Jr. makes sure to describe June seeing the schoolhouse for the first time as a revelation: “The school house, to June’s wonder, had shingles on the OUTSIDE around all the walls from rood to foundation, and a big bell hung on top of it under a little shingled roof of its own” (52).

In *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, institutionalized schooling is linked to passion and ambition. June is described as learning in school and that “the slumbering ambition in her suddenly became passionately definite” (53). Descriptions such as these highlight how formal schooling was believed to invoke change within the person seeking out education, encouraging them to grow above their surroundings. That ambition led her to revise her physical appearance and to engage with her family and community in very different, almost pretentious ways. Education changes June, almost placing her at odds with her family and community. June’s family remarks on her changes by either worrying over her new differences or being shocked that she has not changed too much. Reflecting on her own changes and educational growth, June thinks, “Why laboriously climb a hill merely to see and yearn for things that you cannot have, if you must go back and live in the hollow again?” (115). Here, June laments what her family expects of her versus her newfound educational aspirations.

Despite *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* fictionalizing the creation of a school alongside the creation of a town, Wise County, Virginia, has had a long history of educational institutions. In the Wise County Historical Society’s *The Heritage of Wise County and the City of Norton, 1856-2001 Vol. 2* are recollections from memories submitted by people who had at some point lived in either Wise County or the City of

Norton. Gladeville College, which ran from 1883 to 1906 in Wise County, held courses from primary school through college for the students in the region. Gladeville College closed its doors “in 1906 with the advent of a state-approved high school system” (457). It then became Wise High School in 1907 (JJ Kelly qtd. in Porter 86). In this collection is the journal of Allena Flanary, a teacher in the county during 1920. She taught at the East Stone Gap School then moved to a school in the coal camp Stonega in May 1920. In her journal, Flanary kept track of her movements to and from the schools at which she taught and the goings-on of her students. Another section of memories submitted to this collection of Wise County History was from the members of the Coeburn High School (CHS) class of 1948. In these notes, graduated students reflected on their time at CHS and the skills that they gained while in school there. Billy J. Bray writes, “Perhaps the most useful thing I learned in High School was how to use the English Language” (960). Ray’s description here suggests a type of stifling of home voice. In the sixth chapter of this project, a few teachers described experiences with teachers who tried to “fix” their Appalachian accents to make them more acceptable in Standard American English. Another community member reflected on the penmanship courses she took during her time as a student between 1910 and 1920. What these recollections argue against is the lack of education that was and is a perpetual stereotype of the mountains. In this particular region of the Appalachian Mountains, educational institutions were funded and attended by members of the community. An outsider was not needed to instill the value of education in Wise county, that value was understood. Southwest Virginia College—what would eventually become The University of Virginia’s College at Wise—came into existence in 1950 and Wise County Public School System instituted a Vocational/Technical School in 1942 in order to serve students who were interested in trades (Porter 93).

Code 4: Expectations

The code “Expectations” arose out of the necessity to name the instances within each text where expectations were either met or subverted in some way. This occurrence began in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* at the very beginning of the novel. Jack encounters June on a mountain as he is making his way to her father’s homestead. During their conversation, Jack asks her name, to which June replies “An’ mine’s—Jill” (7). This surprises Jack because he cannot believe this mountain girl had ever heard of the nursery rhyme Jack and Jill. During Jack’s conversation with June’s father, Devil Judd, June reads to him. Her diction and pronunciation, along with the fact that she can read, shock him further (13).

The text where that exhibited the most of this code was *A Curricular Study in a Mountain District*. As this was Henderson’s dissertation, turned first book, she completed surveys and interviews with the students in the Hurricane Magisterial District in Buchanan County, Virginia. Henderson conducted six case studies of homes within the district because, “the home environment is so vital a part in guiding the educative process for any child” (39). Out of the six homes she observed, two were labeled exceptional, two were labeled good, and two were labeled poor. These rankings were based on a specific criteria: the family (jobs, education, lineage, etc.), the farm (types of livestock and goods grown on the farm along with upkeep), the home (detailed descriptions of the state of each home), “cultural facilities” (books in the home, musical instruments, magazine subscriptions, newspapers, etc.), recreation (leisure activities), social contacts (churches and other social groups), service centers (shopping at stores and professional services), and attitudes (towards education and supporting

the local school system). I feel that it is important to talk about these criteria because Henderson does not describe any influences she had on her criteria, but one can assume that they link to middle-class values.

The first two were identified as exceptional homes, far exceeding the expectations of the researcher. The mother and father of the first family hailed from the county, but they displayed a pride in education and pushed it on their children. The home received magazine subscriptions and contained books other than textbooks or the Bible. The family was social, participating in recreational activities and social clubs. Therefore, Henderson concluded that this was one of the best homes in the county (39-45). Her case studies were ranked from exceptional to poor based on her own, middle-class criteria. Her shock at this revelation of homes that met the modern expectations she had imposed—reading material, nice house, garden, musical instruments in the home, recreational activities, social clubs, etc.—indicates her expectations of the homes in this community.

Despite her surprise and the positive way in which she wrote about the first two families, Henderson's description of the two homes she labeled "poor" exhibits her expectations (60-68). Homes five and six were described as cramped and not in good shape. Both sets of parents were born in the county; one family were tenant farmers. Henderson was quick to note that neither family owned their home and that the parents were illiterate. In the instance of the sixth house of the case study, a neighbor accompanied Henderson to visit the home because they feared sickness. Failing to meet Henderson's criteria, neither family had reading materials or musical instruments in the home. Henderson describes both sets of parents as illiterate.

What is very interesting about this code and the segments labeled "expectation" is the fact that despite there being clear proof that life in the mountains was much more

nuanced than what was expected—class differences existed there as they do everywhere—these nuances are assumed to just be exceptions to the expectations of Appalachian impoverishment and illiteracy. When Jack learns that June can read and decides to be her educational benefactor, he does not perceive this as a mark against his assumptions of the Appalachian people; rather, Jack perceives June as exceptional and removes her from her family and the mountains in order to further set her apart from her community.

Not only does this code lay bare the conceptions of Appalachia, it also 1) indicates how Appalachian people compared to and held up against middle-class values (owning books, reading magazines, owning your home) and 2) upholds the notions of Appalachian exceptionalism.

Code 5: Culture

Often, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* reads like an anthropological account of the Appalachian Mountains rather than a fictionalized narrative romance novel. Judge Sam, whom I mentioned earlier, is a self-proclaimed anthropologist who describes the culture and people of the mountains to Jack Hale every scene they are in together. On the topic of outsiders coming into the mountains to industrialize and modernize the people, Judge Sam says that the people will look on the men as “meddlesome ‘furriners’ who have come in to run their country as we please... You mustn’t judge them by the standards of to-day—you must got back to the standards of the Revolution. Practically they are the pioneers of that day and hardly a bit have they advanced. They are our contemporary ancestors” (42). William Goodell Frost, published in the March 1899 issue

of *The Atlantic*, described the people who inhabited the mountains as the “contemporary ancestors” of the rest of the nation. Frost writes, “And their remoteness is by no means measured by the mere distance in miles. It is a longer journey from northern Ohio to eastern Kentucky than from America to Europe; for one day’s ride brings us into the eighteenth century” (Frost). Judge Sam serves the novel as a characterization of Frost’s *Atlantic* article.

Cultural differences account for much of Henderson’s descriptions of lack or difference in the mountain county she surveyed in her dissertation work. In her case studies, Henderson categorizes six different families based on their adherence to specific societal requirements: home ownership, book and reading material, musical instruments, social engagements, etc. The families that do not meet the criteria she set are deemed as lacking or othered. The criteria tend to place the blame, of not valuing education, on the people themselves rather than the structures that affect those people. For example, the two families she designates as living in the poorest conditions are the families who do not own their homes, are tenant farmers, do not rely upon stores, and participate in few leisure or social activities (64-68). These perceived deficits were not critically examined for any purpose other than to discuss how these disparities affect educational attainment for the children in the homes. The families that met Henderson’s criteria were deemed exceptional.

When cultural expectations are subverted, they are deemed exceptional, not the rule. However, when authors from the region write about their own experiences, often they reveal the nuanced realities of life in the mountains. For example, in *Go and Come Again*, Jerry L. Jones is quick to acknowledge the lack of funding for Black Appalachian students in segregated Virginia stating that their “educational experiences in Washington County were minimal—not because a lack of desire or motivation, but

because of a lack of opportunities (9). He writes that many of his family members had to go as far as Roanoke to receive education because of the lack of opportunities for Black students in Washington County. Jones's recollections serve as a reminder that Appalachia, despite descriptions from outsiders proclaiming otherwise, was not and is not a monolithic region.

Code 6: Literacy

Among the first stereotypes of the region, Appalachia has long been considered a place of illiterate people. The writers at the turn of the century portrayed the mountaineer as a simple, uneducated, and illiterate person. This is exemplified in John Fox Jr.'s main character, Jack Hale, is surprised when June reads aloud from a book. During their first meeting, Hale describes June reading "with unusual facility, and her pronunciation was very precise and not at all like her speech" (13). Here, Hale exhibits surprise at June's literacy. A typical definition of literacy—the ability to read and write—does not necessarily cover all the multi-faceted types of literacies. As mentioned before, Hale's surprise at June's capacity to read, and read well by his standards, is indicative of his understanding of Appalachian people as illiterate.

While June subverts that understanding with her ability to read sans formal education, she is the exception to the rule. Many of the Appalachian characters in the novel, most importantly June's family, are described as illiterate. When June goes to boarding school in Kentucky, she writes letters to Hale in which she asks him to relay messages to her family—her family is illiterate and "there was no one at home who could read her letters" (101).

However, literacy is a wrought concept, especially when it is considered while emplaced in rural locations. Kim Donehower, Charlottee Hogg, and Eileen S. Schell, in their work, *Rural Literacies*, define literacy as

the skills and practices needed to gain knowledge, evaluate and interpret that knowledge, and apply knowledge to accomplish particular goals. In this sense, ‘reading’ refers to the ability to gather and process knowledge from a variety of ‘texts’; ‘writing means the ability to transform knowledge to achieve a particular purpose, just as writers transform ideas and information to accomplish rhetorical goals. (4)

Literacy practices are no longer simply defined by having an ability to read and write but include “the particular kinds of literate skills needed to achieve the goals of sustaining life in rural areas” (4). Their definition of both literacy and rural literacies are localized definitions based on the needs and wants of the lived realities of people. Even John Fox, Jr. describes ways of knowing and knowledge making—other types of literacies. He describes the home of a miller and his wife in the mountains, he writes, “on the table was a Bible...and among the usual strings of pepper-pods and beans and twisted long green tobacco were drying herbs and roots of all kinds, and about the fireplace were bottles that had been stewed from them” (31). The miller and his wife can read the Bible and know how to dry herbs and roots and make liquids from the process. June herself is given a literacy that would not be labeled as such by Hale. When working in a garden, Hale does not know anything about weeds, so June says, “I reckon you better c-consult me ‘bout weeds next time. I don’t know much ‘bout flowers, but I’ve knowed all my life ‘bout WEEDS” (90). This knowledge of plants is a type of literacy when using the definition above.

In *Go and Come Again*, Jerry L. Jones writes about his family's schooling experiences and experiences in SWVA. Describing his great-grandfather, Crockett S. Johnston, Jones writes, "There is evidence that Johnston could read and write. What is not known is *where* and *when* he was taught—as a slave in Wythe county or as a freedman in Washington County" (5). His great-grandfather was contracted in 1874 to teach in the Washington County Public School system and was a preacher who wrote sermons—Jones found drafts of Johnston's sermons from as far back as 1884 (6). Jones, describing his childhood, reiterates the definition of rural literacy provided above: "All education does not, of course, come from school. Some see learning also as daily interactions with family and friends. For the Black resident of the South, especially in the 1800s and 1900s, the church was the center of culture and social interactions" (19). While illiteracy, in the conventional sense did exist in the counties of Southwest Virginia, to describe all of the inhabitants of the region as illiterate silences the realities and lived experiences, creating one monolithic identity for Appalachia.

Conclusion and Implications

What this historied account of Appalachian Virginia highlights is the way that writing can take hold of and shape the definition of a place in the national consciousness despite narratives from the region saying otherwise. Despite education being a staple of life in many of the counties in far southwest Virginia as early as 1870, popularized writing about Appalachia defined the entire region as illiterate and uneducated. The realities of the place were not taken into account in the stories that circulated. Because stories told by groups with societal influence circulate at faster rates than the stories told by less influential people, realities get lost or, at least, are not give

priority. The narrative of Appalachia as a backward, unchurched place full of deviants is a narrative that persists into descriptions of Appalachia today. The next chapters will further this exploration of how narratives of difference and deficit affect how teachers in Appalachian Virginia shape their pedagogies in response to the stories told about Appalachia.

Chapter 5: Comparing the Codes: Historical Data and Interview Data from Appalachia

I grew up seeing unkind representations of Appalachian people saturating popular culture. From *The Beverly Hillbillies* to horror films set deep in the mountains of Appalachia, the national understanding of Appalachia was clear: we are a people who are different and often understood as less-than the rest of the United States. I never understood these harsh depictions, so I certainly never really thought about the more cavalier references to illiteracy and deficit in the region. I spent my summers going to Dolly Parton's *Dollywood* in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee—a short 2-hour drive from my hometown of Appalachia, Virginia—and basking in that simulacrum of Appalachianiness was a ritual for me and my family. The park always felt like a warm, kind representation of the people I grew up with, especially compared to films like *Deliverance* or *Wrong Turn*.

Since at least the 19th century, Appalachia has been described as a region set apart from the rest of the United States. Descriptions of backward, uneducated, and often violent hillbillies first began to circulate after the Civil War when travel writers entered the region to find stories to sell. These descriptions that define Appalachia and Appalachian people as unchurched and unschooled have slightly changed, but still persist. Take, for instance, the 2016 presidential election. Despite polling numbers indicating a win for Hillary Clinton, on election night Donald Trump was proclaimed the forty-fifth president of the United States of America. Because the polls were so off in their assessment of voter choice, many journalists sought to understand what had happened. Their drive to understand what they considered the unimaginable, Trump's winning, led many journalists to a common refrain—of course Appalachia was to blame for Trump's election. In 2016, Claire Galofaro, reporter for *The Charlotte Observer*,

attributed Trump's victory in certain areas of Appalachia to desperation caused by a lack of jobs and opportunities. After the election, the nation was bombarded by reports of Appalachia's desperation (Galofaro) and their hope at Trump's promise of returning coal jobs (Jacobs).

This blame placed on Appalachia, for the country's apparent shortcomings, is nothing new. Lyndon B. Johnson continued John F. Kennedy's legacy by "declar[ing] 'war' on the causes of poverty in America and made Appalachia a central theater of that war by launching his crusade from the porch of a former miner's house in Martin County, Kentucky, on April 24, 1964" (Williams 342). This Presidential declaration led to a drive by the Appalachian Regional Commission "to redevelop the region from the top down...[and] the Office of Economic Opportunity (the War on Poverty's action agency) to remake it from the bottom up" (342). Like the post-bellum travel writers, Johnson's declaration set into motion a movement of industrialists, journalists, politicians, government agencies, educators, and social reformers into the region to help remedy the poverty in the region. In an NPR article from 2014, journalist Pam Fessler returned to Martin County, Kentucky, to "report on how the War on Poverty is going" (Fessler). In the report, Fessler speaks to a local journalist named Lee Mueller who claims that since President Johnson entered the county in 1964, journalists have consistently returned to the region each year to capitalize on the stereotypes and stories of poverty that still circulate about Appalachia. Mueller claims, "We became kind of a poster child for the war on poverty, and any time somebody wanted to do a story about poor people, we were the first stop" (Mueller qtd. in Fessler). Appalachia became a poster child for white American poverty by 1946 the region was predominately white.

Aside from journalistic endeavors into the problem of Appalachia, Appalachia is typical fodder for popular culture. Mass media, like television, movies, and books, still

rely upon the hillbilly stereotypes created over 100 years ago as punch and plot lines. Take for instance the television series *Criminal Minds*, specifically episode 20 of season 9 titled “Blood Relations.” In this episode, that aired in 2014, the behavioral analysis unit head to West Virginia for a case. The episode is filled with murder, incest, feuding, and, arguably, terrible accents. I mention this television episode in particular because in an interview with my participant named “Andover”¹⁸ she described how she uses popular culture representations of Appalachians in her English classroom in Appalachia to help her students break down the visual indexes that the rest of the country associate with Appalachia.

These stories told about Appalachia, these rhetorically emplaced narratives of deficit and lack, circulate wide and often today in both news media and popular culture, often reflecting how the rest of the country perceives Appalachia. Often, these narratives told about Appalachia are purposely perpetuated by the inhabitants of the region despite their negative connotations. In Big Stone Gap, Virginia, for example, despite the stereotypical plot and themes of illiteracy, violence, and isolation, *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* Outdoor Drama is performed every summer. Heritage trails like the Crooked Road highlight Appalachian music and art so long as it meets the expectations of Appalachian culture—banjoes and quilts, Celtic-roots and whiteness, etc. The performance of Appalachian identity, while reliant upon certain specific Appalachian cultural traditions, seeks to meet the expectations of what others assume Appalachia to be. The teachers in this study, as I hope to demonstrate below, understand how their students may be perceived by folks outside of the region, having experienced it themselves, so they share stories and strategies with their students in order to prepare

¹⁸ Participants names have been changed to ensure anonymity in the research.

them for what may come. In their 2019 CCC article “Relating our Experiences: The Practice of Positionality Stories in Student-Centered Pedagogy,” Christina V. Cedillo and Phil Bratta argue for the use of positionality stories as critical methodology for classrooms. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the thematic codes presented in the previous chapter change, evolve, or remain the same when analyzing contemporary accounts from people within the region. I argue that the continuation of many of these codes into contemporary accounts highlights the persistence of stories and their implications. I am particularly interested in the ways in which the rhetorical emplacement of narratives onto Appalachia have influenced teachers to shift and shape their pedagogies to engage with Appalachian stereotypes and support their students’ critical thinking skills. In this chapter, I compare the coding schema across the two data sets to understand the ways that narratives about Appalachia have or have not evolved since the turn of the twentieth-century by interviewing current Appalachian Virginia high school English teachers about their experiences with narratives of lack or difference. In order to do that, I 1) describe the process of choosing interviewing as a methodology for this project and 2) explore how the themes that emerged from the archival data in the previous chapter evolve or remain the same in the interview data. The next chapter digs deeper into some of the stories the participants told about their own experiences with rhetorical emplacement and how they shaped their pedagogies to acknowledge the ideas placed onto Appalachian people and places. Ultimately, for the most part, the codes that arose from my analysis in Chapter 4 remained the same in the interview, which suggests that the stories told about Appalachia have perpetuated to the point where teachers need to respond to them within their pedagogy.

Interview Subject Population

For this particular project, I sought interview participants from a very specific criterion. Through projects I helped facilitate with the College Access Collaborative at Virginia Tech, I have been working on building professional relationships and networks with high school English teachers in far Southwest Virginia since 2015. So, I reached out to the teachers who I have worked with before who I knew identified as Appalachian. I chose this specific population because the teachers who were themselves Appalachian have a particular insight into and knowledge of the world and how it perceives students and people from Appalachia. Their world experiences, even if that experience took them to colleges not too far from home, influence and shape their teaching and pedagogy. My teacher participants have a unique insight into what it means to be an educator to people who are like them. The five teachers in this study all spoke to how their own experiences with stereotyping or the rhetorical emplacement of stories onto them by others underscore their teaching and engagement with their students.

After receiving IRB approval for human-centered research, I reached out to teachers with whom I already have a relationship. During 2015-2017 I worked with Virginia Tech's College Access Collaborative, where I helped Dr. Sheila Carter-Tod facilitate composition workshops for teachers in Appalachian Virginia high schools. That work involved my trying to contact and recruit English teachers from schools in Appalachian Virginia for workshops conducted in 2016 and 2017. The experience of recruiting teachers for this study was interesting. Since I am from the region, I expected teachers whom I knew personally to be willing to participate in the workshop. However, none of my prior teachers or the teachers at the consolidated school that was created from my high school and our neighboring town's school participated. Other teachers did not respond to my emails or phone calls to their principals. I was only able

to recruit teachers once I decided to reach out to them on Facebook, and I attribute the responses I received via Facebook to the personal nature of the social media platform. Corresponding via email decontextualizes my affiliation with the region, but Facebook allowed the respondents to see our mutual friends and my “about me” information. This was particularly true for teachers in the furthest county of Virginia, Lee, because my mom has worked as a nurse practitioner at a clinic in Lee County since 1999.

Following this previous work recruiting teachers, I reached out to participants via email first then on Facebook. I sent recruitment emails to about fifteen teachers with whom I am familiar, but I ended up with only five teacher-participants for the study. I interviewed five teachers from counties labeled Appalachian by the Appalachian Regional commission in Southwest Virginia: Montgomery, Lee, Scott, Smyth, and Russell Counties. Four participants identified as women and one identified as a man, and all of the participants are white. All teach or have taught high school English courses; three of the five are teaching in the high schools from which they graduated.

For this project, I have chosen aliases for my participants. The names I have chosen are from different hollers and coal camps surrounding my hometown of Appalachia, VA. None of my participants were from or taught in Wise County, VA, so the participants cannot be traced back to the names of the hollers.

- Andover- Female teacher
- Stonega- Female teacher, Teaches at her alma mater
- Imboden- Female Teacher
- Dunbar- Female Teacher, Teaches at her alma mater
- Exeter- Male teacher

Part of my IRB protocol included the use of aliases and removal of all names and other identifying information so I could protect my participants' identities to the best of my ability.

Methods/Methodology

Following the last chapter, I used my understanding of rhetorical emplacement to explore the interview transcriptions for the same themes that arose in the qualitative coding of the history chapter. This chapter examines how the coding schema that was established in the previous chapter changed, remained the same, or became more nuanced through listening to the stories of teachers who currently work in the region. Ultimately, the analysis in this chapter seeks to compare the role of Appalachian stereotypes by talking to current Appalachian teachers about their pedagogical choices and own personal experiences with difference.

Using both historical and ethnographic methodological approaches in this dissertation study allows me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives exist in the world today. I chose interviewing in order to respond to the research questions

- How is writing pedagogy implemented, institutionalized, and/or sponsored in the region of SWVA today?
- How do Appalachian writing teachers mitigate the different ideologies and stakeholders who affect their teaching?

Interviewing as a methodology encourages researchers to perceive and acknowledge the powerful, vernacular sense of what social change looks like from the perspective of

individuals in their own experiences and lives, in their relations with other humans” (Selfe and Hawisher 36). I am not a high school English teacher in an Appalachian Virginian high school, so I needed to speak directly to and witness the stories of high school English teachers in the region in an attempt to respond to my research questions. The goal of the interviews and sharing them in my research is to get a feel for how the people who teach English in Appalachian Virginia see their work as negotiating between their pedagogy, their students, and outsider expectations.

The purpose of the interviews was to collect stories (Selfe and Hawisher) and hear the voices of teachers in southwest Virginia in order to understand their experiences as Appalachians and Appalachian teachers who teach English. While I did have an interview protocol to guide the discussions (Appendix D) but, often, the interviews became conversations where we, myself and the interview subject, swapped stories about our experiences being Appalachian and seeking higher education or simply existing in the world. These stories were then linked to classroom practice with the teachers using their own stories to underscore the pedagogical choices.

My original IRB plan for interviews was to meet with my participants in person, in their home communities. I felt, like Katherine Sohn in her work with Appalachian women writers post-college, that “the place of the interviews was crucial for communication purposes” (15). However, Covid-19 had different plans for my research. Due to IRB regulations implemented to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews had to occur remotely, so I chose to conduct the interviews via Zoom. While I was wary at first about using the online platform, I found value in the method because I was able to accommodate my participants because it allowed my participants more flexibility in their schedule—some scheduled the interview during their planning periods at school while others scheduled while at home. Each interview was capped at an hour, but most

of the interviews ended within fifty minutes. I recorded the interviews using Zoom and the voice memo app on my phone. I then used Otter.ai to help me transcribe the interviews, but each interview transcription needed revisions due to my and my participants' accents.

The structure of the interview was loose with an interview protocol to help guide the conversation when needed. The interview was structured into three, very loose sections: 1) teacher's experiences with education, 2) teacher's pedagogy, and 3) teacher's interactions with folks other than students or other teachers. The questions were broken down as follows:

7. Teacher's personal experiences with education

- i. How did you become an English teacher? Who influenced you?
What influenced you?
- ii. What was your education like? What did you learn? Not learn?
What factors influence what you teach in the classroom? How
you teach?
- iii. How long have you lived in Appalachia? Taught in Appalachia?

8. Teacher's Pedagogy

- i. Does the fact that your students are "Appalachian" affect what
you teach? If so, how?
- ii. Who are some of the "nameless/faceless people" (Schreiber and
Worden *Composition Studies* 47.1 2019) or future audiences you
are trying to prepare your students to write for?
- iii. Have you experienced any issues/problems/hiccups in your
teaching due to misconceptions about Appalachia?

- iv. What constraints do you face in the classroom based on student population, expectations from other (institutional, familial, etc.) stakeholders?
9. Teacher's interactions with folks other than students or other teachers
- i. Can you share any experiences you have with outsider misconceptions (or accurate assumptions) of your students and the region?
 - ii. Who are the nameless/faceless people (or named and faced outsiders) who affect what you can/cannot teach in the classroom? How do you interact with these people?
 - iii. Do you make accommodations in your pedagogy for outside influences? If so, can you share a story of a time you've had to make accommodations?
 - iv. Do your beliefs about writing and teaching writing change based on outside influences? If so, how?

Often, I did not have to ask these interconnected questions as they just arose naturally from the stories the teachers told.

As stated previously, I chose to build upon the previous chapter's codes as a means of understanding the continuity and nuance of stories and stereotypes about the Appalachian region. This chapter's analysis section will explore the ways in which the codes varied or stayed the same in the interview data. This exercise allowed me to see the variances in the codes and how the stories and stereotypes told about Appalachia exist in an educational setting.

Analysis of Codes

The following sections describe each code and the changes or similarities I perceived in the interview data.

Code 1: Isolation

In the previous data set, the code isolation arose from segments that discussed geographic isolation, described Appalachia as being set apart from the rest of the world, or refuted isolationist ideas of Appalachia. Often, this code arose when segments listed lack of contact with the outside world, lack of infrastructure, or lack of a diversity of ideas (particularly religion). But, in the interview data set, isolation yielded 66 segments—fewer than some other codes.

However, the segments were interesting because while some teachers did note geographic isolation and/or refuted these notions, *isolation* became a code for teachers describing limited viewpoints held by students and parents that were attributed to never leaving their towns, how living in a small community can be isolating for certain students, how outside expectations/stereotypes placed onto students reveal how folks in power do not consider Appalachian students when creating their standards, policies, expectations, etc., and how students who do leave feel like they cannot come back because of a lack of opportunities and isolating ideologies. For example, Andover described the Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) standardized test as “not created with people from our region in mind.” She lamented that the children of a friend who attend schools in Northern Virginia are much better prepared for some aspects of the SOL because the tests are “catered” to them in both content and context.

Also, several teachers noted that while some believe that Appalachia is in fact isolated or set apart from the rest of the world, that is not accurate. This code is

particularly interesting because it revealed realities that teachers are dealing with right now with Covid-19, especially internet access, bus routes, and educational access. Stonega told me that the ChromeBooks her school district had purchased to help mediate the technological issues of the pandemic were still in transit despite being ordered months before class. She also described students who live so far into the hollers of her county, that internet providers refused to even consider running internet lines to their homes.

The revised code became

- Code as isolation each segment describing Appalachia as geographically isolated
- Code as isolation each segment that describes students being left behind by standards/policies/expectations
- Code as isolation each segment that describes isolation within the community
- Code as isolation descriptions of students/people and their ideas of Appalachia as being socially isolated and lacking
- Code as isolation descriptions that negate isolationist ideas of Appalachia

Code 2: Language

In the previous chapter, language and language supremacy appeared as a common theme in most of the texts. The coding schema used *language* to identify each segment that suggested language supremacy, with an eye towards dialect, that described language differences, that featured language correction (by self or others), that suggested linguistic heritage (i.e., Chaucerian or Shakespearean lineage of Appalachian dialects¹⁹).

¹⁹ Proven false and is just another link to White, Linguistic Supremacy.

Unsurprisingly, this code is the only one that did not appear to change or expand in the interview data. The context in which *language* appeared in the data set was a bit different in that while teachers described their own experiences with language supremacy (Imboden describes a college instructor who told her to change her accent or she would not be taken seriously by administration and other teachers), the teachers did predominately talk about language in relation to standard American English expectations that standardized tests have for their students (Andover mused, “What would that look like? If [students] were allowed to write using their language, you know? Because you can’t put that through a state mandated rubric, they can’t comment on it”). Teachers also described their own experiences with language and linguistic prejudice that shaped their pedagogies making their classroom activities often more subversive than the SOL standards would have liked them to be (Imboden describes teaching her students about registers, codeswitching, and language choice, saying “I tell my students that their language is fine. But the way you talk to your grandma is going to be different from how you talk to your principal based on context.”).

The revised code for *language* is as follows.

- Code as language each segment that suggests language supremacy
- Code as language each segment with an eye towards dialect
- Code as language each segment that describes language differences
- Code as language each segment where language is corrected (by self or others)
- Code as language each segment that suggests linguistic heritage

Code 3: Education

Often, the code *education* in the historical data set featured descriptions of school buildings, access to schools, or the things learned in school. The code described each

segment that mentioned institutionalized education or each segment that mentioned school more broadly. However, as I expected, this code had the most segments with 168 out of the 471 coded segments in the interview data. While the coding schema for *education* remained the same for the interview chapter, the code expanded to include both the teachers' experiences with their own education (all interview participants spoke on teachers who had affected their education and the schools that they attended) and their subsequent pedagogical choices in their classrooms (Exeter notes that because of the choice afforded to him by his dual enrollment English teacher, his pedagogy centers student choice, too). The thematic code could be split into two different codes, but I chose to keep the items together because the teachers' experiences with education so heavily influenced their pedagogies, how they interact with students, and what they privilege in their classrooms. In chapter 6, I explore this code and a few others in more explicit detail because it was so predominant and influenced every other code in the data set.

Revision of codes:

- Code as education each segment that explicitly mentions experiences as students with educators.
- Code as education each segment that explicitly mentions or describes pedagogy and/or pedagogical choices made by the teacher.

Code 4: Expectations

The code *expectations* typically remained the same across the two data sets. The code in the history set represented each segment that described expected behaviors, each segment that described expected outcomes, and each segment that described expectations not met. These could be negative expectations—that an Appalachian

student could not read or that they grew up on a farm or in a holler—or positive subversions of expectations—that students could read or that they understood popular, mainstream texts like fairy tales, etc.

In the interview data set, the code remained the same but was revised to examine expectations that the teachers felt were set forth by standardized tests and policy makers (Stonega describes how policy and standards makers perceive her students: “They’ll say, “What do you guys teach them down there? I mean, these kids can't read again,” but I think they really can. They're just processing things a little differently than [policy makers] do. They grasp concepts and they understand them”) and other educators both about the teachers themselves (Dunbar describes meeting with teachers from other parts of the state of Virginia at VEA meetings: “[The other teachers] are like “Oh you're so far away and that's what that's why your accent is like it is that's why you That's why you talk the way that you do that makes sense you now”) or their opinions of Appalachian students. The teachers were adamant about meeting the students where they were rather than any expectations of the students.

Revision of the code:

- Code as *expectations* any segment that describes standardized test requirements and the expectations of the tests.
- Code as *expectations* any segment where a teacher describes encountering some who expected Appalachians to do, say, or be something stereotypical.

Code 5: Culture

For the history data set, the code *culture* described each segment that indicated a particular view of Appalachian Culture, each segment that compared Appalachian Culture with another culture (typically what was believed to be typical American

culture), each segment that showed concern about the region not being industrialized, each segment concerned with a lack of social programs in the region, or each segment that represented Appalachia as a non-homogenous culture. In the interviews, *culture* emerged in segments in which teachers described the culture of Appalachia, the school, the community, or other organizations typically through stories about experiences with parents or other community members. For example, Dunbar claims that her ability to connect with her students through their shared culture—she is from the town and graduated from the high school that she is currently teaching in—helps her understand her students:

So, I find myself a lot relating to my students by talking about how I used to go and like help my granny wash cans outside with bleach and a water hose. Before she would can in the summertime, and like just little things like that and how she would always make chocolate gravy in the mornings like I can relate. That's just another way to relate to some of my kids. I always go back to that, like the whole relating to my kids thing because that's, that's that's how my own Appalachianness would come into play would be to relate to them more than anything. Yeah, just little things like that and being around my grandparents and growing up poor in Appalachia. There are a lot of kids who don't come from great circumstances. (Dunbar)

The revised code scheme for culture became

- Code for culture each segment that describes Appalachian culture
- Code for culture each segment that describes or attributes something to a particular culture
- Code for culture each segment that compares culture

Code 6: Literacy

This code in the history data set described each segment that featured reading outside of school, featured writing outside of school, that indicated a lack of writing, or that indicated a lack of reading. Interestingly enough, this code only yielded seven segments across the 471 segments in the five interviews. The seven segments coded as *literacy* included references to teachers' personal reading habits (Andover describes herself as "read[ing] at a young age and just [eating] books up") and lamentations that students do not read outside of the classroom (Andover describes students who claim that they "don't like to read" or that they "don't read" outside of the classroom) or that their reading habits are extensive because of easy access to the internet, social media in particular (Stonega describes students as "getting introduced to all kinds of different things" on the internet). Overall, the code revealed more about outsider expectations of Appalachian people than it revealed literate practices. In a conversation about popular media depictions of Appalachia, Stonega remarked that it "doesn't matter where you go, it's like we're illiterate" (Stonega).

While this was an important code for the history chapter, many of the texts describe the ability to read and write, etc. I believe since the interviews were focused on education, personal reading or literacy experiences outside of the classroom were not pertinent to the discussion. Different questions could have yielded different results.

Revised code:

- Code as literacy each segment that features reading outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment that features writing outside of school
- Code as literacy each segment in which a teacher comments on student reading/writing outside of school.

Conclusions and implications

Across the two data sets, the codes often remained the same. One important difference I found was that instead of concerning themselves with illiteracy—many of the teachers described the students as being technologically adept and literate because of their access to cell phones and the internet—teachers were much more concerned with critical thinking skills and preparing their students for encountering stereotypes about Appalachia. Along with everything else they are expected to do, the teachers featured in this study try to prepare their students for how they may be perceived if they leave the region. Because these teachers are in Appalachian schools, they have to luxury to speak to these perceptions because every student in the class is Appalachian or at least lives in the region.

In the next chapter, I analyze a few of the codes in more detail in order to understand the ways in which these teachers work from a place-based pedagogy that has affected their own lives. The place-based pedagogy the teachers invoke in their classrooms is not simply assigning projects asking students to explore their communities or homeplaces or assigning readings by Appalachian authors. The teachers have taken their real-world experiences with the stories placed onto Appalachia and molded their pedagogies to make sure students have the tools with which to respond to these same expectations.

Chapter 6: The Role of Place-Based Pedagogies and Stories in the English Appalachian Secondary Classroom

The polarized accounts of Appalachia—often fictionalized or exaggerated reality—led middle- and upper-class readers to view Appalachia as a place that needed saving via missionary work, industrial revolution, or social programs. The stories told about the people of Appalachia provided the exigencies for missionaries and progressive educators to use the region for educational experiments, for religious missionaries to bring religion to what they understood to be a unchurched area, and for industrialists to capitalize on the presumed ignorance of the landowners of the region.

Because of their power, the stories most often shared about Appalachia—the pervasive stereotypes and narratives of the region as backward and illiterate—carry more social weight than narratives Appalachians have about themselves. The stories with staying power, the ones that have invented and reinvented Appalachia continuously, are the mainstream stories told about Appalachia—especially the stories of literacy and education, which often run counter to the realities of the region.

Popular culture representations of Appalachia or of places indexed as Appalachia suggest difference and deficit. *The Beverly Hillbillies*—a television show that my Appalachian mamaw loves—and horror films like *Deliverance* or *Wrong Turn* index Appalachian stereotypes. Appalachia is typical fodder for contemporary popular culture. Mass media often rely upon the hillbilly stereotypes created over 100 years ago as punch and plot lines. One interview participant, Andover, reminded me of the representation of Appalachia in the television series *Criminal Minds*, specifically episode 20 of season 9 titled “Blood Relations.” In this episode, that aired in 2014, the behavioral analysis unit head to West Virginia for a case. The episode is filled with murder, incest,

feuding, and, arguably, terrible accents. Andover explains my frustrations with popular media with Appalachia:

One of the serial killers [existed] because this brother and sister had a child. We continue to do this. Why does it always have to be Appalachia and why does it always have to be incest and why does it always have to be inbred and why does it always have to be, you know, Dopesick, drugs? Why does it always have to be that? Look around the room, we're not like that. We need better representation. We don't have better representation. Because it keeps getting perpetuated in the media and these popular shows. (Andover)

As I will show later in this chapter, Andover, and other teachers, use popular culture representations of Appalachians in her English classroom to help her students break down the visual indexes that the rest of the country associate with Appalachia, to see how the folks from the mountains are perceived by others.

The national understanding of Appalachia is clear: the region is home to people who are different from and often understood as less-than the rest of the United States. Appalachia has always been described as a region set apart from the rest of the United States and often in need of fixing. These media representations of Appalachia are everywhere, so it's important to note because often this is the only knowledge of Appalachia other folks have about the region and its inhabitants.

Stories of deficit and lack are positioned onto the region by popular culture, and not only do these narratives reflect Appalachia in the national consciousness, but they also influence the pedagogical choices that Appalachian teachers make in their classrooms. Often, at least for the teachers I interviewed, these popular culture representations are used to shape lessons in high school English classes that support critical thinking. For my project in particular, sharing this history of the construction of

Appalachia in media was essential to understanding the stories my teacher-participants shared with me. Because of the image of the ignorant, backward (sometimes violent) Appalachian or hillbilly is so saturated in media today, the teachers find the work they do in their classrooms as a means to help students combat stereotypes of Appalachia. The teachers in this study, because they are Appalachian themselves, understand how their students may be perceived by folks outside of the region. So, the teachers leverage their positionality stories of difference and stereotyping to shape their pedagogies to support their students.

Theoretical Orientation

The teachers I spoke with all explained their experiences through stories. They shared experiences with teachers, parents, strangers, and how those experiences helped them build their personal pedagogies. In the telling of these stories, the teachers craft their own personal and teacherly identities in relation to their experiences. In her 2018 book, *The Politics of Appalachian Rhetoric*, Amanda E. Hayes writes, “When people really want to say—or write—something important, they tell a story. Specifically, they tell the story of how they have come to believe or decide something” (9). So, the teachers chose to share their experiences in a way that “demonstrates what makes sense for [them]” (7). In responding to the narratives and stories of difference placed onto them by others by shaping their pedagogies, the teachers see their work as preparing students to critically engage with the world.

Along with Hayes’ description of Appalachian rhetoric as storytelling, to understand the teachers’ stories and the way they construct knowledge, I turned to Christina V. Cedillo and Phil Bratta’s 2019 CCCs article “Relating Our Experiences: The Practice of Positionality Stories in Student-Centered Pedagogy.” Cedillo and Bratta

describe “positionality stories” as the sharing of stories of lived experiences. In this work, the authors argue that positionality stories “allow instructors to present academic counternarratives that contest educational conditions and assumptions while opening space for students to consider their own positionality within the academy” (216).

Positionality stories “are open invitations to student-teacher dialogue that constellate the instructor within a network of potential resources from which students may draw as they see fit” (216). These open invitations take place when teachers relate their own experiences while teaching in order to connect with students and highlight how writing can take many forms.

What I found in the interview data expands Cedilla and Bratta’s positionality stories by highlighting how teachers share their experiences with education or difference in order to describe their own pedagogical choices. The teachers not only related their stories to their students, but they explicitly used their positionality stories to underscore and shape their pedagogies.

Findings

In the interview data, the codes *culture*, *language*, and *education* emerged frequently. This indicates the role that their own experiences and stories play in their professional lives and pedagogical choices. Despite standardized tests and administrative expectations, the teachers I spoke with all described the ways in which they acknowledge their students’ identities and experiences as Appalachian while still meeting their teaching requirements. Amanda Hayes argues that “Appalachia belongs in the classroom because it can help to both validate and complicate identity” (154). My teacher-participants often use stories and stereotypes of Appalachian culture and

language to underscore their pedagogical choices. In the following sections, I share some of the stories my teacher-participants told me and how these experiences have come to shape their pedagogy.

Culture

In the interviews, *culture* emerged in segments that

- Described Appalachian culture
- Described or attributed something to a particular culture
- Compared different cultures

The teachers described the cultures of Appalachia, the school, the community, or other organizations typically through stories about experiences with parents or other community members. I coded segments as “culture” if they described Appalachian culture, described or attributed something to a particular culture, or compared cultures. For example, Dunbar claims that her ability to connect with her students through their shared culture—she is from the town and graduated from the high school that she is currently teaching in—helps her understand her students:

So, I find myself a lot relating to my students by talking about how I used to go help my granny wash cans outside with bleach and a water hose, before she would can [food] in the summertime, just little things like that and, and how she would always make chocolate gravy in the mornings like I can relate. I always go back to that...relating to my kids...because that's how my own Appalachianess come[s] into play is being able to relate to them. Just little things like being around my grandparents and growing up poor in Appalachia. (Dunbar)

Dunbar describes here that she lived with her grandparents when she was in high school. This is not abnormal in the Appalachian region due to homes often housing multiple generations or because of how the opioid epidemic has ravaged the region. Because she teaches at the same school from which she graduated and identifies with a lot of the struggles her students face, Dunbar finds ways to relate to her students that outside teachers may not be able to. Hayes writes, “We can help them see that the place-connection their rhetorics may promote isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Loving their communities isn’t something to be ashamed of” (154). In sharing stories of her own upbringing, Dunbar is able to show her students that being Appalachian or being poor are nothing to be ashamed of.

Exeter, like Dunbar, finds success in sharing his own connections to his students’ cultural identities. He says,

When I talk about my childhood or my, like, Appalachianness with the kids, I see the kids do identify or they have that kind of same background. I can like literally see them become more engaged, like their shoulders might raise up. Because you have an authority figure who is giving power to a shared experience with them. And I also talk about how like looking at me, they would not think that by five or six years old I was riding a four-wheeler by myself. (Exeter)

The connections these teachers make in their classrooms by sharing their own stories and life experiences give validity to the students’ identities.

(Interview #5 with Exeter Transcript, Pos. 69)

Along with connecting with students through stories, the code *culture* highlighted the way that standardized tests do not often take into account differences in culture. The Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) tests and curricula provide activities

and assignments that some students struggle with because of content or context. Take for example Stonega's reminiscence of an SOL assignment that just fell flat because the assignment asked students to engage with a cultural idea that they just could not grasp. Stonega says, "I assigned a writing prompt for my ninth-grade students and it was about car traffic in a big city and [asked] how can you lessen the car traffic in a big city. My kids all looked at me like completely "what is this talking about?" ...They couldn't talk about a bus or rail or a taxi" (Stonega). The students who live in rural Virginia could not respond to this prompt from the VA SOL.

Because of the lack of continuity between SOL practices and their own students' experiences, often the teachers incorporate Appalachian texts, or texts that their students may relate to in their classrooms. Stonega, like the other teachers, seeks to incorporate texts that depict people and places that seem familiar to her students. Stonega said, "You know, it's a heck of a lot easier to teach kids *Where the Red Fern Grows*²⁰. Because everyone's like, yeah, we know what that's talking about" (Stonega). I was also tasked with reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* in middle school, and I remember this being the first time all of the students in my class enjoyed the reading because the novel talked about hunting, dogs, family, and other themes that my peers could relate to. Andover assigns *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls in her class because the themes of drug and alcohol addiction, extended family, and education resonate with her students. Other teachers have opened up their classrooms to privilege student choice. Exeter, for example, gives his students full choice in the books they read and often what they write. He says, "I have some kids who are very proud of the fact that they grew up on a farm...[and] because I offer students choice in...everything that we

²⁰ About the book.

do, that's all they'll write about" (Exeter). While his class centers student choice, he does bring texts to class that he believes his students will relate to or find interesting. He mentioned a poem he assigns in which a student is returning home from college and is snapping peas on the front porch with her mamaw. He also reads out loud to his students from different books that he believes they will find themselves in. The teachers, in making the curriculum reflect student interests and identities, or even by offering student choice, acknowledge the need for a local focus for the standards of learning.

Not only do teachers juggle the misalignment of standardized tests with their students' home cultures, they have to navigate how their teaching may not align with cultural upbringing. Dunbar describes an experience with a parent who was angry about an assignment. She sent home a worksheet to work through inferences:

The kid brings it back... But it was filled out by his dad. And [the assignment] had talked about how there was a kid outside, who was killing bugs, like catching fireflies and killing bugs when he was catching him. But his mom was looking outside and just saw that he was catching fireflies. And so she was thinking, "well, that's, you know, that's sweet," you know. And one of the questions for the inference was something like, what do you think has led to this boy's behavior or something? And the answers were like that maybe he hasn't been taught correctly, how to take care of like other things....But one of the answer choices was, um, he was acting out because his mom and dad had an argument or something like that. But the story never talked about that. That's not even the answer to the question. The answer was that maybe he hadn't been taught. The dad wrote that he must have been, "why would you give my son an

assignment that makes it seem like he's a psychopath? Because his parents are arguing." (Dunbar)

After that experience, Dunbar realized that even though she is teaching in the school she graduated from, that her experiences do not completely align with her students. In sharing this story, Dunbar explained how even the most minute detail of an assignment could be misconstrued based on others' analysis of the assignment. She became much more careful about the work she sent home. Similarly, Andover told me that when she was a new teacher in a school in her home county, her administration gave her the book *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green to use as one of the course texts. After giving her students copies, the next day her principal told her that they were going to have to stop reading the book because one of the parents thought the content was a bit too mature. I do not think these experiences are localized to Appalachia—for example three summers ago the police department of Charleston, South Carolina, protested the schools' choice to read *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. What is unique to these stories of outsider influence in the classroom and on learning is that the teachers in question are members of the community but they still face backlash from other parents.

Language

In the interview data, I coded segments as *language* if they

- Suggested language supremacy
- Used or described eye dialect
- Described language differences
- Corrected language (by self or others)
- Suggested linguistic heritage

Often, the teachers spoke about language or linguistic difference in both their own experiences with education and their students. The context in which *language* appeared in the data included when teachers described experiences with language supremacy, used or discussed dialect, described language differences, corrected their own language or described being corrected by others, suggested linguistic heritage (That Appalachian English is a holdover from Shakespeare or Chaucer).

Often, the topic of language came up when teachers spoke about their own experiences with teachers changing the way they spoke. For example, Imboden described her student teaching supervisor telling her to change the way she spoke:

because of her I have made, I don't want to say corrections. Because that sounds, that's an ugly way of saying it's a kind of negative connotation there. But I have made changes to my accent and my dialect, because of that instance. But she said that "if you want it to be a teacher, and taken professionally, and looked at as an intelligent intellectual individual you're going to have to lose the accent."

(Imboden)

This teacher, although Imboden does not believe she was being cruel, encouraged Imboden to change her accent so that she may be perceived as a competent teacher. Imboden says that because of this teacher she changed the way she spoke and the words she used, and she has never regained that accent. Because of this experience, and other similar experiences, Imboden says that she cringes if she hears a recording of her own voice because she thinks she sounds "so ignorant and hickish and backwoodsy" (Imboden). These experiences have brought her to focusing her classroom on language choices and situational awareness.

Imboden describes teaching her students about registers, codeswitching, and language choice in her class: "[Students] do feel validated that [their language] is okay.

It is okay to speak to your grandma this way. It is okay to speak to your mom this way. Your accent is okay too. But you do need to change your register when you're interviewing for a job or when you're talking to your principal" (Imboden). In doing this, Imboden supports her students in thinking critically about language and its genre-dependent uses. When she advises her students to "change their register" in certain contexts, she is preparing her students to understand how stereotypes of difference are linked to their accents and word choice. Along with this story, Imboden describes how she has these conversations with her own children in order to bolster their own critical thinking skills. She turns the conversation from discussing what we all do, changing the way we speak depending on the situation, to a discussion of why we do it.

Similarly, Andover says that she had a teacher who was constantly correcting her. The teacher would tell her to not say certain words and to not use "ain't." The effects of this teacher were carried over into Andover's experience in college. While Andover says that in her undergraduate classes, she was often unwilling to speak up. She says, "There's that misconception that the way I speak, because I have an Appalachian dialect, the way that I speak then informs this opinion of who I am and what I am" (Andover). Andover's experience here is not singular. When I was in elementary school, the music teacher, who was one of my favorite people, constantly corrected students who used "ain't" and used language that she deemed incorrect. Assuming difference because of accent is not unique to Appalachian accents, and if someone speaks with an accent other than standard American English they are often deemed as ignorant or different. Once Andover met and made community with other Appalachian students and faculty at her undergraduate institution, she became more outspoken and engaged in her course material. Because of this, she chooses not to monitor the way her students speak in the class.

Stonega describes a similar experience with college. At every turn and new friendship made, she said that her classmates and friends were constantly asking her to speak just so they could hear her accent. They would tell her to “just keep talking” (Stonega). While this was arguably a more positive outcome to linguistic difference than Andover’s choice to not speak up in class, it still perpetuates notions of difference. Stonega finds value in the way her students understand language and does not note it as less-than Standard American English. For example, she describes their word choice, “I think [my students] do understand how the word works. If you say, you know, ‘where are you? And they spell it the ‘w-e-r-e’ way, because it’s no different than we’re there...It’s a regional dialect. You know, it’s just what they hear” (Stonega). In this segment, Stonega describes phonetic renderings of words and word choice. In describing this as part of a “regional dialect”—students spelling words as they hear and pronounce them—Stonega is responding to implication of “correct” standard American English and how students write what they hear or how they think a word should be written. This led Stonega to constructing lessons for her class that help her students understand language in relation to genre choice and to not penalizing her students for incorrect word choice. She encourages her students to think about English not as a singular idea but of many different types of English.

More often than not, the teachers spoke about language in relation to the standardized tests and expectations of American Standard English. In her classroom, while Andover encourages her students to use their own voice in reflective, creative, and in-class discussion work, she acknowledges that the SOL test and the test scorers would never allow students to use their home dialects or anything deemed below the standard expectations. Andover mused, “What would that look like? If [students] were allowed to write using their language, you know?” The state does not make room for

variations in speech, however, "Because you can't put that through a state mandated rubric, they [test scorers] can't comment on it" (Andover). Her students, however, push back against the standard expectations. She said, "Students are very proud of their language and kind of push back against this idea that there is any kind of correction or you know, correct or proper way to communicate, you know, "this is this is how it is, this is who I am. This is what I'm going to be and you're not going to change that" (Andover). She turns this pushback into a discussion of the rhetorical situation in which she demonstrates to her students how should chose different ways of speaking for different situations.

Their own experiences with language and linguistic prejudice have made the teachers shape their pedagogy in order to prepare their students. The teachers, despite being beholden to standard American English expectations, find ways to let their students find value in their own language. Andover tells her students, "As a teacher, I go in and tell my kids 'when you go outside of this classroom, there will be misconceptions about you because of where you're from. Because of how you speak. But you shouldn't let that change the way you speak."

Education

I coded segments as *education* if the segment

- Explicitly mentioned experiences as students with educators.
- Explicitly mentioned or described pedagogy and/or pedagogical choices made by the teacher.

This theme included the teachers' experiences with their own education (both negative and positive). Each teacher spoke about how they came to the decision to be an English

teacher, and each story included teachers who left a lasting impact on them. For example, Stonega recounts a teacher who supported her love of reading, "I had this class where [my 11th grade teacher] would assign readings, and I'd get them done so early. She was like, 'You know what? What do you want to do?' She's like, 'Why don't you just pick out some novels and write me some extra pieces'" (Stonega). When Andover decided to become a teacher she wrote to one of her favorite high school English teachers who in turn warned her to "not become a high school English teacher."

Some teachers had experiences with teachers that were tinged with difference and stereotype. For example, Imboden described herself as a gifted kid. She had a teacher who suggested that when she got to second grade she be tested for the gifted program. However, that second grade teacher refused to have her tested because she had known Imboden's father's family. This judgment on family name is a theme in several Appalachian Studies scholarship including Cynthia Duncan's *Worlds Apart*. Duncan, in her section on "Blackwell," describes the familial ties that exist in the mountains and how those ties help folks get jobs: "Joey [her interview subject] explains that he hires based on knowing the families or having a solid recommendation from someone already working for him...There are some families that I know if their name pops up, I just won't consider it [for employment]" (27-28). This name recognition exists in this dissertation project. When I was first networking with my interview subjects at the College Access Collaborative Workshop in 2017, some of the teachers chose to participate only after learning my last name and who my people are. This name recognition can create or limit opportunities depending on the context.

Most of the teachers spent time lamenting how students are not as interested in language arts and reading like they used to be. Andover attributes students' lack of interest in language to standardized testing. While she believes that students need

language skills, she argues that students should be given the chance to learn different language skills that are not solely meant to prepare them for college, since many of her students plan to enter the workforce after school. For her dual enrollment students, students who plan to enter college, she models her course after composition courses she taught during her master's degree. For her non-dual enrollment courses, she models the course after technical writing courses she has taught. In doing this, she is acknowledging the need to further their language skills but is doing it in a way that resonates with her students and will hopefully prepare them for what will come.

Pedagogy

What I found to be both the most interesting and important theme in this data set was the ways in which the teachers leveraged their own experiences with stereotyping, linguistic supremacy, and cultural expectations in their own classrooms. In her interview, Stonega describes how she implements author Adriana Trigiani's local to Southwest Virginia "The Origin Project" to show her students the value in writing about Appalachia. This project's mission is to "inspire young people to release their inner voices through the art of writing about their unique origins" ([Origin Project Mission statement](#)). She uses the Origin Project to both support the SOL standards expected of her class and to give them a chance to explore their own Appalachian Identity. She says,

I do the origin project and probably one of my favorite projects that I have done in the past is [we would focus on] a social issue research paper where [students] would research a social issue, and then they would create a character and then write a story about that social issue. And a lot of kids would write about things

that were very prevalent, like teenage pregnancies, drug use, etc. And I guess technically there aren't writing about Appalachia, but they are writing about Appalachia. (Stonega)

The Origin Project activities give Stonega the opportunity to encourage her students to learn more about their Appalachianness while still meeting the needs of the SOL requirement. She says,

So, I used it for interview purposes, as well. One of the SOLS for ninth and eighth grade was [students] have to interview someone. So, I'd tell them that they got to interview somebody who's like 50 and above. [Students need to ask] them about their experiences. They would learn a lot from the various grandparents and parents...And so, it was a lot of Appalachian information, because they would ask questions like, "what was it like when you were a kid? Or, you know, how are things different? Do you like it better now?" And I still got to say, "okay, checkmark the interview process. (Stonega)

The teacher-participants in this study use their positionality stories to shape their pedagogies.

Andover describes learning about Appalachian Studies as a field at her undergraduate institution. The knowledge that Appalachia is a valued and studied place in academia has helped her to foreground Appalachian studies in many of her English courses, with the goal of getting her students to see the value of their own identities and language. She says, "I think going away, even though [my undergrad] is just like two and a half hours down the road, and coming back helped me now as a teacher teaching these kids because I try to try to incorporate a little bit of like an Appalachian section so that they too can see, what others in the world see" (Andover).

To garner student interest, often teachers will try to choose texts and activities that students will relate to. Andover says, “I choose things that [students] can see themselves in. I think you're more invested, you're more interested when you see the worth and the value in it” (Andover).

So let's say we do one thing that I've done with my regular 12 students is we do some of [Shakespeare's] sonnets. [Students] don't understand what he's talking about sometimes, so I'll play Bruno Mars, or something. And I'll say, “this is like a modern sonnet, do you know?” And so, then I'll do this little challenge where I will say, “Go out and find a song that matches sonnet whatever, whatever, whatever. And then you'll present it to the class and tell me why you think it is.” A lot of students and I'm, I'm being very stereotypical, a lot of students will use country songs, which are great. I mean they have great stories to them, that they're like, these love stories are stories about, you know, changing or growing or whatever. But they really, really, really get in to that because they can see themselves in it. And so all of a sudden, the sonnet says, like, “I might not understand the language, but I understand what the dude is trying to say.”

In this activity, Andover understands the disconnect between the material she is expected to teach—Shakespeare—and her students' own interests. In finding an activity that encourages them to find similarities rather than differences she is asking her students to critically think about how things are relational rather than oppositional.

Similarly, Exeter incorporates texts that he thinks his students will relate to. In his class he teaches a poem called “Snapping Beans.” The poem tells the story of a woman who is making her first visit back home since going away to college:

And she's like on the front porch. She's snapping beans with her grandma and grandma goes “how's school going?” And the narrator says, “All these things I

would want to tell her” and then all she says is “School’s fine.” And it ends with this is the line is like “this leaf still summer green balls off the like hickory tree and blows between them on the front porch.” And grandma says “it’s funny how things blow loose like that.” And so we talked about how there’s this thing where, okay, you’re gone, you’re leaving your rural kind of community, there’s a lot of stuff you get exposed to at school, you don’t want to tell your family, but then it ends on grandma kind of saying, “I understand”, and like, “you’re kind of like the leaf.” (Exeter)

By using this poem, Exeter is able to connect with his students and the idea of changing and being away from home. His students connect to this poem with their own experiences and thoughts of leaving behind their communities and being exposed to new things and how that changes their perspectives. By choosing assignments, texts, and lessons that share similar values with their students or that their students can see themselves in, the teachers are responding to the perpetual onslaught of negative stereotypes of Appalachia that the students see regularly in popular culture.

They see their roles as educators in Appalachian high schools as a means to prepare their students for responding to the detrimental ideas that persist about Appalachia. They feel this rhetorical emplacement to revise their pedagogies to help support their students in combatting or responding to these stories of Appalachia. The teachers use their own experiences of place (both in personal interactions and in media) to encourage students to critically reflect on the circulation of narratives of Appalachia, asking them to pause and reflect on the realities versus the assumptions.

Implications

In the next, and final chapter, I dig deeper into the implications of the analyses of both data sets. But I want to provide a brief overview here. The findings of this chapter highlight the ways in which my teacher-participants use stories and their own experiences with difference to understand their students while shaping their pedagogies to support student critical thinking and growth. This study expands Cedillo and Bratta's Positionality Stories by acknowledging the ways in which teachers shape their pedagogy because of their positionality stories. While Cedillo and Bratta's work underscores the relationship building power of positionality stories, I see positionality stories also having a bearing on how teachers mold their pedagogical choices, too. Because these teachers are from Appalachia, and they have chosen to remain in or return to Appalachia to teach in Appalachian schools, they have a unique insight into how the curriculum that they are given often does not engage students from other cultures or social classes. The way in which these teachers engage place within their pedagogy also has implications for place-based pedagogy.

Often, place-based pedagogy relies upon activities that center place. This study expands an understanding of place-based pedagogy to include sharing stories of place or encounters with stereotypes of place instead of centering simply the location of the class.

I would like to end this chapter with one particular story that I believe highlights my study's conclusions from participant Andover:

And I think going away [to college] and coming back helped me now as a teacher teaching these kids because I try to try to incorporate an Appalachian section so that they too can see what others in the world see. We do a little bit of Jessco White, the dancing outlaw, I still show that video. So, we start with that question,

what do outsiders think of us? And then what do we think of us? And, so I had a student my first year at [current high school] who eventually went to JMU. And he was like, "You're so right, because I had these roommates from New Jersey. And the first thing that they asked me was, like, are you married to your cousin? I wouldn't have been prepared for that had you not kind of prepared me for that." (Andover)

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

I did not embrace my own Appalachian identity until I attended The University of Virginia's College at Wise; specifically I did not understand the rich cultural and geographic history of Appalachia until I took an Appalachian Fiction course with Dr. Amy Clark. For me, being Appalachian was associated with an ignorance and rurality that I just could not see myself belonging to. During elementary school, the most we learned about Appalachia came from trips to local coal mines and science lessons that spoke of the importance of coal, but, once I graduated college and began my graduate degree, I learned that the coal industry gave stipends to any science teacher in the region who would create and implement positive lessons about coal into their curriculum. My high school English teachers never asked me to interrogate the stereotypes associated with the region that I called home, even though I grew up in the town of Appalachia and attended Appalachia High School. But, I also know that the teachers at my high school were required to meet certain criteria in their courses—like reading Shakespeare and preparing students for the Virginia Standards of Learning.

When I took Dr. Clark's Appalachian Fiction course during my sophomore year at UVA Wise, I was tasked with interrogating my issues with Appalachia, the representation of Appalachians in popular culture. I read James Still's *River of Earth* and Denise Giardina's *Storming Heaven*, and I met a history of Appalachia that was rich in culture and pride. I'm thankful for Dr. Clark's course, but I cannot help but wonder how different my own attitudes about Appalachian identity would have been if I would have had the teachers in this study as my English teachers, if I would have had teachers who helped me interrogate my ideas of Appalachian identity while embracing the stories of my homeplace. When I learned that Appalachian Studies was a field of study

and upon my acceptance to graduate study at Virginia Tech, I decided to take it as an opportunity to learn more about my home in the mountains and to figure out ways that I could share the stories and experiences of others in the region. I think I would have appreciated my home and identity much sooner. At the very least, I would have been given the tools to dismantle the harsh stereotypes of difference and backwardness associated with Appalachia that I often accepted as truth.

So, why did I focus this study on Appalachia in order to understand pedagogy or how folks respond to the stories told about them? Because the region is home to teachers who care about their homeplaces and the students they teach. This population is uniquely situated because they show what it means to be an educator to people like themselves. By critically engaging with Appalachian identities—the reality—and stereotypes—what has been placed upon the region—the teachers in this study support their students in developing the critical thinking and interrogation skills that are necessary to understand the role that storytelling plays and how to combat stereotypes. The teachers shape their pedagogy in order to give students the space to work through different means of interrogating their own identities and the identities that are placed upon them and to understand how to combat stereotypes.

For this project, I used two methods of data collection: historical research and interviewing. These two methodologies employed together reveal a sweeping scope of Appalachian Virginia's experiences with rhetorical emplacement in relation to educational practices and ideologies by encountering some of the earliest stories told about the region and contemporary accounts of teachers who currently work in Appalachian Virginia. My main research questions ask how stories told about Appalachia have affected educational practices within the region, and to answer that question I sought out the history of the stories told about Appalachia through historical

research; then, in order to attend to the present realities of the region, I interviewed high school English teachers who identify as Appalachian and work in Appalachian Virginia high schools. The historical and ethnographic methods I employed in this dissertation study allowed me to understand the circulation and variances of particular stories placed onto the Appalachian region by first examining the historical interaction of the region with the stories about the region and then understanding how those narratives exist in the world today. By using grounded qualitative coding, I created codes from the historical data set—the codes were isolation, language, education, expectations, culture, and literacy—and compared them to the interview transcripts, I conclude that while illiteracy is a stereotype that Appalachians combat, illiteracy is not the primary concern in the classrooms of the teachers in my study. These teachers build their pedagogies around rhetorical emplacement in order to support critical thinking skills, understanding the rhetorical situation, and support contextual understanding, including recognition of multiple literacies.

Takeaways

This dissertation puts into conversation theories of place and place-based pedagogy while expanding the scope of Appalachian focused rhetoric and writing scholarship. Rhetoric and writing studies about Appalachia do not need to solely focus on literacy or literacy sponsorship, although that work is important. Predominant stereotypes of illiteracy have pushed scholarship to disprove that image. However, as my data suggests, Appalachian-aware teachers prioritize issues of critical thinking over issues of illiteracy. Appalachian teachers can help us understand how stories make the worlds in which we live. By extending the conversation to how teachers construct their pedagogy because of their own experiences with stereotypes, I demonstrate the ways in

which teachers are actively responding to and engaging with stories that are placed onto the region.

This dissertation study furthers Cristina Cedillo and Phil Bratta's "positionality stories" by exploring the ways in which positionality stories play a role in shaping the teachers' pedagogy. For example, Dunbar describes how her own lived experiences of being Appalachian influence her pedagogy. Repeatedly in the interview she mentioned how one of the most important things she could do for her students was to relate to them, to bring her own experiences into the classroom in order to shape her lessons. By doing this, Dunbar underscored how place-based pedagogies are embodied in the ways that teachers shape their pedagogies as a response to outside stories that have been positioned onto them and their students because of their relationship to a place, Appalachia. The teachers construct activities that help their students combat stereotypes while understanding their connection to the rest of the world. For example, Exeter, while centering his pedagogy on student choice—particularly in book choice—remarked that he brings in books that he knows his students will relate to. By doing this, he helps his students see themselves in the texts in his class, which ultimately allows them to interrogate notions of identity and difference.

The teachers in this study all engage in a type of "speaking back to" the stereotypes of the region. Because of their own experiences with stories placed onto them—Imboden describes going to a different, non-Appalachian part of Virginia with her extended family and, because of her Appalachian accent, a server at a restaurant did not believe that she was from Virginia. These teachers have all experienced stereotypes of difference for simply being of a place. My definition of rhetorical emplacement—that is built from previous scholarship—furthers the field's discussions on place theories by focusing on three things: 1) the way that stories can shape a group of people or an idea

of a place/people, 2) the staying power of stories, and 3) the way that folks respond to these positioned stories, particularly in their pedagogy.

Limitations of the Study

This study is by no means all-encompassing. Due to the qualitative nature of the research design, the results of my study are not representative of the entirety of Appalachia by any means. This study kept as its research site Appalachian Virginia counties, especially those counties in far southwest Virginia, in order to understand how travel accounts and other stories about Appalachia affect or shape education in the region. As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, I am from the region that I study. My connection to Appalachia could be a limitation in that I have a vested interest in highlighting the great work that teachers in the region do every day. This study could be replicated in other parts of Appalachia to yield very different results, and I hope this study does encourage others to seek out the ways that teachers across the mountains use their own experiences to inform their teaching.

Another limitation of my study is three-fold in relation to race (see Appendix E). First, for the most part, studies of Appalachia in rhetoric and writing typically indicate gendered and socioeconomic nuances that affect their participants or research sites; however, many do not mention race. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), people of color make up 18.2% of the region's population (see Appendix E for ARC's Appalachia's Population Data Snapshot). The lack of attention to race in previous studies is a limitation for my own research because the studies are limited in scope. Along with this, my research participants are high school English teachers from the Appalachian region; this group is predominately white. Personally, I did not have a teacher of color until I attended UVA Wise for my undergraduate

degree, and I did not have a Black teacher until graduate school. Third, the archival and historical information I found is predominately white, except for Dr. Jones's book. My study participants were five white English teachers from the region, four women and one man.

Also, over the course of completing this study several issues arose because of the Covid-19 global pandemic. When I began my archival data in December 2019, with the hopes to continue that research over Spring Break, the spread of Covid-19 caused the shut-down of many of the libraries and archives that I would have had access to in Wise County, Virginia. So, the books that I explore in Chapter 4 were all found and analyzed after the initial data collection in the libraries in Wise. Similarly, while I had planned to conduct interviews with teachers in their home communities, meeting them where it was easiest for them—their homes, schools, or local coffee shops—the pandemic forced me to revise my methods. Virginia Tech's IRB put a pause on all in-person research that was not Covid-19 related. Because of that, all interviews were conducted online, and I chose Zoom as the platform to interview and record the interviews with my participants. In the virtual setting, more minute communicative strategies are silenced. For example, if I would have been able to meet the teachers in their classrooms, I could have picked up on their energy about certain topics—which may have led to different stories—and our conversations might have yielded much different results. Also, face-to-face interviews would have allowed me to see the spaces in which they teach and to see their classroom materials. In person interviews would have allowed both my participants and me the opportunity to speak with their entire selves rather than being mediated by a computer screen. Zoom decontextualized the embodied existence of my teachers in their classrooms and homes.

Contribution to the field

By examining how the stories told about Appalachia often affect how folks from the region interact with the world, this study and its findings exist at the intersection of Place-Based Rhetorics, Appalachian Studies, Writing Pedagogy, and Storytelling. Often rhetoric and writing research that centers Appalachia focuses solely on literacy and literacy sponsorship. In this dissertation, I studied Appalachia, and Appalachian teachers in particular, so that I could understand other ways in which rhetoric and writing scholarship may intervene in research about Appalachia.

The teachers who participated in my study made it very clear: Appalachia is a rich site for exploring different pedagogical and place-based methodologies and theories. For example, the teachers showed that place-based pedagogies need not only focus on place—i.e., assignments that ask students to write about their home or their communities—but teachers shape their pedagogies based on their own relationship to a place—and the stereotypes that they have personally encountered. Because these teachers are educating students from very similar backgrounds to themselves, they are able to use their own stories about place to inform the ways they support students' critical thinking. While the teachers spoke explicitly with me about the experiences that underscore their pedagogical choices—encounters with teachers who advised them to normalize their accents or with folks who assumed difference because of their relationship with place—the teachers use their experiences to shape classroom discussions in order to discuss linguistic supremacy, Standard American English, and Appalachian variations of English, ultimately leading to discussions of genre expectations and word choice.

This study also contributes to the field's conversations that center place by witnessing the stories of Appalachian teachers and how through their pedagogy they

speak back against stereotypes often associated with the region. Studies of place have been a focus of rhetorical scholarship since the inception of our field. To understand the context of a situation, location, place, and time all need to be taken into account. Theories of rhetorical ecologies (Dobrin 2001 and Marilyn Cooper 1986) led into theories of rhetorical regionalism, a theory with roots in cultural geography and critical regionalism. Jenny Rice's rhetorical regionalism (2014) is a useful theory in helping support an understanding of the ways in which place affects meaning, but the role of place in her work tends to be more hypothetical than reality based. The experiences with place that both the authors I examine in the historical chapter and the teachers I interviewed have encountered are genuine and demonstrable. Place, particularly being from Appalachia, shaped and shapes their experiences in the world. While this study keeps as its focus Appalachian Virginia, teachers from different stereotyped populations may also be engaging with critical thinking and stereotypes in relation to place within their classrooms. Across the United States, there are teachers who choose to go back and teach in places that reflect their own identities. This response to narratives about Appalachia brought me to building upon existing theories of rhetorical emplacement. When I say rhetorical emplacement, I understand that as and mean the situatedness of the teachers and others to process and resist narratives that are imposed upon them.

This positioning of stories often creates a misaligned idea of the realities of that people group. This emplacement can then affect an understanding of the group of people and their encounters with the world, which can lead to unsupported claims and ineffective policies in support of those people. While this emplacement could be based on sex, gender, race, sexuality, etc., my study focuses on the role rhetorical emplacement played and still plays on our understanding of Appalachia, particularly

how the rhetorically emplaced stereotypes of difference and lack have affected the educational practices of English Teachers in Appalachian Virginia.

Further Research

As I interviewed my participants, I kept thinking about the ramifications that a longer study would have on understanding how teachers respond to stereotypes in their pedagogy. So, for further study, I plan to conduct a larger study by interviewing more teachers from Appalachia because a comparative study that looks to both rural and metropolitan Appalachia would be a more inclusive study of pedagogy in the region. In doing this, I will be able to really highlight the role that place-based pedagogy plays on already existing pedagogy in the region. A larger interview population would yield more concrete place-based strategies that teachers in Appalachia find useful. After talking to my teachers and hearing the stories they shared about their students, I think future research could interrogate former students' experiences with the pedagogy of their teachers and if that led them to critically thinking about stereotypes. This could also include asking the students what they learned about their own Appalachian identities in the teachers' classes.

This study could be replicated in other areas of the country or the world. For example, I believe a comparative study of Appalachia and other areas that index difference could be really useful in understanding and implementing pedagogy that asks students to interrogate their own identities, the expectations of those identities, and the stereotypes about those identities. I hope that this study gives the exigence for other scholars to see how teachers in other areas or contexts shape their pedagogies in relation to the assumptions that surround their people groups. Teachers across the

world make pedagogical choices that give students the tools they need to refute and respond to how the rest of the world perceives them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

	<p>Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance Institutional Review Board North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497) 300 Turner Street NW Blacksburg, Virginia 24061 540/231-3732 irb@vt.edu http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp</p>
<p>MEMORANDUM</p>	
DATE:	May 13, 2020
TO:	Sheila Carter-Tod, Katie Beth Brooks
FROM:	Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 29, 2024)
PROTOCOL TITLE:	SWVA Writing Pedagogy Project
IRB NUMBER:	20-093
<p>Effective May 13, 2020, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii).</p>	
<p>Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.</p>	
<p>This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.</p>	
<p>All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:</p>	
<p>https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm</p>	
<p>(Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)</p>	
<p>PROTOCOL INFORMATION:</p>	
Determined As:	Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(ii)
Protocol Determination Date:	May 13, 2020
<p>ASSOCIATED FUNDING:</p>	
<p>The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.</p>	
<p><i>Invent the Future</i></p>	
<p>VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY <i>An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution</i></p>	

Appendix B: Interview Recruitment Script

Subject: Participation Requested for Writing Pedagogy Study

IRB Protocol Number: 20-093

Hello, my name is Katie Beth Brooks. I am a PhD candidate at Virginia Tech in the Rhetoric and Writing program. I am conducting research on the role of ideology and outside stakeholders on writing instruction in Appalachian Virginia secondary schools.

Participation in this research includes a 30-minute to one-hour interview to take place via the video conferencing platform Zoom. The interview will focus on your experiences as an English teacher in an Appalachian Virginia school and how outside beliefs and people might affect the way you teach. The video interview will be recorded, but recordings will be deleted after the interview is completed. If you participate in this interview, your total time commitment will be between 30– 60 minutes.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at

(276) 275-9630 or katbb92@vt.edu

Appendix C: IRB Approved Consent Form for Interviews

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants

in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project:

SWVA Writing Pedagogy Project

IRB Protocol Number:

20-093

Investigator(s):

Sheila Carter-Tod

Email: sct@vt.edu

Katie Brooks

Email: katbb92@vt.edu

Phone: (276) 275-9630

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this project is to understand the role that ideology might play when Appalachian high school English teachers create and assign writing activities in their classrooms.

II. Procedures

Participants will take part in one 30-minute to an hour long, loosely structured interview about their experiences with ideologies and outside stakeholders in their teaching. The interviews will be conducted using Zoom, a platform that supports video conferencing and recording. The interviews will be audio and visual.

Participation in this program is voluntary based on your willingness to participate.

Information will be collected from your participation in the interview. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by Katie Brooks. By signing this consent form you allow the directors of this program to use any information we obtain via the above methods in research.

III. Risks

The researchers perceive minimal risk in participating in this project.

IV. Benefits

The benefits of this study include but are not limited to: helping push forward place-based pedagogy in the region.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Unless you ask to remain anonymous, all data collected from this program will include your information. All data will be used and stored in a confidential manner: i.e. Data coded into computers.

All video interviews will be deleted as soon as the interview is transcribed.

The parties who will have access to the data are the researchers, collaborating universities, and the study sponsor. We will not release any information without your explicit consent.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

Note: in some situations, it may be necessary for an investigator to break confidentiality. If a researcher has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, or that a person poses a threat of harm to others or him/herself, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities. If applicable to this study, the conditions under which the investigator must break confidentiality must be described.

VI. Compensation

No compensation will be offered for research participation.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

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

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent via electronic signature:

Subject signature

Date

Subject printed name

Date

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Teacher Participants (Semi-Structured)

Focus on narrative and storytelling:

Direction: This interview is intended to be a narrative/conversation between the interviewer and interviewee. So, feel free to tell stories, share experiences. I have guiding questions, but I'd much rather just hear your stories. :)

How did you become an English teacher? Who influenced you? What influenced you?

What was your education like? What did you learn? Not learn?

- What factors influence what you teach in the classroom? How you teach?

How long have you lived in Appalachia? Taught in Appalachia?

- Does the fact that your students are "Appalachian" affect what you teach? If so, how?

Can you share any experiences you have with outsider misconceptions (or accurate assumptions) of your students and the region?

- Have you experienced any issues/problems/hiccups in your teaching due to misconceptions about Appalachia?
- What constraints do you face in the classroom based on student population, expectations from other (institutional, familial, etc.) stakeholders?
- Who are the nameless/faceless people (or named and faced outsiders) who affect what you can/cannot teach in the classroom? How do you interact with these people?
- Who are some of the "nameless/faceless people" (Schreiber and Worden *Composition Studies* 47.1 2019) or future audiences you are trying to prepare your students to write for?

- Do you make accommodations in your pedagogy for outside influences? If so, can you share a story of a time you've had to make accommodations?

Do your beliefs about writing and teaching writing change based on outside influences? If so, how?

Appendix E: Appalachian Regional Commission “Data Snapshot: Appalachia’s Population”

DATA SNAPSHOT APPALACHIA'S POPULATION

Use *The Appalachian Region: A Data Overview from the 2012–2016 American Community Survey*—also known as the Chartbook—to discover more about Appalachia’s population. Authored by the Population Reference Bureau with the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Chartbook features data on income, employment, education, and other indicators at the regional, subregional, state, and county levels, and examines data change over recent years to show trends. The Chartbook’s population analysis compares data from 2016 and 2010 U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

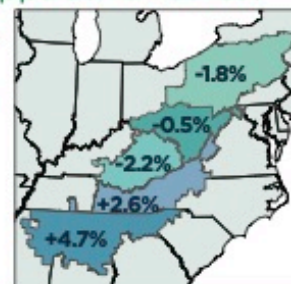
POPULATION CHANGE

25.6 million people live in Appalachia’s 420 counties. Since 2010, Appalachia’s population has **grown 1%**; the **nation’s** has **grown 4.5%**.



POPULATION CHANGE BY SUBREGION

While much of Appalachia has lost population since 2010, **Southern Appalachia’s** population has **grown 4.7%**.



MINORITY POPULATION

Minorities make up a small but growing share of Appalachia’s population.

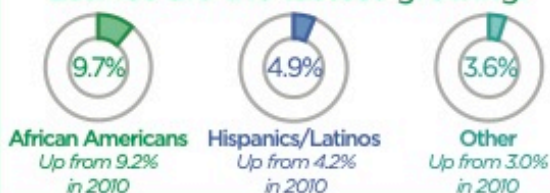


APPALACHIA
18.2%
Up from 16.4% in 2010

U.S.
38.7%
Up from 36.2% in 2010

MINORITY POPULATION BY GROUP

Among Appalachia’s minority populations, African Americans are the largest group, while Hispanics/Latinos are the fastest-growing.



MEDIAN AGE

Appalachia’s **median age** is **higher** than the nation’s.



APPALACHIA
40.9
YEARS



U.S.
38.0
YEARS



Find more data on this and other topics at www.arc.gov/chartbook