"God, Mother and Island Creek": The Story of Holden Central School and the Emergence of Nurturing Paternalism

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"GOD, MOTHER AND ISLAND CREEK":

THE STORY OF HOLDEN CENTRAL SCHOOL AND THE EMERGENCE OF NURTURED PATERNALISM

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and Professional Development

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of Graduate College of Marshall University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Curriculum and Instruction

Committee Chair, L. Eric Lassiter, Ph. D.
Elizabeth Campbell, Ph. D.
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Marshall University
December 2017
SIGNATURE PAGE

I hereby affirm that the following project meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by my discipline, college, and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With my signature, I approve the manuscript for publication.

Project Title: THE STORY OF HOLDEN CENTRAL SCHOOL: A HISTORICAL CASE STUDY OF A PROGRESSIVE APPALACHIAN COMMUNITY, CURRICULUM, AND COAL COMPANY

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Committee Chairperson
09/30/2017 Date
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family who have provided me with an endless level of support, mostly emotional and sometimes financial as well. I want to thank my father and my mother—Harley David Walden and Deborah Walden—for always listening to my struggles and encouraging me to keep at it. I want to express my appreciation for my aunt, Margarette Walden, and my grandmother, Wilda Walden, for always lending an ear and providing thoughtful feedback when I read them excerpts from my research. I love you all very much and thank you for everything.

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ABSTRACT

The story of the community of Holden, West Virginia (Logan County), Island Creek Coal Company, and its model school (Holden Central School) offers a counter-narrative to the dominant deficit-oriented narratives concerning Appalachian education. In particular, the progressive nature of Island Creek Coal Company led it to create a model coal camp community and a school that educated their employees’ children. The school operated from 1922 until 1970, when the combined elementary and junior high school closed its doors forever. Island Creek Coal Company both designed, supplied, and oversaw the daily operations of a benevolent community with all the modern amenities of the day while paradoxically exercising strict, authoritative control of its mines. When it came to the Holden Central school, this conflicting behavior on the part of the coal company was perceived by former teachers and students as a positive, albeit contradictory “nurturing paternalistic” force of influence, rather than a manipulative force of exploitation. This study explores the complex dynamics of these relationships in an effort to construct a narrative for the larger story of Holden as a community, a school, and the headquarters of a powerful coal company. This was accomplished by combining the analyses of archival records and newspaper articles, along with oral histories of former educators and students from Holden Central School. This collaborative ethnographic research complicates larger, dominant narratives and provides scholars of rural education and Appalachian Studies with a new lens to view company towns and the industries that ran them.

Keywords: Appalachian Studies, rural education, nurturing paternalism
"GOD, MOTHER AND ISLAND CREEK": THE STORY OF HOLDEN CENTRAL SCHOOL AND THE EMERGENCE OF NURTURING PATERNELISM

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introducing the Problem: The Specter of Rural Education

The state of Appalachian education is not all that different from the larger narrative currently facing the American education system, generally speaking, as reflected in the discourse associated with educational policy reform. However, it does offer a nuanced look at Progressive era education systems built on the philosophies of Horace Mann and John Dewey.

This story begins with a meeting on a hot summer’s day in 2014 at the office of Professor Stan Maynard on the main campus of Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. At the time, I was enrolled in one of my first Appalachian Studies courses and researching coal camp schools by conducting casual conversations and collecting oral histories from a former student and teacher of such schools.

Professor Maynard attended Holden Central School (Holden Central), a coal camp school in southern West Virginia; his father worked as an administrator for the coal company (Island Creek Coal Company) that owned the school. Professor Maynard spoke at length about the school and the legacy that it left behind in the form of its former teachers and students. I was both enthralled and surprised at the account he retold to me, which ran counter to everything I ever heard about the quality of life and education provided to the miners’ children. His narrative spoke of caring and masterful educators
supplied with significant resources; a benevolent coal company emerged from his memories. I decided on that day that this school, the coal company, and the community should be preserved for future generations of scholars in Appalachian Studies and educational history, and for the future generations of Holdenites, especially the descendants of these former teachers and students. As this research unfolded, several questions came to mind and were addressed during the course of the study.

What does it mean to be an educated West Virginian, Appalachian, or even a citizen living in rural post-industrial America? The answers to these questions are complex and intertwined with the story of a coal company, a school, and the community that came into being as a direct result of both and now barely manages to survive without either. The specter of rural education in post-industrial America haunts the American consciousness, but simultaneously fails to garner major headlines or much attention outside of the regions affected by federal and state education policy reform. All too often this results in school closures and consolidations because of either low enrollment numbers or failing to meet pre-determined adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmark scores. The stories of these schools are important and like all stories, never truly end. The story of Holden Central School in Logan County, West Virginia is reflective of these stories, but also offers a unique narrative concerning an Appalachian context.

**Problem Statement**

Holden Central was promoted as a "model" coal camp school by Island Creek Coal Company’s founders and located in West Virginia. It can be seen as an example of what was possible when a powerful coal company allocated adequate resources and funds to the school and allowed it to develop and flourish without a great deal of oversight and
intervention (Green, 2010). This is significant because the predominant narrative concerning coal camp schools and communities is mostly concerned with a cycle of economic constrictions and inevitable dependency on the part of the coal companies that manipulated and exploited the coal miners and their families (Eller, 1982). Holden Central existed and was influenced in ways by the larger Progressive educational movement in Appalachia that is not always noted by educational historians and survey texts that chronicle the nation’s development of education (Urban & Wagoner Jr., 2009).

In order to provide clarification regarding the use of the term “model,” when it comes to the design of Holden Central School by its founders, I am specifically referring to the fact that both Colonel William H. Coolidge and Albert F. Holden intentionally designed their community with the idea of placating their workforce in order to prevent them from moving to a neighboring coalmining community that would have been operated by a competitor (Thurmond, 1964). Since the creation of Holden Central School was in part influenced by progressive ideals, planned communities have a separate and distinct connotation when viewed through the larger lens of Progressivism and its history in the United States (Lang, 2001). In fact, community planning in terms of Progressivism relates to civic engagement and sociocultural programs implemented on the part of the state and Holden, as a community, does not fit into that category because it instead reflects an origin more aligned with capitalist desire for profit margins and bottom lines.

This research incorporates oral histories along with a review of historical documents in the form of archival records and analyses of historic newspaper articles to provide a more complete picture of the school and what it meant to the community of Holden in Logan County, West Virginia. By doing this, I want to develop a dissertation
within a collaborative framework (see Campbell & Lassiter, 2014), one that provides a case study of Appalachia’s contribution to progressive education and the instruction of educators with capable students, as expressed by my community consultants, while at the same time offering former students and teachers of Holden Central a document that will preserve their memories and contributions to education in Logan County.

But before I begin to explore my research questions, a discussion of the Progressive era in American history, as well as its associated educational movement is necessary in order to contextualize Holden Central’s importance in the region and nationwide as well because Island Creek Coal Company’s founders were in part influenced by Progressivism, but also simultaneously were eager to turn a profit by any means necessary. This complex dynamic of what I will call "nurturing paternalism" seems contradictory, but when viewed through the lens of Progressivism, the coal company’s behavior begins to make sense. The founders of Holden, West Virginia (Colonel William H. Coolidge, a Boston attorney and financier, and Albert F. Holden, a mining engineer) sought to utilize some selective Progressive ideals of community investment, while still wielding their own influence over the community to ensure the economic prosperity of the coal company (Thurmond, 1964). The Progressive era in America occurred during the early twentieth century (1900-1930) and was a political reform movement that espoused bureaucratic intervention on the state’s behalf into local realms of education, public health, child welfare, and public morality (e.g., prohibition) (Link, 1992). Prior to this movement, much public reform efforts were limited and based in social Darwinist ideology that advocated limited involvement from the state in these public realms. But in a reactionary manner, Progressives wanted to address rapid changes
they saw in society caused by industrialization and immigration, which they viewed as problems, which could be solved through means of government intervention.

Progressives from both the so-called Left and Right were indeed a diverse group of sociopolitical reformers, but shared several integral traits that distinguished them from their more conservative predecessors of the early twentieth century (Gendzel, 2011). In particular, Progressives were united in their opposition to an earlier “steel chain of ideas” that opposed state-sponsored social intervention on the part of the state. They also utilized public education as one of their primary means of achieving an interventionist government that they thought should intervene in the daily lives of citizens for the common good of all (Gendzel, 2011). These initiatives to varying degrees defined what it meant to be a Progressive during this time period and as such still hold specific meaning for what constitutes Progressive ideas (with a capital "P") versus progressive (with a lower case "p") ideas and their influences.

Generally speaking, Progressive education began around the turn of the twentieth century in America. The central tenants of this new and radical interpretation of learning included having a student-centered instruction where children were considered to be an integral component of the learning experience and not just a vessel to be filled, as the traditionalist views on education held (Reese, 2001). In particular, Progressive education viewed the child as an active member in the learning process, not passive recipients in a transmission of information or knowledge from stern instructor to student. John Dewey became the figurehead of the Progressive education movement and encouraged a new discourse in terms of curriculum and pedagogy that placed the child as a major stakeholder during instruction and that the curriculum of a school should be fluid in the
sense that it should both reflect advances in society and also adapt to outside factors, such as industrialization (Reese, 2001). Progressives believed this revolutionary act of restructuring the existing political body of society via a more involved government could be achieved through the public education system and shaping the youth of America with Progressive ideals through reform efforts.

Progressivism, as a sociopolitical movement, consisted of a complex relationship that existed between upper class businesses and other grassroots groups that forced the elites to make certain concessions to their reform efforts along the way. These grassroots groups consisted of parent-teacher associations, labor unions, and socialist political parties, who all sought different alterations when it came to school reform (Reese, 2002). Although none of these individual groups possessed enough authority to influence great change, together through concerted efforts, they were able to influence elites in power to enact real change through educational policy reform for public schools. In particular, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Toledo, Ohio, Rochester, New York, and Kansas City, Missouri were four urban cities that experienced such educational reform efforts during the Progressive era through grassroots groups (Reese, 2002). The development of school reform in these four cities were no doubt influenced by wealthy capitalists, but through the intervention of various, small groups, expressing their opinions on the improvement of life for all children, school reform was altered and shaped by activists that included many women and religious groups as well (Reese, 2002). Progressivism manifested differently across the nation and school reform efforts during that era did as well.

As Progressivism developed during the early part of the twentieth century, settlement house workers, who were men and women from middle-class backgrounds,
sought to join the reform movement of the progressive era in Chicago, New York, and Boston by moving to inner cities and diagnosing the cause of poverty in urban neighborhoods. These reformers saw the massive flux of immigration and squalor as a prime opportunity to remedy the failures of past legislation and introduce real change at the source by creating settlement houses, which would educate children, train adults for jobs, and provide temporary housing for those in need (Davis, 1967). Interestingly, these volunteers conducted surveys in order to determine the most effective ways to solve the nation’s large urban poverty crisis.

By doing so, the settlement houses created a unique push within the larger Progressive current to aid those they viewed as less fortunate by introducing sweeping changes through state interventionist policies (Davis, 1967). After WWI, these volunteers were mostly replaced with social workers, who saw these policies as a vocation instead of a social cause and as a result they reduced some of their initiatives, which were pervasive at the beginning of the movement. But the settlement house reformers were successfully able to change the public perception and cause of poverty from the fault of the individual to the environment where the individual lived (Davis, 1967). This created the opportunity and idea for other Progressive reformers to extend their efforts from urban settings to the rural locations in the southern United States.

Interestingly, the development of educational reform after the Civil War through the 1930s was shaped by corporate power and upper-class capitalist elites. But the influence of the working class and labor and trade unions on school reform also played a major role in urban schools (Peterson, 1985). Many of these urban centers were politically pluralist and experienced significant growth in terms of the number of public
schools because of swelling numbers of immigrants migrating to the cities, industrial
employment opportunities that drew people from more rural locations, and the desire
from the American public to provide all children with an education that included
compulsory attendance (Peterson, 1985). In particular, Atlanta, Chicago, and San
Francisco swelled as industrial meccas during the Progressive era and as a result the
public schools there featured well-resourced facilities, smaller classroom sizes, and
trained educators instructed to teach children from a student-centered perspective
(Peterson, 1985). Reformers living in urban centers advocated for strengthening public
schools and through support from labor unions they were able to achieve their goals and
provide urban children with quality schools of no cost to their parents. These Progressive
efforts reflect the reality of school reform during this time, as compromises were
necessary in order to advance the cause of educating every child.

As Progressivism spread across the country, reformers experimented with
different ways to implement their desire to revitalize the public education system in
America from rural, locally-controlled schoolhouses, into state-controlled institutions
where teachers were required to pass certification examinations, curricula were
established and standardized by the state, and students were not only expected, but
required to attend school on a daily basis. One such case study was in Gary, Indiana,
where William A. Wirt introduced sweeping changes to public schools through
Progressive reforms and efforts (Cohen, 1990). As the area’s first school superintendent,
Wirt introduced what he called the “Gary Plan” in 1910, which incorporated many new
initiatives, such as health examinations, night school classes, “Americanization”
programs, and a curriculum consisting of arts and crafts and manual training as well
(Cohen, 1990). These powerful reform efforts resulted in the “platoon system” that became immensely popular across the nation, but dissolved after Wirt’s death.

Specifically speaking, the “platoon system” consisted of moving children around from different rooms, instead of having them stationary in one room all day. Wirt believed that if children transitioned from learning in different classrooms and then went outside to socialize outdoors, then this would help develop a myriad of skills, as advocated by other Progressive reform educators, such as John Dewey (Cohen, 1990). Students were also introduced to a rotating series of guest speakers in the school auditorium, which allowed for the school to operate with a small staff and simultaneously not have to expand construction on school buildings (Cohen, 1990). School enrollment was able to increase significantly because of this innovative plan of rotating children from room to room, as well as having students outside. Additionally, the school day was longer than most, which accommodated working parents employed nearby in industrial factories and other settings. In 1929 the “Gary Plan” was expanded to hundreds of schools across numerous cities, however, when Wirt died in 1938 the “platoon system” that he created also dissolved because of his direct involvement in the schools and his strong level of oversight (Cohen, 1990). These changes inspired other Progressive reformers to further experiment with the public education system in America in order to alleviate what they perceived as flaws in American society and southern America became the next location where they sought to introduce such legislation, however the division among southern Progressives would prove this to be a difficult challenge.

As time went on, Progressive reform efforts from the late 1930s through the early 1960s waxed and waned in terms of implementation and popularity. The 1930s
represented the penultimate of Progressive education school reform because the philosophical approach to education espoused by John Dewey was widespread across the country with many adherents in positions of authority to directly implement a student-centered approach to teaching (Zilversmit, 1993). But during the Great Depression and continuing through the end of World War II, progressive school reform efforts halted because of the lack of financial resources, lack of qualified teachers, and a surge in the number of public schools because of the need created by the baby boom generation (Zilversmit, 1993). Also, the onset of the Cold War during the 1950s through the 1960s signaled the beginning of the end for progressive school reforms, as attitudes toward student-centered instruction faded into obscurity and schools once again became institutions for the transmission of facts and information and the indoctrination of children to notions of patriotism through Americanization efforts in schools (Zilversmit, 1993). These progressive school reform efforts reflect the change in the public’s perception regarding the purpose of schooling and education, whether that be to become better citizens or to prepare children for their upcoming roles as functional members of a capitalist economy.

After having explored the origins of Progressivism, I now turn to a discussion on the nuances of southern progressivism and how it manifested there. As Progressivism took hold in America during the 1920s, farmers and rural communities were the ones who most directly felt the influence of sociopolitical reform. Farmers comprised a unique and complicated population, which would greatly be influenced by progressive reforms efforts. Farmers, on the one hand, represented individual subsistence endeavors focused on traditional ways of life without government intervention; while, on the other hand,
President Roosevelt in 1908 created the Country Life Commission in order to study the life of rural Americans and the commission concluded that farmers were unable to adapt to modern realities because they relied on antiquated ways of living and as a result took initiatives that eroded and threatened to end southern American autonomy from the federal government (Diner, 1998). This paternalistic perspective saw the public education system and schools as their vehicle to introduce such drastic reforms.

In particular, these reformers sought to introduce consolidation of one-room schoolhouses, create standards for teacher certification and licensure, create a universal curriculum, and enforce compulsory attendance (Diner, 1998). Many rural Americans resented these initiatives because, previously, children attended rural schools when they could, usually after working on the family farm. These sweeping initiatives created a long-lasting tension between modern impulses—such as teacher certification and state-mandated standards, and the paternalism of reform-minded educators—with the desire to retain a sense of autonomy in spheres of local domain, such as educating rural children.

The reformers in the South at this time were comprised primarily of what have been called Traditionalists and Populists (Link, 1992). Traditionalists, on the one hand, lived in farms, villages, and small, rural towns and were opposed to government intrusion in matters they viewed as being under local community control, while also viewing social problems indifferently and more passively than the populists. Populists, on the other hand, lived in more populated settings and viewed social equity and justice as primary goals of reform efforts and championed regulatory and antimonopoly efforts from the
state (Link, 1992). This clash of Southern-based ideologies initially made it difficult for Progressive policy reform to take hold.

From almost entirely different backgrounds to the southern traditionalists, most Progressive-era reformers were from white, middle-class urban families. These reformers were inspired by their Protestant humanitarian beliefs to craft policy reforms to remedy the social issues that traditionalists tended to ignore (Link, 1992). Progressives diagnosed the cause of these issues as a failure in governance and found solutions through an expansion of state intervention into local, community initiatives. These vast differences concerning the goal of policy reform created a gulf between the paternalism of Progressives and the “localism and community power of traditionalists” (p. xiii). Ironically, the paternalism of the Progressive movement that fueled these reform efforts simultaneously espoused initiatives to uplift and empower individuals, even as they advocated racial and cultural hierarchies. These beliefs ranged from the inclusion of democratic participation to exerting great measures of influence and control over certain populations, such as African Americans (Link, 1992). The success of southern Progressivism was often a direct result of the reformers’ ability or inability to coopt participation from local, rural communities that were often very hesitant to relinquish their sense of autonomy in the face of federal state intervention. These differences in opinion also bled into the institution of education, as most southern, rural communities viewed it as their sole responsibility.

Southern Progressivism sought, through policy reform efforts, to restructure, revitalize, and increase the efficiency of rural schools. These efforts to reform southern life would ultimately be confronted by opposition from local, rural communities that
created non-bureaucratic school systems (Link, 1986). The southern school system of America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had three main traits that set it apart from the national trends of that time period. The first similarity between southern schools was that they were all affected by the Civil War and Reconstruction in that these historical events influenced the organization and structure of public education after 1870 (Link, 1986). The second similarity is that these schools were influenced by the regional underdevelopment and poverty that plagued the region and hindered the South’s ability to support schools, which resulted in the region being the least educated in America. The third similarity between these schools is their attitude toward education and in general their viewpoints of race, which further complicated the structure and composition of classrooms in the South (Link, 1986).

These characteristics and the southern idea of localism made it difficult for Progressive policy reform efforts to take hold. The reformers’ inability to relate to or understand this idea of localism was a constant source of friction between Progressives and southerners. Localism is the idea that defines local communities, “usually defined by geographical proximity and reinforced by ties of wealth, kin, church, and race” (Link, 1986, p. x). These ties of socialization were sometimes undermined by Progressive reform efforts and led to many school systems being under the control of outside forces, such as the federal government. Interestingly, despite the overriding influence and power of the southern Progressive movement, many rural, southern schools in some way still retain some aspect of localism because of the influence and support from the communities that the schools serve. Once West Virginia became a state in 1863, its separation from Virginia also signaled its unique path towards creating an education
system. In conjunction with the influence of southern Progressive policy reform efforts, industry also played a major role in shaping and forging the schools of rural West Virginia.

Beginning in the 1870s, the infiltration of extractive industries in West Virginia began and shaped the state’s economic trajectory and continues to leave an indelible mark on the state and its people. The “Gilded Age” of unregulated and unlimited economic exportation of the most valuable natural resources that the state had to offer was exacerbated by the absentee ownership of these industries (Williams, 1976). This created an opportunity for certain industries (coal, steam, oil, and gas) and their companies to gain a foothold that eventually became a stranglehold on local communities. These excesses in economic extraction were aided by the state offering industrialists of the “Gilded Age” special considerations and concessions that served to further impede the development of local communities and their economic opportunities (Williams, 1976). Some of these industries, mainly railroad and coal, became so powerful and influential that their legacies continue to shape the economic and political climate of West Virginia. Ironically, it was the excesses of the “Gilded Age” and the laissez faire approach to economics that spurred the Progressive movement and its spread to the South. Company towns, conceived from a Progressive point of view, were established around extraction sites in order to provide a community for the workers and their families.

Although not all company towns were developed with their workers in mind, some were established as “model communities,” which meant to offer employees more amenities and better living conditions. The cotton textile mill industry located in the
Piedmont region of the South (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama) was one such example. Beginning in the 1880s, the cotton textile mills became the most influential industry in the Piedmont region of North Carolina and employed many of the local residents in the fields and mills that the companies owned (Hall, Leloudis, Korstad, Murphy, Jones, & Daly, 1987). Interestingly, these towns were able to foster a sense of kinship and “family” amongst the cotton mill workers which, in turn, forged a shared identity, a kind of bulwark against the threats of poverty and unemployment.

These notions of kinship and belonging reinforced a sense of localism, which some southern Progressives were unable to incorporate into their communities. But other company towns would arise, such as Arthurdale in West Virginia and Black Mountain in North Carolina, which were established as a direct result of southern Progressive attitudes toward intervening in local communities. Holden, West Virginia was also partially a result of progressive attitudes toward creating a “model community” in rural Appalachia. Holden was specifically designed by its founders to provide Island Creek Coal Company’s (ICCC) miners with a state of the art community and their children with a quality education. These discussions of Progressivism and company towns help frame Holden Central School as an example of a school influenced in part by progressive ideals, as well as desires to increase profit margin, but they also help ground my research questions within the school’s uniqueness.

**Research Questions**

1. How do former educators and students at Holden Central School experience and understand the school’s legacy and its relationship with Logan County?
2. How do former educators and students at Holden Central School understand Island Creek Coal Company’s role in the school’s legacy and the community?

3. How do these experiences and understandings of the school’s legacy ultimately affect education in Appalachia in the past and today?

4. How and in what ways does the story of Holden Central School offer a counter-narrative to how images of education in Appalachia are produced and reproduced through time?

Methods

The epistemological nature of my research requires me to explore the understanding behind the experiences that former educators and students at Holden Central School in Logan County, West Virginia, had during their time there (Schwandt, 2015). Since epistemology is a branch of inquiry concerned with the nature of knowledge and its acquisition, this approach to research will act as the framework from which I will operate, while forming my research design (Grayling, 1996). In fact, the justification and verification of knowledge is a primary concern for the field of epistemology and this will be explored through my community consultants’ perceptions of their experiences while at Holden Central School (Bohman, 1991). For my study I will use several different data gathering techniques often utilized in qualitative research, such as oral histories/conversations, historical document analysis, and archival research (Schwandt, 2015). I spoke with former educators and students, who taught and attended Holden Central in rural West Virginia. I researched and critically examined historical documents in the form of associated school records, newspaper articles, letters, and other materials in
order to explore the school’s history. The use of archival newspaper articles was useful for exploring what the school’s relationship was to the surrounding community. As these data collection techniques are varied, this interdisciplinary approach is the underpinning of my research associated with chronicling the history of the school and the community. This research was an attempt at exploring the former teachers’ and students’ understanding of their experiences at Holden Central (Campbell & Lassiter, 2014).

**Significance of the Study**

Rural education in Appalachia has implications for educators and students living in their surrounding local communities. These schools have close and often symbiotic relationships with their local communities (DeYoung, 1995; Mullins, 1996; Tieken, 2014). Of particular interest to me, however, is the role that progressive schools played in Appalachia, especially given the dominant narrative of the region as stagnant and “backward” defined, more often than not, by a one-dimensional deficit-oriented approach (Teets, 2006; Williams, 2002). One of these progressive rural schools, and the topic of this study, was Holden Central School located in Logan Country, West Virginia (1922-1970). Holden presents a powerful alternative image to oft-heard narratives of Appalachian education: it was, for example, often singled out as a model of school and community in a time of national industrialization (Green, 2010). Given this, though, little is actually known about the school, and very little literature has been produced about its culture and history.

The attention to rural schools has recently increased, as most face constant threats of consolidation and closure due to either low enrollment numbers or constraints placed
on the schools via high-stakes standardized test scores (DeYoung, 1995; Tieken, 2014). The literature on rural education and rural schools is, in fact, limited and out-dated. There is, for instance, a significant gap in the existing body of knowledge concerning the impact and legacy of rural schools and their communities. One of the most glaring omissions in this literature is the lack of school case studies that examine the experiences and memories of former educators and students via strong elements of oral history study. This is a significant omission, especially given such individuals were directly involved in shaping the legacies of such schools.

While much of the recent body of knowledge associated with rural education and schools focuses on the reasons behind closures and consolidations of these schools (Tieken, 2014; DeYoung, 1995), my research attempts to fill the above knowledge gap by including oral histories from former educators and students at Holden Central School. My aim is not just to preserve these memories, but to also provide a counter-narrative to deficit-oriented tropes that pervade both the scholarly literature and popular imaginings about Appalachia (Goodyear-Ka’opua, 2013).

In addition to this, the legacy of Holden Central and its surrounding community has many implications for both the educational climate in Appalachia and for the country at large, mainly because of the current zeitgeist obsession with high-stakes standardized testing and scores (Pinar, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). This research seeks to address these issues in a temporal nature in accordance with Paulo Freire’s (2000) critical pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for liberation through dialogue, and in the case of this research, via the memories and experiences of former teachers and students of Holden Central, who worked to construct a legacy that, in many ways, still endures.
Organization of the Study

After Chapter One (Introduction) of my dissertation, Chapter Two (Literature Review) addresses the body of literature surrounding my topic, including placing my research within the frameworks of Appalachian Studies and ethnographies of rural schools. Chapter Three (Research Methods) focuses on the research methods utilized during the course of my dissertation, including descriptions of my research design, data collection, and analyses techniques. Chapter Four (Historical Context of a School, a Community, and a Coal Company) consists of a detailed history of the school and the community of Holden, West Virginia via school records and archival documents. Chapter Five (The Power of Oral History, and The Counter Narratives of “The Rural”) addresses my research questions through conversations conducted with former teachers and students of Holden Central. Chapter Six (Conclusion) concludes my dissertation with a reflective look back on the school, the coal company, and the community that continues to be affected by both of these entities. This reflection also includes discussions for the implications of my research findings for scholars and researchers with suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: Creating a Conceptual Framework

Once I narrowed the focus of my research interests to chronicle a coal camp school’s history and its relationships with the coal company that owned it and the community that surrounded it, I decided to do a first-hand inquiry into West Virginia’s symbiotic relationship with the coal industry. Later during the summer of 2014 after speaking with Professor Maynard, I went to the Exhibition Coal Mine site in Beckley, West Virginia. I had never been to this part-museum, part-underground mining tour erected on the hillside of the city’s New River Park.

I expected to find a site that contained a complete narrative of the state’s relationship with the coal industry, perhaps a testament to the region’s resilient and often-underappreciated miners. But what I found instead was a monument to the coal industry that glorified its impact on West Virginia’s people and ecosystem. Though the tour was very informative, and even featured a former coal miner as a guide, the museum glossed over the industry’s more tumultuous aspects, such as absentee ownership, environmental disasters related to mining (e.g., Buffalo Creek), the exportation of West Virginia’s most valuable natural resource, and the mining collapses, explosions, and other accidents that jeopardized miners’ lives on a daily basis (e.g., Upper Big Branch).

So much was left unsaid about the history and legacy of coal in that tour. I’ve had a similar feeling when reviewing the body of literature surrounding the still-emerging field of rural education. The story we often hear about rural schools—and especially rural schools in the coal fields of Appalachia—is one of poverty, backwardness, and schooling that lags behind the rest of the country (Shapiro, 1978; Tieken, 2014). Those
dominant narratives, though, fail to account for the many progressive schools—like Holden Central—that offered different kinds of stories.

Much of what was missing from my tour of the Exhibition Coal Mine was the larger context in which coal mining materialized in our region. In the same way, to understand Holden Central and its contributions, we need to understand the narrative backdrop in which the school emerged. In order to combat the deficit-oriented narrative concerning Appalachian education, it is important to understand the larger educational developments that occurred in the United States and place Holden Central in the appropriate context. Three major themes found in the literature can help with this project, including: (1) ethnographies of schools in rural locations, (2) the history of Appalachian education, and (3) Appalachian identity. These three themes are explored in the subsequent literature review.

**Ethnographies and Case Studies of Rural Schools**

Despite a larger narrative of rural schooling that often ignores progressive schools in Appalachia, many studies do in fact chronicle such schools. And the scholarly literature has much to offer in understanding the actual, and more complex, context in which schools like Holden Central came into being. Perhaps one of the most well-known rural, and Progressive Appalachian schools was the Highlander Folk School. Frank Adams (1975) chronicles the school and one of its founder, Myles Horton. He provides readers with a case study of a specialized school created from a social movement with educational philosophies and methodologies based on social collectivism. Along with Myles Horton, the Highlander Folk School was founded by educator Don West and Methodist minister James A. Dombrowski in 1932. It was originally located in a rural
Appalachian community in Grundy County, Tennessee; but is now located in New Market, Tennessee. Interestingly, Highlander was a major component of the labor movement in Appalachia and later held significance during the American Civil Rights Movement. The school provided training to Rosa Parks, prior to the bus boycotts in Montgomery, Alabama, as well as aiding the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the 1950s. It was unfortunately forced to close in 1961 and relocated to Knoxville, due to its involvement with the Civil Rights Movement because it drew the ire and anger from Tennessee legislators. Adams (1975) also provides a detailed discussion of the role the school played in the 1960s and 1970s of promoting environmental justice issues in Appalachia and also incorporating a strong student-centered curriculum.

Many case studies and ethnographies of Appalachian rural schools often look to studies like Adams (1975) to understand the larger social and cultural context in which many Appalachian schools evolved. For example: building from Adams (1975) ethnographic research, John Puckett’s (1989) book, *Foxfire Reconsidered: A Twenty-Year Experiment in Progressive Education* is a chronicle of the Foxfire approach to instruction employed at the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in Georgia that emphasized student choice in the classroom. This study focuses on the approach to learning that was created by Eliot Wigginton in 1966, which emphasized the active role of the student in the classroom. Puckett interviewed former staff members and students, while also including a discussion of the school’s records. He also interviewed individuals who participated in Foxfire and who attended Foxfire events during the 1960s.
Puckett (1989) set out to address what the school’s approach to learning looked like on the ground, including how students perceived their progressive-styled learning, based as it was on the beliefs of John Dewey. Puckett (1989) gives a historical account of the Raburn County region in Georgia where Foxfire was established, and a quasi-biographical account of Eliot Wigginton, the founder of this educational initiative. In the Raburn Gap, the Machooche School was created in 1903 as a farm co-op school where farmers worked the land in exchange for their children receiving free enrollment in the school. The school added a junior college in 1928, but subsequently discontinued it in 1945.

By the 1950s, the farming co-op was also no longer open. Wigginton began teaching there in 1966 and, according to Puckett, the aspects of the school that contributed to Foxfire’s popularity and success were the religious administration and their rigid rules, a work-study program to help with tuition costs, and the fact that the school was a catalyst for socialization in the rural, Appalachian community. Of particular note was the publication of the quarterly magazine run by students that included elements of oral history interviews and original manuscripts (Puckett 1989). While this text serves as a school case study of southern Appalachia, it also offers great insight into how a progressive educational initiative in Appalachia originated and developed, despite the dominant narratives concerning the region that were created by outsiders, who believe it to be a region devoid of any serious educational pursuits.

**Ethnographies that emphasize the Importance of Community**

An important theme in rural school case-studies emphasizes the symbiotic relationship of school and community. Many of these case-studies are approached
ethnographically. Alan DeYoung’s (1995) book, *The Life and Death of a Rural American High School: Farewell Little Kanawha*, for example, chronicles the establishment and ultimate demise of a rural high school in Braxton County, West Virginia. DeYoung uses a diversified approach to this school case study, which includes local history, oral interviews, and school records to portray a wide-scope portrait for the importance of the school in its local community and to former students and teachers. DeYoung (1995) attempts to give the reader an appropriate framework through which to view the school, from its beginnings to its ultimate dissolution. In the end, its decline came about because of sociopolitical and economic limitations placed on it by state authorities and national and international schooling objectives (DeYoung, 1995).

Of the national and local challenges that are listed by DeYoung (1995), prime among them is the threat of consolidation and the loss of the local community, which the school serves. In particular, DeYoung (1995) focuses on Burnsville High and Middle schools with Little Kanawha (Little K) being built as a 1-12 grade school in 1915. It was split into two separate schools with one serving grades 1-8 and the second serving grades 9-12. The encroachment of federal and state agencies ensured the schools’ fates, as the 1990s approached consolidation was all, but certain. He views his study as an attempt at “describing the social life of the school and its surrounding community during its last years of existence, and the particular social, economic, and political circumstances which led to its demise” (p. xii). Interestingly, DeYoung (1995), utilized an interdisciplinary approach to ethnography by including oral histories, alongside school records to give readers a more detailed understanding for what happened to this rural school.
In addition to DeYoung’s (1995) ethnography, P. David Searles’ (1995) book, *A College for Appalachia: Alice Lloyd on Caney Creek*, chronicles the establishment and history of Alice Lloyd College in Caney Creek, Kentucky. The school was founded in 1916 by Alice Spencer Geddes Lloyd in an attempt to bring education to the rural Appalachians living in eastern Kentucky. Lloyd created a curriculum specifically tailored for the people living in the region that included a strong element of social volunteering with the school’s graduates. The tuition for the school was free to the community, as long as students abided by Lloyd’s reportedly strict code of conduct and continued to live in the region after they graduated. Searles’ (1995) study is not just an overview of the college, as it also functions as an intimate look inside the life of Lloyd and her motivations behind establishing the school. It provides additional context into her New England background, and her personal desire to increase the transmission of knowledge in a very rural region of Kentucky. One of the more interesting aspects of this book is Searles’ (1995) discussion regarding the fundraising techniques used by Lloyd over the years that relied on inaccurate narratives of mountain people and subsequently created resentment and anger among the people she was trying to help. Contrary to the popular belief that outsiders to Appalachians always create more problems than they solve, Searles (1995) argues that Lloyd created a unique and positive influence in the region and that ultimately the mountain people in the region appreciated what she established.

Echoing similar sentiments by DeYoung (1995) and Searles (1995) regarding community and school, Mara Casey Tieken’s (2014) book describes the challenges and chronicles the racialized histories for two rural Arkansas schools and how this influences their struggle for survival in 2014. Tieken emphasizes the connection that these two rural
schools have to their local surrounding communities and the fact that this symbiotic relationship is being threatened by federal and state policies aimed at consolidations and closings. For both of these schools with different racial compositions, the rural school is a reflection and extension of their communities with one being predominantly African American and the other being mostly white. Tieken (2014) provides readers with a nuanced discussion on rural education and demonstrates how different cultural lenses, such as race can complicate and expand our understanding of what it means to be educated in a rural location in America.

Like many of the case studies I have reviewed, these ethnographies emphasize the role of their surrounding communities in terms of school survival and continuance. More often than not, this relationship is analogous to a canary in the coal mine because when either the community or the school is threatened or collapses then the other is directly affected as a result. These kinds of relationships are instructive for my dissertation research because Holden Central School and the Holden community in Logan County, West Virginia shared a very similar fate once Island Creek Coal Company moved its headquarters outside of the area.

The History of Appalachian Education

In addition to the body of literature consisting of ethnographies and case studies of rural schools, the literature covering the history of Appalachian education is also pertinent to establishing the context for my research. Beaver’s (1986) book, *Rural Community in the Appalachian South*, offers a sociological look at community in southern Appalachia with a strong emphasis on family ties and the bonds forged through bloodlines. Beaver (1986) identifies several key aspects of Appalachian understandings
of community, especially having to do with reverence of specific locations, bonds between and among family and friends, and overlapping social norms and values. Beaver (1986) argues that in times of tumult and uncertainty, the feeling of community—and of belonging—unites Appalachians together in ways unlike any other region in the United States. In particular, she notes that the sociological elements of mainstream American society merge with the desire to welcome outsiders to the fold in a rural setting of inclusiveness that permeates all aspects of Appalachian culture in a mosaic manner. Beaver (1986) concludes by arguing that the success of rural communities in the Appalachian South are predicated on their ability to incorporate outsiders and people from varying backgrounds into their towns in meaningful ways, and as a result, create new identities and rural centers of congregation.

Similar to the point made by Beaver, DeYoung (1976) also notes the roles that rural schools in Appalachia serve to their communities, in this case as agents of change for both students and educators. In “Constructing and Staffing the Cultural Bridge: The School as Change Agent in Rural Appalachia,” DeYoung (1976) emphasizes the fact that rural schools are often perceived as being inefficient and too costly by state and federal agencies, and are thus often the targets of policies that seek to consolidate or close them by forced requirements related to test scores. As an example, DeYoung (1976) looks at the Braxton County school system in West Virginia in order to ethnographically explore what roles rural schools serve to their communities in light of such pressures from outside forces and agencies. DeYoung (1976) argues that rural schools should act like bridges between economically depressed and impoverished areas to economically thriving communities in other regions of the country so that students can seek their future
elsewhere if need be, but also be prepared to return and make a living for themselves in Appalachia. In short, DeYoung argues that rural schools act like mirrors to reflect national virtues and values to rural locations so that students do not get penalized by out-of-touch legislation and policy aimed at assessing urban students’ knowledge and experiences.

What DeYoung (1976) makes clear, of course, is that policymakers often make decisions that have little to do with the role of local schools as they function in local communities. Such neglect of context can have devastating results. Peter Schrag (1972), for example, in his article titled “The School and Politics,” presents readers with a unique look at the public education system in Appalachia and the politics associated with the creation and perpetuation of an inefficient bureaucracy. He argues that the school system lacks both the personnel and the facilities to sustain the high quality of education that is available in surrounding states. Schrag (1972) places the blame on politicians and bureaucrats who put administrators in positions of power and authority that espouse their beliefs in keeping the status quo and creating curricula that teaches obedience and subservience to authority figures, which are most often corporate mining companies. He states that “local leaders permit—even encourage—irrelevant education based on books and classes that kill questioning and curiosity, that discourage change and that reinforce existing fears and superstitions” (p. 222). Schrag (1972) emphasizes the nature of physical and cultural isolation on an Appalachian community and its school. He argues that those in positions of power are the only ones in the community who have the ability to enact change, but instead often elect not to because of incentives relating to their professions. Schrag (1972) explains that Appalachian education requires additional
resources and efforts from educators and administrators in order to build constructive chains of communication between school systems in Appalachia and more progressive ones in other regions of America.

This body of literature is concerned with the history of Appalachian education and the important role it played in shaping the nation. The profession of education is infused with both love and passion, as evidenced by these dynamic examples of Appalachian education. In keeping with this theme, Holden Central embodied this tradition, as many former students from the school recount the kindness and ingenuity of their teachers at Holden Central. For these reasons it is important to frame my dissertation research with a knowledge base that emphasizes the role that Appalachian education plays in the classroom and its unique characteristics that set it apart from education systems elsewhere in the United States.

**History of Mining Communities of Appalachia**

Another important body of literature connected to the history of Appalachian education focuses on the development and impact of coal mining. Ronald D. Eller’s (1982) book, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930*, surveys the industrialization of the Appalachian Mountains, which transpired as a series of changes brought on by outside forces, mainly the extractive forces of timber and coal. One of the major themes of Eller’s (1982) study is the devastation and permeation caused by these outside forces that were predominantly absentee-owned, which remain so today. Eller provides many examples of socioeconomic exploitation that forever transformed small-scale, family owned farming communities
into the dependent company towns, established as a result of an ambivalent industrialization process.

Using Eller’s (1982) work as a backdrop, Crandall Shifflett, in his book *Coal Towns: Life Work Culture Company Towns* (1995), uses oral histories, census records, and coal company archives to explore the coal camp communities of southern Appalachia, ranging from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. He gives specific attention to the impact that these mining companies had on the miners themselves, as well as their families. Shifflett (1995) argues that these miners lived lives that were not as bad as popular belief often holds, especially in comparison to their previous work in subsistence farming communities before Appalachia’s industrialization in the early twentieth century. He goes on to state that these miners and their families left behind lives of extreme hardship living in weatherboard shanties and struggling to eat with limited resources available. Adding to these issues were the increasing rates in population and decreasing farmland. Shifflett (1995) provides many examples of oral histories detailing the miners’ attitudes toward the mining companies as a positive relationship where they were granted indoor plumbing, steady wages, and leisure activities. These accounts run counter to the dominant narratives of the paternalistic mining company and offer readers a new look at the working class forged in Appalachia via the hard work of miners and their families.

This body of literature chronicles the history of coalmining communities in Appalachia. It explores class dynamics and struggles that families faced in these communities, along with examples of communities where the coal mining companies worked in harmony with the coal miners’ families in order to create successful and
thriving communities. This relates to my dissertation research because Holden was an example of a successful and thriving coal mining community where Island Creek Coal Company took the necessary steps to make Holden a model community. For these reasons, it is important to constellate my research with these communities in mind.

**Deficit-Oriented Narratives of Appalachia**

Many early descriptions of education in Appalachia from outsiders were inaccurate, and often historically deficient. One of the earliest descriptions was from William Frost (1901), who details a historic first-hand account of education in Berea, Kentucky from 1901. He describes the early developments of rural education and efforts made by educators teaching in small, one-room log-houses or cabins. His depiction of Appalachia, however, is of a depraved region filled with ignorant and unwashed people. For example, he says that these Appalachians represent “the largest body of uneducated Americans, the greatest mass of unprivileged people of our race [Caucasian] anywhere in the world and are found in the southern mountains” (p. 556). Interestingly, White (1901) was speaking to a group of educators from outside Appalachia at a meeting of the National Education Association of the United States. This depiction certainly helped to solidify narratives around ignorance and backwardness about the region, its perceived lack of education, and its people. Frost (1901) wrote as an outsider to Appalachia and held many Progressive viewpoints toward the region, mainly that Appalachians were incapable of improving the quality of education without the help of those from the northern United States.

Interestingly, thirty-six years later, in a similar vein, another text that negatively and inaccurately depicts Appalachia is by Gaumintz and Cook (1937). In their pamphlet,
Education in the Southern Mountains, issued by the United States Department of the Interior in conjunction with the WPA and Office of Education near the end of the New Deal era, they describe Appalachia as a region of people unable to economically sustain themselves. This pamphlet was the result of research conducted by the editors and works associated with the WPA. The way Appalachia is described in the pamphlet contributes to already existing negative, inaccurate images of a region of the country unable to help itself or improve its economy without the help of others from outside the region. It is easy to see why initiatives like the Appalachian Regional Commission of the 1960s were established after the publication of this pamphlet. Gaumintz and Cook (1937) participated in perpetuating dominant narratives of the region by creating a deficit-oriented narrative that contained narratives of Appalachians as backwards, illiterate hillbillies. These dominant narratives dominate the region now and make it difficult for real social justice or educational innovation to transpire. By invoking the Tennessee Valley Authority, the pamphlet lays the groundwork for future research in the region that might try to improve the “economic conditions that were unsatisfactory; that social services, including education, were wholly inadequate; and that these conditions, with the isolation prevalent in mountain sections, combined to set the people of these areas apart from normal farming communities” (p. 2). This pamphlet is an important example regarding the role that inaccurate narratives can play on Appalachian education.

Evolution of Education in West Virginia through Industrialization

The evolution and modernization of education in West Virginia was created through the forge of the coal mining industry, and this is reflected in a subsection of the body of literature concerned with the history of Appalachian education. John A.
Williams’s *Appalachia: A History* (2002), provides an engaging and insightful look at Appalachia that most other texts never before considered. Williams (2002) emphasizes that for most of Appalachia’s history, it has been negatively impacted by the absentee ownership of industry, such as the wealthy coal barons from the northeast, who mined the valuable natural resource from the ground, and then subsequently shipped it out-of-state for a large profit. Williams’s (2002) narrative offers a comprehensive history of the region, including social, political, economic, religious, and educational implications. This text’s main argument illustrates that the region is a unique place that exists outside of the American mainstream, while simultaneously representing some of the core elements of American culture found everywhere. In the end, Williams’s (2002) text offers readers an insightful look into the pre-industrial Appalachia with Native American settlements and progresses through the region’s tumultuous times as it was industrialized by outside profiteers until the present times as it is a land often ignored by federal policy, yet still striving to survive in economically challenging times.

Sharon Teets (2002), in her essay, “Appalachian Education,” provides readers with an overview for the development of education in Appalachia from the colonial settlement schools, to its role as a source of Progressive reform, and to its current situation as being subject to modern policies that often neglect the role of the Appalachian student and educator. Teets (2006) also chronicles the development of folk schools and how they originated in Appalachia, based on the Scandinavian model that taught adult learners skills and trades to use in the workforce. This historical take on Appalachian education is a general overview for one of the most over-looked portions of the educational history in America. Both of these texts provide an additional layer of
context for my dissertation research because Williams (2002) chronicles the influence of absentee ownership in the coal industry and how it shaped the region. Teets (2006) also provides an additional layer of context for my dissertation research because it showcases the development of specialized schools in Appalachia, such as folk schools, and the particular ways they instructed their students. In a similar way, my dissertation research also functions as a case study of a particular school, but is also a part of a larger tradition in Appalachian schooling of students having an active role in their own learning.

In addition to the research of Williams (2002) and Teets (2006), the work of Hardy Green (2010) also constructs grounding for the development of Appalachian education as a result of the region’s industrialization. In Green’s book, *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills that Shaped the American Economy* (2010), he explores the connections between companies and their surrounding communities across America. He chronicles the development and rise of these company towns that forever changed and forged the new American economy at the dawn of the industrial age. Green (2010) offers several case studies as examples of these company towns, including textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts; research and development labs of Corning, New York; coal mines of Ludlow, Colorado; and the corporate locations of major technological companies and firms.

Green (2010) argues that these company towns originated in one of two different ways in California. The first was fairly benign, as a paternalistic, utopian community that allowed for the development of schools, hospitals, parks, and desirable housing for its workers. The second, which Green (2010) refers to as “Exploitationville,” emphasizes only profits, at the expense of its employees’ well-being. Along the way, he also includes
discussion on some of America’s most prolific industrial capitalists, such as the candy-maker Milton Hershey, steel man Elbert H. Gary, oil tycoon Frank Phillips, and Manhattan Project organizer General Leslie B. Groves. Green (2010) offers readers a nuanced exploration of the positive and negative aspects of the capitalist experience in America. Some of the positive aspects of the capitalist experience in America include the development of industry and the creation of jobs for some Americans, however, the negative aspects include the exploitation of workers by powerful employers and corporate greed in the form of manipulative corporate officials stealing from their companies (e.g., Goldman Sachs).

In addition to Green’s (2010) research, John C. Hennan’s *The Americanization of West Virginia: Creating a Modern Industrial State, 1916-1925* (1996) provides readers with a chronicle for the development of the industrialization of West Virginia and the American politics associated with that development. Henan (1996) includes discussions on education, reform, and industrial relations in the larger contexts of war mobilization, postwar instability, and national economic expansion. He argues that WWI was the most transformative time period and singular event in the development of the state and that through it, politicians, policymakers, and businessmen were able to acquire and then later wield power created from ideas of prosperity, equal opportunity, and middle-class hard work.

This process is referred to as “Americanization” by Henan (1996) and emphasizes the creation of a working class of West Virginians, who were both literate and loyal to their country and employer in an unquestioning manner. This Americanization process was exacerbated by the fact that most of these companies were absentee-owned and
paternalistically intent on exploiting and manipulating citizens. Henan (1996) argues that this Americanization process began in the school system, where children were inculcated with a nationalistic zeal at a young age and their parents were introduced to at their work via being loyal to their employer and complacent with their position at their work. He goes on to state that factions opposed to unionization tampered with teacher training and classroom programs and by 1923 curtailed the gains of the United Mine Workers of America made during WWI. This text is an excellent example for the importance of access to information and the power that special interest groups possess.

In conjunction with the research of Green (2010) and Henan (1996), Otis Rice and Stephen Brown (1993) provide readers with a comprehensive chronicle of West Virginia’s history, from its beginnings as a mountainous section of Virginia, to its independence in 1863, through its transformation into an industrial state fueled by the coal industry. Rice and Brown (1993) spend a great deal of time discussing the Civil War and its impact on the state, especially given the nature of its statehood. Interestingly, the authors include an additional context in the form of geographic information for readers to become more familiar with locations important to the historical record and local areas of interest. In order to completely understand the importance of Holden Central, it is important to first understand the development of education in West Virginia. This makes the role that Holden Central played easier to understand in the larger context of West Virginian and Appalachian education.

**Appalachian Identity**

Understanding the relationship of schooling in Appalachia to identity is a critically important aspect of my study of Holden Central School. Given this, a third
body of literature relevant to my research is concerned with the meaning and conceptualization of Appalachian identity, as it is defined and interpreted by both insiders and outsiders to the region. When it comes to outsiders, in particular, this includes colonial interpretations of already existing communities and cultures, as well as their analyses of the influence that outside agents of change (e.g., industries, federal policies, and migrations into the region) have on the region. James Branscome’s essay, “Annihilating the Hillbilly: The Appalachians’ Struggle with America’s Institutions” (1978), explores the idea of Appalachian identity and the recalcitrance of mountain culture in the face of extreme pressures to erode it from within. Branscome (1978) identifies some of these major threats in various forms ranging from the media, the church, and even the Appalachian Regional Commission to education systems, health care, government agencies, and corporate structures. He argues that these elements of mainstream culture act to “denigrate native culture and exploit the native” (p. 207) in the context of Appalachia. Branscome (1978) argues that these institutions, acting together, all become agents of assimilation of mountain culture into mainstream American culture. These agents work to incorporate Appalachian citizens into modern Americans by rejecting their old ways in favor of a more technological society. Of most interest, he argues that education does not reinforce mountain identity, but serves to erode it by advocating the culture from the Northeast, a culture that insists that native, mountain people must acknowledge their backwardness and reject their ways in order to join the prosperity of their non-Appalachian counterparts.

Appalachian identity, then, cannot be considered outside this tension between, on the one hand, tradition and history; and on the other hand, the push by outsiders to
modernize and assimilate Appalachians to mainstream America. The literature is replete with stories on how Appalachians who have not assimilated or modernized are incapable of being full members of the nation. For example, in their article, “The Lost Appalachian,” Harry W. Ernst and Charles H. Drake (1972) explore how the lack of economic opportunities in West Virginia circa 1959 involve small urban centers of economic prosperity surrounded by areas of destitution and poverty. The authors explain how the lack of economic opportunities, rise in crime, and the increase in the number of factories hiring employees caused a large out-migration to locations outside of Appalachia, such as Cincinnati, Ohio. Their description, of course, in many ways rings true to this day. Unfortunately, though, Ernst and Drake (1972) portray Appalachia as a region devoid of agency to improve its own economic downslide and instead argue that the only way to save the region is from “federal help-similar to the economic aid Uncle Sam sends to underdeveloped nations abroad” and that this is the only way “the region [can] receive its share of the national wealth” (p. 8). The authors describe the Appalachians of West Virginia as being incapable of providing for themselves and educating their children without massive contributions from outsiders investing in the region’s future.

These texts demonstrate the fact that much of the literature concerning Appalachian identity has been interpreted and analyzed by outsiders to the region. This makes defining an authentic Appalachian identity difficult, yet simultaneously crucial given the many policies devised by outsiders that often have significant implications and ramifications for Appalachians. In part, I hope my dissertation research regarding the importance of Holden Central becomes part of a necessary conversation about
Appalachians taking action into their own hands and using their voices and agency to change the narrative concerning them and the many policies that affect them.

Reconceptualizing Rural Identity and the American Consciousness

David Whisnant (1983) explores dominant Appalachian narratives and identity in terms of how American people writ large understand the region in his book, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*. Whisnant points out that more often than not Appalachia brings to mind popular tropes of banjo music, moonshine, and hospitality, which all comprise the Appalachian romanticism that pervades most portrayals of the region and its people. He argues that this portrayal is inaccurate and that there are many different cultural complexities that actually comprise the region as a location and as an identity for its citizens. He explores the politics of culture for Appalachia and suggests that this cultural myth of Appalachia, expressed as a simplistic romanticism, has negatively impacted the region and was perpetuated by a reality that never really existed to begin with. Utilizing folklore, literature, and rural education, Whisnant (1983) reveals a more accurate depiction complicated by the racial, religious, political, and cultural complexities that typify the region and suggest that it was never as simple as previously thought. This complexity is reflective of a region that is a mosaic of the many cultures that settled here and the tumultuous, yet resilient nature of its residents to maintain their own sense of identity in the face of threats from outside forces and narratives that inaccurately depict them as stubborn, ignorant, and dependent on help from more civilized and capable outsiders.

Building off of Whisnant’s (1983) research regarding the fictionalization of Appalachian romanticism, David Shi (2007) explores the ideas of simplicity and the
rejection of the material world in relation to the American consciousness in his book, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*. Of particular interest is the fact that Shi (2007) argues that the pursuit of the simple life has created an ideal that many different groups have strived for, including the Puritans and the Quakers. He argues that some of the main proponents of the simple life were Thomas Jefferson and Henry David Thoreau, just to name a few. Shi (2007) argues that the primitive and simplistic narrative that has been constructed (about Appalachia, for example) has never existed and that living a simple life is a very difficult thing to do, especially in the modern age of technology. Shi (2007) concludes that the anxiety and stress experienced by many people was essential to the nation’s prosperity and progress in the Industrial age and that without it a simple life would not be possible.

In part, both the research of Whisnant (1983) and Shi (2007) help explain how the inaccurate depiction of Appalachia as a backwater and stagnant region of the United States began to dominate the American consciousness. My dissertation research runs counter to these dominant narratives in order to become part of a larger chain of dialogue regarding the many capabilities of the region, beginning with its rich educational traditions and histories, as embodied by Holden Central. The voices and memories of Holden Central’s former teachers and students give context to the historical significance of the school so that the school stands as an example of the progressive nature of Appalachian education and the forethought that its educators had, as they incorporated and utilized many similar techniques that are currently being inculcated to pre-service teacher candidates today that place the student at the center of instruction in an active role.
Summary

The bodies of literature that are concerned with case studies and ethnographies of schools in rural locations, the history of Appalachian education, and Appalachian identity all illustrate the importance that rural schools hold for their surrounding communities, but also their importance on the larger, national level as well, such as the conceptualization of an Appalachian identity, as defined and interpreted by outsiders. All too often these schools are ignored within larger stories of the region (often constructed by the media outside Appalachia), and therefore, their importance is ignored, often in favor of urban schools, which ironically share several key struggles in the current high-stakes, standardized testing era because of high drop-out rates, homogenous racial composition in schools, and low socioeconomic status family backgrounds (Tieken, 2014). In addition to these facts, the literature also illustrates that rural education is underrepresented and often ignored, especially regarding the current state of affairs regarding America’s schools, which includes grouping communities into categories, such as urban and metropolitan, according to population. The issues they face inevitably plague and haunt all schools across the nation, unless steps are taken to reverse these critical errors in the development of educational policy reform. As Mara Casey Tieken (2014) noted, “there seemed to be so much useful and significant in the relationship tying rural school to community-an imperfect and important relationship-yet policymakers simply failed to acknowledge it, to appreciate its possibilities or address its flaws” (p. 3).

The literature also demonstrates the need to construct a counter-narrative to the dominant narratives of Appalachia as a land of ignorance and poverty, one that emphasizes instead agency and self-empowerment in the face of outside obstacles to
success and achievement (Goodyear-Ka’opua, 2013; Spatig & Amerikaner, 2014). I hope my research will act as a component of this larger movement, while also preserving the memory of Holden Central and its community for future scholars of Appalachian Studies and educational historians, as well as descendants of these former educators and students. There is further research needed in order to help policymakers, politicians, and government agencies realize the importance of rural schools and their symbiotic relationships with their local communities. In part, my research will hopefully open more dialogue about these issues and the progressive nature of West Virginian education that has conveniently been absent from larger narratives of the region. My research is part of this dialogue and counter narrative, but also functions as a case study for the community of Holden and the progressive curriculum that was created there. West Virginia’s rich educational traditions and history, which Holden Central is an important part of, often goes unknown, even to native West Virginians, who believe the larger deficit-oriented narrative described previously. In an age where outsiders determine federal and state policies for schools, these deficit-oriented narratives still hold power and influence. High-stakes standardized testing has become the en vogue form of assessment and means to “hold schools accountable” for their failings. With this research, my hope is that the “truer” narrative of West Virginia’s education system can be explored and analyzed by a native Appalachian in an attempt to show that this region is extremely capable and able to succeed, if given the appropriate resources and tools, and not hindered by out-of-touch policies designed by politicians and policymakers who have never stepped foot inside a rural classroom or a rural community, such as Holden.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

On a sweltering Saturday morning in September I made the drive along Route 10 southbound to Logan County. This narrow, twisting, rural stretch of road connects Huntington, West Virginia, to what was once the heart of the state’s southern coal fields. I was on my way to a reunion for a school and a community, for a people who used to make their lives here, and for the few who still do. As I drove down winding roads and through dying towns, the lyrics of a Bruce Springsteen song ran through my mind:

Main Street’s whitewashed windows and vacant stores;
Seems like there ain’t nobody wants to come down here no more;
They’re closing down the textile mill across the railroad tracks;
Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain’t coming back. (B. Springsteen, 1984)

It occurred to me that the song in many ways encapsulates the plight of Holden, too. Substitute the coalmines for the textile mill and Holden could have easily been that town.

After traveling along Route 10 for a while, I switched over to Route 199 South, which was once the equivalent of a “yellow brick road” that led to Oz. But these are different times, and this stretch of the four-lane, Corridor G, would be the harbinger of doom for communities like Holden and its once solid, brick school that served the community over those many years. (The school, by the way, was subsequently and inevitably paved over for the construction of a Wal-Mart and a strip mall shopping center, just like the town mentioned by Springsteen.) Once I arrived at the location for this reunion, the lone school still left in town (the elementary school), Jim Long, the
organizer of the event, greeted me. Jim had emailed me an invitation after he saw my ad in the *Logan Banner*, detailing my research about the school and the community (see Appendix A). This fortuitous invitation led to meeting many new friends and hearing similar stories about the school, the community, and the coal company that Professor Maynard had related to me nearly a year before.

**Research Context and Study Design**

With these memories and people in mind, this study is qualitative in its approach and uses several different data collection methods in order to address the research questions. The purpose of my research is to understand how the school, the coal company, and the community are experienced and perceived by the people who were immersed in them, namely former teachers and students of Holden Central School. The goals of my study are to produce a document for the community of Holden that preserves the memories and experiences of Holden Central for future generations; but I also wish to counter the larger narrative concerning Appalachian education.

Due to the nature of my research questions and goals, my study is an epistemological, collective case study. Glesne (2011) states that a collective case study is an approach to qualitative research where the researcher examines several cases in order to explore a phenomenon or a condition for a population. The knowledge to be explored in my study is associated with my consultants’ perceptions and experiences of their time at Holden Central School and its relationship with the community, and how they view Island Creek Coal Company’s role in shaping the community. The design of the study is flexible in terms of emerging understandings and observations, and use purposeful sampling to “gain insight about the phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p. 40).
In addition to these concerns, I also partially incorporated the research of sociologists Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997). Their research on the use of the qualitative research approach, known as portraiture, is central to my research goal of uncovering and preserving the experiences and perceptions of Holden Central’s teachers and students. Portraiture is seen as “the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4). This piece of my research study design allows me the flexibility to feature multiple perspectives from my consultants and give them equal weight in presentation by balancing their collective, yet unique voices.

These voices give authority and authenticity to my research, as all too often outsiders to Appalachia define and shape the larger narrative concerning Appalachian education. Given how politicians and policymakers shape these narratives about large-scale, societal issues through framing, this illustrates the necessity to include authentic voices to counteract the larger, inaccurate narrative currently facing Appalachian education. I also plan to follow the guidelines of collaborative ethnographic research, as lined out by Campbell and Lassiter (2014). This approach gives my community consultants credit for their contributions and inclusion in the research process, such as their involvement in interpretation of the study’s results.

**Settings**

The setting for my study is the community of Holden in Logan County, West Virginia. In particular, the community of Holden is representative of many regions in West Virginia, as well as Appalachia in a general sense because this community is rural, economically disadvantaged, and physically isolated from more metropolitan and urban
areas of West Virginia. Holden was once the location for the administrative offices of Island Creek Coal Company, and as a result, was promoted as an exemplary, model coal camp community. This is why Holden is so important to understanding West Virginia in a sense because this community was once one of the region’s primary exemplars that has gone unnoted.

**Sampling/Participants**

Participants of the study include former teachers and students who taught or attended Holden Central during its years of operation (1922-1970). The sample consists of six former teachers and students from Holden Central. I ensured equal representation of both consultant groups in the sampling of participants. I should note that due to the emergent nature of my research design for this study, it required flexibility because these former teachers and students could have decided to end their participation with this study or be unavailable for follow-up conversations. I incorporated my consultants by conducting face-to-face and telephone conversations with them, as well as involving them in the review process, as they took part in participant checks in order to address the validity of my study by reviewing drafts of my research as I wrote it.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

As discussed previously, I implemented an epistemological qualitative research study using the framework of a collective case study in order to address my research questions. I collected data from former teachers and students using multiple collection methods, including face to face and telephone conversations, historical and archival document analysis, and participant observations of community functions and meetings.
One of the most effective data collection methodologies used in a collective epistemological case study is conducting interviews or having conversations. Conversations played an integral role in my research, and were completed with former teachers and students of Holden Central School. As they corresponded to my research questions, these conversations served as one of the primary ways that I was able to collect data and acquire descriptions of experiences, feelings, and perceptions that I would not otherwise be able to ascertain via historical-archival document analysis or participant observations (Schwandt, 2015).

Given the parameters/limitations of my research, I completed both face to face and telephone conversations. These conversations were semi-structured, in order to prompt in-depth responses from my community consultants. Semi-structured interviews often stimulate respondents to reflect back on their experiences and often yield deeper understandings of their memories, rather than just straightforward facts. Spradley (1979) offers qualitative researchers a helpful insight into the interview process and advocates using structural questions that “enable the ethnographer to discover information about domains, the basic units in an informant’s cultural knowledge” (Spradley, 1979, p. 60).

In addition to the fact that I conducted face to face and telephone conversations, another important concept to keep in mind with my research is its relationship with the field of oral history. The field of oral history has an important underlying assumption that fits perfectly with my research. Oral history is “a method of gathering and preserving historical information recorded through interviews with participants in past events and ways of life” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 222). The fact that my community consultants were reflecting back on historical events they experienced is a powerful and unique element of
my research that is distinct from traditional interviews because of the emphasis on the historical event itself (the life of Holden Central School). The strength of oral history is most relevant to my research is the idea that it exists at the intersection of many different disciplines and allows the qualitative researcher the opportunity to capture, as accurately as possible, the memories and historical reminiscences from people who experienced these events (Ritchie, 2011).

Although conducting conversations are the primary qualitative means of data collection that were utilized in my study, having a diversified data collection approach strengthened my findings. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue that the use of several different data collection methods allows qualitative researchers the opportunity to identify the different strengths and/or weaknesses of their data and then make conclusions based on the findings. One such method that allowed me to accomplish this goal is historical/archival document analysis, which included analyzing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents, records, and other forms of written materials relevant to a study.

A third form of qualitative data collection that I used is participant observation. Being able to engage people directly in a particular social context is part of managing a worthwhile participant observation, which culminates in writing up fieldnotes and yielding thick, full descriptions that convey meaning as it relates back to a study (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). As my study requires a sense of locality to provide context for my conversations, building thick, rich descriptions was essential to telling the story of Holden. Every participant observation that I took part in allowed me to assume the role of the researcher, which was, in turn, eased by establishing rapport with gatekeepers and
others. In this way, my participant observations should be viewed from an epistemological point of view because, as Schwandt (2015) suggests, “it is a way of gaining access to the meaning of social action either through empathetic identification with those one is observing or through witnessing how the behaviors of actors acquire meaning via their connection to linguistic or cultural systems of meaning of forms of life, or both” (p. 228). This perspective was an effective way to immerse myself in the community, without getting too close.

The analysis of the data, which in my case included conversations, fieldnotes culled from participant observations, and historical/archival document analysis, were ready to be interpreted, and finally I made meaning of the data by placing them in appropriate contexts. Through this data interpretation, I then connected these experiences and memories to larger bodies of literature and scholarly conversations about rural schools. This process assumes the qualitative researcher knows that “resulting interpretations or understandings of human action are capable of being found in or traced to discrete segments of data in the form of written notes on observations, typed transcripts, parts of documents, and so on” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 118). Ultimately, I logged and indexed my conversations, using coding groups for my fieldnotes and data interpretation of the historical/archival school records in order to construct the larger story of Holden.

As discussed previously, my strategy for data analysis is mostly aligned with the concepts of Schwandt (2015) regarding themes for qualitative researchers new to the field. His concepts served as an anchor for my research as I progressed along this journey. In particular, five comments were most relevant to my study. The first concerns
organizing all data in a chronological manner to keep all research (participant observation, fieldnotes, conversations, and archival work) categorized along a specifically ordered research timeline.

The second concerns the use of fieldnotes to provide context and rich description along points of this timeline. He further advises using observer comments and memos to organize these notes in such a way that helps to chronicle what I am experiencing at the moment, so that I can later revisit these notes and gain a sense of my mental process and the lens through which data was interpreted at any given point (Schwandt, 2015). By doing this, I was able to keep check on my ongoing and emergent understandings of former teachers’ and students’ experiences regarding the school and the community.

Thirdly, Schwandt (2015) suggests developing a system of coding groups and categories that encapsulate an idea or theme from the data culled from my conversations in particular. This system allows the qualitative researcher the opportunity to break down complex data into smaller, more manageable components that can be compared with fieldnotes and other data as they develop.

The fourth concept is another important recommendation that is associated with the larger data analysis that yields interpretations as written text. It involves sorting through all of the coding groups formed earlier and placing the data into appropriate narrative frameworks. This process involves “organizing, reducing, and describing the data and continues through the activity of drawing conclusions or interpretations from the data, and warranting those interpretations” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 57). With this last step complete, data is readied for the final fifth step, interpretation, which, in turn, was applied and compared to larger fields of literature, conversation, and, ultimately, theory. My goal,
then, was to apply these concepts to my research in a more or less step-by-step process to create the conceptualized framework through which I now present my research, and hope that it engages in larger dialogues regarding the progressive nature of Appalachian education.

**Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses**

As I see it, the approach lined out above offers several strengths and weaknesses, but, in particular, three strengths and one weakness stand out. Strengths of my research methodologies include my native Appalachian status, my background in the field of education, and the use of qualitative methods that seek to understand experience and meaning rather than generalizability. A possible weakness may be participant accessibility. Each of these points requires further explanation.

First and foremost, I see my native Appalachian status as an especially significant strength for conducting research on a uniquely Appalachian topic. While social scientific researchers at one time may have seen this as a drawback (affecting, for example, researcher “bias” or ethnocentrism) there is, to be sure, a significant literature on natives conducting their own research in their own communities, and Appalachia is no exception (e.g., Keefe 2009). As many researchers and other scholars have pointed out, an important strength in this regard has to do with accessibility.

In my own research, I have already established a friendly rapport with one of Holden’s community leaders. But this could appear as a weakness if I am not cognizant of my own ethnocentrisms. This has been an essential component of my gaining access to community consultants and making them aware of my research interests (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I have access to several different Facebook groups consisting of Holden
Central alumni, and, as a result, have acquired many telephone numbers and home addresses. I also have established different networks of these former teachers and students, as some have moved away from Holden. This diversified approach to contacting community consultants additionally helped when collecting data. One of the key things for me to keep in mind while I researched this topic was that the fact that most Holdenites seemed to connect to me because I am from West Virginia and viewed me as an outsider to their community, even though I am a fellow West Virginian.

A second strength of my research design is that I am an educator undertaking a study concerning the legacies and memories of Holden Central School. Because many of the policies affecting educators are handed down from politicians and policymakers who often have never even set foot inside a classroom as an educator, it is essential that teachers begin voicing their ideas and expressing their opinions regarding their own craft (Tyack & Cuban, 1997). The development of educational policy reform should be created from an inside-out approach with teachers and students being the primary focus of such research. But all too often, this is not the case. The role of the teacher as a researcher is often ignored in favor of someone who supposedly knows better. Farrell (2013) stresses the importance for teachers to disseminate their research as voices of authority, to create their own narratives, and to combat these master narratives. My research embraces this approach.

A third strength of my research design is the inclusion and utilization of sound qualitative methodologies deployed in a diversified manner. Using face-to-face and telephone conversations, conducting participant observations, and analyzing historical/archival documents give me the chance to explore a topic that I am passionate
about. Bogdan and Biklen’s (2007) salient advice about pairing a research topic with an appropriate design is meaningful here. They assert that “without a touch of passion, you may not have enough to sustain the effort to follow the work through to the end or to go beyond the ordinary” (p. 56). My hope is that this research exceeds the ordinary or generalizable or normalized master narrative and feature instead the voices of Holden Central’s former teachers and students as a primary means of conveying the stories and meanings of the school, the community, and the coal company. Using these methodologies, I hope to strengthen my research design and avoid the pitfalls associated with its weakness.

This raises an important point, which, for me, has to do with, on the one hand, the limited number of people I spoke with; and, on the other hand, the age of many of these community consultants. This is primarily an issue having to do with ongoing access to consultants. Many are elderly and some require medical assistance or have mobility issues. Speaking with them once I received IRB approval and recording the conversations was critical.

A closely related issue has to do with being able to find the largest number of people associated with the school as I could. Although I received contact information regarding community consultants, some of them lived outside of the state. Conducting telephone conversations with them and scheduling the conversations around their schedules overcame this issue. In order to avoid this pitfall, I placed another ad in the local newspaper, The Logan Banner, (refer to Appendix A) and made a post on social media regarding IRB approval and my intentions to conduct more conversations as soon as possible.
Validity

In order to strengthen the validity of my research, I needed to be aware of the potential pitfalls associated with conducting qualitative research. These issues relate to researcher ethnocentrism and reactivity while conducting interviews and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Geertz, 1986; Rorty, 1991). Merriam (1995) advises qualitative researchers to identify and make note of your potential biases upfront to the reader and your consultants. This provides a way to do more honest reflection, one that notes where you are coming from and what could influence the data. Being a native Appalachian educator, it makes sense that I am passionate about the profession and the way that outsiders to the region and the profession portray it. This process “enables the reader to better understand how the data might have been interpreted in the manner in which they were” (p. 55). The ability to be honest about your background is key to building rapport with your community consultants, as well as your reader.

In addition to my potential ethnocentrism as an Appalachian educator, I must also be cognizant of my role as a qualitative researcher, which could have potentially interfered with my conversations, either during responses or asking a leading question (Schwandt, 2015). The threat of reactivity in conducting qualitative research is something I also attempted to account for by trying to remain neutral, especially in conversation with my community consultants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Part of creating an honest and authentic text for Holden is not only to be aware of my biases and of reactivity, but also to realize the true quality of qualitative research. This involves thinking about how much of yourself is put into a text and how much the reader interprets of themselves by reading it (Merriam, 1995). At the same time, however, it is important to be cautious of
pretending that an unadulterated, pure reality can be fact. Reality, after all, is “constructed, multi-dimensional, and ever-changing” and “there is no single, immutable reality waiting to be observed and measured” (Merriam, 1995, p. 54). Keeping a balance between these two perspectives—being unbiased while recognizing that there is no pure or single reality—is crucial to understanding that while they may not be totally “avoided” or “captured”, as the case may be, they need to be acknowledged, and made clear upfront. This is, in the end, essential to avoiding a pretentious, misleading, or even an untrue account.

Speaking of ethnocentrisms, it is important to remember that although these predispositions can shade your research, being able to acknowledge that fact is an essential component in qualitative research. Since my research is epistemological in nature, it aims to understand my community consultants’ perceptions and experiences at the Holden Central School. With this in mind, I am after all interpreting their experiences through my own lens of understanding and it is important to be up front about that (Rorty, 1991). Subsequently, this places the responsibility to honestly and accurately interpret these experiences on me in order to tell the story of Holden, according to those who lived it (Geertz, 1986). This contextualizes the narrative in a truly unique way.

By admitting my own research ethnocentrisms and acknowledging the threat of reactivity, I also needed to employ two other measures to account for internal validity with my research. These methodologies include using triangulation and multiple reviewers (or “participant checks”).
Triangulation

Triangulation is a qualitative research approach that seeks to address the validity of a study by providing multiple perspectives of the same event or by analyzing multiple documents in order to confirm a research participant’s perception or any inference made from the data by the researcher. Merriam (1995) describes triangulation as a process utilized by qualitative researchers in an attempt to validate the perspective of a research participant by triangulating other perspectives that could either confirm or refute the validity of a claim.

In order to address the validity in my research, I utilized triangulation by speaking with both teachers and students from Holden Central. Given the historic nature of my research, certain people might perceive things differently, of course, either based on their age or their role at that time (teacher or student). I also analyzed school records in order to substantiate what the consultants relate to me via conversations to provide another layer of context. By speaking with people who were teachers and those who were students, I was hopefully able to either substantiate or refute what data I collect through these conversations and fieldnotes. Ultimately, this serves to strengthen my research and add confidence in the integrity and validity of my data “based on the notion that particular situations convey insights that transcend the situation from which they emerge” (Merriam, 1995, p. 58).

Participant Checks.

In order to further address validity in my research, I utilized multiple reviewers or “participant checks.” Since I recorded these conversations via a digital voice recorder, I was able to log the conversations and create coding groups for the data based on
reoccurring themes or ideas (Merriam, 1995). Once, I wrote up this fieldwork, I asked my community consultants to review the material for its accuracy and authenticity. Many researchers use this approach to great success (e.g., Spatig & Amerikaner, 2014). It can be an involved and time-consuming process, but while addressing validity, it also fosters a sense of value as it actively encourages research participant participation in a more collaborative process of research (see Campbell & Lassiter, 2014). By addressing validity through these means, my hopes are that this text will be more accurate in its representation, as well as becoming a valuable text for the Holden community.

**Conclusion**

By utilizing a multi-dimensional approach to my research methodology—participant observation, conversations, and historical and archival document analyses—I hope to create a dissertation document that stands as a testament of Holden and the legacy of its educators and students. I hope my research helps to open dialogues that, in turn, counter larger, inaccurate narratives concerning the history and culture of rural and Appalachian education. This is crucial in a time when outsiders to the region, who have no vested interest in its uniqueness to its students and communities, continue to frame rural and Appalachian education as deficient past and present. I hope to promote, instead, a narrative focusing on the capabilities and resiliency of Appalachian educators and students.
CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF A SCHOOL, A COMMUNITY, AND A COAL COMPANY

In most cases, the spirit and survival of a community is symbiotically tethered to its economic opportunities or the lack thereof. The community of Holden in southern West Virginia is no different, and its relationship with Island Creek Coal Company is representative of most American industrial towns, which were created out of necessity for the workers and their families. These towns later became communities that were sustained by the economy of the local industry and the community sustaining it as the children grew up to work in the mines, just as their fathers had before them. But as time wore on, the optimism and opportunity that the coalfields of southern West Virginia once held for many high school graduates of the region eventually gave way to waves of outward migration in search of better employment prospects and opportunities elsewhere. Today it seems as if the day-to-day survival of these local communities does not change much, regardless of policy changes, once the monolithic industry of the coal industry folds and the jobs are shipped out of town. Eerily similar to “the canary in the coalmine” analogy, once the coal company dissolves, not long after this event, the community does so as well (Deyoung, 1995; Mullins, 1996; Tieken, 2014).

Understandably, the dominant narratives about coal-mining communities like Holden often depict the unethical exploitation of the miners and their families perpetrated by absentee-owned, corporate entities that built towns for their industry and then abandoned those towns once the area had been fully exploited of its land, resources and people (Eller, 1982; Green, 2010; Henan, 1996; Williams, 2002). Interestingly, though, when it comes to the Holden School, a more complex counter-narrative presents itself in
ways similar that echoed in the research of many studies on the history and culture of schools. For example, Clyde Ellis, in his book, *To Change Them Forever: Indian Education at the Rainy Mountain Boarding School, 1893–1920* (2008), chronicles how the local history of a Kiowa school in southwestern Oklahoma runs counter to a larger, dominant narrative about Native American schools on the western American frontier—a narrative that often emphasizes the detrimental impacts of schools to Native cultures, one that highlights assimilation, domination, and exploitation. The stories that residents and former Kiowa students tell of course include hardship and difficulty, but they also convey a more complex narrative not entirely negative or detrimental, one viewed in more positive terms emphasizing a more complex experience at the school. This more complex narrative is not unlike the story of Holden Central and its community.

In addition to the research associated with the history of coal camp schools and their communities (Brewster, 2000; Mullins, 1996), the story of Holden Central School and its community is unique because it was both promoted and modeled as an exemplar for other communities to follow, similarly to Arthurdale in West Virginia. Just like any story, though, in order to understand the importance and power of the school and the community, it is essential to start at the beginning, as seen through a historical context that explains how the school came to prominence and why it eventually dissolved.

**The Frontier Era: 1800-1905**

The settlement of the Guyan Valley in Logan County began when settlers from the eastern region of the United States arrived in search of lucrative timber jobs, which was the region’s first extractive economy to take hold. Peter Dingess, one of those early settlers, erected a pole cabin schoolhouse on the grounds of a Native American lodge in
order to provide the community’s children with a place to learn a curriculum consisting of “readin’, writin’ and spankin’” (Swain, 1927, p. 196). Interestingly, once the school was no longer being used for academic purposes by the people of “the Islands” because of low enrollment (the early name for Logan County region of Virginia), Dingess had his son burn the schoolhouse to the ground, and the Big Island in Logan County was once again left without a school for the children to attend as this first attempt at a community school dissolved. It was not until the mid-1800s that Logan County would once again possess a community school, when Lewis B. Lawson built a round log schoolhouse near Dingess Run for children to attend (Swain, 1927). This school inspired his brother, James Lawson, to also construct a schoolhouse on his own property, approximately located near the forks of Island Creek in Old Fork Field.

Once this later school was established, it employed a teacher known as Reverend Totten as its primary instructor. Totten was a known Southern Methodist circuit preacher, who traveled the circuits of eastern Virginia during the 1850s and settled in Aracoma, the name for the larger region that would become Logan. The General Assembly of Virginia passed the Free School Act in 1846, which granted children from lower socioeconomic status families free tuition to the school (Swain, 1927). The school’s primary instructor, Reverend Totten, continued to educate children for several more years at the school until the beginning of the Civil War when he left his post to become a member of the Logan Wild Cats, a group of Confederate soldiers led by infamous Hatfield-McCoy patriarch, Anderson “Devil Anse” Hatfield (Swain, 1927).

After the end of the Civil War, an additional schoolhouse was erected and served as the sole school for the region, until the Board of Education in 1883 purchased an acre
of land where a brick building functioned as the community’s schoolhouse for over twenty years (Swain, 1927). Once the construction of the Guyan railroad to Logan was completed, the economic prospects of the region drastically improved, and, as a result, the population increased, creating a demand for a larger school. The Logan County region of eastern Virginia, later West Virginia, emerged because of extractive industries, and, to some degree, its creation of community schools echoes that rigorous and challenging history.

Consequently, the extractive resources of the region were the sole purpose for the existence of Holden. The community was very much a company, industrial town of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Investment in the region began with Z. T. Vinson, a lawyer from Huntington, West Virginia, as he and other entrepreneurs sold their stakes to the United States Coal and Oil Company (Spence, 2012). The company was financed by capital from the northeastern region of the United States under the combined management of Colonel William H. Coolidge, a Boston attorney and financier, and Albert F. Holden, a mining engineer (Thurmond, 1964). Later in 1902, both Coolidge and Holden traveled to Logan County in order to assess 30,000 acres of land owned by a family from Copperas Fork, which they subsequently purchased for $60,000 plus stock in the company (Spence, 2012). The property contained approximately 500,000,000 tons of coal underground, making it almost immediately one of the most valuable coal assets anywhere in the United States (Spence, 1976). The community was officially named after Albert F. Holden, one of Island Creek Coal Company’s two founders.

In December 1904, the first trainload of coal was shipped from their mines and by the beginning of the following year, Holden Mines Number (No.) 1 and 2 were opened
for larger business transactions by the United States Coal and Oil Company, which coincided with the extension of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad (C&O) into Logan County (Spence, 2012). By 1915, the primary coal operator in the region was Island Creek Coal Company (ICCC), as it officially was called henceforth, with 29 functioning mines to its credit. By 1930, ICCC employed 2,500 miners. Holden was the central office and headquarters for ICCC and established the collection of coal camps (numbered one through twenty-nine) under the Holden name, until the entire town was referred to as Holden, collectively speaking. Refer to Figure 1 for a map of coalfields in Logan County.

![Map of coalfields in Logan County](http://www.coalcampusa.com/sowv/logan/logan.htm)

**Figure 1** Dellamea, C. (n.d.). The Logan Coalfield [Map]. Retrieved from http://www.coalcampusa.com/sowv/logan/logan.htm
The Evolution of Community and School: 1905-1920

After gaining a strong foothold in what had once been timber country, Island Creek Coal Company began to gradually reshape and reimagine life in the region for working men and their families. Although paternalistic in nature, ICCC modeled the community of Holden in ways different from the more conventionally known “company store” model. It was explicitly less exploitative in its approach: rather than “trapping” miners in economically dependent roles, ICCC provided opportunities for miners to ascend the corporate ladder and transition from lower-paying mining jobs to more lucrative administrative positions. In this way, it provided an example for what was possible when adequate resources and consideration for ICCC’s employees were at the center of a community’s inception. In many ways this idea emanated in part from the age of Progressivism when outsiders to the region of Appalachia conceived of ways to “uplift” populations of Appalachians they viewed as either disadvantaged or disenfranchised by means of bureaucratic intervention by machinations of the state (Link, 1992). Interestingly, this Progressive ideal of nurturing local populations was complicated by a paternalistic desire to increase productivity and profit margins.

Although Progressivism had the intent of aiding others through governmental acts of benevolence, control was still levied and monitored by the acting agent(s) of change. As such, this complicated corporate behavior manifested in a unique way throughout the case of Holden, as its founders fought to keep out the United Mine Workers of America for many years, but in the same breath they provided employees with modern amenities that few other coal camp communities possessed. The influence that Island Creek Coal Company had on the community of Holden is best understood by exploring the change in
population, as the town had fewer than 100 residents in 1904, but by the 1970s it reached 2,325 citizens with people residing in nearby Whitman and Holden Number 21 (Baisden, 1974). This dramatic change in the city’s population represented an increase in economic opportunities, as well as an increase in the quality of life for Holdenites that was unique from other coal camp communities.

In fact, one of the founders of Island Creek Coal Company, William H. Coolidge, said this about the town’s creation:

knowing the advantage of building something that would be attractive for everybody, we built our houses as we believed better than anybody else’s. We put in everything that tended to efficiency and low cost of mining. We have done everything that we knew to make it a first class mining town... (Thurmond, 1964, p. 55)

As this quote illustrates, the community was partially conceived with a progressive mindset because it was not a utilitarian outpost; Holden was intentionally designed to be a model community for miners and administrators. Walter R. Thurmond, a coal operator and author, commented that “…[Albert] Holden was convinced that a mining town could and should be a pleasant place in which to live. To that end, he planned his town with care, built well-constructed houses and provided excellent stores and recreational facilities” and that “the company recognized the wisdom of Holden’s decision, and has always taken justified pride in providing excellent living and working facilities for its employees” (p. 56). These sentiments reflected the Progressive era from which they originated and embody many of the political reform’s central beliefs, but simultaneously bely the paternalistic side of ICCC that also existed.
Although Holden was a planned community in part born of progressive ideals, it was simultaneously a lucrative industrial juggernaut located in sparsely-populated Logan County, West Virginia. In fact, by the end of June of 1905 Island Creek Coal Company was able to produce more than 100 thousand tons of coal, which was more than double the output for the Gay Coal and Coke Company (the second largest coal producer in the region) (Thurmond, 1964). As a testament to the company’s determination to succeed, the coal company created a twelve-mile dirt road to Dingess, the closest point on the Norfolk and Western railway, in order to reach desperately-needed supplies for the new community that was being created.

Since the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad was not finished at this time, the coal operators constructed their own railroad, the Island Creek Railroad, in order to reach the Chesapeake and Ohio and bring in supplies for the community’s construction (Thurmond, 1964). Very much aware of the high transportation costs they were accruing for delivering their coal, managers at the coal company levied their power against the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and renegotiated a more favorable river rate fee for distribution by threatening to construct their own railroad from Huntington, West Virginia (on the Ohio River) to the Logan coal field (Thurmond, 1964). As a direct result of their bargaining with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company, Island Creek Coal Company purchased barges, towboats, and riverfront property in Huntington to help facilitate their own river distribution of coal, thus increasing their profit revenues and avoiding the pitfalls of financial indebtedness to outside forces (Thurmond, 1964). These difficult, but rewarding business decisions established ICCC as a very successful and prominent entity within the coal industry of Appalachia for years to come.
Having established the community of Holden out of necessity for its miners and their families, the coal company quickly drew more and more new residents to the town, who sought higher-paying jobs and amenities for their families. One such man, W. B. Reece, came to Logan County from Guyandotte, West Virginia. He came to know about Logan because he and others would “go out in the spring with cant hooks and fetch drifting logs” that were marked on one end “to tell what lumber company the logs came from and those men got interested in the fact that Logan County was the place all these came from” (Spence, p. 321, 1976). These recollections from Reece’s daughter, Pauline, hint at both the truly industrial roots of the region and the lengths that early residents took in order to procure better lives for themselves and their families. W. B. Reece later went on to work as a station manager for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Midkiff, West Virginia. There, he became aware of the town of Holden because he saw the shipments of turbines at the station headed for the Holden mines. As his daughter, Pauline, recounted: “it was a pretty big decision to leave the C & O, which was one of the best employers … but I don’t think my father had to think it over very long. He came over here and got a job and rented a house, then he wrote my mother and told her to come from Midkiff to Dingess on a train” (p. 328). As this memory accounts, opportunities for those seeking employment in the mines were available, but required relocation because of the remote nature of the region.

The Reece’s two daughters (Pauline and Kathleen) would eventually become stalwarts of the Holden community and cornerstones of the school built there to serve the children of Island Creek Coal Company’s employees. The two Reece sisters were involved with the school for over 40 years, assuming the roles of educators and principal.
Both were present for the creation of the community, as well as its school. As Pauline recounted, “the town grew up around the nucleus of company interest, and there was some continuity to Holden because the people lived here and worked here and the children went to school here” (Spence, p. 328, 1976). This continuity makes sense because Holden was the headquarters for the coal company and they desired to present their company as the premiere agent in the region.

Not surprisingly, the symbiotic relationship between the coal company and the community did create a sense of paternalism, a very common sentiment expressed by residents living in coal camp towns. Pauline Reece remembered that “they [Island Creek Coal Company] were paternalistic…and maybe that’s not good. But it was pretty good while it lasted. From the time they started the town, they were interested in the life of the people” (p. 328). This interesting interpretation of the word “paternalistic” goes against the dominant narrative concerning coal companies and coal camp communities because the paternalism Reece recalls is not connected with exploitation, as much as it is with a sense of protection and nurture. Kathleen Reece defined that paternalism very specifically: “Island Creek,” she said, “was paternalistic and benevolent. In the Reece household, it was God, Mother, and Island Creek” (Massey, 1981, p. 1). This affirmation for the coal company’s paternalism blurs the line between the industrial and the religious realms of private life that seem to be typical for Holden.

As the community of Holden began to expand, the coal company began to invest more in the town that possessed one of its founders’ names. Unlike most coal camp communities in Appalachia, Holden had many amenities at the time that were considered modern and even luxurious for the region. As Pauline Reece recollected, “it was just very
early that the bandstand we had was built, and there were band concerts and local talent plays…and a lot of things that you don’t usually find in a town like this” (Spence, p. 328, 1976). Indeed, the community of Holden was famous for its manicured lawns and streets lined with neatly-trimmed bushes and flowers. The five-room company homes all featured running hot and cold water, as well as electricity. The involvement of the community, as it relates to their appreciation for the coal company is seen in the following postcard (see Figure 2) from ICCC’s Safety Club’s second annual meeting on August 8, 1926.

Figure 2 Thompson, F. (1926). Island Creek Second Annual Safety Meeting [Postcard]. Retrieved from http://loganwv.us/holden/#-1/33/island-creek-stores-company-holden-wv.jpg

This investment in the community on the part of the coal company is undoubtedly caused in part by the fact that the administrators of the company lived and worked in the town, as well as the miners. However, this does not completely explain the attention to detail and level of forethought that the company placed into the minutia of the town, such as the hiring of plumbing and carpentry staff for the entire town. For instance, Pauline Reece stated that “they also kept carpenter crews and plumbing crews here to keep the
houses in repair. When they built those houses, they built them good because Island Creek figured it was going to be here for a while” (p. 329). In fact, one of the superintendent’s homes in the community was so well constructed that years after it was vacant, Reece remembered that “except for some weathering at the corners, that timber was as good as new” (p. 329). This level of care on the part of the coal company helps explain why the residents came to understand Island Creek Coal Company’s influence on their town as a positive, contributive form of nurturing paternalism.

Perhaps the coal company’s greatest contribution to the community was the creation and gift of Holden Central School. This joint elementary and middle school served the community from 1922 until its closure in 1970. Built on a hill overlooking the town, Holden Central was an impressive, well-constructed three-story brick building (see Figure 3) where my community consultants believed legacies were formed and lives were changed by educators they described as caring, who were equipped with the resources and facilities they needed to instruct the employees’ children from the coal company. Pauline Reece, who taught at the school, remembered the care that went into its planning and construction. As she recollected,

it was a lot bigger than we needed and we had that room to grow in…That school was really built too. When they decided to cut the fire doors out last year, it took tremendous pounding to break through the walls. There’s brick and mortar and air space and another layer of brick before the plaster. Those walls are a foot thick. (Spence, p. 329, 1976)

As this quote illustrates, ICCC invested heavily—and optimistically—in its mines, community, and school.
This level of investment reflects the progressive ideal for a utopian community, based on the desire to aid disadvantaged groups, such as Appalachians living and working in coal camps. In fact, Reece remembered that “they [Island Creek Coal Company] gave it to the Board of Education for a dollar, so the Board didn’t have to put any money in it at all…But the rest of it was all coal company money, which probably explains the way it was built. I imagine there’s not another building like it in the country” (p. 329). Also, the coal company placed trustees in charge of the school before they completely left the daily operations to the community. Ironically, Pauline Reece recounted that “under the agreement with the county, the school would revert back to Island Creek when the county was through with it. When the county gave it back, there wasn’t much left” (Massey, 1981, p. 3). Ironically, by the time the joint elementary and junior high school closed in 1970, ICCC was on its decline and it was not until 1979 when the county was finished using the building, as they built the elementary school building that currently serves the community today. This demonstrates the fact that the county utilized the building for a multitude of community functions, but lacked the resources to properly care for the upkeep of the building, as ICCC had. Island Creek Coal Company strategized that if they were to construct a school for their model community.
that was structurally impressive that it would not only last for years, but also serve as a physical manifestation and reminder to the miners and their families that the company cared for their well-being, alongside their productivity in the mines. By creating such an institution, ICCC ensured that the school would complement their community, as a model for education and create a legacy that far outlasted the physical building of brick and mortar.

**The Model School: 1920-1970**

Island Creek Coal Company’s generous “donation” of the joint elementary and junior high school to the community can also be seen and interpreted as yet another partially progressive intervention meant to improve the daily lives of Holden’s residents. Prior to the coal company’s donation of the school, many elementary schools in Logan County were ungraded; in fact, most resembled the traditional one or two-room country schoolhouses where children of various ages were taught basic curricula consisting of religious scriptures, alphabet lessons, and mathematics (Thurmond, 1964). These schoolhouses were described as being “of the rudest construction, many of them built from hewed logs and with only a dirt floor” and that “the majority of the teachers were poorly qualified and many could claim only a few years of schooling” (p. 80). The school system in Logan County, prior to the introduction of the coal company’s progressive initiative, was substandard when compared to other regions in Appalachia and across the United States at that time. But as time passed and the coal industry became more entrenched in local communities, the education system improved in communities like Holden, reinforcing the paternalism Pauline Reece described.
As the coal industry grew and companies began to increase their profit margins, many invested—albeit, to different degrees—in the infrastructure of their company towns; few invested to the point that Island Creek Coal Company did with Holden. The coal industry, ICCC in particular, made a large influence on daily life in Logan County almost immediately. By supplementing the low salaries provided by the local school districts, coal companies were able to attract and retain higher quality educators to southern West Virginia, while also advocating for the construction of the first high schools in the region (Thurmond, 1964). In 1920, the Superintendent of Logan County Schools reported that although Logan High School had been assessed as a third class institution in 1910, by 1914 it had improved its status into a first class high school. This marked improvement was bolstered by an increased enrollment of 317 students, who studied courses, ranging from English, Latin, History, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology to Stenography, French, and Spanish (Thurmond, 1964). These broad course offerings suggest that the high school was well-funded by the coal companies, both directly through donations and indirectly through tax breaks and endowments, as well as financial contributions from the state of West Virginia and Logan County.

As the coal industry became indelibly involved with the public education system in Logan County, it is no surprise that the donation of the school in 1922 renewed a sense of goodwill for ICCC to the town of Holden. The school established an influential culture within its walls and their mascot of the “Holden Hornet” helped galvanize local residents together in a sense of community around their sports teams, most notably the boys’ basketball squad that won several state championships over the years and garnered the school with a “hall full of trophies” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). Pauline Reece, a former
principal at the school, remarked about the rich athletic tradition at Holden Central that “there was the Wallowacs and the McClouds and the Wootens and a lot of them who are still around here now and who are middle-aged men. It was a basketball town” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). In fact, the school functioned as a funnel for athletes, who would later attend Logan County High School.

The ability for the school to serve as a community meeting center and a unifying force for both the children of miners and administrators is a reflection of the relationship that exists between rural schools and their local communities (Tieken, 2014). The combined elementary and junior high school building was completed in 1922 and by the end of 1921, ICCC began to move equipment and assets from the old elementary school, across the street, in order to prepare the new building for students, faculty, and staff for the following academic year (Spence, 1975). The prestige that the school held for both the students and the faculty could be attributed to the sense of belonging and community that the school created and according to Pauline Reece, “I think a big part of that continuity in Holden is that in the 1930’s and the 1940’s, we had almost no teacher turnover, except maybe we’d get a new coach or maybe one or two teachers a year” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). The sense of community and belonging that was fostered by the school, as expressed by my community consultants, is a testament to the fact that educators truly felt as if they were an integral and irreplaceable part of that landscape and as a result did not desire to leave.

Reflecting back on a forty plus-year career at the school as a principal, Pauline Reece recounted that “it was the same general faculty and now, when the people come back to see the school they’ll say they got about as much out of junior high and grade
school here as they did in high school” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). Since the educators stayed at their same academic posts for numerous years, they were able to teach over three generations of Island Creek Coal Company’s children in a building that was well constructed and imparted a sense of pride and stability to their students.

In addition to the support that the local high school received, other schools, including Holden Central, also were the recipients of the coal industry’s success. The original school at Holden was previously just an elementary school, but a junior high school component was added in the community in order to better prepare students for academic success when they attended high school (Thurmond, 1964). In fact, two years of high school coursework was available at other junior high schools in Logan County at this time. These schools were located in Omar, Ethel, Holden, and Aracoma and 112 students were enrolled across these four schools collectively; by 1964, 64.7% of these students hailed from mining towns and communities across Logan County (Thurmond, 1964). The true progressive gift from the coal industry to Logan County was the large financial investment that the coal company placed in education that the students benefitted from, but that gift came at a substantial financial price that the coal companies were willing to pay in order to attract and retain the services of skilled coal miners and administrators to their company. This progressive curriculum can be seen in the following photograph (see Figure 4) that depicts a fair at Holden Central School, as students display projects they made, such as ceramic plates and other crafts that engaged students in a hands-on manner.
Although the education system in Logan County improved after the introduction of the coal industry into the region, that improvement came at the cost of dependence on the continued success of these companies. It was estimated that during 1960-1964 that the coal industry financially supplemented the Logan County school system $100,000, which does not include the amount of tax dollars the county collected from them as well (Thurmond, 1964). This large sum consisted of improving the quality of playground equipment at a cost of $5,000, painting school buildings at a cost of $3,000, and raising teachers’ salaries county-wide to a total amount of $6,000 (Thurmond, 1964). These initiatives and investments in the area’s local communities go a long way toward building loyalty and goodwill among the residents, but when the coal companies’ financial fortunes decline, this has a crippling influence on the survival of the rural schools that serve these communities. Unfortunately, this is still seen today, as rural schools face threats to their survival, which includes closure and consolidations due to low enrollments and failure to meet their Average Yearly Progress scores on standardized tests. These benchmark scores are used by the federal government to measure how public schools are academically performing, in relation to test scores from standardized tests.
These consequences can result in the reduction or withdrawal of financial support from the federal and state governments (Tieken, 2014). But schools similar to Holden Central have created a legacy that endures in their former students and faculty that refuses to dissipate, regardless of changes to local economies or governmental policies.

**Transition to Dissolution: 1970-Present**

The closure of Holden Central School in 1970 coincides with the decline in financial revenue for Island Creek Coal Company. The Island Creek Coal Seam had once been the region’s most valuable coal deposit, trends in the American economy and within the coal industry itself would dictate the school’s and the community’s fate for generations to come. ICCC was an industrial and economic powerhouse during its heyday; beginning in 1907 the company turned a profit every year, even during the tumult and uncertainty of the Great Depression, paying 209 consecutive quarterly dividends (Thurmond, 1964). This remarkable statistic is in addition to the fact that the coal company was able to expand by great measure and purchase many other mining properties and leaseholds beginning in the 1950s, including: “the Pond Creek Pocahontas Coal Company (1955), the Red Jacket Coal Corporation (1956), the Algoma Coal Company (1957), the Guyan Eagle Coal Company (1959), and the Western Kentucky Coal Company (1963)” (Thurmond, 1964, p. 58) (see Figure 5). With such highly profitable assets under its umbrella, the Island Creek Coal Company was seemingly at the top of the economic coal food chain.
Some scholars dispute these claims of hegemonic prosperity. Historian Robert Y. Spence claims that during the Great Depression, Island Creek Coal Company and the coal mining industry across the county faced extreme hardships. He argues that if it were not for the following three factors the situation could have become much worse: first, the return of people’s hope that things would improve; second, the passage of the Wagner Act that ended the mineguard system and allowed the United Mine Works of America into Logan coalfields; and, third, the creation of the Appalachian Coal Sales, which finally stabilized the price of coal (Spence, 1976). By the end of 1962, the coal company had accrued recoverable reserves (amount of coal that could be physically extracted) estimated at over one billion tons and their working capital surpassed $25 million with $17 million in cash and various government securities (Thurmond, 1964). These impressive financial and economic findings suggest that ICCC and the community of Holden would remain influential coal powers in West Virginia and Appalachia for future generations, but trends in the coal industry and the American economy at large subverted this plan.
The success of Island Creek Coal Company was due in part to its continuity of strategic managers and coal operators, who were able to placate their employees with a combination of well-constructed housing arrangements, well-resourced schools, and numerous recreational and leisure amenities (air-conditioned movie theater, drug store, dress shop, barber shop, billiards hall, tennis courts, Opera House, swimming pool, Club House, etc.) that were available nowhere else in Logan County (Spence, 1976). The company’s longevity is also due in part to their surprising ability to keep out organized, labor unions (United Mine Workers of America) for the most part throughout the years via various methods, such as establishing company unions, which were decentralized boards consisting of mining employees, who would advocate on the behalf of dissatisfied employees to their supervisors within the company. As William H. Coolidge, one of ICCC’s founders, stated to the Senate that “having in the west had experience with the Western Federation of Miners…we kept out and continue to keep out, and propose to keep out, the United Mine Workers of America” (Spence, p. 331, 1976). This sentiment aligns with the progressive sociopolitical mentality because although progressives desired to help those they perceived to be less fortunate than they were, they still wanted to leverage power over that same demographic (Link, 1992).

In addition to this progressive desire to levy power in a managerialism framework, Carl Hedinger, a former coal camp resident, recollected that “life was hard for union and non-union miners everywhere, including Holden” (Massey, 1981, p. 2). This statement was in reference to the brutality and violence of former Sheriff of Logan County, Don Chaffin, who utilized the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency that supplied mine guards to the coal companies and gave them the authority by any means necessary
to prevent union sympathizers from entering the coal fields of Logan County. That included violent beatings and even murder, as long as it accomplished the main objective of keeping out the United Mine Workers of America (Massey, 1981). This private, proxy paramilitary group was known as “the standing army of Logan” (Massey, 1981, p. 1) and was ready at a moment’s notice to descend upon any suspected or would-be union representative. This chaotic violence is more documented in other coal operations, but its presence in Holden does bring into question the narrative of Holden as a utopian or model community, and complicates the intentions of the community’s founders.

Another instance regarding the influence of the powerful Sheriff Chaffin is found in the fact that Island Creek Coal Company had him on their payroll during the early 1920s. In fact, he was provided a royalty fee on their coal for his services in helping keep out union sympathizers during that era (Massey, 1981). Herman Newsome, a former ICCC employee of 32 years, stated that “I went to the company store many a time and my daddy was working, and they said his statement hadn’t come in and they wouldn’t give me a dollar at the office to buy groceries” (Massey, 1981, p. 2). Prior to Newsome’s employment with the coal company, his father had worked for Island Creek at Whitman’s 15 Mudfork coal camp, which was another Holden acquisition. Although he witnessed several abuses of power by the coal company, Newsome ultimately felt that he was treated fairly by Island Creek Coal Company because of his strong work ethic. However, had Newsome been a more lethargic or less productive employee, there was no doubt in his mind that ICCC would not hesitate to replace him.

Running counter to Newsome’s quote, Albert Hedinger, gave a different opinion on the coal company, “Island Creek was an exceptional company. It always paid men for
the hours they worked…Company officials took part in the community. They were on the
school board, and we were lucky they were. Holden had an excellent school” (Massey,
1981, p. 2). This ringing endorsement of the coal company as a protector of the
community and their employees tempers the criticism of Island Creek as a manipulative
or exploitive corporation in Holden and adds complexity to the community as a model
town and brings the struggles that miners faced to the forefront. In addition to Hedinger’s
opinion of the coal company as a positive force in the community, Pauline Reece
remembered that “the company gave each teacher a $10 gold piece every Christmas”
(Massey, 1981, p. 3). This public act of generosity helped cement the idea that although it
was undoubtedly a paternalistic company, the nuances of that paternalism were open for
debate.

Despite these facts, there were occasional disruptions in productivity, such as
miners’ strikes and isolated violent skirmishes between miners and their administrators
(Spence, 1976). Although Walter R. Thurmond (1964) downplays the significance and
occurrences of such events, historian Robert Y. Spence (1976) suggests that these events
did occur and just like the Mine Wars of the early twentieth century, they reflect miners’
discontent with their wages and safety measures taken by their managers at Island Creek
Coal Company. These incidents also spilled over into the private lives of ICCC’s
employees as well, such as when the wife of an administrator remembered that a minister
at their church in Logan admonished the coal company for its lack of concern for the
community, but defended the coal company by stating that “Island Creek has usually
built up any place it’s been. We’ve lived in several places they’ve been besides Holden
and it’s always the same” (Baisden, 1974, p. 1). Regardless of their level of discontent
with the coal company, both the miners and their administrators were subject to more powerful and unpredictable forces (coal industry trends and economic downturns) that signaled the beginning of the end for the school and the economic opportunities that once thrived in Holden.

As time passed, the mechanization of the mining industry firmly took hold, and although Holden and Island Creek Coal Company seemed impervious to decline from outside forces, industry demands, and economic constraints soon exerted their influence on both. With the introduction and adoption of modern, mechanized techniques in the Logan coalfields, the demand for labor was cut in half, as coal companies merged, and smaller operations were liquidated and purchased by larger entities, such as ICCC (Thurmond, 1964). In addition to these factors, larger coal companies were influenced by mechanization in additional ways, such as their need to cut payroll and minimize their employee pool. An end result of these changes was fewer employees, even though those who remained made higher salaries at the coal company. In addition to these factors, geologists had originally estimated there was more than four billion tons of recoverable coal in Logan County, but when more accurate estimates were made that number dwindled to around two billion tons that could be profitably recovered (Thurmond, 1964). These trends in the mining industry would combine with economic downturns in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s to bring troubling times to Holden.

In conjunction with the mechanization of the coalmining industry, the economic downturns in the American economy during the 1950s and 1960s forced coal companies to shift their focus from mining subterranean bituminous coal to processing fuel oil, a safer and more cost effective alternative (Spence, 1976). Regardless of these national
economic trends, by 1952, Island Creek Coal Company had managed to become the third largest coal company in the United States and the largest operating in West Virginia (Thurmond, 1964). It seemed as if somehow ICCC was able to thrive in challenging national economic climates because of their shrewd business policies. However, certain national trends would soon change the company’s status. In the 1950s, the rising popularity of processed fuel oil threatened to completely supplant the use of coal as the nation’s primary source of electric power.

The hazards associated with mining coal in terms of both health and safety are well documented, but the advent of fuel oil offered consumers and producers an alternative to this controversial source of power (Spence, 1976). In addition to the consumption of fuel oil, competition from coal produced in the western United States, and the consumption of gas placed more pressure on the coal industry in Logan County (Spence, 1976). Coal operators in Logan County scrambled to devise an alternative plan that might boost their sales of coal, such as pumping coal through pipelines, but this idea never took root, as politicians and lobby groups (railroads) fought to defeat any legislation that sought to build pipelines (Spence, 1976). In addition to these problems, the coal industry was also forced to address miner safety in the 1960s because the growing reliance on machinery in the mines led to increasingly dangerous underground conditions.

In March 1960, 18 miners died at Holden Number 22 when the slate fell (a kind of mine roof collapse) and a fire trapped the miners at the bottom of the mine. The end result was the worst coal mining disaster that occurred in the county between the MacBeth mine explosion in 1938 and the Buffalo Creek disaster in February 1972.
(Spence, 1976). The precipitating issue with Holden 22 was the overly heavy roof of the mine. The wooden support beams that held up the roof up bent, and were then crushed under the immense pressure. When the roof slate collapsed, it went crashing into a trolley wire, which caused the catastrophic fire (Spence, 1976). This disaster trapped 20 men, although two of them were miraculously able to make it out alive. A rescue team attempting to reach the remaining 18 miners discovered that carbon monoxide gas had already claimed the men’s lives. Each of the 18 had asphyxiated (Spence, 1976). During the 1950s and 1960s as newer mines became more dangerous than older ones, Island Creek Coal Company suffered many disaster-related setbacks. As miner Jack Vernatter, stated, “the safety issue has been a battle fought on the lines of gas explosions, roof-falls, and electricity and the miners have paid the cost of higher productivity” (Spence, 1976, p. 531). At the close of the 1960s in Logan County, things seemed bleak for the coal mining industry that had once used goodwill to galvanize workers and residents together. The combination of the county’s political machine, the instability of the coal industry on a national scale, and too many mining accidents like Holden 22, led the community’s once positive sentiments around mining to wane.

In the beginning of the 1970s, coal operators hoped for brighter times ahead, but the more things seemed to change, the more they seemed to remain the same. The Logan County coal mining industry in general, and Island Creek Coal Company in particular, experienced miners striking for black lung compensation laws; at the same time, an anti-strip mining movement began to gain momentum (Spence, 1976). In addition to these challenges, the issue of land ownership with the mining companies became a major threat to mining companies. When Logan County was first opened for mining during the early
part of the twentieth century, the coal companies purchased large swathes of land and this property only increased in value as time passed. The coal companies refused to relinquish any property without keeping the mineral rights to the land (Spence, 1976). Miners who wanted to live where they worked, then, were essentially compelled to buy mobile homes and live on property they did not own. The problem is best explained by looking at the 1970 census, which “found that 7,171 of the 11,897 homes in Logan County had been built before 1939” (Spence, 1976, p. 547). This means that the majority of homes in Logan County were built in the 1930s and owned by ICC and because they did not want to relinquish any property containing highly profitable mineral rights, the rate of home constructions stalled over the ensuing years. As miners were left with little choice, but to live on company-owned land, the statistics reveal the lengths that ICC would go in order to maximize profit and solidify company assets.

So, although the United States faced an energy crisis during the 1970s and coal experienced a resurgence in popularity and consumption, it never seemed to fully recover to its ultimate level of use during the early twentieth century and the region of Logan County felt this influence more sharply and more quickly than most other regions. Holden seemed to take the brunt of this confluence of events, as Island Creek Coal Company lost some of the prestige and influence it had accrued over the years. As a result of the coal company’s smaller employee pool, the school suffered due to smaller enrollment. Ultimately, Holden Central School (joint elementary and junior high) closed its doors in 1970 and the children who would have attended this institution were forced to enroll elsewhere.
With these combined factors in mind, it is no surprise that Island Creek Coal Company’s presence in Holden almost completely diminished by the 1980s. Some trace the decline of the community of Holden back to just after World War II, as ICCC began “the selling of the houses [to miners], the gradual withdrawal of the company support to culture and recreation, the transfer of the Rec-building to a county group rather than a town group” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). In 1969, Island Creek Coal Company lost its autonomy, as it was sold to Armand Hammer of the Los Angeles, California based Occidental Petroleum Company (Spence, 2012). Most of ICCC’s remaining financial holdings and assets were divided again and sold to Consol Energy in 1993 (Business: Other News, 1993). The coal company relocated its headquarters out of Holden, moving temporarily to Huntington, West Virginia, and then on to Lexington, Kentucky. The Holden Number One Company Store, once a prominent fixture in the community, (see Figure 6) closed its doors in July of 1983. With the closure of the main Holden store, all vestiges of ICCC began to fade. The welcome sign visitors pass as they enter the town no longer even bears the company’s name.

![Figure 6](http://loganwv.us/holden/#-1/33/island-creek-stores-company-holden-wv.jpg)

Today, as economic opportunities have all but disappeared, the prominence of Holden and its once model community is a mere memory in the minds of its citizens. The
school itself was demolished to make room for the four-lane highway, Corridor G, which now ironically bypasses the town that still proudly bears the name of one of Island Creek Coal Company’s two primary founders (Spence, 2012). Despite these facts, teachers at Holden Central School still saw the value in providing the community’s children with a quality education. As Pauline Reece recollected, “you put a little bit of yourself in every group of kids that go out” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). The care and love that the educators at Holden Central felt for their students, as expressed by my community consultants, transcended the physical building of the school and as news reached the community regarding the fate of the school, many former students made pilgrimages to the building before it was destroyed to honor the legacy that they were a part of. Pauline Reece noted, “It’s kind of a tribute, I guess you’d say. Well, they need a new building now, but I imagine there will be a few tears shed when they get it” (Spence, 1975, p. 4). As this quote illustrates, the school was not only an integral component for the lives of those who worked there, but also for the ones who learned there and carry on this tradition in various ways.

**Holden’s Story**

This story of Holden and its school is not entirely a tragedy or a cautionary tale like many dominant narratives of this type, mainly because like all stories, it does not truly end. The fate of Holden and its school is an all too familiar narrative concerning the pressures facing many rural American schools and communities as they struggle to survive once the primary economies of the region dissipate, close, or move on (Tieken, 2014). Importantly, the legacy that originated in the halls and classrooms of Holden Central School still live on in former student turned college professor, Stan Maynard, in
former educator turned community historian Cathy Marino, and former student turned community leader Jim Long. Their stories and others like it inform a legacy that tells us more about larger stories of adaptation and resilience.

It also lives on at Holden Central Elementary School—which still stands in town—where, each year, a community reunion is held to commemorate the power and prestige that the Holden School still holds for the town’s residents. The history of Holden, its school, and the coal company that created both has not faded from memory. Indeed, it serves as an example for the capabilities of Appalachian students and the educators who today continue to shape the lives of students in a region of the country that is often overlooked and forgotten.

In the next chapter, I turn to these stories and their power to reveal the complexities of the coal company, the community, and the school in ways that no other sources can. Indeed, the power of these narratives, consisting of former students and teachers at Holden Central, supplements the historical context provided here in order to present a vivid picture for what the school meant to them (Polkinghorne, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1997). By utilizing the ethnographic technique of portraiture, developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman-Davis (1997), the next chapter is framed by the voices and memories of those most-closely involved with the school and serves as a guiding force to showcase their experiences against the historic context of the coal company and the founding of the community. These portraits are comprised of oral histories, which are distinct from both structured and non-structured interviews because of their emphasis on interpreting meaning and the power dynamics concerning the relationship between the interviewer and the respondents (Yow, 2005). In particular, oral
history is defined as “the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form” (p. 1). With this in mind, the oral histories that follow were conducted with community consultants, not informants nor mere respondents, because this form of collaborative ethnography in qualitative research was not possible without their contributions to form the larger story of Holden (Campbell & Lassiter, 2014). This story contains many memories, experiences, and narrative elements that not only serve to preserve the memory of the school, but also to refute the dominant narrative of Appalachian students and schools as inadequate and incapable, when the opposite is in fact the truth.
CHAPTER 5

THE POWER OF ORAL HISTORY,
AND THE COUNTER NARRATIVES OF “THE RURAL”

The image that most outsiders bring to mind when they think of Appalachia is, too often, of a region and people who are backwoods, backwards, and barefoot. But, of course, these inaccurate and harmful dominant narratives leave much to be challenged, complicated, and refuted in order for meaningful, intercultural dialogues to occur. Appalachia has long been a region typified as “the other,” which implies that it is not similar to the rest of the United States of America, and that it inherently possesses a mysterious and undefined trait that isolates it from the rest of the civilized world (Shapiro, 1978). This makes the region not relatable to most, and foreign for many outsiders. As a result, ever since the introduction of extractive industries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and continuing with the Appalachian Regional Commission during the 1960s, outsiders to the region have attempted to impress their will upon those living here and redefine what it means to be Appalachian, often according to their own terms (Williams, 2002). Just as the mountains continue to exist, despite constant threats to their survival posed by everything from strip coalmining (aka mountain top removal), timber clear-cutting, and erosion, so too do the people of the region continue to endure. Through efforts similar to this research, the capability and resilience of the Appalachians—both mountains and people—must be showcased in order to combat the narratives of Appalachians as others that, unfortunately, persist—even to the point of shaping state and federal policy (Spatig & Amerikaner, 2014). Counter
narratives that can reveal the rural of Appalachia to the outside world offer their own unique set of nuances, even for those from the region, such as myself.

As Appalachia ranges from Maine all the way down to Georgia, there is no singular definition of Appalachian culture that encompasses all of the people who live here. In fact, the culture of the Catskill Mountains in southern New York is vastly different from the culture in southern West Virginia (Williams, 2002). With that in mind, the challenges of conducting qualitative research in a rural setting, such as in Appalachia, and in West Virginia, in particular, are as varied as the region itself. Given this, though, there are several reoccurring themes to explore when conducting educational research in a rural setting, mainly the considerations of social cartography that can best be understood as space, place, and scale (Green & Reid, 2014). This geographic framework offers qualitative researchers a different point of reference when exploring the rural communities they are studying. The connection between geography and educational research provides the context of relationships that exist between real and imagined spaces that permeate regions, boundaries, and cultural territories. The scale of a rural setting also is important to consider because “rather than referring simply to the physical world, geography as we mobilize it encompasses social and cultural life in particular locales” (Green & Reid, 2014, p. 28). In addition to these considerations, the ties of community are essential when conducting educational research in a rural environment (Workman, 2012).

The symbiotic relationship between a rural community and its school can be profound, so much so that when the survival of either one is threatened, the other entity is almost immediately affected. This is particularly true for rural schools and the
communities they serve because as economic opportunities dissipate in the community, the fate of their schools is quickly sealed (Tieken, 2014). These complex relationships also reveal the extent to which rural people often identify themselves as being not only a part of their local community, but also as a part of their rural school. This reflexive framework reinforces the idea that the researcher is also a vested member of the community, because if from the region as well, he must then use his own background to engage with members of the rural community he is researching and use this as a lens to make meaning of what is seen, heard, and experienced (Brann-Barrett, 2014). This places the researcher in an active role, rather than a passive one, so that he can understand that community is as much as a concept regarding physical places, as it is a concept of belonging and relationships.

Utilizing these frameworks with my own research, I have conceptualized my study as a collaborative endeavor, rather than a singular, one-way qualitative research inquiry, mainly because I shared the interpretation of meaning with my community consultants and their memories of Holden Central as the research unfolded (Campbell & Lassiter, 2015). This is why I collected oral histories, as opposed to conducting structured or non-structured interviews, because oral histories emphasize personal testimonies of historical events, rather than emphasizing what can be static responses to questions (Yow, 2005). These oral histories are presented using the qualitative research technique of “portraiture,” an approach that allows the researcher the ability to construct a narrative utilizing numerous case studies of individuals, which results in an organized collection of experiences and perceptions, which highlight different aspects of the larger story. In this way, the perspective of oral history and portraiture emphasizes each collaborator’s
experience and how it connects with all of the others to form a mosaic of voices and narratives that, in this case, can weave together the story of Holden and its school (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). This composition demonstrates the power of narrative and helps to reveal the nuances and intricacies regarding the community of Holden, Island Creek Coal Company, and the school that created a legacy that still persists today.

In this dissertation’s first chapter, I told the story of Holden and how my involvement with its legacy began with a meeting one hot, summer’s day on July 2, 2014. At the time, I did not know that this fortuitous event would forever change my perception of Appalachian education and the importance of caring educators and capable students. What follows is a slice of the rich stories of Holden Central School and the memories from former students and educators at the school itself, beginning with one of my former professors, Stan Maynard.

**Stan Maynard: An Ethic of Excellence**

I first met Stan Maynard during my Post-Baccalaureate teacher- certification program at Marshall University. He, his wife (Barbara), and a colleague, Steve Beckelhimer, taught several classes that were transformational for me as an educator, but also as a person. In particular, Maynard taught Ron Berger’s book (2003), *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students*, which emphasized the need to construct meaningful relationships with students, and, in turn, compared the craft of being an educator to that of a carpenter because of the need to hone and sharpen your repertoire of tools and techniques. Maynard left an indelible impression on me during my time in the program and by the time I graduated with my teaching certificate and license,
I was inspired to make a difference in the lives of my students. As time passed, I became aware of the doctoral program at Marshall University’s Graduate College and I set out on a different path, as I had always wanted to become a professor on the college level. I never forgot what I learned from Professor Maynard, and as things would turn out our paths would cross again.

During the summer of 2014, I was enrolled in an Appalachian Studies class with Professor Luke Eric Lassiter and was assigned to have a conversation concerning a project exploring Appalachian education. I decided to speak with my grandmother, who taught at a small country schoolhouse, and Maynard, as he attended two coal camp schools himself. When he began to discuss his experiences at a school in southern Logan County, West Virginia, however, I became enthralled by the historic significance and the ethic of excellence he described in action at Holden Central School. Maynard informed me about how and why he became the educator he is today, which includes being one of the three founders of the Buck Harless Student-Athlete Program at Marshall University in 1983, as well as being the executive director of the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development. (The June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development is focused on aiding educators and students in rural West Virginia with improving the quality of education and financial grants for professional development opportunities.) Maynard is a living testament to the education that he received at Holden Central, as he attributes his success to his teachers that he was fortunate to have while he was enrolled there. His ethic of excellence was forged in Holden and continues to be passed down to Marshall University students enrolled in the teacher education program.
When I walked into Maynard’s office in Jenkins Hall, I was quickly greeted by his receptionist and led to a smiling face, brimming with energy. Maynard is a revered professor among his many students. When anyone meets with him, it becomes clear as to why: in the classroom and during face-to-face meetings his cadence and gestures used to illustrate the most important points during a lecture or conversation quickly come to the fore. He has a unique talent to convey meaning with care and make students feel comfortable when in the classroom or in face-to-face meetings. This day would be no exception. I sat down at a long, wooden conference table and hit the record button on my voice recorder, and our conversation began to unfold.

Maynard attended two coal camp schools during his life, Chaffin Elementary School and Holden Central School, between 1948-1956 in Ragland and Holden, West Virginia, respectively. His father was an administrator in the coalmines of southern West Virginia, before he transferred to Huntington, where Maynard attended high school (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014).

Maynard described Ragland as distinct and very different from Holden. Ragland was a sparsely-supplied community that had “the company store mentality where the management houses were all in a row and the miners all lived in small houses together” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). The layout of Ragland was typical of most coal camp towns and this was reflected in the absence of amenities that were readily available in Holden. In comparison, Maynard stated that Holden was “promoted as the quintessential coal camp because it had a hospital, a really good school, a movie theater, a drug store, and even a community church” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). In fact, Main Holden had a Methodist Church and each of
the related coal camps had a Baptist Church for parishioners to choose from. The community of Holden was designed to be a model for others to follow in the coal industry and this care was reflected in the coal company’s attention to detail and the wide variety of modern amenities that the community was provided.

The community of Holden was well maintained, and the school was the community’s primary focal point, outside of Island Creek’s Company Store Number One. As a boy, Maynard attended school through the third grade at Chaffin Elementary and grades four through nine at Holden Central. The curriculum at Holden was “reading, writing, geography, and arithmetic,” but it also “really did incorporate the history of the world, without the beauty of Google and the Internet, as books were the vehicles to foreign and exotic places” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). This type of instruction is utilized in modern classrooms and is commonly referred to as “differentiated instruction” because it utilizes a variety of instructional materials to engage students using numerous techniques (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Gregory & Chapman, 2013). Educators at Holden Central utilized a variety of resources and tools to engage students, such as books and the construction of crafts, to reach students who preferred to learn via different ways (tactile, visual, etc.). In particular, educators at Holden engaged students’ imaginations and created dynamic lessons that Maynard still remembers. The book of “Robinson Crusoe,” for example, “stood out because we looked up his deserted island on a map and discussed what the weather was like and what he would do for survival in the elements” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). This combination of resources and skilled educators forged meaningful relationships between students and their teachers.
As our conversation unfolded Maynard moved from discussing the curriculum at the school to discuss the structure of Holden Central, and the appearance of the educators. He described the teachers at Holden Central School as being “professional educators who dressed formally in what we might call business casual, but it was even a step higher than that with the principal wearing a suit and tie” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). He emphasized the difference between the ways teachers dress in modern classrooms and the ways they did when he went to school with the educators at Holden Central representing a superior dress code.

While this is a trend one can see widely in schools across the United States, Maynard was quick to point out that students can pick up on these subtle differences in the way teachers dress, and this was no different at Holden. Appearance sets a tone, whether that be professional or “laid back.” Holden’s dress code, in particular, added to the school culture, which seemed to prevent an “us versus them mentality, even though some of the children were from mining families and others were from management families, when we all entered the doors of Holden, we were all Holden Hornets and felt equally valued” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). This sense of school unity and comradery was strong at Holden, and Maynard pointed out it was a testament to the school’s faculty and staff, as there were occasional mining strikes and other disruptions that would have been felt by the children at the school.

In addition to this positive school culture, a religious component to the school’s curriculum “had an opening Lord’s Prayer to begin every day and then start the Pledge of Allegiance before instruction occurred” and they even “had a drill in case we were bombed, so you would hide underneath your desk because of the coalfields in Logan and
the chemical plants in Charleston” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). These safety precautions reinforced the school culture at Holden Central and increased the unity the students felt toward one another and with the school staff, despite the realities that the real world held for their parents beyond the school’s walls. Although these aspects of the school’s curriculum may have manifested at other schools at that time, it was done with the purpose of uniting children from mining and administrative family backgrounds.

Although this school culture was forged in a multitude of ways, the care and love from the teachers, Maynard suggested, was perhaps the greatest avenue for trust and belonging that the students experienced. Maynard’s fifth grade teacher was an example: Mrs. Beard was the first teacher from the school to leave a lasting impression on the young man. Maynard said she “would use the intonation of her voice and captivated you by knowing, exactly where to stop reading for the day, which left everyone wanting more” and if a student behaved exceptionally well they “were allowed to take a book home for the weekend and read ahead, which was one of the most prestigious things I can remember in order to be considered a ‘cool’ kid” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). A second teacher who also influenced Professor Maynard was named Mrs. Diamond, who “invited students to her home on Saturdays to have lunch, learn etiquette lessons for eating, but also to discuss students’ long-term goals and encourage them to follow their talents and dreams” (July 2, 2014). This act of kindness on the part of the educator was thought of as a true honor by Maynard, as she opened her heart and her home to the students and made them feel valued, while they ate lunch she prepared just for them.
A third teacher that Professor Maynard had while at Holden Central School left the largest impression of all. One of the Reece sisters, mentioned earlier, had a hand bell that she used to bring in children from recess and she allowed them the opportunity to use it, if they behaved. Maynard recounted that “you thought you died and had gone to Heaven, just to ring the bell every once in a while and although you knew you would not ring it every time, you behaved so maybe you could” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). In fact, this gesture was so influential to him, that Maynard visited her before she passed away and was given the bell as a reminder of the special relationship that was created at the school and the legacy that he is still a part of. He recollected that “all the lives that the bell touched still resided on the handle, all of the emotional DNA is still there, but that it meant to you, as a student, were good enough and showed her something over the course of the school year that she identified as positive” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). While Maynard relayed this story, I couldn’t help but think how this story resonated with me because I too can remember influential teachers who cared and made a difference in my life as a young boy. In any case, Maynard viewed this as a purposeful act of looking for success, and that Holden Central, in his mind, was not only an excellent institution for learning, but that it also became an incubator for increasing students’ development and preparing them with a quality education for life beyond the school.

Because not all children were going to attend college after their graduation, if they even graduated high school, Maynard pointed out that Holden Central School imparted their students with a sense of purpose and self-respect that, importantly, relayed a sense that they could achieve great things if they applied themselves. Maynard
recounted that “although I do not have any data, I know a lot of Holden students went on to college and were successful at Logan High School as well” and that “most of the kids that I graduated with from Holden Junior High School went on to West Virginia University, Morris Harvey [University of Charleston], and Marshall University” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). So, even though the school was the property of a powerful coal company, which mined (and arguably exploited) a region and community for its resources and labor, it also created a more positive legacy that lives on today through the lives touched by Holden’s former students and teachers. Indeed, Maynard has changed my life, too, and his story is just the beginning of the school’s larger narrative.

**Jim Long: Community Crusader**

Another former student of Holden that I had the chance to meet while conducting my research was Jim Long, a community leader in Holden, who (with the help of many others) organizes and runs an annual community reunion in Holden’s current elementary school’s cafeteria. Holden’s legacy, as discussed earlier, also influenced other students to become active members of their community, so that the memory of Holden Central School does not dissipate away as time passed by, but is instead preserved for future generations of Holdenites.

While I was logging Maynard’s conversation for my summer class, and doing some further research about the school, I happened upon an online Facebook group, consisting of alumni from Holden Central. As I scrolled through various posts about school memories and personal conversations, I found a post from Long, in which he announced an upcoming community reunion that fall. I immediately emailed Long,
notifying him of my research interests and asked if it would be permissible for me to
attend the reunion. I wanted to put up a table in the corner of the cafeteria where former
students and teachers could have some informal conversation with me about their
experiences at the school. Within a few days, Long got back with me and replied that he
would be happy to have me at the reunion. Several weeks before the reunion, I placed an
advertisement in the local newspaper, The Logan Banner, (refer to Appendix A) which
provided more details about my research interests in Holden and that I would be in
attendance, should anyone want to stop by. To my surprise, this strategy worked well,
and many people wandered up to my table asking if I would like to talk with them about
their experiences. This, of course, would not have been possible, had it not been for the
generosity and hospitality of Jim Long and the many other reunion organizers. It was
during this event that I had the occasion to meet and develop several connections,
including with Long, who happily provided his story.

Long attended Holden Central School from 1955-1963, which included both his
time at the grade school, as well as the junior high component that was attached to the
building. Long remembered starting elementary school at the age of five and walking to
school because the bus service did not begin until his younger sister began attending the
school several years later (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015).
Additionally, students at that time had to pack their own lunches because the school did
not have a cook until years later when they hired a Home Economics teacher, who also
performed duties as a cook. Long remembered “she made the best biscuits there ever was.
I really enjoyed my time there” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015).
These basic, yet essential functions of a rural school are key to the health and safety for
students living in the surrounding communities and during the 1950s Holden Central struggled to provide these services, despite the prominence of the model town.

Though occasional inconveniences surfaced associated with the daily routine of the school, Island Creek Coal Company did carefully select highly qualified and experienced educators to work at the school. In fact, Long recollected “many of the teachers who worked there, their husbands were employed by Island Creek as a package deal” and that the coal company “also gave their wives a job” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). One of Long’s earliest memories of a teacher at Holden Central School was Margaret Ward, his sixth grade teacher. Long enrolled a year early at Holden Central and as a result of a surgery he had in the second grade, he fell behind the rest of his classmates. As a result of this teacher’s care, Long stated that “Ms. Ward worked with me and got me ready for junior high and because of her help I ended up going to college prep in high school” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This remarkable amount of attention and dedication to her students endeared Ward to Long, even after the passage of many years. In addition to Ward, Long also remembered Kathleen Reece and his third grade year in her classroom. Long recollected that “they [Pauline Reece and Kathleen Reece] were both historically-minded …and for our Civics class they required us to make something from a past time period. I made a tomahawk and other people made log cabins. She kept all of these crafts on her shelves until the building was destroyed” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Once again, the Reece sisters seem to reappear as guiding figures in the lives of Holden children and their legacies live on in the memories of former students like Stan Maynard and Jim Long.
Another educator that Long fondly remembered was Coach Masil Maynard (not related to Professor Stan Maynard). Long stated, “I ran track for him for a couple of years, but he would not let me run the high hurdles in my seventh grade year because they did not reach my chest and I was too short! He was a great teacher that taught both Phys-Ed and Health and shaped many lives during his time here” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Long emphasized the fact that all three of these teachers made a significant influence on his life growing up in Holden. In particular, Long credits the educators at Holden Central with helping instill a sense of civic duty and patriotism in their students because they modeled this same attitude toward their children. Long remembered that “the teachers were well versed and very well educated, but they could bring the content to our level and relate it to us, so that we would understand” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This ability demonstrates the fact that the teachers at Holden Central School were carefully selected by administrators at the coal company to not only instruct the children of Holden, but to inculcate them with a strong sense of self-esteem and a belief that they can achieve and excel if they applied themselves.

In addition to the memories of specific educators that influenced Long, we also discussed the daily routines at the school and the strong school culture that was fostered by the teachers at Holden Central. Interestingly, as paternalistic as ICCC was described as being, they did not influence the school’s curriculum or dictate what the teachers could include in their lessons. Long remembered that “I think more or less they supplied the school and left the teachers to their own devices. They hired the teachers and let them have free reign, but as the Logan County Board of Education got bigger, they started
dictating what they [teachers] had to teach and what books to use” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). As a matter of fact, at the grade school children were required to purchase their own books, but Long stated that many families simply could not afford them, so Island Creek Coal Company intervened and “footed the bill for the families who could not afford them” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015).

Such acts of generosity reinforce the idea that Island Creek Coal Company was a benevolent company that acted as a guiding force in the community, rather than an iron fist of authoritarian oversight. But the influence of the coal company on the community by any account cannot be understood as an Appalachian utopia, as ICCC did maintain a strong command on its workers; they thwarted unionization efforts, for instance, by keeping out the United Mine Workers of America for quite some time, threatening to replace any miner with union sympathies (Massey, 1981). So, though this narrative does partly reflect the nurturing, protective form of paternalism described by Pauline Reece and Kathleen Reece, it also complicates the dynamic between Island Creek Coal Company being a more benevolent progressive entity and simultaneously a corporation mining the community for profit (Spence, 1976). This is represented by the fact that the company store in Main Holden became a central hub for the community where “you could buy anything from clothing to furniture to shot guns” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Secondary to Holden Central School, the company store was the community’s central location for both congregation and commerce, yet ICCC still operated on the scrip system for its citizens where items where purchased on credit. As is true with most things in life, Island Creek Coal Company was a complicated
amalgam of benevolence and investment in the community, along with their main
objective of turning a profit and keeping their miners and their families satisfied in the
community they specifically built for them.

Regardless of the coal company’s true intent for the community—complicated by
any measure—the school that the company created was in part a progressive-era
investment in the lives of their employees’ children that would influence future
generations of Holdenites. In fact, Long remembered that many of the children already
knew each other even before they enrolled at the school. He stated that “the class sizes
were rather small back then with two grades and two sections in Junior High with the
teachers providing their students with a more one-on-one scenario than what children get
today because of consolidations” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9,
2015). These smaller sized classrooms offered students more opportunities to get to know
one another and socialize both inside and outside of their daily school routines.

These factors combined to reduce the perceivable difference between the children
from mining families and those from administrative families. In fact, Long’s grandfather
was the chief mining engineer at ICCC from 1922 to 1955. In addition to the small class
sizes, the close proximity between neighborhoods also strengthened the school culture
that the educators at Holden Central created. Long recollected that “most of the kids were
all local that knew each other” and that “even before I started school just down on Bee
Bee Street down there, there were thirty-two kids under school age and we always had
ball games, school activities, and Parent Teacher Association meetings that kept the
community involved with the school” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9,
2015). These efforts made by the school’s faculty and staff created as sense of family and
belonging amongst the students at Holden Central and this investment of social capital on the part of the coal company paid dividends in terms of employee satisfaction and goodwill expressed toward Island Creek Coal Company.

Although Long remembers his time at Holden Central School very positively, he also emphasized the symbiotic relationship that existed between Island Creek Coal Company and the school. Inevitably as ICCC’s influence began to wane in the community, the stability of prosperity of the community also declined. Long stated that “as Island Creek progressively left the area, they put Holden on a downward spiral. They sold the church that they had previously supported and paid the pastor. When the school closed down, Holden Hospital went out of business” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Once Island Creek Coal Company began to financially decline, it slowly, but steadily began to uproot itself from the community. The selling of miners’ homes to employees and the financial withdrawal from the church were the first hints for both the decline of Holden as a model community and the future of the school.

Long described the zenith of Holden as being during the 1940s and 1950s, which dovetails with the economic prosperity of the coal company before the mine collapse at Holden Number 22 in March of 1962, as well as the economic tumult of the 1970s. In fact, years after the school closed its doors forever, but before it was destroyed to make way for Corridor G, Long remembered that local children would go play basketball in the vacant gym. He stated, “I can remember looking in the windows years later and stuff that was hanging up on the walls had all fallen onto the floor” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This poignant, yet haunting memory encapsulates the fate of the school and rural education across the country in general. As time passes,
the similarities between rural and urban schools seem to increase, as both face threats to their survival; rural education, however, is like a ghost in the background during discussions of education policy reform, neglected and unseen.

On the day that I first met Long, at the reunion, after we had finished our first involved conversation about Holden out in the heat of a midday Saturday sun, we both ventured back inside the shelter of the cafeteria at Holden Central Elementary School. Both he and Marietta Baldwin Gilbert were being beckoned from within the school’s hallways to continue setting up the cafeteria for the ensuing community reunion that would transpire later that day. As I helped set up a couple long, folding wooden lunch tables with decorations, I wandered around the elementary school cafeteria to explore the table that was set up in the back of the room, near the hallway. Reunion attendees brought various Holden Central memorabilia and paraphernalia that was displayed, so that everyone could take a mental stroll back in time to revisit school yearbook photographs, embroidered lettermen jacket patches, and relive their time at the school by examining community newsletters from the 1950s through 1960s. As I wandered around the exhibit, I was approached by a smiling woman who was holding a stack of photographs. She asked if one of my relatives attended the school and I replied that I was at the reunion to have some informal conversations with the school’s former teachers and students to understand their experiences at the school. She grabbed my hand and said, “Oh, let’s talk. I’ve got so much to tell you!” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015).
Barbara McCloud-Brewster: Perceptive Pupil

Barbara McCloud-Brewster and I made our way back to the table I had set up, so that we could talk in a corner of the room that was quieter than the rest. The chatter from other reunion attendees had reached fever pitch and resulted in a cacophony of conversation that threatened to drown out my digital voice recorder, but as time was at a premium, we carried on. McCloud-Brewster attended Holden Central School from fourth grade in 1941 until 1949, when she graduated junior high school in the ninth grade (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Before attending Holden Central, McCloud-Brewster went to a small community school because her next-door neighbor was the first and second grade teacher. McCloud-Brewster remembered, “She took me to school. I really started school at four. And she took me to school. She just had first and second grade. So I’m certain that I was six, I was born in ‘33 so I was six in ‘39. And then in ‘41 was probably when I started at Holden Central School” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). McCloud-Brewster reflected fondly about her time at the school, as it amounted to her earliest childhood memories with friends, as her sister was a cheerleader and she primarily focused on her academic studies.

As our conversation took shape, McCloud-Brewster brought up the school culture that existed at Holden Central and what she thought it meant to be a student there. “It was a family atmosphere,” she remembered. “Everybody knew everybody. And the teachers went out of their way to help. I remember that” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Her smile grew, as she really delved into the
memories of feeling like a family at school because she was spending time with friends and teachers, who she felt, cared about her immensely.

Interestingly, McCloud-Brewster recounted a poignant memory regarding the day she was born on June 20, 1933. Her parents, Allie McCloud and Golden McCloud, lived in Holden and her father worked for ICCC as a miner. She said, “My mother told me that right before she gave birth to me, she rose up to watch my daddy through the upstairs window of the house, as he marched from 21 Holden to Logan to show solidarity with the other miners, who were fighting for the right to unionize (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This powerful memory highlights the difficulties that miners in the southern coalfields of West Virginia faced during this time and further complicates the idea of ICCC as a purely benevolent corporation, as it fought for many years to keep out unions from their mines in order to maximize their profit margin, at the expense of their employees’ right to unionize.

Expanding on the memories of her father, Barbara McCloud-Brewster stressed the importance of the coalmining unions for the miners and the obstacles they faced, as they fought for their rights as employees. She stated, “Daddy worked in non-union mines and there was a creek between the railroad track and the mine. Somebody left literature on the tracks and he went to go pick them up. Island Creek told him they’d fire him if he went, but he went anyways and didn’t get fired. He worked there almost fifty years” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This memory attests to the fact that Island Creek Coal Company was not a purely progressive entity, but was instead a more complicated corporation that behaved in ways that were partially benevolent, but that were also simultaneously paternalistic in nature. ICCC strived to
keep their employees satisfied by providing them with a well-resourced community to live and work, while also restricting their rights to unionize and to protest against corporate abuses of power concerning wages and safety. However, McCloud-Brewster emphasized how ICCC worked as a nurturer for the members of the community and that Holden Central School was a prime example of their benevolence.

In particular, she reflected on the Reece sisters and Mrs. Rigdeon, who taught there. While in the sixth grade, McCloud-Brewster participated in and won a county-wide literary contest. She was coached by Mrs. Rigdeon and competed against students from many different schools in the county, which allowed her the opportunity to make new friends. She stated, “My sixth grade teacher that really stands out was Mrs. Rigdeon. She was great. The Reece sisters too; they were concerned for the students. They were exceptional teachers. They were caring, trying to help you. Pauline had what we called a determination. You had to make A’s in Civics and Current Events. And she tried to get you to be a self-achiever” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). These sentiments, as expressed by McCloud-Brewster, reflect the attention to detail that she believed the educators at Holden Central School showed all of their students and was reflected in the conversations that I had with other students from the school.

Although McCloud-Brewster commented positively about the school and its teachers, she particularly emphasized the feeling of community in the town of Holden and the school’s place as one of two focal points for its citizens. “The school was the center of the community of Holden,” she said. “We never excluded anyone. Everyone felt welcome. Everybody helped everybody. It was like family” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster,
personal communication, September 9, 2015). This inclusive sentiment, as expressed by McCloud-Brewster, seemed to help reinforce the school culture that existed at Holden Central and as a result, the school became a meeting place for both adults and students after the school day concluded. McCloud-Brewster commented that “one thing I remember was we had Halloween socials and everybody took time to meet at these social gatherings that were highlights for the community that brought everyone together. I also remember attending fundraisers. I remember going to Holden Central School to make flowers and making corsages to sell, and things like that that would benefit people in the community” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This facet of the school is a reoccurring theme among rural schools, as they tend to become important places of both community socialization, as well as centers for social functions (Tieken, 2014).

After discussing how the school became a community meeting place that fostered a sense of belonging, McCloud-Brewster went on to discuss the relationship between Island Creek Coal Company and the school. “They [Island Creek Coal Company] didn’t try to tell them what to teach,” she said. “But I think they supported it [Holden Central School] financially. We had a good curriculum. It was a really good building. The books. I can remember everybody kept their books. And then the next year, we traded them or sold them” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This was a practice utilized by ICCC at the school in an effort to acquire higher quality textbooks, but they would also, from time to time, help lower socioeconomic status families financially by purchasing the books for the children.
As McCloud-Brewster grew up and had children of her own, she made sure they attended Holden Central, just as she did to continue her family’s legacy at the school. One particular day stood out to her when her son returned home from school with a group of classmates. McCloud-Brewster recollected, “He was in second or third grade, and his teacher called me, and she said, ‘You may not be aware of this, but you’re having a birthday party this evening.’ And I said, ‘I am?’ Because I worked, and she called me at work and she said, ‘Yes, Jacky made invitations,’ and he invited the whole class to our house for a birthday party. And she said, ‘I think you should know!’” (Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Although this impromptu celebration caught her completely by surprise, the teachers at Holden Central School ensured that she could be somewhat prepared for the large group of children running to her home.

As our conversation came to an end and I thanked McCloud-Brewster, Jim Long came back up to me and introduced me to David Evans, a man sitting at a table distributing throwback t-shirts emblazoned with the Holden Hornet logo and the name of the school proudly displayed across the top of the shirt in maroon and gold. Long wanted to make sure that I spoke with Evans, as he was a former student at the school, who returned years later to teach at his alma mater. This was a busy day at the reunion for me as I had conversations with numerous people, who were casually strolling around the elementary school’s cafeteria becoming reacquainted with old friends and meeting family members of classmates, who had passed away. The community reunion in Holden in a way had preserved the legacy of Holden Central and through the efforts of Jim Long and others it continues to flourish. With that introduction, Long walked away to continue
preparations for the reunion and David Evans and I began a conversation exploring what Holden Central School was like for a former student turned educator.

**David Evans: Duality of Duty**

As I sat down to discuss David Evans’s time at Holden Central, as both a student and then later as an educator, his love for the community and the school became immediately apparent as he shared the influence that the school had on his life. Evans was born in Holden in 1948 and grew up there during the 1950s and 1960s (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). He explained that Holden was a community consisting of smaller regions numbered by ICCC in order to organize their land acquisitions, as well as the different mines themselves. These regions, Holden No. 7, Holden No. 8, Holden No. 5, Holden No. 6, and Main Holden No. 22, constituted Holden as a community and as a location synonymous with Island Creek Coal Company. Holden was always home for Evans, and, as he stated, “all of our fathers worked for the mining industry in some way” and that “I was privileged to work at the same school I attended as a student before they tore it down as a PE teacher, followed by being a Junior High coach” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). It was clear that Evans felt a deep sense of pride when he discussed the school and community of Holden. He stated that the town featured manicured lawns with flowers decorating the streets and a community Christmas tree for everyone to enjoy. He remembered Holden in a nostalgic way because for him, Holden and Island Creek Coal Company were his earliest fond memories of friends and family.

In addition to the unique dynamic of being a former student who returned to teach at his alma mater, Evans described the close-knit community of Holden in a very similar
way as Jim Long. In fact, Evans stated that “Holden had a dairy, a drug store, and a movie theater, the company store. The company store, you could always go in and charge stuff to your dad, and they would take it out of his payday. He’d jump onto you for going to put down charges. But it was a nice little community growing up. People took care of their homes, how it looked” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The school culture that thrived at Holden Central benefitted from the familial nature of the community where children felt safe to walk and play in the streets and purchase a snack at the company store after school.

As a community, Holden was at its peak during the 1950s and early 1960s when Island Creek still had their headquarters in the community, and while they were still a very profitable coal company. Island Creek Coal Company provided the community with “people who cut the grass all the time and they had garden club” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This attention to detail demonstrates how ICCC envisioned the community of Holden as a model town where their employees would be satisfied and happy, and also where their administrators would feel at home with modern amenities found few other places at the time. Additionally, Holden featured a recreation center for its employees where children could play basketball for twenty cents. Evans recollected that “our dads, they would take money out of their payday and they built a recreation center for the community, which had a swimming pool, and a gymnasium, and Logan High School actually played their home basketball games there in the 50’s, late ‘57, ‘56” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The recreation center was so well constructed that it served multiple purposes for the citizens of Holden,
which is a feature for many rural communities where schools, churches, and community centers become the heart of social congregations and meetings (Tieken, 2014).

In addition to Island Creek Coal Company’s investment in the community gymnasium, the school was the primary recipient of the coal company’s financial contributions. Interestingly, Evans remembered that the coal company hand-picked the teachers at the school and that the selection committee was comprised of mining engineers and officials (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Evans commented on the rigor of the education he received at Holden Central School and the student-centered instruction that is promoted in modern teacher-education programs across the country. In particular, Evans stated, “I remember our science teacher, we were doing experiments in the ninth grade that a normal high school student might do. We had a Chemistry experiment every Wednesday or Friday” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). To this Evans added that Mr. Hutchison, who was also the principal of the school, provided students with an opportunity to dissect animals that explored Biology coursework and also chemical reactions that would address topics associated with Chemistry.

As a result of these unique educational explorations provided by the Holden Central faculty and staff, Evans believes he was well prepared for high school by the time he graduated. He commented that “I think we all had a marvelous education in Holden, I really do. From first grade on, I think we had quality teachers” and that “we have a lot of students who grew up, went to Holden Junior High and are now doctors, lawyers, teachers, professional people, people that have their own businesses who are high school graduates who are running their own business” (David Evans, personal communication,
This remarkable track record is a direct result of the education that the students were provided at Holden Central School and the educators who ensured their students’ success by incorporating differentiated instruction into their lessons. Not surprisingly, my community consultants believed the teachers at the school did not differentiate between the children from mining families and those from administrative families by providing some preferential treatment. This attitude from the educators created an egalitarian aspect to the school culture, which was strengthened by the strong bonds between family members and cultivated by teachers, who became second parents to the children of Holden.

After graduating from Marshall University, Evans returned to Holden Central in the capacity of a teacher. Evans says he understood this call to duty as an act of reciprocity, because he wanted to give back to the community and the school that he believed gave him so much over the years. During his first day back at the school as an educator, Evans recollected, “all the kids knew me as ‘Dave’ growing up, so during my first day there teaching, two to three of the boys that had fathers I was friends with, came into the gym and hollered ‘Hey Dave, how you doin’ today?’ And I told them, ‘Boys, just put Mister on front of it.’ But it was nice to grow up in such a family-oriented place” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This humorous exchange illustrates the close ties of the Holden community and that even though time passed, families remained close to one another and the kinship of belonging and the concept of family were stronger because of the coal company and the school that was built there.

Evans also commented that as a teacher, he was also a parental figure at the school and comforted students when they felt uneasy in unfamiliar surroundings. “One
day we had a blizzard warning,” he remembered, “and I had went down to the grade
school to the kindergarten room to check on the kids. One of the little boys I knew came
running and hugged me and was shaking like a leaf and he said, ‘Dave, how big’s that
lizard that’s coming?’ I said, ‘Mark, it’s not a lizard, it’s a blizzard. It’s cold, it’s snow’”
(David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Once again, Evans assumed
the role of both an educator and guardian. The school culture at Holden Central was an
extension of the family unit that most students experienced at home, but because the
community was located in a rural region of Logan County, West Virginia, the kinship
between students and their teachers was by proxy similar in nature because the role that
the school served in community functions.

That role and influence, though, had nearly eroded by the time Evans returned to
teach. Evans remembered that “well, at that time, Island Creek was pretty much gone and
it was a different story. Once they had pulled out, left here, it turned into Holden Grade
School, no longer a Junior High. We didn’t have our own ball team, we didn’t have our
own football team and it was just very different” (David Evans, personal communication,
September 9, 2015). The combined elementary and junior high component of the school
dissolved during the 1969-1970 school year and after this time period the school became
an elementary school exclusively. The eventual withdrawal of Island Creek Coal
Company from the community meant that not only would the school be forced to make
difficult decisions, but that the existence of the community was also in limbo.

In fact, when contemplating the relationship between the school and the
community, Evans stated that “it took away the community’s identity because we didn’t
go to Logan High School until after the ninth grade, I mean, we spent all of our lives in
Holden up until the time they closed the school down. So, the school has always been the identity for every community and when they close down these little schools in all these little communities, it just takes the life out of them” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This profound commentary on the relationship that exists between rural schools and their communities reflects the symbiotic nature of a rural existence for families in Appalachia. When the survival of either entity is threatened, the other is directly affected (Tieken, 2014). As a direct result of ICCC’s dissolution, enrollment at the school dwindled as the population of Holden dropped when miners moved elsewhere for better economic opportunities.

In 1983, Island Creek Coal Company began to be liquidated. The closure of the company store in Main Holden Number 22 signaled the end of the prosperous model community that once was the boasting pride of ICCC. Evans and I finished our conversation on this note, and just as we did, the room where we sat talking silenced for a prayer, blessing the upcoming meal at the community reunion. Once the reunion attendees began to mingle and make their food selections, Jim Long reappeared with a huge smile, asking me if I had spoken with Coach Maynard yet. I replied that I did not, and as I turned my head, I noticed a large crowd huddled around a man slowly walking my way. As he sat down to talk with me, three men hugged and shook Masil Maynard’s hand, thanking him for the life lessons and care he had shown them over the years. I was impressed, to say the least, with Maynard’s “cult following.” As we began our conversation, I quickly realized why this man was so influential and beloved by so many Holdenites that had the opportunity to have Coach Maynard as a teacher.
Masil Maynard: Sage of Sports

As I turned on and positioned my digital voice recorder, I noticed the attentive focus from Maynard, as he examined my face, as if deciphering my intent. He spoke with a gentle, yet determined voice, as he began to describe his career at Holden Central School and his involvement over the years in Logan County as an educator and as a coach. Masil Maynard began teaching at Holden Central halfway through the academic year during 1960 and taught there for six years (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). He also taught at Logan Junior High School during 1965-1966, at Logan High School from 1966-1973, and at Man High School from 1973-1989 when he retired from teaching. Of all the teaching experiences Maynard had over the years, none of them, according to him, compared in neither quality of the school nor happiness as an educator during his six years spent at Holden Central School. In fact, Maynard commented, “looking back at all the schools I taught in, I would say that I enjoyed my time at Holden more so than I had ever been at any of the other schools. This includes my time after teaching there and the schools that followed” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Maynard’s memories reflect the school culture that was cultivated by educators, but was also strengthened by the small, close-knit family atmosphere that existed within the community itself. These factors help explain why Holden Central was so influential for not only the educators who taught there, but also for former students who attended the school, even many years after they first stepped foot in the school’s hallways.

After exploring his initial reflections about the school, Maynard emphasized the importance of the school’s physical location in the community. Maynard’s room in
particular was in prime location to oversee daily activities at the school. “When I taught there,” Maynard remembered, “the room set up on a knoll a little bit and had a set of steps that went down to the highway. My room was right on the corner, so it was pretty much a feature of the school, easily seen in all of the pictures. I was really proud to teach there with other faculty” and that “I would not hesitate for a second if I had to go back and live it again (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Maynard was now a retired man, still living in the community where he worked so many years ago. It seemed as if there was still a magic about the school that existed for him, even though the physical structure of the school was torn down years ago to make room for the four-lane highway, Corridor G. These sentiments, as expressed by Maynard, were not merely sentimental reflections, but were instead a true yearning for the past because the school possessed such a strong sense of a family or belonging atmosphere for both educators and students.

In particular, the relationship between the school and the community were of emphasis for Maynard. He commented: “Well, it was a great community. They [Island Creek Coal Company] took care of the people then and the community and I think that is why the school was so special. You just felt like it was home to you all of the time” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Therefore, this strong sense of community and the fact that the educators knew all of the students and most of their parents further strengthened and reinforced the school culture at Holden Central. In fact, one of the first boys’ basketball coaches, Mr. Drake, as he was known, gave the school its mascot nickname of the “Hornets,” which gave the school an identity and a long held tradition of success for the boys’ basketball program there. Maynard stated that
“during my years at the school we were the smallest junior high in the county and it was really difficult to compete in football, but basketball was not nearly as bad. We won two or three state championships, while I was there. This was a feeder school for Logan High School and I have always been told that the majority of the best basketball players came out of Holden” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The Reece sisters also expressed the success of Holden Central School’s basketball teams and this made the school even more prominent in the region because of their excellence in sports.

Even though Holden Central maintained a successful athletic program, Maynard spoke about the success of the sports teams that was made possible because of the close relationships between coaches and the educators at the school. Maynard commented, “As a coach, you were looked on in a certain way by students and other teachers and if they had a problem they would bring it to a coach and have them speak to the principal. I think that’s why the school worked so well was because I think a lot of the teachers respected the coaches a lot” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). In fact, Maynard’s dual role as a track coach and as an educator, who taught Health and Phys-Ed, helped him mediate several disagreements and misunderstandings between other members of the faculty at the school.

Interestingly, Maynard did not begin teaching those subjects, as he taught five Math classes and one Algebra class during a six class period day. Maynard stated that the school only had “two seventh grade classes, two eighth grade classes, and two ninth grade classes. So, it had to be set up that each one of those was a part of the school system and their curriculum” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9,
As time went on, the curriculum of the school became more refined and nuanced, as more class offerings were made available to a larger student body. Some of the courses that were available were a variety of pragmatic classes that would help prepare students for life beyond high school. These classes included Home Economics and various trade classes, but also specific math classes too. Maynard remembered, “I feel like a lot of the things that were taught then, especially learning real world math and multiplication tables is now a lost art. After that, they went to what they called the “Modern Math” program and changed the Phys-Ed program a bit. It changed and developed over time and expanded for more complicated lessons” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The evolution of the curriculum at Holden Central is a reflection of the coal company not becoming involved with curricula mandates and hiring more qualified teachers from across the country. This makes sense because when Maynard was originally hired by the school there were several teachers still there from the elementary school’s first days.

Interestingly, Maynard also attributed a great deal of the school’s success to the fact that there was an involved Parent Teacher Association at the school. Maynard commented, “You had a great Parent-Teacher Association and they had regular meetings and if you had any problem we would take it on and see that it was corrected. There was much support between staff members. Many times, we had the freedom as teachers to correct any problem and straighten it out directly through the PTA” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). This allowed educators at Holden Central School to utilize their own agency and resolve disputes between parents, community members, and other teachers without involving the bureaucracy of the Logan County
Board of Education. ICCC affirmed of this line of command, as they often financially supported changes made during these PTA meetings. Maynard stated that “I think that what you did not get from the Board of Education, you would get from them [Island Creek Coal Company]. You always had Island Creek backing you up. I imagine they did as much probably or at least at that time that the Board of Education did” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Through the joint efforts of a strong and involved Parent-Teacher Association and the financial backing of the coal company, the faculty and staff members of the school felt appreciated and valued and as a result, job openings at the schools were rare.

After discussing the unique relationship that existed between the coal company and the school, Maynard made one final, yet profound remark about the relationship that defines all successful schools, that between teachers and students. “I think it was great because you were closer to the teachers,” he said, “and in return the teachers were more involved with the kids. If they had a problem they would come to you and that just does not happen today. I think that the school was ahead of its time and a lot of it is lost today” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). As expressed by my community consultants, the supportive team of educators at Holden Central were able to cultivate a strong sense of belonging that many people described as being reminiscent of their family and is understood as school culture today.

Maynard and the other teachers at the school were an integral component of that culture and their legacy still lives on in the lives that are touched by the former students who attended the school. Although occasional problems would arise, the comradery between the school’s faculty members was facilitated because of the shared space of the
elementary and junior high components. Maynard stated, “I even knew about all of the teachers that had the elementary kids beginning at first grade up to sixth grade. It wasn’t separated as much, but they did have their own sections and rooms. There was never a problem with the shared place between kids and others” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The combined elementary and junior high elements of the school set it apart from all others in the region and the fact that Island Creek Coal Company financially backed Holden Central School truly made it an influential school at that time. After our conversation, a small crowd of middle-aged men was swarming around Maynard and as I said goodbye and shook his hand again, I could not help but sit back and think about all of the teachers in my life who made a difference by caring and listening to the voice of a child.

As Coach Maynard walked away to grab some well-deserved lunch, I began to collect my things and prepare for the hour and a half drive back home. I noticed many people filing out to head to their cars and walked outside to load my car. As I came back inside to help fold up the long, lunch tables, I bumped into Jim Long again. He walked up to me with a large smile on his face, and asked if I had any fun. I told him that I really appreciated the invitation and the opportunity to have some meaningful and enlightening conversations about the school with the reunion’s attendees. He invited me to the next year’s community reunion that was to be held on September 17, 2016. I replied that I definitely planned on attending the next reunion and that I looked forward to meeting new people that might not have been able to make this year’s reunion and having different conversations with Holden Central’s former students and teachers.
After arriving home and settling into my last full semester of coursework for my doctoral degree, I decided to join the online Facebook group associated with the reunion, entitled “Holden Reunion: Our Town,” in order to stay up to date on any happenings related to the school and the community. I also added Jim Long as a friend on Facebook in order to strengthen our friendship and my connection to the community, as I felt some initial apprehension and curiosity from some of the reunion’s attendees the previous year. This strategy seemed to work well, as now I had an open means of communication with Jim any time I might have a question or needed some clarification of details regarding my conversations. As June rolled around during the summer of 2016, I received a reminder about the upcoming reunion, as well as a nice message from Jim thanking me for my continued interest in the community. With caring community crusaders like Jim Long and others in Holden, it is easy to become enamored with the history and family atmosphere that still exists in such an often overlooked part of rural West Virginia. For these reasons, on September 17, 2016 I began the drive again down United States Route 119 South, as I made my way to Holden Central Elementary School for the community reunion.

Cathy Marino: Emigrant of Education

As I pulled into the parking lot of the school, I noticed the usual suspects associated with the community reunion, Jim Long and Marietta Baldwin Gilbert. They were just arriving, unloading coolers, and several boxes full of decorations. I walked up to Jim and Marietta and they both began smiling and told me that it was nice I was able to make it again. I helped them set up some tables and place tablecloths across the tops, so they could place decorations in the center. Jim Long asked if I had spoken with Cathy
Marino yet because she was a teacher at Holden Central School for many years and was there for the transitional years during the 1970s and 1980s when the junior high component of the school was eliminated. Holden Central School (joint elementary and junior high) closed in 1970 and after that functioned solely as an elementary school in the same building, until 1979 when the present elementary school building opened. I had not previously had a conversation with Marino, but Long made sure that was quickly remedied. As I walked to the back of the cafeteria to my “conversation table,” I saw a very friendly woman walk up to have a seat beside me. My conversation with Cathy Marino would be the longest one that I conducted at either reunion, as well as the most detailed. Cathy adjusted her glasses and shook my hand, as we both got comfortable for what would turn out to be not only an informative exploration into the school’s final years as it broke apart, but also the story of yet another caring educator that shaped the lives of countless children.

In fact, Cathy Marino taught at the school from September of 1972 until 2009, when she retired. She was originally from New York State and became aware of Holden Central because at the time it was a magnet school that would draw certain students’ names and they would attend there, versus going somewhere else in the county. In particular, there was a lack of certified kindergarten teachers at Holden Central and the school was in dire need of qualified educators. “I was certified in kindergarten,” Marino said, “so that’s what brought me here with my husband. He was a teacher also and ended up teaching nearby, at Verdunville” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). These series of events led Marino to the community of Holden and what
originated as the opportunity for better economic prospects, transformed into a lifetime of relationships that were forged during her tenure at the school.

But adjusting to Holden was challenging at first for Marino, as she was previously in a region of New York with a very different culture than southern West Virginia. But the school provided her with an aid that helped her not only understand the children’s accents, but also their culture. As Marino recollected, “If I had not had an aid I probably would not have understood the kids. I was coming from a part of New York that was dominated by French Canadians and actually, their vocabulary was quite a bit different. Of course, the aide was from the community. She knew everybody and everything. She could say, ‘Well, so-and-so needs a little help.’ But it was a group effort” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). In some ways, Marino had become a transplant or emigrant of education of sorts, as she became acclimated to her new surroundings. However, as she acknowledged, other faculty members at Holden Central School and the culture that existed upon her arrival eased this transition.

During her first years at the school, Marino was given a room that left quite a bit to be desired for a new transplant. This was a result of ICCC’s withdrawal from the community and the school that they had once been so-proudly maintained. But as years passed and economic prospects dwindled, the school fell into disrepair. Marino remembered that “I came in with Pauline Reece as the principal and we had all three floors of the building. Of course, my room was on the semi-basement floor. It was semi-basement because there were windows level with the ground with little light on the floor” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). These less than perfect accommodations were reflective of the large level of disrepair that was evident in other
areas of the building as well. In fact, Marino remembered times when school cooks had to examine tables before they sat down food because of falling asbestos paint that was flaking off the cafeteria ceiling. Marino remembered, “I never thought about it until years later when I did get cancer. Of the teachers that I knew who were there for three years, about 90% of them developed some kind of cancer. I think that it was possibly because of that old building with parts completely covered in asbestos. None of it was kept up and it deteriorated very badly” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). Unfortunately, the once model school had fallen into a state of irreversible disrepair that was caused by Island Creek Coal Company’s withdrawal from the community. This tragedy was just one of many that befell the community of Holden once ICCC moved out of West Virginia to Lexington, Kentucky.

As time passed, Marino was given a larger room at the school, which was once the science laboratory for the now defunct Junior High. Marino remembered that “it was a beautiful room with all kinds of cabinets, a sink, and lab tables. I loved the room, except between the furnace and me was a metal door with an open space underneath it. Every morning before we started passing out snacks, a crew of parents came in and wiped down everything to get the smoke dust off” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). In fact, Marino had to go home a few times to change clothes because the dust was that thick in the old room. The door to the furnace room was particularly problematic during the winter. Marino stated that “I had a couple of mornings where the fire would not be started properly, so we had flames shooting out, underneath that old, metal door” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). During times like these, Marino’s class would go to the gymnasium to meet and resume
their lessons in a slightly more stable environment. Although similar kinds of disruptions happened elsewhere, the outdated building was on its last legs, and its days as a functioning school were short-lived.

Interestingly, setbacks at Holden Central amounted to temporary bumps in the road for the faculty and staff at the school. One particular event that stood out in Marino’s mind was a mine blowout that occurred behind the Verdunville elementary school. As students were evacuated from the area, many found themselves at Holden Central for half-day sessions, until it was safe for them to return (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). The children were sent to the old library of the school because there were many books and antiques to keep them occupied. However, when heat was funneled into the room, the ceiling gave way and collapsed. Miraculously, no one was injured and the children were eventually sent back to Verdunville. Marino recollected that “we had to close that room off and it was just this kind of atmosphere that every day there was a new challenge. You took it and went your way, hoping your kids didn’t get too disrupted. The teachers stepped up and did their best” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). This resilient attitude is reflective of the school culture that persisted since Holden Central’s inception. In addition, the educators at the school were capable and resilient enough to ensure that their students received an education, regardless of the obstacles that arose.

Despite the occasional disruptions to learning, the staff of Holden Central School also came to the aid of both students and educators at the school. In particular, Marino emphasized the importance of cooks and bus drivers who would go the extra mile for a child in need. “Most of the cooks down over time,” she said, “would know which
children did not have good nutrition at home. There were no real nutrition programs at school, so they’d say, ‘Well you go to the end of the line,’ because the kid at the end of the line did get an extra helping” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). The willingness of a school cook to make sure that children were fed and prepared to learn is a reflection of the school culture modeled by both faculty and staff at Holden Central. Also, bus drivers employed by the school ensured the safety of students, as they rode to and from the school. As Marino stated, “The bus drivers cared as well. They’d come in and they’d say, ‘So-and-so wasn’t out waiting for the bus today.’ If they’d miss two or three days, then they would come into the school and say, ‘Do you know if they’re sick?’ You know, it’s a community thing because, it takes a village to raise a child” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). These examples of caring on the part of school staff reinforce the idea that the school culture that existed at Holden Central was a direct result of both diligent employees, but also a close-knit community that was more akin to family, as opposed to neighbors.

Adding to the feeling that the school was like family was Pauline Reece. When Cathy started teaching at Holden Central, Pauline Reece was the principal, who helped guide her along her first few days. Marino remembered, “Ms. Reece was very much on top of everything. She knew everybody in the community. Of course, she lived there for so long. She lived in a house at the bottom of the school hill. Her sister [Kathleen] taught second grade when I was there. Very strict teacher, but everybody tried to get their child into her room because she had such a good reputation. She was a tremendous teacher” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). These two cornerstones of the Holden community left a huge impression on Marino because they were able to
command the respect of the students, as well as the other teachers at the school. In fact, Cathy Marino remembered one time when Pauline Reece comforted a five-year-old girl, who accidentally got on a bus and arrived at school by herself. Marino stated, “It was their fifth birthday so they could come to school. She’d look at the child and she’d say, ‘I know your grandma and I know your mommy. Do they know that you came on the bus this morning?’ She’d take the child upstairs and call their house, because she knew who the child was” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). As expressed by Marino, this level of care shown by Pauline Reece proved that she was a stern, decisive, yet loving administrator that genuinely was interested in the success and safety for all the children at Holden Central School.

Marino’s story ran counter to the dominant narrative concerning coalmining towns as entirely exploitative; Holden was a model community with the school and the Company Store at Main Holden Number 22 being the centers of socialization and congregation. The composition of the Holden community was comprised primarily of coalmining families, as well as the families of Island Creek Coal Company’s administration. Marino thought that this sense of belonging in the community was, at least in part, attributed to the variety of ethnicities living in close proximity to one another. Marino stated, “I had a man, who lived next door to me, who was from Hungary. He could be Italian. He could be Mexican. He could be Hungarian. He could be black. He could be white. But you depended on the others for your safety. And he said, ‘When you get down into a mine you may not speak my language, but you understood enough of what I was saying to be safe’” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17,
This demonstrates the level of consideration and care that Holdenites felt for their fellow citizens, regardless of their ethnicity or the language they spoke.

Another incident that stood out in Marino’s mind was when a low socioeconomic status family moved into Holden who needed some financial assistance. Marino remembered:

We had a few large families and we knew when they came in a lot of them needed extra help financially and we made sure that the kids had clothes. I could go to somebody, anybody in Holden that had a child that was like seven or eight years old and see if they have any clothes. They’d give it to me. And that was just the whole thing that if you had something you weren’t using, pass it on. (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016)

This communal sense of generosity and concern reinforced the school culture of care and belonging that was abundant at Holden Central and helped ease the transition of the elementary school from its old building to the new one, after the junior high component dissolved in 1970.

After the elementary school decided to relocate down the street to its current location, Holden Central, as it was formerly known, would be referred to Holden Central Elementary School. Many of the educators from the old building decided to remain at the school and were joined by several new additions to the faculty as well. Interestingly, the new elementary school was designed according to the “open school” philosophy. According to Marino, this policy “was more than just no doors on the classrooms. It was whole rooms put together in small groups in teaching. So, by the fourth year we complained so much that they finally put doors on the classrooms” (Cathy Marino,
personal communication, September 17, 2016). Instead of the “open door” approach to learning catching on, many of the educators at Holden Central Elementary viewed it as a problematic approach toward education that undermined the school culture that already existed and as an unnecessary obstacle in the way of instruction. Coincidentally, this was true for many educators teaching at open-schools, as they viewed them as failed attempts at forced collaboration and yet another example regarding the lack of consulting the opinions of educators themselves during the development of educational policy reform (Parsons, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Once, the doors were added to the classrooms, the echo that plagued the school’s hallways was remedied and the self-contained classrooms that the teachers desired were established. In addition to the lack of doors at the new school, sliding partitions were in place, so that shared classrooms could either be combined or separated at the teacher’s discretion. “It was about ten years later,” Marino remembered, “when they finally put the base boards down on both sides, so that the wall wouldn’t move. It still was a big noisy time because the walls were not thick enough to keep the noise down. So, we tried to arrange different schedules so that when class was out for gym, my kids could have their rest time” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). Even though the “open school” approach to learning did not stick at Holden, the school culture that was created at the old building was carried on at the new location.

After settling in at the new elementary building, Marino and her fellow teachers at Holden Central Elementary were presented with a new set of challenges to address when Whitman Grade School closed. Marino recollected, “When they decided to close Whitman Grade School, they decided that those kids were going to come here [Holden].}
They eventually discovered we were going to be a Kindergarten through fourth grade school because that’s when the new middle school came, but we didn’t have enough space” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). After dealing with an overcrowded school, outbuildings from the closed Stollings Grade School were used to help alleviate the problem. But these structures also proved to be troublesome: “there were no bathrooms, they were not handicap accessible, and if a teacher wanted to let a kid come in the building they had to leave their class unattended and walk all of the way down with their key and hope their kids settled down” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). But, these deficient accommodations would soon give way to larger facilities, including four classrooms that were eliminated from the original design.

Instead of focusing on weaknesses associated with the school’s evolution, Marino emphasized, what she viewed as, the high quality of education that the students received and the hard work from Holden Central Elementary’s faculty and staff. “The kids,” she said, who “came through here were like kids from every other place in the world. Some of them ended up with fantastic jobs you couldn’t dream that didn’t even exist when they were in kindergarten” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016).

She stated that several of her former students became biological researchers, lawyers, and even famous singers on television (i.e., Landau Eugene Murphey, who won America’s Got Talent in 2010). Despite the challenges that did arise, educators at Holden Central School addressed them, so that the students could excel and achieve beyond their wildest dreams. Marino reflected: “So it’s still a very well academically good school. Lots of new teachers have come in, but they’re still all very dedicated” (Cathy Marino, personal
communication, September 17, 2016). According to Marino, the coal company did not stand in the way or influence the school’s curriculum at all and allowed the teachers free reign to instruct as they saw fit. This unique learning environment was made possible in part through the progressive ideology on which the school was founded and then later by educators and staff, who picked up that same torch and lit the way for generations of children at Holden.

As time passed, the influence of Island Creek Coal Company dissipated and the decline of the community began. This transformation from a model community and school into a small, elementary school with a small population was a direct result of the coal company’s disappearance. As Marino stated: “If it wasn’t for the school being here, this community would die. Population is way down. A lot of kids that were living here have moved off. They went on, graduated, and got jobs. They had to move away” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). This stark, yet sobering remark reflects the socioeconomic reality for many young Appalachians, as they are forced to make a decision of staying to carve out an existence in an antiquated economy or move elsewhere in the pursuit of better economic prospects. But the spirit of the Holden community is still strong and stays alive through the efforts of community leaders like Jim Long and many others.

Upon the conclusion of our conversation, Marino left me with a somber, yet poignant metaphor for the power of community, especially those in rural settings. To wit:

Well, one of the big things I noted a few years ago, tragically, there was a first grade student killed in a car accident. At her wake you could not get in because there were so many people. The day of her funeral, they sent people from the
main office, every teacher, every cook, every janitor could go to her funeral. So they sent substitutes in for that day. We had special counselors in that first grade classroom to make sure that those kids were okay. That’s the sort of thing it was, and there wasn’t any cook that said, ‘No, I didn’t know her. I didn’t want to go’ and no janitor said that. Everybody went. (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016)

**Oral History and Portraiture: Implications**

As our conversation ended and I thanked Marino for sharing her experiences, I could not help but think about the overlap of ideas and sentiments that carried over into all of the conversations I had conducted over the past two years at the reunions. In sum, three reoccurring themes included the power of community than ran through Holden, the school culture that existed at the school, and the complex progressive nature of Island Creek Coal Company that made everything possible. I will return to these themes shortly (and in the next chapter), but suffice it first to say that even though Holden was no progressive utopia and ICCC was not completely benevolent, the people with whom I spoke felt that it was a special school that certainly should be viewed as a model for all others to follow. They spoke of caring educators who went the extra mile for their students, capable children who could excel if given appropriate resources, and a supportive community that nurtured the development of the school as it too evolved over the years. The power of these narratives help form the story of Holden, its school, and the coal company that created both. As a result, they stand against dominant, inaccurate narratives concerning Appalachian education and present a counter narrative of resiliency and capability.
Although these six conversations in no way represent the entirety of experiences at the school, they do point to an understanding, however partial, of what it meant to be a part of the school. Additionally, they provide a glimpse into the conversation about the school that continues today, even though the physical space is gone and is now covered by the four-lane highway, Corridor G. This is an all too familiar trend in Appalachia, as places of historic note are destroyed and paved over in the name of progress (Williams, 2002). Simultaneously, these perceptions cannot be easily dismissed, just because they are “nostalgic,” as they provide insight into the inner workings of the school for both teachers and students that reflect the relationship that exists for my community consultants between the past and the present (Yow, 2005). These relationships are comprised of meaningful experiences that reveal a great deal about how my community consultants understand their experiences while they taught at and attended the school and now how the community has changed as a result of the passage of time.

Although these conversations are partial glances into the larger narrative of Holden Central, and though they are framed within a nostalgic view of Holden’s past, they do have something to tell us: namely, they help to build dynamic context around the relationship that existed between Island Creek Coal Company, the school it created, and the community of Holden. These dynamic contexts were framed by the ethnographic approach of portraiture. This technique served as a framework for my research. Though, portraiture is often concerned with creating full-life biographies of community consultants, I utilized portraiture in a broader sense in order to provide partial portraits of my community consultants that organize the story of Holden Central School along the roles of former students and educators (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997). By
using portraiture in this way, a more refined and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the coal company, the school, and the community is elaborated.

The three themes previously identified (i.e., the power of community in Holden, the culture at the school, and the progressive nature of Island Creek Coal Company) surfaced as a result of this approach to oral history and portraiture. The first of themes concerns the power of community in Holden, which was reinforced by the citizens’ relationship with ICCC, as most Holdenites were either employed directly by the coal company itself or as a result of the coal industry’s presence in the community via the tertiary economy of shipping coal to out of state markets. Also, the school and the company store in Main Holden were essential to the community, as they acted as catalysts for both socialization within the community, but also as meeting places to hold different functions, such as parent-teacher association meetings and religious gatherings. This extension of rural schools helps strengthen the power of community and the feeling of family that was expressed by many of my community consultants (Tieken, 2014). Communities similar to Holden are a composition of their parts and this is partially a result of the school, where the employees’ children attended.

In addition to the power of community in Holden, the second theme, the culture that was created at the school, helped to amplify the importance of the close-knit community that surrounds the school. That the school fostered the strong sense of belonging was expressed by many of my community consultants. Many of the children knew each other and their friends’ siblings before they were even of age to attend school. In fact, the carved-up sections of Holden that were numbered referred to the various mines that ICCC owned and operated. As children attended Holden Central over the
years, educators would teach multiple generations of children from the same family and become familiar with many of that family’s relatives. This would create an intense familiarity between faculty members and new students from large families in Holden and as a result increase the culture at the school. Also, the willingness of educators at Holden Central to provide additional help to students, who struggled academically or socially, reified the school’s culture for the students, as they spoke with me regarding educators they had over the years that made a lasting impression on their lives.

Finally, there is the complicated matter of Island Creek Coal Company. To be sure, the school, and none of its positive experiences and memories would have been possible without the nurturing paternalistic nature of the coal company that created both the community and the school. Many of the people I spoke with agreed that without the interest and investment of ICCC, the community of Holden and the school that it created would not have been the same. The nature of the coal company facilitated the growth and modern amenities of the community. This ranged from ensuring streets were cleaned regularly to providing the community with options regarding leisure activities (swimming pool, opera house, air-conditioned movie theater). This interest and investment also extended to the creation of Holden Central, as they “sold” the building to the Logan County Board of Education for one dollar, selected the teachers for the school, and supplied the building with everything from laboratory equipment to an extensive library that contained numerous antiques and books (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015).

This progressive approach, however, also drew upon a powerful paternalism, an example of which can be seen in how the coal company exercised control by keeping out
organized labor unions. It accomplished this feat by employing the services of the former Sheriff of Logan County, Don Chaffin, as he utilized the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency to deter the United Mine Workers of America (Massey, 1981; Spence 1976). These facts complicate the narrative of the community of Holden, Island Creek Coal Company, and Holden Central School, but are given context via these emergent themes as emergent in the conversations featured above. With this in mind, I turn now to exploring these themes in more detail and their relationship to my larger study of Holden in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: RURAL SCHOOLS AND THE ROLE OF NURTURING PARTEINALISM

When I first sat down to speak with Dr. Stan Maynard, in his office on campus, on that hot summer’s day, I had no clue how meaningful that hour-long conversation would be for me. Three years later, I am still discovering new ways I am being influenced by our interaction. Maybe it was because he reminded me of my grandfather, or perhaps it was because Maynard knew how to convey his passion for rural education and inspire others. But regardless of the rationale, I am profoundly indebted to him as a mentor and as an educator. As a West Virginian, I appreciate and know the value of education, and yet simultaneously I realize the complexities of this in post-industrial America. Powerful, dominant narratives concerning Appalachian education and rural schools shape real world educational policy reform, and are often informed by inaccurate, deficiency-based narratives that paint the region as inferior and incapable of success and excellence.

Of course, the opposite is often true, and by researching the story of Holden Central School, I sought to provide a kind of counter-narrative based on historical documents and oral histories from former educators and students at the school. By including these voices, I hoped to paint a more complex picture of Appalachian education marked by a much larger dialogue concerning the capabilities of Appalachian students and the excellence that can be found in Appalachian schools. I allowed these goals to guide me, as I explored the possibilities of my research.
The Influence of Holden Central School

Reflecting back on the origin of my research with Holden, I never could have imagined that my initial conversation with Stan Maynard would evolve into a full dissertation-length project. But I am very thankful that Maynard conveyed the importance of Holden Central School to me three years ago and the influence the school had on his life. In turn, he made a lasting influence on my life as well when I had him as a professor at Marshall University. The way Maynard described the school, the community, and the coal company in Holden made for an unforgettable experience that I thought required further exploration, and over the course of four years, I began to understand the meaning and appreciation that he and so many others expressed for Holden.

After my initial conversation with Maynard, I began to organize my research interests within the fields of rural education and Appalachian Studies. I knew that the specter of rural education was an important issue to me; on a larger front, the question of the public education system’s survival was also at stake. Like a specter, rural education is often unseen and neglected in the coverage of education—especially in media outlets—yet it still haunts these discussions. In Chapter One (Introduction) I explored this issue and Holden Central’s importance as a case study, as a way to provide a counter-narrative to deficit-oriented dominant narratives that have represented the area in the minds’ of outsiders for many years (Shapiro, 1978). Although recent studies in rural education emphasize factors related to school closures and consolidations (Tieken, 2014; DeYoung, 1995), the goal of my research has been to fill in this gap of knowledge by placing the story of Holden within the larger contexts of the ethnographies of schools, as well as progressive education in Appalachia. By doing so, my hope is that Holden is couched
within a much larger dialogue concerning rural education and the resiliency and capabilities of rural educators and students.

In Chapter Two (Literature Review), I addressed the body of literature surrounding the story of Holden, and the larger socio-economic and cultural context in which it surfaced. I framed the narrative this way so as to place my research within the appropriate frameworks of Appalachian Studies, as well as the ethnographies of rural schools and education. Three larger bodies of knowledge were pertinent to this narrative; these included: ethnographies and case studies of rural schools, history of Appalachian education, and Appalachian identity. Within the body of knowledge offered by ethnographies of schools, there was also a subcategory that emphasized the importance of community (De Young, 1995; Searles, 1995; Tieken, 2014). Additionally, in the body of literature for the history of Appalachian education, four subcategories were relevant to the story of Holden, which included: the history of mining communities (Eller, 1982; Shifflett, 1995), historical-deficit oriented narratives of Appalachia (Frost, 1901; Gaumintz & Cook, 1937), and the evolution of education in West Virginia that came via industrialization (Green, 2010; Henan, 1996; Rice & Brown, 1993; Teets, 2006; Williams, 2002). Finally, within the body of information for Appalachian identity, a subcategory emerged that focused on reconceptualizing rural identity within the American consciousness (Shi, 2007; Whisnant, 1983). These bodies of literature contextualize the story of Holden and place it within a larger dialogue about rural school ethnographies that, in turn, help to complicate—as well as offer alternatives to—the dominant narrative of Appalachian education as inferior, backward, or “behind-the-times.”
With this literature as my backdrop, in Chapter Three (Research Methods) I discussed the methods I utilized over the course of researching the story of Holden, including descriptions of my research design, data collection, and analyses techniques. To provide experiential context for my study, I needed to explore the meaning associated with the specific experiences of Holden Central School’s former teachers and students, who, in my study, served as first-hand consultants describing socio-historical interactions between the school, the community, and Island Creek Coal Company. The data collection methods I used for this research revolved around having conversations with these community consultants, as well as analyzing archival documents and newspaper articles in order to give a historical context for the story of Holden. I utilized a partial application of portraiture in order to balance the voice of each consultant, while simultaneously weaving them into a larger narrative framework about the school, the local community, and the Appalachian region, (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). These methods were carried through in the next two chapters, four and five.

Chapter Four (Historical Context of a School, a Community, and a Coal Company), in particular, detailed the school’s history, the community of Holden, and the Island Creek Coal Company. This description was built upon primarily archival records and newspaper articles. The historical context for each component for the story of Holden was necessary in order to understand the relationship that existed between each entity in Holden. The chapter is categorized into four chronological time periods that reflect significant changes in Holden: the frontier era (1800-1905), the evolution of community and school (1905-1920), the model school (1920-1970), and the transition to dissolution (1970-present). The settlement of the Guyan Valley in Logan County began with the
introduction of the region’s first extractive industry, timber (Swain, 1927). As families settled the region, log schoolhouses were built to educate the children and settlements arose. As the Guyan railroad opened up Logan County to larger industry, the population increased as well, which necessitated a school large enough to serve the children of the area. In 1902, Albert F. Holden and William H. Coolidge, Island Creek Coal Company’s two founders, purchased 30,000 acres of land for $60,000.00 where the community of Holden would be built and founded the community, as it stands today (Spence, 1976). Later in 1922, the combined elementary and junior high school was constructed to serve the children of the community and “sold” to the Board of Education for a dollar (Spence, 1976). Interestingly, this investment on the part of the coal company was perceived as a kind of “nurturing paternalism” by many Holdenites, and viewed with a more benevolent connotation, rather than exploitive. I return to this idea and consider it in more depth below.

As Island Creek Coal Company continued to be economically prosperous in the 1930s and 1940s, the school also grew to keep pace with a larger population and, consequently, a strong sense of community and culture at the school was fostered by this symbiotic relationship (Spence, 1975). But as the coal company’s fortunes changed during the 1970s, the school felt the brunt of these changes, as local businesses had to intervene and financially support school functions that were previously covered by ICCC. In many ways, the ability of the coal company to prevent unionization from entering their coalfields was key to both the success and growth of Island Creek, but with the passage of time, and as the coalfields began to unionize, the company’s power began to wane—especially as economies of supply and demand began to shift profoundly during these
years (Spence, 1976). Namely, the mechanization of the coalmines, the economic downturns of the 1950s-1960s, and the mine collapse at Holden Number 22 in 1960 all signaled the beginning of the end for ICCC in Holden (Spence, 1976). Over time the coal company would be split up and sold off to different corporate entities until Consol Energy purchased the majority stock in 1993 (Business: Other News, 1993). The school closed in 1970 and was eventually paved over to make way for the four-lane highway, Corridor G, which leads to Holden today (Spence, 2012).

With this historical context of Holden’s history in mind, in Chapter Five (The Power of Oral History and the Counter Narratives of “The Rural”) I turned to an exploration of the experiences that gave context to this history, and focused, in particular, on conversations conducted with former teachers and students of Holden Central. In an effort to understand the meaning of their experiences, and how they related to the school’s culture and history, I spoke with six former educators and students at Holden Central School. I explored their perceptions of their experiences at the school, what it was like to live in the community, and my consultants’ thoughts on the influence of Island Creek Coal Company. During the course of these six conversations, three major themes surfaced. These themes included: the sense of community than ran through Holden, the strong culture that existed at the school, and the progressive nature of ICCC, which helped to facilitate the expansion of the community and the school.

While it is important to note that these conversations do not stand for all of the experiences at the school, they do, partially, point to an understanding of something regarding what it meant to be associated with the school through time. Rather than present a “holistic picture” of the Holden School experience (which was not my intent
here), I sought to explore various threads within another narrative that offers an alternative to those dominant narratives concerning Appalachian education that are so inaccurate, and damaging, particularly because they continue to influence the development of educational policy reform today (Tieken, 2014). I was very selective in the interviews on which I focused, mainly because I sought to construct the story of Holden around four epistemologically-based research questions that would guide the narrative of the school, the community, and the coal company in a logical manner. I now turn to these research questions and the answers that were explored within the story of Holden.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that I drafted at the beginning of my dissertation research proved to be prophetic, as the relationships that existed between the coal company, the school, and the community helped to explain why the citizens of Holden hold each of these entities in such high regard. The answers to my research questions reveal a great deal about the power of community, the school culture that was cultivated at Holden Central, and the progressive nature of Island Creek Coal Company and its gift to the community that would outlast any physical structure torn down in the name of economic progress. These answers follow:

**How do former educators and students at Holden Central School experience and understand the school’s legacy and its relationship with Logan County?** The former educators and students at Holden Central School perceive and understand the school’s legacy as a transformational one. Of the students that I spoke with, all of them remarked that the school was the heart of the Holden community and even though it may
have been small in size, in relation to other schools in Logan County at that time, it was tremendous in stature. The legacy of the school lives on in the lives that are still being shaped by the educators at Holden Central. Many former students, who attended the school, became teachers themselves and inculcated their students with the same level of care they received and the quality of education that was imparted to them.

In particular, of the former educators and students at Holden Central School who I spoke with, many experienced and understood the school’s legacy as an influential force in their lives that forever transformed them for the better. Out of all the other schools that existed at that time in Logan County, my community consultants remembered their time at Holden Central in a much more meaningful way than other schools they attended. For instance, Professor Stan Maynard spoke of his experiences there in very fond terms, remembering, for example, when Mrs. Reece allowed him to ring the hand bell and bring in the rest of the children from recess. He recounted that “all the lives that the bell touched still resided on the handle, all of the emotional DNA is still there, but that it meant to you, as a student, were good enough and showed her something over the course of the school year that she identified as positive” (Stan Maynard, personal communication, July 2, 2014). This memory seemed to resonate just as strongly on that summer’s day in 2014 for Maynard, as it did the day after this event occurred. The experiences that my community consultants had at the school and their understanding of its legacy reflect a time in their lives when they were provided with what they perceived to be a high quality of education instilled in them by caring educators.

In addition to my community consultants’ understanding of Holden Central’s legacy, they also perceived its relationship to Logan County as the highlight of their
educational careers. Coach Masil Maynard, an educator who taught at Holden Central School, went on to teach at several other schools in Logan County over the years; but none of them, he stated, influenced him in such a way as Holden did. He said that “looking back at all the schools I taught in, I would say that I enjoyed my time at Holden more so than I had ever been at any of the other schools. I was really proud to teach there with other faculty” and that “I would not hesitate for a second if I had to go back and live it again” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015). So, one can easily conclude that the relationship that existed between Holden Central and Logan County, West Virginia—as experienced by my community consultants, at least—was understood in terms of the school being the educational and athletic primary focal point of the county, until it closed in 1970.

How do former educators and students at Holden Central School understand Island Creek Coal Company’s role in the school’s legacy and the community? The former educators and students at Holden Central School understand Island Creek Coal Company as a benevolent corporation that gave them one of the greatest gifts possible, a first rate education. Although the reality of ICCC as a corporation is more complicated—a fact not lost on most of my consultants—former educators and students at Holden Central view the coal company’s paternalistic nature as a complicated if necessary form of nurturing, a protective force, rather than an entirely manipulative, exploitive one. They perceive Island Creek Coal Company as a provider that handed over to the citizens of Holden a beautiful community to live in, an excellent school for their children to attend, and quality jobs for their fathers to work, so they could provide a happy, stable life for their families.
When one compares the stories they tell, compared to familiar dominant narratives, a very different picture emerges. In particular, my community consultants still couch their stories about Island Creek Coal Company and the school as a nurturing one where supplies and resources were provided, without many strings attached. This helps explain the nurturing aspect of the unique form of paternalism that manifested in Holden. As Jim Long, a former student at Holden Central School, recollected: “I think more or less they supplied the school and left the teachers to their own devices. They hired the teachers and let them have free reign, but as the Logan County Board of Education got bigger, they started dictating what they [teachers] had to teach and what books to use” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). The coal company supplied the school with financial support, as well as providing pay for qualified teacher candidates for job openings in order to present the school as a model for all others to follow.

Additionally, my community consultants generally viewed the company’s involvement in the community as a benevolent form of paternalism. The sometimes strict manifestation of the paternalistic side of ICCC’s behavior in the community helps contextualize their goal to maximize profit, while simultaneously providing their employees with a place to live and work. According to Cathy Marino, a retired educator who taught at Holden Central, the old building that housed the combined elementary and junior high school fell into disrepair as Island Creek Coal Company began to withdraw from the community. She remembered that “I never thought about it until years later when I did get cancer. Of the teachers that I knew who were there for three years, about 90% of them developed some kind of cancer. I think that it was possibly because of that old building with parts completely covered in asbestos. None of it was kept up and it
deteriorated very badly” (Cathy Marino, personal communication, September 17, 2016). This powerful memory evokes the paternalistic side of the coal company story because it focuses on how the company kept a close watch on the school’s upkeep; but when economic fortunes changed for the worse, ICCC withdrew its support for the school, and, as a result, the institutions that were once the pride of the community were reduced to semblances of their former selves. However, the ultimate success or failure of the school should not be viewed in terms of the survival of the school once the coal company left, but instead with an eye toward the prosperity of the former students from Holden Central, who continue to change and shape lives of Appalachian students today.

How do these experiences and understandings of the school’s legacy ultimately affect education in Appalachia in the past and today? These experiences and understandings of the school’s legacy affect education in Appalachia very differently in the past in comparison to the present. These perceptions of the school’s legacy affected education in the past by creating one of the most prestigious schools in Logan County, during the 1940s through the late 1950s. The educators who taught there, along with the students who attended the school, helped to make the legacy a reality—and as they continued to add to that legacy by becoming teaching mentors, these former students became successful in their own rights. These perceptions, however, shaped education in Appalachia today by creating a yearning for the past, as Holden Central School was demolished to make way for Corridor G, the four-lane highway that linked Pikeville, Kentucky, to Logan County, West Virginia.

As the oral histories illustrate, the school’s former educators and students remember fondly a time of economic prosperity, manicured lawns, and well-resourced
schools. This shouldn’t be surprising as the reality for the community of Holden is now, today, much different. The withdrawal of Island Creek Coal Company from Holden triggered a disastrous series of events that sent the community into freefall, as economic opportunities dwindled, population significantly decreased, and institutions fell into disrepair. In this regard, Holden and ICCC were very much like West Virginia’s other coal towns and coal companies; they collapsed when their companies left. What was once a thriving model community of prosperity and beauty, has now become an isolated residential neighborhood where former educators and students from the school struggle against great odds to economic prosperity. As they hold onto their memories of the past, and fight against the decline of the coal industry in particular and a declining regional economy in general, outmigration and the lack of economic prospects loom large.

The experiences and understandings of the school’s legacy, then, as expressed by my community consultants, ultimately surface into the present juxtaposed to an education in Appalachia in the past, one that demonstrates how a relationship that existed between the school and the community created a culture of kinship and inclusion during a time of much greater prosperity. Jim Long, for example, remembers that “most of the kids were all local who knew each other” and that “even before I started school, just down on Bee Bee Street down there, there were thirty-two kids under school age and we always had ball games, school activities, and Parent Teacher Association meetings that kept the community involved with the school” (Jim Long, personal communication, September 9, 2015). Those events are largely gone now and although Holden was comprised of several coalmining neighborhoods, all of the children knew each other before they even attended their first day of school. This, of course, carried over into the classroom, as the school
strengthened this culture of inclusivity by uniting children from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds under the larger idea of being “Holden Hornets.” In many ways, a thread of continuity connected family, work, community, and school—a thread broken many times over as Island Creek Coal Company withdrew its support for the school and the community.

Once ICCC had moved elsewhere, the effects on the school were unmistakable: its doors closed in 1970. Today, all that remains of the rich educational legacy, which once stood on the hill like a watchful guardian, is the elementary school where the community reunions are held every year. Coach Masil Maynard put it best when he said that “I think it was great [back then] because you were closer to the teachers; and in return, the teachers were more involved with the kids. If they had a problem they would come to you and that just does not happen today. I think that the school was ahead of its time and a lot of it is lost today” (Masil Maynard, personal communication, September 9, 2015).

While yearnings for the past like these may be a direct result of the coal company’s influence; the influence that the educators had on their students over the years cannot be underestimated. My community consultants expressed their experiences at the school and by doing so demonstrated how the school’s legacy affects education in Appalachia today through their continued commitment to meet up annually and reminisce about what was truly lost when Holden Central closed, and how their community would forever miss the “nurturing paternalism” that ICCC exhibited there. Their sentiments are not simply nostalgia of perceived “better days gone”—though this is undoubtedly part of
the story here—they also touch upon a kind of Appalachia rarely foregrounded when it comes to things like education, past or present.

**How and in what ways does the story of Holden Central School offer a counter-narrative to how images of education in Appalachia are produced and reproduced through time?** Though it might be easy to dismiss nostalgic stories and sentiments about the past, I have tried to take the stories of my consultants and present them accurately, and to seek understanding of how the story of Holden Central provides a counter-narrative to how images of education in Appalachia are produced and reproduced through time. Stories of Appalachia—whether of the past or the present—rarely include “education-rich” stories like that of Holden, ones that challenge and complicate the dominant narratives of coal camp companies and the communities where their employees live. Significantly, my consultants don’t tell the all-too-often told story of poor, uneducated Appalachians dominated and exploited by outside coal companies that provide little good for the community. Their story is clearly different, even if told in nostalgic terms. In particular, the story of Holden Central School is more often about capable Appalachian students, who were able to excel, in an excellent learning environment that was staffed with caring educators and adequate resources.

Take, for example, David Evans, a former student and educator at Holden Central, who has a unique perspective on the quality of the education that was provided to students at the school. After graduating college, Evans returned to his alma mater because of the close-knit sense of family that was created at Holden Central School and renewed through its relationship with the community. “I think we all had a marvelous education in Holden,” he says. “I really do. From first grade on, I think we had quality teachers” and
that “we have a lot of students who grew up, went to Holden Junior High and are now
doctors, lawyers, teachers, professional people, people that have their own businesses
who are high school graduates who are running their own business” (David Evans,
personal communication, September 9, 2015). This sentiment, as expressed by Evans,
reflects the story of Holden as a place where students were given the opportunity to excel
and their learning was facilitated by educators. This complicates the dominant narratives
concerning the region and combats these harmful inaccuracies.

Stories like these—though they are still common in Holden—are rarely heard and
told when talking about the history and culture of Appalachian schools in the vein of
dominant narratives of the region. Though overwhelmingly positive, stories like Evans’s
are significant because they help to develop more nuanced understandings of how people
living in and experiencing coal camp communities talk about and remember education in
their communities.

In this way, my consultants’ stories introduce a reconceptualization of
“paternalism.” Rather than unquestionably accept the negative connotation often
associated with coal company exploitation, they instead elaborate this story along lines
highlighting ICC as a positive agent of protection. For example: Barbara McCloud-
Brewster, a former student at Holden Central, commented on the ways in which Island
Creek Coal Company exhibited a kind of positive paternalistic behavior at the school.
“They [Island Creek Coal Company] didn’t try to tell them what to teach,” she said. “But
I think they supported it [Holden Central School] financially. We had a good curriculum.
It was a really good building. The books. I can remember everybody kept their books”
(Barbara McCloud-Brewster, personal communication, September 9, 2015).
While some might decide that such stories foreground positive memories (which they no doubt do), stories like McCloud’s elaborate a community-based counter-narrative, supported by other like stories from former educators and students at Holden Central School. Such stories—as illustrated by the oral histories presented in chapter 5—place agency with Appalachians themselves, who were directly involved in the school’s legacy. In this way it struggles against the larger, dominant narratives concerning Appalachian education born of a deficiency model approach, which results in inaccuracies that influence real world educational policy reform on both the federal and state levels.

In sum, then, the story of Holden Central and others similar to it are critical today, as they provide counter-narratives to larger, dominant narratives concerning Appalachian education. In particular, these inaccurate, dominant narratives are the result of literature written from a deficit-oriented perspective concerning Appalachian education (Frost, 1901; Gaumintz & Cook, 1937). My research seeks to address this literature and offer a counter-narrative that demonstrates the capabilities of rural education and the resiliency of educators and students at these schools (Spatig & Amerikaner, 2014; Tieken, 2014). The former educators and students from Holden Central whom I spoke with, all represent integral links in the chain that comprise the legacy of excellence that was cultivated within the school’s halls and classrooms and is still influencing the lives of Appalachian students today. For these reasons, it is essential that future research be conducted in Appalachian education, based on the capabilities of students and the care of their educators.
Nurturing Paternalism

In his book, *Coal Towns: Life Work Culture Company Towns* (1995), Crandall Shifflett argues that dominate narratives about coal company towns generally relate a story about the exploitation and manipulation of miners by their employers. This narrative often captures an unquestionable reality of coal mining life, where coal companies exploit a region and its people for profit, and where coal companies often have little concern for how short-term goals can have long-term and devastating effects for land and people. A great deal of scholarly and popular literature has helped to grow this narrative, and fill out its contours (Eller, 1982; Henan, 1996; Williams, 2000). But Shifflett argues that this story is not always entirely accurate, especially when you begin to investigate the more complex relationships between coal companies and “their” towns; the relationship between work and culture; region and identity.

I found a similar idea at work in my own research. While it was true that ICCC worked in ways familiar to larger dominant narratives of exploitation and paternalism, it also worked within streams of paternalistic development or, perhaps more precisely, as “nurturer”: an idea that seems more in line with the way my consultants spoke of it. Thus in addition to the findings related to my research questions, an important concept that emerged from this study was the idea of what I have come to think of as “nurturing paternalism,” which surfaced as a unique sentiment that was expressed by many of my community consultants.

“Nurturing paternalism” is an idea that helps to capture the complex relationship between a coal company, its town, its employees, and their futures. It is also, unquestionably, reflected in the memory of that complex relationship. In the main, this
idea concerns a blending of two separate realms of life for coalmining employees and their families. As I see it, “nurturing paternalism” is a concept that places the role of the coal company (Island Creek Coal Company) as a primary source of sustenance and cultural support for communities similar to Holden. Not only was Holden designed to be a model community by its founders, it was also crafted to serve as a constant reminder of the benevolence of ICCC, as it provided community members with state-of-the-art amenities for their employees and their families to enjoy during their time off from work. In fact, the community of Holden was conceived to be the quintessential coalmining community that not only provided miners with a lucrative job, but also with a well-supplied place to live where their families could live and a school where their children could learn to achieve beyond their own expectations.

Contrary to most other company towns, Holden was built upon the idea that if workers were content with their living conditions, then they would remain at Island Creek Coal Company and not seek employment elsewhere. In this way, ICCC is somewhat unique in that it may stand outside typical, and dominant, narratives about coal companies working in Appalachia. For example: its story runs counter to Hardy Green’s (2010) research that delineates existence in company towns as limited to one of two experiences. His first concept is that most company towns were utopian communities where companies provided its citizens with modern facilities, such as hospitals, schools, and adequate housing for the company’s employees. The second type of company town, as noted by Green, is the idea of “Exploitationville,” where company employees are manipulated for financial profit by their employers in order to maximize their financial
gains, at the expense of their employees’ lives and safety. Instead, Holden existed somewhere in the middle.

As opposed to Shifflett’s (1995) incomplete explanation for counter-narratives from coalminers concerning employer manipulation and exploitation and Hardy Green’s (2010) limiting argument that company towns were one of two existences, the story of Holden and Island Creek Coal Company hopefully will provide a new lens for scholars and historians to utilize concerning coalmining communities and powerful industrial companies. In fact, “nurturing paternalism” can best be understood as both an acknowledgement of the coal company’s power and oversight by community members, as well as simultaneously an acknowledgement of the benefits that arise from such a high level of interference in local community affairs.

As expressed by Kathleen Reece, the coal company had a benevolent, yet significant level of oversight over the community of Holden (Massey, 1981). But this benevolence was a complex mixture of providing modern amenities and leisure activities for employees and their families, while simultaneously levying direct and often time’s strict procedures in place to safeguard the company’s corporate interests. Interestingly, Kathleen Reece, stated that “‘Island Creek was paternalistic and benevolent. In the Reece household, it was God, Mother, and Island Creek’” (Massey, 1981, p. 1). This sentiment conflates the notions of kinship and religiosity by extending and attributing them to the coal company. In this way ICCC becomes both the provider of jobs that sustains the family, as well as the foundation on which the family’s faith is invested and renewed through its endeavors in the community.
This level of oversight and perceived benevolence is complicated by the fact that Island Creek Coal Company actively fought to keep the United Mine Workers of America out of its coalfields by offering its employees company unions, as well as hiring the Sheriff of Logan County, Don Chaffin, and his army of mine guards to violently suppress union sympathies among its employees (Spence, 1976). In particular, William H. Coolidge, one of ICCC’s two original founders, stated to the United States Senate that “having in the west had experience with the Western Federation of Miners…we kept out and continue to keep out, and propose to keep out, the United Mine Workers of America” (Spence, 1976, p. 331). Coolidge’s desire to create a “model” community for Island Creek Coal Company’s employees was facilitated by his ambitions as a venture capitalist to increase profit and productivity, at the expense of his employees’ safety and security.

This coalescence of strict oversight combined with genuine concern for the welfare of its employees, made ICCC a unique coalmining company and provided its employees and citizens with a feeling of “nurturing paternalism,” as they perceived both the caring elements of a corporate entity, as well as the cold, business desire to turn a profit. This new conceptualization provides a lens to explore further research into company towns and the communities they created.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Although I wish to offer a new conceptualization for how paternalism functioned in coal camp towns, “nurturing paternalism” at this time is not a comprehensive or complete theory that can explain the complex and sometimes contradictory behaviors that ranged from benevolence and care to a more strict, authoritarian management style that was demonstrated by coal companies and other industries, as they designed and
subsequently ran their industrial “model” communities. As further research is conducted with coalmining towns and their schools, however, more examples similar to the circumstances that existed in Holden may illustrate the nuances of “nurturing paternalism” and how it manifests in different settings across Appalachia and the United States.

While I was completing my dissertation, I had the opportunity to look back at the process and think about what other relevant documents might await discovery—documents that did not make it into my dissertation. These collections might include the business records of Island Creek Coal Company or any surviving personal collections that might include detailed information relating to the daily operations at the school, such as Board of Education minutes, curriculum plans, student documents, or faculty and staff records. I hope to expand on this research after the completion of my dissertation, and hope to uncover more of these documents, if they indeed still exist, and produce an even richer manuscript that may help to elaborate the relationship between the coal company, the school, and the community of Holden.

But, alas, there are many other schools across the country that are worthy of being studied, particularly because the literature concerning the history of schools has great potential to offer scholars and educators a unique opportunity to preserve the stories and memories of alumni and faculty before it is too late. Additionally, the emergent field of rural education provides researchers with the opportunity to explore challenging, yet rewarding, narratives of capable students and caring educators working together in close-knit communities where the school functions as the epicenter of socialization and learning. Narratives such as these are even more important today, as they are consistently
overlooked in textbooks, research, and media coverage, in favor of urban schools and their stories. Ironically, rural and urban schools face many of the same challenges for survival and research; so focusing on their stories for survival in postindustrial America are of paramount importance right now.

**Some Final Reflections: On the Importance of Rural Schools**

As I write this dissertation’s conclusion, the current state of public education in America, from any angle or perspective, looks bleak. This view has persisted for several decades now, its roots going back to 1983 with the Reagan’s administration release of the *A Nation at Risk* report. The report argued that the public school system in America was of poor quality, and that, as a result, was dragging down the national economy. The only way to remedy both situations, the report’s authors argued, was to increase academic achievement via a more rigorous and measurable curriculum (Tyack and Cuban, 1995: Vinovskis, 2009).

Also called the Bell Report (after U.S Secretary of Education Terrell H. Bell), many scholars have argued that the report included misinformation that America was lagging behind its competitors and allies or that the American way of life was under threat (Apple, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Pinar, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). These same scholars point out that the authors of that report reduced the health of the public education system into a game of misdirection and blame. This, in turn, led to a media obsession with educational grades and scores, as they were used to judge the success of individual schools and then later the larger public education system as well (Ravitch, 2013).
This trend continued when President George W. Bush instituted the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which required schools to utilize standardized tests to measure their students’ learning. Federal funding and other assets were levied as pressure to succeed and if a school failed to meet its adequate yearly progress (AYP) benchmark score, then it could face consolidation or even closure (Ravitch, 2013). With the election of President Barack Obama in 2008 and his Race to the Top initiative, the influence of No Child Left Behind expanded, particularly as it preserved many of the former legislations central requirements (though it did add that private charter schools were a necessary component of educational policy reform). This only fueled what had become our nationwide zeitgeist obsession with high-stakes standardized tests, which lasts to this day (Pinar, 2011; Ravitch, 2013). Additionally, President Obama also issued the Every Student Succeeds Act in December of 2015, which still required annual testing and reporting of students’ scores, based on standardized tests, but gave states more flexibility and agency when it comes to penalization of under-performing schools (Brenner, 2016). This legislation no longer required adequate yearly progress accountability and allowed individual states to outline their own criteria for highly-qualified teachers. It also transformed federal funding for schools into block grants, based on state determinants of schools in need. Indeed, the Every Student Succeeds Act does grant states a more direct role in shaping education policy reform and reduces the influence of individual underperforming schools regarding the allocation of funds, but its legacy in relation to rural education at this time still remains to be seen (McGuinn, 2016). These pieces of legislation have significant ramifications for rural schools and their communities.
Though the various implications and consequences of high-stakes standardized tests are complicated, one thing is clear: rural schools have not fared well. Rural Appalachia is no exception. The problems of education are big and momentous for communities like Holden, especially when the closure of beloved schools like Central make the attainment of a quality education elusive. As policymakers and politicians turn to standardized tests and their quantitatively generated data—often more problematic than conclusive—policymakers and politicians stake the future of the public education system on popular opinion to make their decisions about the futures of rural schools (Tieken, 2014). And when they do so, they rarely take into account the stories like those featured here.

As a result of low test scores or low enrollments, rural schools thus face either consolidation or closure, (DeYoung, 1995; Tieken, 2014). Public, community-based schools also face another threat: private schooling. As federal policies have evolved in recent years, the privatization movement in America has, in turn, gained even more momentum, as the phrase “school choice” has become the en vogue way to frame the conversation. So, as rural communities struggle to preserve their public schools, larger forces of neoliberalism (often in the form of special interests not directly associated with their communities) have also contributed to the dismantling of the existing educational order, and replaced it with a privatized system comprised mostly of charter schools (Howley, Howley, & Kuemmel, 2015).

In this context, the culture and history of rural education—its implications, consequences, and its future—should matter much more than it currently does. My hope is that this dissertation has at least helped to contribute to larger dialogues about rural
education. Using Paulo Freire’s (2000) critical pedagogy as a guide, I hope to engage in continued and regular dialogues concerning how the historical case study of Holden Central School (and others like it) highlight the capabilities and resiliency of Appalachian students, the care and excellence of their educators, and the possibilities for rural education, rather than its deficiencies. The story of Holden Central demonstrates how a rural school in Logan County, West Virginia, its surrounding community, and its coal company created a thriving, vibrant learning environment for students to succeed. Not all of the students at Holden Central went on to become doctors, lawyers, or politicians later in life, but they were all provided opportunities to excel and many of them did just that. The mere fact that this school continues to be so influential for many of its former educators and students further demonstrates the power of community at work in Holden and the culture that existed at the school, as well as the progressive nature of Island Creek Coal Company that made everything possible by investing in its employees and their children.

One might suggest that the community’s rise and fall associated with the Island Creek Coal Company points to an ironic confirmation of an old Appalachian stereotype, that of “outsiders” determining the success of Appalachian communities, that without the help of ICCC, Holden students would not have achieved their various educational successes. I would posit that the success of Holden Central School and its community should ultimately be understood in terms of its people and not as a result of a financially influential coal company. The fact that Island Creek Coal Company supported the community of Holden financially was commonplace for company towns of the era and when they withdrew from the community it was no surprise that the state of West
Virginia and Logan County in particular could not sustain such a large contribution. This does not suggest that the people of Holden failed the school, but instead speaks to the power of rural communities to rise to the occasion, as well as adapt when opportunities shift and change. The people of Holden most certainly succeeded, in part, because of ICCC, but they succeeded much beyond that help and support as former students have changed and contributed greatly to the lives of current Appalachian students and have over the years returned to the community to build legacies that last to this day. Given this, of course, I do not want to ignore the nature of rural schools and their communities, as these powerful symbiotic relationships depend to a large degree on one another. As David Evans, put it: “We spent all of our lives in Holden up until the time they closed the school down. So, the school has always been the identity for every community and when they close down these little schools in all these little communities, it just takes the life out of them” (David Evans, personal communication, September 9, 2015).
References


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Green, B., & Reid, J. (2014). “Social Cartography and Rural Education: Researching Space(s) and Place(s).” In S. White & M. A. Corbett (Eds.), *Doing educational research in rural settings: Methodological issues, international perspectives, and practical solutions*. London: Routledge.


*Holden Central Student Fair* (n.d.) [Photograph].


West Virginia State Archives Patty Mowery Collection, (n.d.) Holden Central School [Photograph].


Appendix A

Logan Banner Newspaper Advertisement

Hello, my name is Harley Walden and I am a doctoral student at Marshall University working on my dissertation research of the history for the joint elementary and middle school, Holden Central School, in Logan County that was owned by the Island Creek Coal Company. I am interested in looking at the experiences of former students and employees of the school and what the school, its curriculum, and for the students what the staff meant to them. So, if you either worked there or attended the school I would be very interested in speaking with you for my research. Also if you know where any school documents, records, or photographs are located that would also be greatly appreciated as well. Should you be interested in either participating in my research project or have any knowledge about the school or records related to it, please feel free to contact me. My email address is: walden4@marshall.edu and my phone number is (304) 654-5234. Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

- How long have you lived in Holden, West Virginia?
- What grades did you attend at Holden Central School?
- How long did you teach at Holden Central School?
- If you were not originally from Holden, how or why did you move there?
- Could you please discuss your time at Holden Central School as a student?
- Could you please discuss your time at Holden Central School as a teacher?
- How would you describe the learning environment there?
- How would you describe the school culture?
- Would you please describe the relationship between the school and Island Creek Coal Company?
- Would you please describe the relationship between the school and the community?
- Would you please describe the relationship between Island Creek Coal Company and the community?
- How would you describe the community of Holden, both then and now?
- How would you describe the legacy of Holden Central School?
- How would you describe the quality of education at Holden Central School?
- How would you describe the education at Holden Central in comparison to other schools in the region at that time?
Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
One John Marshall Drive
Huntington, WV 25755

June 8, 2016

Eric Lassiter, Ph.D.
Graduate Humanities Program, MUGC

RE: IRBNet ID# 902686-1
At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Lassiter:

Protocol Title: [902686-1] The Story of Holden Central School
Expiration Date: June 8, 2017
Site Location: MUGC
Submission Type: New Project APPROVED
Review Type: Exempt Review

In accordance with 45CFR46.101 (b) (2), the above study and informed consent were granted Exempted approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Designee for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire June 8, 2017. A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Harley Walden.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, ThD, CIP at 304-696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.
Curriculum Vitae

ACADEMIC DEGREES

2017    Ed.D., College of Education and Professional Development, Marshall University
Directed by: Luke Eric Lassiter

2017    Ed.S., College of Education and Professional Development, Marshall University

2017    Appalachian Studies Certificate, Humanities Program, Marshall University

2012    Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Certification Social Studies 5-Adult, Marshall University

2011    M.A., History, Marshall University
Thesis: “Sahib and Sepoy: British Reaction to the Rebellion of 1857”
Directed by William Palmer

2007    B.A., Political Science, Marshall University

SELECTED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

2015    “Graduate College Travel Support Grant”
For travel to conferences, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia

2014    “Graduate College Travel Support Grant”
For travel to conferences, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia

2010    “Graduate College Travel Support Grant”
For travel to conferences, Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia

2009    Phi Alpha Theta, Inducted at Marshall University

2003    “West Virginia Promise Scholarship”
For college tuition

2003    “Westmoreland Society Scholarship”
For college tuition
### REPRESENTATIVE PUBLICATIONS

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<td>2016</td>
<td>“Reflections on the Dissertation Process”</td>
<td>Annual Doctoral Student and Faculty Seminar</td>
<td>South Charleston, WV</td>
<td>September</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>“Student Panel”</td>
<td>Annual Doctoral Student and Faculty Seminar</td>
<td>South Charleston, WV</td>
<td>September</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“Reflections on the Portfolio Process”</td>
<td>Annual Doctoral Student and Faculty Seminar</td>
<td>South Charleston, WV</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>“Miners and Mentors: Memories and Experiences in Coal Camp Schools in Appalachia”</td>
<td>38th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference</td>
<td>Johnson City, TN</td>
<td>March</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>“Welcome to Charm School: Mastering Concepts through Gamification”</td>
<td>25th International Conference on College Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Ponte Vedra Beach, FL</td>
<td>March</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>“The Use of Digitized Archives and Primary Source Documents in Social Studies Classes to Bring the Past to the Present and the Future”</td>
<td>25th International Conference on College Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Ponte Vedra Beach, FL</td>
<td>March</td>
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2010 “Child Labor during the Industrial Revolution: The Taboo of Capitalism”
2010 Phi Alpha Theta Kentucky Regional Conference
Highland Heights, KY March

2010 “Fetch Me my Mead Wench: Feminine Gender Roles in the Viking Age”
19th Annual Bluegrass Regional Graduate Student Conference
Lexington, KY February

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2017 EDF 625: Qualitative Research in Education (Co-Taught) w/Dr. Eric Lassiter & Dr. Beth Campbell-Summer
- Facilitated Class Discussions
- Graded Assignments
- Participated in Course Lectures
- Assessed/Evaluated Students’ Work
- Facilitated Students’ Understanding of Qualitative Research Theories

2015 CI 677: Writing for Publication (Co-Taught) w/Dr. Beth Campbell & Susan Malinowski-Spring
- Facilitated Class Discussions
- Designed Class Assignments
- Lead Writing Workshops
- Assessed/Evaluated Students’ Writing
- Graded Assignments

REFERENCES

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