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## Place-based and Non-place-based Performing Arts Experiences and First-generation, Appalachian College Student Engagement

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**PLACE-BASED AND NON-PLACE BASED PERFORMING ARTS  
EXPERIENCES AND FIRST-GENERATION, APPALACHIAN COLLEGE  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

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Rachel Schott

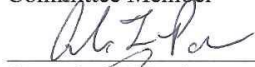
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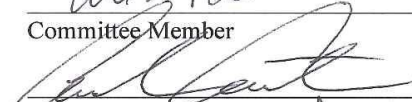
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**PLACE-BASED AND NON-PLACE-BASED PERFORMING ARTS  
EXPERIENCES AND FIRST-GENERATION, APPALACHIAN COLLEGE  
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

**Dissertation**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Carter and Moyers School of Education  
at Lincoln Memorial University**

**by**

**Rachel Schott**

**January 2020**

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**Rachel Schott**

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to Robert Mitchell Cosby a first-generation, Appalachian college student who persisted, succeeded, and whose wisdom and kindness is an inspiration to his community, his family, and to me. XO.

## **Acknowledgments**

I wish to offer my deepest thanks to committee members Dr. James McAllister, Dr. Alexander Parks, my Chairperson Dr. Andrew Courtner, and also to Dr. Pete Silberman for their council and encouragement. Last, I extend my tenderest gratitude to Dr. Joseph Bein for planting the seed that is now, all these years later, a fully-grown tree.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participated in place-based and non-place-based performance arts ensembles and, using a qualitative research approach informed by Kuh et al.'s (2005) study on positive student engagement, understand the influence that participation in these ensembles might have on Appalachian students who are the first in their generation to pursue higher education. In this study, the researcher examined student data from 28 first-generation, Appalachian college students who responded to an online survey, and 11 who volunteered to participate in-depth, personal interviews. All the student participants were enrolled at one of three private institutions in Central Appalachia. Based on data generalized from this study the researcher concluded that ensemble participation positively influenced students' ability to engage with their college environment by facilitating valued relationships to peers, faculty, and campus facilities.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

The Appalachian Mountains and the people who live there have been a prolific source of human and natural resources for generations. In the 19th century, families in mountain communities harvested a lion's share of the hardwood, coal, iron ore, and copper that was used to build many of America's modern cities (United States Geological Survey and the United States Department of Mines, 1968). Appalachian families were critical in easing labor shortages during World War II and mining the coal necessary to fuel the booming postwar economy (Eller, 2008; Williams, 2002). Despite these contributions, Appalachian families have faced persistent economic and cultural barriers in achieving levels of health, education, and income commiserate with mainstream Americans (Alexander, 2006; Meit, Heffeman, Tanenbaum, & Hoffman, 2017). The foundational American promise of economic success for anyone committed to hard work and the pursuit of educational opportunities has proven to be unrealistic for many Appalachian students and their families.

In 1994, economist and college president Howard Bowen argued, "In our society, education is the principal engine of social progress and higher education is a major part of that engine" (Bowen, 1994, p. 37). Researchers in the field of higher education have developed valuable models by which administrators and student service professionals can gauge important aspects of student success. A critical factor in student success in higher education is engagement, or the degree to which students connect with their academic peers, instructors, and community. Within some Central Appalachian higher education institutions, opportunities

exist for students to participate in performing arts ensembles that are rooted in Appalachian heritage, as well as ensembles more typically offered within higher education. The impact that participation in performing arts ensembles, and in particular that place-based pedagogical approach might have on the ways students construct meaning from their college experience is not well understood. The purpose of this study was to give voice to the experience of first-generation Appalachian college students who have participated in performing arts opportunities at their Appalachian institutions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite ongoing public debate about the rising cost of college, the positive economic, social, and mental health benefits of earning a college degree have been well-established. Men and women with a college degree have consistently out earned those with only a high school diploma and experienced half the unemployment rate of their non-college degree holding peers (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The number of jobs that typically require postsecondary education for entry have been on the rise, and employment in occupations that require only a high school diploma or the equivalent has declined by more than 4 million positions in three years (Watson, 2017). College graduates experience more nuanced benefits from their experiences in higher education as well; they tend to be more satisfied with their lives, less affected by negative life circumstances, and less susceptible to preventable diseases (Ross & Mirowsky, 2011; Schafer, Wilkinson, & Ferraro, 2013).

Communities in the Appalachian region of the United States have experienced persistent poverty, slow economic development, and widespread mortality from diseases caused by alcohol, prescription drugs, and illegal drug abuse (Meit et al., 2017). Some social scientists have argued that isolation and family-centered culture have compounded challenges facing Appalachian communities and that policies in support of educational attainment would modernize the region (Eller, 2008; Lewis & Billings, 1997). However, Appalachian students who aim to be the first in their generation to obtain a four-year degree have been more likely to drop out of college without graduating than non-Appalachian peers (Armstrong & Zaback 2014; Ishitani, 2006). During college, Appalachian students have been less likely to engage in extra-curricular, athletic, and volunteer events than their non-Appalachian peers (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), have lower credit completion rates (Armstrong & Zaback, 2014), and significantly lower grades (Pascarella et al., 2004). Between 2013 – 2014, \$259 million in federal grant money was awarded to institutions to increase persistence and graduation rates of low-income students and first-generation college students (United States Department of Education, 2016). Despite this effort, first-generation students like many coming from Appalachia have continued to experience more barriers to timely and successful college graduation than their non-Appalachian peers.

In the K-12 setting, arts involvement has long been correlated with high levels of engagement, growth mindset, socio-emotional development, and academic goal orientation (Catterall, 1998; Holochwost & Wolf, 2017). Since

2001, however, state and federal policymakers have reduced arts funding in the public schools and students in poor and rural districts were left with fewer arts teachers and opportunities than their middle-income peers (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2005; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012; Rabkin & Hedbert, 2011). Middle-income students and those with access to formal music instruction with a paid instructor have been more likely to participate in formal music opportunities at the college level (Mantie, 2013). A number of small, private liberal arts institutions in Central Appalachia have offered students place-based (Bequette, 2014) or culturally-familiar (Gruenewald, 2003) performing arts opportunities in which students could participate *independent* of their access to formal arts training in their pre-college years. These included Appalachian music ensembles, private instruction on traditional Appalachian instruments, Appalachian-themed drama clubs, and instruction in Appalachian dance. Researchers have found that college students who engage in educationally purposeful activities express feelings of resiliency and positive well-being and that engagement is the best predictor of student success after controlling for past academic performance and preparation (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Steele & Fullagar, 2009). Few researchers have yet investigated the ways in which postsecondary arts involvement could impact college student success. Fewer, if any, have examined how place-based performing arts opportunities could impact the engagement of first-generation, Appalachian college students at their institutions. The purpose of this study was to examine the pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participated in place-based and non-place based performance arts ensembles and,

using a qualitative research approach informed by Kuh et al.'s (2005) study on positive student engagement, understand the influence that participation in these ensembles might have on Appalachian students who are the first in their generation to pursue higher education.

## **Background**

In the waning years of the Roman Empire the 1st Century BC orator and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero translated the works of Greek philosophers into Latin with such eloquence and skill that he was considered to be the harbinger of a Golden Age of Latin literature that lasted well beyond his death in 43BC (Bugter, 1987). The English word *cicerone*, defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a guide who conducts sightseers” (Cicerone, n.d.) was derived from his name and was illustrative of a critical factor in Cicero’s success; he re-interpreted the works of Plato and Aristotle into a vernacular language and lauded the political accomplishments of smaller societies within the Roman Empire instead of focusing solely on the Roman political elite (Kraus, 2015; Rice, 2006). Historians believe that Cicero venerated Plato but disagreed with the Platonic philosophy that knowledge for sake of knowledge was the highest possible human pursuit, arguing that developing human character through community and leadership was man’s greatest quest (Niegorski, 2013).

Centuries after Cicero’s treatises, the American President Abraham Lincoln guaranteed public land donations to states and territories for the creation of institutions of higher education by signing into law the Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862. The successful passage of the Morrill Act (1862) helped to define an era

in higher education reminiscent of Cicero's model. Prior to the passing of the Morrill Act (1862) American colleges fostered the ideals of the British schools on which they were modeled—chiefly, to improve the moral, religious, and cultural lives of students and prepare the gentlemanly elite for positions of leadership (Poston & Boyer, 1992; Trow, 2005). In contrast, the land-grant institutions were established

To teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such a manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life. (Morrill Act, 1862, SEC 4)

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, faculty and administrators of these public land-grant institutions had designed a new form of higher education—one built on a foundation of service to the public through the creation of new knowledge (Boyer, 1994).

The number and variety of students entering higher education institutions changed dramatically in the years following World War II. Under the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944—an act to provide federal government aid for the readjustment in civilian life of returning World War II veterans—military veterans could receive four years of funding to attain a college degree. More than 2 million veterans enrolled in the years immediately after the war, doubling the enrollment in American colleges and universities nationwide (Hammond, 2017). Before the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act

(An act to provide Federal Government aid, 1944), rural and working-class students struggled to gain access to a college education; tuition costs were prohibitive for most families, and small, rural secondary schools rarely met the required standards set by administrators of public colleges to allow graduates entry (Gelber, 2011). Returning veterans, inspired by their defeat of Fascism and changed by the experience of seeing the comparative wealth of Western Europeans to poor Americans, embraced higher education as a path toward participatory democracy and social mobility (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007; Trow, 2005).

President Harry Truman's 1947 Commission on Higher Education (Zook, 1947) gave voice to the reality of post-World War higher education in America. According to Hutcheson (2007) it solidified a "clear and highly visible statement on the need for higher education to change whom it admitted and how it taught students" (p. 109). Faculty and administrators of America's colleges and universities were tasked with delivering mass higher education to thousands of new students while also developing cutting-edge tools and scientific research necessary to win the Cold War. For the leadership at some institutions, the two goals were dichotomous. According to Trow (2005):

The effect of expansion on "standards" and "quality" is a complex and uncertain issue. In the early stages of the current phase of growth, beginning in the 1950s, there was widespread concern among academics and others, captured in the slogan "more means worse," that the pool of talented youth able to profit from higher education was small and limited,



and that expansion beyond the numbers provided by this pool would necessarily mean a decline in student quality. (p. 44)

As enrollment in higher education climbed, federal dollars inundated previously cashed-strapped institutions and administrators could afford to become more selective about the type of student they admitted. Administrators of research institutions had the luxury of gleaning the brightest, most academically prepared students for their schools while students from less-advantaged backgrounds filled the rolls of institutions whose faculty focused on technical, vocational, and applied sciences. Ironically, as the role of higher education in America broadened to include students historically excluded from post-secondary schooling, the definition of scholarship narrowed (Poston & Boyer, 1992; Trow, 2005). According to Poston and Boyer (1992), “Research per se was not the problem. The problem was that the research mission, which was appropriate for some institutions, created a shadow over the entire higher learning enterprise” (p. 12). Consequently, faculty who provided education for first-generation students were judged by the same criteria as their peers at research focused institutions—namely, the amount and frequency of publications. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, researchers in the field of higher education began forging a path to a more inclusive definition of ‘public good’ wherein institutional leaders would embrace creative resolutions to complex societal issues. Three independent policy and research publications were particularly important in highlighting the ways schools engaged students and community members for mutual problem solving:

the Carnegie Commission, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

In 1971, the Carnegie Commission, an independent policy and research center, developed a groundbreaking framework to classify higher education institutions. The classifications, or snapshots of institutional qualities based on data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports and National Science Foundation (NSF) surveys, have been posted every five years since the 1970s. Since 1983 writers at the *U.S. News and World Report* have used the Carnegie Classifications to form the annual *Best Colleges* report (Morse, Brooks, & Mason, 2018). Though Carnegie researchers adjusted the criteria by which institutions were categorized four times between 1971-2000, a significant overhaul in 2005 expanded the original classifications to include information on institutions' commitment to graduate education, nature of undergraduate programs, characteristics of undergraduates, relative size of undergraduate and graduate populations, and absolute size and residential character of campuses (McCormick, 2005). In 2006, the Carnegie Classification was again updated to include a series of criteria by which institutions could carefully examine, track, and assess their approaches to engagement. In their book *In Pursuit of Prestige: Strategy and Competition in U.S. Higher Education* Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2002) claimed that "in terms of practical meaning in the field of higher education, the classification has established a ladder for institutions to climb" (p. 45). Given the Carnegie Classification's reputation as the most preeminent university ranking system in the United States the number of institutions that have

sought after and achieved the elective Community Engagement Classification grew from 107 institutions in 2006 to 342 in 2016 (CUEI, 2019).

The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NSULGC) recommended in 2001 that institutions “transform their thinking about service so that engagement becomes a priority on every campus, a central part of institutional mission” (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 2001, p. 17). The NSULGC report was commissioned with the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and examined student experience, student access, institutional engagement, learning society, and campus culture. In 1998, administrators of the Pew Charitable Trusts initiated the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to provide stakeholders with tools to rank institutional quality beyond the historical measures of faculty credentials and student selectivity. Survey results were used to provide institutional leaders, potential students, media, and accrediting agencies data on “particular classroom activities and specific faculty and peer practices [leading] to high-quality undergraduate student outcomes” (NSSE, 2018b, para 1). Despite advancements in the valuation, assessment, and reporting of student and community engagement within higher education, administrators still struggle to provide high-quality engagement opportunities for some subsets of the student population. Low-income, first-generation, and Appalachian students are more likely to drop out of college without graduating (Armstrong & Zaback, 2014; Ishitani, 2006), are less likely to engage in extra-curricular, athletic, and volunteer

events, and achieve significantly lower grades (Pascarella et al., 2004) than their non-Appalachian and non-first-generation peers.

Researchers have discovered that arts participation in the elementary and secondary school settings has positively impacted student engagement and involvement (Bequette, 2014; Holochwost & Wolf, 2017) and likelihoods students will graduate high school, apply to, and attend college two years after high school (Elpus, 2014; McNeal, 1995). Logic dictates that similar benefits exist for arts students at the college level. However, for poor and rural students these benefits may be out of reach. Since 2001 and the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, educational policies have led to diminished arts opportunities for public school students – especially those in poor and rural districts (McCarthy et al., 2005; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012; Rabkin & Hedbert, 2011). As a result, poor and rural students may lack the musical and physical skills necessary to participate in the performing arts ensembles typically offered at institutions in higher education; skills that their middle-income, suburban peers attained in secondary school.

Even with high school performing arts training, underprivileged students still may not possess the skills and confidence to participate in college-level ensembles. In one study on recreational music making in college, Mantie (2013) concluded that “privileged conditions (cultural capital) may account for more collegiate music participation than the direct benefits of school music” (p. 52). Of the 12 randomly selected recreational music makers (i.e., non-music majors) the researcher interviewed at a large, private university, almost all received private

lessons in high school in addition to music classes, had access to a piano in the home, or both. Few researchers have yet investigated the informal arts experiences that students bring with them to college, and the impact those experiences may have on student engagement.

Researchers and educators interested in improving outcomes for American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students have catalogued promising examples of how applying place-based, culturally-relevant pedagogies have positively impacted students' attitudes toward school and associations with their Indigenous heritage (Ball & Pence, 2001; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Rubie, 1999). Indigenous students come disproportionately from poor, rural communities and face similar cultural and economic challenges as Appalachian students (Alexander, 2006; Costello, Farmer, Angold, Burns, & Erkanli, 1997; Demmert, Grissmer, & Towner, 2006; Meit et al., 2017; Thorne, Tickamyer & Thorne, 2004).

Many of the promising examples outlined by researchers of place-based pedagogies closely resemble conditions some scholars posit have led to positive outcomes for college students. These conditions, described in Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh and Whitt's (2005) *Student Success in College; Creating Conditions that Matter*, resulted from the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project for which the researchers closely examined student engagement data from schools with better-than-predicted graduation rates when taking into consideration characteristics such as institutional size, selectivity, and location.

## **Research Questions**

The income, health, and education benefits associated with college attendance have been out of reach for many Appalachian students and their families; outcomes for which physical geography, detrimental government policies, and factors unique to Appalachian culture, all likely play a part (Alexander, 2006; Armstrong & Zaback, 2014; Eller, 2008; Lewis & Billings, 1997; Meit et al, 2017; Thorne et al., 2004). Scholars have shown that college students who devoted time to engaging with their peers and faculty in educational activities were more likely to graduate from college (Astin, 2005; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Krause & Coates, 2008; Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Steele & Fullager, 2009) but little is known about the engagement behaviors of underserved student populations like those coming from Appalachia. Administrators of some Appalachian institutions have provided students the opportunities to participate in Appalachian-themed music and dance ensembles in addition to the classical or modern music ensembles typically found on college campuses. Because both arts involvement and place-based or culturally-familiar pedagogies have been associated with positive student outcomes (Ball & Pence, 2001; Bequette, 2014; Elpus, 2014; Holochwost & Wolf, 2017; McNeal, 1995; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Rubie, 1999) the questions that guided this study were designed to explore the meaning-making process of Appalachian students who participate in the performing arts opportunities afforded to them at their Appalachian institutions.

**Research question 1.** What meaning do first-generation, Appalachian college students construct from their experiences in performing arts ensembles?

**Research question 2.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in all performing arts ensembles in college?

**Research question 3.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in place-based performing arts ensembles in college?

**Research question 4.** What recommendations do first-generation, Appalachian college students have for higher education administrators related to the type and availability of arts opportunities available to students on college campuses?

### **Theoretical Framework**

In 1862, American President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Morrill Land-Grant Act to ensure funding for institutions of higher education in every state. As a result of this legislation, many American students (excluding, of course women, minorities, and disabled students who would not attend college in significant numbers for many years following the Morrill Act) were afforded the opportunity to attend college in their home state and study a variety of disciplines including agriculture, teaching, and engineering. Eighty years after the Morrill Act, the number and type of students entering the American system of higher education was bolstered again by the passage of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 through which legislators provided four years tuition for active duty serviceman to attend college. In 1947, 49% of students enrolled in American institutions of higher education were veterans, most of whom were from working

class and farming families who never could have otherwise afforded a college education (U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2013). Following the Vietnam conflict, eligible veterans attended college at a higher rate than either their World War II or Korean War counterparts (Arminio, Grabosky, & Lang, 2014; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013) and government sponsored programs to provide grants and student loans to low income students caused the overall number of students in college to expand rapidly (Newman, Couturier & Scurry, 2010; Trow, 2005).

Though governmental legislation throughout the 20th century helped large numbers of Americans gain access to college, graduation rates lagged, particularly for students who did not attend highly selective, private institutions (Bound, Lovenheim & Turner; 2010). Students who dropped out of college were viewed by administrators as proof that the new generation of working-class students were less motivated and less intellectually able to handle the rigors of college, a necessary consequence of the movement toward mass enrollment (Brennan, King, & Lebau, 2004; Tinto, 2006; Trow, 2005). According to higher education theorist Vincent Tinto, it was in the 1980s that new thought patterns about student retention among higher education professionals began to emerge. Tinto (2006) posited:

As part of a broader change in how we understood the relationship between individuals and society, our view of student retention shifted to take account of the role of the environment, in particular the institution, in student decisions to stay or leave. (p. 2)



Scholars began to realize that though the number and type of American students entering higher education was changing rapidly, the system of higher education that students entered was designed in pre-colonial days and strongly modeled on a British system that was centuries old. The British system was designed to serve wealthy, elite families and the foundation of student success was built through a centuries-old arrangement in which students with robust financial and family assistance were completely devoted to the process of education. Historically, British students lived in carefully organized family-like units where they were encouraged to socialize with and develop prolonged relationships with their teachers. Faculty and staff had centuries-old customs for supporting the white, young adult, male students who came to their institutions with robust financial and familial support (Trow, 2005). American higher education administrators struggled to develop support systems that could bolster the success of older, non-traditional, and working students in an environment deeply limited by traditions, organizations, and finance (Trow, 2005).

In 1975, director of research for the American Council on Education Alexander Astin conducted the first longitudinal study on college dropouts and concluded that virtually every factor in the college environment that significantly affected student persistence was related to student involvement or “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic process” (Astin, 1984, p. 518). Astin, who was found in 2010 to be the most often-cited individual in scholarly literature related to the field of higher education (Budd & Magnuson, 2010), posited that living in a residence hall and

participating in student government, athletics or honors courses were related to wide range of positive student outcomes including artistic interests, interpersonal self-esteem, intellectual self-esteem, and satisfaction with the undergraduate experience (Astin, 1977). The resultant student involvement theory, first published in 1984 provided “a unifying construct that can help to focus the energies of all institutional personnel on a common objective” (Astin, 1984, p. 527). Astin’s theory helped persuade higher education leaders to investigate how students invested their time, and to emphasize active, rather than passive, participation in the college experience to curb the dropout rate of American students.

Since the publication of Astin’s (1984) student involvement theory, researchers in the field of higher education have offered several definitions of involvement or engagement; a term that Astin (1984) deemed an “active verb form” of involvement (p. 519). Student engagement has been described as college students’ quality of effort and involvement in educationally purposeful learning activities and as the intersection of time, effort, and resources (Krause & Coates, 2008; Kuh, 2009; Solomonides & Reid, 2009). Trowler (2010) offered a broader definition:

Student engagement is concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution. (p. 3)

Kuh (2009) described engagement as “the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success” (p.9). The viability of Astin’s involvement theory has been strengthened by findings that college students who engaged in educationally purposeful activities expressed feelings of resiliency and positive well-being, and that engagement was the best predictor of student success after controlling for past academic performance and preparation (Astin, 2005; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Krause & Coates, 2008; Ream & Rumberger, 2008; Steele & Fullagar, 2009).

A critical tool that scholars have used to explore student engagement has been the National Survey of Student Engagement (Krause & Coates, 2008; Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010). Driven by the need to generate consistent data with which to gauge improvements in student learning, administrators of the Pew Charitable Trusts developed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and first administered it to 140 institutions in 1999. By 2008, the survey, which collected data on student behaviors, institutional actions, reactions to college, and student background as a means to gauge student learning and development, had been administered to students in 772 institutions (A Brief History of NSSE & Related Projects at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2009).

Rather than a definition of engagement that is strictly limited to student behaviors, researchers have posited that engagement could be viewed through the intersecting lenses of teaching practices and student behaviors (Kahu, 2013; Kuh,

et al., 2005; Krause & Coates, 2008; Trowler, 2010). Institutional behaviors that constitute student engagement included “the ways in which the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 9). In 2005, Pike and Kuh examined NSSE data from 321 institutions to create an alternative institutional engagement typology to the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification (Pike & Kuh, 2009). The authors classified institutions as having one of 12 student-engagement types: Diverse but Interpersonally Fragmented versus Homogenous and Interpersonally Cohesive, Intellectually Stimulating; Interpersonally Supportive; High-Tech, Low-Touch Academically Challenging and Supportive and Collaborative (Pike & Kuh, 2009).

**The Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) Project.** In addition to the work in developing a student-engagement typology alternative to the Carnegie Classifications, George Kuh, director for the Center of Postsecondary Research at the Indiana University Bloomington led a group of researchers in another important project made possible through data collected in the NSSE. The Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project allowed researchers to identify six conditions that likely accounted for some schools’ greater-than-expected measures of student engagement and rates of graduation. In a qualitative case study, the DEEP project researchers, led by project directors George Kuh and Jill Kinzie, sought to discover what could be learned from the institutions that created power learning environments that added value to students’ experiences.

According to Kuh et al., (2005) the researchers used an “ideal-typical case selection process” (p. 355) to determine which of the more than 700 four-year institutions whose students participated in the NSSE between 2000-2002 had better than predicted student engagement scores and graduation rates. To determine which schools had better than predicted engagement scores the DEEP researchers utilized the NSSE Institutional Engagement Index; a factor determined by NSSE researchers using fall 1999-2001 IPEDS data and responses to questions of the NSSE including level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interactions with faculty members, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. Researchers determined higher-than-predicted graduation through a regression model that encompassed status (public or private), admissions selectivity, undergraduate enrollment, urbanicity, proportion of full-time enrollment, proportion of students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and proportion of students living on campus. The researchers verified higher than predicted graduate rate for high performing schools via the Common Data Set; a tool developed through the combined efforts of The College Board, Thompson Learning, and *US News and World Report* (Common Data Set Initiative, 2019). Of the more than 700 institutions whose students participated in the NSSE between 2000-2002 and had better than predicted student engagement scores and graduation rates, the sample was further limited to 20, a number feasible for researchers with the time and resources allocated to the project. The resultant 20 schools were chosen by the

researchers to maximize variation of institutional locale, size, type and public or private status.

To develop a thorough understanding of methods that the 20 high-performing institutions used to help students engage with their environment and persist to graduation, project directors George Kuh and Jill Kinzie first assembled and prepared a research team of 24 graduate students, student affairs professionals and academics from a variety of regions in the United States. These researchers collected data for the DEEP project in three stages. First, researchers carried out a document review of web-based catalogs, organizational charts, newspapers and publications from each institution. Researchers used data collected in the document review to inform a two-day site visit during which 3-5 researchers interviewed students, staff, and faculty members of the high-performing institutions. The last point of data collection for the DEEP project was a second site visit in which 2-3 researchers (at least one of whom was present on first visit, and at least one who was new to the campus) held debriefing meetings with institutional staff, students and faculty to correct and satisfy lines of inquiry that emerged after the first visit. Data collected by the researchers in the document review and site visits were “thick, distinct descriptions of institutional policies, programs, and practices” (p. 362).

Phone conferences and team debriefing sessions occurred concurrently with data collection so that researchers could compile and compare field notes and adjust the data collection protocol as themes emerged. Investigators who were present at the institutional sites developed a preliminary analysis which was then

combined and informed by the other investigators in what Kuh et al. (2005) called a “whole team approach” (p. 361). Aided by qualitative software the researchers created and coded chunks of data and created a final analysis published in Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh and Whitt’s (2005) book, *Student Success in College; Creating Conditions that Matter*.

The DEEP project allowed researchers to identify six conditions that likely accounted for 20 high-performing schools’ greater-than-expected measures of student engagement and persistence: living mission, focus on student learning, adapted pathways for enrichment, clear pathways to student success, improvement-oriented ethos, and shared responsibility for educational quality (Kuh et al., 2005). According to Kuh et al. (2005) DEEP institutions demonstrated these conditions in the following ways:

1. practices were tailored to the students’ educational and social needs, interests, and abilities and the institution maintained a steadfast commitment to institutional values and traditions (living mission) (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 62);
2. faculty motivated students to grow beyond the students’ aspirations, encouraged them to apply new knowledge in their everyday lives, and provided timely feedback (focus on student learning) (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 88);
3. faculty and administrators encouraged students to identify, engage, and respect the surrounding community in ways that were mutually

beneficial to students and community members (adapted pathways for enrichment) (Kuh et al., 2005, p.108);

4. administrators were not overly prescriptive in describing pathways to student success and tailored efforts to meet students' actual needs (pathways to student success) (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 131);
5. administrators willingly experimented with new innovations and welcomed ideas to improve curriculum and performance (improvement-oriented ethos) (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 156);
6. faculty held students responsible for managing their own affairs, collaborated across silos and embraced the contributions of people from diverse backgrounds (shared responsibility for educational quality) (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 172).

The analysis of high-performing schools published by Kuh et al. (2005) provided a valuable framework for this project. First, the DEEP researchers used a variety of high-quality tools to design the study, create benchmarks, and navigate the sample selection. As a doctoral student and burgeoning researcher in the field of higher education, I felt confident that the analysis published by Kuh et al. (2005) provided a thorough, systematic support on which to build my own study. Second, because the DEEP researchers explored the intersection of institutional habits and student behavior, the analysis offered an ideal scaffolding on which to form research questions that explored the engagement behaviors of specific student population (first-generation, Appalachian college students) in the



context of specific institutional offerings (place-based and non-placed-based performing arts ensembles).

### **Significance of the Project**

It was important to study the meaning that first-generation, Appalachian college students construct from their college experiences because, though social scientists disagree on whether or not the existence of a distinct Appalachian culture has been proven, Appalachian students come from a region of the United States that is unique geographically, economically, and socially (Keefe, 1988; Lewis & Billings, 1997; Lohmann, 1990). Because they have been underrepresented in college enrollment (Haaga, 2004), Appalachian students have therefore been underrepresented in data gleaned from the valuable measurement tools researchers use to examine student engagement in higher education institutions (i.e., NSSE). Between 2013 – 2014, \$259 million in federal funds was awarded to institutions to increase persistence and graduation rates of low-income students and first-generation college students (United States Department of Education, 2016). However, Appalachian students who aimed to be the first in their generation to earn a four-year degree are more likely to drop out of college than their non-Appalachian, non-first-generation peers (Armstrong & Zaback 2014; Ishitani, 2006).

The need to support Appalachian students has been felt acutely within the member institutions of the Appalachian College Association (ACA), a 35-member consortium of private, liberal arts institutions within a five-state region of Central Appalachia. In 2017, presidents of ACA member institutions voted to adjust the

organization's mission from one of providing library services and helping to improve academic quality among its members, to a broader one that included efforts to improve K-12 education in the Appalachian region at large. The organizational shift was undertaken in part to help institutions mitigate the enrollment challenges associated with poor academic preparation and college retention of Appalachian students (Seltzer, 2017). Administrators, student-support professionals, and researchers at ACA institutions and others that primarily serve Appalachian students could benefit from this study and other studies that provide rich, insightful, and purposeful data on the experiences of Appalachian students within their own Appalachian institutions.

Researchers have studied place-based pedagogies in a variety of social, racial, international, and class-based contexts (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Haymes, 1995; McLaren & Giroux, 1990; Thompson, 2002); none, however have examined the meaning that Appalachian students construct from participating in Appalachian-based performing arts ensembles. Likewise, many promising examples defined by researchers in the field of place-based pedagogy closely resemble the conditions DEEP institutions exemplify in Kuh et al.'s (2005) project on college student engagement (Ball & Pence, 2001; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017; Rubie, 1999). This study, in which I examined the intersection of performance ensembles, place-based pedagogy and college student engagement, is a unique and needed addition to extant research.

## **Description of the Terms**

**Appalachia.** In this study, the term *Appalachia* referred to the area defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) as “the 205,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi” (ARC, 2019b, para 1). The Appalachian Region includes 420 counties in 13 states.

**Chamber music.** Interview recipients, when describing their performance ensembles as *chamber music ensembles* were discussing “music and especially instrumental ensemble music intended for performance in a private room or small auditorium and usually having one performer for each part” (Chamber ensemble, n.d., para 1) as noted in the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

**Classical music.** *Classical music* is, in a strict sense, a term that describes music created in the Classical period (1730-1820). However, *classical music* was used in this study in a wider, vernacular sense as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary - “of, relating to, or being music in the educated European tradition that includes such forms as art song, chamber music, opera, and symphony as distinguished from folk or popular music or jazz” (Classical, n.d., para 1).

**DEEP Institution.** One of 20 institutions of higher education determined to have greater-than-expected measures of student engagement and graduate rates when investigated by a team of researchers from the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project. Descriptions of these institutions’ noteworthy practices were published in Kuh et al.’s (2005) book

*Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter* and formed the theoretical framework for this study.

**Ensemble.** In this study, the term *ensemble* was used in keeping with the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of “a group providing a single effect” (Ensemble, n.d., para 1). The researcher chose this term because it effectively encompassed a variety of genre-specific designations such as troupe or team (dance), company (theater), band (instrumental music), and choir (vocal music).

**First-generation college students.** According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1998), first-generation students are “those whose parents’ highest level of education is a high school diploma or less” (United States Department of Education, 1998, p. 7). In this study, the term *first-generation student* also included students whose parents held a technical certification or associate’s degree.

**Highly residential university.** A university at which at least half of undergraduates live on campus according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017b).

**Indigenous.** In this study, the term *Indigenous* was used to describe *American Indian, Alaskan Indian, Pacific Islander* or *First Nations* populations collectively. According to Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., an organization founded by a member of the First Nation community, “there is no generally accepted definition of Indigenous Peoples in a global context” (Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016b, para. 2). However, *Indigenous* has largely replaced other “outdated collective terms” (Indigenous Corporate Training, 2016a,

“Native,” para. 1) and, at the time this research study was written, was a culturally-sensitive collective noun. When the work of other researchers was described within this study the terminology of that researcher’s choosing was maintained.

**Large university.** A university with enrollment of at least 10,000 degree-seeking students as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017b).

**Medium university.** A university with enrollment of 3,000 – 9,999 degree-seeking students as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017b).

**Place-based pedagogy.** Place-based pedagogy is a burgeoning area of study for which scholars are using a variety of terminologies. In this study, the phrase *place-based pedagogy* was used to describe “an educational approach that draws on local history, culture, economics, environment, and circumstances as a curriculum source, sometimes with the explicit goal of connecting students to their community and thereby promoting citizenship, entrepreneurship, community sustainability, or environmental stewardship” (Demmert, 2001, pp. 29 – 30).

**Primarily residential university.** A university at which 25-49% of undergraduates live on campus as classified by the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017b).

**Student engagement.** In this study, *student engagement* described actions devoted to educationally purposeful activities. Student behaviors associated with engagement included “the amount of time and effort students put

into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 9). Institutional behaviors that constitute student engagement included “the ways in which the institution allocates resources and organizes learning opportunities and services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 9).

## **Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

In the following section, I have reviewed and summarized some of the existing literature that informed this study. The themes I examined and describe here include critical concepts related to first-generation, Appalachian college student success, the unique socio-economic and cultural framework of Appalachia as a region, and the promising practices of place-based pedagogy on student populations similar to Appalachian students. Last, I explain how my research study extends the vein of literature linked to college student success to include first-generation, Appalachian college students, a unique population of students who are underrepresented in extant college success literature and markedly absent from the burgeoning field of research in place-based pedagogies.

### **Geographic Characteristics of Appalachia**

The Appalachian Mountains have been described as a system of narrow, rocky, forested hills that stretch from Eastern Canadian provinces to Northern Mississippi, forming a physical barrier between the east and west sides of the United States. Rich in mineral resources, hardwood, and pine forests, the Appalachian Mountains in 2019 were home to more than 25 million Americans (ARC, 2019). Compared to the topography of Rocky Mountains in the western part of the United States, geologists have portrayed the Appalachian Mountains as relatively low, the highest point being 6,645 miles above sea level at Mt. Mitchell, North Carolina. By contrast, scientists have indicated that the highest summit in the Rocky Mountain Range is in Colorado, at 14,440 feet above sea level (United States Geological Survey, 2005). In 1964, the President's Appalachian Regional

Commission deemed the Appalachian region to be distinct from the rest of the nation both in terms of geography and social statistics; the annual family income, education level, household savings, living standards, and property value being lower for families in all of West Virginia, and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia than for the rest of the United States (see Appendix E) (Appalachian Regional Commission, 1964). In November 2009, members of the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) further divided the Appalachian region into Northern, North Central, Central, South Central, and Southern sub regions based upon topographic, demographic, and economic similarities (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2009).

### **Economic and Cultural Framework of Appalachia**

In his remarks to the public upon signing the 1965 Appalachian Regional Development Act, President Lyndon Johnson noted that no other region of the United States had contributed more to the shaping of the nation's destiny than Appalachia (Johnson, 1965). Timber milled in the Appalachian region produced nearly half of the lumber used throughout the United States at the turn of the 20th century (Sarvis, 2011) and by 1908 an estimated 86% of forest acreage in Southern Appalachia had been cleared for use in urban regions of the country (Yarnell, 1998). In addition to timber, Appalachian mines and quarries produced crushed stone, iron ore, copper, and marble for the growing nation (Greeley, 1872).



The invention of the coal-fueled steam engine created an almost insatiable appetite for coal. In the early 1920s, an estimated 750,000 Americans were employed in the coal industry, most of them from the Appalachian region (The United States Geological Service & The United States Bureau of Mines, 1968). Coal-fired engines fueled the burgeoning steel and railroad industries and provided electricity to millions of American homes. However, the stock market crash of 1929 immobilized the coal industry and Appalachian miners, suddenly out of work, returned to farming.

Depression-era relief programs provided short-term respite for struggling Appalachian families but created long-lasting, unintended consequences for local economies. Franklin Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Administration paid Appalachian farmers to stop growing tobacco to decrease supply, raise prices and, theoretically, wages for farm workers. Along with tobacco subsidies, cash welfare payments were distributed to families in an effort to jumpstart the economy and give poor Americans "purchasing power" (Salstrom, 2004, p. 81). Another federal relief agency, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), encouraged families to pasture overburdened fields, grow fewer crops on eroded hillsides, and participate in other soil conservation programs. With steady paychecks from the TVA and Works Progress Administration, and cash incentives to limit production, Appalachian farmers and unemployed coal miners were unwittingly rewarded for neglecting their family farms. Local Appalachian economies, for the first time habituated to cash incomes, were permanently destabilized (Hatch, 2008; Lewis, 1998; Salstrom, 2004).

**Post World War II economy.** Appalachian land and labor resources were in high demand during America's involvement in World War II and though employment temporarily improved throughout the 1940s, Appalachian communities experienced few long-term benefits. During the war small seam coal operations which had closed during the Depression reopened and some Appalachian miners were once again locally employed. The expansion of small seam mines was an unsustainable source of employment, however (Eller, 2008). Strikes by workers in large, union mines were frequent and unpredictable and small mine owners struggled to compete with the resulting market volatility (Banker, 2010; Drake, 2001; Eller, 2008). After World War II railroad industry leaders switched from coal-fired engines to diesel, and gas-heated homes became more popular with American families. To maintain competitive advantage, small mine owners cut wages, mined with antiquated methods, and provided substandard housing for their employees (Eller, 2008; Marley, 2016; Thomas, 2010). In 1952, the Federal Coal Mine Safety Act passed by the United States Congress afforded miners new protections from unscrupulous owners. Small coal mine operations however were exempt from regulation. While the rest of the nation's coal miners benefited from safer equipment, more stringent health regulations, and unionized wages, Appalachian coal miners and their families remained entrenched in poverty. The *company store*, a term used to describe the arrangement by which mine owners deducted rent, food, medical and even funeral expenses directly from miner's paychecks, further exploited the earning potential of Appalachian miners. Mine owners charged exorbitant prices for goods and

services and forbid families from purchasing items and services from other sources. According to Marley (2016),

Outright wage theft, through denying miners benefits for injuries and diseases from mining, and the debt–labour relations of the company store. . . . resulted in an eventual reproductive crisis that was evident in the 1950s Great Migration and the long-term intractable poverty that plagues the region. (p. 249)

Though exploitative company store practices have ceased, the Appalachian economy is still closely tied to the coal industry, known colloquially as *King Coal*. In 2018, an analysis prepared for the ARC by researchers of West Virginia University and the University of Tennessee showed a 19.3 percent decline in coal employment for Appalachian states between 2000 – 2015, compared to 7.8 percent for non-Appalachian states. Scholars have argued that deliberate underinvestment in education and industry in the Appalachian region has perpetuated a cycle of underemployment, over-reliance on the coal industry, and feelings of financial hopelessness.

In the 1950s and 1960s, thousands of Appalachians, primarily from the Southern and Central regions, migrated from mountain homes and small farms to urban centers in Kentucky, Ohio, and Michigan. Many Appalachian workers became farm laborers on large, industrialized farms whose owners benefited from government crop subsidies (Alexander, 2006; Obermiller & Howe, 2000), soon followed by Appalachian loggers and unemployed miners. Lower class families, with fewer options and resources, tended to gather with one another for support,

creating clusters of low-income, low-opportunity regions in the areas to which they migrated (Alexander, 2006). Researchers examining data prepared by the United States Census Bureau between 1940 and 1980 revealed that Appalachian-headed households had poverty rates similar to households led by those who had immigrated to the United States from poor, developing countries (Alexander, 2006; Obermiller & Howe, 2000). Though some gaps have narrowed, Appalachian families have faced persistent cultural barriers in achieving levels of health, education, and income commiserate with the rest of the United States (see Appendix F). According to the ARC, families living in the Appalachian region between 2012 and 2016 had lower median income, higher poverty rate, and lower educational attainment than their non-Appalachian counterparts (ARC, 2018). Appalachian students of the early 21st century have come to institutions of higher learning from communities economically stagnated by poor government and labor policies and whose families have been stigmatized as stubborn, idle people whose economic circumstances are of their own choosing.

**Stereotypes of Appalachian culture and people.** In the late 1800s and early 1900s, American writers that created stories, songs, and plays based on the peculiarities of specific regions of the United States became popular. These writers of the American literary regional genre or *local color movement* were pivotal in shaping the ways Appalachian people were viewed by mainstream Americans and arguably the larger world (Lewis & Billings, 1997). Urban authors, unfamiliar with the customs, norms, and daily challenges of mountain farmers, presented the Appalachian region as a “retarded frontier” (Walls &

Billings, 1977, p. 1). In the 1930s and 1940s, comic strips *Snuffy Smith* and *Li'l Abner* were syndicated throughout the United States and depicted Appalachian characters as simple-minded, often drunk, and prone to violence (Batteau, 1990). Creators of both *Snuffy Smith* and *Li'l Abner* profited from licensing agreements that propelled the fictionalized characters into books, movies, television shows, and toys.

Television and movie writers further engrained Appalachian stereotypes in the minds of Americans in the 1960s and 1970s with productions like *The Dukes of Hazzard*, *Hee-Haw*, *Green Acres*, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. James Dickey's novel *Deliverance* (1970) featured four businessmen who, on a vacation, were hunted down and sodomized by deviant Appalachian locals; the Academy-award nominated film grossed more than 40 million dollars. On the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its release, journalists and bloggers described the movie as ageless, revolutionary, and never dated (Lyttelton, 2012; Morgan, 2012).

"Dueling Banjos", an instrumental tune performed by New York musicians Eric Weissberg and Steve Mandell and released on the *Deliverance* soundtrack, hit the Billboard Top 100 Charts in the year of its release. North Carolina native Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith who wrote and released the tune in 1955 under the name "Feudin' Banjos", resorted to filing a lawsuit in order to receive writing credit and royalties from the film's makers who flatly ignored Smith's rights to the melody (Rutherford, 2014). Some scholars would say that Arthur Smith's story was not unique one. In Appalachia, music, crafts, and art have been an important source of tourism-related income for decades however,

mainstream producers of film, literature, and television have either ignored or appropriated Appalachian music and art for their own purposes. In many ways the arts of Appalachia, however revered by non-Appalachians, have served as a complicated reminder of the ‘otherness’ of Appalachian culture and people.

**The socio-cultural context of arts in Appalachia.** In the words of Appalachian writer and historian Billy Best, “Appalachian soul can help heal the split of the psyche caused by overindulgence in things material, quantitative, and conceptually abstract, and the concurrent denial or suppression of feelings, spirituality, and the arts” (Best, 1979, p. 16). Appalachian writers and historians have theorized that mainstream Americans found in Appalachian crafts and music a familiar, nostalgic sentiment of simpler times (Batteau, 1990; Davidson, 2009; Shapiro, 2014). President Johnson’s War on Poverty policies provided grants for marketing Appalachian crafts to regions outside the mountains (Dickenson & Birdwell, 2004), but in ways that some scholars argue added to existing stereotypes of Appalachian people as backward, and needing lifting up (Batteau, 1990). An illustrative example of the dichotomous relationship between policymaker attempts to appreciate Appalachian artists and at the same time garner sympathy for “poor mountain folk” (Dickenson & Birdwell, 2004, p. 254) can be found in Thomas’s (2010) chapter entitled *Good Intentions: The New Frontier and The War on Poverty*:

An incident during the centennial celebration that revealed the growing sensitivity of some West Virginians to being constantly portrayed as the prime exhibit for persistent American poverty resulted from an art contest

sponsored by the Centennial Commission. The commission offered a \$1,963 prize for the work by a West Virginia artist that best expressed the spirit of the state. Joe Moss, a young art instructor at West Virginia University, won for *West Virginia Moon*, an impressionistic piece featuring six rough boards, a part of a screen door frame, and a bit of paint suggesting a moon and a man. Furious state critics likened the piece to an outhouse, an inappropriate symbol for a state aspiring to project industrial leadership and prosperity and eager to escape the negative images of the metropolitan media....Contest judge James Johnson Sweeney, director of Houston's Museum of Fine Arts (and later director of the Guggenheim Museum in New York), told Time magazine that he picked *West Virginia Moon* simply because he liked it best. (p. 138)

The 1963 celebration Thomas (2010) described took place at a formative time in American social and artistic history; followers of the back-to-the-earth and folk music revivals in 1960s America put Appalachian crafts, music, and arts in the spotlight during a time of unprecedented social upheaval that both complicated and benefited Appalachian artists and craftsmen (Eller, 2008; Kalra & Olson, 2005).

The controversy surrounding the West Virginia Centennial art contest was in no way the first to emerge from the complex intersection of Appalachian art and cultural tourism. As early as 1895 Protestant missionaries, dispatched from urban centers to fulfill a perceived need for Christian education, arranged for the creation and sale of Appalachian handcrafts to northern markets. The making and

selling of artfully crafted pieces served multiple purposes in the minds of missionaries: women and families who gathered to create handcrafts were a captive audience for the evangelical Christian message, proceeds from the sale of the items helped alleviate family poverty, and the craft-making process served as model lesson for modern methods of production like the assembly line (Shapiro, 2014). Some writers and historians argue that these endeavors, however well-meaning, added to already extant stereotypes of Appalachian culture as old-fashioned, out-of-step with modern times, and simple (Batteau, 1990; Eller 2008; Shapiro 2014). For better or worse, many Appalachian scholars have found that cultural tourism has been a critical factor in the development of Appalachian identity as it is perceived by mainstream Americans (Banker, 2010; Drake, 2001; Eller, 2008). In 2019, listed first among the strategies designed by the ARC to develop overlooked assets of Appalachia was capitalization of traditional arts, culture, and heritage of the region (ARC, 2019). These and other strategies intended to build prosperity and preserve the character of Appalachian communities call attention to the exceptional challenges that students face in embracing the future while honoring the distinctive traditions of Appalachian life.

**Appalachian college student engagement unique challenges.** Higher education professionals have a robust body of literature through which to examine the experiences and challenges of first-generation college students. Appalachian students however come from a geographically, economically, and socially unique sub region of the United States. According to Lewis and Billings (1997):



Assumptions about the distinctiveness of Appalachian culture influence the very presumption that Appalachia is in fact a discrete region with a distinctive culture even though most Americans would scoff at the notion of a Rocky Mountain culture or an Adirondack culture. (abstract).

Keefe (1988) argued that one of the chief differences in Appalachian culture from mainstream American culture was the definition and influence of the nuclear family. In Appalachia, the support and familial responsibilities normally reserved for the nuclear family (parents and children) included grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and spouses' families (Dyk & Wilson, 1999). Among Appalachians, feelings of well-being and belonging were resultant from one's connection to the wider family kindred of which the nuclear family is only a sub-unit. Keefe (1988) also contended that Appalachian families tended to live geographically closer to one another than did mainstream American families, visiting one another daily and sharing responsibilities.

In a study that analyzed longitudinal data from 18 four-year colleges, Pascarella et al. (2004) posited that typical first-generation college students had lower levels of extracurricular involvement and interaction with peers due in part to their tendency to live off campus, hold a job, and be enrolled part-time. In addition to the factors noted by Pascarella et al. (2004), other scholars have noted that Appalachian college students reported that keeping up with family obligations and managing the expectations of their close-knit communities has added to their stress (Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Hlinka, 2017; Hunley, 2015). Students from close-knit Appalachian communities grappled with whether to

return home to depressed economies after college or seek better job prospects in other parts of the country upon graduation, and young women from the Appalachian region fought to reconcile traditional gender stereotypes with career and educational goals (Bryan & Simmons, 2009; Dyke & Wilson, 1999; Welch, 2013).

In addition to the challenges associated with keeping up with family obligations, Appalachian students often entered college speaking nonstandard English. The Appalachian dialect was characterized by phonetic differences and the speaker's use of nonstandard or archaic verbs and participles (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2016; Mitchell, 2005). Depictions of Appalachian people in popular books, newspapers, television, and movies have created among some Americans an embedded stereotype with the Appalachian or *hillbilly* dialect as backward, slow, and ignorant (Cramer, 2018; Keefe, 1988). Some scholars argue that, for Appalachian students, the association has been a troubling one.

Dunstan and Jaeger (2016) found that students from Appalachia felt stereotyped by others as uneducated, unintelligent, and slow because of their speech patterns. The researchers designed their study to qualitatively explore the experiences and perceptions of Appalachian students, their dialect, and the effect that those perceptions had on students' campus interactions (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2016). Dunstan and Jaeger (2016) interviewed 26 college students raised in Appalachia since childhood who were, at the time of the study, attending a large public research institution in the southern United States. Of the approximately thirty thousand students at the institution, 7% were from the Appalachian region.

From recorded interview data, a coder with sociolinguistic training coded the students' speech patterns on a scale of *standardized* to *vernacular*—vernacular representing those whose speech had the strongest dialectal elements of Southern Appalachian speakers. One major conclusion of Dunstan and Jaeger's (2016) study was that students with a Southern Appalachian dialect felt stereotyped by others on their campuses. The students reported that campus interactions related to their Appalachian dialect ranged from light-hearted teasing from friends, to confrontational and disheartening exchanges with faculty. One participant, for example, was reprimanded by an instructor for being a “kiss-ass” because the student instinctually responded to the instructor with *yes-sir* instead of the standardized *yes* (Dustin & Jaeger, 2016, p. 55). The researchers also concluded that students used language as a way to determine with whom they wanted to engage on campus. The students who expressed strong and positive ties with Appalachia were likely to reach out to students with dialects similar to theirs—especially for those students who the study's sociolinguists coded as having the most vernacular patterns of the sample. By contrast, participants whose speech patterns were on the standardized end of the dialect spectrum and did not express strong connections to their Appalachian roots avoided, in some cases, their Appalachian peers to set themselves apart from the negative stereotypes associated with Appalachia (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2016).

In a similar, phenomenological study of first-generation, Appalachian college student persistence, Hunley (2015) reported that students felt campus peers and instructors assumed they were poor and unintelligent due, in the

students' views, to their Appalachian dialects (Hunley, 2015). Hunley (2015) noted that graduate students were also not immune to negative stereotyping from peers and professors when the students' natural accent was Appalachian.

Dr. Felicia Mitchell, a poet, writer, and English instructor presented a paper at the National Conference on College Composition and Communication in which she discussed the negative socio-cultural bias her colleagues demonstrated when they encountered grammatical errors in their Appalachian students' writing. In her experience as a professor at a Central Appalachian institution, Mitchell (2005) asserted that:

There is something about the stereotype of Appalachia, however, along with the southern Appalachian tone of voice, that feeds the notion held by some that an error based in rural Appalachian grammar error [*sic*] is relatively worse than certain grammatical errors made by urban students or college professor. (p. 5)

Mitchell pointed out that grammatical errors most commonly associated with Appalachia were viewed as less socially acceptable and, when coupled with the slower tempo of Appalachian speech, deemed by college instructors as not just incorrect but ignorant (Mitchell, 2005).

Logic dictates that students who feel their peers and instructors perceive them as slow, unintelligent, or naïve have been at a social disadvantage in the college environment. However, Dunstan and Jaeger (2016), Hunley (2005), and Mitchell (2005) did not explicitly connect students' likelihood to engage or disengage in educationally purposeful activities as a result of being stigmatized by

their Appalachian dialect. In fact, few researchers have effectively examined the deeply personal, subjective, and likely offensive ways that students' Appalachian dialect and idiosyncrasies affect their participation in academic life. Throughout the formation of this literature review it also became obvious that in most reports, researchers have framed Appalachian language and cultural expression as problematic factors in students' acclimation to higher education. At some institutions within the Appalachian College Association (ACA) however, students have the opportunity to perform in unique, Appalachian-themed performance ensembles. In this study, I aimed to explore the student experience at institutions in which manifestations of Appalachian cultural and artistic life might be perceived as valuable to the students themselves and their college communities.

### **Student Benefits of Arts Opportunities**

In 2004, McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, and Brooks, researchers at the RAND Corporation, released an extensive literature review designed to inform public policymakers of the varied benefits associated with arts participation. McCarthy et al. (2005) expressed two major findings on the quality and type of existing literature related to the benefits of the arts. First, most empirical research on instrumental benefits of the arts were limited by weak methodologies, absence of specificity, and researcher failure to consider the cost of arts opportunities (McCarthy et al., 2005), a finding shared by Elpus (2014). Some researchers have shown that exposure to music was instrumental in positive brain development, especially in mathematics and reading achievement (Garcia, Jones, & Isaacson, 2015; Hallam 2010), and that arts participation increased sense of achievement,

self-esteem, personal pride, and positively affected students' social relationships and locus of control (Broh, 2002; Harland et al., 2000; Rabkin & Hedbert, 2011). A small subgroup of studies on the instrumental benefits of the arts directly examined the link between student art opportunities and engagement. In the elementary and secondary school settings, fine arts participation was found by researchers to have positively impacted student engagement and involvement (Bequette, 2014; Holochwost & Wolf, 2017; Horn, 1992) and likelihoods students will graduate high school (Barry, Taylor, & Walls, 1990), apply to, and attend college two years after high school (Elpus, 2014; McNeal, 1995); however more empirical evidence is required to strengthen the claims found within these, and similar, studies.

The second major finding of the RAND report related to the type of arts benefit overwhelmingly described in contemporary literature; McCarthy et al. (2005) argued that, in an effort to legitimize arts opportunities as important to the economic, educational, and public spheres of the United States, researchers have overlooked the intrinsic benefits that exist when one participates in the arts. According to the authors (McCarthy et al., 2005), intrinsic benefits of arts involvement ranged from the personal, such as individual pleasure, capacity for empathy, and increased world perspective, to collective benefits that included the creation of social bonds and communal expression of meaning.

Though few researchers have intentionally examined performing arts participation and its impact on the college engagement of students, some scholars have implied a causal relationship between recreational music making in college

and engagement-related behaviors. In a qualitative study designed to assess the impact of music-making on non-music majors in college, Kokotsaki & Hallam (2011) surveyed 54 undergraduate and 3 graduate students at a university in England. Along with the perceived benefit of increased musical skills, participants also reported a variety of non-musical benefits including general enjoyment of music-making, the opportunity to meet like-minded friends, be part of a close-knit team, and have an outlet to relieve the stress of student-life. The researchers also compared responses of non-music majors (whom the researchers called *non-musicians*) to those of the music majors (whom the researchers call *musicians*) and discovered that:

For the non-musicians the social elements are particularly important providing opportunities for friendship and relaxation. The musicians emphasized gaining opportunities to develop a wide range of skills that were perceived to be of value to them in pursuing a career in music.

(Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011, p. 167)

Along with perceived benefits however, 16% of respondents reported challenges associated with music-making that including a reduced sense of belonging when the demands imposed by leaders were beyond participants' abilities, and overall tension surrounding the amount of time non-music majors were able to commit to their respective ensembles (Kokotsaki & Hallam, 2011). Mantie (2013) reported similar results as Kokotsaki & Hallam (2011) in a study of 12 collegiate recreational music makers at a large, urban college in the United States, whom the researcher defined as "college students who are non-music majors but who

continue to be active in organised groups” (Mantie, 2013, p. 40). According to Mantie (2013), when asked why they participated in ensembles despite time constraints implicit with full-time college enrollment, respondents indicated that music making was a form of stress release, allowed them to enjoy social time with friends, exercise their already extant love of music, and engage in a positive activity in their leisure time (Mantie, 2013).

### **Arts opportunities in public schools serving Appalachian students.**

Though continued research is still needed, researchers have provided strong qualitative evidence that students obtain a variety of benefits when they participate in the performing arts; benefits that could help underserved student populations overcome the challenges of achieving a college degree. However, for students to participate in recreational music-making of the type that is typically offered at the college level, students must possess rudimentary skills that have not been consistently provided to rural, Appalachian secondary students.

The movement toward free, compulsory education was well established by the end of the Civil War but at the turn of the 20th century, urbanization, immigration, and vast need for human and natural resources compelled educational leaders to develop distinct, universal standards for American schools (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). In 1892, the National Educational Association created a subcommittee to organize academic content and clarify curriculum for the modern American secondary school system (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). The subcommittee, nicknamed the Committee of Ten (the majority of whom were college presidents), advocated for an American



curriculum that would increase mental discipline and give students the necessary credentials to apply for college. The Committee of Ten worked to normalize the teaching of the classical subjects: Latin, Greek, English, Modern Languages, Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Natural History, History, Civil Government, Political Economy, and Geography. According to a report drafted by the Committee in 1894:

The omission of music, drawing, and elocution from the programmes offered by the Committee was not intended to imply that these subjects ought to receive no systematic attention. It was merely thought best to leave it to local school authorities to determine, without suggestions from the Committee, how these subjects should be introduced into the programmes in addition to the subjects reported on by the Conferences.

(National Education Association, 1894, p. 48)

Despite the Committee of Ten report in which committee members advised that arts education be left to local authorities, education reformers primarily from New England viewed rural Appalachian communities as in need of uplift and believed that high art – like that displayed in urban galleries and performed in symphony halls – had a civilizing effect on rural communities (Lee, 1997). In 1913, music educators formed a committee within the Music Teacher’s National Association to create a “standard song repertoire appropriate for city and country” (Lee, 1997, p. 310). Though the vast majority of American children in early 20th century America lived in rural areas, the project’s leader was a university faculty member from New York City and no rural educators were consulted for the project (Lee,

1997). Once created, the standardized music curriculum was almost entirely out of reach for rural students like those living in Appalachia; school administrators found it difficult to recruit well-trained teachers to the region, local funding was insufficient to the task of providing updated materials to students, and children were an important source of labor at home and could not be spared to attend school regularly throughout the year (Elam, 2002; Eller, 2018).

In the 1960s education researchers and sociologists warned that an academic achievement gap between children from rural and low-income households and those from suburban and middle-class households was becoming a national liability, especially while the United States struggled for economic and scientific supremacy over the Soviet Union. President Lyndon Johnson, in response to these and other troubling reports about the nation's poorest children, allocated additional federal funds to schools with a high percentage of students from low-income families in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (United States, 1965). Local school authorities used the additional funds to address skill gaps by a broad variety of means that included professional teacher development, parental involvement programs, high-quality preschools, library services, and integration of school and community services. Researchers agree that evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives paid for through Title I funds was a complex challenge, as the allocations were a funding stream and not a specific intervention that could be easily reviewed (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004; Vinovskis, 1999). Without a comprehensive accountability system, local school leaders struggled to identify specific positive

learning outcomes from any arts-associated programs paid for through Title 1 funds.

A watershed moment in the history of arts education in the United States occurred when President George Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). With the passage of the No Child Left Behind law, federal legislators required public school leaders to administer yearly standardized tests to measure student performance in literacy and math and low performance on standardized tests resulted in sanctions of federal funding (No Child Left Behind, 2001). School administrators (especially those in poor and rural districts) reallocated money from student arts opportunities to features that tied directly to academic achievement (McCarthy et al., 2005; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012; Rabkin & Hedbert, 2011). Art, music, and physical education have historically been the first areas cut from school curriculum when budgets are unstable (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Scholars, educators and arts supporters, fearing the permanent loss of arts opportunities for students, became increasingly focused on empirically documenting the instrumental (i.e. cognitive) benefits of the arts.

Arts advocates were hopeful that arts opportunities would be given new precedence in America's schools with passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a bill signed into law by President Barack Obama in December 2015 to correct aspects of its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Under the ESSA, school administrators were still required to administer standardized tests in the areas of math and English language arts to retain federal funding, but standards and performance targets could be developed by state legislators with

more autonomy than was allowed under No Child Left Behind (2001). In addition to math and language arts achievement, graduation rates, and measures of English improvement for English language learners, local educational agencies were also directed to provide under ESSA one marker of school quality or student success. The ESSA mandate to “provide activities that support well-rounded educational opportunities” (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, STAT 1853 (B)(1)(a)) could be a positive motivator for local educational agencies to include student arts opportunities in their state improvement plans. As of December 2018, legislators from eleven states included K-12 arts education in their accountability systems, two of which—Georgia and Kentucky—served Appalachian students (Education Commission of the United States, 2018).

The need for empirical research on the benefits of arts opportunities is still critical to the successful integration of arts opportunities into K-12 school curricula and improvement plans. Under ESSA, school administrators are required to empirically justify their choice of interventions. Evidence-based tiers into which interventions are categorized range from, at the lowest tier, “likely to improve student outcomes” (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, STAT. 2091, (ii)(I)) to those in the top tier that “demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes” (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, STAT. 2091, (i)). In 2017, researchers from the American Institutes for Research conducted an evidence-review of studies related to arts-integration interventions published since the year 2000 (Ludwig, Boyle, & Lindsay, 2017). With a comprehensive database search, researchers identified 1,619 reports related to arts integration and

student outcomes. Of those, 27 reports were certified by reviewers from Institute of Education Sciences to be well-designed and exclusively focused on prekindergarten to twelfth grade students. According to Ludwig, Boyle, and Lindsay (2017), of the 44 different arts-integration interventions described in the 27 well-designed studies, one demonstrated a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes sufficiently to be categorized into the top-tier of evidence-based interventions under ESSA; nine provided either “strong evidence” or “promising evidence” (Ludwig, Boyle, & Lindsay, 2017, p. 3) and were categorized into the middle tiers under ESSA guidelines and 34 of the arts-based interventions contained theoretical, but not empirical, evidence to suggest positive student outcomes and therefore were categorized into the bottom-most tier of evidence-based interventions under ESSA guidelines. State education legislators submitted their first improvement plans under ESSA guidelines in April 2017. Research will be needed to explore how ESSA may impact the availability of arts opportunities for Appalachian students who will be entering higher education in the future.

### **Formal and Informal Arts Education**

Because those who believe in public school arts education are eager to qualify for federal educational funds the majority of research on the impacts of art opportunities and student outcomes are situated in formal, school-based, teacher-directed educational contexts. However, a small but compelling body of researchers have explored the methodologies, social contexts, and community-building possibilities of informal performing arts educational initiatives. Phil

Jenkins, a researcher in the philosophy of expression and the arts, distinguished informal education as that which occurred outside of socially-sanctioned educational institutions and was pursued by the student primarily through self-motivation (Jenkins, 2011). Jenkins further described informal learning as a “self-motivated effort to reach competence in some task or skill, using resources ready to hand in one’s everyday life” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 181). By contrast, formal education is that which occurred in a “pedagogical environment where clarity of goals and procedures are clearly defined in advance and where learning results in certification or assessment” (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010, p. 72). Both Jenkins and Lucy Green, a leading scholar in the study of how musicians learn, agreed that students learned music informally by listening and copying recordings or, in the absence of technology, through enculturation by repeated exposure to melodies and techniques (Green, 2006; Jenkins, 2011). Scholars have shown that in formal music training, students progressed through a scaffolded curriculum of exercises and instructors focused largely on the conceptual, rather than experiential, rudiments of music (Jenkins, 2011; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). In summary, in extant literature Western educators and music researchers have characterized formal music education as:

- Teacher-directed, rule-governed and delivered through verbal instructions
- Oriented toward performance or single culminating events such as a recital, end-of-term performance, or festival

- Focused on a limited, carefully chosen repertoire read from the printed page
- Aimed at improving technique and expressivity on a single instrument
- Developed with the goal of uniformity in style
- Delivered in an organized, group setting or at a prearranged time with a single teacher and student

Informal music education by contrast was described as characteristically:

- Self-governed and experience-oriented
- Integrating varied elements all at once in a linear, non-scaffolded method
- Occurring through immersion and enculturation, often as an outgrowth of students' environment
- Egalitarian and dialogical, rather than instructional
- Acquired through casual, recreational interactions with peers or community members with higher skill levels (Green, 2006, 2017; Jenkins, 2011; Mans, 2007; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

In 2006, Lucy Green applied aspects of informal music learning in the teaching of eighth grade students in eight schools in the United Kingdom as part of a larger, ongoing national project (Green, 2006). In place of formal music lessons students, in groups of five, were directed to choose a popular song and work together in a room with various instruments and a CD player to replicate the song in any way they chose; no teacher was in the room, and the students'

processes were recorded without their knowledge. After observing the students' learning processes (and securing consent from the student-participants to use the observations for research purposes) and conducting personal interviews with the students and teachers, Green (2006) reported significantly higher motivation and enjoyment on the part of the students, a greater sense of investment and responsibility, and a higher than expected effort to cooperate and learn from one another. The researcher found similar results when the treatment was repeated and students were allowed to choose only from among prearranged selections of classical music, a genre for which students normally show disdain. According to Green (2006):

The learning practices of classical musicians have also been removed, over the last hundred years, from their original contexts. They too, used to be much more informal, deeply located within musician-family or apprenticeship networks, whereby young learners acquired their skills and knowledge by immersion in an adult community of practice. Perhaps we have gone too far in removing these practices into an 'inauthentic' realm of formal educational principles and procedures. (p. 20)

Green (2006) concluded that giving students the opportunity to participate in "haphazard" (p. 10) learning environments that were self-governed by the students and their community of peers positively impacted the students' personal autonomy, cooperation, and responsibility for learning.

In the introduction to a collection of essays on community and traditional music and dance, editors Jordan-Smith and Horton (2001) discussed the nature of



the word *community* as a group descriptor for people who congregate around an activity or physical place. The editors posited that:

The *meaning* of participation in dance and music groups goes beyond the satisfactory performance of physical movements. Participants often see their dancing as a component of their personal identity, philosophy, and lifestyle choices. Experiences off the dance floor may rank in importance with those on the dance floor. (Jordan-Smith & Horton, 2001, pp. 107-108)

Jordan-Smith and Horton (2001) concluded that *community* implied a group of people who have “dense social relationships” (p. 104) that extend beyond shared interests in a single activity and instead encompasses a well-integrated, stable group of individuals with a common attitude of concern for well-being of others in the group.

In her dissertation on the experiences of community within a West African dance class doctoral student and dancer Julie Johnson (2016) agreed with Jordan-Smith & Horton (2001) that the term *community* warranted investigation, especially in the way that is used to describe the group experience of dancers and musicians. Johnson (2016) explored the lived experiences of 17 men and women who regularly attended a weekly dance class in which the researcher was a participant-observer. The participant group ranged in age from 19 to early-sixties and 14 identified as African American, Black, or indigenous. The instructor of the class in which Johnson (2016) was embedded mixed formal American and traditional African pedagogies, welcomed visitors and observers, and continued

instruction throughout seasons without focusing on performances or culminating events. In a series of conversational interviews in which the author considered the participants to be co-researchers, Johnson (2016) discovered that participants had a shared reverence for the physical space their class occupied and a distinct awareness of how they moved within the space both as individuals and as a whole. Participants reported feeling surrounded by others in a supportive way and described how their efforts to improve were acknowledged by one another both verbally and non-verbally. In the context of their weekly dance class, participants noted a loss of self-consciousness and a feeling of shared responsibility toward one another. Johnson (2016) also reported that participants conveyed a sense of celebration, pride, and appreciation that they were engaged in an important and historical activity, a finding that mirrored McCarthy et al. (2005) in their review of studies related to participants in traditional, ethnic arts. As indicated by Jenkins (2011), Green (2006), and Johnson (2016), researchers in the field of arts-education are beginning to recognize the social, cultural, and cooperative value of informal arts experiences.

Unlike the students in Green's (2006) treatment group, informal arts experiences occur for the vast number of students in an everyday, non-school environment. Administrators at some private colleges within Central Appalachia however offer students the opportunity to participate in informal arts experiences (the type normally found in Appalachian homes, churches, and community gatherings) in the formal, academic setting. These place-based ensembles include choirs devoted to singing Appalachian folk tunes and church hymns, dance

ensembles that explore mountain clogging, and acoustic string bands in which students play traditional, Appalachian instruments. Few researchers have examined how Appalachian students' shared experiences in place-based and other performing arts ensembles may impact how they interact with peers and instructors on their college campuses. With this in mind, it was critical to explore previous research on the effects of place-based pedagogies on a variety of student types.

### **Place-based Pedagogy**

In one article on the role of socio-cultural diversity in the arts classroom Dyndahl (2015) posited, "A crucial point is how music education interplays with the students' experiences and surrounding life-worlds, and there by helps to contribute value to their aesthetic and cultural competencies" (p. 182). Though Dyndahl did not explicitly name place-based pedagogies as a tool for creating relevant curriculum for students, researchers have shown that place-based pedagogies have proved to be a promising practice toward enhancing the relevancy of classroom content. Place-based pedagogies are teaching methods rooted in the local community, encompassing aspects of cultural studies, nature studies, real-world problem solving, internships and entrepreneurial opportunities, and introductions to local community processes (Demmert, 2001; Deringer, 2017; Smith, 2002).

Modern education researchers consider the birth of place-based pedagogy to have occurred with early 19th century education reformers. In the 1820s Pestalozzi, a Swiss educator, developed educational programs that capitalized

upon children's desires to be helpful in the home environment, explore the natural world, and co-create their learning experiences (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007).

Froebel, a German-born follower of Pestalozzi, fostered early childhood education through storytelling, object lessons, and cooperative social experiences (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). In 1916, American philosopher and educator John Dewey published his landmark treatise "*Democracy and Education*" in which he rejected the "remote and dead, abstract and bookish" (Dewey, 2001, p. 12) form of education which dominated most American schools in the early 20th century. Influenced in large part by his European predecessors Pestalozzi and Froebel, Dewey and other educators in the burgeoning Progressive Education Movement advocated for a child-centered American system of schooling that embraced natural growth, individual differences, social cooperation, experiential and sensory learning, and meaningful lessons with practical application to students' home lives (Dewey, 2001; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007; Reese, 2001; Zimiles, 2008).

Educators have used placed-based pedagogies as tools to construct hybrid knowledge spaces for Indigenous and bi-lingual secondary students (Bequette, 2014; Hrenko, 2010; Martínez-Álvarez & Bannan, 2014) as a starting point for the teaching of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science (Sobel, 2004) and to examine perspectives of race, class, gender, and privilege among educators with a critical perspective (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Gruenewald, 2003). Administrators at a handful of Appalachian institutions of higher education have offered place-based performing arts ensembles for their students; a unique

college-based application of place-based pedagogical methods that has not been thoroughly examined. For K-12 educators however, place-based pedagogies have proved to be a promising practice. The summary that follows is an attempt to inform readers of varying types and applications of place-based pedagogies in extant literature.

**Critical Place-based Pedagogy.** Two distinct objectives have emerged among scholars who have explored place-based pedagogies. In the first, educators and researchers have examined the ways place-based pedagogies have helped students contextualize academic concepts and connect them to their surrounding worlds (Deringer, 2017; Gruenewald, 2003; Jayanandhan, 2009; Smith, 2002; Sobel, 2004). The second philosophical objective led scholars to explore how, within the social construct of *place*, students emerged with unique ideologies, identities, and cultural norms that could easily be devalued by the dominant culture (Deringer, 2017; Ferris & Hopkins, 2015; Gruenewald, 2003). In the United States for example, though many suburban, northern families embraced the experiential, child-centered curriculum posited by Dewey and his contemporaries, the progressive approach to education proved difficult to implement in schools of the rural south and in immigrant urban neighborhoods. In part, because families like those living in Appalachia had little faith in education as a ladder to the middle class and preferred educational methods that were focused on morality and respect for one's community and leaders (Reese, 2001).

Dewey believed that student-centered, civic, and social-minded education created in students the unbridled ability to create a new social order (Dewey, 2001). Paolo Freire, a literacy teacher among the rural poor of Brazil, shared many beliefs with Dewey and other Western progressive educators: learning should be an active, experiential, process focused on personal growth, inquiry, and social learning (Deans, 1999). In his foundational book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005) Freire, however, engaged a much more critical view of wealth, power, and the dehumanizing effects of a majority culture on its minority counterparts. Throughout his career as an educator and leader, Freire insisted that political relevance is neither a gift from the elite nor an achievement of a minority culture; it is a shared liberation that engages both the majority and minority cultures (Freire, 2005).

In the 1980s Freire travelled to Appalachia for a series of conversations with Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School (later re-named the Highlander Research and Education School). Myles Horton, an activist who was born and educated in Central Appalachia was deeply committed to desegregation of the American south and was instrumental in organizing social justice workshops during the civil rights movement. In the 1960s and 70s, Horton and Highlander Folk School staff broadened their mission to improve the economic and educational situation of all rural Appalachians. Highlander staff provided timely and relevant educational workshops on health, labor relations, mining safety, and Appalachian land ownership as well as cultural programs on the dance, music, and folk traditions of Appalachia (Schneider, 2014). Horton and

Freire's ideas were most closely connected within the context of adult and community education and in 1987, staff of the Highlander School recorded a series of conversations in which the two men discussed the role of the educator, intervention in the learning experiences of others, and the relationship of theory and practice in education (Horton & Freire, 1990). Horton died two years after his momentous conversations with Paulo Freire were recorded, but their discussions on the role of participatory, culturally-relevant practices for the purposes of educating working-class adults were published in *We Make the Road by Walking; Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Horton & Freire, 1990). In some literature, researchers used the terms *culturally-relevant* or *culturally-sensitive* to describe pedagogies closely related to what Freire (2005) and others have labelled place-based pedagogy (Boger, Adams, & Powell, 2014; Deringer, 2017; Gruenewald, 2003; Jayanandhan, 2009; Martínez-Álvarez, & Bannan, 2014; Sobel, 2004). Though Freire and Horton recognized deep similarities in one another's methods for designing adult education that was useful, fitting, and culturally-relevant or culturally-sensitive to their students' home cultures (Horton & Freire, 1990; Schneider, 2014) Highlander School staff never addressed specifically the needs of the Appalachian college students in their midst. In schools that served American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students however, educators have established a strong precedent for the use of place-based pedagogies to increase the relevancy of classroom content for their students; these investigations were especially relevant to my study given the

demographic and cultural similarities between Indigenous and Appalachian students.

**Place-based Pedagogy and American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander Education.** Before illustrating the similarities between Appalachian students and American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students it is critical to note that Appalachian students and their communities are very *dissimilar* in the injustices wrought on them; American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander societies have survived discrimination, racism, war, and genocide at the hands of non-Natives and these acts have impaired Indigenous students, languages, and identities in ways difficult to articulate in their totality (Barnhardt, 1994; Skinner, 1991). The similarities, however, between Appalachian students and Indigenous students with regard to educational attainment and cultural attachment to place warranted an investigation of extant literature related to place-based pedagogies and Indigenous populations. Like American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students, Appalachian students are likely to experience generational poverty in rural areas that lack the economic opportunities available to suburban families (Alexander, 2006; Demmert et al., 2006; Meit et al., 2017; Thorne et al., 2004). Additionally, Appalachian and Indigenous students tend to be clustered in geographic regions still somewhat remote from the rest of the country (Demmert et al., 2006), with low educational attainment and significant impacts from drug and alcohol abuse (Costello et al., 1997; Meit et al., 2017).



Perhaps the similarity between American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students and Appalachian students that was most relevant to this study was the connection scholars have highlighted that both student populations share to the places from which they come. Researchers have shown that Indigenous students and rural, Appalachian students alike have shared a cultural and familial bond to their home communities that was unique from their non-Native, urban and suburban counterparts (Brown et al., 2009; Demmert et al., 2006; Gruenwald, 2003; Howley, 2006). Last, because both student populations have been relatively small in terms of overall population of the United States, and more likely to drop out of college than their non-Native, non-Appalachian peers, Indigenous and Appalachian students alike have been underrepresented in extant literature on college student engagement and success (Haaga, 2004; Demmert et al., 2006; Ishitani, 2006).

Scholars have produced a substantial amount of place-based pedagogical literature stemming from initiatives aimed to improve conditions for American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students and communities in the 21st century. In fact, Jacobs and Reyhner (2002) argued that place-based education is “a relatively new term for how American Indians traditionally viewed teaching and learning” (pp. 2-3). Ostensibly, Western place-based educational researchers and practitioners have, in their desire to promote and understand educationally purposeful activities, underscored the very ways in which Indigenous communities—when self-governed—have engaged young people in education for millennia (Jenkins, 2011).

In one study on the use of place-based pedagogies, Rubie (1999) described results of a cultural intervention with a group of indigenous children in two primary schools in Auckland, New Zealand. In New Zealand, where at the time of Rubie's (1999) study nearly 15% of residents belonged to the Māori ethnic group (Statistics New Zealand, 2007), governmental leaders required the Māori perspective be included in public, K-12 school curricula. To comply with the mandate many state schools created Māori Culture Clubs—organizations about which Rubie (1999) contends “little is known. . . and even less is known about their effectiveness in developing self-worth and a sense of belonging in Māori students” (p. 146). The study participants received Māori instruction and cultural immersion for six half-school days, five full days of school time, and 15 live-in weekends. With guidance from Māori elders and community members the children mastered approximately fifty culturally significant activities. Interspersed with rehearsals were community meals, traditional prayers, and special Māori ceremonies for guests and friends. Before and after the 12-month cultural intervention Rubie (1999) administered a test measuring scholastic abilities, locus of control, and self-esteem.

The researcher found that children in the Māori Culture Club developed stronger self-esteem and internality, and the students' caregivers and teachers, when interviewed at the conclusion of the intervention, indicated that they believed their students were “more interested or involved in school, had developed more independent work habits, and were more confident” (Rubie, 1999, p. 155) as a result of their experiences with the Māori Culture Club. The

cultural intervention for Māori students described by Rubie (1999) required a substantial time commitment from teachers as well as parents and children. Rubie (1999) argued that the collective willingness of school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to dedicate the necessary time resources to the Māori Culture Club was an overt demonstration of how adhering to a unified set of values can benefit all stakeholders. An active, collaborative, and practical approach to student learning in the context of culturally-relevant pedagogy can also be found in Rubie's (1999) description of the Māori Culture Club activities: the major instruction was led by a respected kaiko (teacher) who not only modelled all activities, but also explained the historical significance of each activity and its meaning in current Māori custom and protocol. In this way, traditional activities like haka, a dance once performed by warriors of a tribe to discourage an attack from an approaching tribe, were given meaning and value in a modern context and performed prior to sports competition.

A common challenge to American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander educators who endeavored to use place-based pedagogies to enhance student outcomes was a paucity of books, software, and other learning technologies that were congruent with students' home cultures. Ovando (1994) described how teachers in a remote Alaskan village developed software dubbed "The Alaska Writing Machine" (p. 55) to guide student learning within of standard English within the cultural context. In Ovando's (1994) report, students wrote news articles and personal essays to improve their standard English instead of completing rote drills written by non-Indigenous educators. In a description of

four successful indigenous language programs Stiles (1997) commented, “Textbook companies do not make, as a rule, textbooks for a few thousand children in an obscure language. This means that programs have to develop their own materials, which takes years of dedicated hard work” (p. 256). In the extant literature, examples of educators embracing innovative solutions for the purpose of providing positive, place-based materials for their Indigenous students were plentiful.

Though the amount of research on place-based pedagogies for K-12 students vastly outweighs research on place-based pedagogies for college students, administrators of some institutions of higher education have explored using place-based and culturally-relevant pedagogies to improve college student success. In 1989, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, a consortium of First Nations of Northwest Saskatchewan, initiated a dialogue with a professor at University of Victoria’s School of Child and Youth Care. According to Ball & Pence (2001), the Meadow Lake Tribal Council members desired a high-quality program for the training of early childhood education specialists, grounded in the culture and beliefs of the Cree and Dene First Nations communities. In subsequent years, partnership agreements between seven tribal communities and the university were developed to “introduce and strengthen culturally desirable childcare perspectives and practices” (Ball & Pence, 2001, p. 115). In 2001, Ball and Pence published a comprehensive evaluation of the training program outcomes between 1998 to 2000; throughout those years, members of the community nominated candidates, provided funds, classroom facilities and materials, and hired faculty to lead the

courses. Selected members of the community then co-designed with university-partners a flexible, living curriculum that provided remedial training (as needed) and four university-accredited courses thematically designed around topics of early childhood education.

Ball and Pence (2001) reported a variety of positive outcomes for university staff, community members, and program enrollees in a program designed to support First Nations students. The university-based team benefited from the experience of designing a culturally-relevant curriculum model as it was “predicated on stepping outside typical relationships and identifying a common ground of caring, respect, flexibility, and an orientation toward action” (Ball & Pence, 2001, p. 118). Of 110 Indigenous enrollees, 60 to 100% successfully completed the program when average completion rates for First Nations students at the time the study was conducted was 40% and the community gave “abundant testimony” (Ball & Pence, 2001, p. 115) to the positive outcomes piloted by the partnership. The community’s children benefited from culturally-relevant materials, communication between elders and younger members of the community improved, and students gained the skills necessary to provide youth development, parenting, and school-readiness services within the reserve. Ball and Pence (2001) also noted that one important factor in the success of the University and Tribal Council partnership was “a generative framework which encourages each constituent community involved in the training program to contribute to the curriculum, bringing in its unique set of priorities and practices” (p. 119). For students in the early childhood education training program that the

partners co-designed, the philosophy was neither fully native, nor fully Eurocentric, but rather it operated under its unique hybrid set of principles and values. Similarly, the authors report that in the culturally-responsive partnership between tribal and university communities, Indigenous students were “challenged by the tensions between theory, community objectives, and cultural considerations, and by their daily interactions with children in practice settings” (Ball & Pence, 2001, p. 120).

In a 2007 mixed-methods study designed to explore place-based pedagogies within higher education, Ragoonaden and Mueller (2007) analyzed the impact of a culturally-responsive course designed to support Aboriginal students who did not meet admissions requirements for the University of British Columbia. EDUC 104 Introduction to American Pedagogy: An Aboriginal Perspective, was the culminating course in the Aboriginal Access Studies program that provided first- year college courses to Aboriginal students with a non-Eurocentric curriculum and a holistic epistemology that was congruent with the students’ culture. To assess the impact of the course, Ragoonaden and Mueller (2007) analyzed results from a Likert-type test that measured students’ perceptions of skill development, and interview data regarding students’ general perceptions of the course. Seventeen of 64 students enrolled in EDUC 104 between 2013 and 2015 participated in the study. Ragoonaden and Mueller (2007) reported that students felt they had improved in reading strategies and note taking and believed they had acquired the necessary skills to gain full university admission. From interview data the researchers reported three emergent themes:

circles of learning, or “safe and respectful context where [students] explored camaraderie” (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2007, p. 33) were important in forming a community environment, students felt supported emotionally and academically through the program’s peer-mentoring system, and personal and genuine student-teacher relationships were highly important to the course participants.

Ragoonaden and Mueller (2007) also concluded that the Aboriginal students in their study benefited from “a robust partnership with [the university’s on-campus] Aboriginal Programs and Services, First Nations community members, and the presence of peer mentors” (p. 37).

In the extant literature it became clear that place-based initiatives extended beyond curriculum in some Indigenous-controlled institutions of higher education. Drawing heavily on a 1991 United States Department of Education report commissioned by the Indian Nations at Risk Force, Grant and Gillespie (1993) noted that community-organized tribal colleges had redefined how Native American teachers were trained. Instead of adhering to a broad or ill-defined mission, tribal colleges had their own charters and were controlled locally and leaders of the tribal colleges observed the school’s mission in all aspects; management styles, human relationship, and pedagogies were all grounded in the cultural values of the community (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Similarly, Barnhardt (1994) concluded that one factor contributing to the successful graduation of 50 Alaska Native teacher education students at the University of Alaska Fairbanks were student support services tailored to their unique needs (Barnhardt, 1994).

In summary, American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander communities have used place-based, culturally-relevant educational pedagogies for millennia. In these Indigenous societies, lessons rooted in the local community and that involved real-world problem solving, tutelage in community governing processes and cultural heritage were common-place (Demmert, 2001; Deringer, 2017; Smith, 2002). The educational policies of President Lyndon Johnson's administration were favorable to educators interested in utilizing place-based, culturally-relevant pedagogies to benefit minority students and researchers found within the American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander communities a wealth of evidence for its impact on students (Demmert, 2001).

In the 1990s researchers published a variety of studies that examined these outcomes of place-based initiatives within Indigenous communities and found that caregivers and teachers perceived their elementary school students to be more interested and involved in school after participating in cultural interventions (Rubie, 1999), and programs designed to teach indigenous language skills were more successful when place-based, culturally-significant materials were available to elementary and secondary students (Ovando, 1994; Stiles, 1997). Among American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander communities place-based pedagogical approaches have also helped students successfully complete college-readiness programs (Ball & Pence, 2001; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2007) and graduate from teacher-education programs (Barnhardt, 1994) despite the fact that administrators have historically struggled to keep Indigenous students enrolled.



A number of the studies selected for this literature review were chosen not only because the researcher described the use of place-based pedagogies for Indigenous students, a population who share demographic and cultural qualities with Appalachian students, but also because the researcher's findings regarding place-based pedagogies paralleled those from the Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project. The DEEP project was an innovative qualitative case study in which researchers sought to identify conditions that likely accounted for greater-than-expected measures of student engagement and graduation rates at some institutions of higher education. Kinzie, Kuh, Schuh and Whitt (2005) described the DEEP study findings in their 2005 report *Student Success in College; Creating Conditions that Matter*. One finding described by Kuh et al. (2005) indicated that DEEP colleges, or those that effectively engage and compel students to graduation "induce students to assume responsibilities for their own learning" (p. 167). Similarly, researchers who examined effective place-based or culturally-relevant pedagogies among American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students noted it was natural to direct students to one another and to the community for academic guidance rather than to a member of the college's staff (Grant & Gillespie, 1993; Stiles, 1997; Watson-Gegeo, 1989).

DEEP institutions, or those that had better than expected student engagement outcomes, also encouraged students to apply their classroom learning to the real world, pushing students beyond what they perceived to be their intellectual capacity and increasing student agency in the learning process (Kuh et al., 2005). Correspondingly, faculty who used place-based pedagogies to support

First Nations students at University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care pushed students to delve into the tensions between philosophy, community objectives, and culture rather than ignore the incongruencies (Ball & Pence, 2001). Ball & Pence (2001) also found that Indigenous students were challenged by their faculty to find inspiration and knowledge in their daily interactions with the community's children rather than blindly apply the Eurocentric view typically offered to them (Ball & Pence, 2001). Another practice demonstrated by DEEP institutions was described by Kuh et al (2005) as an "unshakeable focus on student learning" (p. 65) in which faculty accommodated student needs with creative, often time-intensive learning solutions. Ovando (1994) and Stiles (1997) reported that faculty of Indigenous schools demonstrated a similar practice when they re-designed language acquisition books, periodicals and software to be culturally familiar and relevant to students' daily lives.

Last, perhaps no other DEEP practice for student engagement was as recognizable in place-based pedagogies as the principle of community engagement to "augment, complement, and enrich students' academic experience" (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 99). In literature that described promising, culturally-relevant teaching practices for American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students, meaningful community engagement was the common thread. Researchers found that administrators engaged the Indigenous community by maintaining parent or community advisory councils, inviting elders and community members to teach in the classroom, lead field trips, and create

instructional materials (Ball & Pence, 2001; Barnhardt, 1994; Demmert, 2001; Grant & Gillespie, 1993; Markowitz & Haley; Rubie, 1999; Stiles, 1997).

To date, researchers reporting on place-based interventions have not provided empirical evidence that place-based, culturally-relevant or culturally-sensitive pedagogies directly influenced the amount of time and effort students put into their studies (i.e., student engagement). However, some of the place-based initiatives researchers described closely resembled practices that Kuh et al., (2005) found to be positively linked with student engagement. Because Indigenous students are similar to Appalachian students in terms of the economic opportunities afforded them, their ability to attain a college degree, and their uniquely poignant attachment to place (Alexander, 2006; Brown et al, 2009; Demmert et al., 2006; Gruenwald, 2003; Howley, 2006; Meit et al., 2017; Thorne et al., 2004) I designed a study to shed on light on the experience of first-generation, Appalachian college students who participated in typical, as well as Appalachian-themed, music and dance ensembles at their institutions.

A number of important themes emerged when reviewing extant literature for this study. First, the Appalachian region, which encompasses 420 counties in 13 states that lie along the spine of the Appalachian Mountains, has an economic and cultural framework that has made it unique from the rest of the United States (ARC, 2019). Due in part to unscrupulous government and labor policies, families in the Appalachian region have faced enduring challenges in attaining education and income commiserate with non-Appalachian Americans (Alexander, 2006; Armstrong & Zaback, 2014; Eller, 2008; Lewis & Billings, 1997; Meit et

al, 2017; Thorne et al., 2004). When Appalachian students have matriculated to college, many as the first in their generation to do so, some students have reported being stigmatized as slow, unintelligent, and childish (Dunstan & Jaeger, 2016; Hunley, 2015; Mitchell, 2005) - perhaps because of their non-standard, Appalachian dialect and persistent, media-fueled stereotypes of Appalachian people as lazy and prone to emotional outbursts. Distinctly Appalachian styles of music, dance, and handicrafts however have been deemed by the Appalachian Region Commission (ARC) to be an overlooked asset (ARC, 2019) in the endeavor to build prosperity in the region. Indeed, cultural tourism has long been an important, albeit complicated, source of revenue and cultural pride for Appalachian communities (Batteau, 1990; Eller 2008; Shapiro, 2014).

Second, few researchers have intentionally examined arts participation and its impact on the college engagement of students and topical research that did exist in this field has taken place in the context of formal music classrooms, or those in which students read pre-arranged, carefully selected music from a written page while aiming to improve their technique on a single instrument (Jenkins, 2011; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). This study was designed to understand and address the informal performing arts experiences of Appalachian students, or those in which students share cultural knowledge through interactions with peers, the repertoire is chosen unceremoniously, and improvisation is welcomed. This research was especially timely in light of an extensive literature review undertaken by McCarthy et al. (2004), Rabkin & Hedbert (2011) and Parsad & Spiegleman (2012) in which school administrators in rural and underfunded

districts like many of those in Appalachia were found to have reallocated money from performing arts opportunities to programs that were tied directly to academic achievement.

Third, researchers have shown that place-based pedagogies, or those rooted students' home cultures, have positively affected American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students; a population that resembled Appalachian students in terms of educational attainment and cultural attachment to place (Alexander, 2006; Costello et al., 1997; Demmert et al., 2006; Meit et al., 2017; Thorne et al., 2004). In light of these promising reports, my research study extended the vein of place-based pedagogical literature to include experiences of a population that has yet to be investigated in this context – Appalachian students who have participated in typical college performing arts ensembles, as well as Appalachian-themed music and dance ensembles at their institutions of higher education.

### Chapter III: Methodology

Researchers have shown that poor and first-generation students do not have the same college outcomes as their middle-income, non-first-generation peers (Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella, et al., 2004). As an educator and practitioner at a four-year institution that serves many first-generation Appalachian students, I have experiential knowledge on the alienation and cultural mismatch many students face when matriculating into higher education. Though a college campus may be a short driving distance from home, the norms, expectations, and culture of university life can feel distressingly foreign to some first generation, Appalachian college students. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of Appalachian college students who participated in performing arts ensembles and, using a qualitative research design approach informed by Kuh et al.'s (2005) study on positive student engagement, to understand the impact that participation in these ensembles might have on Appalachian students who are the first in their generation to pursue higher education.

#### Research Design

According to Merriam (2009), "All qualitative research is interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds. The *primary* goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (p. 24). In the long history of scientific inquiry, researchers have used quantitative research designs when proof or disproof of an existing theory or causality among multiple variables is the primary goal (Creswell, 2014). In the 1920s and 1930s however, a new form of scientific inquiry emerged from the

work of cultural anthropologists who produced vivid, in-depth descriptions of non-Westerners with whom they lived and observed closely. According to Merriam (2009) and Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke (2004), these nuanced accounts of the beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of others (later categorized by researchers as ethnographic research) were among the first to undertake scientific inquiry in a lived, social context rather than a quantitative, or “causal-comparative” (Creswell, 2014, p. 12) one. By the 1940s and 1950s, academics in a wide variety of fields were approaching research from qualitative, experiential viewpoints (Merriam, 2009). Jean Piaget (1952), renowned child psychologist, formed his theories of intellectual development by observing his own children and students (Merriam, 2009; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). In 1946, Kurt Lewin pioneered the field of organizational development by carefully examining training groups, or T-Groups, in which free, natural conversation flowed among participants (Kleiner, 2008). According to Lincoln (2004), sociologist Norman Denzin has blurred academic lines and advocated “borrowing intellectual traditions and illuminative insights from one discipline which might inform the study of another” (p. 54).

Contributions to the burgeoning field of qualitative research in the 1970s and 1980s included Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) whose treatise on grounded theory laid the framework for the use of inductive reasoning and experiential knowledge within qualitative methodologies, and Yvonne Lincoln whose collaborations with Egon Guba (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) paved the way for qualitative approaches to educational program evaluation, use of participant

voices as concrete data, and overall advancement of discovery-oriented research (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; von Kardoff, 2004). A variety of paradigms exist from which qualitative inquiry can be initiated. Researchers with a philosophy that reality is stable, measurable, and observable operate from within the positivist philosophical foundation. Critical researchers undertake qualitative inquiry to challenge or transform social realities, and for those seeking to discover the “basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) the foundational philosophy is phenomenological.

I designed this basic, qualitative study from an interpretive or constructivist philosophy which, according to Merriam (2009) “assumes that there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event” (p. 8). The interpretive or constructivist philosophy was founded in the belief that meaning is made by individuals – it is not an inherent reality, awaiting discovery from the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). As someone deeply connected to Appalachia but not *from* Appalachia, it was critically important that I chose a research design that allowed multiple realities to emerge from the students I interviewed. Ever aware of the damage that had been inflicted from well-meaning researchers who studied Appalachian communities through a cultural lens that was focused clearly on the deficits of mountain people, the constructivist philosophy allowed my study’s results to reflect students’ interpretations of their reality instead of my own perceptions.

The open, conversational method to gathering data exemplified by Kurt



Lewin and his qualitatively-minded peers (Kleiner, 2008) seemed to be a particularly valuable approach for interacting with Appalachian students. Though my goal was to understand the students' experiences within a particular context (as participants in performing arts ensembles), the conversational approach I used to gather data from my participants allowed discussions to take participant-directed turns that resulted in genuine, rich, and unexpected responses.

### **Population of the Study**

The population examined for this study were first-generation, Appalachian college students who participated in performing arts ensemble at one of three Central Appalachian institutions of higher education. The institutions from which the sample population was chosen were selected based on membership in the Appalachian College Association (ACA) and the availability of Appalachian place-based performance ensembles at those institutions.

According to Merriam (2009), "A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds" (p. 22). Member institutions of the ACA share social commonalities with regard to student demographics, type, and location. According to the ACA (2019), of the 35 member institutions, "nearly 90% of member institutions furnished institutional aid to all or virtually all of its undergraduate students; the remaining four institutions provided aid to more than 90% of their students" (para 3). All of the ACA institutions examined for possible inclusion in this study were private, four-year colleges and all were located within Central Appalachia. I reviewed information posted on all 35 ACA member institutions websites and

discovered that five institutions offered Appalachian-based performance ensembles for their students.

Of the five ACA institutions that offered Appalachian-based performance ensembles, I further limited the study population to institutions with similar percentage of undergraduate to graduate enrollment, total student body size, and number of in-state students as total percentage of student enrollment. Three institutions were almost entirely devoted to providing undergraduate degrees, reported total undergraduate student enrollment between 600 and 1,040, with between 57% and 81% of students from inside the state where the institution was located. Of the ACA member institutions that offered Appalachian-based performance ensembles for their students but from which no sample was selected, both had fewer than 50% of students from inside the state where the institution was located. The three institutions from which the sample population was selected were Fork Valley College, Forest College, and West Mountain College (pseudonyms), and each was located in one of three different Central Appalachian states.

Table 1

*Summary of Sample Institution Student Population and Performing Arts Ensembles*

Institution (pseudonym)	Annual enrollment headcount, academic year 2016-17	Percentage of students enrolled in undergraduate programs	Percent of students from institution's home state	Performing arts ensembles available to students
Fork Valley College	609	100%	81%	Appalachian-themed student choir
Forest College	945	100%	57%	Concert choir Appalachian ensemble Scottish dance ensemble
West Mountain College	1451	98%	72%	Symphonic band Concert choir Percussion ensemble Marching band Clogging ensemble

Table 1 presents a summary of the institutions in the sample, institutional demographics, and performing arts ensembles available to their students. At Fork Valley College students had the opportunity to participate in an Appalachian-themed student choir whose members performed songs that celebrate regional history, geography, and culture. At Forest College, students had the opportunity to participate in a dance and music ensemble in which student performers showcased traditional and regional folk tunes, dances, and acoustic string music. Forest College students also had the opportunity to participate in a (non-Appalachian themed) mixed choir and a dance ensemble dedicated to Scottish dance. At West Mountain College students had the opportunity to audition and perform in a competitive student-led folk dance group whose repertoire is based primarily in traditional and historic Appalachian clogging. West Mountain

College students also had the opportunity to participate in non-Appalachian themed performing arts ensembles: symphonic band, mixed choir, percussion ensemble, and marching band.

### **Data Collection**

Once the three ACA member institutions were chosen and IRB approval was granted from each of them, I created a Microsoft Word document (see Appendix E) that included a greeting to students, information on the study, and a link to a 13-question online survey (see Appendix A) created with the cloud-based online survey tool, Qualtrics. The administrators from whom IRB approval was granted preferred, in all three cases, to send the survey information and link to potential respondents from one of their own college faculty members. At Fork Valley College, I attached the Word document to an email and sent it to the director of the Appalachian-themed choir, who forwarded it to the members of the student ensemble. At Forest College, the administrator from whom IRB approval was granted forwarded the document to the directors of the music ensembles at that institution. Neither the Fork Valley College ensemble director nor the Forest College administrator disclosed the number of students to whom the survey link was sent. At West Mountain College, the faculty member who served as chair of the Music Department copied the text of the participant recruitment document into an email and forwarded it to 80 performing arts students. The first question of the online questionnaire was a statement of informed consent; answering *yes* after the statement indicated that students had read, understood the information, were willingly giving their consent to participate in the research study and were

18 years of age or older (see Appendix B). In the survey, participants were asked about their pre-college arts experiences, the state and county in which they were raised, the education level of both parents, and whether or not they were willing to participate in a follow-up on-on-one interview about their experiences in performing arts ensembles at their institution. The online survey remained open for nine weeks and responses were collected from 38 participants. At the end of the nine-week period, survey questions and data were moved to a password protected device.

Of the 38 survey participants, 28 indicated that they were first-generation students, raised in an Appalachian county (ARC, 2009). Of those 28 respondents, 12 indicated via survey response that they were willing to be interviewed about their experiences in a performance arts ensembles. Of 12 respondents who were both first-generation, Appalachian college students and willing to be interviewed, I used convenience sampling to determine which participants were able to meet me on a series of designated days. In total, 11 students were interviewed. All 11 students within the population sample were between the ages of 18-22 years old and had participated in a performing arts ensemble at their college for at least one semester. Of the 11 interview respondents, 6 self-identified as male, 6 as female, and all self-identified as White or Caucasian.

The individual, semi-structured interviews occurred between October 25, 2019 and Sunday, November 3, 2019 and lasted an average of 32 minutes. I met two of the three West Mountain College interviewees in a small, private study room on the second floor of the campus library that I, as the researcher, reserved.

When an unexpected delay made one West Mountain College interviewee unavailable until after the library was closed, we met outside of a coffee shop a short walking distance from campus to conduct that participant's interview. All six interviews with Fork Valley College students took place in group study room in the library that was I reserved in the week prior to the interviews. One interview took place at Forest College in a small, private study room on the third floor of the campus library that I reserved for our purpose. At the start of each interview, I presented participants with a written copy of the interview informed consent (see Appendix D), gave them time to read the document, and invited them to ask any questions. After both myself and the interviewee signed the consent form, I reminded the participant that he/she could skip answering any of the interview questions without explanation and also secured verbal permission to use a recording device to collect responses. All interviewees were offered a copy of a (blank) interview informed consent. For the semi-structured interviews, I used a 10 question protocol (see Appendix C) in which each question was loosely connected to one or more of the conditions that Kuh et al (2005) described as being related to positive student engagement practices. Interview data was collected on a non-networked, digital handheld recorder. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and rendered the data anonymous by taking away all personal identifiers of the participants and using pseudonyms chosen by the participants at the start of the interview in place of their names.

## **Analytical Methods**

Qualitative analysis is the process by which researchers organize and reflect on raw data to draw conclusions about the circumstances, the underlying meaning, or the generalized experience of the sample (Merriam, 2009).

Historically, qualitative researchers have examined raw data in the context of specific questions and, through a process of systematic categorization, developed an interpretation and description of a phenomenon to readers. Scholars in the field of qualitative inquiry have proposed a variety of methods by which qualitative data can be analyzed. Coding is a process through which qualitative researchers construct categories based on preliminary readings of data, then apply a brief code or abbreviation to emerging groups of information (Mayring, 2004; Merriam, 2009). Coding is an effective and widely-accepted tool for presenting and interpreting data in a variety of commonly used qualitative approaches.

A distinct feature in qualitative analysis is the time at which the analysis occurs; unlike quantitative analysis which occurs after all data has been collected, qualitative researchers collect and analyze data simultaneously (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I created written memos at the conclusion of each one-on-one interview and used these memos to guide the interviews that had not yet occurred; in these memos I reflected upon my basic conclusions, noted the follow-up questions I had asked and made comments about how to adjust and focus interview questions relative to trends that I was observing. I transcribed interview data into Microsoft Word within a few days of

each interview's conclusion and begin reflecting on the data I was encountering. In the transcriptions, each line of dialogue was numbered for reference.

When participants from all three ACA schools had been interviewed and all the audio recordings of interviews transcribed, the Microsoft Word document containing all respondents' interview data was combined into a single document that could be reviewed as a whole. I then summarized interviewees' responses into a few words and wrote the summations into margins next to the text. I copied the representative bits of text and the summations or open codes into a Microsoft Excel document that could be easily re-organized. Next, I thematically categorized the summations or open codes into seven themes that I deemed to be responsive to the research questions, a process known as axial coding (Böhm, 2004; Merriam, 2009). Last, I examined the recurring patterns in light of the student engagement practices outlined in Kuh et al. (2005) and deliberated on the contextual data I collected during the examination of extant literature, my own experiential knowledge, and personal reflections to create a narrative response to the research questions.

### **Reliability and Validity**

According to Guba (1967) "the data resulting from an investigation depend heavily upon the mode of inquiry used by the investigator" (p. 59). The method of data collection I adopted for this study were qualitative surveys and semi-structured interviews. This discovery-oriented research approach was structured to provide suitable data related directly to the research questions, and



also to allow flexible, sincere, and unhurried responses from participants that could illuminate their authentic meaning-making processes.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the constructed knowledge and eliminate, as much as possible, researcher bias, I reviewed data from survey questionnaires and interview responses in their entirety multiple times, listening to the recordings of the one-on-one interviews and following along with the written transcripts. I frequently re-visited and re-arranged the data in the Excel document I had created, adding overlooked data as it became apparent in the interviews, and combining, renaming, and eliminating codes when applicable. These thorough, objective reviews broadened the lens through which I viewed the data, helped me to avoid partiality, and allowed me to see emergent themes in an objective way.

Civil rights pioneer Dr. Martin Luther King (1986) wrote that “shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will” (p. 295). Scholars in the field of qualitative research design agree that member checking or respondent validation is among a researcher’s best tools for ensuring that the major themes discovered by the researcher are congruent with the participants’ intent (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Steinke, 2004). In this study, I provided to all interview participants a transcription of their interview via email and invited them to clarify their responses, add additional information, or strike any of their replies.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

A number of potential weaknesses threaten the value of my findings in this study. First is the concept of serendipity as introduced by Kuh et al. (2005). In their 2005 Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) research project, directors George Kuh and Jill Kinzie sought to discover what could be learned from institutions of higher education that created better than expected student engagement outcomes. In their analysis, Kuh et al. (2005) offer that student engagement is a summation of two components that contribute to student success: the time and effort that students put into their studies, and the ways institutions allocate resources and learning opportunities. Kuh et al. (2005) recognized that:

Many colleges claim to provide high-quality learning environments for their students. As evidence, schools point to educationally enriching opportunities such as honors programs, co-curricular leadership development programs, and collaboration with faculty members on a research project. Too often, however, such experiences are products of serendipity or efforts on part of the students themselves—the first component of engagement. Moreover, for every student who has such an experience, there are others who do not connect in meaningful ways with their teachers or peers, or take advantage of learning opportunities. (pp. 9-10)

I recognized that there was no meaningful way to have identified first-generation, Appalachian college students within the research population (those who were participating in non-Appalachian or Appalachian place-based

performance ensembles at one of three institutions) who were naturally inclined toward, or away from, engagement with their peers and instructors. Brint, Cantwell and Hannerman (2008) noted that, similar to the natural tendencies of individual students to engage or disengage with their peers and instructors, unique cultures existed within undergraduate fields of study. Likewise, it was impossible to discern whether findings related to the meaning making processes of first-generation, Appalachian students in performance ensembles would be similar to those who have, because of any number of variant factors, self-selected to actively engage or disengage from their peers and instructors.

A second factor which limited the scope of this study was an oversimplification with regard to critical personal demographics of the participants. In analyzing the participants' interview data with singular meaning placed on the students' experiences as first-generation, Appalachian college students, I neglected to investigate the rich and powerful impact that race, ethnicity, class, gender-identification, and language have on the engagement experiences of students in college (DeAngelo & Franke, 2016; DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 2002; Kahu, 2013; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001; Zwerling & London, 1992).

Though these limiting factors restrict in some ways the findings of this study, I designed it to be a basic, qualitative investigation from an interpretive or constructive philosophy. Guba and Lincoln (1994) maintain that research designed with a constructive philosophy is predicated on the belief that reality is "socially and experientially based, local, and specific in nature (although many

elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions” (pp. 110-111). Flick (2004) quoting Glaserfield argued that constructivism “only requires that knowledge must be *viable*, in the sense that it should *fit* into the experiential world of the one who knows” (p. 90). Participants in my study had the opportunity to read a complete transcription of their interview and clarify their responses, add additional information, strike any of their replies, or provide new context. None of the interviewees chose to change or amend their responses. I am optimistic that this procedure strengthened the findings of my study and that participants who read their own replies from the one-on-one interview felt their responses were fair, appropriate, and accurate reflections of their actual experiences in college; of the 11 interviewees, none opted to change their initial comments.

Last, first-generation, Appalachian college students have attended all types of institutions of higher education, in all regions of the United States and presumably, abroad. In this study, however, I intentionally limited the scope to first-generation, Appalachian college students who were pursuing bachelor’s degrees at private, small institutions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2001; United States Department of Education, 2018) within Central Appalachia that served a mostly regional population. This delimitation means that findings of this study may not represent the meaning making process of first-generation Appalachian college students who have participated in performance ensembles in larger, public schools that serve a non-regional population or

schools that have a thriving ‘underground’ or non-university sanctioned Appalachian music or arts community in which students participate.

### **Researcher Subjectivity**

My motivation for undertaking this study was rooted and enriched by my personal experiences as a musician, a first-generation college student, and a student-services professional in an Appalachian institution. Shortly after starting orchestra class at the age of nine, I began informal lessons from family and local musicians on the art of improvising for country, gospel, American folk, and Eastern European folk music. By the time I was a teenager, I was performing professionally with family, recording with a small local music label, and teaching lessons at a local music store. Upon high school graduation I became a first-generation college student and attended a large, highly residential public university 15 miles from my hometown. Like many first-generation college students, I struggled financially, maintained a heavy work load of both campus work-study jobs and outside employment (performance engagements and music tutoring), and felt out-of-place on campus (Banks-Santilli, 2014; Pascarella et al., 2004). The skills I had gained informally in a wide variety of local and folk genres seemed immaterial to the task of completing a college degree in the fine arts; I rarely engaged with other student-musicians on campus and, despite a strong grade point average, withdrew from the university between my fourth and fifth semesters, a time Ishitani (2006) found to be one at which first-generation students are most at risk.

I was raised in a Southern Ohio county where, though officially outside the Appalachian Region as defined by the ARC (2009), nearly 40% of the population was recorded to be of Appalachian heritage (Maloney & Auffrey, 2013). The paper mills and iron foundries of Southern Ohio were prime targets for the Appalachian out-migration of the 1940s and 1950s (Alexander, 2006). My hometown of Hamilton, Ohio was so deeply tied to Appalachia that it was colloquially (perhaps pejoratively) known to locals as Hamil-tucky (Jones, 2012). A year after dropping out of college, I transferred to a medium sized, primarily residential public institution in the heart of Appalachia to continue my undergraduate studies—here, the music faculty were formally schooled in classical music, but were also familiar with gospel, bluegrass, and jazz, and the informal teaching and learning styles associated with these genres. At the institution I transferred into, I was invited to an informal, non-college sponsored weekly bluegrass jam session in a student common area, made deep friendships and, despite ongoing financial insecurity, completed a Bachelor of Music degree. The formal music courses that were required for degree completion were similar at both of the institutions I attended as an undergraduate. At the Appalachian institution however, the non-classical music skills I had acquired informally in my pre-college years seemed to be valuable and relevant to my faculty and peers.

I returned to Central Appalachia ten years after attaining my undergraduate degree, completed a Master of Education degree and began working as a student-services professional in a medium sized, primarily residential private university. In seven years as a higher education professional I

have observed firsthand the challenges faced by first-generation college students and watched as even academically gifted students disengaged with their instructors and peers, dropped out, or remained enrolled precariously. One Appalachian student, now a graduate with an advanced degree, relayed to me the excitement that he felt over having an introductory music class in his first semester of college. Though fine arts classes were offered infrequently at his small, rural, K-12 school this first-generation student had played bluegrass and gospel music most of his life and felt confident he would succeed in a college music course. He recalled with pleasure finding a picture of country music star Dolly Parton among a collage of images on the front of the college music textbook. He discovered the course, however, to be completely foreign to all of his previous experiences with music; there was no teaching or learning of tunes and melodies, no performing or collaboration with classmates, and no recognizable terms or vocabulary. Later, the student reflected that the image of Dolly Parton seemed to be a nod to the existence—but not the richness, merits, or socio-cultural importance—of genres familiar to Appalachian students. Despite a wealth of knowledge in the history, structures, terms, and performance of Appalachian and folk genres, this student—like myself—felt disconnected from the faculty, curriculum, and peers in the higher education arts classroom and learned that the skills he had acquired in his pre-college years were neither valued nor relevant.

I designed this study to examine the experiences of first-generation, Appalachian college students in a way that reflected the students' actual beliefs,

attitudes, and constructs. By gathering survey data on the experiences of this unique student population and following up with semi-structured interviews, the data I collected served as valuable, rich, and rare sources of information. I examined the data in light of knowledge I have gained as a student-services professional in Appalachia, from my own recollections of being a first-generation college student, and from the many studies and articles I discovered on college student success. Though many years too late for the student who relayed this description of his experiences in a college-level music course, the analysis that follows is an attempt to shed light on the experiences of first-generation, Appalachian college students who have recently navigated the norms, expectations, and culture of university life.



## **Chapter IV: Analyses and Results**

In this chapter, I present the data received from the first-generation, Appalachian college students who participated in performing arts ensembles at their Appalachian institutions. To provide needed context to the rest of the analysis, I first briefly introduce the interview participants by pseudonym and summarized relevant demographic data. Next, I introduce the general themes around which interview and survey responses were grouped, offering representative direct quotes from the interview transcripts to deepen the context, enliven the written word, and more closely present the respondents' meaning. Following that, I offer an analysis of the themes that directly answered the study's research questions. Last, I review the results of the study in a brief narrative that encompasses applicable themes.

### **Research Questions**

The first three research questions that guided this study were designed to uncover how participation in performing arts ensembles added meaning to the college experience of the respondents, and to discover the pre-college arts experiences – both formal and informal – of the survey and interview respondents. The fourth and final research question was chosen to reveal insights held by the respondents about how college-level performing arts opportunities might be adjusted to better suit their interests.

**Research question 1.** What meaning do first-generation, Appalachian college students construct from their experiences in performing arts ensembles?

**Research question 2.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in all performing arts ensembles in college?

**Research question 3.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in place-based performing arts ensembles in college?

**Research question 4.** What recommendations do first-generation, Appalachian college students have for higher education administrators related to the type and availability of arts opportunities available to students on college campuses?

### **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were completed, transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and carefully reviewed, I briefly summarized into a few words bits of respondent data that were applicable to the research questions. Next, I grouped the 17 open codes thematically in a process known as axial coding. The resulting open codes and major themes can be found in Figure 1.

## Figure 1

*Open codes and themes related to first-generation, Appalachian college-student participation in performing arts ensembles*

Open Code	Theme
Personal commitment Enjoyment and stress relief	Ensemble participation was meaningful because it reflected respondents' personal enjoyment of and commitment to the arts.
Time spent with ensemble peers Faculty relationships Musical and interpersonal closeness Arts facility as home base	Ensemble participation helped respondents build meaningful connection to peers, faculty, and campus facilities
Mutual dependence and shared leadership Self-improvement and personal responsibility Hands-on approach Building foundations	Respondents felt they shared responsibility for the quality of the ensemble and valued the opportunity to improve their skills in a practical, non-academic setting
Outreach and community integration New genres and cultures	Ensemble participation allowed respondents to connect to the local non-campus community in a meaningful way and also to explore new artistic genres and outlets.
Church and congregational singing School-sponsored band and orchestras	Respondents in place-based ensembles had participated in informal church and worship ensembles as well as formal, school-sponsored instrumental ensembles prior to college
Arts environment Family legacy or culture	The performing arts were a familiar and customary aspect of respondents' social and cultural pre-college environment
Recommendations	Respondents reported that they would prefer more and varied music outlets available to them, an increase in the type and number of outreach performances available, and more attention on their ensembles from the school administrators that handle the colleges' social media and branding efforts.

## Research Questions

**Research question 1.** What meaning do first-generation, Appalachian college students construct from their experiences in performing arts ensembles?

Of the seven axial codes or major themes identified, four revealed factors that

related to ensemble involvement and were valuable, enriching parts of respondents' college experiences.

***Respondents relayed that ensemble participation was meaningful because it reflected their personal enjoyment of and commitments to the arts.***

This major theme that emerged from the data was a reflection of two open codes: (1) personal commitment, which was assigned to data in which students relayed a distinct point in their lives in which their commitment to arts participation became an intentional and valuable part of their identity, and (2) enjoyment and stress relief, applied when respondents described their ensemble experience in those terms. Amelia, Eleanor, Lilly, May, and Charles all indicated a distinct time at which they decided to commit themselves fully to arts pursuits. As she approached her last year in high school, Amelia came to a profound realization that she could never give up music and decided to pursue it as her major in college. May recalled the rewarding experience of stepping in as a soloist when a singer in her church's Christmas pageant was suddenly absent, and how from that point forward, members of the community often asked her to perform in their churches. For Lilly and Charles, the internal commitment to more seriously pursue performing arts occurred with the recognition of their own skills and abilities. Lilly, who had been in dance lessons since preschool, joined a dance team at her middle school and found that she was a quick learner. After that, Lilly joined a formal dance company and began training more seriously. According to Eleanor, the rehearsals, competitions, and expensive costumes that were part of competitive clogging necessitated a full commitment to the art – on her part as

well as the part of her mother and grandfather (who raised her together). In her words, she was “committed to things for a long time, since a very young age.” Jonathon also expressed that he’d been deeply and fully invested in music from the point that he reached middle school, and even convinced his parents to let him switch high schools so that he could be part of a more competitive high school marching band.

As a reflection of their commitment to the arts, four respondents spoke of becoming student leaders within their high school ensembles. Thomas, who originally played saxophone in jazz band, switched to guitar – an instrument on which he had taken private lessons – to lead the rhythm section of his high school jazz band when the previous drummer, bass player, and guitar players graduated. Having had one year of choir class as a freshman, Franklin moved to a different high school and joined that school’s newly-formed, after-school choir club. Franklin recognized that his new director had little experience with choir and stepped in to help his male choir mates learn to read and sing their parts. Charles formed and led a brass quintet with his classmates in high school and Eleanor was one of the students who helped organize a performance at a local bookstore for the high school barbershop quartet, of which she was a member.

Of the twelve interview respondents seven relayed that they found ensemble participation to be a fun, enjoyable, or stress-relieving experience. Jonathon noted that “Music is one hundred percent an outlet for me. I forget everything else that is happening when I play music.” According to May, singing in choir gave her something to look forward to every week. Thomas explained,

“I’ve always enjoyed playing music with people and making music and so if I’m having a bad day or something I can go to choir and sing for an hour and I feel great after.” May said simply, “Honestly, I like singing. It’s one my passions.” Bree commented that “When I go to choir, it’s a place where I can relax and just know that I can have a fun time.”

*Ensemble participation helped respondents build meaningful connections to peers, faculty, and campus facilities.* This major theme was a reflection of four open codes: (1) time spent with ensemble peers, (2) faculty relationships, which applied to respondent data that indicated they had a close or communicative relationship with their ensemble’s faculty members (3) musical and interpersonal closeness, the code that was applied when respondents articulated ‘in-tuneness’ with their ensemble peers, and (4) arts facility as home base, the open code that was applied to data in which students shared comments about their ensemble rehearsal, office, or performance spaces as central to their day-to-day lives.

Seven respondents remarked that, even outside of class, they often congregated with friends in the arts offices, rehearsal, and performances spaces at their institution. Most of Bree’s closest friendships developed in some way around college choir. Bree commented:

We all go and hang out in the music office. There’s coffee, there’s tea, there’s hot chocolate in there anyone can come in there and get, and we kind of just sit in the table that’s in the middle of the room and sit there and talk.

Jonathon remarked that he and the other members of his ensemble often met in the arts building for rehearsals and socially, too. According to Jonathon, “The entirety of [campus fine arts building], the auditorium we have definitely taken over all of that space and we hang out wherever we want to whenever.” Of the fine arts building on her campus, Amelia said, “there’s always people around it’s very homey.” May commented:

My friends work in the actual music office. So what I do is I go in there and sit with them, or if they’re in the choir room I’ll go in there and sit with them. Sometimes we watch a movie or listen to music together. It’s kind of like fellowship time as a choir – like a little choir group – not the big choir group...We all, that’s our little meeting spot. We always know where we’re at.

Eleanor described her time in the campus fine arts building this way:

I feel I could sleep in that [fine arts] building if I needed to. I basically live there and all the percussionists in particular we live in the band room and we live in the studios and we see each other every day, just like crawl out of the hole that is in the band room floor and resurface for ensemble rehearsal!

Amelia remarked that she spends most of her time with same group of musicians at her college, and Bree and John both remarked that they frequently eat with their ensemble peers. When asked if there were any traditions associated with joining or being in his ensemble Jonathon replied that “I wouldn’t say that there were a whole lot of traditions outside of just always hanging out, and always being

around one another.” Eleanor commented on the amount of time she spends with her ensemble outside of official rehearsals and described time with her ensemble peers this way:

The percussion studio is like its own cell, like its own powerhouse, our mitochondria is just crazy big so meet outside of class time all the time. Like, a lot. When we do chamber ensemble pieces, we are trying to meet at least twice a week for an hour outside of class time. Sometimes it doesn’t work out so we’ll meet a couple of times for thirty minutes because something is better than nothing.

Lilly, however, who considered herself to be comfortable with lots of different kinds of people on campus relayed that “Last year I did have my closest friends were in ensemble but [pause] life changes. I mean, nothing bad happened but one of them left and then the other one – we still speak, but it’s not like as close.”

According to May, “My roommate’s in choir. My old roommate’s in choir. My boyfriend is in choir. Some of my other friends that I worked with are in choir. And I feel like we’ve all built our friendships through choir.” James and May both spoke about spending time in the music office, listening to music and drinking coffee with friends.

Four of the respondents independently commented that, when interacting with their ensemble peers they were ‘in-tune’ with one another both artistically and interpersonally. Franklin commented:



We all just get along and listen to each other throughout the choir because that's what we're trained to do, to listen to everyone else and not exactly fit in, but make sure you're in harmony. So yeah, I feel at home.

According to Jonathon:

Everyone drums together and is honest with one another and that's not necessarily a tradition thing but it's more of a culture thing... even if we did have problems with one another, we'd work it out and we'd fight it out. We didn't actually physically [laughs], physically punch anybody but we definitely have gotten better at communicating and its mainly just been everybody hangs out.

Lilly noted that:

We're really working on this year making it a synchronized ensemble so that we're always, if we're doing something acapella, if we're doing something with the band, we're always together. And we've been working on doing different activities to make ourselves and our bodies in-tune with one another.

Four respondents commented that they felt a close and communicative connection to the directors of their ensembles. Bree said,

I really like [Fork Valley College choir director and choir director's spouse]. I go in there, I have [choir director] for class and every day after class I go in there and I talk to her for about an hour.

Franklin offered that "Around here there's a lot of communication between us and our director. We're able to just talk and not really be awkward. It's a really

mellow environment.” Lilly recalled that the previous director of her ensemble had been “a very close friend.”

According to May, “[choir director] will sit down and show you where you’re messing up, what you need to do, and make sure you understand what you’re doing wrong.” Jonathon commented that two of his ensemble directors were dedicated to effective, personalized instruction. He said:

Both [choir director] who’s in charge of the choir and [music professor] who’s in charge of the percussion do a really good job on teaching people in the everyday class. Even if it might take a little bit of extra time they focus greatly on teaching in every setting. If there’s a moment to teach, they will do it.

***Respondents felt they shared responsibility for the quality of the ensemble and valued the opportunity to improve their skills in a practical, non-academic setting.*** This major theme was a grouping of four open codes: (1) mutual dependence and shared leadership, the open code applied to data that reflected aspects of the respondents’ ensemble experience that was student-led, (2) self-improvement and personal responsibility, the open code applied to data that reflected respondents’ desire to demonstrate their personal best for the betterment of the group, (3) hands-on approach, the open code that applied to respondents’ positive association with the focused, non-academic ensemble rehearsal atmosphere, and (4) building foundations, the open code that was assigned to data in which the respondents expressed ownership of the role of developing traditions and legacies for their ensembles.

Seven respondents shared observations about student leadership within their ensembles. Amelia observed that “there’s one player that really sets the standard and then everyone else tries to like meet that standard. It’s really competitive.” Amelia also pointed out that less-motivated members of the ensemble in a way set the tone for the ensemble saying, “they always bring down the expectations like if this person isn’t going to do their work why do we have to, because they are getting away with it.” When asked which students lead the sectionals, or breakout sessions where one section of the ensemble meets on their own, Eleanor replied:

[Name of instructor] tries to place emphasis that he’s making sure all of the students are learning how to teach while they’re here, so he doesn’t like for one individual student to be in charge all the time. If it happens, and it serves the purpose for this one particular person to be in charge every time we do X, Y, or Z then that makes sense and that is fine but we like to make sure that everyone feels like they can critique in a helpful way and be able to solve problems in a group setting before they’re out the door doing whatever they’re going to do.

Jonathon relayed how leadership roles were established when musicians collaborated as a chamber ensemble for a student’s recital:

Chamber ensembles which are most of the time student-led...it takes a lot of emotional intelligence to understand when to let people coach their piece and when to bring up something like your experience with it and

how this might could be better. But most of the time it's whoever's recital it is. They'll take charge in it.

James was elected president of the college choir and was responsible for organizing activities during choir tour and looking after the general welfare of the group. Charles, who was the founder of the brass quintet he participates in, was the one who organized rehearsals, musically arranged pieces for the group, and started the group's social media.

Respondents also indicated that members depended on one another to learn their parts and do well. Jonathon noted that the chamber ensembles he performed with were mostly student-led but that a music faculty member "comes in every now and then to check up on us and get into the nitty-gritty." Charles remarked of his student-organized brass quintet practices that "It's basically just us rehearsing and [faculty member] there. He helped a lot, he helped build us a lot but when it come down to the business side of it, it fell on my shoulders." As president of the choir, James' role involved weekly planning meetings to discuss upcoming trips and plan travel activities. When asked if there were official leaders for the sections within her choir Bree commented:

We kind of just listen to each other and I listen to one or two of the other girls that do really well and kind of listen to them see how it's going. Because [the choir director] doesn't always sing with us. And you kind of listen to each other to go off of that, but we don't necessarily have an alto leader or a soprano leader, or a bass leader. But I'd say that we all have made that connection, subconsciously.

Franklin said, “The most important thing about choir is to show up. Because that’s whenever we’re all able to sing together and hear each other’s parts and get everything down in a specific way.” Franklin added that he depended on his ensemble peers to help saying, “It’s always good to sing as close to perfect as possible but there’s no real way of doing it unless you’re in the choir class.”

Four respondents recognized that shared leadership also meant shared responsibility for raising funds on the ensemble’s behalf. Amelia’s comments indicated that fundraising was, in her view, a joint effort between the ensemble, the community, and the college’s administration. Speaking about the purchase of new uniforms for her ensemble Amelia said, “The [West Mountain College] President, he made that happen. He went to some people in the community for us and so we’re very supported by him, the President here he is very supportive of the program.” As for finding new places to perform and reach the community, Lilly remarked that it was a shared effort that members of the ensemble were working toward. May’s role as a performer in local churches allowed her to help raise money for the upcoming collegiate choir tour saying, “they were so supportive that when we go on tour next semester and sing, they are actually giving me money this semester and next semester to go towards that.” When Lilly relayed that she wished her ensemble was more frequently featured on the school’s social media pages, she admitted that, to receive support from the social media team, “We have to communicate with them for them to be able to communicate to everybody else. We’re working on building that up and getting the communication systems.”

Four respondents noted that they felt a responsibility to reshape traditions or build new foundations in their ensembles. According to Lilly:

Because we're reshaping it a little bit we're trying to grow it a little better, we have a little less performance times than we did before. Cause we're just trying to see what works and what we should – how to arrange it so that we get the optimum experience out there for everybody and for ourselves.

Thomas commented of his ensemble:

We don't have traditions yet I think because we just got a new director... We had [former choir director] before and things were a lot different under him. And now [current choir director] came and we're trying to rebuild, I think we're trying to establish traditions.

Jonathon, who spent many hours outside of class in rehearsal with his ensemble peers commented that they were “Trying to build culture in being a part of something bigger.”

Eight respondents indicated that their grade was neither the primary motivator for their ensemble participation, nor the measure by which they measured their own success. About her grade, Amelia said succinctly, “It is very important but our grades are not threatened.” She also commented that “It is set very much upon the individual. I want to do my best in everything I do and so that pushes me harder than any other aspect.” Bree remarked, “I'm actually not enrolled in the class right now. I have a very busy schedule so I come as a volunteer, kind of. And I really enjoy it.” Franklin had a similar response when

he said, “No. No. I’m not in choir for the grade, I’m in choir because I like to sing.” Bree also believed that effort was the factor by which students demonstrated their worth in her ensemble. Bree relayed that:

You come to class, you show effort in what you’re doing and you more or less try. Try your best. Because when you get into the choir you have to do an interview. You have to sing for them and see if you can get in. So she knows you can sing, it’s just how much effort you’re putting in.

Respondents noted that within their ensemble, their individual contribution was noticed and recognized as important to the larger group. Of her dance ensemble, Lilly observed that all of the participants were valued regardless of their skill level. According to Lilly:

A few of them who are seniors...didn’t have any form of dance experience until they came here. And then they learned, and they’re very good. And then we have some who are on clogging competition teams, and they’re really good. We have some that kind of have the background that I do, and then some that just have tap background. Yeah, there’s a few that don’t have any experience and they just hop in.

Lilly also commented, “the thing about ensemble is that I think that we have a unique one and that is something that we form and change. Because it is the students that have a big impact.” Bree relayed details of one technique her choir director utilized to encourage each student’s confidence and skill when she said, “She’s been breaking us up a lot recently...putting us in a circle, she’s like I want to hear *your* voice and I want you to learn your part.” Franklin remarked:

Because our choir is so small, we're able to communicate better and hear each individual person just about....and if someone's out of tune or out of pitch you don't really catch it as easily as you do here. And here it's a lot easier to fix. So it's almost as if when you fix it, I'm not saying we're better singers than people from large universities, but we definitely do have to try just a little bit harder.

May relayed that her individual voice was heard during choir and that “[the choir director] will sit down and show you where you're messing up, what you need to do, and make sure you understand what you're doing wrong.” Charles struggled personally and academically in his first year of college but realized his “self-worth” by reflecting on the positive impact he'd had on his college marching band as the only player of his instrument. After this, he started a quintet with his peers and became more committed to improving his craft.

Four respondents commented about the hands-on, focused approach that was required of them in their ensembles. May commented:

In a way it feels different because in choir I feel a little bit more relaxed than I do in an actual class, cause in class you've got to pay attention to the professor while you write this down, read from a book, and do all of that and in choir it's just one thing in front of you. And one person, it's not everything else in front of you.

Lilly, who had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, also felt the singular focus of her ensemble rehearsals made those meetings more relaxing than her academic classes. Lilly said,



Cause then you don't have to worry about school, you're not really worrying about [pause] the next week, you're really just worrying about 'okay, I'm learning all these dances. I've got to remember them and then we're good to go.'

Thomas said, "College choir gives me something to work on that I can see progress in." He later added that choir was "something to work toward that I'm not just studying for a class, get my grade back, there we go. I feel like I'm actually learning to *do* something and its fun." Franklin organized his thoughts about the hands-on approach of choir by stating that:

[College choir] definitely doesn't require a lot of work outside, but during choir class it's an hour straight of singing...in choir it's now it's *your* turn to *do the thing*. So in choir, we're a lot more active instead of just being in a classroom environment of listening, write things down.

***Ensemble participation allowed respondents to connect to the local non-campus community in a meaningful way and also to explore new artistic genres and outlets.*** This theme reflected two open codes: (1) outreach and community integration, the open code applied to data related to respondents' observations of being in, and actively involved with, the larger community, and (2), new genres and cultures, the open code applied to data when respondents commented on expanding their artistic and social horizons through ensemble participation.

Data that related to the respondents' role in the greater, non-college community was represented by the outreach to others and community integration code. Because of their roles as musicians or dancers at their institutions, three

students reported that they had interacted with other artists in the (non-collegiate) community. Jonathon was introduced by one of his college instructors to two mature musicians in the community. The trio of musicians performed regularly in local establishments. Jonathon commented, “Both [other musicians] are, like, sixty-five years old and then I’m out here playing drum set being twenty [laughs]! They’re just cool guys and we play different types of folk music.” Charles collaborated with a musician from a large, regional university nearby to fill out the ranks of his brass quintet. Lilly landed a summer internship at the folk music and dance camp sponsored by Forest College and commented that because of her role at the folk camp she was able to interact with and learn from local, as well as nationally known, artists.

Many of the respondents regularly sang or performed in their home churches and four commented that they have often performed at churches nearby the college. Charles’ brass quintet debuted at a Presbyterian church in a nearby town and frequently performed at churches in a three-state area. Bree regularly sang at a local church and Eleanor relayed:

I have a couple of friends that get scholarships through the Methodist church to sing in the church choir so just for fun I’ll go to their rehearsal because I’m like, ‘I don’t have anything to do so let’s go sing!’

Amelia, Lilly, and Jonathon reported that they traveled locally and regionally to visit schools and share their arts. According to Lilly:

We'll go to the schools and do little performances for them and we'll get them up and moving with us sometimes, try to teach them some steps. It's just really fun. We really try to get out there as much as we can.

Eleanor, with the other members of her women's music fraternity, sang Christmas carols each December at the local senior citizen center and Charles mentioned that he and the members of his brass quintet had been invited to perform at a local mental health clinic. Bree and Andrew both commented on the moving experience of performing with their choir at a homeless shelter. At one community performance Charles recalled that a woman approached him following the performance to tell him they had played a piece that was also played at her wedding. According to Charles, "I thought, that's why we do this. We reached out by just doing what we do. Touched her, and said 'hey, you remember your wedding?' and that's what draws [me to music]." Thomas characterized his ensemble's outreach as a community service by saying, "Our tour is a like a thank you to the alumni. We go out to all these places and you have these people that are like eighty years old and went to [Fork Valley College]."

For five of the respondents, the opportunity to travel with their ensemble was an important part of the experience. For Franklin, Thomas, and Bree, choir tour allowed them to see new places. Bree was enthusiastic when she relayed her experience on a recent trip with choir:

We went to Chicago. I had never been to a big city in my life. I've been to Cincinnati, and I've been to Louisville. When we went to Chicago I was blown away [laughs]. I looked at that place and I was like, 'whoa!'

Bree also explained that choir tour allowed her to get closer to some of her ensemble peers when she commented, “On choir tour last year I got put in a room with people I didn’t necessarily talk to all the time. Now we’re like best friends.” Amelia said frankly of her ensemble’s tour, “Well I just like the bus with all the people the most.”

Seven respondents considered learning about different cultures or genres to be an important and worthwhile part of being in their college ensembles. Amelia joined jazz band at her college specifically to broaden her horizons and help her become a more well-rounded music educator in the future. Of her experiences in a world percussion ensemble Eleanor commented:

I’ve fallen pretty much in love with it. Just the connection between culture and music and we’ve sang a lot of things in traditional languages that we could never speak – Portuguese and these West African languages – I just love the world music stuff.

Jonathon observed that “these new ensembles are opening me up to more genres and different styles, and not everything on the planet is marching band. There are so many different cultures that I’m exposed to.” Lilly conveyed very positive feelings about the kind of cultural experiences she was engaged in through her ensemble. Lilly reflected:

I just know that joining ensemble has opened me up to a giant world of all things music; Appalachian, non-Appalachian...just so much, so many different things. One of our directors of ensemble is an African dance teacher. She has studied many different forms. She’s amazing. So I’ve

learned that, and the background of African dancing and how it mingles in with Appalachia, and all different things like that. It just really has opened me up.

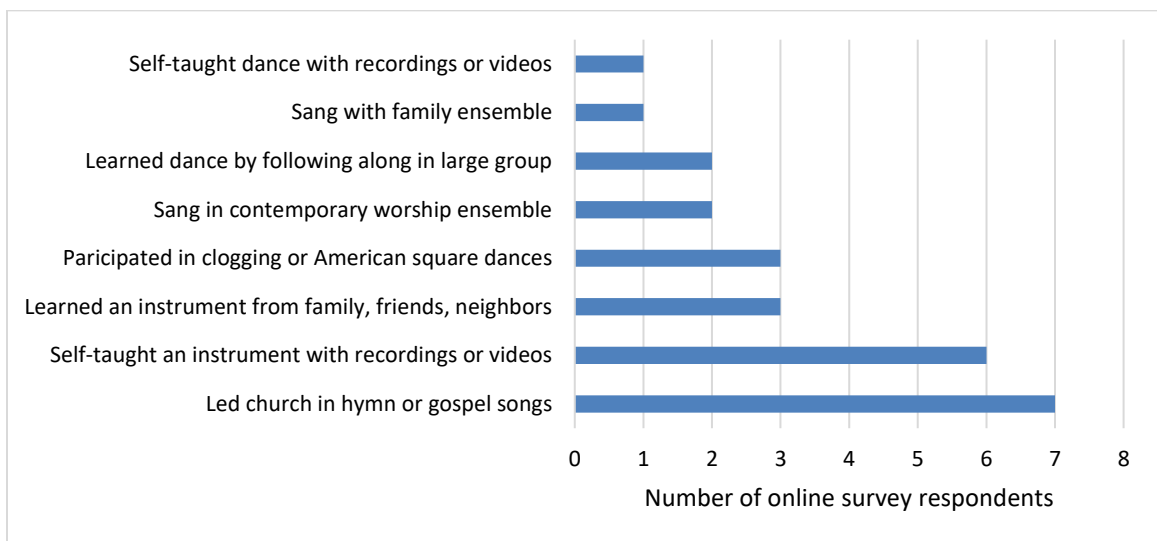
**Research question 2.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in all performing arts ensembles in college?

Quantitative data gleaned from an online survey distributed to students revealed that (n = 28) from three Central Appalachian Colleges in which students could choose multiple responses to best describe their experiences revealed that in their pre-college years 15 respondents (65%) had learned to play an instrument, 16 respondents (70%) had participated in choral or singing groups, and 7 respondents (30%) had participated in dance lessons or cultural dance activities.

Among the 28 first-generation, Appalachian college student survey respondents the most common informal arts experience was leading their church congregations in hymns or gospel songs and self-teaching an instrument with recordings or videos (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Informal pre-college arts experiences of first-generation, Appalachian performing-arts students at three Central Appalachian colleges.*

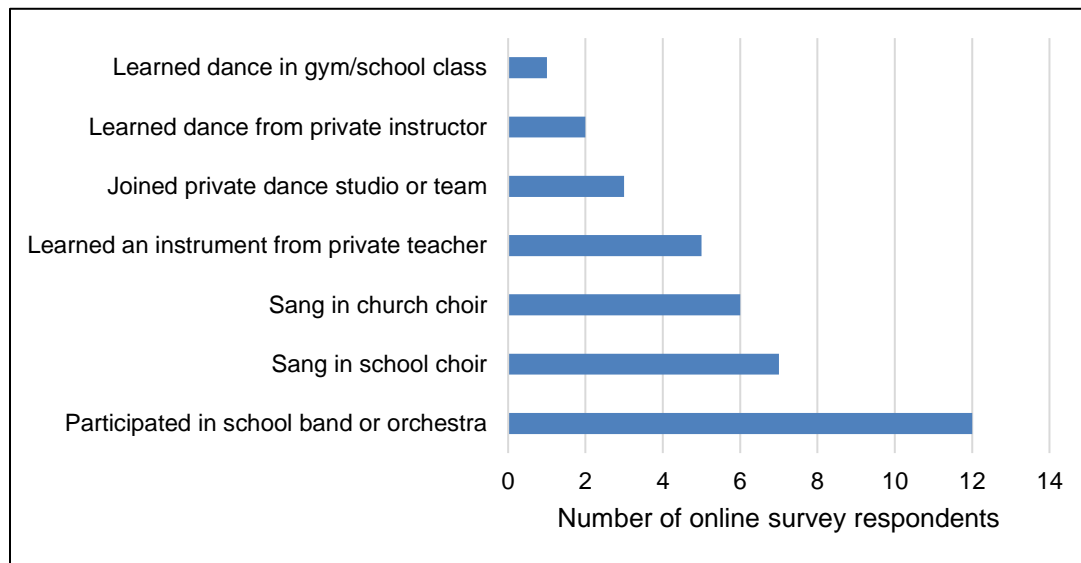


*Note.* For this study, pre-college arts experiences that were self-governed, occurred through immersion and enculturation, or as an outgrowth of students’ environments were considered informal arts experiences.

Among the 28 first-generation, Appalachian college student survey respondents the most common formal arts experience was participating in school band or orchestra and singing in school choir (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Formal pre-college arts experiences among first-generation, Appalachian college students at three Central Appalachian Colleges*



*Note.* Pre-college performing arts experiences that were teacher-directed, focused on a limited repertoire and aimed at improving technique and expressivity on a single instrument or genre were considered for this study to be formal arts experiences.

This data reveals two themes with regard to the pre-college performing arts experiences of first-generation, Appalachian college students. First, that for survey respondents, informal arts participation was closely linked not only to church involvement, but to leadership within their congregation. Second, that despite researchers’ findings that music has historically been one of the first areas

cut from school curriculum when budgets are unstable (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007), formal performing arts opportunities are still available, and utilized, by some Appalachian high school students.

**Research Question 3.** What are the formal and informal pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in place-based performing arts ensembles in college? Of the seven axial codes or major themes identified, two revealed data about the pre-college performing arts-experiences of respondents in place-based performing arts ensembles in particular.

*Respondents in place-based ensembles relayed that they had participated in informal church and worship ensembles as well as formal, school-sponsored instrumental ensembles prior to college.* This major theme was a reflection of two open codes: (1) church and congregational singing and (2) school-sponsored bands and orchestras. Data gleaned from the qualitative interviews of seven first-generation, Appalachian college students who participated in place-based ensembles at their institutions revealed that the most common informal pre-college arts experience was leading their church congregation in hymns or gospel songs (four respondents) and, the most common formal pre-college arts experience was participation in school band or orchestra class (four respondents).

*Respondents relayed that the performing arts were a familiar and customary aspect of their social and cultural environment prior to college.* This major theme was a reflection of two open codes: (1) arts environment, in which respondents indicated that the arts were part of their home atmosphere and, (2) family legacy or culture, in which respondents commented about arts traditions



within their close or extended families. Four interview respondents described listening to their parents or grandparents' music in their homelives. In speaking of his father, Andrew said:

Sometimes we would go just to ride around the town or something, he introduced me to the Police, Bob Seeger, Motley Crue, Kiss...he had just a big, cd case – the big thick ones – and we would just flip through them and we would just listen to all this music that he grew up on.

May remembered that her mother was always listening to 70s and 80s music around the house and Bree recalled that she routinely accompanied her great-grandmother (by whom she was raised) to outdoor concerts and benefit gospel singings.

Three respondents specifically described their family culture or history in the performing arts. Andrew spoke with pride about a great-uncle who had achieved commercial success and recorded country music hit songs in the 70s and Lilly, a dancer, relayed that her great-grandmother had been a tap-dancer. Both of Franklin's parents played guitar and his sisters both played instruments and sang at home.

**Research question 4.** What recommendations do first-generation, Appalachian college students have for higher education administrators related to the type and availability of arts opportunities available to students on college campuses? Of the seven axial codes or major themes identified, one revealed the recommendations respondents offered about the performing arts opportunities available to them.

*Respondents reported that they would prefer more and varied music outlets available to them, an increase in the type and number of outreach performances available, and more attention on their ensembles from the school administrators that handle the colleges' social media and branding efforts.* This theme reflected the open code 'recommendations,' and applied to data that directly reflected respondents' suggestions, recommendations, or observations of the arts possibilities afforded to them and their Appalachian peers.

As for additional musical outlets available to them Jonathon commented, "I would love to add something like music technology and understanding how, there's some universities that have laptop ensembles. And it's so weird, but it's electronic music, and it's all new but we need something new." May offered that, even if there isn't a significant interest in a new performance ensemble, she would tell college administrators to:

Give it a shot and if it doesn't work then maybe find people who would like to do it and let them do their own little thing, or make it a club there. If we didn't have a lot of people but we would like to sing still maybe we'd make it a club.

Thomas had a similar suggestion to Bree's, adding that "so my suggestion would be, that even if there's only five people that play, give them opportunities to play, right?" Eleanor commented, "there's not really designed any room for you to explore other ensembles so it might be nice to see some room built in for people to be able to explore." Eleanor, referring to the local, non-college affiliated

musicians and venue owners in her region also added, “it might be nice to work with people in the area.”

Andrew commented that he would like to see his ensemble expand their annual tour to include other regions. He said, “See I would even like to take the choir...into Nashville, Memphis. Just do a full concert of good old gospel and bluegrass, and just take it down there and let the people enjoy it because that is the country music capital of the world.” He also commented that the Appalachian-themed choir on his campus should have an accompanying acoustic stringed instrument band. According to Andrew:

If we want to show what Appalachia really is, we can’t take all these old songs and sing them just with a piano. We got to show them. We need a guitar, a banjo, maybe even a mandolin. And just do like a quartet type thing, even if it’s just for one or two songs, or like a medley of songs. It shows the people what we’re actually about. And what the mountains is about.

May’s suggestions also included a comment about reaching out to the rural community near her college. According to May:

I kind of think that people who aren’t able to get out much around here, we could go to a certain point and let them come there and hear us. Or just get us out there. So people who want to hear us but can’t get to a certain spot where we’re at can actually hear us.

Bree conveyed that she wished a music-reading class were available to her so that she and her peers could start a band at the college they attend.

Amelia and Jonathon both noted that their ensembles weren't permitted to use the same logo as the athletic teams on their materials. To Jonathon, this factor made him feel his ensemble was "definitely looked down upon" and that they had to "stick to a different script." Lilly also compared her ensemble to the athletic teams on her campus when she observed:

Basically, how it is for sports you know who's on what team. You know what they're doing, when their games are. Just maybe making it more clear ensemble will be here this time, ensemble will be here this time. Posting pictures of ensemble doing performances not just teams doing community service. That's important!

### **Interview Participants**

Amelia, a music major, is an 18-year-old student at West Mountain College who participates in wind ensemble, jazz band, woodwind choir, and marching band. In Amelia's words, "bluegrass runs in our family," and her grandfather organized several local clogging groups. As a child, Amelia participated in clogging activities.

Andrew is a 19-year-old history education major at Fork Valley College where he sings in an Appalachian-themed choir. Andrew had many musicians and songwriters in his family's history, plays guitar himself, and has written and recorded some of his original music.

Bree is a 21-year-old education major at Fork Valley College where she sings in an Appalachian-themed choir. Bree attended bluegrass and gospel

singings with her great-grandmother and participated in music classes and school choir throughout her elementary, middle, and high school years.

Charles is a 22-year-old music major at West Mountain College where he has participated in wind symphony, marching band, low brass choir, and brass quintet. Charles has a long family legacy of singing and playing gospel and bluegrass music.

Eleanor, a 21-year-old music major at West Mountain College, was raised by her mother and grandfather. Eleanor participated in competitive clogging throughout her childhood and, at West Mountain, has participated in percussion ensemble, university choir, wind symphony, world percussion ensemble, and marching band. When home from college on breaks, she sings with her grandfather at his church.

Franklin is an 18-year-old student at Fork Valley College who had not yet settled upon a major of study. Franklin was very involved in music and theater throughout high school and now sings in the Fork Valley Appalachian-themed choir.

James, a business major, is 21 years old and attends Fork Valley College where he participates in the Appalachian-themed choir. James sang with his grandmother in church growing up and was elected to be the choir's student president.

Jonathon is a 20-year-old music major at West Mountain College. He was very committed to music throughout middle and high school and has participated

in West Mountain's percussion ensemble, university choir, and world percussion ensemble.

Lilly, a 19-year-old education major at Forest College, has been studying creative movement and dance since childhood. Lilly played in her high school's band and now dances with Forest College's Appalachian-themed music and dance ensemble and Scottish dance ensemble.

May sings in the Fork Valley College Appalachian-themed ensemble where she is a 20-year-old education major. May sings as a soloist in numerous local churches in the region and often visits with choir friends in the Fork Valley music office.

Thomas is an education major at Fork Valley College where he sings in the Appalachian-themed choir. Thomas, who is 20 years old, played several instruments in high school and deeply enjoyed his experiences in jazz band.

### **Summary of Results**

This study on the experiences of first-generation, Appalachian college students who participate in performing arts ensembles at their Appalachian colleges was undertaken from a basic, qualitative approach. I first collected data via an online survey in which 28 first-generation students offered information about their pre-college arts experiences. To collect rich, in-depth data on the meaning they constructed from participating in performing arts ensembles at the college level I personally interviewed 11 of the 28 survey respondents.

Respondents relayed that ensemble participation was meaningful because it reflected their personal enjoyment of and commitments to the arts and helped

them build meaningful connections to peers, faculty, and campus facilities. Respondents also felt they shared responsibility for the quality of the ensemble and valued the opportunity to improve their skills in a practical, non-academic setting. Last, ensemble participation allowed respondents to connect to the local non-campus community in a meaningful way and also to explore new artistic genres and outlets.

The most common informal, or self-governed, pre-college arts experience among recipients was leading their church congregations in hymns or gospel songs and self-teaching an instrument with recordings or videos. Among the formal, or teacher-directed, pre-college experiences of the respondents, school band, orchestra, and choir were the most common. Qualitative data from the population of respondents that participated in place-based ensembles revealed that the respondents had vivid memories of listening to the music in their home environment and, for three respondents, described music and dance as a part of their family culture or history.

Last, respondents offered a variety of recommendations for the type and variety of arts opportunities available to them on their college campus. Respondents reported that they would prefer more and varied music outlets, an increase in the type and number of outreach performances available to them, and more attention on their ensembles from administrators that handle their colleges' social media and official branding.

## **Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to examine the pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participated in place-based and non-place based performance arts ensembles and, using a qualitative research approach informed by Kuh et al.'s (2005) study on positive student engagement, understand the impact that participation in these ensembles might have on Appalachian students who are the first in their generation to pursue higher education. This chapter includes a discussion of the role that ensemble participation plays not only in the college experiences of a unique subset of American students but offers new insights into how arts experiences might provide a supportive scaffold for students whose families face economic, cultural, and social barriers to educational attainment similar to those faced by Appalachian students.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Based on data generalized from this study, three major conclusions are apparent. First, ensemble participation positively influenced students' ability to engage with their college environment by facilitating valued relationships to peers, faculty, and campus facilities. Since the publication of Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, researchers in the field of higher education have offered several definitions of involvement or engagement; student engagement has been described as college students' quality of effort and involvement in educationally purposeful learning activities and as the intersection of time, effort, and resources (Krause & Coates, 2008; Kuh, 2009; Solomonides & Reid, 2009). Students who participated in ensembles spent time eating meals, travelling and



socializing with one another, felt personally responsible to improve the ensemble's quality, and purposefully worked with their peers in and outside of rehearsal to troubleshoot difficult material. More, the extended time that students spent with their ensemble peers often took place specifically in their institution's fine arts building: a place where students felt at home to interact, practice, and rest in one another's company. In their landmark Documenting Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) project, Kuh et al. (2005) closely examined student engagement data from schools with better-than-predicted graduation rates and discovered that "adapted pathways for enrichment" (p. 108) included physical campus buildings and atmosphere that nurtured a sense of 'place' within the students who lived, worked, and learned there. Kuh et al.'s (2005) student engagement observations related to 'place' closely matched this study's participants who reported being meaningfully connected to the campus spaces reserved for their ensemble.

Only a small subgroup of studies on the instrumental benefits of the arts exist in which researchers directly examined the link between student art opportunities and engagement. However, my conclusion that arts participation positively impacted college students' engagement was comparable to the findings reported by Bequette (2014), Holochwost and Wolf (2017), and Horn (1992) in which fine arts participation was found by researchers to have positively impacted student engagement and involvement in the elementary and secondary school settings. The conclusion that ensemble participation facilitated valued relationships to peers, faculty, and campus was also supported by authors (McCarthy et al., 2005) who concluded that intrinsic benefits of arts involvement

ranged from the personal, such as individual pleasure, capacity for empathy, and increased world perspective, to collective benefits that included the creation of social bonds and communal expression of meaning.

The second major conclusion of this study was that ensemble participation positively influenced student engagement by giving students an opportunity to exercise leadership and work collaboratively in practical, non-academic settings. Students who participated in performing arts ensembles listened to one another both musically and personally and relied upon one another to lead, critique, improve, and engage with the ensemble as a team. Collaborative environments like those described by respondents in this study were another important factor in the DEEP institutions that Kuh et al. (2005) examined. According to Kuh et al. (2005) institutions with higher-than-expected student engagement rates were committed to “shared responsibility for educational quality and student success” (p. 157) and DEEP institutions “through a variety of mechanisms...expect students to exercise considerable responsibility for their own affairs and hold them accountable for doing so” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 172).

Students in college-level performing arts ensembles routinely performed in local and regional churches, schools, and social service facilities and while serving the community in this capacity, students reported meaningful, heartfelt interactions with the community members they encountered. The cohesive and mutual expression of value that respondents described in my study closely aligned to an engagement factor described by Kuh et al. (2005) when they noted that

“DEEP schools connect to the local community in ways that benefit students, the institution, and surrounding community” (p. 108).

Last, data generalized from this study reflected the conclusion that first-generation, Appalachian college students come to the college campus familiar with both formal and informal approaches to learning and participating in the performing arts. According to Jenkins (2011), Green (2006), and Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) informal learning is that which occurred outside of socially-sanctioned educational institutions and was pursued by the student primarily through self-motivation using resources ready to hand in one’s everyday life” (Jenkins, 2011, p. 181). Students’ participation in group-led, casual church ensembles and their efforts to self-teach an instrument with videos or recordings are highly characteristic examples of what arts researchers describe as informal learning (Green, 2006; Jenkins, 2011). Student reports of having participated in school band or orchestra class and director-led church choirs demonstrate that they arrived at the college campus having had experiences in the formal performing arts environment as well the informal.

It was important to study the meaning that first-generation, Appalachian college students constructed from their college experiences because, though social scientists disagree on whether or not the existence of a distinct Appalachian culture has been proven, Appalachian students come from a region of the United States that is unique geographically, economically, and socially (Keefe, 1988; Lewis & Billings, 1997; Lohmann, 1990). Student populations like those coming from Appalachia are underrepresented in college enrollment and are therefore

underrepresented in data gleaned from the measurement tools researchers use to examine student engagement (i.e., NSSE).

The first-generation, Appalachian college students examined for this study came from a geographically and culturally unique place, but their plight is not unique from other underserved student populations, and neither is the dilemma facing American higher education administrators tasked to develop support systems that could bolster their success. Higher education administrators that offer diverse performance ensemble opportunities are adding to a support framework on which underserved college students may be able develop deep, collaborative relationships with their peers and environment. Institutions within the Appalachian College Association (ACA) have experienced an acute need for resources and initiatives for mitigating the poor academic preparation and college retention of Appalachian students (Seltzer, 2017). Conclusions drawn from this study provided rich, insightful, and purposeful data on the experiences of Appalachian students within their own Appalachian institutions – conclusions similar to those reported by researchers who studied pedagogies culturally-relevant to American Indian/Alaskan Indian and Pacific Islander students in Indigenous classrooms and colleges (Ball & Pence, 2001; Barnhardt, 1994, Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2007). In the cases of both Indigenous and Appalachian college students, students reported data that closely resembled a number of the factors that Kuh et al. (2005) described as highly effective educational practices. This study, in which I examined the intersection of performance ensembles, place-based performance ensembles and college student engagement, was a

unique addition to extant research and is applicable to supporting culturally unique, underserved student populations of many types.

### **Implications for Practice**

This study was a unique and necessary examination on the ways in which participating in performance ensembles can lead underserved students to meaningfully engage with the college environment. Though respondents from this study were from a unique cultural and geographic area of the United States, the findings could be beneficial for administrators who are tasked with supporting the engagement, and ultimately graduation, of any underserved student population. For administrators interested in exploring and enhancing performance ensembles as a student engagement tool, data from the respondents leads to the following recommendations:

1. Administrators could recognize college fine arts physical facilities as not just rehearsal and performance spaces, but areas where valuable student engagement occurs. Students benefit when administrators view fine arts facilities on the college campuses as more than just general spaces in which ensembles rehearse and perform; rather, they are central to the experience of students who are in the performing arts. According to Kuh et. al (2005), spaces adapted for realistic student use “reduce the psychological size of the campus...and encourage participation in campus life” (p. 108). When administrators provide and protect space for performing arts students to congregate spontaneously, share meals,

rehearse privately or study, they should frame the effort as a student service that directly impacts engagement.

2. Administrators might consider adding place-based performance ensembles to the ensemble options typically offered at institutions of higher education. A common criticism among scholars is that researchers frequently fail to consider the cost of arts opportunities (Elpus, 2014; McCarthy et al., 2005). For typical college-level performance arts ensembles administrators provide instruments, performance and rehearsal spaces adequately modified for music or dance, and performance rights to composers' materials. As this study demonstrates, performance ensembles of varying types provide valuable pay-offs in terms of student engagement. Administrators might explore the creative role of place-based or culturally-relevant ensembles at their institutions as local artists may be available to help design curriculum, lead students, and capitalize on the availability of locally crafted instruments, community performance spaces, and traditional (i.e. public domain) repertoire. A secondary benefit in a place-based approach exists because it encourages students to connect to the local non-campus community in a mutually meaningful way—another important student engagement factor observed in the DEEP institutions described by Kuh et al. (2005).

3. Administrators, ensemble directors, and staff could consider actively recruiting new ensemble members from among the student population whether or not the recruited students have formal music ensemble

experience in their teen years. Students in this study, regardless of their formal, school-related or teacher-directed ensemble experiences, reported positive associations with ensemble participation at the college level. In the atmosphere of friendship, shared leadership, and mutual dependence that existed within the ensembles described in this study, students with varying levels of skills and abilities felt free to engage with their ensemble faculty and peers. Though college-level performance ensembles perform at highly public campus events and must exhibit a commiserate level of excellence, students who have demonstrated artistic self-drive and resourcefulness through informal arts participation (Green, 2006; Jenkins, 2011) stand to artistically benefit their college ensembles and also benefit *from* the engagement opportunities those ensembles provide. For students who don't have the requisite formal training to perform in college-level ensembles administrators and ensemble directors could offer auxiliary roles, or those that provide the ensemble with administrative, physical, or managerial support.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Publications like the RAND report (McCarthy et al, 2005), a landmark work on the economic and educational benefits of arts participation and other projects, designed to uncover how and to what effect secondary administrators apply arts curriculum (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012; Rabkin & Hedbert, 2011) prove that scholarly interest in arts participation is a robust area of exploration. Though the conclusions described in this study were derived from responses by a

small and homogenous sample of first-generation, Appalachian college students, the conclusions were not dissimilar from those reported in similar research on student engagement and arts participation.

Researchers with an interest in the promising outcomes reported in this small-scale study could expand the sample size to include more students and purposefully sample to capture the experiences of students from a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds. Expanding this study to include more and varied students would determine whether or not the conclusions described here were unique to first-generation, white Appalachian college students, or if the conclusions could be broadened to include Appalachian college students with other ethnic backgrounds and cultural experiences. Similarly, an in-depth case study examination of students who participate in place-based or culturally-relevant performance ensembles could provide valuable information on the impact of those arts offerings may have on students' daily lives.

In this study, I chose to examine specifically the experiences of first-generation, Appalachian college students at small (between 600-1040 students) Central Appalachian institutions that primarily served undergraduate, in-state students. However, first-generation Appalachian college students attend all types of institutions of higher education, in all regions of the United States and presumably, abroad. Broadening this research to include first-generation, Appalachian college students who attend medium sized, large, public, or regional institutions could provide worthwhile information on the meaning-making processes of students who find themselves in larger, diverse pools of peers.



Because of the sheer number of first-generation, Appalachian college students who attend large and geographically diverse institutions, the unique conclusions from related future research of this type would be applicable to a much greater body of students and administrators.

One intriguing conclusion from this study was the extent to which respondents' informal, pre-college performing arts experiences were linked to church participation. Though researchers continue to expand upon research related to arts participation in the public school context (Broh, 2002; Elpus, 2014; Garcia, Jones, & Isaacson, 2015; Hallam 2010; Horn, 1992; McCarthy et al., 2005; McNeal, 2005), researchers should begin to examine the roles that religious music, community, and culture play in the successful integration of Appalachian college students into the artistic and cultural fabric of college life.

The population of students who attend America's institutions of higher education has rarely been stagnant. The fluid nature of the United States' racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup, in consort with the ever-expanding course delivery options ensure there will *always* be a new population of students that higher education administrators must learn to serve and support. Strategies like those that give first-generation, Appalachian college students the opportunities to participate in performing arts ensembles may provide rich and valuable engagement experiences for students unfamiliar with the cultural norms of college life. Studies in which researchers examine creative offerings to engage, retain and support underserved students will always be relevant and needed additions to research in the field of higher education.

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**Appendix A**  
**Online Survey Protocol**

## Online Survey Protocol

### Pre-College Arts Experiences

1. Before college, had you already learned to play any musical instruments?

- Yes
- No (if NO skip to question 4)

2. Which instruments did you learn to play before college? Please select all that apply.

- Autoharp
  - Bagpipes
  - Banjo
  - Bass (acoustic upright)
  - Brass (tuba, trombone, trumpet, F horn, baritone)
  - Drum set
  - Fiddle
  - Guitar
  - Mandolin
  - Percussion (marching, concert, or pit)
  - Violin (orchestral), viola, or cello
  - Woodwind (flute, clarinet, saxophone, oboe, bassoon)
  - Other: Fill-in response
-

3. In what ways did you learn to play these instrument/s? Please select all that apply.

- Friend, family member, or neighbor
- Jamming with others in an informal group
- Private lessons
- School teacher in band/orchestra class
- Self-taught with recordings and videos
- Other: Fill-in

response \_\_\_\_\_

4. Before college, had you participated in school choir, church choir or other singing activities?

- Yes
- No (if NO skip to question 6)

5. In what type of singing activities did you participate before college? Please select all that apply.

Church “choir” conducted by director, reading from pre-arranged choral music

Church “singers” leading congregation in hymns from memory or hymnal

- Contemporary worship ensemble
- Family singing group
- School choir

Other: Fill-in response

---

6. Before college, had you participated in dance activities?

Yes

No (if NO skip to question 9)

7. In which styles or genres of dance had you participated before college? Please select all that apply.

African

American Square Dance

Ballet

Ballroom

Clogging

Contemporary

Flatfoot

Hip-Hop

Irish/Celtic

Latin

Swing

Tap

Other: Fill-in response

---

8. In what ways did you learn these dance genres? Please select all that apply.

Friend, family member, or neighbor



- Following along with other dancers in an informal group
  - Private lessons
  - School teacher in dance class or squad
  - Self-taught with recordings and videos
  - Other: Fill-in response
- 

9. Before college, did you participate in any other dance, instrumental, or singing activities that were not indicated in previous questions?

- No
  - Yes. Fill in response
- 

### **Demographic Information**

10. Were you born in the United States?

- Yes
- No (if NO skip to end)

11. Please indicate the county and state in which you were raised. Example:

Claiborne County, Tennessee.

Fill-in response

---

12. In which state do you currently attend college?

- Kentucky

- North Carolina
- West Virginia

13. What is your mother's level of education?

- Some high school
  - High school graduate
  - Associate's or technical degree
  - Bachelor's degree or higher
  - Unknown
  - Other: Fill-in response
- 

12. What is your father's level of education?

- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Associate's or technical degree
- Bachelor's degree or higher
- Unknown
- Other: Fill-in

response\_\_\_\_\_

### **Further Inquiry**

13. Would you be willing to participate in a short, in-person interview with the researcher about your experiences in college? Your interview would be audio recorded (so that I can use your responses in my research paper), and would take

place on your college campus at a time that is convenient for you. If yes, please submit an email address and phone number at which you can be reached.

Yes, I'm willing to be interviewed about my experiences. My email address and phone number is:

---

No, I'd rather not talk to the researcher.

**Appendix B**

**Online Survey Informed Consent**

## Online Survey Informed Consent Document

There is no known risk or discomforts associated with this research and there is no compensation for participation. The questionnaire will take approximately 8 minutes to complete and you must be 18 years or older to participate.

At the end of the survey, you can indicate whether or not you would consider participating in a personal interview about your college experiences. To indicate 'yes' please provide an email address and phone number at which you can be reached. The data collected from this research will be published in a doctoral dissertation however, responses will be aggregated and anonymous. For more information on how Qualtrics protects data, please see [www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement](http://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement).

Your participation is voluntary. There is no way to withdraw an anonymous questionnaire once it is submitted; however, you may choose not to complete the questionnaire at any time without penalty.

The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Schott. If you have any questions, please contact me at [rachel.schott@lmunet.edu](mailto:rachel.schott@lmunet.edu). If you have questions about the rights and welfare of research participants please contact the Chair of the Lincoln Memorial University Institutional Review Board, Dr. Kay Paris at (423) 869-6323 or [kay.paris@lmunet.edu](mailto:kay.paris@lmunet.edu).

I have read and understand the information above and I willingly give my consent to participate in this research study. I am 18 years of age or older.

Yes

No

**Appendix C**  
**Interview Protocol**

## **Interview Protocol**

### **Introduction**

I'm interested in learning about the college experiences of Appalachian college students – particularly those who, like you, participate in or have participated in arts ensembles that are directly tied to Appalachian/mountain culture. There are no right or wrong answers – I am aiming to learn more about your everyday college experiences and your feelings about those experiences. I have planned this interview to last no longer than thirty minutes, and I am *very* grateful for your time.

### **Interview Questions**

1. What led you to be involved in the [insert ensemble] at your college?
2. How do think your family feels about your participation in this group?
3. Tell me about your first few weeks in the ensemble. How did you know what was expected of you?
  - a. Within the group, how are responsibilities distributed or communicated?
4. Are there any special rituals or traditions associated with starting or graduating from the group?
5. How 'at home' do you feel in the rehearsal or office/organizing space set aside for this group?
6. In your opinion, how important is this ensemble to the rest of the students, faculty, leaders on your campus?

7. How important is this ensemble to you?
  8. Some people would say that Appalachian/mountain-based ensembles are not that different from other kinds of ensembles – marching band, dance squad, concert choir – do you agree or disagree? Why?
- B. Some people would say that the music young people in Appalachia listen to or learn to play themselves is not that different from the music that young people listen to or learn to play elsewhere in the United States. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
9. If a group of university presidents were sitting here with us, what recommendations would you make to them about the kinds of arts opportunities they should have available to their students?
  10. Is there anything else you'd like me to know about your participation in the Appalachian/mountain-ensemble, or about your college experience in general?

### **Conclusion**

Thanks again for your time. Your insights are important to my research. I'll send you a written transcript of the interview so that you have the opportunity to clarify your responses before the research paper is published.

### **Other Observations**

Other topics discussed

Documents obtained

Description of physical setting



**Appendix D**  
**Interview Informed Consent**

## **Informed Consent Document**

You are being asked to participate in a research study about how participating in Appalachian or mountain-based arts ensembles impacts students' college experiences. You are selected as a possible participant because you are in an Appalachian ensemble at your college, and indicated on an online questionnaire that you'd be willing to speak to the researcher about your experiences. Please read this form and ask any question before agreeing to be in the research. This study is being conducted by researchers at Lincoln Memorial University.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** The purpose of this research is to examine the pre-college arts experiences of Appalachian college students who participate in Appalachian arts ensembles and, guided by other research on positive student engagement, understand the impact that participation in these ensembles might have on Appalachian students who are the first in their generation to pursue higher education.

**DURATION:** The interview will take approximately 30 minutes of your time and take place on your college campus.

**ELIGIBILITY:** You must be 18 years or older, raised in the Appalachian region, and have participated in or are currently participating in, an Appalachian or mountain-based arts ensemble at your college or university.

**PROCEDURES:** If you agree to be a participant in this research, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Answer questions posed by the researcher about your activities, feelings, routines, and thoughts on your college experiences.
- Consent to being audiotaped during the interview so that the researcher can refer to your responses later
- Offer approximately 30 minutes of your time for the interview, to be held on your college campus
- Confirm that you are 18 years or older, were raised in the Appalachian region, and have participated in or are currently participating in, an Appalachian or mountain-based arts ensemble at your college or university.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** There are no known risks or benefits to this research.

**COMPENSATION:** There is no compensation for participating in this research.

### **PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY**

- Before audiotaping your interview, the researcher will ask you to choose a pseudonym (a name other than your own). Throughout the interview, and in the doctoral dissertation in which your words may be published, you

will only be identified by the pseudonym. The college you attend will also be identified by a pseudonym.

- Only the Lincoln Memorial University researcher, and the researcher's faculty sponsor, will have access to your anonymized interview responses.
- This consent form, once signed, will be kept in a lock location to which only the researcher has access.
- Your audiotaped interview will be transcribed (typewritten) into a Microsoft Word document by the researcher, with pseudonyms in place of your name and college. Only the researcher and the researcher's faculty sponsor will have access to the audiotaped recording of your anonymous interview. After three years' time, the audiotape will be destroyed.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** You should not sign this form unless you have read it and have been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with LMU. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask questions that you have about the study.

**CONTACTS and QUESTIONS:** The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Schott. If you have questions you may contact her at [rachel.schott@LMU.net.edu](mailto:rachel.schott@LMU.net.edu), or by text or phone at 423-419-0041. have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Chair of the LMU IRB, Dr. Kay Paris at (423) 869-6323, or by email [kay.paris@lmunet.edu](mailto:kay.paris@lmunet.edu).

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS:** If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed at the top of this form.

I have read and understand the information above and I willingly give my consent to participate in this research study. I am 18 years of age or older.

---

Subject Signature

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Subject

---

Researcher Signature

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Researcher

**A copy of this consent is being provided for your records**

**Appendix E**

**Online Survey Recruitment Email**

Dear student,

Hello! My name is Rachel Schott and I'm a doctoral student at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee. I'm writing to invite you to participate in my research study about students who perform in ensembles at Appalachian colleges. I received your contact information from [college] administrators because you are a member of [performance ensemble/s].

If you would like to participate, please fill out this online survey - it will take about 4 minutes to (you must be at least 18 years old to participate). If you are willing to participate in a personal interview about your college experiences please answer 'yes' to that question on the survey.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If have any questions, please email or contact me at [###-###-####].

Thank you very much! The link to the survey is below:

[https://lmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_55rdS95rv75OpSZ](https://lmu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_55rdS95rv75OpSZ)

Sincerely,

Rachel Schott

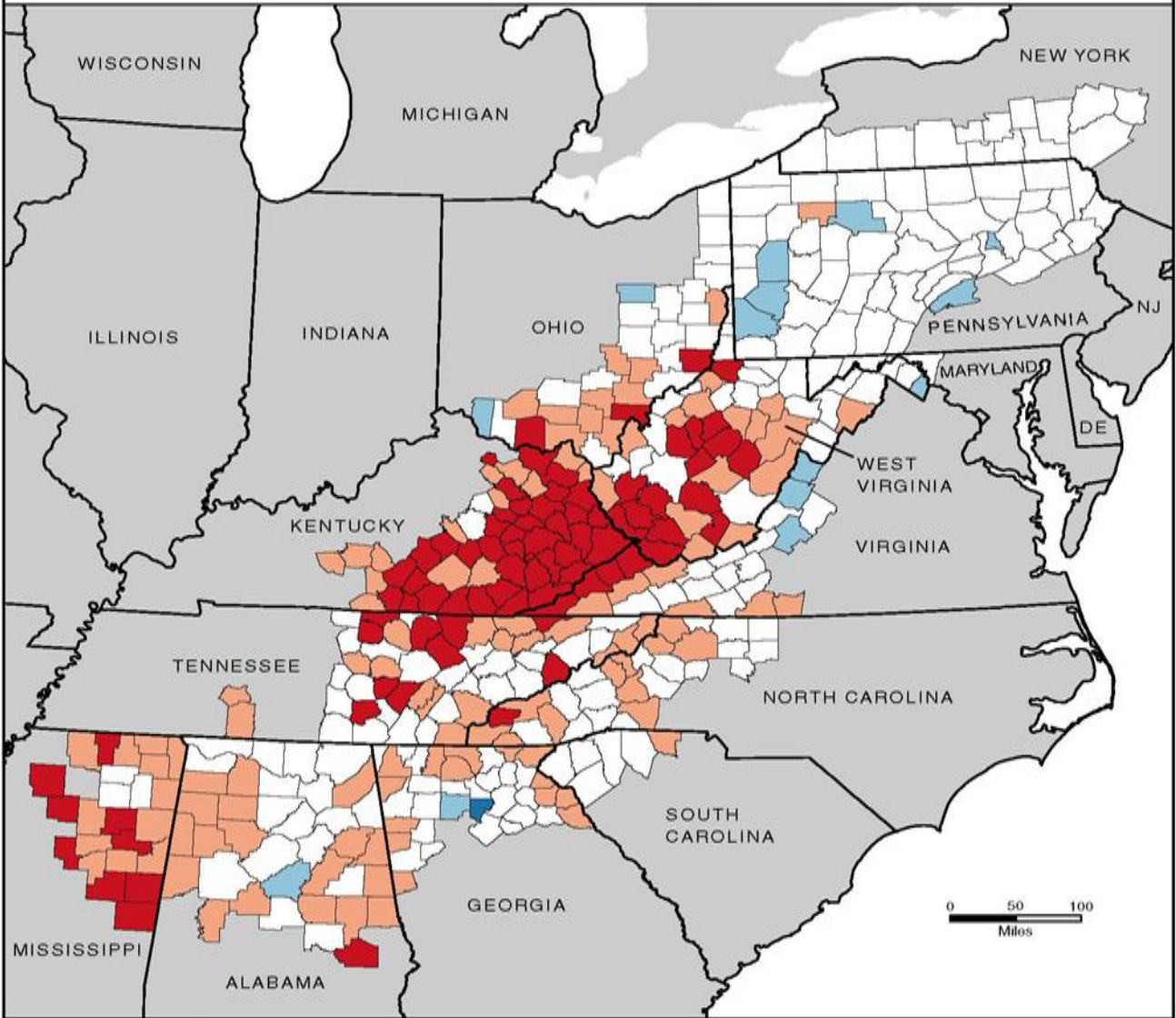


**Appendix F**

**County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2019**

# County Economic Status in Appalachia, Fiscal Year 2019

(Effective October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019)



The Appalachian Regional Commission uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties. See the reverse side for a description of each economic level.

### County Economic Levels

- Distressed (81)
- At-Risk (119)
- Transitional (205)
- Competitive (14)
- Attainment (1)



Map Created: August 2018

Data Sources:

Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2014–2016

Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS, 2016

Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012–2016

## County Economic Status Classification System, FY 2019

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) uses an index-based county economic classification system to identify and monitor the economic status of Appalachian counties. The system involves the creation of a national index of county economic status through a comparison of each county's averages for three economic indicators—three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate—with national averages. The resulting values are summed and averaged to create a composite index value for each county. Each county in the nation is then ranked, based on its composite index value, with higher values indicating higher levels of distress.

### *County Economic Levels*

Each Appalachian county is classified into one of five economic status designations, based on its position in the national ranking.

#### **Distressed**

Distressed counties are the most economically depressed counties. They rank in the worst 10 percent of the nation's counties.

#### **At-Risk**

At-Risk counties are those at risk of becoming economically distressed. They rank between the worst 10 percent and 25 percent of the nation's counties.

#### **Transitional**

Transitional counties are those transitioning between strong and weak economies. They make up the largest economic status designation. Transitional counties rank between the worst 25 percent and the best 25 percent of the nation's counties.

#### **Competitive**

Competitive counties are those that are able to compete in the national economy but are not in the highest 10 percent of the nation's counties. Counties ranking between the best 10 percent and 25 percent of the nation's counties are classified competitive.

#### **Attainment**

Attainment counties are the economically strongest counties. Counties ranking in the best 10 percent of the nation's counties are classified attainment.

ARC County Economic Status Designation by National Index Value Rank

