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The Importance of Cultural Context in Rural Education: Historical and Modern Perspectives

Cover Page Footnote

Devynn C. Campbell-Halfaker <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1444-8386> Margo A. Gregor <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2121-8282> We have no known conflict of interest to disclose. We would like to thank Dr. David Baker and Lizette Royer Barton for their contributions in conceptualizing the historical content of this paper. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Devynn Campbell-Halfaker, Department of Psychology, 290 E. Buchtel Ave., Akron, OH 44325. Email: dcc78@zips.uakron.edu

Many questions concerning the goals and curriculum of rural education from over 100 years ago continue to surround education in rural communities today. The function and structure of rural education were heavily debated in the first half of the 20th century. The current paper provides a broad historical context in which to understand the debates on rural education from 1900-1940 before considering important topics in rural education, including the goals of education, the structure of schools, teachers, and curriculum. Throughout the paper, examples of successful consideration of cultural and ecological systems that failed to reform, and the impact of marginalization on rural education will be presented. Historically, rural residents, educational psychologists, and politicians offered a range of contrasting needs and methods by which these needs should be met through education. In particular, the appropriate beneficiaries of rural education (e.g., children, rural communities, the nation as a whole) were a source of disagreement. Additionally, concerns of outside control and reforms that did not consider the cultural and structural context of rural areas were prevalent, including decisions about curriculum as well as training and supervision of teachers (e.g., Fuller, 1982). Examining the history of rural education highlights the importance of cultural competence in suggesting and implementing rural education reform and understanding the various functions of education in rural communities.

In addition to highlighting the history of education in an understudied population, the current paper will draw connections to current literature on rural education and highlight questions asked by both historical and modern rural educators and researchers. For example, what goals should rural education try to accomplish? How should issues of school funding and access to resources be resolved? What role should everyday rural lived experiences play in education? In addition, historical pitfalls remain problematic today, including the marginalization of rurality and failure to contextualize universal educational standards and expectations. As we are facing the same questions about rural education and issues of cultural competence that were evident in 1900-1940, the current paper offers an important opportunity to learn from the past and inform present decisions of those who are active in rural education, including educators, researchers, and activists.

Zeitgeist

Several factors converged during the early twentieth century that impacted debates on rural education, ranging from changes in the population and economy to emerging ideas about education. First, rural populations began to decline in the late nineteenth century (Theobald, 1995) and were outnumbered by the urban population for the first time between 1910 and 1920 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). During this period, the economy's transitioning focus to industry and manufacturing, lead to a higher concentration of job opportunities in cities

(Hirschman & Mogford, 2009), influencing more rural youth to leave their homes for the job opportunities there. Additionally, the belief grew that the “best” individuals (e.g., most intelligent, efficient, innovative) found in the rural population were migrating to cities (Brim, 1923; Theobald, 1995). The out-migration of individuals whose abilities showed promise for becoming efficient farmers was connected to growing concern regarding the prices of food. In particular, food price increases in the early twentieth century led to a push for greater efficiency in agricultural practices to reduce production costs for the amount of food required by the urban-industrial nation as a whole (Danbom, 1979). Further, it was a widely accepted perspective among wealthy White businessmen and politicians that increasing agricultural efficiency, and thereby maintaining the economy in the South specifically, required “efficient and contented [B]lack laborers” (p. 392) to stay in the South and work in agriculture (Anderson, 1978). The intersection of sentiments about the value and function of rural populations with the racism and oppression of the Jim Crow era culminated in the motivation to ensure Black Southerners stayed in low paying agricultural work to financially benefit White businessmen, to bring “racial order” (p. 372), and stabilize Southern politics (Anderson, 1978).

In response to these concerns, President Roosevelt created the Country Life Commission in 1908 to investigate the problematic departures from rural areas, specifically farms (Fuller, 1982; Theobald, 1995). The commission consisted of eight members who held hearings and sent questionnaires to thousands of farmers across the United States in order to understand problems associated with farming and rural life (Fuller, 1982; Theobald, 1995). The primary motive of the commission appeared to be preventing rural population loss to facilitate efficiency in food production (Brim, 1923; Danbom, 1979), although some historians argue that another primary goal was to increase the quality of life for rural inhabitants (Theobald, 1995). The movement created by this commission largely lost momentum by 1920, coinciding in part with lowered costs of food (Danbom, 1979). Although the commission focused on many aspects of rural life (e.g. church and community), its primary focus for reform was education, which was believed to be the most efficient way to implement lasting change (Danbom, 1979; Theobald, 1995). The commission made a range of recommendations for rural education, including curriculum changes (e.g., basing curriculum around daily agrarian life, teaching additional subjects); helping students develop an appreciation for country life and a sense of duty; and consolidating school districts (Danbom, 1979; Fuller, 1982; Theobald, 1995). Taken together, these changes were intended to “stem the tide of cityward migration” (Theobald, 1995, p. 171) and ensure an adequate population of competent farmers remained in rural areas. Given the intended outcomes and recommendations of the commission, Danbom (1979) and Fuller

(1982) describe the Country Life Commission as an attempt to impose urban values on rural areas, explaining its general failure to implement widespread change.

In general, relationships between rural and urban populations were filled with animosity and lacked understanding (e.g., Brim, 1923). In particular, urban populations did not understand or appreciate the needs and interests of rural areas and often took a superior or patronizing attitude toward rural communities due to rapid industrial, economic, and technological progress occurring in cities (Brim, 1923). In discussing strategies to increase interest and recruitment of well-qualified teachers to rural schools, Payne (1931) stated, "All that is necessary for breaking down the prejudice against the country is to make living conditions more attractive" (p. 203), further suggesting additions of communication technology (e.g., telephones, radio), comfort, and convenience (e.g., hot water). Even in advocating for improvements in rural education, Payne relied on downward urban to rural comparisons. Notably, Payne had experience in rural schools as both a student and a teacher, as well as administrative experience in several urban schools in Kentucky before his tenure as president of the State Teacher's College in Morehead, Kentucky (L. D., 2021). A general lack of understanding and superior attitude on the part of many people living in urban areas led to suspicion of urban motives by rural inhabitants, and in combination with a cultural value of conservatism, led to a distrust and misunderstanding of urban areas (Brim, 1923). In response to increasing urbanization, some farmers glorified farming and its superior role in society while denigrating cities and the people who lived there (Keppel, 1962). Thus, stereotypes about different geographical areas and the people who lived there and a sense of superiority about one's own way of life abounded in both urban and rural populations. This is important for understanding resistant responses to rural education reform since many proposed changes, such as requiring higher levels of education for teachers and consolidating school districts, were seen by some as an imposition of urban standards on the rural context (Fuller, 1982).

The rise of progressive education impacted the debates on rural education as well since the Country Life Commission was known to make suggestions that aligned with tenets of progressive education (Fuller, 1982). Although difficult to distill into a list of main ideas, progressive education generally focused on the interests and life experiences of students as a foundation for schoolwork; individualized instruction; socialized activity among students and a focus on the social environment more broadly; and working to appreciate global social heritage (Dunn, 1930; Nutterville, 1938, 1939). The suggestions made by the Country Life Commission, such as basing curriculum around the experiences of daily agrarian life and using these experiences to teach necessary subject matter, generally aligned with the approach of progressive education. Together, beliefs about rural areas held by those both within and outside of these areas, as well as the climate of education more generally impacted debates regarding rural education from 1900-1940.

Historical Goals of Rural Education

Rural education's primary goal following the Country Life Commission was encouraging children to stay in rural areas (Brim, 1923). Brim (1923), who was both a former student and current educator in rural schools (McVicker, 2003), stated that generally, the needs of students were viewed as "vocational needs of an agricultural people rather than... the larger demands of membership in a progressive society" (p. 16). Notably, this goal is closely associated with the motivations and suggestions of the Country Life Commission, specifically in attempting to reduce rural out-migration and maintaining a talented population of potential farmers (Brim, 1923; Theobald; 1995). The commission suggested that developing an appreciation for country life among students, as well as developing a sense of duty, would further the goal of keeping students in rural areas (Danbom, 1979; Theobald, 1995). Support for this goal came from within rural communities as well. For example, in response to increasing urbanization and industrialization, many state agricultural organizations advocated for educational changes that would defend farming as an occupation and improve rural quality of life by teaching agriculture and related sciences in schools (Keppel, 1962).

The goal of reducing rural out-migration through education was imposed on Black students as well. Industrial education (discussed below) was proposed and widely implemented, in the rural South as a means of "adapt[ing Black workers] to their 'natural environment' and unfit them for alternative occupations" (Anderson, 1978, p. 377). This sentiment reflects racist views of the cognitive and occupational abilities of Black Americans. Additionally, it positions the value of Black labor as benefiting White wealth given the expectation that a traditional education would encourage Black students to seek further education and higher-status jobs (Irons, 2002).

Reducing out-migration was not the only goal of rural education, however. Swain (1931) noted, "We do not want all our boys and girls on the farm, but we do want a fair share of America's best manhood and womanhood" (p. 229). This suggests that a competing, and much less common, goal was the same as that for all education: to prepare children for life and work and to promote social membership in society as a whole (Brim, 1923). Undoubtedly influenced by his own experiences, Brim (1923) believed these goals of rural elementary education to be the only appropriate goals, in part because they promoted democracy. Orville G. Brim (1883-1987) was raised in a rural Ohio community and taught in a one-room school before attending university. He went on to earn his Ph.D. and work in the field of rural education and teacher training (McVicker, 2003). The belief that education should be expansive to prepare children for a wide range of paths in life, not just rural life or agriculture, was held by some rural families as well, as some parents desired for their children to have the opportunity to move away and pursue

interests beyond what was available in rural areas (Fuller, 1982). In particular, Black families in the rural South viewed education as an opportunity to leave the incredibly stressful, exhausting, and poor paying work of farming or sharecropping to seek better employment (Johnson, 1941). It appears that systems of power recognized the potential of education to strengthen Black communities as well, as philanthropists and governments worked to ensure that the most appealing, if not the only, education available to Black children was industrial education that would provide the skills needed to remain in agricultural and domestic jobs (Anderson, 1978). Similar to historical debates on whether rural education should prepare students for work in rural areas or prepare them for a career of their choosing, regardless of location and social identities, modern rural education must weigh the costs and benefits of preparing students for a college education that will likely take them away from their home community (e.g., Staley, 2017).

Modern Out-Migration and Goals for Rural Education

“Rural brain drain” refers to widespread patterns of out-migration of rural youths, particularly those seeking or who have obtained higher education, who tend to leave rural areas in higher numbers than peers without college degrees (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). Education plays a significant role in rural brain drain, particularly in preparing and encouraging certain students to pursue a college education (e.g., Kryst et al., 2018). For example, recent Common Core Standards serve an important function of preparing high school students for college and careers (Freeman, 2014). Freeman (2014), an assistant professor of educational leadership with expertise in educational research and policy analysis (Freeman, 2011), suggested that an increased focus on college and career readiness contributes to a shift of understanding education as an individual asset rather than a societal asset and has the potential to increase mobility aspirations among rural youth. Thus, current federal policy and trends in education may serve to draw rural youth away from their communities. It is clear that the concerns about the out-migration of promising rural youth that prompted the Country Life Commission’s work over 100 years ago are still an important concern today.

In addition to pulls toward a college education, poor local economies in many rural areas also contribute to rural brain drain. Rural brain drain is understood to be both caused in part by, and contributing to, rural economic difficulties (e.g., Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka, 2019). Evidence from qualitative interviews of parents (Sherman & Sage, 2011) and school administrators (Kryst et al., 2018), as well as empirical data from current Appalachian college students (Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka, 2019), emphasize the availability of desirable employment opportunities as a primary factor impacting decisions to stay in or leave rural areas. Additional factors, such as connection to family, ties to the community or geographic area, and

a sense of civic duty to one's home community contribute to decisions to stay in local areas as well (Hlinka et al., 2015). For rural LGBTQ+ students, experiences of discrimination have been found to influence decisions to leave their local community to seek a college education (Winstead, 2015). Notably, LGBTQ+ students in rural areas experience a higher rate of victimization by peers based on their gender or sexual orientation and lower feelings of safety at school than students in urban and suburban areas (Palmer et al., 2012). Many students who plan to stay in rural areas plan to pursue careers that require attending a technical school or receiving on-the-job training (Staley, 2017). Others who plan to pursue a two- or four-year college degree and remain in their local area may plan their careers around available industries in the area (Hlinka et al., 2015). Suggestions to reduce rural brain drain revolve around policies to improve rural economies and help establish well-paying jobs (Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka, 2019). For example, a principal of one rural high school worked to form partnerships with local companies to offer scholarships to students in exchange for a commitment to return and work at the company after obtaining their degree (Kryst et al., 2019).

Despite calls for improving rural economies to increase viable career options for rural students who choose to stay (e.g., Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka, 2019), many rural students have been inadequately prepared for local career options (Staley, 2017) and experience economic disadvantage compared to peers who leave (Sherman & Sage, 2011). Current literature suggests that opportunities to leave rural areas in pursuit of a college education are not evenly distributed across rural students. For example, parents who represented the lowest socioeconomic status in one rural California area perceived that their children were given less attention and encouragement than other students, and these parents also did not encourage their children to attend college or see a college education as necessary for their development (Sherman & Sage, 2011). In addition, in a study of rural high school seniors who were planning to stay in the area and were not planning to attend a four-year university, students shared concerns that their high school coursework held little purpose for them as it was geared more towards college readiness and was not relevant to their chosen career paths (Staley, 2017). Thus, research suggests that not all students are encouraged to pursue college educations (Sherman & Sage, 2011), and the career preparation needs of students who are not college-bound are relatively neglected (Kryst et al., 2018; Staley, 2017). While Sherman and Sage (2011) describe students who do not leave for college as lacking both relevant job skills and social support, Kryst and colleagues (2018) describe a program pairing a "stayer" with a teacher who can provide mentorship that prepares them for a career in the local community. Adequately preparing students who plan to stay and work in their local area is a crucial role of rural schools (Staley, 2017) and has the potential to increase the well-being of both students and communities (Sherman & Sage, 2011). The Country Life Commission's ultimate concern was ensuring that

an adequate population of young people stayed in rural areas; it appears that the current climate of rural education is not doing all that it could to prepare students who plan to stay in rural areas for success, much less explicitly encouraging students to stay.

Decisions of rural educators to encourage students to stay in rural areas or leave for urban college and career experiences impact rural communities as well as students. Freeman (2014) suggested that Common Core Standards and an increasing focus on college and career readiness and preparation for success in a global marketplace increases the focus on individual benefits of educational attainment rather than societal benefits. This perspective is reflected by both school administrators (Kryst et al., 2018) and parents (Sherman & Sage, 2011) who discuss the difficult decision to encourage students to leave their local area in pursuit of a college education. Parents and school administrators discuss recognizing that although this is a loss for the community, it often appears the only way for young adults to attain economic stability and success. Calls to improve access to employment in rural areas (e.g. Vazzana & Rudi-Poloshka, 2019) would facilitate the needs of both individuals and rural communities. Given local and global economic contexts, educators, administrators, parents, and students continue to grapple with historical questions surrounding whose needs should be met by rural education, and thus whether goals of maintaining rural communities or preparing youth for success in a wide range of possible careers should be prioritized.

Historical Issues Facing Rural Schools and Teachers

Structure and Resources

Prior to the twentieth century, virtually all rural schools had just one room and one teacher responsible for teaching students of all ages and ability levels (Fuller, 1982). Although this began to change with the rise of school consolidation, from 1927-1928 approximately one-third of rural children still attended one-room schools (Dunn, 1930). The number of students in these schools ranged from less than 10 to more than 20 (Fuller, 1982; Theobald, 1995). Further, the availability of schools at all, particularly secondary education, was a concern for Southern Black students (Anderson, 1978). For example, in 1930, more than two-thirds of the Black population in the South lived in rural areas; however, less than half of Black high schools were located in rural areas (Anderson, 1978). Segregation of schools meant that Black students were unable to attend White high schools, and underfunding of Black schools (discussed in more detail below) meant that some communities could not afford a high school (Irons, 2002). Clearly, rural education presented an environment for teachers that was far different from consolidated urban schools, where students were separated and taught by grade level (Danbom, 1979).

In part due to the Country Life Commission, calls were made for the consolidation of rural schools. Consolidation, or the process of closing small rural schools to send children to larger graded schools that were often located farther from home, was seen as imperative to implement suggested curriculum changes and would offer other benefits, including a richer social life for students and a graded education system (Danbom, 1979; Fuller, 1982). In addition, consolidation was supported because it offered benefits such as increased supervision and access to adequate equipment (Dunn, 1930). However, many rural inhabitants opposed consolidation based on concerns of cost and loss of control over the local school system through a locally elected three-member school board (Fuller, 1982). Further, educators in one-room schools in the 1920s argued that it was not, in fact, necessary to consolidate school districts to implement progressive education practices, as was suggested by the Country Life Commission (Dunn, 1930).

Although the nature of one-room schools was not necessarily a barrier to progressive education, rural schools at the time often did not have the resources or infrastructure in place to implement changes proposed by education reformers. Income for farmers was generally low and given that schools were funded in large part by property taxes, rural schools were poorly funded (e.g., Swain, 1931). Swain (1931), a former state rural school commissioner in North Dakota and president of the State Teacher's College in Mayville, North Dakota (Northwest news, 1917), highlighted this inequity and called for increased income for farmers as well as greater funding for schools from other sources so that "the farm boys and farm girls can have a school that measures in some degree with the opportunities that come to the boys and girls in our urban centers today" (p. 230). The inequality between urban and rural schools was greatly magnified for Black students in the rural South where schools were segregated due to Jim Crow laws (e.g., Irons, 2002). In general, school systems in the rural South were vastly underfunded; while there was often not enough income to adequately fund one school, a disproportionately small amount of tax revenue was allocated to Black schools (e.g., Anderson, 1990). For example, from 1937-1938 Alabama had an average expenditure of \$49.37 per White student, versus only \$14.75 per their Black counterpart (Johnson, 1941). In addition to funding, physical facilities and equipment were unequal between urban and rural schools (Payne, 1931). Although creative, trained, and equipped rural educators were able to put the theory of progressive education into practice, this was simply not possible for teachers with inadequate training and equipment (Dunn, 1930). Again, these disparities were greatly magnified in Black schools (Johnson, 1941). Thus, it was not the inherent nature of small, rural schools themselves that was a barrier to education reform, but widespread policies that led to a systemic lack of access to necessary resources.

Teachers

Teachers in one-room schools were often poorly paid, which contributed to two concerning trends: hiring primarily young teachers with little to no experience and high turnover rates (Harvey, 1930; Theobald, 1995). Teachers often left before they had the experience needed to become effective educators and then were replaced by new teachers with no experience themselves (Fuller, 1982). Oppression compounded the already low wages available to rural teachers in the South for Black teachers (Anderson, 1990). For example, in Alabama, White teachers earned an average of \$827 annually while Black teachers earned \$393 per year on average (Johnson, 1941).

Regarding training, one estimate stated that half of the rural teachers did not complete high school, and only 2% completed education at a teachers' college (Brim, 1923). There was a push for more rigorous education for rural teachers by both the Country Life Commission (Danbom, 1979) and advocates of education equality more generally (Payne, 1931). Inaccessibility of teachers' colleges, and perceptions that they were pretensions, resulted in few rural teachers who were educated in educational philosophy, and when they were, it was rarely accompanied by instruction in practical application (Fuller, 1982). Compounding these problems was the general absence of specialized training and curriculums for rural teachers (Dunn, 1930; Harvey, 1930). This left rural teachers unprepared for teaching in a one-room school or for taking advantage of and teaching about rural culture, environments, and resources, and did not draw interest from qualified prospective teachers who did not grow up in a rural area (Harvey, 1930; Payne, 1931). Calls to action were made within professional teaching organizations to help resolve the injustices in rural education, for example creating legislation requiring equal pay for teachers across rural and urban areas and restructuring teachers' colleges to more adequately prepare rural teachers (Payne, 1931; Swain, 1931). These requests for advocacy called attention to the structural barriers to providing high-quality education to rural students.

A related concern was a lack of supervision of rural teachers. The local school board consisted of average citizens, and there were no professional educators to oversee teaching practices (Danbom, 1979). This lack of supervision was seen as a barrier to implementing progressive education (Dunn, 1930; Harvey, 1930). In contrast to the experiences of White teachers, Black teachers in the rural South were faced with overly restrictive, even coercive, supervision (Anderson, 1978). In 1903, the General Education Board was formed in collaboration between the United States government and a group of wealthy, White Northern "philanthropists" who had a vested economic interest in ensuring that an adequate population of Black workers remained in agriculture in the South, which they attempted to secure through pushing for industrial education for Black Southerners

(Anderson, 1978). In 1910, the Board established formal supervision structures at various levels. State supervisors, who were all White, oversaw the work of county supervising teachers, who were all Black and traveled between schools to deliver industrial instruction and curriculum to Black students (Anderson, 1978). In addition, specialized schools were developed to provide industrial education. When teachers began to implement their own curriculum rather than the suggested curriculum due to the recognition that this type of education was limiting to Black students, state supervisors convened to create a mandatory curriculum that was more strictly enforced (Anderson, 1978). Thus, through institutionalized racism and strict supervision by powerful outside forces (i.e., White, wealthy, urban men), Black Southern schools faced problems with teacher supervision that prevented the implementation of desired educational philosophy.

Modern Issues and Interventions for Rural Schools and Teachers

Teachers

Several barriers facing rural schools from 1900-1940 continue to pose difficulties in rural education today. Challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers in rural school districts are widely established in the literature (e.g., Ulferts, 2016). While efforts to address this problem are increasingly being explored in universities, preservice teachers generally have very limited access to field experience in rural schools, in large part due to the frequently large geographic distance between rural areas and universities (Mitchell et al., 2019). One innovation in teacher training programs to recruit rural teachers is brief, early exposure to rural schools and teachers. Mitchell and colleagues (2019) describe several such programs, such as a half-day observation in a rural school where students can observe unique features of rural schools, such as classes with combined grade levels and teachers that are responsible for more than one subject, and a week-long intensive field placement where students live and teach for a week in a rural school.

However, it is not enough to simply develop an interest in teaching in a rural school; preservice teachers must also be adequately trained. Schulte (2018) describes one program that prepares preservice teachers to work in rural schools. Before co-teaching with an established teacher for a year in a rural school, students are required to complete a study of the local community, in particular looking to address any preconceived notions of rural areas, learn about strengths and resources of the community, and prepare for place-based education (Schulte, 2018). Training and recruitment efforts such as these hold promise for improving rural education. However, these examples appear to be the exception rather than the rule (Mitchell et al., 2019). It will require significant effort and investment on the part of universities to develop relationships with rural school districts, determine how to best supervise students who are in field placements geographically distant from

their universities, and provide a curriculum that adequately prepares preservice teachers for these experiences (Mitchell et al., 2019; Schulte, 2018). Similar to Payne's (1931) call for change in teachers' colleges to support rural education, universities continue to have an important role in improving rural education today in preparing future teachers for the unique aspects of the educational environment in rural areas (e.g., small class sizes, teaching more than one subject) as well as the importance of culture and community to rural education.

Structure and Resources

In addition to the lack of specific preparation for teaching in rural areas, there is continuing evidence that rural teachers are underpaid compared to their urban and suburban counterparts (Jimerson, 2005; Ulferts, 2016). This inequality contributes to difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified rural teachers (Ulferts, 2016). The underpayment of rural teachers is related to financial difficulties in rural districts more broadly. State funding for schools is based in part on school enrollment, which means that small rural schools in areas that are often experiencing population decline and aging populations receive inadequate state funding (Blauwkamp et al., 2011). Policymakers continue to suggest school district consolidation as a solution to these financial burdens (Blauwkamp et al., 2011). However, there are mixed results about the outcomes of district consolidation. Cooley and Floyd (2013) found that across consolidated school districts in Texas, there was no reduction in cost per student, and in some cases, the cost per student increased. In addition, the expected benefits in performance on state standardized tests did not materialize (Cooley & Floyd, 2013). On the other hand, Nitta and colleagues (2010) found that students in consolidated school districts in Arkansas valued the increase in academic and social opportunities afforded by consolidation while acknowledging the drawbacks of larger class sizes and more distant relationships with teachers. In this particular case, students experienced the benefits that historic champions of consolidation would have expected (e.g., Fuller, 1982).

Another important consideration in consolidation is the impact on rural communities. Because schools play a central role in community life, closing a school can have far-reaching impacts on rural communities (Blauwkamp et al., 2011). Blauwkamp and colleagues (2011) discussed several cases of consolidation in Nebraska. Community outcomes in these cases included a loss of economic activity as businesses closed when people began purchasing goods out of town where their children attended school after consolidation, as well as a loss of community improvement projects and involvement with the school when the consolidated school became detached from any specific feeder community. Through detaching school experiences from community life, students' ties to their community are loosened and out-migration increases; with fewer students,

consolidation is more likely to occur, thus creating a feedback loop between depopulation and consolidation (Blauwkamp et al., 2011). The concerns surrounding school district consolidation, a negative impact on community life on one hand and a financial need on the other, mirror debates on consolidation over 100 years ago. It is notable that once again, financial pressures often take precedence over the impacts on the lived experiences of people in rural communities, and rural education and community life continue to have a complex reciprocal impact on one another.

Several routes to improving access to resources for rural schools are suggested in the literature. First, Blauwkamp and colleagues (2011) suggest that rural economic revitalization is the solution to breaking the cycle of consolidation and depopulation, and notes trends such as remote employment and a resurgence of local, small-scale agriculture as particularly promising in this regard. In fact, in the three cases these researchers studied, the only rural school that was able to avoid consolidation was in the community that had the largest population (2,964 residents in 2000) and the most stable and profitable economy (Blauwkamp, 2011). Given that rural young adults often leave their home communities due to local economic difficulties (Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka, 2019), improving local economies holds promise in reducing out-migration both by offering employment opportunities as well as reducing the need for consolidation, which could lead to increased ties to local communities for students. Reducing out-migration of children and youth offers a direct improvement to schools as well through increased funding (Blauwkamp et al., 2011). In addition, increasing additional funding to, and consideration of, the unique situation in rural education through factors such as small class size and limited access to teachers, in federal education legislation is critical (Jimerson, 2005). Notably, the Every Student Succeeds Act, the replacement of No Child Left Behind, offers additional funding opportunities for rural schools and requires states to explicitly include rural districts in both their planning processes and allocation of resources (Brenner, 2016). This marks a critical shift towards increasing focus on equity in rural education through federal legislation and funding, and this shift will be crucial in continuing to work toward educational equity in rural areas. While calls for equitable pay for teachers and adequate access to necessary educational tools and resources that began in the early twentieth century (Dunn, 1930; Payne, 1931) have not yet been met, advocacy on behalf of rural education has begun to be met with an increase in resources from the federal government. Continued advocacy will be essential in maintaining and increasing these gains.

Historical Rural Curriculum

One area that was a particular source of debate among rural parents and advocates of education reform was the rural curriculum. Traditionally, rural schools were focused on teaching the "three R's"- reading, writing, and arithmetic, with a bit of geography or history as well (Theobald, 1995). These subjects were taught through memorization and recitation. Although this was not considered the most effective method of education at the time, it served an important role in maintaining classroom control in what could be difficult to manage in the educational environment (Theobald, 1995). Reformers often saw this curriculum as too narrow (Danbom, 1979). However, unlike in urban areas, a good deal of socialization happened within the community and family, which justified a narrow curriculum that was intended to teach only what couldn't be taught at home (Danbom, 1979; Fuller, 1982).

One common suggestion was to base instruction on rural experiences. This was supported by the Country Life Commission in order to instill a love of country life (Theobald, 1995), and by progressive education, as this would mean teaching through children's daily experiences (Dunn, 1930). Educational psychologist John Dewey, whose work contributed significantly to theory and practice of progressive education (Theobald, 1995), stated, "Facts which are not led up to out of something which has previously occupied a significant place for its own sake in the child's life, are apt to be dead and barren" (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p.73). He argued that using children's everyday experiences should be organized in such a way as to build their conscious knowledge of academic subjects (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). In practice, this involved the inclusion of nature study, agriculture, physical education, and home economics in rural school curriculums (Brim, 1923; Danbom, 1979). A one-room school in Missouri implemented these techniques by teaching students about agriculture, biology, and budgeting, through student-led maintenance and beautification of school grounds (Harvey, 1930). Advocates of progressive education in rural schools, such as Dunn (1930), explained that the experiences and interests of rural children served as a gateway to understanding universal principles and a starting point for later exploration beyond the rural environment. Teaching through rural experience was not an end in itself, nor an attempt to limit life experiences, but acted rather to facilitate learning in a wide range of subjects.

However, there was pushback against the focus on rural experiences in schools among some rural families, as schools were valued for teaching what could not be learned at home or on the farm (e.g., the three R's; Fuller, 1982). In some schools, vocational training for a future in agriculture began as early as elementary school (Brim, 1923). Brim (1923) condemned this practice as undemocratic, as it prevented freedom to explore interests and freely choose a vocation. Moreover, industrial education was posited as a means to uphold the structures of power and

oppression of racism and wealth in the rural south (e.g., Anderson, 1978). Given that in many rural areas no Black secondary education was available if students wanted to obtain secondary education, they were forced to attend county training schools established by the General Education Board (Anderson, 1978). These schools taught skills such as agriculture, cooking, sewing, woodworking, gardening, and canning (Anderson, 1978). It appears that making rural experience central to the curriculum was perceived to serve several incompatible outcomes. Whether educators and reformers saw the goals of rural education as maintaining rural populations or preparing students for life and work more broadly, and whether they valued curriculum focused on everyday experiences for the purpose of specific and pre-determined vocational training or to stimulate broader exploration determined the level of support for this educational technique.

In the debates on rural education, it appears that the budding field of educational psychology placed more emphasis on issues relevant to the rural curriculum than any other area of debate. Research methods in educational psychology provided an opportunity to move away from “*a priori*, philosophical theory and emotional exhortations based on traditional viewpoints” (p. 601) that had previously guided education (Hall-Quest, 1915). Hall-Quest (1915) identified a scientific and open-minded view that was necessary to optimize systems of education. Additionally, Thorndike (1910) suggested that psychology could be used to help determine appropriate teaching methods, for example by explaining the mechanisms of effective methods of teaching or by measuring changes in knowledge or skill that would help determine the results of a particular method.

The respective usefulness of industrial education, agricultural education, and nature study were examined by various researchers in order to try to better understand effective educational methodology. For example, research found a small advantage for an applied science approach compared to a pure science approach (focusing on economic applications of facts instead of learning facts for their own sake) in a high school zoology class (Bricker, 1912; Gilbert & Bagley, 1910) and found nature study in elementary grades to be an adequate foundation for a formal high school botany course (Grier, 1919). These studies supported the use of nature study and the general consensus of the time that students should learn about agricultural principles before applying them, rather than starting with hands-on experience (Bricker, 1912).

For some educators (e.g., Brim, 1923), the use of rural experiences as teaching tools exemplified in the example of nature study, was insufficient. Although Brim (1923) saw utilizing rural experiences in education as important, he believed that in order to use these methods to accomplish the goal of a well-rounded and democratic education, it was crucial to supplement rural experiences with non-rural experiences. Moreover, he believed that education should provide experiences that could not be provided by the home. He suggested bridging the gap between

rural and urban areas by providing students with socialization that extended beyond rural areas and providing contact with modern standards. Dunn (1930) suggested that "in the social and economic life about [the rural school] are to be found, in a simple and accessible form, examples of all the great institutions and occupations of the world" (p. 469). Dunn argued that facilitating experiences with, and interest in, these diverse aspects of rural life would lead to exploration outside of their own community.

In addition to adding rural experiences to the curriculum, it was suggested by education reformers that cultural activities such as art, music, and literature be added both to support the holistic development of children and to maintain rural populations (Brim, 1923; Danbom, 1979). It appears that there was a general consensus among professional educators and reformers that rural curriculums should be expanded, but differences existed in opinion regarding rationale and methodology.

Modern Rural Curriculum

Place-based education, or educational methods that aim to connect schools and local communities (Waller & Barrentine, 2015), continues to play an important role in rural education today (Donovan, 2016). Empirical research (e.g., Donovan, 2016) as well as teachers' anecdotal observations support a range of benefits of place-based education that tend to fall into two categories: social and academic (Jennings et al., 2005). Social benefits include a sense of connection to one's community, which may be demonstrated by a feeling of protectiveness (Donovan, 2016) or a sense of appreciation for one's environment (Jennings et al., 2005). In addition, place-based education can help instill in rural students a sense of social responsibility and empower them to act for positive social change in their area (Donovan, 2016; Jennings et al., 2005). These connections and understanding of community can help students develop a sense of personal identity as well (Donovan, 2016). Donovan (2016) described the growth of rural middle school students through a series of writing assignments that encouraged them to think about their connection to their community. Over time, students demonstrated a deepening understanding of their community that became more complex and nuanced, resulting in an ability to recognize its shortcomings and inequalities as well as its strengths. Students additionally reported increased experiences of community protectiveness.

Not only did the place-based writing described by Donovan (2016) result in social gains for students, it also led to increased academic ability. Specifically, students developed a more authentic voice and made fewer mechanical errors when responding to place-based writing prompts. Furthermore, many teachers report that students are more motivated by, and engaged in, place-based assignments and may

experience increased confidence (Jennings et al., 2005; Rearden & Bertling, 2019). The benefits of place-based education for rural students align with the historical perspectives of both progressive educators, who identified academic benefits of helping children learn through their own life experiences (Dunn, 1930), and supporters of the Country Life movement who expected place-based education to have social benefits in connecting students to their local communities and environments (Theobald, 1995). Donovan (2016) suggested that using place-based teaching and the resulting connection to the community may help fight against conditions that lead to rural brain drain.

Current literature on place-based education in rural areas highlights a potential tension between this approach to education and the widespread prioritization of standardization in education in the United States (Jennings et al., 2005). Jennings and colleagues (2005) highlight concerns that the goal of standardization is to prepare students for global markets and workplaces which unfortunately may disincentivize a place-based approach. The curriculum has moved toward standardization as well. Waller and Barrentine (2015) found that one standardized reading curriculum offered little opportunity to make connections with the local context. Despite these difficulties, it is possible to find complementarity between standards and place-based teaching (Jennings et al., 2005). With proper planning and intentionality, rural teachers can make use of their knowledge of and connection to their local community to supplement standard curriculums and connect materials to the students' location and context (Waller & Barrentine, 2015).

The tension between standardization and place-based education mirrors the historical conflict between vocational and industrial education and a more universal approach to education in rural areas. While some educators argued that rural education should be well-rounded to provide students a foundation and opportunity for a vocation of their choosing (e.g., Brim, 1923), akin to standardization, others argued for education that focused on daily experiences with agriculture and nature to enhance learning and maintain a rural population of farmers (Dunn, 1930; Theobald, 1995), in line with modern place-based education. It is also notable that the unique knowledge and resources available in rural areas that many reformers fought to include in rural curriculums in the early twentieth century are perceived by many rural educators today to be undervalued in the context of a standardized approach to education. Educators such as Harvey (1930) and Dunn (1930) successfully demonstrated that rural life experiences, relationships, and surroundings can be used to help students learn about a range of subjects within the existing one-room school systems during a time when many other rural teachers believed that rural experiences were insufficient, too simplistic or limited, to adequately use in progressive education (Dunn, 1930). Despite the work of educators such as these to demonstrate the inherent value in rural experiences and

culture and make education relevant and meaningful for rural students, history appears to be repeating itself. Rural education is dominated by a one-size-fits-all approach that does not take advantage of the rural context to assist in meeting the needs of rural students.

Case Example: The Montana Life Project

An examination of the history and current trends in rural education highlights the importance of considering the context of rural culture and experiences. Debates suggest that it is possible to educate students in a well-rounded way, yet still connect them to their local context. However, questions remained around whether education should primarily benefit students through opening a wide range of possibilities for career choices or should primarily benefit communities these students live in by reducing out-migration. It is also important to consider the available resources, both in funding and in the availability of qualified teachers, and the way that structural barriers can create inequality when considering rural education. An excellent example of the ways in which the various suggestions made by education reformers and the Country Life Commission were practically applied is the Montana Life Project.

The Montana Life Project successfully integrated apparently contrasting goals and viewpoints and offers a strong example of cultural competence in rural education. This project was the work of Catherine Nutterville (1887-1982) during her term as president of the Montana Education Association (MEA) from 1937-1938 (Nutterville, 1937a). Although the project was not specifically rural in nature, Montana was a primarily rural state and thus many aspects of the debates discussed above are applicable here. The Montana Life Project created a clearinghouse of information about the art, music, history, literature, and culture of Montana for use in classrooms across the state (MEA, ca. 1937). It was suggested that it would be valuable to provide teachers with “the history of the immediate vicinity where she finds herself so that by vitalizing the immediate environment, all history or geography or economics or art will become a living reality to her pupils” (p. 1). Thus, this project implemented the use of children’s daily experiences as a means to teach important subjects. For example, students might create art inspired by their natural surroundings, write a play about their states’ history in English class, or read the works of authors from Montana (MEA, ca. 1937; Nutterville, 1937a, ca. 1938). Nutterville (ca. 1938) discussed the importance of discussing familiar situations in understandable language as an aspect of progressive education. One specific example of this was the use of a case study of an Italian mining family in Butte, Montana, to teach students to apply sociological principles (Nutterville, 1937a). Students in Butte would likely have experiences with mining or mining families, and thus social science principles could be taught through this familiar experience.

The Montana Life Project and the examples of including Montana life experiences and culture in the curriculum provided by Nutterville provide a practical application of teaching through students' everyday experiences and resemble modern place-based education techniques (e.g., Rearden & Bertling, 2019). The Country Life Commission and certain rural farmers supported a curriculum that revolved around daily agrarian life (e.g., Keppel, 1962; Theobald, 1995). Similarly, progressive education supported the use of everyday experiences in education (Dunn, 1930). Thus, the Montana Life Project offered a tangible example of the ways in which progressive and rural education could be combined to achieve overlapping objectives.

Although one goal of the Montana Life Project was certainly to bring to life students' local culture, the aim was not to make students blindly committed to their own culture and heritage but to understand and evaluate both their own culture and cultures that were more distant (MEA, ca. 1937). As a way to implement this broader experience, it was suggested that schools across the state share projects completed by their students with one another (Nutterville, ca. 1938). The sharing of ideas and experiences between urban and rural areas exemplifies Brim's (1923) suggestion of bridging the country and city and creating cooperation and understanding between these groups. In addition to building knowledge and respect for other cultures, Nutterville (ca. 1937b) saw schools as playing an important role in improving and caring for communities. Specifically, teaching social sciences and integrating local culture and experiences could help develop a personal sense of responsibility and pride for one's community; modern research has similarly supported the role of place-based education in helping students establish a sense of connection and responsibility to their community (Donovan, 2016; Jennings et al., 2005). Thus, this approach held promise both in helping students develop as global citizens as well as to increase ties to one's local community. Nutterville's description of the potential social outcomes of the Montana Life Project, including increasing connection both to other cultures and one's own, demonstrated that increasing ties to one's own community and broadening knowledge of, and experiences with, society more broadly were not mutually exclusive.

Despite clearly associating the Montana Life Project with the progressive education movement, Nutterville (1937a) was clear that her goal was not to indoctrinate all Montana teachers into the movement. She discussed the importance of providing adequate training before implementing techniques of progressive education and found fault with supervisors who did not follow this approach. This is perhaps a unique approach from that taken by that of the Country Life Commission, who wished to impose suggestions, some of which had originated in urban education systems, upon rural areas despite underlying differences in access to resources, such as school funding and well-trained teachers. Similarly, Nutterville acknowledged that although in many cases, it was unlikely that Montana

schools would move away from a subject-based curriculum, using material from the Montana Life Project could add value to the education offered within the current system (Nutterville, ca. 1937b). Nutterville attempted to take into account the perspectives of her audience and present her progressive agenda in a non-threatening and compassionate way. She appeared to recognize the reality of the widespread approach to education in Montana, as well as the available resources and training, and suggest incremental steps toward implementing progressive education rather than proposing drastic, perhaps unrealistic, changes. Perhaps her own experiences as a teacher in a one-room school (United States Congress, 1966) facilitated an approach of compromise and gradual change that was likely to be more acceptable to rural teachers and families.

The Montana Life Project serves as a representation of the expansion of the curriculum to include life experiences of rural students as well as art, music, and literature; helping promote social membership on a larger scale, and an alternative approach to enacting educational change. This case exemplifies the many nuances of debates on rural education, as well as the impact of the zeitgeist and historical context. Given the differing perspectives on the appropriate goals and methods of rural education, there were many diverse examples of rural education; however, the Montana Life Project offers a unique example of an approach to rural education from 1900-1940.

Reflections on the Role of Educational Psychology

Educational psychology contributed to historical debates on rural education in several ways. First, early educational psychologists such as John Dewey (Alexander et al., 2012) played an integral role in developing and supporting progressive education. He wrote *Schools of Tomorrow* with his daughter, Evelyn, in 1915. This book described the theory and practice of progressive education, describing a range of classroom experiences and activities, such as the use of nature study to learn about the life cycle of plants and acting out classical literature (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). In addition, early educational research investigated the efficacy of various vocational and industrial educational methods (e.g., Gilbert & Bagley, 1910).

However, there were also significant gaps in the contribution of educational psychology to rural education historically. Göncö and Gauvain (2012) note that until the late 20th century, educational psychology failed to consider the role of culture in learning and development. Reflecting this weakness, research on the efficacy of instructional methodology advocated by rural education reformers (e.g., Gilbert & Bagley, 1910) failed to consider the cultural context in which these methods were suggested, including the perceptions of rural areas by society more broadly or the differences in vocational skills required by urban and rural students.

In addition, despite a focus by educational psychology at the time on individual differences, including interest and ability (Hall-Quest, 1915), and a theoretical recognition of the importance of a child's interests and abilities in relation to vocational education (B., 1910), little research or practice in educational psychology appears to have addressed these concerns.

There are both potential contributions and gaps in the role of educational psychology in the current state of rural education. Much of the contemporary literature summarized in the current paper is drawn from journals focused on rural education practice (e.g., Donovan, 2016), as there is a paucity of scholarly work published in educational psychology journals that focuses on rural education. This reflects the tenuous, often strained relationship between educational psychology and practice described by Alexander and colleagues (2012). In contrast, research focused on the educational experiences and development of Black students in particular, and multicultural research, in general, is represented in educational psychology journals but is very rarely published in rural education practice journals (see Reed, 2010 for an exception). Göncö and Gauvain (2012) recommend that future educational psychology research focus on cultural communities as a unit of analysis, answering questions about drivers of learning and similarities and differences to other cultural communities. Given this, future educational psychology studies that focus on rurality in general, and identities such as race that intersect with rurality, are warranted. In addition, gaps in academic achievement between Black and White students are significantly influenced by intergenerational factors, including the education level, neighborhood, and socioeconomic status of Black students' grandparents (Yeung, 2012). The historical racial inequalities in rural education thus can be understood to contribute directly to the experience of Black rural students today, which underscores the need for rural education research that focuses on the experiences of Black students.

Current educational psychology theory and research offer potential avenues for exploration in rural education as well. For example, the theory of dialectical constructivism focuses on the interaction between a person and their environment in building knowledge and relies on the use of authentic tasks, or students' previous experiences, interests, and culture, to teach material (O'Donnell, 2012). This theoretical lens could be utilized to further explore place-based education and identify additional ways in which students' experiences in their rural context can be used to build their academic knowledge base. In addition, recent research evidence regarding the impact of neighborhood characteristics, such as positive and negative social dynamics, on school achievement (Chen & Brooks-Gunn, 2012) could be applied to rural settings. For example, Chen and Brooks-Gunn (2012) summarize research on the positive impacts that social cohesion in one's neighborhood can have on educational outcomes. Research has found higher rates of a perceived sense of community among rural compared to urban and suburban

neighborhoods (Kitchen et al., 2012), exploring the unique protective factors of rural community cohesion for students is warranted.

Conclusion

Many common threads run from the history of rural education from 1900-1940 to today. Questions of whether rural education should benefit individual students or their communities and whether to connect curriculum to everyday rural experiences are still modern topics of debate. In many ways, the current status of rural education appears to have united contrasting historical aspects of progressive education and the Country Life movement. While progressive education prized a focus on individual students (Dunn, 1930), the Country Life Commission focused heavily on the potential benefits of rural education for rural communities and society at large (Theobald, 1995). Today, there is a significant focus on individual benefits of rural education through college and career preparation (Freeman, 2014) as well as the opportunity to cultivate a sense of civic duty or desire to improve one's community through place-based education (Donovan, 2016). In addition, strengthening rural economies holds promise to benefit rural communities and students simultaneously through education systems (Blauwkamp et al., 2011; Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka, 2019). While in some ways rural education may be working toward reconciling the value of education for the individual and rural communities, this is a question that remains more than 100 years after it was originally posed.

Another theme that is consistent from history to today is the importance of cultural competence. Successful consideration of culture was demonstrated by advocates of progressive education encouraging teachers to rely on the strengths of rural environments and communities in their teaching (Dunn, 1930; MEA, ca. 1937). In modern rural education, a continued push to acknowledge and utilize the strengths of rural areas, including close-knit community relationships and natural resources, is a positive example of cultural competence (Donovan, 2016; Kryst, 2018). In addition, themes of poor cultural competence connect modern rural education to history. Historically, members of rural communities resisted reforms, such as consolidation, that were seen as pushing them towards urbanization rather than respecting the inherent differences between rural and urban areas (Fuller, 1982). Similarly, some educators and researchers have identified standardization and an emphasis on college preparation as a push toward urbanization (Freeman, 2014). In addition to valuing differences between rural and urban areas, consideration of structures and systems in rural areas historically, such as underfunding of schools and teachers (Swain, 1931), would have improved educational recommendations and follow through. This is an area in which modern approaches to rural education are more successful. For example, the role of local

economies on rural brain drain is acknowledged through relevant economic growth suggestions (e.g., Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka, 2019), and federal education legislation has recognized that rural school systems face unique educational and funding situations not encountered in urban and suburban schools resulting in increased funding and legislative consideration of rural school needs (Brenner, 2016; Jimerson, 2005).

A final thread that connects historic and modern rural education is difficulties that can arise from working with available and at times limited, resources. While it was possible to implement progressive education with a small group of students across a wide age range, it was very difficult for teachers of one-room schools to do this without adequate equipment and facilities (Dunn, 1930). Similarly, modern smaller and more remote rural schools tend to have more limited offerings for AP courses and other college preparation in comparison with larger schools that are closer to colleges or other educational resources (Kryst et al., 2018). In addition, it requires additional effort to incorporate rural experiences and context into the standardized curriculum (Waller & Barrentine, 2015), just as it required extra effort and creativity on the part of teachers in the early twentieth century who generally were not trained in how to do this (Dunn, 1930). In addition to curricular constraints, inadequate access to rural-specific training for preservice teachers is another trend that has continued from history (Payne, 1930) to today (Mitchell et al., 2019). A lack of adequate training in rural place-based education techniques (e.g., Jimerson, 2005) compounds the difficulty of implementation in an already limited standardized education system. Lack of resources and culturally informed standardized approaches to education continue to be barriers in rural education.

Implications

Several important implications can be drawn from the study of the history of rural education and its connection to the present. First, the importance of considering rural culture and context, including both strengths and barriers, is important. By attending to sociocultural context in educational experiences, students are able to grow both individually and as a citizen of their community (e.g., Donovan, 2016). In addition, cultural considerations can be used to make universal approaches more appropriate for rural students, such as by modifying the curriculum (Waller & Barrentine, 2015) or identifying ways to implement progressive education without consolidation (Harvey, 1930).

Second, it is important to advocate for equality and social justice for rural students. This may include advocating for policy to improve rural economies (Blauwkamp et al., 2011; Vazzana & Rudi-Polloshka, 2019) or providing necessary supports and opportunities to students who may lack resources or social support necessary to pursue a college education (Kryst et al., 2018; Sherman & Sage, 2011).

Historic advocacy for equal pay for rural teachers (Payne, 1931) and more equitable funding for rural schools (Swain, 1931) offer examples of recognizing the impact of ecological factors on rural education and intervening at those levels.

Third, it is imperative that future research examine the experiences of rural students with marginalized and underrepresented identities, such as students of color and LGBTQ+ students. Existing research has identified both an elevated risk of discrimination and the impact of this discrimination on decisions to leave one's community for LGBTQ+ students (Palmer et al., 2012; Winstead, 2015). Further, given intergenerational impacts on Black students' educational outcomes (Yeung, 2012), research that seeks to understand the experience of today's Black students in light of the oppression against their ancestors in rural school systems is warranted. Given historical and modern experiences of oppression and discrimination, consideration of the impact of place-based education intended to foster a connection to the community (e.g., Donovan, 2016) on underrepresented rural students seems particularly important. Research on the unique experiences of rural students of color and LGBTQ+ students may offer suggestions for school-based interventions to protect students from harm and discrimination, as well as ways to leverage the strengths of rural schools and communities to support these students.

Taken together, understanding the historical context of rural education and the ways in which this history impacts modern issues provides important implications for both intervention and future research. Continuing to increase cultural competence and social justice in rural education is essential to creating an optimal educational environment with lasting effects on the futures of rural young adults and the health and wellness of rural communities more broadly.

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