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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Christina Jo Wright

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky
2010

WHY DO THEY GO?

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By

Christina Jo Wright

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Alan DeYoung, Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation

Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WHY DO THEY GO? COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS AND POST-SECONDARY PURSUITS IN CENTRAL APPALACHIA

This dissertation focuses on how rural community college students make decisions regarding their post-secondary plans. To understand these decision processes, I interviewed students, faculty and administrators at Southeast Community and Technical College in Harlan County, Kentucky. The literature informing my research reflects on rural college going patterns. Most studies connect place and post-secondary plans. Central Appalachia has among the lowest population percentages with Bachelor degrees in the country. Studies argue this is because of limited application for such degrees in the region. Matching their education and training to local job market requirements, people hesitate to complete advanced degrees when little if any local application requires such additional education.

This study discusses how place informs and shapes students' decisions around college and degree selection. Unlike those who connect advanced education with outmigration patterns, my research highlights students who pursue post-secondary training in hopes of applying these degrees locally to build their communities and families' quality of life in a rural place. From the twenty-eight student and fifteen faculty and administrator interviews conducted, rationales regarding the purpose of post-secondary degrees and training surfaced. Through selected follow up oral histories, students further described the application of their degrees towards terminal, transfer and/or transformative ends. Their articulated positions regarding the purpose and application of higher education in Central Appalachia adds to the continuing studies on how advanced degrees informs students' decisions to stay or leave rural areas.

From the Southeast interview data, I provide a critique of policy directives related to advanced education and economic development. Given many of the urban assumptions embedded in development theory, my study was interested in how these rural students, in a place considered underdeveloped partly because of low college attendance rates, attain and then apply their degrees and the rationale they articulate in doing so. As US policy makers continue to require advanced education for more and more of their citizens, my research shows the complications and complexities such rhetoric evokes when people, committed to rural places and ways of life, apply them in their local contexts.

Key words: community colleges, student aspirations, economic development theory, rural education, Central Appalachia

Student's signature

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DISSERTATION

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To the students, faculty and administrators at Southeast Community College whose commitments continue to shape what being educated means for rural people and places.

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I also want to thank the students, faculty and administrators at Southeast Community and Technical College for granting me such personal access to their lives. They revealed much about not only the pursuits of higher education but also the pursuit of quality living in what is considered by many outsiders as a marginal place but what insiders know intimately as home.

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Chapter 1

Why we think they go: Rural community college students and post-secondary pursuits

Introduction

Why do students participate in higher education and what informs their decisions to pursue advanced degrees? As high school degrees decline in value (Green, 1980) and political rhetoric promoting access to post-secondary education as a right and necessity for 21st Century quality life and work intensifies, how are such compulsory notions translated into informed decisions about post-secondary access and application of degrees? As a PhD student in education policy, issues of whether students begin (access) and then how they complete and market their degrees (application) surfaced often in classroom discussions and course readings. As a college instructor I often heard students' rationale for attending college. Like Labaree's (1997) consumer model of educational ends, many oft-heard rationales were based on notions of individual advancement or seeking credentials for better positioning in the job market.

In broad ways my dissertation research interrogates why students attend post-secondary schooling and how these purposes influence their credentialing plans. Given their rationale, to what extent are their pursuits and plans then informed, enhanced and/or limited by the economic application of their degrees? As the necessity of an advanced degree beyond high school gains traction in national and international discussions, how do students' stances comply and conflict with notions of the necessity of advanced degrees in order to compete in expanding markets? More specific to my field research, how do *rural* community college students negotiate an assumptions of these rhetorics, namely that the best marketability of their pursuits are in urban rather than rural places? To what extent does requiring advanced degrees inform what it means to not only to be a

viable player in the marketplace but extend to where such advanced skills, training and degrees can be plied? How do theories of development ignore attachments to places and people while seemingly purporting to be about the promotion of both?

Central Appalachia as a site for pursuit and application of advanced degrees

Appalachia, and specifically significant to this study Central Appalachia, has among the lowest population percentages of Bachelor degree holders in the United States. Many studies argue this is because of the limited economic application for such degrees in the region. People, matching their education and training to local job market requirements, hesitate to complete advanced degrees when little if any local application requires such additional education (Hektner, 1995, Howley, 1996). Other explanations are tied to cultural and social reasons for low investment in educational attainment. Jones (1994), discussing Appalachian values, attributed attachment to kin and place as a dominant characteristic. If mobility is necessary to get the best exchange for their investment in higher education, how do students then rationalize decisions to stay and/or leave their home regions given these valued attachments to place and kin?

Schooling has often been cited as a place where students are exposed to national values and expectations. Schwartzweller and Brown (1962) emphasized schooling's influence in Appalachia as a bridge out of the region to advanced opportunities. Whisnant (1983) in his discussion of the Settlement Schools in Kentucky understood the connection between schooling's civilizing efforts and how these efforts contradict impulses to stay in the region.

Gender has also been studied to see how it shapes and informs the decision making process of advanced degree pursuits for Appalachian people. Female participation in higher education has advanced steadily over the past two decades in Appalachia, whether at regional or sub-regional levels. From 2000 census information Latimer and Oberhauser (2004) found the percentage of female high school graduates in the region was almost 78% while male percentages were at 76% (p. 275). As was evidenced outside the region and so too within, Appalachian males held advanced degrees at higher percentages than females. For the region, college graduates were 27% for males, 23% for females. The Central sub-region of Appalachia had less college degree holders than any other sub-region, yet unlike the North or South, more females held a college degree than males, 11% to their 10% (p. 276).

O'Quinn (1999) discussed how advanced education caused conflict for some females who were seen by family and friends as using their degrees to "get above their raisin". Sohn (2006) in her study of degreed women in Eastern Kentucky found a correlation between the education pursued and its application to the community. In their ten year focus on rural community colleges, the Rural Community College Initiative found that though most regions saw increased enrollment, most of this was because of increased female rather than male participation rates (2003, p.7). In addition to access and application, my dissertation discusses the extent to which gender influenced students' selection and degree application.

To answer the question of why students go to college and more specifically why they attend community colleges, I decided on one of Kentucky's earliest community colleges, Southeast Community and Technical College in Harlan County Kentucky.

Established in 1961, Southeast aptly illustrates rural college going in Central Appalachia. Given its geographic remoteness-it is a minimum of two hours from any Kentucky regional university -Southeast does its part to answer State demands for a trained and educated workforce. It does this while working within the historic context of a region spotlighted for its central role in the American labor struggle. Documentaries depicting the area (i.e. *Harlan County USA*) and popular folksongs (*Which side are you on*) reflect the positions of people reflecting in their labor efforts their commitments to people and place.

Furthermore, Southeast is positioned within the contrasting national debate on the mission of the community college. In Kentucky, statewide policy initiatives are attempting to clarify the role of the community college. Begun in the early 1960's as transfer institutions (O'Hara: 2005), Kentucky's community colleges changed course in the 1980's and 1990's as more and more jobs required training beyond high school, training which culminated in Associate degree and certificate programs. Since 2007 emphasis has again returned to increased Bachelor degree attainments through State initiatives to double the number of Bachelor degrees by 2020. (Council on post-secondary education, "Double the Numbers", 2007).

Given the workforce demands of the 21st Century, demands which articulate the necessity of advanced education and/or training skills, how does Southeast answer these demands? As a community and technical college, Southeast must answer the tri-fold nature of each of its namesakes: 1) by answering the educational needs of the community, 2) by addressing the technical needs of a changing workforce, and 3) by providing the preparatory education necessary for student transfer to four year degree programs.

To answer these demands, Southeast became involved in the Rural Community College Initiative in 1993. This initiative asked rural community colleges to rethink and re-envision their mission related to the community through economic and social applications. Participating in this effort, Southeast repositioned itself as a community catalyst for development by promoting college going in the region as well as involvement in local issues to address the needs and strengths of the county.

Since their inception, community colleges have been charged to answer the varied transfer and transitional needs of adult education. How successfully they could do all three has also been debated since their beginning.

The Institutional context: The contrasting missions of the community college

Since its inception at the turn of the 20th Century, the mission and focus of the community college has been contentious. With community colleges replacing the technical programs once taught in secondary schools, questions arose as to its utility. With advocates highlighting its ‘democratizing’ principals and open door admissions, policies and critics pointed out its less than stellar reputation as a place where college degree dreams went to die, the purpose or purposes of the community college remains subject to debate and discussion.

In her historical look at Clinch Valley State College in Virginia, Lewis (1978) outlined the position and role of community colleges in the Central Appalachian region. Like other surrounding small state colleges, community colleges were training centers preparing students for local industries. Unlike their state university counterparts who were preparing their students to take their place in prestigious state and national jobs, the

local community college students were, according to Lewis, being trained to be “skilled technicians, skilled factory workers, computers scientists, paraprofessional medical and social service workers” (p. 31). In this way the community colleges were matching students training to the needs of the region in ways that helped them transition into local jobs.

Whisnant (1994) was critical of the vocational emphasis local educational institutions provided, arguing instead that the liberal arts education would be a more useful resource in exploited, poor regions.

The Jeffersonian principle is that democracy can thrive only when each individual citizens receives an education that liberates and strengthens her or his unique human potential and develops broad critical and analytic abilities. Because the need for such an education is especially critical in exploited regions, the vocational education program is a double disservice to the region’s people (p. 158).

In his historic look at community colleges Cohen (1982) sums up community college’s conflicts and competing charges by comparing it to the changeling nature of American society,

Community colleges are indeed untraditional, but they are truly American because, at their best, they represent the United States at its best. Never satisfied with resting on what has been done before, they try new approaches to old problems. They maintain open channels for individuals, enhancing the social mobility that has so characterized America (p. 28).

Like Cohen, Dougherty (1994) discusses the community college’s contradictory emphasizes, arguing for a renewed commitment which helps students attain four year degrees. Like other writers, Dougherty directs the community college’s focus towards four-year degrees rather than community certifications. His position highlights the transfer emphasis of the community college; the institution as pipeline funneling students towards completion of Bachelor degrees. Only by doing this, Dougherty argues, can

community colleges fulfill their democratic mission. Many community college students aspire to completion of four-year degrees; to provide less is a 'cruel' exchange.

It is important to underscore the finding that community college students- -even if we restrict our focus to baccalaureate aspirants- -secure significantly fewer baccalaureate degrees than four year college entrants. This result is so cruel given the fact that so many students...enter the community college in the belief that it will greatly assist their pursuit of the baccalaureate degree (pgs. 67-68).

For those who claim community colleges should focus on and address local needs, there is less criticism when students do not complete two year, much less four year degree programs. These advocates argue that the community college has never been, nor should be used to promote degreed programs solely (Brint & Karabel: 1989). Rather, its programs should reflect the economic and business needs of the local community. The argument is, given its historic mission, community colleges *should be* about how students, regardless of ability or age, can attend and complete instruction commensurate with local occupational opportunities. It should not be judged by criteria set around collegiate goals. Instead, criticisms center around how well it provides for local deficiencies in the job market via skills and training and how it meets the access needs of students by way of location, affordability, class offerings, and scheduling. It is in this way that community colleges fulfill their democratic mission by making post-secondary schooling accessible to those who might not attend four-year colleges because of financial or academic limitations.

Theelin's (2004) look at the history of higher education in the United States concludes that even as community colleges provide both transfer and terminal options, they still contend with nagging questions of focus and priorities.

What was more important: to serve as a port of first entry for underserved and undereducated individuals or to provide postgraduate refresher courses or

retooling for citizens...the opportunity to be the “people’s college”...was a source of institutional ascent during prosperous times but a millstone during a state recession. Community college advocates argued forcefully that posing the policy question in that manner was foul play because it was a false dichotomy. What not do both? (p. 334).

How well can community colleges do both? Should there be a concentrated focus on transfer preparation or terminal training for specific job needs? Would it be possible to transition students into jobs while also providing them the academic preparation necessary to transfer and complete four year degrees? Would it be possible to do this while staying in the region and applying their general education requirements towards the transformation of the local?

Labaree (1997) in his analysis on the ends of education promoted civic capacity as the highest good for both individual and societal advancement. His historic approach on the political goals of education in the United States linked philosophical notions of education with current economic trends. Whether training workers, preparing citizens for active roles in the newly forming Republic or creating consumers who can manipulate a global marketplace, education, whether at the primary, secondary or tertiary level promotes ends which serve societal needs. In this way, the community college, whether emphasizing the transfer or transitional options for students, is invested in the ends Labaree cites. My research at Southeast Community and Technical College in Harlan Kentucky looked at how the college and student community articulated the purposes of post-secondary degrees.

The Kentucky Context: House Bill 1

In Kentucky the contrasting debates on whether the community college should focus on collegiate or community applications was questioned and answered by the State legislature in 1997. The passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act (House Bill 1), severed the historic connection between the University of Kentucky and the community colleges, creating a new entity, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). Through this legislative act, the bill ended the emphasis debates, changing the focus of the community colleges from transfer to terminal and technical applications. Though the Council on Post-Secondary Education in Kentucky currently promotes attainment of Bachelor degrees over Associate's (as evidenced by its Double the Numbers campaign discussed further in Chapter Two), recent developments related to faculty tenure and benefits communicate the State's conception of KCTCS as a vocational and technical, rather than collegiate institution. In March 2009, KCTCS ended tenure for new faculty, replacing it with multiple year contracts. According to the KCTCS President Mike McCall, "eliminating tenure would make it easier for the college system to respond rapidly to economic changes or the shifting training needs of employers" (Warren, 2009). Such 'flexibility' arguments were cited by many who voted for tenure elimination. These arguments as well as the newly established 'contract' status for faculty reflect the technical and vocational stance of the community college institution in Kentucky. Though the tenure issue was revisited in early fall of 2009 and reinstated, it is a hollow victory given that of their 5,000 faculty members, only 1,055 (around 21%) were tenured or on a tenure track when the subject was debated in 2009 (Blackford, 2009).

In 1997, HB1 paved the way for an emphasis on technical and community education at the expense of transfer preparation. Argued as the way “to improve Kentucky’s post-secondary education systems as a means to advance the state’s economy” (NGA: 2001), the intentions of House Bill 1 reflect a common sentiment in theories connecting human capital and social development; by increasing the educational attainments of its citizens, a nation, state, and/or region increases the quality of life available to its citizens and the tax base available to the State.

How then do students at a rural community college in Central Appalachia reflect, refute or integrate these human capital and quality of life arguments in their own stances on the purpose and pursuit of post-secondary education? What are the motivations and values informing the student’s post-secondary pursuits? Given its reputation of emphasizing community, technical and transfer applications, Southeast provided fertile ground for these varying views. As one of the first community colleges established in the Kentucky, Southeast incorporates a history of first functioning as a feeder or transfer institution-preparing students for the completion of four year degrees. With the passage of HB 1 in 1997, Southeast positioned itself as transitional institution, preparing students to apply their degrees to local economic needs. Furthermore, as the State renews a commitment to increase four year degrees among its residents, Southeast is charged, as are the other community colleges in Kentucky, to again advance Bachelor degree over and above Associate degree attainment. How is Southeast able to translate these fluctuating charges and how does its rural context impact these ends?

The Rural Context: Southeast and the RCCI

Southeast Community and Technical College was established in 1960. Like many community colleges added during the explosive growth period of the 1960's, Southeast was established as a feeder campus to the larger four-year colleges (Southeast Community College Institutional Effectiveness: 2001). Reflecting the push towards vocational education in the 1970's and 1980's, Southeast became more focused on community application, increasing its certificate and diploma options (ibid).

With the implementation of the Kentucky Higher Education Reform Act (HB 1) in 1997 under Governor Patton, Southeast's ties, like every other community college in Kentucky, to the University of Kentucky were severed. Merging the technical, vocational schools formerly under the State's workforce development department with the community colleges, HB 1 combined them into a new higher education entity, the Kentucky Community Technical College System (KCTCS). This action, highly contentious at its passage, effectively ended the relationship between the community colleges and the University of Kentucky. This was Governor Patton's aim who believed by separating the two, both could reach their potential. UK could concentrate on becoming a top twenty research university and the community colleges could concentrate on those programs necessary to prepare a workforce in a changing economic climate. According to Patton, if these ties were not severed, both would fail in their missions as had been evidenced in other states.

In states where there has been an effort to link research universities with other institutions, their respective missions have been homogenized, their resources scattered. The results then can be that these states have neither an outstanding research capacity nor an effective system for workforce development (2003, p. 33).

Given the changes enacted in the 1990's, Southeast reassessed its emphasis and strategies. In 1994, the Ford Foundation established the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), which conceptualized the community college as a catalyst for economic and educational development in rural areas. By 1997, twenty-four community colleges throughout the United States were participating in the program. Southeast was one. Philosophies regarding local capacity development centered on the community college and charged it with expanding the economic and educational vitality of their service areas. Linking the economic impact of the community college to the region highlighted "one of the assumptions about rural development...that economic development and access to higher education are related" (Eller, 2003, p.7). The approach also emphasized the role of the community college president in promoting a vision of the college which was integral to the success of the community.

During the ten year inception (1990-2000) of RCCI, enrollment of students in the Appalachian colleges declined from 4,068 to 4,010. All other participant areas showed increased enrollments, ranging from modest gains in the Delta South, to substantial gains in the Southwest and Northern Plains regions (p. 41). Indicators of economic development in the regions revealed gains in employment with job growth rates ranging from a loss of 1.5 in the Delta South to a gain of 1.6 in the Southwest. In Central Appalachia, job growth increased by less than 1% (.08) during the ten year implementation period (p. 44). Revising mission statements, organizational structures and curriculum instruction was an integral component of RCCI's vision of the community college as a local economic catalyst (p. 47). A crucial link to success was

also attributed to new leadership understandings. The initiative concluded the long term sustainability of rural community college efforts were in these linked partnerships.

The effect of building college-community teams was also to bring community leadership into the campus, providing new ideas and perspectives and challenging old assumptions and practices in higher education. The degree to which colleges were able to move along the path toward transformation...often depended upon this interactive leadership (p. 48).

The report argued for the continued promotion of education as a community development strategy. Innovative strategies targeting transitions from secondary to post-secondary opportunities are also recommended.

RCCI's strategy of local development through the impetus of community college leadership reflects an expanded definition of its role, that of civic capacity builder. Dr. Ayers, twenty-five year President of Southeast, describes this citizenry component as a necessary corollary of regional development:

Community colleges keep people at home. That is very, very important...They (students) are going to be the future...because they don't want to go anywhere else, it is just home to them... they are going to be the public officials, they are going to be the civic leaders, they are going to be the people who are the future of the region... It is critically important that we do a good job with them (Ayers, 2009).

To what extent did students and to a lesser extent faculty and administrators at Southeast internalized these arguments promoting the individual, social and civic pursuits of higher education? For the students, how did their values relating to place inform their degree pursuits and commitments related to staying or leaving the area in order to achieve them?

Educational aspirations and residential mobility

Conventional wisdom suggests that rural students who access higher education are likely to leave their home community and opt for metropolitan residency. Gibbs (1998) confirmed this belief in his finding that in rural communities “four-year college graduates are only 10 percent of stayers but 35 percent of those lost to urban areas” (p.74). Lichter, McLaughlin, and Cornwell (1995) documented a mass exodus of educated individuals out of rural communities that began over half a century ago. They attributed this movement to the absence of employment opportunities in rural communities for college-educated young people.

Gibbs (1998) found that rural college students were 63 percent less likely to return to their home community by age 25 than their urban peers. However, this result was insignificant when he controlled for a host of local economic factors. When the model was limited to rural students, females and those raised in a female-headed household were less likely to return home.

Using a national probability sample of longitudinal data, Hektner (1995) found 84 percent of rural students wanted to live near parents and relatives while at the same time most aspired to leave their home community. This level of family and residential conflict was significantly higher among rural students than those from other locales and the conflicted students had lower levels of educational aspirations.

Appalachian students in particular can encounter cultural barriers in a university setting. The acculturative stress experienced by these students occurs when the values, attitudes, and beliefs of their home communities clash with the dominant ideologies of the university. Dees (2006) found that some Appalachian students respond to such

barriers by separating themselves from others and rejecting the project of higher education. Similarly, Whiting's (1999) case study of a rural, white male student at a flagship public university showed how cultural dissimilarities between the home and university communities could have profound social and academic consequences for rural students.

Howley et.al (1996) focused attention on Appalachian West Virginia given its persistent and widespread poverty and reported results that conflicted with those described above. These authors found that among students enrolled in a statewide academic talent program, residential aspirations of high-achieving (and likely college-bound) students did not differ from their rural peers. Both the rural-at-large and rural high-achieving students indicated a preference for modern and cosmopolitan values of mobility, acquisitiveness and status to traditional ones connected to place and people. Regardless of educational achievement levels, Appalachian students felt the push and pull of modern vs. traditional values and indicated a desire to maintain a sense of place when making decisions on future residency. Chenoweth and Galliher (2004) examined the aspirations of rural Appalachian students and found no correspondence between aspiring to high levels of educational attainment and aspiring to residence in one's home community.

Much of the disparity in aspirations between rural and urban students is confined to aspirations related to graduate education. Caitlin Howley (2006) found that rural students do not differ significantly from their urban peers in their aspirations for high school and undergraduate education. She also found that some of the remaining rural-urban difference in aspirations could be explained by controlling for familial attachment

to place. Her survey research on education aspirations rather than attainment levels propels my own study on what about rural life informs students' decisions to stay and apply their degrees locally, or leave to pursue additional, which may include graduate degrees, outside the region.

Ethnographies informing the Southeast study

When researching Appalachia and its college going patterns, studies find a relationship between place and post-secondary plans. Central Appalachia has among the lowest population percentages with Bachelor degrees in the country. Many studies argue this is because of the limited economic application for such degrees in the region. Like these writers, my look at Southeast shows relationships between where students place themselves and how this placement informs and shapes their decisions around college and degree selection. It however suggests that students also pursue advanced degrees in hopes of advancing a local economy that, while currently showing little application for such degrees, nonetheless articulate applications for their education in the area.

Concerning issues of class, Weis' study (1985) of urban community college students and their post-secondary degree plans detail connections between issues of class, culture and the pursuit of college degrees. Her study documents how black students, unfamiliar with the middle class values embedded in the higher education environment, struggle to adopt the behaviors and attitudes necessary to succeed at the community college. To what extent would Southeast students and faculty bring up class and culture issues when discussing the pursuit of advanced education? To what extent would

Southeast's environment challenge students and to what extent would it be familiar?

Sohn's study (2006) of private college female students in Eastern Kentucky made connections between their increased literacy abilities and the ways they could improve their family and home communities. O'Quinn's (1999) look at how parental and community expectations influenced the college going patterns of Central Appalachian daughters further explain pursuit of degrees in relation to community opportunities and gender expectations. Would Southeast students voice similar intentions for their degree applications and would they be predictable given dominant gender roles?

Corbett's study (2007) informing how place impacts post-secondary plans has been crucial to the framing of my own research. His book *Learning to Leave: the Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community* connects patterns of staying or leaving one's home community with students' aspirations toward post-secondary schooling and/or employment in the local economy. His research highlighted the connection between

- : whether one stays or leaves the community and the correlation between distances between their home community and their level of schooling
- : teachers' roles as agents who wish to provide students "tickets out" of a community.
- : the view of formal schooling and informal education by those students who stayed in their community of Digby Neck, Nova Scotia and those who left.

Who stays and why and who leaves and why are the central questions and concerns reflected in Corbett's research. As a long-term resident, teacher and scholar of Nova Scotia, Corbett formulates his focus after a memorable conversation with one of his high school students. Working retail in a local shop, she apologizes to him as he is shopping for not having done more with her education, evidenced by her staying and working in the Digby Neck area. After this encounter, Corbett questions how the educational system, of which he takes part, reflects this message of success linked to mobility. His

research gathered information on school children attending Digby Neck schools during the years 1963 to 1998. He concludes that educational attainment and geographic mobility are conversely linked. The implications of this out-migration policy for rural areas lead to community and family concern issues. What happens when an area educates its best and brightest for work elsewhere? Inversely, what are the implications for those who stay: why complete high school when it is just a launching pad for employment pursuits elsewhere? Why leave home, as education seems to necessitate, when you want to stay and why stay in school when you want to leave to make a local living?

Each of these ethnographies alongside Corbett's study provide analysis throughout the dissertation and bring specific foci to Chapter Six as they inform what can be said regarding future policy promoting higher education attainment. These studies joined by Southeast student, faculty and administrative voices provide additional insight regarding what post-secondary education means for an individual's as well as a community's economic and social health.

Methods and objectives of the Southeast study

During the spring and fall 2009 semesters I interviewed twenty-eight students from Southeast Community and Technical College regarding their post-secondary pursuits. Because I wanted to isolate students who represented the staying and leaving applications of higher education degrees, I chose students whose plans fell within the following four trajectories: 1) those who were pursuing an Associate degree in order to apply it to a four year degree, 2) those who were pursuing the Associate as the terminal

degree, 3) those who were *not* pursuing an Associate but rather a certificate or diploma option, and 4) those who had transferred from Southeast and were soon to complete or had completed a Bachelor's degree from Eastern Kentucky University. These initial interviews were semi-structured (see Appendices A and B), usually lasting between 20 to 40 minutes during which I asked students to describe their post-secondary plans and their conceptions of how and where they would apply their degrees. Their responses are coded and discussed thematically in Chapter Four.

Once these initial interviews were completed, I selected students for follow-up life histories presented in Chapter Five (See Appendix D). Students were selected as cases studies of varying positions taken as rationale for their post-secondary pursuits. Their positions reflected conflicted stances on whether to stay or leave the region and how their degree plans allowed, propelled and/or interrogated these positions. These positions were informed further by students' conceptions of quality of life and community issues and how these influenced not only what they had selected but how they planned on applying their degrees. Some articulated how their degrees allowed them to stay and transition into local jobs. For others, their advanced degrees compelled they leave and transfer to four year programs outside the region. For a few others, their pursuit of post-secondary education was eventually to be applied to transforming their communities even as their own lives were transformed by their advanced degrees.

As with the students, I wanted to understand how faculty and administrator conceptions of purpose and place influenced their understandings and definitions of higher education. During the spring semester 2009, I interviewed fifteen Southeast faculty and administrators. Like the students, I asked them questions regarding their own

educational background and post-secondary pursuits. I also asked them about the purpose of higher education and their particular role in that promotion. (See Appendix C) Their oral histories are presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter 6 concludes with how future post-secondary education policy can be enhanced by Southeast students' articulated positions. I also reflect and discuss how the theories promoting the necessity of advanced education can be informed when attachments to place and people are considered.

The continuing discussion

As I began my research I was interested in how Southeast students would discuss their commitment to place, and how these values impacted their selection and application of degree pursuits. Would such commitments inform positions on staying or leave the region to pursue their degrees? Would they, like Corbett's study, have made connections between advanced degrees and outmigration? How might their perceptions differ? Would the fact that Southeast provided access to four year and graduate options in the area influence whether or not students worked out other contingencies and complexities regarding their post-secondary pursuits? How would faculty and administrators at Southeast perceive and project opportunities for degrees in the region?

Even as it examines how local context shapes students plans, my study looks at the push and pull factors of state and national arguments on students' post-secondary plans. In the next chapter I examine how development theory and its relationship to human capital arguments informs international, national and regional policy relating to advanced education pursuits and post-secondary attainment rates. How these theories

have been applied to Appalachia beginning in the 1960's, as well as their ability to adequately situate today's Central Appalachia, will also be discussed as will complications related to class and economic factors.

Chapter 2

What has been said: Development initiatives and educational ends in Appalachia

Introduction

What does it mean for a people and place to be considered progressive?

Development theory, like its predecessor modernization theory, attempts to answer this question by detailing the characteristics that regional planners and policy makers promote through intervention efforts. Appalachia has seen increased modernization efforts throughout the 20th and early 21st Century. Initiatives around increasing access to the area through road building as well as efforts to increase educational levels in the region all point to assumptions inherent in what constitutes a developing and progressive area. In order to understand development assumptions regarding such how a region progresses, I applied their assumptions to my study of Southeast Community College in Harlan, Kentucky. Specifically, I wanted to see how well development theory, with its constructions of viable people and places, explained the current acquisition of post-secondary training and degrees in Central Appalachia. I was also interested to find out if, and to what extent did Southeast students describe themselves or the region as ‘underdeveloped’ and how did their conceptions of place influence their post-secondary and subsequent employment plans.

Development theory and its critics

Development theory is a late 20th Century recast of what was the Century’s earlier attempt to explain, via modernization theory, why some societies are poor while others are wealthy. As Western societies grew in economic, political and military influence,

justifications for their continued dominance was judged by their ability to not only be modern, but also promote the modern life for others to replicate. As with later arguments surrounding what constitutes a 'developed' nation, earlier efforts to explain what it meant to be 'modern' abounded. Societies were defined as modern to the degree they were bound less by traditional customs and attachments to local places and people and connected instead to contemporary institutions and markets. Others defined it by way of traits evidencing urbanization, industrialization, high levels of education and social mobility (Inkeles & Smith, 1974).

A more critical stance defined modernization in a more fluid way as

a change from traditional customs and behaviors to ones that are forcibly or voluntarily borrowed from a dominant society that results in changes in the behavior and worldview of its people or customs (Divale & Seda, 2000, p. 172).

Rather than continuing with fixed trait characteristics, Stephenson's (1968) definition included elements of human agency, not only in modernization's constituency but in its deployment. His definition was more fluid, avoiding the common universal or static trait approach. People, positioned within a culture, move along a dimension defined by them as more or less modern, more or less traditional. By understanding how locals defined the continuum between modern and traditional, Inkeles & Smith's fixed definition is disregarded, instead

A definition of modernization is needed that avoids the assumption that it is a universal process of unilinear change and which avoids the assumption that the particular values contents of traditionalism and modernism are everywhere the same (p.268).

Unlike Inkeles & Smith's static approach, Stephenson's approach encouraged the questioning of what it means to be modern by substituting a culturally specific

understanding of the term. By doing this, localized knowledge constructs the traditional/modern continuum. Modernization, according to Stephenson then,

...may be defined as a personal or cultural expression or one type of social change, mainly movement of persons along a dimension from what is defined by the cultural norms as traditional to what is considered modern by the same culture (ibid).

Yet many of modernizations fixed characteristics remain and persist in theories of development. Development theory includes many of its assumptions regarding urbanity and formalized education. Like modernization theory, it too was defined by countries having the economic and military might to deploy its definition. As economies in the First World increased, initiatives to increase GNP - which was seen as the primary strategy to decrease poverty - were promoted in those countries (i.e. Third World) whose science and technological skills were considered less advanced. Proponents of development theory conceptualize economies using a stage-based growth model featured in the writing of W.W. Rostow (1960). As an economic historian, he articulated what had been accumulating before and since Marx: economies go through stages, advancing, [a key concept] from traditional, pre-technological societies emphasizing agriculture, to modern ones evidencing urban, technological, consumptive societies. In his outline, the United States was in the development vanguard, with European and Asian countries following closely behind (p.6).

These stages were presented as inevitable with societies progressing from one to the other. Though Rostow will caution readers to allow for fluidity when interpreting his theory, he does nevertheless set out the stages as 'sequences of modernization', implying regression as retreat from development. In Rostow's model, one of the pre-conditions for economic take-off is related directly to the educational level of the society. As less

advanced societies, intruded on by more advanced societies, internalize their concepts of progress which includes the need for 'modern' education.

The idea spreads not merely that economic progress is possible, but that economic progress is necessary condition for some other purpose judged to be good...education, for some at least, broadens and changes to suit the needs of modern economic activity (p.4).

Rostow model clearly evidences those traits promoted by modern theory. To be developed, a society must evidence higher levels of education as well as a shift away from the countryside- both as an economic as well as residential model-to abide in the cities and engage in industrial, technological work.

Critics of development theory question the unequal power relations inherent in such conceptualizations as well as the evident lack of appreciation for varying economic and cultural traditions. Escobar, a leading development theory critic, argued that instead of "fair dealing democratic development programs", President Truman's 1947 inaugural address reinforced the US geopolitical stance of dominance by labeling regions underdeveloped. Many such regions labeled 'underdeveloped' were negotiating independence from Western European powers, and thus in need of - - as the US saw it - - scientific and technological interventions. It was through such interventions, Escobar states, that people came to understand themselves to be 'underdeveloped',

Development can be described as an apparatus that links forms of knowledge...with the deployment of forms of power and intervention...By means of this discourse, individuals, governments and communities are seen as 'underdeveloped' (or placed under conditions in which they tend to see themselves as such) and treated accordingly (1992, p. 23).

Employing Rostow's stages of growth model and Escobar's critique , Appalachia comes into focus as a setting where efforts to modernize a region considered underdeveloped are employed.

ARC and other development approaches in Appalachia

Even as the United Nations international efforts to modernize the 'underdeveloped' was developing, domestically, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), an organization dedicated to promoting modernization in the mountainous regions of the North and Southeastern United States, was being established. Following the same arguments based on the model of deficient regions needing intervention efforts, ARC's founding document reminds us of its intent.

This then is Appalachia: a nonurban land with a population over 50 % rural...deeply unemployed, all too frequently deprived of the facilities and services of a modern society....what it has found is a record of insufficiency, a history of traditional acts not performed, of American patterns not fulfilled (1964, p.16)

As one thinks about Appalachia and how it is defined, geography, specifically how the mountain landscape shapes the culture, dominates. As a geographic designation, the Appalachian Mountains extend from the Northeastern Acadia providence of Nova Scotia to the Southeastern state of Alabama. Politically, Appalachia was defined in the early 1960's by governors and other state representatives to include 13 US states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North and South Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. This designation provided federal monies to the distressed and poor regions of Appalachia. In 1964, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) defined Appalachia in terms of deficiency, in

hopes that “its recommendations form a sound basis for the emergency of development action through which the Appalachian people may fully join in the progress of a growing America” (p.6). Campaigning in West Virginia, John F. Kennedy’s presidential platform brought images and issues in Appalachia to the larger American public. Meeting with the Appalachian governors shortly after his inauguration, Kennedy’s discussion centered on what could be done to address the regions’ needs. From these meetings the President’s Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC), later renamed the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1964 began its efforts in the region, working alongside President Johnson and his War on Poverty programs of the 1960’s.

ARC’s founding document resounds with the language of deficiency, othering, and prescription. Its opening chapter discusses the opportunities of Appalachian youth “limited by the enclosing hills”, while his father watches, realizing his son is “repeating his own history” (p. 2). The deficiencies of education are specified in a summary of the region. According to the commissioners’ research, Appalachia suffered from high dropout and low college attendance rates. Compared to the larger American society of that time which had high school graduation rates averaging 42 %, Appalachia’s average was 31%. In 1964, eight out of every 100 US citizens had college degrees; in Appalachia this averaged at around five (p. 8).

It is during this formative time that Schwartzweller and Brown (1962) released their study portraying teachers in Eastern Kentucky as agents of modernity. In a region typified by primitivism and localism, education was presented as the key to bringing the region into the goals of the larger ‘Great Society’. Their study speculated that it was through the institution of schooling that students were exposed to agents of change, i.e.

teachers who had went away to college and there exposed to the national goals of US society. Their exposure to larger societal goals helped these teachers return to their home communities and expand their students' concepts of the world and their participation in it.

The school, by teaching the normative patterns of the Great Society, inculcates the youngster with the culture of the Great Society, and, through the processes of assimilation and substitution, furnishes him with a cultural link to the Great Society, allowing him to become an agent of change in the rural community or to make an easier adjustment to urban life if he migrates (p. 368).

The idea of Appalachia in need of intervention efforts was furthered in the culture of poverty arguments of the 1960's and through them America became reacquainted with her poor cousin Appalachia. These exposures provided in part a justification for the then President's War on Poverty interventions. Weller (1965) described it as a place where the mountain culture instills fatalism in need of modern remedy. Though the mountains could not be moved, people could be moved and developed such that Appalachian poverty could be overcome. Harrington (1962) describes the Appalachian position as one of deficiency, but will conclude that rather than being characteristic of American life in general, Appalachia is a specific case, other, counter to the ideals of America. His work helped launch Johnson's War on Poverty but was just the newest reflection of an historic approach. Appalachia has often been defined as counter-point to America's identity (Eller, 2008). With prosperity propelling American society after the Second World War, Appalachian poverty was presented as anachronistic as well as a blemish on the emerging image of America as a technologically advanced, urbane and consumer society. Harrington, using the literary device of a visiting traveler to Appalachia, described her conditions and the condition of those who dwell there

Driving through the area...one perceives the loveliness, the openness, the high hill, streams and lush growth. Indeed the people themselves are captivated by their mountain life. They cling to their patches of land and their way of living. Many of them refuse to act reasonably; they stay even though misery is their lot (p. 40).

Like poor pockets throughout the United States, for Harrington, Appalachia's stark deficiencies contrast with the larger wealth and possibilities of America as it assumes a more dominant role in a growing internationalized world. Yet these pockets remind Americans of capitalism's casualties. Rather than seeing the poor as victims of an emerging world economic system, instead, it is a culture to be eradicated. According to Harrington, the war against poverty should include a restructured way of living.

This book is based upon the proposition that poverty forms a culture, an interdependent system. Consequently, a campaign against the misery of the poor should be comprehensive. It should think, not in terms of this or that aspect of poverty, but along the lines of establishing new communities, of substituting a human environment for the inhuman one that now exists (p. 168).

Up and until these reflections of poverty are eradicated: poor health, inadequate housing, food, and education, America concedes her future possibilities. "As long as America is less than its potential, the nation as a whole is impoverished by that fact...we are, all of us, poorer because of it" (p. 179).

For an affluent nation - or to bring in Rostow's terminology - an advanced nation to have pockets of poverty is not only an embarrassment but an anomaly, one which can soon remedied through interventions which included increased resources and technology. Appalachian historian and one time ARC advisor, Ron Eller describes how the region was cast as deficient.

The region became a kind of poster child for poverty and a popular symbol of weakness in the American economy itself...images of Appalachia as isolated and of Appalachians as quaint...persisted but increasingly observers described

Appalachian poverty not as a permanent condition but as something that could be alleviated by the application of modern resources to human problems (2008, p.78).

Initiatives and the resources were then brought to bear on Appalachia in the hopes that the result would be a modern Appalachia, an Appalachia where access to resources related to medicine, education and transportation could be accessed. These programmatic ends encapsulate the creation and intent of the ARC. President Lyndon Johnson, himself a promoter of government's role in improving its citizen's lives, through the War on Poverty supported ARC's initiatives addressing Appalachia's infrastructural deficiencies. As Eller points out, during the 1960's Appalachia becomes a focal point for larger economic issues influencing America

Almost all saw the region as an anchor dragging behind an otherwise progressive nation. Such accounts transposed Appalachia into a marketable media commodity and helped to establish a pattern of critical but superficial commentary that would sustain the image of Appalachia as a problem area for years to come...Poverty in Appalachia...was simply out of step with the rest of America and could be conquered by government investments in public infrastructure to open up markets and by extending opportunities for the poor to join the cultural mainstream (p. 116).

As mentioned earlier, along with building market infrastructures, access and attainment of educational opportunities are seen as key indicators of a country or region's progress and development. The United Nations Education for All (EFA) brief, *Meeting Basic Learning Needs*, a policy initiated at the turn of the 21st Century, and international in its efforts, details this connection.

At the macroeconomic level, an analysis of a sample of developing countries indicated that increases in literacy contribute to increases in investment and in output per workers...Overall differences in patterns of educational investment...are significant in explaining differences in national rates of economic growth and in other development indicators (UNESCO, 2010).

Though development efforts are often thought of in relation to other countries, Appalachia has long been a focal point for these initiatives, initiatives that seek to increase a region's economic growth and stability through human capital promotion. Policies which increase the capital of citizens are promoted and translated often by way of increased educational access and attainment rates. These arguments have been articulated at international, national and local levels.

Human capital theory

A component of development theory focuses on increasing the human capital of a region through increased education and skill levels. Illustrative of the phrase, "if we can't bring Mohammad to the mountain, the mountain must be brought to Mohammad" human capital brings modernization/development to the mountains by increasing the worth of its people through advanced educational levels. The acquiring of human capital through increased access to and acquisition of advanced education are central to international, national and regional development policies.

Human Capital (HC) theory is an economic argument stating that the pursuit of advanced skills, training and degrees evidence individual initiative and gain. According to human capital theory, nonmaterial assets such as educational attainment work toward increasing the capital worth of individuals and the societies they comprise. An early proponent, Adam Smith articulated the individual and societal benefits of human capital. According to Smith, among other forms of fixed capital such as trade machines, instruments, buildings, and improvements, are,

the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society. The acquisition of such talents, by the maintenance of the acquirer during his education, study, or apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in his person. Those talents, as they make a part of his fortune, so do they likewise that of the society to which he belongs (1776, p. 166).

As Smith indicates, human capital is understood within a larger context of societal exchange and application. It is not enough for individuals to acquire capital; they must also invest their personal fortunes in the marketplace. Though considered fixed or non-circulating, the investment of human capital presumes market participation. How else then, as Smith argues, could the “expense be repaid with a profit”?

A leading human capital theorist, Gary Becker (1983) discusses human capital in the specific terms of individual investments in education. The theory assumes that these investments improve individual productivity and earnings and, as Becker states, an individual’s success reflects an ability to bring about that success,

Human capital analysis assumes that schooling raises earning and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills, and a way of analyzing problems. An alternative view however denies schooling does much to improve productivity, and instead it stresses credentialism—that degrees and education convey information about underlying abilities, persistence and other valuable traits of people...earnings of college graduates exceed those of high school graduates not because college education raises productivity but because more productive students go on to college (p. 19).

The institution, college, does not raise the productivity of the individual rather, his emphasis is on how individual choice- - to go and succeed in college--reflects that individual’s ability to succeed. Yet Becker was aware that historic rates of returns on education were not equal for all those who attended college. In 1964 he studied the relationship between increased returns and college degrees pursuit among black males and females, rural males, and both urban and rural white females. His research found all

were less likely to invest in education because the investment did not equal or surpass its exchange value in the marketplace (pp. 182-195). When such marginals do invest in post-secondary education, how do their understandings of the exchange value of their investments compare and contrast with the center?

Human Capital (HC) theory posits that education is and should be understood as an investment for both individuals and the larger economy. By investing in themselves, people defer immediate gain (opportunity costs) in order to acquire skills that will have higher payoffs later. By allowing and enabling people to invest in themselves via schooling, states benefit by the higher skills better educated people bring to the local economy, as well as by the increased taxes their higher salaries garner. HC theorists argue that human actors are basically rational, and once the benefits of investing are understood, they will act rationally to acquire advanced training and degrees. To act rationally also entails geographical mobility; individuals move to where they may best sell their services to employers in vital occupational markets. Given all these benefits, states, again acting rationally, will provide increasing opportunities for future workers to upgrade their skills.

Human capital theory references then the assumptions inherent in development and modernization theories; that the more advanced a society, the more it cultivates and retains an educated workforce. This workforce promotes their skills in a predominately urban environment where individuals can make the most of their investments in an expanding marketplace. Again Rostow's model for societal progress from an agricultural, rural to an urban, industrial base underlies what is seen as worthy promotions as well as where these characteristics should be deployed. How are we to

understand those who invest in advanced degrees in rural places? Does their rationale differ from the human capital arguments which see the deployment of degrees and skills primarily in the urban? Specific to those in my study, how do they rationalize their training and application in a ‘developing area’ such as Central Appalachia?

International perspectives: development and educational attainment and access

Human capital arguments have informed development efforts in international, national and state arenas. Internationally, the United Nations promotes investment in citizen’s capital through increased educational opportunities. Most of the goals of these initiatives are connected to primary and secondary school attendance. In 2000, the United Nation’s UNESCO program ‘Education for All’ (EFA) set out the agenda whereby primary education would be available to all children by 2015. It’s second goal – to provide free and compulsory primary education for all - - is urged because it “provides access to further learning opportunities” that as such is “vital for economic development, giving individuals the chance to earn more and be more productive” (UNESCO, EFA Goals, 2010). Amidst and among the EFA development arguments to increase human capital for economic ends, the United Nations argues such a philosophy of educational access as a basic human right.

Increasing educational opportunities is at the center of more ‘developed’ nations’ policies as well. An example is the recent initiative by the Irish Higher Education Authority working to increase higher education access and completion rates among its citizens. Their plan “National Plan for Access to Higher Education 2008-2013” outlines increasing college entry population percentages to 72% by 2020 (the 2007 rate was 55%)

and the strategies to achieve these ends. Why this push for increasing advanced degrees in a developed country? According to the Ministry of Education “higher education is vital to Ireland’s continued social and economic progress” and is consistent with Ireland’s larger economic development plan. The first national development plan in 2000 emphasized infrastructure issues related to transportation and highway building. The second national development plan, begun in 2007 and continuing through 2013 focuses on strengthening the human capital component of the nation. Within this plan the promotion of continuing and advanced education, is an emphasis on increased skills, research and innovative capacities, an integral part of Ireland’s larger strategy to transform its economy to compete within the European Union. To do this, Ireland is investing €25 billion in education and training initiatives.

The future capacity and quality of Ireland’s higher education system is vital to our social, cultural and economic well-being. The Higher Education system requires clear national strategic goals set in the international context and against EU objectives. The reform and modernization agenda at third level needs to be driven to provide for an expanded fourth level to transform the research landscape further and allow Ireland to be among the leaders of a global knowledge economy (NDP, 2007, p. 202).

By increasing its human capital stock by increasing access to advanced access, Ireland hopes to be a contender in the global marketplace of the 21st Century, a market increasingly concentrated in knowledge and research economies.

State perspectives: Kentucky’s “Double the Numbers” initiative

Like Ireland, the state of Kentucky wants to increase college degrees holders among its residents. In 2007, The Council on Post-secondary Education issued a report

outlining how Kentucky could expand future Bachelor degrees¹ by 2020. Titled “Double the Numbers: Kentucky’s plan to increase College Graduates”, the initiative connects increased human capital to the increased economic health of the state. In 2000, a little more than 400,000 of Kentucky residents had earned a Bachelor’s degree. The goal of the ‘doubling’ initiative then is to increase this to 800,000 by 2020. How will this be accomplished? The Council has set out several strategies to increase bachelor’s degrees, some which include increasing transfers from two to four year programs as well as increasing the attraction and retention rate of Bachelor degree holders to Kentucky. Why do this? Why increase the State’s Bachelor degree holders? The investment in higher education is tied directly to Human Capital arguments, tied to the ‘increased quality of life’ argument. According to the Council, the quickest way to increase per capita income is to increase the number of Bachelor degreed residents in the state. Why not focus on increasing the number of Associate degrees²? In a state where not everyone finishes even high school, would not increased Associate degree completions also seem a worthy goal? According to the initiative, residents with Associate degrees do not provide the same ‘capital’ as those with Bachelor degrees. Part of the issue may be that in the current era there is confusion between skills that people learn in school and the degrees that have become proxy for them. According to the Council’s report,

Kentucky’s “Double the Numbers Plan” does not diminish the importance of associate degrees...but the plan focuses on bachelor’s degree production because the link between economic prosperity and educational attainment is most dramatic at the bachelor degree level. Master’s and advanced degrees...cannot be obtained without a bachelor’s degree...this plan is the most substantial

¹ Degrees typically involving four years of undergraduate study

² Degrees typically involving two years of undergraduate study

contribution our postsecondary education programs can make to Kentucky's quality of life in the shortest period of time (p.8).

What then can be said of those areas like eastern Kentucky where there are few Bachelor degree holders? What keeps the region from developing their human capital stock through increased educational access and attainment rates? As was highlighted in Chapter One, how does the lack of jobs in Harlan County requiring advanced degrees keep Associate and Bachelor degree levels low? If people are committed to staying in the region, and that region has little application for advanced degrees, do these commitments influence their pursuit of degrees and training? Does HC theory make presumptions regarding human behavior that contradicts individuals committed to different perspectives of place and the purpose of education?

Further discussions of HC applications

HC argues that individuals pursue education and training because these advanced skills are associated with an improved quality of life. The rationale is that individuals, having invested in the value of their human capital, will then exchange these skills in regional or national labor markets where they can obtain better pay for their investments. Based on the outcomes provided society when individuals take advantage of human capital opportunities, state, national and international governments continuously provide various programs and trainings in hopes to increase the HC stock of their population. In this way, quality of life, i.e. employment and the inherent potential for growth a region evidences will bring in additional employers and employees, thus bringing about a better life for the individual and the society.

But how does one define quality of life? Is it as the economists surmise, based on access to health care, advanced education and training opportunities and tied to a vibrant marketplace? Can a quality life be lived in rural places where access to such amenities may be limited? What if access and connection to land, family and kin networks are equally, if not more highly prized? This study looks at the motivations of students attending a rural community college in Central Appalachia. Through their interviews and life histories, I was interested to find out how students articulated the values informing their decisions on post-secondary credentials and degrees. Would their positions reinforce the ‘rationale’ arguments espoused by human capital theorists or reflect other stances? For those interviewed, would attending college be about improving their lives and if so, in what ways? How would their rationale define quality of life, and how would this be articulated in relation to place and people?

How then do these students negotiate investments in human capital, particularly those living in regions considered economically marginal? How do they translate the value of higher skills and advanced degrees to local and rural/regional markets? Is it possible that such individuals, as Corbett’s study argues, given an opportunity to expand their skill levels, resist increased educational opportunities because they are not interested in moving where appropriate jobs are located? Do such individuals take advantage of state funded educational programs with no intentions to relocate in order to maximize their educational investments? How is such an investment translated then if one is unwilling to leave to get the best exchange value? These questions informed the study as I began. I was interested in the ways community college students, marginalized by place (rural Appalachia) and programs (community college offerings) rationalized and

articulated their degree choice and application and to what extent their decisions to remain attached to place can inform education and economic policy that rarely if ever, considers such positions 'rational'.

Local perspectives: Central Appalachia and educational attainment

In Appalachia, there are social and cultural institutions and beliefs allegedly acting counter to the "rationality" posited by human capital and other development theorists. Central Appalachia has for over one hundred years been described and imagined as a 'place apart', a region separated from modernity by the mountains (Caudill, 1963, Shapiro, 1978) This discussion of Appalachia in relation to its geography and the place bound temperament of its people helps define it as a place of constraint and deficiency. Given the mountainous contours of the region, Appalachian people in the American imagination have historically described as isolated and constrained by place (Weller, 1965). For many Appalachians are people bounded by their attachments to the land, their communities and kin, and these attachments are seen to thwart policy efforts to modernize and develop the region.

Significant to this study Central Appalachia has among the lowest population percentages with Bachelor degrees in the country. Whereas both Southern and Northern Appalachia have increased their residents education levels, Central Appalachia still retains a high population without college degrees (Shaw et. al, 2004). An economic and educational profile of Harlan County gathered by the Kentucky Council on Post-Secondary Education finds that the county is below both the state and national averages related to income and educational attainment. Their profile indicates the median

household income of Harlan County residents at around \$19,000 below the state's at \$34,000 which is below the national average of \$42,000. Their profile of the county from 2008-2010 also shows those with bachelor degrees at almost 9% while the state and national percentages are at 17% and 25% respectively. The county however is close to the state's percentage of associate degree holders, 4.6% compared to the state's 4.9% (See Appendix E).

Many studies argue the reason for low educational attainment is because of the limited economic application for advanced degrees in the region (Heckner, 1995, Howley, 1996). Other explanations are tied to cultural or social reasons for low investment in educational attainment. Jones (1994) distills Appalachian values, indicating a dominant attachment to kin and place. If mobility, as human capital theorists argue, is necessary then to get the best exchange for their investment in higher education, how do students rationalize decisions to stay or, if they are leaving with their degrees, how has this affected their place and kin attachments?

Cultural historian and Appalachia scholar, Whisnant (1983), with his politics of cultural theory, argues that Appalachia was and is a site of cultural and systematic intervention. With outsiders shaping Appalachia into what they thought it should be, as with the example of the Settlement Schools at the turn of the 20th century, insiders or natives to Appalachia were seen as deficient in need of modernity's diagnoses and cures. At the same time they were also contrasted as carriers of ancient traditions, worthy of preservation. According to Whisnant, what interveners failed to acknowledge was the sufficiency of the native people to preserve or change their culture as they saw fit.

Whisnant sees this process of changing and influencing a culture in a prescribed way as less than benign.

In short, we must begin to understand the politics of culture-especially the role of formal institutions and forceful individuals in defining and shaping perspectives, value, tastes, and agendas for cultural change (p. 42).

Whisnant notes that while these intervening agendas were taking place in Appalachia, none were addressing the real ‘convulsions’ of industrialization: coal, timber and land extraction which would continue to have a major impact on the region at the turn of the 20th Century and beyond. These extractive industries drained the resources from local economies and reinvested them in capitalistic endeavors benefiting those outside the region.

Whisnant applies his politics of culture argument to educational endeavors promoted through the Settlement School Movement in the early 20th century. Focusing on the Hindman School in eastern Kentucky, Whisnant finds the ironic implications of a school hoping to educate students “back to their homes, rather than away from them” (p.32). What happened was the opposite: Settlement Schools provided the best opportunity for mountain students to gain entree to outside educational systems. Rather than relating to the local culture, the Settlement Schools were refinement stations of middle-class, modern values preparing students to enter colleges outside the region in places as near as Berea and Lexington and as far away as New York and Massachusetts.

Whisnant concludes his study of the Settlement schools with a discussion of the push and pull impact of the founders. These reformers were faced with the influence of modernity and its nagging implications: to what extent should the schools assimilate the people of Appalachia to the outside modern forces and to what extent should it try to

preserve the 'traditional' ways of the local people? He argues Settlement Schools would have been much more effective and long lasting if they had "ground their cultural programs in the complex dynamics of both traditional culture and cultural change in the area" (p. 56). Instead, he argues, they focused on 'essentially anachronistic artifacts': ballads and baskets, archaic speech and manners, dulcimers and play-party songs (p. 57). By doing this, by confining and defining Appalachian culture in static notions of a romantic past, the Settlement Schools secured the demise of the culture, positioned as it was, against the dynamic change being brought about by industrialization. Indeed, one of the lasting ironies of this portrayal of Appalachians as backward and traditional people is its durability. Whisnant concludes,

one of the paradoxes of intervention-induced cultural change is its very durability and the degree to which imported forms and styles are accepted and defended by local people whose actual cultural traditions they altered or displaced (p. 100).

Diane Sawyer's recent *20/20* 'documentary' on *The Children of Appalachia* continues this tradition of portraying Appalachians as poor people in dire need of outside interventions.

Duncan (1999) discussed how the education system in eastern Kentucky kept people embedded in 'a culture of poverty' perpetuating their subsistence. Through her ethnographic research she finds the reputations of the poor precede them and impact their ability to receive adequate housing, health care and education benefits. Being attached to a kin network known in the community as 'bad poor people', you are, according to Duncan's evidence, unable to move out of your poverty position. A community member explicates.

A lot of times you can hear somebody's last name and before you even meet them you've already got the idea they're either a good person or as sorry as can be... (in school) they make their picks on the people that's got the most money up here...the teacher treats them with respect...when I was going to school I was sent to the principal's office every day...and they did my brother the same way. (pp. 9-10)

These biases affect not only students but also the patronage of educators, many who receive their positions not by merit or skill but through political connections and corrupt means. According to Duncan, schools in central Appalachian districts, lacking the best and the brightest teachers, turn out students deficient in the skills necessary for participating in the larger world. Duncan attributes this system to earlier times in the region when mine owners controlled employment and jobs. Today, this is reflected in a school system where:

Employment in the school...provides a significant portion of the jobs here and the allocation of these jobs...has long been a matter of patronage politics. School board members are elected to represent small communities in the county...they are elected to look after their constituents' job needs, not the education of their children. (p. 32)

By connecting problems to the economic structures prevalent in Appalachia, Duncan concludes that other factors such as community, culture and class further inform understandings of the region's educational deficiencies.

Complications to deficiency modeling: Class, core and periphery economies

Billings and Blee (2004) also interject a class argument when explaining the issues of poverty in Appalachia. Taking an historical approach, these authors' study of Clay County, Kentucky suggests the class issues at play in the late 19th Century precipitated the poverty of today's Central Appalachian region. These issues include the

interplay of markets, local and state political partisanship, and the inability to own or raise enough local capital to counter outsider interests in the resources of Appalachia.

One enduring effect of Clay County's political life on its long-term poverty resulted from the inability of local government institutions to establish autonomy from factions of the county's contentious elite...Such partisan local institutions weakened the county's ability to promote a coherent set of elite interests, while the political domination of the majority of the population precluded effective non-elite representation. These conditions worsened the county's long-term economic stagnation (p. 31).

Unable to counteract the class dominant interests of local elites, Central Appalachia early on became a site where outsiders and insiders, both with means and power, exploited the interest of a few for the health and well-being of the many. Yet, the authors are hopeful that these processes can inform current reform efforts in the region. They write,

Such class processes are important for understanding the potential support for grassroots efforts in Appalachia to confront poverty and dependency by building equitable and sustainable alternatives to capitalist exploitation, preserving cultural strategies that still bolster reciprocity in poor communities, and transforming the local state and politics to make them more responsive and accountable to non-elite interests (p. 33).

As my interviews with faculty and students evidenced, community members have made this connection between the lack of available jobs in the region and elites whose interests keep certain opportunities limited through a status quo approach to economic development. They are also involved directly in bringing alternative economies such as tourism and outdoor recreation activities to the region to diversify the current economies of retail and coal mining.

Returning to issues of geography, how has the Central Appalachian region been targeted by ARC for development funding? Eller, an Appalachian historian, in his look at Appalachian development since World War II, discusses how issues of regional growth

policies have influenced ARC project funding of projects since the 1960's.

Incorporating Wallerstein's economic model of core and periphery centers to Kentucky counties, Eller (1994) notes the impact of core and periphery models as they were applied by ARC to Central Appalachia. In his analysis of the Appalachian Region Commission's (ARC) funding process, his findings report the growing disparity of county wealth within eastern Kentucky. At the time of the report, Kentucky had fifty-seven counties labeled as 'distressed' by the ARC. The ARC defines a county as distressed if it meets the following criteria:

A poverty rate that is 150 percent or more of the U.S. average Per Capital Market Income (PCMI) that is no more than 2/3 of the U.S. average and an unemployment rate that is 150 percent or more of the U.S. average. A county also qualifies as being distressed if it has a poverty rate that is at least 200 percent of the national average and matches only one of the two remaining criteria (150 percent unemployment or two-thirds PCMI) (Wood: 2005).

Eller found two characteristics of perpetual poverty in these distressed areas. One was a cluster of counties with poverty rates consistently higher than 38%. These counties in the 1980's and 1990's had been largely bypassed by the highway development projects funded by the ARC. Also, within these distressed counties in Eastern Kentucky, further distressed communities existed. Having historically received little money from the ARC, these communities were periphery to the county seats when compared to core communities. Eller noted that since 1965, ARC had given Appalachian Kentucky over 766 million dollars. During the 28 year period he studied (1965-1993), Eller found disparities in funding ranging from \$400,000 in one county, Owsley, to \$9,000,000 in another, Pike (p. 34). Most of the counties receiving the largest share of the funds were more populous and located along the Virginia border. In comparison, because they were designated as 'non-growth centers', interior counties and well as non-populous regional

county seats received less funding (p. 33). Eller is also quick to note, funds received generally were applied to infrastructure projects (roads, sewage, etc.) with most of the funding for human resource development (education, health, housing, etc.) declining since the 1980's (p. 38). Eller concludes that the most distressed counties in Appalachia evidence a periphery relationship and that "these most severely distressed communities exists at the periphery of political and economic life and are often miles from larger regional growth centers" (1994, p.14). Because it has like Pike and Jackson County received significant ARC funding over the last forty years, Harlan County is considered one of ARC's regional growth centers promoted through their funding strategies. Yet it too, like many rural areas, has seen an increasing reduction of population since the 1970's. From census records, in 1980 the population of Harlan County was close to 42,000. By 2000 this number had declined to around 33,000. The 2010 census is expected to document even further the Harlan's trend of outmigration and reduced population size.

How do such issues of class and core/periphery economies impact Southeast students' pursuits of higher education? How do perceptions of the region, dissected and described by many as lacking in economic opportunities, inform their decisions to stay or go? If necessary, how willing are students to leave the region, attached as they may be to local people and places? How have the assumptions inherent in development, with its shift from local to global perspectives as well as the subsequent move from rural to the urban, influenced their decisions? For students and to a lesser extent faculty and administrators, how necessary are such mobility requirements? Can they, by participating in community college programs- and in this way investing in human capital

and development arguments around individuals- nonetheless find outlet and application for their advanced degrees and training in 'underdeveloped' regions? Are some of them, by choosing to attend college and apply their increased capital in Central Appalachia, exhibiting a 'rationale' consistent with local and familial values connected to place and community?

What about those who leave, how do they discuss their post-secondary positions and how do they rationalize their degree selections and the applications? Are they more convinced by development arguments than those who stay in Appalachia? Do they articulate a different definition of community and their commitment to it? For Southeast students, how do perceptions of place influence their higher education options and applications?

The continuing discussion

This chapter lays out the primary and pertinent questions of my study. As a researcher I approach these questions from the position of someone whose life exhibits the inherent assumptions of development policies. At the age of eighteen I effectively left my home community for college, never wanting or seeking return. My academic biography is one of increased mobility and displacement as I moved, acquiring jobs and additional graduate training in ever distant and unfamiliar places. Yet I find the arguments and stances of those committed to place and people compelling. Why is this when my life's trajectory moves me well beyond such specific attachments? We know as

researchers, our own assumptions and life events equally inform our study as it does our interviewees. I continue to question the qualitative definitions inherent in economic development theory, definitions which primarily attach quality of life to income and economic possibilities. Having lived and been exposed to both an economically struggling urban place facing a declining industrial base and a rural agricultural community geographically isolated, I was witness to people attached to place regardless of its seeming deficiencies. People in these places made a living by focusing quality of life issues to their values, values which emphasized familial and community rather than economic relations. As I approached this study, I was hoping to better understand student and faculty perspective on place and how this constrains, contains, and/or expands their educational lives. But also, to better understand, like Corbett, my own inherent biases towards the purposes of advanced education.

Summary

The Central Appalachian region, long articulated as site in need of development, is now included in Kentucky statewide plans to increase post-secondary degrees. This local emphasis reflects national and international patterns connecting regional economic development to increased human capital development. Urged by the State hoping to increase the human capital of the region, Kentucky's 'Double the Numbers' program recognizes the role of the community college in helping to increase transfers to four year institutions. My research at Southeast investigated how the community and technical college phenomenon in Harlan County, Kentucky was understood and utilized in a

context where the logic of development theory confronted local application of what it means to be educated and employed in Central Appalachia. From these interviews and oral histories, my study researched how students and, to a lesser extent faculty and administrators, at Southeast Community and Technical College in eastern Kentucky articulated the rationale of pursuit and application of post-secondary education in ‘underdeveloped’ Appalachia. How this rationale was informed by commitments to individual and community advancement was detailed as was their concepts of what constituted ‘the good life’ and how educational ends informed these constructions.

In the next chapter, faculty and administrative voices provide context for the students’ voices which follow in Chapters Four and Five. While interviewing students at Southeast, I selected faculty and administrators to interview as well. I asked them to contemplate their own academic preparation as well as their perceptions of the purposes of higher education, the place of Central Appalachia, and student pursuits at Southeast. Their comments provide contextual backdrop before concentrating on the students’ perspectives in the later chapters.

Chapter 3

What they say: Southeast administrators and faculty speak about place and post-secondary pursuits

Introduction

Through the interviews with Southeast faculty and administrators, I better understood their reasons for working and living in a region considered historically 'deficient'. I also better understood how their articulations of place situated their positions regarding post-secondary pursuits and how such positions were informed by definitions on the purposes, or ends of education.

By the time of my field data collection in 2009, Southeast Community and Technical College had established five campuses in a tri-county region, Cumberland in 1960, Whitesburg in 1990, Middlesboro in 1995, with Harlan and Pineville added in 2001-2002. The two field sites selected for my research, Cumberland and Harlan, reflect the beginning and current ends of community college construction in Kentucky. In the late 1950's both communities petitioned to be the construction site for the newly developing community college initiative in Kentucky. Of the two, Harlan was favored. It was surprising then when, after the donation of land by US Steel and funds promised by the city totaling \$60,000, Cumberland was selected. A groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Cumberland site in May of 1959 by the then Governor Chandler (Southeast Community and Technical College, 2001). During the first decade, student enrollment hovered at around 500. The Harlan County Vocational School was established in 1938 and added as a Southeast campus after the merger of community and vocational schools

created by KCTCS. Today it serves primarily, though not exclusively, as the vocational extension of Southeast, housing most of the technical certificate programs. During the 2008-2009 academic year, Southeast employed close to 125 faculty, administrator and support staff at the Cumberland site, the Harlan site employed around thirty-five.

Southeast has five academic divisions, allied health, communications including the arts and humanities, industrial technologies, natural sciences and math, and the social sciences. Each state they are to service both the needs of the student and the community. Of all divisions, the offering of allied health, (nursing, medical assistants, physical therapy and radiography) are among the most popular for entering students. There are over thirty faculty associated with the division. Communications employees twenty-two, industrial technologies as well as the natural sciences employ twelve, with the social sciences, like the arts and humanities, employing twenty-three faculty. These faculty numbers reflect the emphases of Southeast on health and education degrees as well as those courses promoting the associate of arts or associate of science degree.

(www.southeast.kctcs.edu/Academic/Divisions)

Over the spring and fall 2009 semesters, I interviewed fifteen faculty and administrators from Southeast's Cumberland and Harlan campuses. Faculty from each of the five department divisions, allied health, arts & humanities, industrial technologies, natural and social sciences, were interviewed. Faculty identified within these divisions by students as helpful advisors were also specifically sought for interviews as were any administrators identified by students. Many students referenced one specific office, student support services. Though not mentioned by students directly, I also interviewed

the president and registrar given their influential and distinct perspectives on the student and institutional body.

I began the interviews with the assumption that a faculty's discipline would influence their positions on the purpose of post-secondary education. To me it followed that the allied health professions and industrial technology divisions would evidence a connection to local jobs through terminal certificates or degrees and the natural and social sciences, arts and humanities divisions would emphasize the transfer position, preparing students for four year degrees applicable outside the region. Though these assumptions were in varying ways supported, faculty and administrators introduced another position, that of transformative. This position reflected by the community college emphasized the liberal arts, preparing students to be active, engaged citizens where ever they lived.

Interview protocol: themes of place and purposes in post-secondary pursuits

Because I wanted to have them think about how their own biographies and educational backgrounds influenced their articulation of place and purposes in higher education, I asked faculty and administrations questions concentrating on their perceptions of place, higher education pursuits and purposes. (See Appendix C) Their responses formed oral histories of their work at the community college, their own educational preparations as well as their philosophies regarding the importance of post-secondary education. Oral histories are always useful when as a researcher, one wants to get beyond official texts and find out how local people contextualize events and, specific to my research, policy. Frisch, (1990) a leading oral historian comments on this, highlighting how research is informed by interviewees' knowledge and experiences.

What is most compelling about oral and public history research is a capacity to redefine and redistribute intellectual authority so that this might be shared more broadly in historic research and communication (p. xx)

Following the guidelines for oral history interviewing established by the Oral History Association, all Southeast faculty and administration interviews are transcribed and available at a public archive. (See Appendix D)

Through their responses, faculty and administrators related their reasons for being in or coming back to Harlan County, their connections to the community and the college, as well as the purposes of higher education. Indeed, it was these purposes which directly informed their perceptions of the community college's application in the region. This was true for both faculty and administrators as each articulated how their own educational preparation - -whether they had stayed or left to receive their degrees, returned or in some cases, first arrived in the region to begin work at Southeast- - shaped their intents as community college members. Through the biographies, faculty and administrators addressed the indirect questions posed by development theorist by directly answering why they are attached and committed to a place often written off as lacking in quality life opportunities.

Like post-secondary policy analysts, Southeast faculty and administrators are also working out the role and mission of the community college. While all are committed to the necessity of additional training beyond high school, their own educational positions vary regarding what the college provides, be that terminal training or transfer degrees. While current state policy emphasizes the need for increasing four year degrees among Kentucky residents, Southeast must content with the vocational/technical education emphasis created by the KCTCS merger in the late 1990's. Amidst such pushing and

pulling, Southeast faculty and administrators offer contrasting positions which spotlight the continuing debate regarding the ends of education generally but more specifically, community college education.

Understanding Harlan County: Place and identity

How do faculty and administrators talk about the region once they arrive and/or return to work at Southeast Community and Technical College? Do perceptions of place inform their positions on the purpose (s) of post-secondary education? During their oral history interviews, faculty and administrators discussed contrasts which reveal tensions between the perceived potential and reality of the region and how higher education pursuits and applications were informed, justified and modified by such understandings.

Of the faculty and administrators interviewed, most (11) were from Harlan or a neighboring county. A few (3) were from other states, and most of these had been raised or worked in rural areas. Only one faculty interviewed, Dr. Roy Silver, a sociologist, was from far away, having grown up in Queens, New York. After his graduate training in the Midwest, he took a job at a local college until he could later find full time work at Southeast in the late 1980's.

Not only were most of the interviewees from the region but many had worked at Southeast for over fifteen years. Perhaps one of the more instructive examples is Dr. Bruce Ayers who started at Southeast as a student in the 1960' and then worked several years as a faculty member in the 1970's. He is currently college president and has been since 1988. He describes the 'tugging' which keeps him home.

It just like, I just felt like, the mountains were my home. I think there is a mystical tugging at people's hearts in the mountains to stay here. I think there is just a metaphysical, mystical, spiritual connection that is very, very powerful that's probably not quantifiable (Ayers, 2009).

Other faculty and administrators would also have much to say about the region and what brought and keeps them there. In their answers to the prompt "How would you describe the region to someone who was considering moving here" they detailed both pessimistic and optimistic stances regarding the region and its potential. Yet all are committed to it and its people.

Contrasting assets: people and place

Ann Carr, like many of the Southeast faculty, returned to Southeast after having completed an advanced degree elsewhere. Though born in Naples, Italy, (her father was a GI station in Europe during WWII and her mother moved to the United States after the War) she grew up in Lynch, Kentucky and attended Southeast before transferring to the University of Kentucky. A tenured English instructor, she remembers how she began as a student at Southeast and though now she "sits on the other side of the desk" (Carr, 2009), she nonetheless is familiar with her students. When discussing the region Carr believes,

You have to like solitude and the beauty of nature and of people speaking to you. If you're going to the grocery store, some stranger may comment to you. They're not trying to rob you or anything. It's not an idyllic life. I don't want you to think there's not anything bad. There is. We've got drug problems. We've got poverty problems. We've got political problems. Don't get me going.

Having got her started, she would go on to throughout the interview relating her commitment to the area. As a childhood and adult resident in the region, Carr speaks of it as one would a family member, well-understood and well loved.

Gary Gibson, in contrast came to Kentucky as an adult to take the job at Southeast. Moving from Kansas after having grown up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Gibson and his wife began their work at Southeast in the late 1980's. Gary is tenured faculty in the social sciences department; Karin is the college's dean/registrar. He came to Harlan County familiar with rural areas so "coming here was not a culture shock to me". He has taught accounting, computer and other business applications courses as well as provided motivational speaking workshops in the community. Like many of the writers framing Appalachia as deficient, he too sees the region as lacking but highlights the people as a regional asset.

Now, the strength of the people, the people are very strong here, okay. Some of them are very reserved, but most of them they jump in and they're willing to help you if you need help like the old cliché give the shirt off your back even if they're poor. Well, I don't know, other than it's very poor. I'm gonna' repeat that. Poor, and very rural. We don't have a lot to do (Gibson, G, 2009).

When discussing why the area is poor, Gibson argument reflects a core and peripheral understanding of the economy. Hoping I did not find his logic crazy, he had thought for many years that powerful people had isolated the region by not providing better access to the region by way of roads.

Well, I think one reason there are not jobs here people say is that it's the access, the infrastructure. This is Gibson's view now...when they designed the interstate system, they made it where they moved businesses away from smaller communities because businesses locate close to the interstate... it seems to me like the fed is a little responsible for the rural areas that don't have jobs.

When asked to further consider the region by discussing its assets and challenges, faculty and administrators answers were fairly uniform: the beauty of the area, access to outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing and all terrain vehicle (ATV) riding, these amenities were juxtaposed with the fact that "there is not a lot to do around here". Also,

that the region was a safe and good place to raise kids was discussed as was the fact that the region lack of amenities might limit a child's future opportunity. Tammi Chapman highlighted this position through her life history. She works in the education department and grew up in a small community, referred to early on as the 'colored camp' near Black Mountain.

I live in a little bitty community, believe it or not. Actually, when I was a little girl, it was called the "colored camp" because that's where the black people, African-American people live... We lived in the camp called the "colored camp." It's actually called Black Mountain... And about three miles above my house, the highway just ends. You come smack dab into a mountain, like, no more road (Chapman, 2009).

Living there, she was able to finish her Bachelor's degree at Cumberland College, followed by a Master's at Union College and then principal certification at Eastern Kentucky University. Before coming to Southeast in 2007, she taught science for seventeen years in the county high schools. When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the region, her responses evidence the push and pull factor of staying and leaving.

I've wanted to leave here, but you don't want to leave here. I can't describe it to you. Here is safe. I have a little boy; he's ten. And I know that by probably staying here, he's probably gonna be at a disadvantage and that bothers me... Well, it's a nice place to live... But if you've got high hopes where you, like, if you've got children and things, I probably wouldn't move here. And I hate to say that because I love it here... if I had children and I wanted them to be exposed to a lot of things that children in Lexington and Louisville get exposed to, they're not gonna have that here.

Chapman's contradictory position, her love of the region and the comfort she derives from it as well as her concern over her son and his future was represented in other Southeast voices.

Sheila Gordon began her professional role at Southeast in the late 1990's working with first-generation college students through the college's TRIO programs. She herself is a first generation college student who attended Southeast her first two years, transferring then to complete her bachelor and master degrees in social work from the University of Kentucky. She relates how the TRIO counselor at the time of her undergraduate work encouraged her to transfer and, "If it hadn't been for her I probably wouldn't have made it" (Gordon, 2009). As a social work faculty member and administrator of Southeast's TRIO programs, Gordon describes Harlan where people are a resource in a place where mineral resources are abundant but other amenities are not.

People will be there for you here. You do get to know people here. They care about each other. . Just (not) having some modern conveniences that some people do have...The hardships here seem a little harsher with the way some have to live.

Like Chapman, the area's isolation limits opportunities yet provides a comfort and aesthetic that is not traded for big city amenities. People become the dominating asset in a region characterized by declining economic assets.

Contrasts between the idyllic and the ills of the region

Having moved to Ohio as a young boy, economics professor Elijah Buell's perspective on the region is influenced by his return to teach at Southeast as a young man. He has been a faculty member at Southeast for over thirty years. Though born in Harlan, he grew up in Ohio when his family, like many others, left Harlan in the 1950's for jobs in the industrial north. Buell related that after completing his graduate degree, while on a visit to his see his parents who had returned to Harlan while he was in college, read an ad advertising his current job at Southeast. "Interviewed and got the job and I told 'em, I'll probably be here for a couple of years. Twenty- nine years later, I'm still

sitting here” (Buell, 2009). When posed the question of how he would describe the region to someone who was considering a move to the area, his description juxtaposes the strengths of the region alongside its weaknesses.

Rural, mountainous, the economy as being restricted, but there are opportunities out there. Right now we are experiencing a recession nationwide and the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, seems like they are always in a recession. Your highs are not too high, your lows are not too low but you are right there in the middle low.

Ronnie Daniels story of outmigration and return is similar to Buell’s. He began his work in Harlan in 1992, employed at Harlan Vocational School as a state employee under the Workforce Development Department. After the 1998 KCTCS merger between the community and vocational colleges in Kentucky, he became an employee of Southeast. His family moved to Indiana when he was three from Pineville, Kentucky. Here he completed his Associate’s degree as Master Technician from Ivy Tech, Indiana’s equivalent technical/community college system. He currently teaches a two year automotive technology program available to adults and local high school juniors and seniors at the Harlan campus. His appreciation of the region was increased by his time away,

It’s just a beautiful place to be. That’s one of the things I like most, and I missed most when I lived away from here, and a lot of people in this area don’t really realize what they have because they didn’t live outside (Daniels, 2009).

Daniels is a local member of the new ATV park which recently opened in the Black Mountain region. Working with other local clubs and organizations, Daniels helped form a coalition to promote tourism in the region. Along with others, he believes Harlan needs to diversify its economy.

Kathy Guyn, chair and professor of the Allied Health department grew up in Harlan but moved away to Lexington to complete her Bachelor's at the University of Kentucky. She enjoyed her time in Lexington and had no plans to return to Harlan. It was her husband, with a little persuasion from her father, which influenced her to return. A native of the Lexington area, her husband was approached by her father with a job offer. Guyn consented, relating, "We wanted to hopefully make a difference in the area...give something to this area" (Guyn, 1990). Like others interviewed, she describes the region's issues by focusing on its limited economic opportunities.

The people here were hard workers, but most of the land or mineral rights were owned by companies and entities that aren't local. Historically, a lot of the money that has been made here didn't stay here with your large corporations that own all the mineral rights. We don't really have any factories or any other of those middle of the road type jobs that we depend on.

Like Daniels, Guyn also connects the region's assets to its outdoor recreational opportunities by working on various local committees to promote them.

But if I were talking about someone coming to this area, I think once they get here it's beautiful. The mountains. The scenery. You know we have the highest point in Kentucky here. There are probably more recreational activities that you could do here. Lots of climbing, mountain climbing. Trail hikes that you can do, and we're working on those. In fact, I'm on a coalition that's working on some of those.

The idyllic beauty of the region, the sense of community and friendliness of the area was spoken of alongside its limitations, sometimes within the same breath. One of the tremendous problems infecting the area, a problem often connected to lack of opportunities, is increased drug addiction. Pat Scopa, a natural science faculty biologist who also works with many of the allied health program students, shared her perception of the region. Her medical vantage point informs her perspective. Scopa returned to Southeast after completing advanced degrees at the University of Kentucky. She too

connects the lack of jobs in the region to a lack of investment by those who hold the capital. She goes on to connect the lack of employment opportunities to drug abuse

You're either a coalminer or a nurse or a teacher. That's basically the jobs. You have a lot of non-union miners now and a lot of coal trucks. See, it's absentee ownership, and the money that they're making is going out of state. So it's sort'a still tied – it's a small area, and only a few people control most everything in the area...And I'd say we've probably got one of the higher unemployment rates in the state. In fact, I know we do...then there is a very bad drug problem here. And I'm not exaggerating. It's really one of the worst, and a lot of the kids, young men and women, are on drugs. (Scopa, 2009).

Outsiders who became committed insiders

For others at Southeast, the extreme depictions of the area's assets and deficiencies make for interesting living and working in the region. Unlike those who grew up in Harlan or have family roots which stretch out and draw them back, a few migrated to Harlan County to take their current jobs at Southeast.

Robert Gipe grew up not far from Harlan in Kingsport, Tennessee. His educational trajectory bounced him from Wake Forest, North Carolina- where he completed a bachelor's in English-to Amherst, Massachusetts to complete an MA in American Studies. After working several years in the region for Appalshop, a nonprofit arts and education center promoting Appalachian life through the arts through multi-media venues, Gipe joined the humanities department at Southeast. "I was traveling around helping communities prepare proposals...and was interested in getting off the road" (Gipe, 2009). He was hired as director of the Appalachian Center at Southeast in 1997.

Since coming to Southeast over ten years ago, Gipe has been instrumental in promoting the arts as a means of telling the story of Harlan County. Through gathered

stories and photos from students in his Appalachian history course, he has helped write and cast plays depicting the lives and ways of living in the region. His describes the region as a place, because of its problems and potentials, which makes for interesting living and learning.

I mean you know, it's not for everybody to live...it's a great place to listen, it's a great place for people who are interested in American history, it's a great place for people who want to engage with people who are, you know I mean a lot of great examples of the human spirit, and the people's ability to survive and persist and flourish, and- - It's a good place for people who wanna work on social change..If you wanna look at examples of, of places where the American experiment hasn't really fulfilled itself, you can see a lot of examples of what, what the costs of the system that we have chose to perpetuate are .

Roy Silver, also moved to the region from out of state. He however spent his early years growing up in New York City, in the borough of Queens. After finishing his PhD from University of Toledo, in the 1980's he taught for four years at Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky. After his contract was not renewed in his fifth year, he approached the Dean for a reason and asked why he was not being rehired. "He says we don't have to tell you ...they were much more concerned about protecting the interest of the students and from what they perceived to be radicals like me" (Silver: 2009).

Silver taught for the next five years part-time at the University of Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky University. In 1989 he was offered a teaching job at Southeast. Accepting the job, he concluded "there would be some good opportunities...to do some constructive things here". As he researched the area he found one of the strengths of the region was its historical background of unionism. Through its past, Harlan found a foothold for its current organizing efforts to protect the area's resources.

Working with people in this community here, in particular, who have been trying to protect their water in the community of Lynch next door, these are people who

have union experience, and union background, and a mining background, and they know the value of organizing, and they know the value of their protecting the valuable resources that they have.

Faculty and administrators articulated descriptions of the region, its assets, strengths and weaknesses and through them provided interesting contrasts. How is the college as an institution in the region impacted by as well as addressing the community issues of unemployment, drug abuse and recreational opportunities? Do faculty and administrators views of the region impact their perspectives on the purposes of post-secondary training? Whether functioning to transfer students out of the region, transition them into available local jobs or transforming them into citizens who can address critical life issues, Southeast faculty and administrators' perspectives on the ends of higher education were influenced by their perception of the regions limits and possibilities.

Understanding and preparing Southeast students: Purposes of higher education

When asked their positions regarding the purposes of post-secondary education, faculty and administrators responses reflected goals described in Labaree's (1997) analysis of education ends in the United States. Labaree, a historian of education, describes what has been and currently are the evolving and conflicting educational ends of US schooling institutions. He sees three historic approaches to the purposes of education: to prepare students to be citizens in the newly forming republic, preparing workers in the growing industrialism of the 19th and 20th Century, and preparing consumers to navigate the globalized market forces of the 21st Century. Though conceding that all preparations have to varying degrees been part of the purpose of education, Labaree sees the current trend of student as savvy consumer dominating

educational rationale and practices. Though the potential for conflict exists within these approaches, all three have proven useful conductors of education purposes in the United States.

Labaree argues that education reform movements have been trying to answer is not what kind of schools will persist, but rather what kind of schooling is needed. He argues that rather than being a cultural, pedagogical, organization or social issue, reform centers around political ends.

The problem is not that we do not know how to make schools better, but that we are fighting amongst ourselves about what goals schools should pursue. Goal setting is a political, and not a technical, problem (p. 40).

Schools decide on what kind of schooling or preparation to provide as students take their respective places in society.

Schools, it seems, occupy an awkward position at the intersection between what we hope society will become, and what we think it really is, between political ideals and economic realities...Should schools present themselves as a model of our best hopes for our society and a mechanism for remaking that society in the image of those hopes? Should schools focus on adapting students to the needs of society as currently constructed? Or should they focus primarily on serving the individual hopes and ambitions of their students? (p. 41)

These three educational trends, whether preparing students to be citizens through an emphasis on the liberal arts, preparing them to be workers by stressing vocational education or promoting education as individual consumer choice, reflect the political goals of educational institutions. While interviewing Southeast faculty and administrators, these themes of students as citizens, workers and consumers were reflected in corresponding purposes related to the community college, whether that be through a transformative (citizenry), transitional (worker) and/or transfer (consumer) emphasis. Though most realized all three to be part of the community college's charge,

each articulated a dominant focus to their individual work with students, a work intimately connected to perceptions of student as well as regional opportunities and limitations.

Education for the transitional worker

Faculty and administrators who viewed students' post-secondary pursuits as a means by which they transitioned into the local economy emphasized the necessity of staying in the region. If increased quality of living standards were to be fostered in the region, then retention of students was crucial. Kathy Guyn, chair of the Allied Health division at Southeast, describes her students' local application as trained medical professionals as a retained regional resource.

Students that graduate from here, and they get a job here, they tend to stay here, which is good for our local economy... We need to keep the brightest and best here. To do that, you need to be able to have something for them to use their brightest and best on (Guyn, 2009).

According to Guyn, Southeast provides a much needed educational opportunity to students who, because of their attachment to the local, seek area application for their degrees.

I guess my whole personal philosophy basically agrees with basic community college principles. We try to bring the education to the area in the program it needs. Most of the students because of growing up here-I knew a lot of students - you'd be surprised at the number of students who don't go past Pineville or Middlesboro or someplace else. If this college were not here, I don't know that they'd journey too much further away to get an education.

Like Guyn, Daniels, chair of industrial technology, agrees application is key to those he prepares for local jobs in auto and technical fields. As the department website attests, their goals are to provide "current information about local Industry needs, while utilizing that information in each program curriculum allowing students a smoother

transition into the workforce” (author’s emphasis). Daniels argues that students transitioning into the local economy find the Associate degrees applicable in the region.

A lot of my students don’t want an associate degree, and you’re going to see that a lot in the technical programs. We try to get them to go ahead because often times the Associate degree - - doesn’t matter what field you have it in- -just having an Associate’s degree could be the difference between getting a job, and not getting a job. You know, if you’ve got 15 applicants, and one of them - - and they are all somewhat equal - - and one has an associate degree, that’s pretty much the easy choice, and that often times is what happens (Daniels, 2009).

Daniels also discusses the situation of students who having pursued the Bachelor’s, find themselves having invested in a degree that has little application locally.

The four-year degree is great in some instances, but in some instances there’s a whole lot of people around here with four-year degrees that can’t find a job, or are working at McDonalds, and that’s a shame. That’s the bad part about it. There’s a lot of cost involved with a four-year degree. Maybe that was bad planning on what they chose to go for. If they planned on living in the area, maybe they needed to look at what was going to be available.

Dr. Ayers, President of Southeast, also connects keeping people in the region by providing them training necessary for local applications. Like Guyn, he sees people’s connection to the region as an asset to be cultivated,

Community colleges keep people at home. That is very, very important... They (students) are going to be the future... they’re going to be the public officials, they are going to be the civic leaders, they’re going to be the people who are the future of the region... Students do not aspire to leave, they want to stay here...so we are able to come up with a program mix that allows them to get degrees so they can find jobs in the region (Ayers, 2009).

Education for the transferring consumer

The emphasis on preparing students to transfer out of the region was also articulated by Southeast faculty and administrators emphasizing the transfer possibility provided by the two year degree programs. Like those who articulated transitional ends, perceptions of student and regional characteristics informed their position related to

degree application. Some also discussed an historic understanding of the changing and sometimes conflicting missions of the community college.

Ann Carr, professor of English who has taught at Southeast for almost 30 years, laments the decline of transfer education, attributing it to the KCTCS merger in 1998, a merger she was adamantly opposed to.

The KCTCS system is one that I spoke against; I went to Frankfurt and testified. I didn't feel that it was in the best interest of community colleges to be taken away from the University of Kentucky. And of course, we were the big bone of contention. Lots of reasons, I don't know how much you know about the history or what you think about it but what a whole lot of us thought, Paul Patton saw Charles Wethington as his big opponent for the governorship so he was going to change it by God or else. And so, he got it and we got it.

She continues,

So we had a shotgun wedding of an unwilling bride and groom because the technical people were not anymore interested in joining with the community college system than we were in joining with them...And what I've seen in the last ten years is a declining emphasis on traditional transfer education. I've seen an increased push for technical education. And now what I'm really seeing in the last two or three years is, the big push is, "This is business. We are going to run this place like a business." It's not a business. It's higher education.

Carr's emphatic belief that the community college should be a foundation on which students can work towards a four year degree program is articulated further by Pat Scopa, chair of the Natural Sciences division and professor of biology. Scopa who has also taught for many years at Southeast, saw the creation of the KCTCS system. For her, the severing of the University of Kentucky connection translates into a relational loss between local students and transfer opportunities. She is always encouraged when her students seek the four year degree.

And when I first started teaching, we were part of the University of Kentucky. And life was much better. And I just, there was just a pride in your work and seeing your students move on to another college. A lot of them went to University of Kentucky, a lot of them went to Eastern, a lot went to Union College, a lot of them transferred to different places. But you had a real sense of

accomplishment when they would transfer and do well...and there is still sort of now but there's so much politics in the system now that it's just corrupt and it's just - - you still try to hang onto your old values, and I'm still proud of my students. And I'm proud when they go, transfer (Scopa, 2009).

Both Carr and Scopa are returnees to the region after having finished two years at Southeast as undergraduates. Both went to the University of Kentucky for their Bachelor and Master degrees and returned because of personal responsibilities to family in the region. Both are aware that students, because of familial obligations and connections may chose to stay rather than leave Harlan.

Gary Gibson came to Kentucky from Kansas to take the position at Southeast and relates how, when counseling students, he is often surprised that they have not considered transferring out. His own perception of regional economic opportunities compels him to advise students to consider the possibilities of transfer,

I've had some people honestly say they wanted to just stay here. They hadn't thought about transferring, and I've actually suggested to them that "hey, you've got so many years of financial aid, did you realize you could get a four-year degree with that?"... Not that they were questioning, they just hadn't thought about that as a goal because they hadn't thought about leaving here per se.

Gibson goes on to explain how, though it makes sense that students would not think to leave the big cities of Kentucky because of their amenities, it makes little sense, as he sees it, that students would not consider leaving Harlan which provides little.

Now, if you were interviewing people at Blue Grass or Jefferson, that would be different because they're in a big city. So they may be a little different than we are because a big city like Lexington or Louisville seems to me like a student won't think about leaving. Why? Because everything is there. Here, we don't think about leaving, but there's nothing here.

I wondered why then, given the lack of opportunities, students still stay?

Wright: Why is it you think students don't perceive that- -

Gibson: Because - -I don't know. They just like home. They don't realize that - -in my case- -they don't realize that you could still love your family, and they could be three states away.

Gibson cannot understand the rationale of students who choose to stay in a region of limited options because of a responsibility to family, a responsibility which they translate in terms specific to geographic propinquity. Rather he believes they should, as *individuals* considering their limited options in Harlan, pursue possibilities elsewhere.

Sheila Gordon, Southeast's TRIO counselor, is also concerned that Southeast students, given their attachments to the region, consider only degrees of application rather than degrees of aspiration.

Some will choose a major just because it's here. I have known several that, because they felt bound to the area due to family obligations, fear, whatever else it may be, decided to do a program here because it was here. Not because it was a career choice...There is a culture here that - - I mean my mom and dad was that way a little bit. You know, they really didn't want me to go to Lexington, but they didn't hold me back. But there are some that will. I mean they'll pull out all the stops, all guilt trips. I have seen that happen to some of our students and they would have been awesome at some of these four-year schools. But for whatever reason, they couldn't let it go. They stayed here (Gordon, 2009).

Gordon was quick to add that a student choice to stay in the region was not a bad thing in and of itself. What she did regret were those who stayed even when their degree interests necessitated leaving.

Education for the transformative citizen

In his analysis of the conflicting political ends of education in the United States, Labaree highlights citizenry building as the pinnacle example of the ends of education. Citing Jeffersonian ideals for the republic and how an educated citizenry is crucial for the

creation and maintenance of democratic ends and on which the public school movement was built, he argues:

The single best explanation for the founding and early diffusion of common schools in this country is that they are seen as an essential to the process of nation building and the related process of *training for citizenship* (p.44, author's emphasis).

Because of the emphasis on democratic ideals related to equal treatment and access, for Labaree, public education is seen as the most public application of a public good; an ideal lost in the recent emphasis on education as a means to meet the individual ends of worker and consumer goals. Labaree argues against educational ends as a purely private good, which only placating the demands of the market and/or the demands of the consumer. For him, a consumer, individualistic education, while promoting the market mobility of students, works against the societal ends of engaged citizens.

The social mobility goal has a mixed relationship with the three elements that define the goal of democratic equality: Whereas social mobility shares with its partner in the progressive a concern for equal access, it stands in opposition to equal treatment, and it works directly counter to the ideal of civic virtue (p. 65).

At Southeast I interviewed faculty voicing a similar emphasis on the public good of education. To this end, their work as educators was about how students could address and apply their education to the problems in the region. Robert Gipe and Roy Silver are two such faculty who emphasize the transformative ends of education. They came to Harlan having grown up in other places, one in Tennessee, the other, New York City. Both have taught at Southeast for many years; Gipe completed his tenth year during my field study, Silver his twentieth. As project work in their courses, both have students identify, conceptualize and present regional problems to local and national audiences. Not surprisingly, both in their education purposes identified with Labaree's preparation

of the student as citizen and articulate these ends as they discuss the purposes of post-secondary education.

Silver begins by agreeing that education today seems to focus on the individual as worker or consumer. When asked what he believes to be the purposes of post-secondary education, Silver concedes that the primary argument articulated today is one related to increasing the human capital of students.

Well, I think the obvious one is for the individual to build up, as we say, their educational development, their human capital... I think, you know, obviously, that you could look at all the research about, you know, years of schooling and how that contributes to income (Silver, 2009).

He does however argue against this push to make education solely for transfer or transitional purposes. Given the fluctuating and unpredictable needs of the market, the traditional liberal arts education can in the long run provide more job options for students

The historical push for a strict technical education is fallacious, in my point. It's a fallacy, in that there's no training that will prepare anyone to hit the ground running in a particular career... what the liberal arts education does, is provide a broad based foundation that gives someone the adaptability to prepare for the unforeseen changes that are out there. So the basic skills, the critical thinking, ...the basic math and literature...it does provide a foundation that prepares us for the future, and as we try to push more for the technical side, with the exclusion of, of the liberal arts...we do a disservice to the students and the communities that they're part of.

For Silver, the service the liberal arts provide to the students and consequently their communities cultivates civic involvement. This cultivation runs counter he states, to recent trends in education focusing only on the student as consumer.

What you're doing is helping people become better citizens, and with that understand the responsibility of being a citizen. You know, both to not only help you and yours and your immediate surroundings, but, you know, beyond that... We've got to the point in education where it's all what kind of dollar does it bring

back to me...it sort of runs counter to say, there is an intrinsic value in learning for learning's sake.

He admits he and those like him emphasizing the transformative ends of education are “fighting against the tide”. For Silver, if Southeast fails to cultivate the citizenry aspect of education by neglecting their liberal arts foundation the consequence will be the region joining what has been a growing trend of declining creation and presentation of arts in the community. And it is precisely through these artistic presentations that the regions issues are engaged, addressed and mediated by the community.

Robert Gipe agrees with Silver regarding the necessity of the arts and has made community artistic creation, their presentation and expansion, the focus of his work at Southeast. He came to Southeast in 1998 after having worked in the region promoting the arts through Appalshop in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Gipe is unapologetic about the role the arts play in building civic capacity and has solicited funding for plays from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Rockefeller Foundation. In 2008 he cast the play *Higher Ground*, a colloque of local stories gathered by Southeast students from the community relating to the growing problems of legal and illegal drug addiction in Harlan County. Students, faculty, administrators and community folk all participated in the play. In 2009, *Playing with Fire*, a production again gathered from local stories and oral histories collected by students, highlighted the region's coal history and was the second of what will eventually be a three part series on issues facing in Harlan County. Gipe described the community involvement in the art making process.

We collected hundreds and hundreds of oral histories to use ...the play was called *Higher Ground*, and it got finished in the fall of 2005...The second of the plays is

called *Playing with Fire*...the plays have been a real big community engagement project. We had 80 people in the cast for the first one. We've got 90 or so that are kind of in or around the cast this time. So that's been a pretty viable, in terms of community participation.

The emphasis on community engagement projects and participation in the arts is crucial to an understanding of not only the area's problems, but also the resources of the community and the college's role in bringing all this together. For Gipe, the college provides the means by which the region's stories are gathered and presented

Nowhere is the intellectual vitality of the Appalachian people more in evidence than at the community colleges and in the coalfields. I mean you know, you just see...there's the kind of...there are so many kinds of conscious people. A lot are searching for a vocabulary to express that consciousness, and you know, haven't been given...an opportunity to read about what's been said about them. Or even get any kind of framework for a deep understanding of what's happened here.

He sees this consciousness in his students as they put together reports on the issues facing Harlan County and its people. Unlike other Appalachian colleges presenting at ARC's annual December meeting, Southeast students bring to the classroom an intimate knowledge of the region's problems and, as such, find local sites for their field research. The community college's task then, according to Gipe, is to continue these opportunities promoting conscious raising in the students and in the community. Like Silver, he too concedes a general drift away from this emphasis by community colleges.

And I really am disappointed that, that there seems to be some drift away from recognizing that access to the first two years of a baccalaureate or university education is an important part of the mission of a rural community college especially... and this idea that well, if you're the kind of person that has to go to the community college, then you must be more interested in technical education and just becoming an employee of somebody, a wage earner. That, you know, the idea that potentially professional people and artists and academics don't find themselves in community college, I think is just a shame.

The final of the three plays will continue the land, fire, water metaphor by focusing on the economic and environmental impact of coal in the region. Production begins in the fall of 2010 with performances the following spring of 2011. Content continues to be gathered by Southeast students from family and community remembrances.

Education's transferable, transitional and transformative ends

While most of the faculty and administrators articulated a focus on one of Labaree's education ends, whether as worker, citizen or consumer, there was a faculty member's position which stands in contrast. When I interviewed her, Tammie Chapman had been working at Southeast teaching education courses for just a few years, having taught science for many years in local high schools. While teaching, she worked towards her Rank I and Rank II certifications and a principal endorsement. She was however, unable during her time at the high school to move into an administrative role.

I had applied for three or four different principal positions, but this county's very political. It's not what you know and what you can do if you're the best – and I hate to say that against our people, but that's the truth. They know it's the truth; they live it (Chapman, 2009).

It was after these rejections that she turned her attention to working at the community college. Previously, she had not considered the work of the community college. She now sees it as an asset to its students as well as the region,

I never really paid much attention to the community college until I started working here. I never even really even encouraged my students to go to the community college until I started working. Then I saw what a real asset it really, really is... And I believe we are a vital resource in the communities that we serve because we have people move up in jobs. But I think this is a wonderful beginning because they get the college and the college atmosphere without the really, the fears and dangers of the things that are really out there. And then once they - -it's a like a gradual move away from you, I think. This is a wonderful thing.

Chapman, while recognizing the transitional role the community college provides students, especially the non-traditional students, does believe that eventually students may go away to college to complete four year degrees. She does however advocate for their return once they have finished. She sees her position at Southeast allowing her the political platform to bring about the change she hoped for while working at the secondary level. She conveys this passion to her education students.

And I'm gonna make sure that when they go out there, they're fired up. And I tell mine too when I'm teaching, I say, "Look, just don't settle to be a teacher. I need you to be administrators. I need you to be principals. I need you to work in that central office and be over curriculum. And I need you to be over the things in the areas that make a difference." So I thought maybe at this level, if I can teach teachers to be better teachers and then come back here – because I encourage my kids "Come back here, work here, and come back here, help us here" -that I could make a- - I wanna cry for some reason, that wells me up, I don't know why - that I could make a difference because I couldn't make one no other way.

Chapman believes education provides a way out for students but also a means of return which allows for not only transformative local but national change.

And for me, I think being an educator is probably the most powerful position – but we don't get recognized as that – but teachers are a powerful force. Through education, we can make or break a nation. That's just what I think about teachers, about education.

The continuing discussion

Faculty and administrators were candid during the interviews. Not only were they open regarding their biographical and educational backgrounds, but all were very frank regarding the purposes of post-secondary education. Their stances reflected competing missions of the community college. While Chapman was able to hold these tensions and work out a way to combine transfer, transitional and transformative ends, most faculty and administrators focused on one or the other.

Having taught at a community college in Wisconsin prior to beginning my PhD work, interviewing the faculty and administrators at Southeast reminded me of the commitments community college staff have for their teaching and their students. Given such commitments, in some ways their answers were predictable. Given the community college's philosophy of open access, if faculty and administrators had not emphasized student success, whether through transfer or transition, it would have been a surprise. However, that Southeast further chooses to focus on the educational end of transforming their community and region was not predictable. It is through its emphasis on the transformative end of post-secondary education that Southeast Community and Technical College functions in a unique way. While like most community colleges, it provides the training students need to take their place in the local economy. But it also has adopted as its mission to prepare students to become engaged locally and apply their education to regional problems and potentials.

Are students at Southeast aware of the transferable, transfer and transformative ends of education? Do they push back, define educational purposes differently or find themselves also gravitating towards one or more of these ends?

Summary

From their interviews, Southeast faculty and administrators articulate what Labaree has argued are the conflicting goals of education currently circulating in the United States. Whether working towards the end of an engaged citizenry through an emphasis on transformative educatory experiences, or preparing students to make transitions into the local economic job market and/or encouraging students to transfer out

because of lacking consumer and market options, Southeast seeks to provide all three. Labaree's critique, like other education critics especially those who focus on the mission of the community college, find such hybrid emphasis impossible to sustain over time. Those I spoke with at Southeast seemed to concur that since the KCTCS merger, the transitional emphasis on worker preparation has dominated. Why has the transfer option not grow in importance? Is it because such an emphasis on the student as consumer would ultimately see them transfer them out of the region, a region which has historically shipped out its resources to its detriment? (Lewis et al, 1978, Batteau, 1990) As interviews with some faculty and administrators indicated, Southeast students are seen as assets to be invested in, with the hope that local applications for their education can be found.

How then do Southeast students understand the economic push and pull factors related to their education biographies, biographies still being contemplated and constructed? How do they see their own futures shaped by a community college education? Do they articulate similar ends along citizen, consumer, and worker themes? How do their biographies and perspectives of the region influence, if at all, their post-secondary pursuits? As voiced by concerned Southeast faculty and administrators, how are their commitments to the region impacting decisions around what kinds of education are pursued? Where they are seeking to apply their advanced training and degrees? Chapter Four looks at how students at Southeast perceive, construct and navigate the definitions and deployment of degrees in eastern Kentucky and elsewhere.

Chapter 4

What they say: Southeast students speak about place and post-secondary pursuits

Introduction

This chapter looks at the push and pull factors Southeast students discussed as they articulated their rationale for attending Southeast Community and Technical College. As the researcher I was interested to find out how, and to what extent, students' commitment to place influenced their conceptions of higher education, its purpose and application. Furthermore, to what extent would students' perception of their home communities and whether or not they conceptualized their futures in Harlan County or elsewhere inform their stances regarding the application of their degree pursuits? Would their perceptions of the region, like the faculty and administrators interviewed, and its future potential inform their commitments to it? Would they be living in or leaving the region after acquiring their training and degrees and was this connected to how they discussed the purposes of education?

The selection process

During the spring and fall, 2009 semesters I interviewed twenty-eight students from Southeast Community and Technical College regarding their post-secondary pursuits. Because I was looking to see how their degree plans were influenced by their understanding of its application in the region, I interviewed students within the following degree of certificate trajectories: 1) those pursuing an Associate degree in order to apply it towards a four year degree, 2) those pursuing the Associate as the terminal degree, 3)

those who were *not* pursuing an Associate but rather a certificate or diploma option, and 4) those who had transferred from Southeast and were soon to complete or had completed a Bachelor's degree from Eastern Kentucky University. I did not select any students attending diploma programs, i.e. GED, adult education courses or community education courses as these credits are not necessarily applied to post-secondary pursuits. Of the twenty-eight students interviewed, eight were female, twenty male. A majority (15) were between the ages of 18-22. Some (10) were between the ages of 23 and 36 with a few (3) in their early 40's to early 50's.

For the transfer interviews, I selected Eastern Kentucky University. It has historically been the most popular choice among Southeast transfers, transfers which required students move from the county. From the 2007-2008 academic year, of the total 142 students who transferred, sixty-three students from Southeast Community Technical College selected Eastern. The next highest number transferring out of the region were eleven transferring to the University of Kentucky ("CPE Report"). Roughly 150 miles from Harlan County, Eastern provides students an educational experience close to home yet sufficiently far enough away. As one transfer student surmised, "Well Eastern is like – it's far enough away from home, but its close enough at the same time" (Boggs, 2009). Eastern also accepts the KCTCS scholarship which provides community college students transferring in to half their tuition costs.

These initial interviews, usually between twenty and forty minutes total, asked students to describe their post-secondary plans and their conceptions of how they would apply these degrees. Similar to the administrators and faculty interviews, I asked students to describe the region and think about how their conceptions of place influenced

their post-secondary plans and the application of their degrees. Responses varied with students articulating varying commitments to place. Once interviews were transcribed and coded, students' positions on the purpose and application of their educational training as well as the place (s) they envisioned living and working were highlighted.

Interview protocol: Themes of place and purpose in higher education pursuits

As earlier studies cited elude, (Hektner, 1995, Howe, 1996, Corbett, 2007) my research interest is in how students' attachment to rural places inform, conform, and influence their selection of post-secondary plans. Are, how are Southeast students influenced by place commitments when asked about their degree plans and applications? My interview protocol asked students questions around themes, inquiring into areas of place, identity, college and work/career options and applications. (See Appendices A&B) Like the Southeast faculty interviews, students' perceptions of Harlan County and the region shaped their education trajectories. Some selected their plans because of their local application; some for the direct transfer out of the region it provided. The least predictable student positions were those who selected advanced degrees like the Associate, Bachelor and Master degrees for direct application *in* the region. Hoping their education would connect to the social issues of the region in order that change and economic transformation could come to Harlan County, these students were seeking degrees whose applications directly addressed area deficiencies.

The use of semi-structured interviews

It was through semi-structured interviews that students initially discussed their perceptions of the region as well as their rationale for attending Southeast. I based my questions around interview categories Corbett (2007) had used in his study on education

and outmigration in Digby Neck, Nova Scotia. His categories related to Place and Family informed my categories on Place and Identity. Corbett's open-ended question format was one I sought to replicate in my own interviews. Under each theme heading I asked open-ended questions, letting students respond with their own descriptors. Knowing the centrality of place and connections to family and community often highlighted in Appalachian studies, I focused on place and identity as two dominant interview themes. I added two additional general headings specific to my study, the Community College and Post-secondary Aspirations. In the fall of 2008 I piloted the protocol in Professor Silver and Gipe's courses. During this trial interviews, students often brought up employment issues when describing Harlan County. From these initial contacts, I added Work and Economy to my list of categories.

From the twenty-eight initial interviews with students, I used thematic analysis to organize their data. As with any qualitative data, my task was to organize, create explanations, syntheses, and then develop theories linking my ideas to theirs (Glesne, p.147, 2006). By coding their replies using emergent design (Spradley, 1979), I was able, from the categories (domains) of Work, Community College, Place, Identity, and Post-secondary aspirations, to identify students' reoccurring and varying responses. The following themes and domains capture how Southeast students discuss, interpret, describe, and organize their rationales around the pursuit and application of advanced training and degrees Central Appalachia and beyond.

Understandings of place and identity

How do Southeast students describe Harlan County? When asked questions related to how people describe the community and what they thought were some of the best and worst aspects of living in Harlan, how did they describe the potentials and limitations of the area? Throughout the interviews, students did not hesitate to speak frankly about the dichotomies, tensions and commitments all which illustrate and inform their compositions of home.

Small town life “everybody knows everybody”

Of the twenty eight students interviewed, ten used the exact quote “everybody knows everybody” to describe their home region. Again and again, they articulated the benefits of small community living. Along with people knowing their neighbors, Harlan County was presented as a place where people knew but also looked out for their neighbors. One specific student’s response reflects this general theme.

I think that one of the strongest assets of this community is the way people care about each other and will help each other. You say hello to people you don't even know, and you'll ask somebody that you don't know if they need some help.

Other students added that the intimacy of the community established a sense of safety and security. In contrast to life in the big city where people lead isolated lives, the Harlan community provided oversight especially when it comes to the care of children.

...it’s a small town, you can leave your doors unlocked, I mean you can let your kids go out and play... Everybody knows everybody, and if something happens you are sure to find out. If your kid got in trouble, you’re sure to find out.

There were students however who articulated what they saw as the negatives of small town life. Nine students directly stated “there is nothing to do here”. Others gave

more nuanced reasoning regarding the lack of opportunities in Harlan. One student connected his own future with what he described as Harlan living in the past.

I've heard a lot of people...say that it is a place that's frozen 20 years behind in time and it really is the truth. ..It's just because of that, it's so lacking in what my options are to even make it out...that's my main goal is to get out of this area where there is so little for me personally.

Students reflected an understanding that the intimacy of the area could have its benefits but also, given its predictability, limited possibilities.

Lived life: "couldn't live in a big city"

From the student interviews, an understanding regarding where they had lived as well as where they would considered living, emerged. Of the twenty-eight students, eighteen had never lived outside of Harlan County. Some had moved around the county but most were attached to communities with extended family nearby. Students discussed having been in Harlan "my whole life", "never lived anywhere else", "where I live is mostly family", when describing their attachment to the area. Others who had lived outside the county lived as close as Laurel County, North Carolina, Tennessee and as far away as Chicago. Only one student interviewed had moved around and lived in various places in the South as a child. His educational biography is highlighted in Chapter 5.

Students were also asked to think about where they could see themselves living in the future as well as where they could not. Eight students stated they "could not live in a big city" with half of these citing New York City as the quintessential example of big city life. The way they express it, being new to a city would be difficult "because everything is so spread out and "you can't get close to anyone". Students who had traveled to big cities expressed an interest in visiting but not living in cities. One student related the anxiety he experienced whenever he spent time in big cities. Many students said they

would rather live in places which resembled Harlan County with some stating they did not want to move out of the region at all. One student expressed his time outside the region this way “I was used to seeing mountains. Everything was flat and it threw me off”. He goes on to conclude that wherever he lives in the future, he has to “have hills around me”. A young female student who has lived all her twenty-three years in Harlan states she prefers “rural, simple places” while an older male student in the mechanics certificate program concluded he had “no desire to go anywhere else”.

For those students who had lived or were currently living outside of Harlan County, including those at Eastern Kentucky University, such distance and time away from the region provided new ways of accessing it. Some discussed how this ‘outsiders’ perspective’ providing insights into Harlan’s problems that those who had lived in Harlan all their lives lacked. A student who spent her childhood in Chicago until age eleven when her family moved back to Harlan, specifically highlighted the differences in the educational systems. “Education is better there...I got my first education up there. So when we did move back here, I was ahead”. Another student who had spent his high school years in London, Kentucky also concluded that the time away helped him see the region in a new, albeit negative way,

Getting out of here and then being out of here for a good amount of time and then coming back here, it really opened my eyes as to what is here, which really isn’t much.

Harlan’s social ailments and elixirs: drugs and ATV parks

Many students at Southeast connected the lack of economic opportunity to another issue raised when describing the challenges of the region: prolific use and abuse of drugs. Like having a coal miner in the extended family, students knew of relatives and/or friends-or in one student’s case his own-struggle with drug abuse. As the last two

community plays attest, Harlan like so many places in the United States at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st Century saw an increase in prescription drug abuse. A report commissioned by the ARC shows that unlike the rise of methamphetamines in other parts of the United States, Appalachia has seen a decline in its use. Where it has seen increases are in the prevalence of oxycotin and other synthetic drugs in the coal producing counties of the Central Appalachian region. Like general trends of poverty and lack of economic opportunities in the United States, Appalachia, specifically those counties where there is high coal production, evidence mental illnesses and drug abuse in greater proportions of their population (NORC, 2008).

Students, in general and specific instances, discussed the affects and effects of drug use in the region.

There is a drug problem here, I mean – like it’s not anything that we’d be – you know, proud to admit, and they just did the show *The Children of Appalachia* and the poverty, and I mean all of it was true, there – they did focus on only the negatives, but I mean it is true³. There is poverty here, and the drug problem, you know, and people say that they turn to drugs because there’s not anything else here, there’s the coal mines, and then there’s -- you know, you sell drugs... I mean I know family, friends – people who’ve just – they’ve just thrown their lives away to drugs.

One student who described herself as an outdoorsman [*sic*] sees the recreational advantages of the area providing an outlet for the area’s boredom and frustration but only to those who enjoy such activities. Nine other students described the area as a place where “there is nothing to do”. The lack of other outlets, recreational and economic, leads many to find entertainment and release through drugs.

³ Students were highly disturbed by this 20/20 documentary which aired in February, 2009. Most students, while agreeing with some of the examples of Appalachian poverty, disliked being singled out as a place of such extreme negative portrayal.

But we need roads, we need jobs, factories. And that helps fight against drugs. 'Cause drugs are so bad around here, you know – I mean... I think that we need things to do 'cause not everybody are outdoorsmen people, you know. You have plenty of things to do if you love the outdoors, but if you don't like the outdoors there's not much – you don't have anything to do... Lack of jobs and – lack of jobs leads to other – lots of other problems like drugs.

Students commenting on the amenities of area spoke of it in relation to outdoor activities. Specifically mentioned were the many fishing, hiking, hunting and camping opportunities. More than any other outdoor opportunity, ATV'ing was cited by six students as a recreational outlet in the region. Students described the beauty of the area, the mountains, streams and lake as an aspect they would miss or have to duplicate if they moved away. One student, in a discussion regarding her brother, reflects on the peace the area provides; a peace her brother missing out on by living in the city.

I love the mountains. I love... I love to be able just – just to walk out in the mountain, you know. Get away from everything. I told my brother – he lives in Lexington, I don't – he likes to do the same. Just to be able to go in the mountains. He said it drives him crazy sometimes not being able just to – just to walk out in his back yard and go up into the mountains. I love waterfalls, I love being able just to – you can walk up the mountain and follow down, and find a stream and just walk up the stream and find a waterfall somewhere, and just get under it during the hot summer weather – I mean that's awesome.

Other students spoke discouragingly about how the one great asset of the community- the natural world - was being destroyed by the coal mining practices.

It has a lot of environmental beauty to it. I think that, technically, if it were treated different by the stewards of the land, if you will, if the tourist condition was to push it that it would succeed. But the way that the industry is coalmining there, they're destroying the one thing that really sets it apart.

This connection with the land, like those articulated in the faculty and administrative interviews, provides students a sense of identity and place as well as a spiritual and

physical resource necessary as they combat the economic issues of low employment and high drugs abuse prevalent in the region.

Harlan economy: "there's no jobs"

In their interviews, Southeast students discussed the lack of opportunities available in the region as some began and others restarted their economic lives. Students attributed lack of opportunities with the economic problems of the region. The available jobs in the region students described as relying heavily on manual rather than mental labor. Possibilities for jobs providing livable wages requiring additional training and degrees were related to the medical and educational fields. But these were of limited number.

All of the students interviewed, whether through their own personal, family or friends experiences, had direct knowledge of the coal industry. Fourteen of the twenty-eight directly stated they had worked, were preparing to work, or had family working in mining. Even so, though Harlan has historically been known for its coal economy, students seemed aware that the industry was in decline. One student gave the following assessment of the economic impact of coal's future in the region.

There's no jobs. None whatsoever, people have given up. It started with no jobs, only coal mines and all the coal mines have shut down. I know of one coal mine in our area. You know, that's all we have...you can only get so many workers out of that.

Some students were more optimistic about the availability of coal jobs but nonetheless hoped to avoid working in the mines. Mining and working in the medical fields were seen as the best economic opportunities the county offered. If they were interested in working in other industries, students knew that such work required they be open to

leaving the area to take the job. One student's response to the region's economic challenges reflects the hopeless feeling of staying and finding work in the area

The lack of economic development, it's hurt this county a whole lot. Like every young person in this county, if you were to just ask them what their options were here, you know you're not gonna get much, it's just that kind of area. Like mining, you can go into the mines because this is the mining capitol of the country apparently. You can go into the mines or go into some kind of cheap service thing or whatever, you don't have much in the way of succeeding beyond that in life.

For others, the lack of new jobs created in the area would translate into their leaving Harlan and not returning with their finished degrees. One student at Eastern studying biology identifies the area as a place best suited for people retiring. This economic profile pushes out then those who are at the beginning rather than the end of their careers.

The problem I had with Harlan is that it's too small. It is becoming a retirement community. All the young people have to leave because there's nothing there. It sort of pushes you out. You sort of have to leave. So that's basically why I left. There's just nothing there for me.

As the students' quotes indicate, pursuits of degrees and their applications were informed by their positions on whether they would transfer out, transition into and/or look to transform the region and how these relationships evidenced a continuing connection or beginning disconnect to their home communities.

Understandings of postsecondary pursuits

How do Southeast students describe Southeast and what is its reputation in the region? Given the crucial need for advanced degrees or training if one is to find stable employment apart from the coal mines in Harlan County, how do students then discuss their own post-secondary pursuits at Southeast Community and Technical College and

elsewhere? What other influences impact their decisions to continue their education beyond high school? How does gender and social reproduction of possible roles in the community or elsewhere inform their pursuits? As the following quotes indicate, Southeast students continue frankly discussing what post-secondary education means to their social and economic lives.

Southeast's reputation: "It's close". "It's cheap. "It's the home town college"

Many of the students interviewed discussed their start at Southeast as an easy, gradual initiation to college work and life. The lower tuition, ability to stay at home and pay reduced rent, being able to continue working at an established place of employment, these reasons were cited often by Southeast students and have historically been attributed as the benefits of attending community colleges in the United States. The adjectives which were most frequently used by students regarding their selection of Southeast were "it's close" (16) and "it's affordable/cheap" (11). One student put succinctly his reasons for selecting Southeast, "Well, three main reasons. One, it's at home. Two, I can work here. And three, it is very affordable". Getting your basics at Southeast and it providing a good foundation or jumping off point for further education experiences were also cited by eight of the twenty-eight students interviewed. Some students (4) stated Southeast was the best thing going in the region, one stating "it is the high point of the community". One reason it is considered "great for the community" is Southeast's involvement in area art promotion. Ten of the twenty-eight students interviewed either participated in or attended local events sponsored by Southeast, among them the plays *Higher Ground* and *Playing with Fire*, the *Crawdad Social Experiment*, *Swappin' Meet* and *Artists' Attic*.

Students also described Southeast in less positive ways. In one student's direct response he described Southeast as "cheaper, faster, easier, closer". The notion of Southeast being an easy place to start was also indicated by two students who referenced the a nickname given to Southeast, "Southeasy". One student explicitly relates the reasoning of his choice.

It was a safe choice. I wasn't taking no risks. I was pretty much – pretty much it was like an extended high school. You know, except at a college level. 'Cause still livin' – you know, at my parents' house. Still living in Harlan, still going to school with most of the same people. So, I mean – it was just a real safe decision, 'cause – you know, I wasn't forced to go out, because you know I could get my basics here, so I figured – you know, why not get your basics around here when you can live with – you know, mom and dad. You know, put back a little cash, not have to pay as many bills.

Other students also justified their selection of Southeast as a safe choice. Some students saw the work at Southeast as scaled down academic versions of the curriculum at larger universities. By providing students a reprieve, Southeast allows students, unsure of their academic pursuits, a breathing space to figure out their futures.

Reputation is really not that great, they call in "South Easy", but a lot of people decide to go there after high school if they don't know what they want to do, but it's still a great college. You can get a degree and if you want to do anything, you have to have a degree now.

Many students agreed that Southeast was a good place to start their academic plans and agreed further that it was the best thing going in the area providing opportunities in an area where the future is at best often sketchy.

I'd say it's pretty good. It's definitely not in the upper eschelon of the academic scale, but for this region, it's what this region needs, and that's really all that it needs to be, it's more than enough. It offers exactly what the people of this region need. So I'd say it's got a pretty good reputation for that.

These students comments further illustrate and understanding of how the community college can act as the ‘cooling out’ function described by Clark (1960). Seen as a place where students could go if they ‘don’t know what they want to do’, Southeast provided a place where the less than prepared found nurturing guidance from faculty and administrators. Faculty and administrators were cited by sixteen of the twenty eight students as resourceful mentors who were examples of teachers who “break it down” and “know students by name”, “work one-on-one” and when students have problems “they fix it”.

Many faculty and administrators were mentioned by name: Ayers, Carr, Daniels, Gipe, Gordon, Scopa, and Silvers. Each were discussed as exceptional community college members but also members of the community. One student relays his relationships with the faculty as well as his perceptions of the college president.

Then I come up here, and I run into some professors that were just outstanding. I mean, they’re down to earth – I mean it’s just like – just like some person that you would hang out with at Wal Mart or something like that. Except they’ve got a degree and they’re capable of teaching...I’d have to say all in all the person that’s helped me the most would be Bruce, because he’s the president of the college, and he don’t – he don’t have the attitude like he’s sittin’ up on a pedestal... And he’s just a real understanding, helpful person ‘cause he’s not – you know, just a dude that sits in the office. He’s actually doing his job and doing it very well.

Whether or not the college provided the academic skills necessary for advanced degrees did not seem of critical importance to the students interviewed. Only two of the twenty eight student interviewed discussed how Southeast prepared them to transfer to complete four degrees. In fact one student, an older man whose black lung payments were being used to pay for his retraining in the automotive certificate program at Southeast, was critical of the college for providing degrees not necessarily applicable to

the needs of the region. As a laid off miner, he selected what he hoped was a training program which allowed him to continue living and working in the region. In his estimation it was those degrees which did not have application in the region that caused Southeast's reputation to suffer.

Well, lots of people have a negative attitude about it. They'll go for two or three years and get high degrees and stuff, but there's no jobs around here for them, for what you go to school for... Moving off, a lot of people when they come to school, they don't never plan on doing that to begin with, going and moving away for a job. What few little jobs there are around here for something you'll come get a high degree about, for an Associate's degree or whatever, is far and in between, there's not many jobs around here.

His specific critique of Southeast as an institution preparing students for degrees that had little if any local application was unique yet reflected an instrumental and utilitarian understanding of the purposes of post-secondary education. The application that education should translate into better paying and more stable jobs was a common one as students discussed how they and their community defined the purposes of education.

Gender and social reproduction: "its education or it's underground"

As mentioned earlier, all the Southeast students interviewed had familial or personal experience with the mining industry. Jobs modeling either by parents or other family members fell along typical male/female gender scripts. Jobs mentioned by students relating to grandfathers, fathers and husbands' work histories were coal miners, construction workers, mechanics, welders, carpenters and electricians. One student's related that his brother, father, and grandfather had all worked in the coal mines. "I am basically following in their footsteps". Jobs mentioned in which mothers and wives had worked were in retail businesses, waitresses and food/convenience stores as well as in medical and education fields working as teachers, surgical techs, and nurses. Students

were internalizing these roles and following predictable paths. Female students discussed pursuing degrees and training in medical and education fields working then as dental hygienists, nurses, teachers and social workers. Males were pursuing training and degrees to be welders, mechanics, heavy machine operators, law enforcement officers and civil engineers. By attending college, students were however breaking with the educational tradition of their families. Many related (20) that neither parent had finished or gone past a high school education. Of those who parents had college experience (8), half had begun their post-secondary training at Southeast.

Students interviewed at Eastern Kentucky University who had finished their Associate degrees at Southeast were breaking with the tradition of their parents. Like their counterparts at Southeast, they were attending college where most of their parents had not but, also by pursuing fields requiring four year degrees if not more, they were diverging from their family's educational trajectories.

Just as Sohn's study (2006) indicated, a majority of Southeast females indicated pursuing their degrees towards community purposes. Of the eight females interviewed for this project, five connected their post-secondary education to improved community application. All were current students at Southeast. These female students further discussed pursuing Bachelor and Master degree options available in the region primarily because it allowed them to stay and directly apply their degree to local transformation. Three of the four were parents with young children. A single mother described her social work degree application.

I know for sure that that's where I want to be (Harlan). Cause I know the area well...and there are many victims of this place...and I do know there are a lot of people that neglect their kids...and I wanna give people a chance and show 'em that there's other ways, that there is a way out of it...and just try to help them.

In contrast, none of the female transfer to Eastern Kentucky University females discussed their degrees in relation to returning and improving their home region. In fact each related her degree's application to, as one put it, 'getting out'. When asked purpose of education, one student answered "getting out really, leaving".

Of the twenty male students interviewed only one directly connected his education to improving regional problems. As a student transferring to Eastern Kentucky in the fall and in pursuit of a teaching career, he discussed how his exposure to teachers at Southeast, in contrast to his high school experience, informed his career choice and application.

I wanna be one of those teachers that makes school not such a dreaded thing. 'Cause in Harlan...the high school I went to, I mean everybody hated coming to school. They dreaded it...because like I said a lot of your teachers were robots...when I first started going to college I didn't know what I wanted to do...but when I looked back, those teachers that made school interesting really changed a lot of peoples' lives...Just being real. I wanted to be one of those people.

Overwhelmingly the males interviewed seeking certificate and associate degrees hoped their additional training and education would translate into additional pay and stable jobs. A limited few (3) were considering work in or related to mining. Many more discussed how education would allow them to circumvent stable, albeit diminishing coal jobs. Having also witnessed the degenerative effects such manual labor caused to fathers, brother, uncles and grandfathers, males discussed their pursuit of education in direct relation to avoidance of coal work. One male, pursuing radiology certification, relayed, "if you don't go to school, you get into the mines, that's pretty much it". For one student pursuing his Associate degree, wanting then to transfer and complete a four year degree,

and having been witness to his father's decline, all these influenced his college attendance.

My dad pretty much said go...I mean he told me that I needed to go to college, but he never, he was never gonna force me to...Seeing him working underground for twenty, twenty-one years... And he's not even, I think he's forty years old. And he's already had two knee replacement surgeries, and he's down in his back, been crushed a couple of times, and his body's in the shape of – you know, somebody that would be around upper fifties to sixties. And I just didn't wanna end up like that. Having to work underground...in this area, if you wanna have a decent living, then it's either education or underground. There's really no in-between.

Whether to stay and earn a living wage or seek opportunities outside the region, additional education beyond high school was necessary. For one student whose father died of black lung disease, his pursuit of education allows him to “make it”.

Around here if you really don't have an education, you don't get a good paying job. Really the only thing that pays good around here are the hospital or the coal mines. And if you don't want to do the coal mines, you pretty much have to get an education just to make it.

Purposes of education: “So I think that would be a good career”

For some of the students, the questions interrogating higher education's purpose (s) provided some of the most direct responses. All would indicate education providing a means to better pay, or a better life. How and where they envisioned the good life would differ.

There was little hesitation as students articulated what education meant to their plans and purposes as more than half of the students (15) agreed that attending college provided access to better paying, more stable jobs. One student directly connected a rise out of poverty to degree attainment. When asked the purpose of education she stated,

Money. Because everybody is – you know, poverty-stricken, mostly. And everybody knows if you don't go to school, you're – you're not gonna you know, have a degree to make a decent wage.

It is interesting to note here that, given the low percentages of college going rates in Central Appalachia when compared to other parts of the US and even other Appalachian regions, not “everyone knows if you don’t go to school...you are not going to have a degree to make a decent wage” or is at least is acting on it.

Unlike Corbett’s study (2007) which showed a direct relationship between education attainment levels and outmigration patterns, only five of the students interviewed connected their advanced degrees with their ability to leave the region. One student studying to be an RN explained the connection this way.

You can see what education can do. Not only does it broaden your horizons, it helps you financially and it allows you to venture out. And you don’t feel like you are stuck.

An equal amount of students connected their training and degrees to local applications. Unlike those who were using their degrees to leave, these students connected their degrees to local economic opportunities. Another student studying for an Associate degree explained.

Well I would like to do the dental hygiene. I want- my sister had known that when I was little I wanted to do it, so I think that would be a good career...it would be stable and easier to find a job...I mean I would prefer to be here with my family; I have a large family.

Another student connected his degree to diversified job options. There was one industry he particularly wanted to avoid and argued could only do so with a degree. For him the purpose of advanced education was “To keep out of the mines, pretty much. If you don’t go to school, you get into the mines. That’s pretty much it”. When discussing education’s application, yet another student highlighted the less physically stressful

nature of academic work contrasting it to the local physical jobs available in the regional coal and timber mining economies.

Well, in most aspects people see education to be more of an idea for work. The higher the education, the better the job which for many is then the better the lifestyle. If you wanna – if you don't – if you don't plan on living back-breaking work, you're gonna be wanting to look in the books. I had a cousin tell me one day – years ago – he would rather push a pencil than he would a shovel. And that's what education meant to him, and I think that's what education means to me.

In contrast, some students discussed education in relation to betterment of themselves and their communities. A student, pursuing a two year degree in order to apply it to a four year degree program in psychology available through Southeast, highlighted it in her notions of education's purpose.

Well, it's – it's to better yourself. See, I – I like to – like I'm one of those people that – is just after the pursuit of knowledge. You know, I will learn just to be learning. You know, I do things like that, so I think – I couldn't tell you what anybody else is here for, but I'm here because I – I have a goal.

She seemed aware that her ideas might not be that prevalent among her fellow students. Yet additionally seven students would discuss education in transformative terms related to individual, family and community health. Taken together, this stance provides one of the striking features of this study. Southeast students discussed how their education translated into a better life was how it could be used not just to address their lives economic situations but how it would also help address the social needs of a community. In her study of college graduates in Eastern Kentucky, Sohn (2006) also highlights how, contrary to the national rhetoric surrounding higher education connecting it to increased educational advancement and mobility, Preston College graduates (pseudonym) were using their degrees to stay and participate in their communities. She concludes:

One of the most powerful statements these women made was in their decision to remain in their communities...though they were not opposed to moving away and becoming more upwardly mobile, the women knew how disruptive such a move would be for their families. So they overcame the objections some family members had to their returning to school...by using literacy for their own purposes in their jobs, churches, children's schools and homes, maintaining community values (p. 44).

The following quote from a Southeast student, who transferred to complete a four year degree and see himself returning to Harlan, makes similar connections when he ties how his raised quality of life, afforded by his advanced degree application, would positively impact his surrounding environment.

Just like anywhere else, you wanna' get a good education so you can make a lot of money, and that's probably the general attitude, I would say. It's what drives most people, but I don't necessarily agree with that. I think that it's also a part of just making your life better, in general. Because, like with me, this Ag thing, I'm learning things that, you know, yeah, I can make money from them, but also, I can apply them to my life and grown my own food, or make sure that my environment is health and safe, and just enriching the quality of my life, or whatever.

Some students did raise the transfer application of their degrees. Unlike the majority of students who were seeking a degree application that would transition them into better local jobs, some students were looking to use their degrees as tickets out the region. A transfer student, completing a four year degree at Eastern Kentucky University, get to the point when she describes the purpose of the degree as "Getting out, leaving". One particular Southeast student, contemplating his upcoming graduation from Southeast discussed the divergent opportunities his degree affords.

Well because if you get your education you can – you've got more opportunities for jobs around here. But you have an opportunity to get jobs elsewhere too. If you don't get your education, you – around here, you're still just susceptible to get a job as a person with education, sometimes even paying more due to the coal mining industry at the moment. But people – a lot of people don't wanna go into the mines.

This student, like others makes connections between acquiring additional degrees in order to disconnect from the prevalent mining economy. Some students, seeing the decline of mining, hoped that additional opportunities, perhaps related to the arts and recreational and tourist industries, will replace it. They see Harlan going through a transformation which incorporates characteristics which have historically defined the region. One student defined the local assets which promote this transformation as basic to Appalachian small town communities in general.

I would say some of the strengths are small town; cozy atmosphere; appreciation of tradition and of their heritage, and of long lasting activities; appreciation of your history, and connection to others.

Positions of post-secondary applications

Of the twenty-eight students initially interviewed, nine were selected for follow up oral histories. These nine were selected as each evidenced one of three positions in response to their degree application: 1) they were either preparing to or had transferred out of the region to attend four year degree programs elsewhere, 2) they were using their degrees to transition into the local job market and 3) students were using their degrees in local transformative applications. These positions are connected to Labaree's educational ends. For example, students who aligned their degrees related to Labaree's (1997) citizenry position incorporated the available opportunities that two, four year and, in some cases graduate degrees offered by various private and public institutions on Southeast's Cumberland campus. The application of these advanced degrees would be in the local context. By doing this, they were able to stay in the region as they continued to advance their educational programs. By staying in the region with their advanced degrees, their hope was to bring about change in the region and in their home

communities. What follows is a list of the three positions Southeast students articulated related to their post-secondary plans and interview quotes that define and reinforce these positions.

Transitional position: To stay and get a good job

Interviewer: So how do people around here talk about education, what do they say is the purpose of education?
Interviewee: Just to get better jobs, that's about it.
Interviewer: And what would a better job be?
Interviewee: More pay, less work but more pay, and things like that...

As I interviewed Southeast students, the idea that their post-secondary education would translate into better paying and more secure jobs dominated. Whether the degree would be of local or regional application was not the dominant concern; of concern was staying in the region without additional education past high school. Students either articulated decline or disinterest in coal mining jobs, jobs that had historically required little advanced education while paying reasonable wages. One student pursuing a certificate in welding relayed his own initial attempts at finding a coal mining job. This experience brought a realization regarding the area's changing economy,

More people around here are starting to get educated because this community has always relied on coal mining but if you watch and see how things are going, it looks like it's going to be something of the past.

His welding training he hoped would provide access to local job opportunities. Labaree discussed this position of preparing for changing economic markets as a characteristic of an education which emphasizes the student as worker; a worker who uses education as a means of transitioning into current available labor industries.

Transfer position: To get out.

"I've never said that I would always come back here...it would be the place to get away from"

Few of the students interviewed who had or were planning to transfer out of the region to continue their degree plans discussed returning to Harlan once their degree plans were completed. Though many planned to visit family and friends, few believed they would ever again live in Harlan, though some articulated wanting to return to live in the region. Those most adamant about not returning were the Eastern Kentucky transfers. While those who were still at Southeast yet struggled with ties to the community, those who had transferred out had come to terms with community attachments. Yet even they struggled at times, fluctuating as they returned for holiday or summer extended visits. One transfer student articulated her feelings regarding Harlan which evidence an extreme dichotomy.

There are two extremes when it comes to Harlan. People either absolutely love it, like absolutely love Harlan, never want to leave their entire life; or they despise it. They're – they can't wait to get out of the town... There is really not a middle ground. You either absolutely love it, or you absolutely hate it.

Others at Eastern described how their new perspective as 'outsiders' allowed them to see the problems of their home communities in ways those never left could not. Their 'outsiders' vantage point helped them see how their home communities contrasted with their new ones. Without an outsider perspective, change could not come without a realization of differing ways to bring it about.

No, Harlan is something that once you leave, from an outsider's perspective, it changes it. A lot of the problem with Harlan is because people never leave. They don't know what exists, and if you don't know better things exist, you can't sort of force change within your community. You think the whole world is just like Harlan, and you can't see any change that way.

Students who had transferred out were in an ironic position: having left, they were the best able to see the change needed but the least likely to return to set a different course in

the region. These students best evidence Labaree's characteristic of education's emphasis on consumer/transfer education. Their personal options were multiplied by varied living experiences. Since coming to Eastern, they had been exposed to a variety of choices. Their degrees would continue to expand their opportunities outward and away from Harlan.

Transformative position: To have a good life

I don't really know how many people have the same viewpoint as I do, but I used to be in the same shoes, that I wanna make a lot of money...money's good, but it's not everything.

When preparing my research questions regarding access and application of post-secondary plans, I did not anticipate the transformative position evidenced by some of the educational positions of Southeast students. Given my readings on the subject, my held assumptions fell along the lines of the dichotomy raised by the either/or positions of the community college mission. It has long been described as an institution that negotiates its resources between terminal or transfer plans. A well established assumption regarding the community college is that students complete degrees and certificates in order to find local application. So too is the idea that the community college provides a transferring out option. What I heard from some Southeast students was a commitment to advanced education plans- some of which included graduate degrees-which would allow them to stay in place while acquiring and applying their degrees. These students articulated a vision for their communities, a vision fostered through Southeast Community and Technical College. Like Labaree's description of the civic capacity building characteristic of transformative education, these students were committing themselves and their educational preparation to civic and community problems and potentials. They

were, as President Ayers hoped, evidence of Southeast's ability to keep its community resources intact.

I cringe sometimes when I hear people say that we're exporting our best and our brightest. I would contend that we're keeping a lot of the best and the brightest here, and they are going to be the future of Harlan County and Bell County and Letcher County because they don't want to go anyplace else (Ayers. 2009).

The continuing discussion

Given the positions and descriptions articulated by students in this chapter, what are some preliminary implications related to community college students' pursuits of post-secondary education in central Appalachia? As is clear from the interviews, students are well aware of the economic and social problems systemic to their home communities. Whether hoping to avoid the mines by training in the growing medical field, or in pursuit of Bachelor degrees outside the area, students' rationale reflects an awareness of the options, limitations and potentials of Harlan County Kentucky.

What then is the role of the community college in questioning, fomenting and expanding students understanding of place and degree applications? Given that Southeast is a college situated in the coal fields, what does it select as its primary responsibility. Should it concentrate on helping students stay and transition into the local economy, prepare them academically to transfer out by promoting advanced degrees, or help transform the area by providing opportunities to stay and employ advanced degrees in the region? If Southeast does, to greater and lesser degrees, combinations of all three positions, what are the implications to rural and urban community colleges equally situated in depressed economic areas? Should they like Southeast earn a reputation as a 'home town college' and how would their curriculum and degree offerings reflect such an

emphasis? By being committed to the local while providing options to pursue advanced degrees in the region, is Southeast finding a way to fulfill its charge from the State to increase in Bachelor degrees, even as it focuses on a responsibility to the region by keeping and nurturing future leaders?

Summary

Whether preparing to leave or preparing to stay, Southeast students' interviews articulate the turmoil, uncertainty and identity formation informing their post-secondary pursuits. Knowing to varying extents the vagaries of the economic market, fluctuating job needs, the changing gender identifications and family and community obligations, all these factors combine to define, deter and determine post-secondary plans and their applications. Even as students conceptualized their futures, they were drawn to past and present understandings and rejections of self and community while doing so.

In the next chapter students contemplate the completion of their post-secondary pursuits. Whether certificate, Associate's or beyond, they speak intimately regarding their hope and dreams regarding their education pursuits and their future plans for living a 'quality life'.

Chapter 5

What they say continued: Life histories and educational ends

Introduction

In this chapter, I look more intimately into Southeast students lives, not only the decisions they made regarding their post secondary education but how these decisions were situated by their lives locations and what they discussed as their degree applications. How would they rationalize their choices and how would they, whether they stayed or left the region, find comfort in these choices? Many voiced confusion as well as conviction when speaking about these decisions. Some voiced cautious optimism regarding the possibilities their training and degrees would bring into their lives, their families and their communities.

The selection and interview process

As chapter Four outlined, in the spring and fall semesters of 2009 I interviewed twenty-eight students at Southeast Community and Technical College in Harlan County, Kentucky. During these initial semi-structured interviews, students answered questions on their degree pursuits and degree applications in the region and elsewhere. From these, nine students were selected for oral histories. These were selected as their varying positions on degree and training applications highlighted whether they would stay or the leave the region. They were also selected because even as they displayed familiar stances in relation to advanced education -some would see it as a ticket out, others as a way to remain in their communities -their life stories complicated these stances in

nuanced ways. While some spoke with certainty about their decisions regarding their degree applications, most spoke of lives complicated by place and people and how these attachments provided freedom and comfort as well as, at times, claustrophobic constraint.

The use of oral histories

The oral histories were all conducted at the students' homes. This way, I was able to gather informal information alongside the more formal information presented in their oral histories. Furthermore, I let them know that if they agreed, I would use their names rather than a pseudonym in the dissertation. All agreed. All oral histories conducted with the students were transcribed and deposited in the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. Oral Historical Association guidelines for the independent/unaffiliated researcher requires oral histories be made available through public archives. These guidelines also require oral history participants be identified by name, given the "importance of context and identity in shaping the context of an oral history narrative" (Oral History Association evaluation guidelines, 2010).

The oral histories usually lasted a little over an hour. Having followed up on first interview details, I moved students towards questions clarifying family biography and future plans. Students spoke at length not only on their decisions to attend post-secondary education but how these decisions impacted family and community attachments and commitments. Questions regarding quality of life issues, how they defined it and what kind of community they wanted for themselves and their families, were also posed. Their answers illustrated the ways education ends informed, negotiated and, in some cases, disrupted these definitions.

The students' oral histories were interpreted using narrative analysis techniques. In her work on prolife and prochoice movements in North Dakota, Ginsburg (1989) applied narrative analysis to the movements' activists. She found that activists' biographies discussed life events, events which jolted them out of predictable story frameworks into lives with unforeseen and yet-to-be defined plots. Such events can jolt people from a predictable framework (story) and redefine their lives related to plot with unforeseen and yet-to-be defined ends.

Like Ginsburg's activists, this chapter contains Southeast students' life histories reflecting events which defined and redefined their conceptions of self and post-secondary pursuits. Riessman (1993) discusses how peoples' related stories contain such events and how "a comparison of plot lines across a series of first-person accounts is one way to approach narratives" (p.30). Narrative analysis then provided ways of organizing Southeast student's educational biographies around such defining events.

Students' positions on post-secondary pursuits and applications

In his historic ethnographic study of Digby Neck, Nova Scotia, Michael Corbett (2007) made connections between levels of education and whether or not residents stayed or left their home community. For the people in his study, the higher an individual's education attainment, the more likely that individual was to live away from Digby Neck. His data confirmed what had been a long known phenomenon and concern understood by rural communities. Namely, to what extent should they invest in children's education, knowing such investments could be lost as 'successful' students left to pursue

opportunities unavailable in their home communities (Corbett: 2007, Deyoung: 1995, Theobald: 1997).

As an educator, Corbett questioned his own role in promoting degree pursuits as a way out and away from local applications. The Stayers he studied who remained were those (predominately male) able to work in the local fishing economy, jobs historically known not to require a high school, let alone post-secondary degrees. Knowledge which could be applied in local markets trumped formal knowledge which required mobility to other, away markets. Though advanced education may not have direct investment locally, its varied application was understood to impart social capital to individuals rather than to the community. Corbett discusses the perspective of advanced education as both sought and scorned by rural youth.

Contrasted with local skills and intelligences, formal education continues to be perceived and experienced by local youth as a set of largely irrelevant experiences. But at the same time education is seen as necessary because it confers mobility...In other words, education itself is mobile and negotiable across space...despite it seeming irrelevance for solving known problems in the rural community (p. 247, 2007).

Do Southeast students articulate similar connections between advanced education and outmigration? How do they discuss their own lives and the impact post-secondary education has had on redefining their life goals and trajectories? Is there, like in Corbett's study, a connection made by students between their individual degree pursuits and the necessity of leaving in order to apply them? What other connections, whether local or global, do they make between their education and its application?

The Leavers: Heather & Robert

For the Leavers of Harlan County, higher education pursuits moved them to Richmond, Kentucky completing their Associate degrees at Southeast. Through their recounted educational biographies, both show not only connections to their new city and college communities but the residual loss of connections to Harlan. Though both will visit the area periodically, they now see their new lives in relation to university life, whether that be Richmond or beyond. And though they communicate a sense of loss when speaking about their home communities, their new found understandings of self and possibilities propel interests and desires to “find where I am supposed to go and just go, just follow it, just experience , not miss out on anything” (Boggs, 2009).

Heather Boggs was 21 when I interviewed her in her apartment on Eastern Kentucky University’s campus and in her third year of college. She transferred from Southeast Community and Technical College having finished an Associate of Arts and Associate of Science the previous year. Currently, she is pursuing a Bachelor degree in the humanities after having tried out other programs related to the arts. Her plan is to graduate in 2010.

Heather’s family is from Harlan County; her grandparents moved into the region in the 1950’s. Other than moving to Richmond to continue her post-secondary degree, she has not lived anywhere else. While attending Harlan Independent High School, she became involved in Upward Bound, the federal program which helps lower income students go to college. As an Upward Bound student, Heather completed 14 college credits at Southeast Community and Technical College while in high school. Her success at Southeast and transfer to Eastern she attributes to the preparation work provided by

Upward Bound. Additionally, Southeast's partnership with Eastern has reduced her tuition costs by half for six consecutive semesters as long as she maintains a 3.0 GPA. Given these financial helps, Heather could afford Eastern; other colleges such as the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville were not in consideration.

There were other reasons, beyond the financial, for attending Eastern. When we discussed her college selection, Heather stated "Well Eastern is like, far enough away from home, but its close enough at the same time". In this way, she is able to return at least once a month to Harlan during the semester. Though she enjoys going home periodically, there are tensions with her return. Her family would like her to return to Harlan when she finishes her degree. "Well you know you can always come back and try and teach at Southeast", is her grandmother's suggestion. Heather is conflicted when she visits; she really loves her life at Eastern but enjoys time with her family, though in ever diminishing amounts.

It's like I want to go to Harlan. I absolutely love to go home for the weekend. I really want to go home. I get there; after a day I'm like, okay so when am I going back to Richmond again?

While at Eastern she is able to explore her adult self while being challenged by her coursework and professors. When she returns home, she reverts back to her childhood self, enjoying her grandparents' attentions. For Heather living in Richmond allows anonymity not available in Harlan. Yet when she needs intimacy, going home is an option.

Heather is not however interested in returning to Harlan. Her goal is to be a professor one day and she knows this will require much more schooling. The only way she considers returning is to retire. Until then, there is much she wants to do. Between

the first interview and follow up oral history, Heather took a class on Shakespeare in London, England. During her five weeks, she traveled on the weekends to Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Now, she wants to travel and see other areas of the world. Having grown up in the area, she believes Harlan has very little to offer in terms of newness or innovation. When I asked what she thought Harlan would be like in ten years, she replied “exactly the same”. She also realistically rejected my idea that people with advanced degrees could return to Harlan and make changes. Heather related a story about a friend who tried to shake up the town’s sameness by opening a coffee shop in Harlan. It was not successful.

I would love to say, I would love to say that people who get their degree should go back to Harlan and try to use what they have gotten to enrich the area...I would love to say that, but a lot of times when that does happen it just doesn’t go anywhere. Like I mean, this isn’t really going along with that, but people trying to modernize, like bring coffee shops in and stuff like that. I knew someone who had opened a coffee shop in Harlan, in downtown Harlan, and it was closed within three or four months because it just doesn’t go anywhere. Though she recognizes that some people are able to live out a quality life in Harlan, this is not an option she seriously considers. She relates how some high school friends have never left Harlan though they discussed leaving. They were delayed by what she labels as excuses to “get a job and save up some money and they are there five years later”. For Heather, if she had not left to go to Eastern when she did, she, to quote a local favorite song, would ‘Never leave Harlan alive’. Now that she has left, she wants to make her family proud by being the first to graduate. Education allows her to continue what she defines as a quality life.

Having a job that you enjoy and being able to see things that you want to see, be able to have experiences that you find enhance you as a person. And then be able to come back at the end of the day to your own little hobbit hole and be at home.

As a Leaver, Heather's post-secondary plans prepare her for transfer out of Harlan County. She continues to utilize her degree pursuits towards these ends. The process of outmigration is not over and though she is not certain where she will land, hopes it is far, far away from where she started. Her connections to Harlan, her family and friends, continue to be severed by the possibilities leaving provides; not only to new places but through new definitions of who she is and what she wants for her life. When asked about her adult life, Heather related simply "I just want to teach at the college level and travel, that's really it".

The students' stories are to varying degrees, compelling. Robert's situation as a Harlan County Leaver I found one of the more intriguing. Robert Pace is forty years old. He first completed an Associate of Science degree from Southeast in 1993. He contemplated transferring at that time, considering Eastern and Northern Kentucky University. His grandmother, whom he describes as "a force to be reckoned with" discouraged it. It was she, according to Robert, who controlled the direction of the family. Robert explained his grandmother was a well known leader in the community and was concerned about what she saw as its scattering. The family took her side arguing "You don't know how to do this. You don't know how to live in a city." Robert concludes, "They use fear to keep people there." And keep him there they, until he met Elli - -his soon to be wife - - on the internet.

Elli Pace is from Australia, having been born in England. She and Robert began corresponding on the internet in 1998. They soon met in Los Angeles and spent a few weeks together. Here they decided to continue their relationship. Elli visited Robert in Harlan in 2002; Robert visited Elli in Brisbane in 2003 when they decided to get married.

Among their early decisions as a couple was where they were would live, her country or his. Because it was seemingly easier for her to immigrate, they decided on the United States. Elli and Robert would find the immigration process more difficult than expected and would, while in Harlan, wait three years before receiving her green card.

While waiting, Elli volunteered at the Artist's Attic, an exhibition hall in the Harlan County court house. In 2003 Robert completed an Associate of Arts degree from Southeast. In 2006, after being sponsored by Joe and Pat Scopa, art and biology faculty at Southeast, Elli started at Southeast, pursuing an Associate of Arts. Elli was blunt about her connection to Southeast, "Southeast was the only place in Harlan where I felt like I wasn't an outcast". Elli graduated in 2008 at which time both she and Robert transferred to Eastern Kentucky University.

Robert attributes his transfer to his wife's insistence on continuing their education at Eastern. Elli's parents, who both have college degrees, had always encouraged their children to do the same. For Elli, a college degree was discussed as a constant and influenced Robert.

Then we met and got married, and then she was going to Eastern. She had her plan, so I decided I wanted to further my education as well, and it was easier if we both came to college at the same time because then we're living in the same city.

The scholarship available to Southeast graduates allowing them reduced tuition at Eastern also helped. Robert will graduate in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in biology. When I asked him about his future plans, he began by stating as a child he wanted to be an entomologist. After graduating from Eastern, he is considering a Master's degree but does not want a PhD. "In biology Ph.D. people end up sitting back behind a desk and

signing papers, and other people are doing all of the interesting work”. For Robert the interesting work is in the field.

Elli is pursuing a Bachelor degree in nutrition at Eastern. Her plans are to work in schools teaching children healthy eating habits. Eli has struggled since arriving in the United States, first in Harlan and now, though less so, in Richmond. She is a vegetarian and found living in Harlan a challenge. Living in Richmond and having access to more ethnic food variety has helped. When she lived in Harlan she had to translate what being a vegetarian meant, less so in Richmond.

I was a vegetarian as well, and there’s like no vegetarian food in Harlan County. They’re like, “You eat chicken, don’t you?” I was like, “No, that’s a meat.” So they just, it was a lot of – and I’m better now.

Robert’s family is from Gray’s Knob, a tiny community populated by his kin for several generations. When asked to describe it to someone who had never visited, Robert talked about how small, tight-knit and clannish it is and though this might have been comforting as a child, how this has changed since his marriage.

It’s a very sleepy town. That’s another reason that it’s sort of quaint and enjoyable, but at the same time, it does resist change. Harlan is very clannish. It’s very difficult for an outsider like my wife to settle in because they’re used to – if you’re not from a certain family or something, you’re an outsider, and they have no interest in outsiders.

Robert has little tolerance for such provincial thinking. Having lived in Australia for six months, visited other parts of the United States, and now a resident of Richmond, he brings what he terms his ‘outsider’ perspective to critique his home community.

When I left to go to Australia, and spent six months in Australia, I think that was when all of these ideas came to fruition. You begin to see things a lot differently from an outsider’s perspective. You see things that could occur in your community, in Harlan, that could elevate this status there, the standard of living.

People in Harlan resist change, he explains, because of limited exposure to other places and ways of doing things. They are 'stuck' doing things the same way. One example Robert cites is the way Harlan clings to the shrinking coal economy.

The mindset in Harlan is they're used to coal being the sole source of breadwinning, and they don't change. So every time someone suggests an alternate way for the community to be bolstered, they shoot it down immediately. They're clinging to coal as if it's a lifeline or a life raft, and it's on its way out. It's a finite resource that has been depleted.

Only by bringing in new, high tech jobs -which he argues would require better road infrastructure- could Harlan begin to address the lack of economic opportunities in the area. Being a biologist, Robert, describes Harlan as a varicose vein in need of 'new blood' but is not optimistic about it happening anytime soon.

You have to have, first of all, a fusion of new blood into the area. It is, to be honest, a varicose vein in that area. There's nothing happening. The people have been there for 400 years. They like the way it is. They are retirees. For them it doesn't matter if there is no need for new job opportunities and stuff like that. The only thing I think that could fuel change is if you have some jobs come in that would involve bringing a lot of people outside of the area in, show them how to live from an outsider's perspective, inside the county. That's the only thing I think of that could possibly change. I don't see that really happening.

Robert and Elli future plans are a return to Australia. They both agree that quality of life issues are defined by urban amenities: the availability of mass transit, exposure to a variety of ethnic people and food, and a lifestyle that includes access to healthy exercise options. As they describe it, a quality life seems to have everything to do with a return to Brisbane and nothing to do with Harlan. But for now, being at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond exposes them to some characteristics of the urban. Lexington,

the second most populous city in Kentucky is nearby and one they frequent when wanting to dine out.

Like Heather, the other Leaver highlighted in this section, Robert is well on his way to defining his life in relation to university and city living far away from family place and possibilities. His growing family connection to Elli, as well as his identification with the life of the mind provided by the university, overwhelms early influences and exposures in Harlan. A miner's son from the hollers of Eastern Kentucky, he is reconfiguring his life around scientific endeavors and international city locales.

I think I succeed very well in school. I enjoy it. I really love learning things. So I see a lot of potential. I love to associate with people who have similar thoughts and ideas that I do. I love my professors. I like that environment and everything like, so I actually enjoy that. I can't imagine ever coming to a nexus in my life in which I'm not learning something. I thirst for knowledge, and that's the best place to be.

The Stayers: Beth & Ebony

Unlike the Leavers, Stayers build on continuing connections to Harlan County, connections cemented by attending Southeast Community and Technical College. They also evidence a community commitment to the betterment of the region and articulate an application of their post-secondary degrees towards these ends. Yet like their Eastern Kentucky University counterparts, they too discuss continuing their education pursuits, whether to complete undergraduate or graduate degree degrees. They however are looking for ways to do this while in the region.

Beth Jones is a Southeast student pursuing an Associate of Arts degree. She is in her early twenties and the mother of a two year old girl. Beth's family is from Harlan County and she has lived there most of her childhood and early adult life. She has four brothers and two sisters. Her father's family has long ties to the area moving to Harlan in

the 1920's to bootleg and buy land. Beth has inherited a portion of this land is readying it for her family. Her mother recently moved to Lexington to find work and she and Beth's younger siblings are now living there with an older brother who moved there a few years back. Beth's fiancée at the time of our first interview (and husband at the time of the oral history) also lives in Lexington and is pursuing a Bachelor's degree at the University of Kentucky. He had wanted Beth to move to Lexington to complete her bachelor's degree and she was, at the time of the first interview, contemplating it. She instead graduated with her Associates from Southeast in December, 2009 and it is in Harlan that she discusses building her future.

During the oral history Beth shared her future plans, plans that while still in flux, were starting to form around living and working in Harlan. Beth's recently inherited land included a house which is in need of repair which she has occupied herself with, making it habitable for her husband and child. Beth is "crafty", a term she uses to describe her interest in the arts. Her hopes for her future are directly tied to the community's future. While taking classes at Southeast, Beth became involved in many of the programs promoting Harlan County history, including both plays *Higher Ground* and *Playing with Fire*. For both of these, Beth made costumes and backdrops. She has also helped with the Crawdad Social Experiment, an October program highlighting local artists' work. These experiences with artists in the area started her thinking about establishing an artisan center in Harlan, a place where locals could bring their arts and crafts and sell them to the increasing tourists who are visiting the ATV trails in the region.

You have all these people around here that do all this art and they'd sell it dirt cheap compared to in Berea. I've seen people that sell their stuff around here – people will sell a quilt around here for \$100 to \$150. You can go look at the same one in Berea for about \$500. I think the reason is because Berea has all these

shops. They have businesses going where people want to come. It's gonna take a lot of work to get that in Harlan. But I think that it can happen...Due to the ATV Park – it's causing all these people to come in from out-of-state. If you had an artisan center in the right spot where these people can get in here and buy art at a good price. These people work hard for things and they sell them for dirt cheap. I think that's a wonderful way to get things started around here.

Beth is convinced that with infrastructure investment, i.e. more accessible roads, Harlan could be to Kentucky what Asheville is to North Carolina. She believes that if she is able get an artistic business started then others will be encouraged and this interest will bring about other viable economies. Her husband is studying plant and soil science and when he finishes at the University of Kentucky will be moving back to Harlan and building a greenhouse on their property, working to replant and farm lands recovered from abandoned strip mines. Beth's future plans place her in Harlan building up an artisan business, working as a backdrop maker and seamstress, having a garden and enjoying the peace and quiet of living on the land.

When asked how she defined a quality life, Beth began by discussing the role her faith played in bringing meaning to her life. She is very involved in her church community, teaching 'kids church' on Sunday and working with youth during Wednesday night services. Her husband comes back to Harlan most weekends to also participate in church activities. Education has also brought about a good life for her. Having witnessed parents who worked hard for little pay, she had heeded their advice to "go to college. Don't work hard like we did". Beth found it difficult to attend college with a small child but was convinced that she was doing it for her and her daughter's future. Having seen many families whose parents' health were compromised through years of back breaking labor, Beth states it is "important to go into the field you love and

that you can do for the rest of your life”. She added that going to college has provided a ‘surefire way’ to provide for her family. One of the ways Beth describes herself and her people is that “we are family people”.

Beth does not see herself leaving Harlan. Her love of the mountains, the necessity of going for walks to relieve the stresses of life, the enjoyment she takes in hiking, camping and gardening does not translate in Lexington, the only other place she has considered living. In her decision to stay, her justification reveals a tension she has resolved by coming to terms with who she is and what she values. This resolution has been reinforced through rural writers.

If I had to leave due to a job? I probably wouldn’t. I’d probably just say, “Hey, I’m happier where I’m at.” If it sounded like a good idea, if I was offered a good job as an art teacher in Lexington, I’d be much happier staying here and finding something to do...I was reading that book *When I Was Young in the Mountains*, and in part of the book she talks about going to the city and seeing this and that, but she said, “I don’t care because I like it in the mountains and I don’t have to go anywhere else.” That’s how I feel. I guess that’s because I was raised here. I love the land.

Beth defines her educational ends as transformative. Through coursework and involvement with plays and other artistic programs, she invests the social capital her degree provides to bring about ways of being and living in Harlan County, ways which are, given her working class upbringing, new for her. Going beyond the Associates at this time is not of prime importance though she concedes a Bachelor’s degree in business might better inform her entrepreneurial endeavors.

Beth sees herself as a role model to both her family (her younger brothers are looking to attend Southeast after finishing high school) as well as to other local community artists seeking for an economic platform for their works. As a young woman she is concerned about her community’s future but her respect for mountain people and

mountain way makes her happy with her choice to stay. Living in a small community provides a quality life such that living in the big city can only be by comparison deficient.

You would probably find a better job and make more money with more benefits in a place like that. But what happens to the town that you leave behind is what I ask myself. There are so many people here that are talented. Robert (Gipe) explains it as DIY – Do It Yourself. I am so into that. If you can do it yourself, why not? Why pay for it when you can do it yourself? There are so many people around here that take care of themselves in a good way. If you are happy and content with not having big things – there are a lot of things you can do to take care of yourself and be content. There are so many people who raise their own food around here. They don't need to go buy a blanket because they know how to sew one together. That's what's good to me. I love that about a lot of mountain people. Making your own costumes for Halloween – there are so many people that do that around here. For me, that's a fine quality. That's a fine quality in life. If you like that kind of stuff, who cares if you make that much more money in the city?

With her husband and father's help, Beth continues to work on her family's two bedroom home. During the oral history interview she related her current tasks of replacing the plumbing and fixing holes in the roof and floorboards. Though her future plans include having another child - maybe a boy this time she hopes - she first wants to have her husband finish his degree so they can be more established. She is convinced her early, unplanned pregnancy oriented her life in a planned direction.

I was 20. We weren't together long before I got pregnant and that was real hard on us...And it worked. We went out and now we're married...But at the time we thought, "We're gonna have to give all these childish ways up." We were still really immature and partying – of course, because we met at a party. But it was a lot to give up. That life was a lot to give up. We were both wild. That baby's been a blessing. God knew what he was doing. He put her in our arms and it's been different ever since then.

For Beth, though she started at Southeast "with a baby and no car", she nonetheless has successfully achieved her goal, completing the Associates. While she waits for her husband to finish his Bachelor's degree in Lexington, she works on her home, committed to building a place for her dreams realization in the region.

Like Beth, Ebony Hamrick also found her dreams of pursuing college delayed by a young pregnancy. At twenty-nine, she is currently pursuing an Associate of Science in this her second year as a full-time student. Her plans are to complete her Associate's before pursuing a Bachelor and Master's program in psychology through Lindsey Wilson's weekend program offered at the Cumberland campus. Her family is from Harlan County, her father and grandfathers coal miners in the region. Her mother and brother both live in Harlan.

Ebony has not always lived in Harlan. When she was young she lived with her mother in Ohio for five years and then, after moving back and finishing high school in Harlan, went and stayed with her aunt in Boone, North Carolina. Here she enrolled at Appalachian State University but dropped out pregnant during her first semester. While raising her son, she met her current husband, a student at ASU. After eight years in Boone, Ebony and her husband moved back to Harlan where they opened the only pet store in the area. Her husband, having visited with Ebony one summer wanted to move to Harlan to start his business. Her thoughts at the time were "No please, let's not go back there". She has ever since, been reconciling herself to it. The community has changed much since she left as a young adult.

When I left here it was just the most innocent little town you could imagine. And when I came back my friends that I graduated high school with were prostitutes and they were selling their bodies for oxycontin. That's what changed. I had no idea that this was even happening here, which is still – I have no social life because I don't hang out with any of the people that I know because they're all just – it's sad. It's real sad.

While participating in the oral history interview, Ebony was visibly upset as she related the conditions of her home community. We had initially rescheduled the interview because she was suffering intestinal problems. As she spoke, she grew more

and more agitated. Though she herself is committed to the region and its welfare, she is not opposed to her three children leaving to pursue other opportunities. She described Harlan as a good place to raise children but then “if you can raise your children here then you can send them off into the world”. To do this, she sends her son to Harlan Independent School, not trusting the county school ability to adequately prepare him for college. She hopes all her children go to college, maybe even attending Appalachian State.

In contrast to her children and their futures, Ebony does not see herself leaving Harlan. Instead, she is pursuing her degree locally so that she can do her take part and address the rampant drug problem in Harlan. She has seen many of her high school friends who have stayed in the region become addicts and is amazed that even as it continues to see increased drug addiction, Harlan currently does not operate a halfway house for individuals trying to overcome drug habits. Ebony hopes to start one once she has the credentials to do so. Her education continues to provide a means towards these transformative ends.

You can go out all you want and hand out flyers and talk to people, but if people don't feel like you're educated they're not gonna really pay too much attention to you. That's just the bottom line... And plus I wanna know what I'm talking about, too. I don't wanna just get out there and say, “I don't think this is fair,”...you know, become a redneck and yell and scream at people ...So I'm just trying to educate myself in order to fix, or try and help.

For Ebony, a quality life is defined by options, options that allow for healthy lifestyles. This includes not only adequate food and shelter but of particular importance to her, mental health. She is aware that without the basics of life, many people cannot attain or maintain mental health. Mental health issues are all too prevalent in her home

community, a characteristic she attributes to lack of opportunities. Even so, Ebony believes a good life is possible in Harlan, though much hard work is necessary to see it happen. It cannot happen if people keep abandoning it by leaving. Though people may leave to pursue education or adventure, Ebony believes strongly the community needs them to return.

Well, I think it's probably easier for me to say it's possible because I'm not in the situation that a lot of people around here are in. But I have been. I've been there. And I just think you just have to work hard. I think – even if it takes leaving – but I think you should come back. Because that's what's happening. Everybody's abandoning this place. And this is home. This is a beautiful place. It's absolutely possible to have a good life here.

Having returned three years ago, Ebony is still adjusting to the fact that Harlan, in her words, “is a ghost town, dying”. How she personally can work to bring about a reversal of this is still being worked out, she is however altogether committed to seeing it happen. Ebony, like Beth, sees her education's application as transformative, both as it relates to her individual life and the life of the community.

I wanna try to do something. I think this drug problem is the thing that's driving me crazy about this place. I don't think people intentionally wanna become drug addicts. I don't think anybody goes out to say, “Let's shoot needles.” It just progresses. And I think that if there was other outlets, I wanna do (pause), I have to figure it out. I haven't quite got my master plan together to take over Harlan County, but I'm working on it.

For Ebony, the return to Harlan after having spent time away brought about a new perspective on the region and a renewed commitment to its betterment. Having severed, and not wanting to renew, high school friendships, Ebony is forging a new identity and understanding of the community through her connections with Southeast. She recently participated in Southeast's *Playing with Fire* play and through it has made new friends, friends who share her passion for a ‘healthy Harlan’. Ebony had stated early on in the

interview process, “your imagination should always exceed your reach” and she is putting this philosophy into action as she completes her degree at Southeast. As she does this she is building connections to her future self and the future possibilities for her community.

The Leaver who wants to stay/the Stayer who wants to leave: Charlie & David

Charles Ewing is twenty-one and in his first year at Eastern Kentucky University. I interviewed him in the spring prior to his graduation from Southeast when he was contemplating completing a Bachelor’s degree. Having grown up in Harlan County in the town of Highsplint, an old coal mining town set up in the mountains, Charlie was experiencing some anxiety about leaving. He was very excited, but was questioning his ability to compete with others at the university level. Added to that, he was considering where he would find work and roommates to help share the costs of attending college away from home. The reasons he outlined for attending Southeast were also a factor in his selection of Eastern: it was financially affordable, he could potentially work while attending, and he could lower his housing costs by living with others. His current roommate at Eastern is from Harlan County. They attended Southeast together and played in the local band, ‘Mortal Strike’. Charlie loves to play music and could, if his plans to be a history professor were put on hold, move to Kingsport, or Johnson City, Tennessee to become involved in the music scene there.

Charlie is a first generation college student, neither parent having gone to college. His dad was a coal miner who died when Charlie was eleven. It was during this time that Charlie’s interest in history began. During the interview and oral history he spoke at length about his uncle who had been to college, completing a Master’s in psychology.

Uncle Ben then returned to teach for several years at Southeast but had recently decided to leave teaching and is, according to Charlie, “nearly homeless”. It is evident that this worries Charlie, his uncle having been for so many years a role model. Charlie’s other family members, his mother and brother, both live in Highsplit, Kentucky though his brother had left at one time to drive a truck across the country. He recently returned to Harlan because, as Charlie explains “he couldn’t get used to the fact that he was never home, because he never had a home, he was always everywhere”. Charlie is the youngest in the family and the furthest of his family members from home.

For now Charlie enjoys the challenges of attending Eastern Kentucky University. Though the classes are daunting, he spoke about the pace of the city and campus life. Describing his life as ‘being in the lions’ den’, Charlie must prove to himself, his professors and peers, that he belongs at Eastern Kentucky University.

University life’s much more rapid, much more rapid. It’s not laid-back in any way whatsoever. It’s a do or die kind of situation. It’s not at lenient. It’s very demanding. Like take your professors, for instance, or your fellow students – if you don’t do what’s expected of you, there’s not gonna be any helping hand in the long run to be able to let you know, hey, did you know there was an assignment due two weeks ago that you just don’t even know about? Let alone when someone from Harlan would be like, man, make sure you know that next week that assignment’s due... Because you just see all these people having the same idea, wanting to chase the same dream, wanting to do the same thing. And you see the competition face to face when you go to school with all these students. And you’re like, do I really wanna put the responsibility forth to be able to score a job against these people?

About twice a month he returns to Harlan to see family and friends. He enjoys returning and considers moving back to the region to teach once his degree is finished. Like his uncle, Charlie hopes to teach at the community college level. He finds the atmosphere at the community college much less stressful than that at the University level.

When I asked him where, giving him the world as his oyster, he would most like to take his degree and apply it, Charles returned to the familiar.

Chris: So where do you – again, this quality of life scenario – if you could take that degree and be a college teacher anywhere, where would that be? The world’s your oyster, Charlie.

Charles: If I had a coin to flip I would. But off the top of my head where would I like to teach? I’d see if there are a couple places I could teach with Union.

Chris: Union?

Charles: Yes.

Chris: And that’s in –

Charles: That’s in Barbourville.

Chris: Yeah, Barbourville. Okay.

Barbourville is less than fifty miles from Harlan and a little over sixty from Charlie’s childhood home of Highsplint. Given the world, Charlie prefers to stay local.

When discussing quality of life issues and how he defined the good life, Charlie focused on how education allowed him to pursue work that would not injury his body. Thinking of his father’s early demise, Charlie believes and has had this belief reinforced by many family members, that “The higher the education, the better the job...if you don’t plan on living back-breaking work, you’re gonna be wanting to look in the books”. As a twenty-one year old male, he also wants the job that provides a car that ‘slaps you in the face’. As mentioned previously, his uncle Ben provides the example for the kind of life Charlie wants, a life that requires no apology for doing what you want.

The stereotype idea of what a person wants is to live in an expanded place where you can live your life to the fullest. When a person who really wants to live their life to the fullest – doing what they wanna do – it’s completely different, like my Uncle Ben, for instance. I asked him one time, I said, “Exactly what was you doing?” He said, “I’m doing exactly what I wanted to do.” So it makes you think what a person actually wants compared to what the idea of what people have for other people is.

For Charlie, what he wants includes the possibility of returning to his home region to participate in its local history. Even as he does this he hopes to continue as a history teacher and musician constructions his definitions of the good life. Whether or not his new connections to Richmond will propel him in other directions has yet to be established. It is evident though that even if does return, he returns as an educated worker. Having chosen not to identify with his father’s manual but instead with his uncle’s mental labor, Charlie portrays a choice similar to many of the Southeast males interviewed. Charlie selected post-secondary education to take him out of the coal fields to the college campus, whether at the community or university level. In this way his educational ends provide a way to transition back to familiar places.

Interviewing David Ward could at times prove uncomfortable. David was always very apologetic during our interviews, voicing concern that he was not contributing much to my research. “I hate to have you come all the way down here for that”, he remarked after we completed the oral history. However his story, like so many others I interviewed, made the journey to Harlan well worth the effort. Like the other students highlighted in this chapter, David struggled with current and future conceptions of self and how his education would affect where and how he lived out his degree in the area. Or, if necessary, it might take him beyond county and region boundaries.

David retired from coal mining when he was thirty. His back injury left him unable to continue doing manual labor. "I'm afraid I can't bend that much. If I bend a certain length down, I end up, my back goes out". Prior to his injury, David worked for twelve years as a miner, underground electrician and foreman. He always thought he would retire from mining, just not at such a young age. Currently in his third year at Southeast, he intends to graduate with his Associate of Arts in the spring of 2010. Like Ebony, he too is looking into the BA and MA degrees in psychological counseling offered by Lindsay Wilson at Southeast's Cumberland campus. Though he articulates a future in Harlan, this future, like the health of his back, seems tenuous.

Unlike the majority of students I interviewed, David did not grow up in Harlan. Though born in Harlan, at a young age he was sent to boarding school and then, when money got tight, was placed with various relatives, moving from Kentucky to Tennessee and Virginia. When he was eight he was placed in foster care and spent his teenage years shuffled between foster families and group homes. At sixteen he came to Harlan to live with his older sister. When she later moved, David lived in his car, supporting himself with his restaurant wages. It was while doing fast food work that he met his wife who encouraged him to find an apartment. It was her father that helped him get a job in the mines once he turned eighteen.

While working in the mines, David and his wife bought a trailer. They were expecting their first child and the apartment they shared was too small. Their plan was to pay the loan off in ten years, sell it, using the profit as down payment for a house. Before they could do that, David was injured. "If it wasn't for that I would say we would have been moved out by now and had our own place, a big piece of land." After he was

injured David's wife began working at a nursing home in Middlesboro, a forty-five minute commute from Harlan, a commute she has been doing for seven years now.

David's job as he defines it is "a full-time student and Mom". His youngest often teases him that if he had gone to school a long time ago, he would have a job by now.

David understands his son's criticism.

He wants to see somebody as a fireman or somebody established in a job, to look up to and, where I'm not at that point yet, I am not doing nothing for myself.

David wants to leave Harlan and has for several years. The problem is convincing his wife. She has always lived in Harlan, as has her family. As such, the only family David has known, his wife and kids, are deeply attached to the area. His two sons are in school, one in elementary, the other in middle school. As a child who was moved around a lot, David knows the impact of such instability on children. And so he hesitates. Though he does not see a future for himself in the region, he sees the relational benefits of staying in the area, benefits lost if he were to move.

Well it's a shame, in a way, because we do have relatives that live here and by leaving we would have to leave them. But if we stay, there's nothing...I don't mind moving, myself because I am used to it. I've moved all my life. But my wife, she pretty much, she's been here all of her life.

When I asked David to discuss his conceptions of a quality life, the good life, he quickly draws connections to his family, specifically his children. He is not concerned with his children having a lot of material things as long as the basics of food, shelter, and people around that love and care for them are covered. It is the second part of his definition, having a good job to support himself and his family, which is bringing such stress to life right now. The medical bills, even with workers compensation coverage, are not all paid. His injuries are not entirely healed and may require surgery at some point in

the future. He is looking at an additional two years before he can get a job in his new field of social work. Though he sees the economic opportunities of the region as limited, he is willing like his wife, to commute to where the jobs are. Part of living in Harlan, he explained, requires such a strategy. Either you know someone who can get you a job, or you are willing to drive considerable distances for work. Or you move away.

It's basically – if they're not living next door to them or they're not related to them they don't get a job. If you don't live next to them or you're not related to them they won't hire you. Or there's some companies that won't hire you if you live in Harlan. They'll hire somebody from Lexington, but they won't hire anybody from Harlan. So everybody either has to move away or drive long distance for work.

David is not planning on moving away and so is preparing for long commutes. He does this because he values his family's relational commitment to the region more than the options and choices living in a larger community might provide. He explains it, in a roundabout way, this way:

Well you do have more options and recreation (in the city) – well, lots of ways you have more options. But a lot of things you have options in is not a necessity. It's more or less a want. And if you take that quality of life and try to pamper yourself, and say, "I've got gold rings on every finger," or "I've got this big old house," or "I'm wearing a \$150.00 pair of shoes, because you can't get them in your town." I don't see that as a good quality of life. I see people treating you good, having good morals, loving in the family – you can have \$150.00 shoes because you can get them in the city, but you might treat your parents like crap, or disrespect everybody around you.

Money's not always everything. When it boils down to quality it's every individual – I guess it depends on what you look at when you – if you're looking at material things, yeah, it would be better to move off. But if you're looking at something that's not gonna give you wrinkles or gray hair by the time you're 40, I guess it doesn't matter where you live. It's just how you look at it, if that makes any sense.

For now, David takes care of his wife and children and his back while pursuing his degree plans to become a social worker and care for others while earning a

professional wage. Though he sees it as a difficult process, he is determined to use his education to transition into the local economy. By identifying with the potentials provided by his advanced degree, he has realigned himself (figuratively, if not hopefully literally once his back heals) and his economic future towards what is possible in the region. Like Charlie, he has been forced to reassess the life of a coal miner. Now he is 'Mom' and with his education, working out new definitions and conceptions of self. He is not unaware of the limitations such a choice to stay has on his opportunities but commits himself to his family and, because of them, to the region. For now, this is the plan. For now.

Of place and people: Jamison & Terri

For many of the students interviewed, family and place intervened in their post-secondary plans. Whether keeping in touch 'back home' by visiting every couple of weeks, or staying so as to remain close to family, students lives were more or less connected to Harlan. Home was defined through relationships to place and people. Two students in particular evidence these connections. Both are contemplating life in new places away from Harlan County, Kentucky even while carrying imprints of it with them. One is younger, one older. Both articulated excitement and reservation at the prospect of their future possibilities, even while pursuing them at full speed. Each sees their education providing a way out, or a way to 'venture out' of the region. Yet both seek a way to stay close, either to familiar geographic features or the people which constitute home, whether that be in Harlan or elsewhere.

Foreign people but familiar places

Jamison Kirk is 21, in his second year at Eastern Kentucky University, completing a Bachelor's degree in recreation and park management. He finished at Southeast with an Associates of Science and an Associate of Arts and moved with his girlfriend, Heather Boggs (the student highlighted in the Leaver section) to Richmond in the summer of 2008. As a child growing up in Caywood, Kentucky he traveled with his family to visit many national parks and attributes this to degree selection. For Jamison, the job he eventually takes must be one that allows him to spend time outdoors. He loves to ride motorbikes, hunt, and ATV. In fact, he related when he visits big cities like New York and San Francisco, he struggles with anxiety. "I can't see myself living in a huge city. I just, I hate the atmosphere, I guess, of it. Right now I plan on going to Alaska...and working at Denali National Park". Jamison's family, his parents and brother, still reside in Caywood in the same house Jamison grew up in.

Jamison met Heather when they were Upward Bound students in high school. He went to James Caywood High School, a school since consolidated into the new Harlan County High School. Though his girlfriend was attending Harlan Independent, Jamison had no desire to go to the "stuck up, snooty school". Living outside of Harlan city limits also meant he would have to pay to attend even though the high school he did attend was just down the street from the independent school. Like Heather, he too took course work at Southeast while in high school and selected to enroll full time there after graduation. Finishing their Associate degrees, they both moved to Richmond to pursue their Bachelor degrees at ECU. Jamison mentioned his relationship with Sheila Gordon, Southeast's students support staff member. "I used to hang out in her office". As a first generation

college student- Jamison's mother finished high school, his father did not- Sheila gave much needed guidance and direction to his post-secondary plans.

Jamison's professional goals may take him far from Harlan, but he hopes to continue living in a rural place. He also wants a job that will help benefit the environment. When we discussed quality of life issues, his main concern was to have a job that would allow him to pay his bills on time but also provided a place of comfort.

It's not necessarily a set place, it's just a place that you, I don't know, you get home at the end of the day and you're like, "Okay, I'm calm." And you're comfortable there.

Between the first interview and the follow up oral history, Jamison experienced two events continuing to shape and define his future plans. Like Heather, he too went to England for five weeks over the summer. His experience in Scotland left a lasting impression, an impression in some ways reminiscent of his childhood in Harlan. While in England, on weekends, he and Heather would go hiking around and one weekend visited Edinburgh, Inverness and Loch Ness in Scotland. Hear how Jamison describes the country and people.

Jamison: But like where I'm talking about is closer to Inverness, away from the larger cities there. It almost looks like around Harlan up there because of the mountains...It's a lot older country, it's like these people are set in their ways. They've been doing the same things since people have been in Scotland. I can't really explain it; you just have to experience it. You have to be there.

Chris: You've described Harlan that way as a place where people do the same thing and they're set in their ways.

Jamison: Yeah, I mean that's a similarity...

Though not planning to return to Harlan County to live, Jamison carries a lasting imprint of the area in his memory and seeks out its likeness in varying places. Though not home

in terms of residence, Harlan remains as an archetype of what any future home should look like.

The other indelible experience for Jamison over the summer was the loss of an eye in a shooting accident. While cleaning a gun, Jamison accidentally shot himself in the head, the bullet entering through his right eye and exiting his skull. He was unfortunately alone when it happened and, not knowing the extent of his injuries, drove himself to the hospital in Harlan where he was airlifted to Johnson City, Tennessee. Feeling very lucky to be alive, during the oral history, Jamison spoke tentatively about the injury and how it was not going to change his career plans. Though delayed during the fall semester - he had to take all online courses in order to limit exposure of his eye and brain to infection- Jamison is still planning for his internship in Denali. Regaining eyesight in his right eye is doubtful but he hopes by consulting a specialist, it might improve. At the time of the second interview, he was working with sight in just one eye and the inherent balance problems caused by the injury.

Rumors abounded in Harlan regarding the accident. “Was it an attempted suicide?” “Did Heather shoot him during an argument?” “When was the funeral?” He is very glad to deal with the gossip from far away. He does still try to visit Harlan once a month, “just for a change of scenery, Richmond is so flat”. He misses the mountains and as he stated many times, enjoys spending time outdoors. It is here too that he can be at home and relax. As stated by another Eastern University transfer, Richmond is close enough to home that “if you get homesick you go home and see everyone you know” and far enough away to beat a retreat back to the University.

Jamison sees his education as transferring him out of Harlan. He is not planning on returning but instead will take his love of the outdoors, cultivated during his childhood, to similar rural places in the country. His story highlights a way to resolve the tension between whether to stay or leave. If by leaving one can find similar home places throughout the world, then in a way one remains, if not to a specific place at least to its characteristics. His degree allows the possibility of such transfer to other places though for Jamison these places are not foreign but familiar and reflect his commitment to rural spaces. His family back in Harlan does not agree as they “hate the idea of me being so far away if I did go to Alaska”. For Jamison, his education trajectory has always been about “getting out really, leaving” and the possibility the degree affords to “do something every day that I love”. Having witnessed his father work a job he disliked propels Jamison to avoid such a future.

It's hard for me to think of a worse thing than to, for the rest of my life, have a job that I hate going to, because my dad's done that his entire life, and I know what that does to people, and I don't want that for myself.

For Jamison, his degree allows the possibility of such disconnect from familial roles while maintaining a connection to the geographic features of his family’s place.

Foreign places but familiar people

At fifty seven, Terri Brock was the oldest of the students I interviewed at Southeast Community and Technical College. She had already completed her LPN training and in the spring of 2010, will complete an Associate of Science to become a registered nurse. This is when she and her husband, both who have never lived outside of Harlan County, will move to be near her three children and six grandchildren in Cincinnati, Ohio. She refers to it as her second childhood and is very excited to ‘venture

out'. Her husband is less convinced but Terri believes she can convince him to give it a try.

Family has always been central for Terri. As a young woman, she turned down a scholarship to Union College. Her family was dependent on the income provided by her work at a local medical clinic. It was here at the clinic she met her soon to be husband and embarrassingly admits,

And I met Randy. And I had a scholarship. I had gotten a scholarship my senior year to go to Union. And I wouldn't go because I was afraid I would lose him. Isn't that stupid?

Stupid or not, she choose to stay and support her family, marrying at age 20 and raising three kids, all of which finished college. Her father, a coal miner and union organizer, hoped Terri would finish high school. Though he will suffer from black lung, a debilitating illness, early on he exemplifies for Terri the ethic of hard work, an ethic she has internalized and illustrated in her own life. While completing her RN training, Terri worked full-time at a dental clinic, a place where she has worked for the last thirty years. "My way or relaxing is by doing something...I'm ADHD, I'm sure." Terri explains.

Terri identifies her degree and training from Southeast as the reason she is able to, as she characterizes it, "venture out". It allows her to provide for her family, a husband who can now retire from his business testing soil and water for the coal industry, and her children who, once she is in Cincinnati, can call on her more often as a babysitter. For her it is better than they grow up not knowing her. She also is able, after having cared for her own mother during a protracted illness, to use her education to start what she describes as her "second childhood." Her advanced degree brings such transferrable and transitional possibilities to her life.

So when I really decided – and after with my mother’s illness and seeing the need there and with my children, I just thought, “You know, if I go back to school and get my nursing degree, then I can start a whole new life.”

For Terri, her new life will be translated in a new home community. Her nursing credentials allow her to do so but also allow her to stay near her family, which she values above all else.

When we discussed what constituted a quality life and the ways she defined it, Terri discussed how work was always a necessary component. Like many of the Southeast students interviewed, she too is quite dismayed with Harlan’s decline since her youth and attributes it to people not having work. While working in the dental clinic, she has witnessed the community’s growing dependence on welfare and prescription drugs. Though discouraged by the plays Southeast Community College has made depicting these issues, she nonetheless accepts their accuracy.

I didn’t care for the first play (*Higher Ground*) because that is not the place that I grew up in. That’s the place that it has become...it just really breaks my heart, but I’m really just tired of it. I mean, I’m just tired of seeing that, and I’m tired of people coming into our office and you know, want all this pain medicine and want all this. And they hand you a card that you realize you’re paying all this for them. And I just – I just feel like young people need to work. I think that’s what’s wrong.

Having worked in the area for so long in the care and assistance of others, Terri has some suggestions of ways to help both the elderly and the unemployed of the region.

Even if there’s no jobs and people want to stay here...why doesn’t the state employ these people to help elderly, people that can’t clean their houses? I would do – there’s no work that I wouldn’t do to support – I wouldn’t say I would never clean somebody’s – because I would anything that’s honorable and you know, you would do. I just feel like we’re really aiding our youth to be non-productive.

The other component of a quality life for Terri is a home and family that respect and love each other and contribute these qualities to the community. Having instilled in her own children these values, Terri speculates that Eastern Kentuckians share these qualities also.

And I've never known anybody that has ever come to southeastern Kentucky that didn't say these are some of the finest people I've ever met. Right? And really, I just think that as a nation, as a country, as people, we miss the mark because people are judged now by the type of car they drive, how much money they make, you know, the house they live in. And that doesn't make the man. You know, the man is made – you know, from the time they're babies, integrity, stand up for what's right, have respect, do good. You know, love your family. Don't sass your mother. You don't need super nanny. Have you seen the super nanny in southeastern Kentucky?

Terri's oral history ends with her contemplating her own death. For many years while they were living, she took care of her parents. She is intimately familiar with protracted illness and eventual death. Now, she takes care of their graves, visiting monthly to pull weeds and put out fresh flowers. However, she does not want her children to continue this tradition after her death and is considering cremation. Rather than being buried in Harlan County, Terri wants her children to think of her when they go to the beach. This is where she wants her ashes scattered.

I told my kids, "I'm going to fix it to where you'll never have to feel guilty if you forget to put a flower on my grave. Just put me in a plastic bag, and the next time you go to the beach, just ..." So that's my views on that. So I might not be typical Appalachia for you.

In her own way, Terri is the modern Appalachian, connecting to the people of her place, a place in motion and necessitating resettlement elsewhere. She is redefining what Appalachia means for herself and her family. Rather than connecting to the place of her past, she is rather connecting to the future possibilities of a new place filled with the

people of her past, present and future. Through such new experiences, she is redefining what it means for her to be Appalachian. Having completed her family duties to her parents, Terri now prepares herself for her future by completing a nursing degree which allows her continue her tradition of helping her children and grandchildren, and her husband if he will only agree to her retirement scheme, in a new place, just a little north of the Appalachia they have known.

The continuing discussion

Student highlighted in this chapter represent positions related to the purposeful ends of the post-secondary degrees, whether that transition them into available local jobs or provide a way to transfer out. Yet Southeast students evidence another position, that of staying in the region and advancing their educational degrees towards transformative applications.

What are then the implications of these students' positions relating to the purposes of post-secondary degrees, whether that be at the community college or other higher education institutions? If the ends of community college education are to prepare students for transfer out of their home and then even their college communities, what (dis)services are they offering in response to such displacement? If instead, the college focuses on local transitional applications, what about those students who are, as some students identified, preparing for 'bigger colleges' while getting their basics at the smaller community college? To what extent are students' identifications with the community aspect of college, whether through transitional and/or transformative means, keeping them from identifying with the State's more nebulous goals of Bachelor and

beyond degrees? If the community college emphasizes one end to the detriment of the other, can it see itself as fulfilling its mission towards the collegiate and the community and if so, what are the ends that can prove mutually beneficial?

Summary

Whether detaching or attaching themselves and their futures to Harlan County, the students profiled in this chapter well understand what informed their directions. Each, regardless of stance, related the rewards and regrets of their post-secondary pursuits. Unlike those studied in Corbett's research, advanced education did not necessarily translate into Southeast students leaving the region. For the Stayers, higher education was being pursued for local relevance, whether towards individual transitional or community transformative purposes. Like the others, David's profile highlights the influence of family and how these attachments direct the degree's usefulness.

For the Leavers profiled in this chapter, varying rationale argued for their departure, whether related to economic, social or personal identifications. Yet they too articulated the push and pull factors of place and family. Charlie's life history illustrates that even as degrees take students away, they provide ways to return to familiar places. Or, as Terri's life history depicts, degrees allow a transferrable relevance that, while transporting them to unfamiliar places, are employed to keep them near what is most familiar and dearly valued, the people that compose family.

Even as it promotes the necessity of advanced education, State policy continues to ignore the connection to family and place students articulate which influence their decisions to pursue and apply these degrees. As the students' educational stories

highlight, whether they decide to stay or leave to fulfill their education ends, each indicated how family, friends, community and a sense of place are considerations informing the wheres, hows and whys of their post-secondary plans.

How then should State policy understand and incorporate such stances and rationale while continuing to promote higher education degrees for its residents? Furthermore, how are theories around development adjusted once an understanding of how individuals committed to place shift its focus to the local? In the next and final chapter, I look at how Southeast Community and Technical College students' articulated positions on the value and application of advanced degrees redefine what is meant by development, its connections to education and attachments to place. Furthermore, the role of the rural community college in addressing these ends of education, whether relating to transfer, transition or transformation, will also be analyzed.

Chapter 6

Why they go: A rural community college perspective (s)

*In the deep, dark hills of eastern Kentucky
that's the place where I trace my blood line
and it's there I read on a hillside gravestone,
"You will never leave Harlan alive"*

"You'll never leave Harlan alive"

"Well, we all die somewhere, why not Harlan if it's home?" Southeast researcher

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out why students pursued post-secondary training and degrees in Central Appalachia. I also wanted to find out how students were discussing the application of their degrees and whether or not such applications required they leave their home regions. To answer these questions, descriptions of the region and its potential were gathered through interviews and oral histories with faculty and students at Southeast Community and Technical College in Harlan, Kentucky. Through their depictions of home, students and faculty discussed commitments to Harlan but also growing attachments to other places, new places 'to venture out' whose access was provided by their advanced degrees and training. This research is then about post-secondary pursuits and how students and faculty at a rural community college construct their educational ends in a place constructed historically as underdeveloped, deficient in quality of life amenities.

Even as Southeast students defined quality of life issues and attached them to people and places, they also aligned with arguments promoted by human capital and development theories. All agreed on the need for advanced degrees or training, though they would differ regarding the form, whether as Certificates, Associates, Bachelors' or

beyond. Like Howley's study (2006) Southeast students' interests reflect their agreement with the need for additional education beyond high school.

Like Corbett's study (2007), when beginning my study at Southeast I too assumed that as students pursued more advanced degrees their application would require they leave the region. I did not expect to find, but unlike Corbett did find positions allowing both to occur. While interviewing students, individuals discussed educational goals which included Bachelor and Master's degrees pursued and applied in the region. Southeast and its commitment to building the region's civic capacity has translated into its courting of undergraduate four year and graduate programs made available through its Cumberland campus. Three students interviewed specifically mentioned these programs as avenues in their continued degree attainment.

Sohn's study also informed my research as I began. Her look at how women in Central Appalachia applied their degrees in the region, and how this translated into increased community, family and individual literacy was also echoed by primarily female but also a few male students interviewed at Southeast. Their educational degrees were being pursued in hopes of addressing the social ills of the region and bringing about transformative ends through teaching, recreational, artistic and psychological services.

In this concluding chapter I revisit the theoretical and philosophical constructions related to post-secondary pursuits. I discuss how critical interpretations of these construction, voiced by Southeast students, administrators and faculty, help to construct new descriptions of being educated in Appalachia. Using the example of Southeast, I will also discuss how the rural community college as an institution can inform these

continued constructions and applications. Again those interviewed for this study will voice their perspectives on these issues.

If attachment to place and commitments to local networks of family and kin were understood in ways that helped constitute the good life and informed quality of life issues, how then might development theory include such attachments and commitments? As Southeast students' educational biographies attest, rural students' commitments to their communities translate into seeking undergraduate and in some cases, graduate degrees. Contrary to Howley's study, how would such degree-seeking-in-place be understood and redefine education ends as well as inform the mission of the rural community college? What does it mean for the vitality of institutions like Southeast, if development theory based policies at the state level ignore these local place-based rationales?

Development reconsidered

As ideas around development took hold in the 20th Century, new ways of defining it and ways to characterize it evolved. Initially and continually, development has been tied to economic growth using a country's GNP as its indicator. In the 1960's, the United Nations proposed the social aspects of development be added to the economic emphasis. Not only should per capital production of materials increased, so too social services like those found in the developed countries, i.e. access to health and education, would be promoted. By concentrating on the economic and the social conditions, development proposals would bring change to poor areas.

Development is growth plus change. Change, in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative...The key concept must be improved quality of people's lives (UN: 1962).

Who then gets to determine whether a place or a people have access to a quality life? Critics of development theory question not only the qualifiers which are used to define development but also the assumptions and intentions of development planners. In his critique of development theory, Escobar (1992) argues for local input in this process rather than what had been its global edict approach.

It is not a teleological project (moving people towards a pre-determined direction) but one which recognizes people's agency and learns how to foster and co-move with them...it has been said that what is at stake is the transformation of the political, economic and institutional regime of truth production that has defined the era of development (p.28).

Rather than promoting and cultivating societies that are replicas of rich Western nations, Escobar argues the examples for a post-development era are in those places and people who have resisted or participated creatively in the modernizing process. Such a process is then:

...a matter of 'regenerating peoples spaces' or creating new ones with those who have actually survived the age of modernity and development by resisting it or by insinuating themselves creatively in the circuits of capital and modernization (p. 49)

What would be the impact of such an approach then if it were applied to State and regional arguments and perspectives on what is needed for the people of Central Appalachia, specifically the education policies which impacting the students at Southeast?

Critique of State and regional development initiatives

In 2007, the Kentucky Council on Post-secondary Education began strategies which they argued would increase Bachelor degree attainment in the state. The policy

titled *Double the Numbers*, enacted ten years after the Post-secondary Improvement Act, connected increased per capita income with increased educational attainment. Though not wanting to fully discount the role of Associate's degrees in this process of increased "standards of living and quality of life to the national average by 2020", raising the percentage of bachelor's degrees was argued to be more efficient (p. 5). Furthermore, at the time of the report, Kentucky met or exceeded the national trend for AA degrees. Where the state fell short was in its BA attainment. According to the report, in 2000 19% of Kentuckians (1 in 5) had a BA degree. To adhere to projected national percentages of 1 in 3 state residents having a BA degree or higher, the goal of the initiative would double BA holders in Kentucky by 2020. In numbers, by 2020 this would translate to almost 800,000 of Kentucky's 2.5 million residents having attained a BA or beyond (p. 9).

What causes the state of Kentucky to take on such a commitment to advanced education degrees? The Council's rhetoric is purely economic and reflects logic intrinsic to development theory proponents. According to the Council's study, the more educated a person, the more money they make. Educated people furthermore attract, create and maintain more diverse and stronger economies thereby increasing the State's tax revenue.

One of the strategies employed by Kentucky to raise BA attainment is to increase transfer rates from KCTCS to the State's four-year degree granting institutions. According to the Council for Post-secondary Education, the Southeast region, the region in which Southeast Community College resides, includes promotion of transfers to Eastern Kentucky University, Centre and Berea Colleges, Union and the University of the Cumberlands. Of all the institutions in the region, the report charges ECU with primary transfer responsibility. Yet as the Southeast students in my study discussed, ECU is not a

reasonable choice for students who, given place and people connections, are committed to the region.

Another strategy is to attract people with advanced degrees to the state. The policy details by geographic area how many new BA holders would be needed as each area works towards its share of the 2020, 800,000 number goal. The Southeast region includes those counties serviced by Southeast Community and Technical College. The state projects that 10,000 new BA holders would need to move into the twenty-two county region. Interestingly, the state assigns similar number gains to the Central region (which includes Lexington) and the Louisville metro area. How reasonable is it to think an area like southeastern Kentucky, which has seen record outmigration since the 1950's, could attract post-secondary education migrants to the area? How reasonable also is it to assume that an area dominated by manual economies such as coal and timber, would attract more divergently skilled and degreed people? To attract these individuals to rural peripheral places like Harlan rather than core economic centers like Lexington or Louisville is challenging and not one discussed by developmental theory, given its inherent urban focus and assumptions inherent.

Eller (2008) discusses such urban alignments in Appalachia and how ARC funding complimented this rationale. Tying growth center policies to funding streams, ARC, since the 1960's, has helped move and concentrate populations from rural/peripheral places to less rural more urban/core centers. According to Eller, growth center strategy concentrates money and resources in those places demonstrating the most potential for growth. These centers were initially areas with populations at or exceeding 250,000. Appalachia had few such areas, and economically depressed Central

Appalachia had none. Instead of a national growth center strategy, governors from the Central Appalachian states were able to petition for a regional growth strategy which focused on areas with populations around 7,000.

The planners devised a three-tiered model that permitted agency funds to flow to midsize cities and towns that lay along the developmental axes between metropolitan centers and rural hinterlands...In Central Appalachia these growth areas included clusters of small cities organized with surrounding rural counties...When connected to larger urban centers by good highways and transportation facilities these second tier cities could provide employment and services for remote hinterland populations within a fifty mile radius...(p.182) The more rural an area, the less likely it was to receive ARC funding. In this way, Eller argues, mountain people were being prepared to live in cities or commute to cities for work in manufacturing or service economies. Less and less would they be attached to local jobs involving agriculture and mining. More and more, attachments to the urban lifestyle, amenities, and necessities would be fostered. The ARC, "By investing public resources in health care, technical training and higher education facilities..hoped to build a skilled labor force that might attract new industries to the region." Yet by doing so, Eller states, they were also aware of the potential that educated young people would leave the region (p. 185).

Harlan County is one such peripheral economy. As students indicated in their interviews, coal jobs are perceived as the primary source for consistent work in the area, whether or not students want such opportunity and its avoidance is reflected in the selection and application of their post-secondary education and training. Whether or not they are able to change and diversify the economy and reduce coal's influence on the region is also reflected in how some of them apply their degrees locally towards a transformed economy.

Southeast voices

Southeast students, faculty and administrators displayed an understanding of Harlan's peripheral economies. Faculty and administrators voiced concern that students are selecting to stay in the area by training for available jobs rather than aspiring towards careers of interest which may not be currently viable in the region. Yet students were well aware of their options and voiced an interest, particularly the males at Southeast, at pursuing post-secondary education as a way to avoid traditional manual labor jobs such as coal mining and timber logging. One male, whose father had died of black lung, states his options in Harlan:

Around here if you really don't have an education, you do not get a good paying job. Really the only thing that pays good around here are the hospital or coal mines. And if you don't want to do the coal mines, you pretty have to get an education just to make it.

Some students discussed ways, in particular the women at Southeast, of transforming the region through promotion of social improvements and artistic endeavors. This student, a single mother sees her education as a means of improving not just her own life but the lives of others,

You know if you're a victim, I understand, but let's do something about it, you know. But I wanna give people a chance, you know, I wanna show 'em that there's other ways – that there's a way to get out of it. You know, and just try to help 'em.

Some of the Southeast voices also aligned themselves with state initiatives working to transfer students from the rural, peripheral economies to more central urban centers such as the Richmond/Lexington corridor. Their ability and commitment to improving their rural home region was tempered by the realization that 'the better life' was indeed in the urban, "where everything is here" and to be had, where shopping and

food amenities as well as contact with diverse people from diverse places promoted a possible life, a life beyond the local and towards national and international contexts. Whether or not the State can retain these students after completion of their degrees may prove challenging given that for some the little taste they have received at Eastern of what is potentially possible given their post-secondary achievements leaves them wanting experiences beyond the limits of Central Kentucky.

Southeast students in ways reflected the economic definitions of a quality life tied to increased incomes. They believed their educational degrees and training would translate to better paying, more stable jobs. Others interviewed described their notions of the good life in ways that were unrelated to market accessibility and application. Instead they tied quality of life issues to family and community connections and increased social development goals which their advanced degrees allowed them to maintain by retaining them in the region. Whether instrumental in leading to a better job or increased pay or intrinsic through increased knowledge and social betterment application, many Southeast students articulated stances relating educational advancement to increased community and family enhancements. Though they knew their degrees might have better economic traction in urban places, their commitment to the local rural was a dominating influence in their pursuit and application of post-secondary degrees.

Education's ends reconsidered

Historians and philosophers of schooling in the United States have referred to the ends or purposes of education. Postman (1995) in *The End of Education* states that new narratives relating the purpose (s) or ends of education need to be constructed or

schooling will be finished. Quoting Nietzsche that one can endure the how's of life if one knows the why's of it, Postman encourages educators to renew their rationale through stories which relate why education is important. If as educators we relay meaningful narratives to our students, accordingly, "School can be about how to make a life, which is quite different from making a living" (p. x). Similarly, Labaree's synthesis that historically education has been to varying degrees about socializing the individual towards their places in society be that as worker, citizen and consumer, also recommends knowledge of education's ends. If educators are unaware of the social and economic influences which infuse curriculum and degree requirements, they will continue to work at cross-purposes regarding the why's of education.

Limiting ends of Labaree's thesis

Though I agree with Labaree that educator's need to be aware of the political and social ends of curriculum and standards, these varied ends of our educational system, rather than a negative, prove positive for students trying out roles in society. Students do not lean towards one or another role, whether citizen, consumer or worker. All three and others are learned in school. Also learned are how to be a teenager in high school and how to balance the professional and personal obligations single mothers contend with while attending community colleges. Or, in the case of my study, how Southeast males train for varying work rather than the dominant manual labor evidenced by generations of their male family members.

Perkinson, (1995) described colonial and post-Revolutionary education efforts as ones which prepared youth "for the unexpected". Given the changing market economies and the varying jobs available, the basics such as reading and mathematics prepared the

people of the New World to take part in positions for which they may have no familiarity either through familial or experiential connections. From my study's research, faculty, administrators and students vocalized education's varying ends and were applying them towards the unexpected and unfamiliar. In varying ways and through varying emphasizes, Southeast students could prepare for transfer and four year degrees, train in those fields allowing them to trade up and transition into better paying, more stable local jobs and/or take the general liberal arts courses fostering an awareness of their home community and an application of their post-secondary degrees towards transformative individual and social ends.

Southeast voices

Southeast students, when discussing how the purposes of education related to increased quality of life, spoke in predictable ways of increased job security and increased wages. They also discussed how their advanced training and degrees prepared and allowed them to consider work they loved and were interested in rather than spending their lives in fields of work which were mentally, and in some cases physically, debilitating. Their educational pursuits provided increased income but also, provided meaningful work, whether as teachers, radiologists, nurses, welders or social workers. This was the hope Southeast faculty and administrators had expressed; that their students would be exposed to the continual lifetime benefits of a community college education.

The historical push for a strict technical education is fallacious... It's a fallacy, in that there's no training that will prepare anyone to hit the ground running in a particular career. There's three to five year apprenticeship that one has to do, but what... education does, is provide a broad based foundation that makes someone gives someone the adaptability to prepare for the unforeseen changes that are out there, so the basic skills, the critical thinking,...the basic math and literature, and art, and all these things none of us liked to take when we were, undergraduates,

the value of that, it does provide a foundation that prepares us for the future.
(Silver, 2009)

Southeast students reinforced the lifetime value of post-secondary education. Many, likened going to the community college as “a good jumping off point” for their lives, that “going here kind of gets you used to college and what to expect so when you go on to the bigger colleges, you’re well prepared”.

How well does Southeast get students ‘used to college’ and does/should such preparation push them out of the region to the ‘bigger colleges’, keep them in the region to pursue additional post-secondary education locally, or transition them into immediate local job applications? As we consider the role of the community college towards these ends, which ones does Southeast emphasize as distinct to their rural community status and what similarities are highlighted when compared to the more commonly studied urban community college?

The rural community college considered

Ethnographic studies on community colleges in the United States tend to focus on urban students. (Weis, 1985, Shaw, 1999) Unlike the more commonly studied community colleges, Southeast serves a rural population. Issues of access, preparation and tuition costs, all which students factor as they consider a community college degree, in rural settings are further complicated by students’ abilities to pay the travel costs necessary to attend. In Harlan County, classes are held on the Cumberland and Harlan campuses, which are roughly 25 miles apart. Southeast administrators had in part addressed the travel issue, receiving a grant to cover the cost of a shuttle bus which ran between the two campuses. Yet faculty and administrators had in our interviews

discussed the decline in enrollment and retention given the rise in gas prices during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The rural community college initiative

In 1994, the Ford Foundation established the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), an initiative conceptualizing the community college as a catalyst for economic and educational development in rural areas. Its mission was to be “a national demonstration designed to help community colleges in distressed regions move their people and communities towards prosperity” (RCCI: 2001). By 1997, twenty-four community colleges throughout the United States were participating in the program. Southeast Community and Technical College was one. Philosophies regarding local capacity development centered on the community college and charged it with expanding the economic and educational vitality of their service areas. Linking the economic impact of the community college to the region highlighted “one of the assumptions about rural development...that economic development and access to higher education are related” (Eller, 2003, p.7).

Revising mission statements, organizational structures and curriculum instruction was an integral component of RCCI’s vision of the community college as a local economic catalyst (p. 47). Southeast’s current mission statement includes the preparation of students for academic transfer as well as economic application and community revitalization. It also includes a continued commitment to promote and preserve the Appalachian culture of the region by promoting the arts in the community. Furthermore, it

Endeavors to be an active leader in its service area, working with other community organizations and educational programs to empower its constituencies to participate in social and economic change (www.southeast.kctcs.edu/)

Southeast's application and commitment to the local contrasts with the mission of KCTCS which designates its mission related to generalized workforce education, transfer preparation and college and workforce 'readiness'. (www.kctcs.edu/)

A crucial link to success was also attributed to new leadership understandings.

The initiative concluded the long term sustainability of rural community college efforts were in these partnerships:

The effect of building college-community teams was also to bring community leadership into the campus, providing new ideas and perspectives and challenging old assumptions and practices in higher education. The degree to which colleges were able to move along the path toward transformation...often depended upon this interactive leadership (p. 48).

An executive summary discussed the impact of the Initiative and reported that while other reporting regions saw gains, the Appalachian region during the ten year period saw decreases in enrollment. Though the initiative showed mixed results by region, indicators of economic development in the regions revealed gains in employment with job growth rates ranging from a loss of 1.5 in the Delta South to a gain of 1.6 in the Southwest. Appalachia increased by .08 during the ten year implementation period (p. 44). The report argues for the continued promotion of education as a community development strategy. The RCCI framework conceptualized the role of the community college as one of being intimately tied to the economic vitality of the area. Rather than mandating steps to achieve these ends, RCCI challenged local players to define and detail economic solutions.

The RCCI challenges colleges to think broadly about their potential as catalysts for regional development. It does not impose a particular set of programs or strategies to solve regional problems; rather it fosters a climate of innovation that will spark local solutions (p. 1).

This analysis was confirmed by many of the students I interviewed who agreed Southeast was “the best thing going on around here”. In fact, some students and faculty impressed on me it was ‘the only thing going on around here’. One student commented on how Southeast provides for the younger people of Harlan County.

What I like about this place right here is that at least it’s offering something to the younger crowd, who really wants to make something of themselves. This institution right here is probably the only option in Harlan, and it really is the only option in Harlan.

A faculty member discusses how Southeast fills a void in the region.

I guess my whole personal philosophy basically agrees with basic community college principles. We try to bring the education to the area in the program it needs. Most of the students because of growing up here...you’d be surprised at the number of students who don’t go past Pineville or Middlesboro or someplace else. If this college were not here, I don’t know that they’d journey too much further away to get an education. With it here, it provides them with that opportunity to get at least a two-year degree, and maybe the two years that will lead to a four-year degree for a lot of them. It’s affordable. It’s within their reach. They say, “Hey, my friends up there are taking classes and doing good. I think I can do this, too.” A lot of personal care and time spent with students. I get students up here- “My mom said she went to school with you”, or this or that. I think it fills such a void that would be in this area if we didn’t have the college. (Guyn, 2009)

By concentrating regional development efforts in the hands of local community colleges, RCCI cultivated an approach connecting the social and economic future of the area to the efforts by which higher education was applicable in the area and its continued vitality. In contrast with other Kentucky community colleges like Somerset and Hazard, each who serve larger multi-county regions and also participated in RCCI, Southeast

focused on the home communities of its campuses. Even as the KCTCS merger was taking place, Southeast continued to concentrate on local and community, rather than state, needs. As the final RCCI report contrasts “Hazard as a regional institution due to its location in a regional town center, and Southeast as a community institution because of its emphasis on serving its home community” (Jensen, 2003, p. 46).

Participation in the RCCI was in no way mandated though a strong administrative commitment was seen to bring about effective and last internal support. Of the faculty and staff who did volunteer, it was Dr. Ayers, the Southeast’s president who was cited in the RCCI reports as a model leader in the effort. His continual support and ability to rally the support of the community helped spotlight Southeast as “a successful example of how RCCI works” (p. 52). The report goes on to caution that a “new tier of leader” needs to be cultivated at Southeast and the difficulty given that “one person has been in charge for so long” (ibid).

Rural educational aspirations and identifications

Weis (1985) in her study of urban community college students in the United States described how black students’ culture ensured they would not meaningfully participate, transfer or graduate from Urban College. Though agreeing that faculty knowledge was of interest to them, community obligations and patterns worked to resist the dominant white, middle-class values required to successfully attend the college institution.

Students embrace and reject schooling at one and the same time. Students affirm the process that is education but drop in and out of school, arrive late to class, exert little effort and engage in extensive drug use. The effects of the culture are twofold: 1) an exceedingly low graduation rate per entering class and 2) the reproduction of deeply rooted race/class antagonisms in the broader society (p. 27).

As indicated earlier in Howley's study, West Virginian students were not less likely to seek undergraduate degrees than their urban peers. It was only when discussing the pursuit of graduate degrees that rural students expressed less interest, primarily because they did not see the application of such advanced degrees in their home communities. The Southeast students interviewed for my study related both aspiration and application rationale when discussing their post-secondary plans. Though some articulate an instrumental approach when applying their Associate and Certificate degrees, others would discuss pursuit of advanced degrees (Bachelor's and Master's) in order to stay and better the region. Only one student (Charlie) discussed his pursuit of a PhD in relation to regional application. To what extent does Southeast help students identify with college life and how does this influence their preparations for successful application of their degrees, whether that be in or out of the region?

Southeast voices

Many agreed Southeast should be a place where students feel 'at home'. If they were transferring to what was perceived as more rigorous four year institutions, then the community college should be that place where confidence and academic development was fostered in the students. Faculty and administrators concurred that local high schools did not always prepare students for the college curriculum and as a community college they should fill in that gap.

Our students are bright and very capable. Unfortunately, many of them come to us needing remediation. I think we got about 70 to 80 percent of our students who had to take one remedial course. And that's far too high, but what we found is that we have the lowest ACT scores at Southeast of any college in the state. But we have one of the best pass rates on our licensure programs of any college in the state. And our students do especially well once they transfer, so that suggests

to me that our students are just as bright and capable and can perform academically on a level that compares favorably with students anywhere and that they're not getting the education that they should get in high school (Ayers, 2009)

Students also agreed that Southeast was a place where remediation and enculturation to college life could be learned in familiar, supportive environment. Though they were aware of Southeast's nickname, 'Southeasy', they appreciated going to a home town college knowing they were accepted and faculty and administrator were on their side as they prepared for their futures. One student relays the family nature of the college.

I looked around, but this is the hometown college and it just offered everything I needed, really with the field I was choosing to go into...Everybody is really personal, we get caught up with each other just like a family and when you have a relationship like that with your teacher, I think it goes better. Someone can look at you and tell you something and how to do it but if you interact with each other and you can just really sit and talk about it, I think you learn better.

Whether students were going to stay and transition, transform or transfer out of the region, Southeast Community and Technical College was the place in the region, where development, be it social, personal and/or academic, occurred.

'Becoming to remain': Southeast and place-based development

Peshkin's (1997) ethnography of Pueblo Indians in New Mexico described tension between the secular agenda of mobility and individual advancement in the schools and the Indian's commitment to their tribes longevity and spirituality represented by the kiva. At the kiva, community values regarding place and group identity were taught. His conclusion after having researched while living on a Pueblo Indian reservation was that local Pueblo values, symbolized by the kiva, were in direct contrast to the values promoted by the local high school. Hoping to assimilate the Pueblo students to Anglo culture through advanced degrees and outmigration, school administrators and

teachers pondered why students rejected these values as they reflected on high student drop-out patterns, failed grades and general disinterest in pursuing college after high school. Peshkin discusses this as the tension between becoming and remaining.

The school as an institution of becoming, and the kiva, as an institution of remaining, are antagonistic, as are the cultures from which these parallel institutions arise... As yet, the whiteman's school lies beyond Pueblo prayers and songs...therefore beyond remaining a Pueblo person. (p. 114)

Like Corbett, (2007) Peshkin's study highlights how commitment to place is in tension with commitments to secondary and post-secondary education. Peshkin's work begins a dichotomous dialogue that Corbin's study continues: the either/or choice of advanced formal, national schooling and informal, place-based education. What if, instead of seeing the situation of rural education as either preparing students to stay or leave, policy discussions on educational attainment and migration focused on what is possible given particular local contexts? Rather than, as human capital theory argues, continuing to view staying and applying ones advanced education in a particular place as limiting, how might the discussions of community development diverge when people with advanced degrees stay? Is it not possible, that seeing what and where one wants to become, remaining in a region is a rational way to achieve these ends? What if, by choosing to remain in a region, people select a place because of its 'becoming' potential? What if, instead of advanced degrees working only to 'drain brains' from a region, a local community college enables students to remain while becoming, or become in order to remain? What does it do to the social and economic viability of a region when people commit their degrees and resources to that region? A Southeast student Beth conceptualizes it for us.

We have a river – we have a creek running through our yard. We thought if I make a business and he knows how to do this – eventually, we can maybe set up a greenhouse. It would be a really nice business if we can get it going. In Harlan, we need things like that. It would be something that we would love. So, we would be working with our passion. So, we’re thinking about that...Also, with the mining, we thought – he’s had a lot of thoughts – with all these strip jobs that don’t get used around here on these mountains – they cover it up with all this sludge and throw a little grass over it – he wants to figure out a way to farm on top of them. He’s got a few pretty bright ideas. We’re just thinking.

Southeast’s president further fills out the community nature of the rural college profile, You know, we’re fond of saying that if you’re doing your job right, you don’t know where the college ends and the community begins, and I think there’s some truth to that. Community colleges, of course, were founded, and I’m sure you know all this, to be community centered institutions...helping communities to accentuate some of the positive things that they had going on, the culture and place...So those that are engaged with their community are doing their job properly (Ayers, 2009).

In juxtaposition to national and state arguments on post-secondary education which link students to ever-increasing and multiple markets, Dr. Ayers defines the success of his institution in terms which connect it to the local community. Further, Ayers will see the mission of the community college to keep students in the region, providing and promoting them as current and future resources.

Community colleges keep people at home. That is very, very important...They (students) are going to be the future...because they don’t want to go anywhere else, it is just home to them... they are going to be the public officials, they are going to be the civic leaders, they are going to be the people who are the future of the region... It is critically important that we do a good job with them. Students do not aspire to leave, they want to stay here, they are very fond of the area, they are very fond of its people so we are able to come up with a program mix that allows them to get degrees so they can find jobs in the region.

Faculty perspectives on the region also reflect how their lives are enhanced by teaching and learning in and from the community:

And then, you know, to get here, to the coalfields and you know, to be around so many academic people who are, you know, very anxious about the authenticity of whatever they’re doing. Nowhere is the intellectual vitality of the Appalachian people more in evidence than at the community colleges and in the coalfields. I

mean you just see that...there's the kind of, there are so many kinds of conscious people (Gipe, 2009).

In contrast to Corbett's findings, my study of Southeast community college students found their willingness to stay or leave the area was not connected to their pursuit of advanced degrees. Students interviewed took varying stances related to the application of their degrees with some committed to both home and college communities. Those students who viewed education as transformative pursued advanced degrees beyond high school all the while committing the application of these advanced degrees to local and regional issues.

Implications, limits and recommendations for further study

From the interviews, students articulated three positions related to their degree selection, completion and application. Many reflected a *transfer* position; pursuing Associate degrees for direct transfer to four year institutions outside the region. A second position found many pursuing their Associate or certificate programs for direct *transition* into local employment application. The third position, the *transformative*, combined the other two positions. These students sought degrees at the Associates level and beyond but were selecting those opportunities that allowed them to stay to pursue and apply their advanced degrees to local issues. Like Labaree's (1997) historic perspective on the goals of education, Southeast Community and Technical College and its students emphasized similar stances related to post-secondary pursuits. Unlike Corbett's work (2007) connecting advanced education with rural out-migration, the students interviewed in my study included a position allowing for advanced education without the inevitable

outmigration. Students stances related to their post-secondary plan did however reflect conflicting and resolved commitments to personal and place development.

Students' post-secondary pursuits show how they problematized and resolved place-based attachments and whether or not such applications allowed them to stay in the region or helped prepare them to leave the area. Whether wanting to stay and apply their educational training to local jobs or community betterment project, or hoping to continue their education away from Harlan County, Southeast students relationship to place influenced the what's and why's of their post-secondary trajectories. Both the Stayers and Leavers highlighted in Chapter 5 exhibit the tension Southeast students struggle with as they apply the Appalachian sense of place to their changing lives and changing economic climate.

Southeast Community and Technical College is a congruence of local, regional and state definitions of higher education's ends. RCCI efforts in the 1990's concentrated the community college's attention towards local and regional capacity building, both in economic and individual terms. While maintaining a concentration on the vitality of the community, it also, as students and faculty attest helps prepare students for advanced degrees out of the region. If students then leave and do not return with their degrees, a loss investment in the community is still part of educational preparation promoted by the institution. Making higher degree options available for pursuit and application in the region is the college's best attempt to fulfill aspects of its mission related to the collegiate and the community.

Southeast also continues to provide a rare example to other struggling rural communities of how higher education, rather than draining human capital resources from

the region, can instead be part of the process keeping individuals committed to transforming the dominant deficiency profile of a Central Appalachian area. It does this by contrasting its rurality as a resource and its problems as field site for the application of advanced degrees and training.

If it is the case that the State wants to increase the acquisition of four year degrees and subsequent retention of these degree holders, then it should follow Southeast's example and provide access to additional opportunities. This can be done as this study indicates through increased availability of undergraduate and graduate programs in the region. Currently, it is only the private institutions such as Lindsey Wilson, Midway, Lincoln Memorial University, and Union who provide the possibility of staying and advancing educational degrees in the region. As the transfer numbers attest, though Eastern is the most popular choice for students transferring from Southeast, the private colleges of Lindsey Wilson, Midway and Union, each providing students the option to live locally, taken together almost equal in number those leaving the region to attend Eastern (See Appendix F).

This study is limited by its concentration on one community college in one specific county in Kentucky. Interviewing students at other community colleges in a rural state like Kentucky could proven an interesting comparison and contrast to my study as each seek in their own ways to maintain the collegiate and community aspect of their colleges. This study perspective is also limited by the fact that all those interviewed were still in or near the region. What about those high school students who left right after high school to attend colleges across the state and in other states? How would their perspectives on the purposes of higher education contrast with those interviewed at the

local? Would they articulate any sense of commitment to Harlan for the application of their degrees?

A recommendation for further study would include an international study on post-secondary pursuits, perhaps in Canada. Corbett's study did not include community college students though it could prove interesting given that a larger number of Nova Scotian students, roughly 25,000 yearly, attend the island's thirteen campuses. How might these students discuss their certificate and degree pursuits and applications? Also, in the United States, what might additional studies conducted with other RCCI campuses yield? Specifically, what unique aspects would research on the community colleges serving on tribal lands raise? What if any additional tensions between the institution and the community surface for those attending and working on such campuses?

Conclusion

So why do the students in my research study to the local community college? Like many attending post-secondary education and training, the application of the degree is related to better economic and job security. Whether this be by way of transitioning into local jobs or transferring to complete bachelor and beyond degrees, Southeast students argue in predictable ways that education provide credentials, credentials that allows them more diverse market applications than the high school degree. Yet Southeast students also argued in less predictable ways that their post-secondary degrees plans allowed them the security to stay and 'fix' issues persistent in their home communities. By applying education toward these ends, Southeast students were able to

stay local and apply their degree plans in ways that strengthened their ties and commitments to their home and community networks.

If indeed the case for post-secondary degrees and trainings has been made, then I as a future professor and thus agent in this endeavor must continue to interrogate my assumptions and positions related to the pursuits and application of advanced degrees. I did not attend a coal field community college as an undergrad. My own undergraduate college was labeled the 'college in the corn fields' and in this way, in this rural way, I can relate to some of the experiences expressed by Southeast students and faculty in Harlan County Kentucky. But it is here that the similarities end. Having completed my undergraduate degree in philosophy, I was, like some of the transfer students at Eastern Kentucky University interviewed, off to see the world, never returning to my home community of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a dying then and dying still industrial town where most of my family lives and where my father is buried. I visit very infrequently and always with equal senses of loss and gratitude at having 'made it out alive'.

As I complete the PhD requirements and contemplate my own degree's application, and, even with all the sympathy and respect I have for Southeast's commitment to its people and place, I do not consider moving back home. The academic institution is where my attachment to place is lived out, interpreted, defined and translated. What academic higher education institution I begin and remain at, I do not as yet know, though I do have increased affinity and loyalty to the missions of the liberal arts and community colleges. However, I am sure it will be ever and increasingly away from my childhood home. In this way, the modernizing influences of mobility, individuality and detachment have played out in my own life's ethos and direction.

Given that my notions of attachment are to the market and not to people and place, my life evidences a commitment to individual advancement wherever that may play out. Like Southeast students though I am not interested in living in big cities such as Los Angeles or the ever nefarious New York, but would rather be attached to a rural or peripheral place through an academic institution. I hope in the Southeast community can see in this way they have shaped my own definition of self in relation to place and people, in ways I had not considered or known properly before knowing them. Their post-secondary positions and purposes have informed my own and so, regardless of market application, I do consider this research experience one of gain and success. My wish for Southeast is as it continues living out its mission as a community college in a struggling region, that its students might also continue in their journeys of redefining the who, what and why's of their lives as well as how these new understandings might be applied to Harlan County, Kentucky, and elsewhere.

Appendix A
Southeast Student Interview Protocol*

Post-secondary Aspirations

What is your college major?

Why did you select this major?

Did your parents go to college?

If so, what did they get their degree (s) in?

Who most influenced your college plans?

Are you planning to transfer?

If so where, why?

What are your friends pursuing here?

Place

Where do you live?

How long have you lived there?

Where else have you lived?

Tell me about where you live.

What is the best/worst thing about where you live?

Would you live anywhere else? Why? Why not?

How do people describe this community?

Identity

Tell me about your family.

Give an example of an important value to your family.

How did you learn that value was important?

Where are your parents from?

What community organizations do you belong to?

What do you want for your future?

Community College

Why did you select Southeast Community College?
What or who most influenced your choice?

What is your major? Why did you select that one?

What department or person has been most helpful to you here at Southeast?
How?

How do people talk about Southeast Community College around here?

Around here, what do people say education is for?

Work/Economy

What does your family members do for work?

What kind of work do most people do around here?

What kinds of work have you done/are doing?

What kind of work will you do with your degree from Southeast Community College?

Is this kind of work available here?

If not, what do you think about moving to find work?

**I have separated the interview into themes related to the study and included relevant questions under each*

Appendix B
Eastern Transfer Student Interview Protocol

Post-secondary Aspirations

What is your major?
Why did you select this major?
Who most influenced your college plans?
Transfer process / making friends? How has it gone...
Where are your friends here from...?
What are your friends pursuing here?
How are you planning on applying your degree from Eastern?
Family's thoughts on this?

Place

Where are you from?
How long did you live there?
Where else have you lived?
Tell me about where you grew up?
What was one of the best/worst things about where you grew up? What's an average day like where you grew up.
Would you live other places? Why, why not?
What do you do for fun at Eastern? Do you do things that you wouldn't do back home?
How do people back home describe your community? How about here?

Identity

Tell me about your family
Has anyone in your family been to college?
Where are your parents from?
What did you do while attending SE?
What do you do here?
What do you want for your future?
What is an important value to you? How did you learn it?

College

Why did you select Eastern?
What/who most influenced this choice?
What person or department did you find most helpful at SE, Eastern?
How do people talk about college around here? At home?
What is the purpose of education? Where did you learn this?
What do you hope to do with your degree?

Work/Economy

What do your family members do for work?
What kind of work do most people do where you are from?
What kind of work have you done/are doing?
What kind of work will you do with your degree from Eastern?
Where is this work available?
Will you be able to take your degree and apply it back home?

Do you hope to stay in Kentucky or move elsewhere?
Are there places you would not consider moving to? Where?

Contacts

Are there any SE students here at Eastern you would recommend I speak with?

Appendix C
Faculty/Administrator Interview Protocol

Education

Tell me about your preparation to teach/work here at Southeast.

What brought you to Southeast?

How has your training and or degree affected your life?

Place

Have you lived other places? Where?

Tell me about your experiences living and working here.

How would you describe the region to someone who was considering moving here?

What is the region's greatest asset? Greatest challenge?

Identity

What are your ties to this community?

What organizations do you belong to?

Talk to me about your family life.

What are some of your personal values?

Community college

Why did you take the job at Southeast?

What do you like about working at Southeast?

What do you dislike about working at Southeast?

What kind of student seems to do well here?

What kind of student seems to struggle here?

Talk to me about your own personal views of post-secondary education

Appendix D: Selected methods

Overview

The ethnographic approaches of semi-structured interviews and oral histories were selected as the primary methods for gathering information from Southeast Community College faculty, administrators, and students during the spring and fall 2009 semesters. These qualitative research approaches were selected in order “to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved” (Glesne, 2006). Furthermore, I am by training and work experience familiar with the philosophies and approaches of oral history. I would also add that I have for many years been personally interested in the ways people frame and narrative their lives and the light such seemingly ordinary lives bring to events.

The use of semi-structured interviews

It was through semi-structured interviews that students initially discussed their perceptions of the region as well as their rationale for attending Southeast. I based my questions around interview categories Corbett (2007) had used for his study on education and outmigration in Digby Neck, Nova Scotia. His categories related to Place and Family informed my categories on Place and Identity. Corbett’s open-ended question format was one I sought to replicate in my own interviews. Under each heading I asked open-ended questions, letting students respond with their own descriptors. Knowing the centrality of place and connections to family and community often highlighted in many studies of Appalachia, I focused on place and identity as interview themes. I added two additional general headings specific to my study, the community college and post-secondary aspirations. In the fall of 2008 I piloted the protocol in Professor Silver and Gipe’s courses. Students often brought up employment issues when describing Harlan County. From these initial contacts, I added Work and Economy to my list of categories.

From the twenty-eight initial interviews with students, I used thematic analysis to organize their data. As with any qualitative data, my task was to organize, create explanations, syntheses, and then develop theories linked my ideas to theirs (Glesne, p. 147, 2006). By coding their replies using emergent design (Spradley, 1979), I was able, from the categories (domains) of Work, Community College, Place, Identity, and Post-secondary aspirations, to identify students’ reoccurring and varying responses. Chapter

Four discusses how students talked about these categories, how their descriptions converged or diverged as well as how these discussions interacted with the faculty and administrative interviews.

The use oral histories

It was through their educational biographies that student and faculty positions on post-secondary pursuits are reflected. These positions and pursuits are captured in oral histories and that which is considered official education policy is challenged, posed and juxtaposed and reformulated through ordinary peoples' lived experiences. The words and lived experiences, of the 'rank and file' student, faculty and administrator at Southeast provided perspectives on national and state policies which seek to increase college going. Ordinary people's lives become the central focus. (Thompson, 2000) By asking students their views regarding why people go to college, their responses evidenced the ways they were implementing, rejecting and reformulating state and national rhetorics regarding college pursuits.

All oral histories conducted with the students, administration and faculty were transcribed and deposited in the University of Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History. Oral Historical Association guidelines for the independent/unaffiliated researcher requires oral histories be made available through public archives. These guidelines also require oral history participants be identified by name, given the "importance of context and identity in shaping the context of an oral history narrative" (Oral History Association evaluation guidelines, 2010)

From the Students responses to post-secondary degree aspirations, positions regarding how they would apply their degrees and how they negotiated their commitments to place given these applications, surfaced. How they would apply their trainings and degrees created tensions around staying or leaving the region. From these nuanced positions of staying and leaving, students were selected for follow-up oral histories. These students were selected as their stories highlighted positions reflecting how these tensions around people, place and the application of degrees were resolving. Their conceptions on the varying ends of their post-secondary degrees, whether that be to transfer, transition and/or transform their communities, informed their positions. Chapter

Five details their stories and positions, positions informed by educational pursuits and also defining understandings of the good life.

The students' oral histories were interpreted using narrative analysis techniques. In her work on prolife and prochoice movements in North Dakota, Ginsburg (1989) found that activists' biographies discussed life events, events which jolted them out of predictable story frameworks into lives with unforeseen and yet-to-be defined plots, plots which defined their current gender conceptions. Like Ginsburg's activists, Chapter Five contains Southeast students' life histories reflecting events which defined and redefined their conceptions of self and post-secondary pursuits. Riessman (1993) discusses how peoples' narratives contain such events and how "a comparison of plot lines across a series of first-person accounts is one way to approach narratives" events which jolt people from story – a predictable framework—to plot, lives with unforeseen and yet-to-be defined ends (p.30). Narrative analysis then provided ways of organizing Southeast student's educational biographies around such defining events.

Appendix E: Harlan County Kentucky profile



HARLAN COUNTY

KENTUCKY POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROFILE 2008-10



General Population Data

	County	Ky	US
Total population	33,202	4,041,789	281,421,908
Median household income	\$18,865	\$33,672	\$41,994
Per capita income	\$11,585	\$18,093	\$21,587
Living in poverty	32.5 %	15.8 %	12.4 %
Eligible for Medicaid	30.7 %	17.6 %	na
Without medical insurance	20.2 %	13.3 %	14.2 %
Registered voters who voted in 2004 general election	51.4 %	64.7 %	70.9 %
Unemployment rate	8.1 %	5.7 %	4.6 %
Use the Internet at home	50.1 %	64.0 %	na

Highest Level of Education

	County	Ky	US
Less than a high school diploma or equivalent	41.3 %	25.9 %	19.6 %
High school diploma or equivalent	34.3 %	33.6 %	26.6 %
Some college but no degree	11.0 %	16.5 %	21.0 %
Associate's degree	4.6 %	4.9 %	6.3 %
Bachelor's degree or higher	8.9 %	17.1 %	24.4 %

Educational Pipeline

	County	Ky	US
High school graduates in 2008		320	
In-state college-going rate for 2008 high school graduates	57.0 %		
Kentucky Adult Education enrollments in 2008-07	1,240		
GEDs awarded in 2008-07	27		
Students entering postsecondary education in summer or fall 2008	323		
Students earning an associate's degree in 2008-07	147		
Students earning a bachelor's degree in 2008-07	66		
Students earning a bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics in 2008-07	24		
Students earning a graduate or professional degree in 2008-07	33		
Students enrolled in distance learning college courses in fall 2008	340		
Students enrolled in Kentucky Virtual Campus courses in fall 2008	139		
Bachelor's degree six-year graduation rate for 2008	45.5 %		
Number of additional bachelor's degree holders needed in this county to match the national average	3,426		

College Readiness

	County	Ky
Average ACT score	18.2	20.6
% entering college with developmental needs in one or more subjects	71.1 %	45.9 %
% entering college with developmental needs in mathematics	66.0 %	35.4 %
% entering college with developmental needs in English	46.8 %	28.6 %

Employment by Sector

	County	Ky
Agriculture, mining, & other natural resources	1,403	28,251
Manufacturing & construction	447	346,324
Retail, wholesale, transportation, & utilities	1,493	373,216
Finance, professional, & business services	700	258,647
Health & educational services	1,530	215,834
Government & public education	1,906	293,968
Leisure, hospitality, & other services	715	209,829

Undergraduates & Alumni

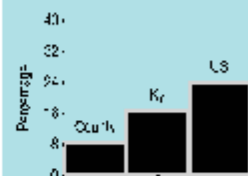
	Enrollment	Alumni
University of Kentucky	36	2,290
University of Louisville	7	23
Eastern Kentucky University	74	579
Kentucky State University	0	5
Morehead State University	21	30
Murray State University	4	6
Northern Kentucky University	7	18
Western Kentucky University	2	24
KCTCS	1,537	3,571
Independent colleges & universities	108	1,150
Total from this county	1,798	7,696

Financial Aid to Students From This County

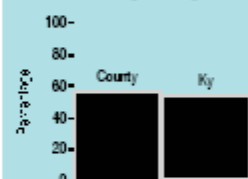
	Dollars	Awards
Federal Pell awards	\$2,594,783	675
Federal loans	\$1,976,724	355
Kentucky Ed. Excellence Scholarships (KEES)	\$628,435	501
Kentucky need-based grants	\$836,584	437

KEY FACTS

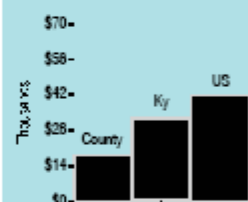
Percentage of Adults With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher



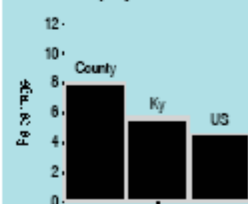
In-State College-Going Rate



Median Household Income



Unemployment Rate



Sources: US Census 2000, US Department of Education, Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, Kentucky Office of Employment and Training, ACT, Inc, Kentucky State Board of Education, Data Light: Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, US Census Small Area Health Insurance Estimates Program, Kentucky Department for Medicaid Services, Commonwealth of Kentucky, Kentucky Adult Education, and the Council on Postsecondary Education. Complete descriptions of sources and methodologies may be found in the technical notes at the end of the 2008-10 County Profiles or through the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data Portal at the Web address below.



Visit the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data Portal, <http://cpe.ky.gov/info>



Appendix F: Southeast Transfers*

	2006-2007	
<u>Public Four Year Universities</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Eastern Kentucky University	50	660
Kentucky State University	1	47
Morehead State University	13	424
Murray State University	2	485
Northern Kentucky University	2	126
University of Kentucky	16	755
University of Louisville	2	520
Western Kentucky University	3	530
<u>Independent Colleges</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Alice Lloyd College	3	23
Asbury College	1	6
Bellarmino University	0	30
Berea	0	10
Brescia University	0	44
Campbellsville College	0	48
Centre	0	0
Georgetown College	0	9
Kentucky Christian University	0	11
Kentucky Wesleyan College	0	38
Lindsey Wilson College	13	133
Mid-Continent University	0	174
Midway College	11	183
<u>Independent Colleges</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Pikeville College	4	34
Spalding University	0	92
St. Catharine College	0	40
Thomas More College	0	1
Transylvania University	0	1
Union College	21	43
University of the Cumberlands	0	11
	2007-2008	
<u>Public Four Year Universities</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Eastern Kentucky University	63	718
Kentucky State University	0	30
Morehead State University	8	369
Murray State University	3	467
Northern Kentucky University	1	132
University of Kentucky	11	447
University of Louisville	2	533
Western Kentucky University	2	489

<u>Independent Colleges</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Alice Lloyd College	5	17
Asbury College	0	29
Bellarmino University	0	23
Berea	1	4
Brescia University	0	31
<u>Independent Colleges</u>	<u>Southeast transfers</u>	<u>KCTCS transfers</u>
Campbellsville College	0	42
Centre	0	0
Georgetown College	0	0
Kentucky Christian University	0	12
Kentucky Wesleyan College	0	41
Lindsey Wilson College	28	162
Mid-Continent University	0	197
Midway College	16	362
Pikeville College	2	45
Spalding University	0	48
St. Catharine College	2	32
Thomas More College	0	1
Transylvania University	1	1
Union College	12	27
University of the Cumberlands	3	10

*Kentucky Transfer Feedback Reports Kentucky Council on Post-secondary Education

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- Wood, L. (2005) *Trends in National and Regional Economic Distress: 1960 - 2000*, Ohio University.

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Education

PhD, Studies in Higher Education University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky	In progress
CELTA Certificate, Royal Society of Arts Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland	2000
MA, Adult Education Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana	1999
Graduate coursework in American Studies Baylor University, Waco, Texas	1994-1995
BA, Philosophy Manchester College, North Manchester, Indiana	1992

Education Instruction Experience

Instructor, *Education in American Culture*, University of Kentucky, 2005-2008.

Writing Instruction Experience

Instructor, *College Research and Writing* (ENG 102) University of Wisconsin Maniowoc, 2004.

Instructor, *Business Communication* (ENG/BUS 210) University of Wisconsin Sheboygan, 2004.

Instructor, *Basic Writing* (ENG 098) University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2002.

Coordinator, Writing Center, Manchester College, 2001-2002.

Instructor, *Writing through Literature*, (ENG 110) Manchester College, 2000-2002.

Instructor, Writing Center, Manchester College, 1999-2002.

Trainer, *The Writing Process Workshop*, Manchester College, 1999-2002.

English Instruction Experience

Instructor, *College Research and Writing* (ENG 102) University of Wisconsin, Maniowoc, 2004.

Instructor, *College Research & Writing* (ENG 102) University of Wisconsin, Sheboygan, 2003-2004.

Instructor, *Basic Writing Skills* (ENG 098) University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2002.

Instructor, *Writing through Literature*, (ENG 110) Manchester College, 2000-2002.

Trainer, *English as a Second Language Workshop*, Manchester College, 2000-2002.

Tutor, *English as a Second Language*, Queens University-Belfast, June-July, 2000.

College Study Skills Instruction

Instructor, *College Study Skills* (IDIV 100) Manchester College, 1999-2002.

Assistantships

Research Assistantship

READ Kentucky

Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation

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Teaching Assistantship

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Graduate Assistantship

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Baylor University, Waco, Texas 1994-1995

Grants and Awards

University of Kentucky Woman's Club Fellowship, 2009.

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Dissertation Development Award, University of Kentucky Graduate School, 2009.

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James S. Brown Student Award for Research on Appalachia, University of Kentucky Appalachian Studies, 2009.

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National Conference Grant, Office of Research and Graduate Studies, University of Kentucky, American Educational Research Association, San Diego, 2009.

\$400

International Conference Grant, Office of Research and Graduate Studies, University of Kentucky, World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, Sarajevo, 2007.

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Peer Reviewed Presentations

Wright, C (2010) *Why do they go? Community college students and post-secondary aspirations in Central Appalachia*. Paper presented at the Council for the Study of Community College Conference, Seattle, Washington.

Wright, C & Staple, C (2009). *Educational aspirations and residential mobility among Appalachian college students*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, San Diego, California.

Wright, C. (2007). *Reproduction as resistance: Appalachian youth, higher education and the rejection of globalization through community localism*. Paper presented at the 13th annual World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Wright, C. (2006). *Redefining through repositioning: Women challenging violence through local actions, global thoughts*. Paper presented at the Conference on International Women and Children, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Employment

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Research Assistant, Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
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Teaching Assistant, Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
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Resource Coordinator, Kentucky Domestic Violence Association
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Instructor, English Department, University of Wisconsin Colleges
Sheboygan, Manitowoc
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North Manchester, Indiana
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