

**Teachers' Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education in Central Appalachia**

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**Abstract:**

This paper reports on a sequential mixed-methods (quan → QUAL) study that explored rural Appalachian teachers' perspectives and pedagogical decisions about Global Citizenship Education (GCE). In phase one, a questionnaire was completed by social studies teachers (n=19) from remote and distant rural high schools located in Central Appalachia across two states. Closed-ended items were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Open-ended items were coded to elicit themes that helped to answer the research questions. In phase two, two participants from the original sample were interviewed to uncover their experiences navigating GCE in their unique community contexts. Findings suggest social studies teachers in rural Appalachia, while not using the exact terminology of global citizenship, support multiple types of global citizenship aims. They tend to perceive their communities as homogenous, isolated, and conservative, which presented both challenges to and stimuli for teaching global curricula. Participants tend to perceive much of their global curricula as contrarian in their communities and, therefore, rely on professional tact and community-based knowledge as rural natives to inform their pedagogical decisions.

**Key words:** global citizenship education, rural education, Appalachian studies

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**Introduction**

As the world becomes more transnational and interconnected, there is an increased need for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) (Myers, 2006). GCE is a pedagogy that aims to prepare students to understand and take action on global issues such as human rights, environment sustainability, and peace. (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009; Myers, 2006; Noddings, 2005). However,

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the increase in global interconnectedness has also led to a rise of anti-globalization sentiment among the working class as traditional job sectors wane (Stiglitz, 2018). Using nationalist rhetoric, politicians in various countries have capitalized and amplified these anti-global sentiments. For example, in the United States, Donald Trump used anti-global rhetoric and promises to revitalize the coal industry, a declining job sector in Central Appalachia, during his 2016 presidential campaign. He ultimately won a majority of votes in the region in 2016.

The dichotomy of an increased need for GCE and the rise of anti-global sentiments in places like Central Appalachia raise critical questions about the existence and characteristics of GCE in the region's schools. To help answer these questions, this study aims to uncover social studies teachers' perspectives and practices of GCE in rural Appalachian high schools through an exploratory mixed-methods research design. Likewise, it purposefully investigates the influence of teachers' perceptions of their rural contexts on their GCE curricula.

### **Review of Related Literature**

GCE is an unsettled concept with multiple meanings and competing aims (Goren & Yemini, 2017). These competing aims are often due to opposing worldviews, values and definition of global citizenship (Gaudelli, 2009; Oxley & Morris, 2013). In the present study, GCE is broadly operationalized to encompass these competing views. For the purpose of this study, GCE was understood as the integration of global-oriented content or experiences into a social studies curriculum to foster students' knowledge, abilities, and/or dispositions to personally and collectively live in the world. This definition enabled multifaceted dimensions of GCE to be explored through the concepts and experiences which participants themselves provide.

Several typologies have been created to organize the diverse aims of GCE (Goren & Yemini, 2017). Yemini suggests GCE aims can be understood by three overarching types: relationship-focused, economic/neoliberalism-focused, or critical discourses (Brehm, 2017). Relationship-focused GCE emphasizes aims related to cosmopolitanism, human mutuality, and care for others beyond national boundaries (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009); economic and neoliberal discourses tend to emphasize knowledge and skills for individual or national competition in a global marketplace (Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009); and critical discourses apply Marxist or colonial lenses to analyze unequal relations and systems that perpetuate unjust wealth and power inequality where some countries do the "globalizing" while other countries "are globalized" (Andreotti, 2014, p. 3).

The complexity of GCE discourses in the academy have left teachers with little guidance for developing curricula. Only 15 states in the U.S. have standards that incorporate exact or

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synonymous terms of global citizenship (Rapoport, 2009). Few teachers mention global citizenship even when they incorporate “global, international, and comparative perspectives into citizenship education” (Rapoport, 2010, p. 186). Moreover, national interests complicate GCE by pressuring teachers to further a country’s economic and political goals (Goren & Yemini, 2017); and, similarly, local community contexts can place pressures on teachers to adhere to certain value systems (Rapoport, 2009). The influence of such pressures on teachers’ decision-making about GCE is under-researched (Goren & Yemini, 2017).

Rural localities offer one specific under-researched context for GCE. Approximately 46% of the world’s population is rural, though China and India account for 45% of the world’s rural population (United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014). In the United States, rural schools make up 28.5% of all schools and 19.3% of the nation’s students attend these rural schools (Showalter et al., 2014). The size, demographics, and geographic remoteness of these schools vary (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Rural schools offer frequently overlooked strengths, such as small class sizes, established personal relationships, and feelings of safety and care (Herzog & Pittman, 1995). Yet, the geographic remoteness of rural schools present structural challenges to non-traditional curricula like GCE. For example, rural schools generally have fewer course offerings and less access to technology (Bouck, 2004); recruiting and retaining teachers are persistent problems for rural schools (White & Kline, 2012); and the professional isolation of rural teachers is a common concern (Burton et al., 2013). Structural issues facing rural schools likely work against the development of GCE since non-state sponsored, emergent curricular initiatives depend on the professional knowledge and willingness of teachers to challenge or move beyond traditional curricula.

Rurality, as a sense of place and not only a geographic location, raises similar challenges to GCE. Global issues sometimes appear distant and disconnected from local rural life, sentiments, and ways of knowing (Azano, 2011; Waterson & Moffa, 2015). Research suggests rural people sometimes hold resentment toward urban places and political institutions that often have more economic and political power (Cramer, 2016; Sawhill, 2018). As noted above, the working class, common in many rural areas, have shown a tendency toward anti-globalism in the face of modern globalization which has gutted traditional job sectors (Stiglitz, 2018). Additionally, rural areas lean toward social conservatism (Brown & Schafft, 2011); and conservatives are more likely to view GCE as a threat to national interests (Grygiel, 2013; Wood, 2014). Relatedly, Rapoport (2010) found that “small town mindsets” work against teaching ideas the community deems unpatriotic (p. 186).

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Teachers are tactful when making decisions about the curriculum due to the perceived values of their schools and communities (Moffa, 2019; Romanowski, 1996; Thornton, 1989); yet, rural places generally suffer from misplaced assumptions and stereotypes and rural teachers can be complicit in propelling these stereotypes or misunderstandings of place (Moffa, 2019). Stereotypes of rural places can misguide curriculum development and lead to assumptive teaching. Assumptive teaching is a problematic manner of instruction that stems from inaccurate assumptions about students.

Since rural places are not socially and politically monolithic, scholars call for researchers to challenge dominant narratives that might not be true about rural places (Burton et al., 2013) and to better understand the specific rural conditions that impact a phenomenon (Coladarci, 2007). The present study seeks to contribute authentic representations of rural schooling in Central Appalachia to help answer these calls.

### **Central Appalachian Contexts**

Central Appalachia is a region of the United States defined as the counties of West Virginia, Southeastern Ohio, Eastern Kentucky, Southwestern Virginia, Eastern Tennessee, and Western North Carolina. These counties offer a distinct mountainous area whose per capita rural population is double the national average and whose population has higher than national averages for poverty and white racial identity (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2017). Yet, Catte (2018) criticizes such generalized data as it can misrepresent the complex realities of Appalachia and promulgate longstanding stereotypes of the region as poor hillbillies and rednecks. For example, Appalachia also contains urban centers, cultural diversity, and varied political beliefs and practices, but these characteristic are not often represented in national media outlets (Catte, 2018). It should be noted that Appalachia specifically has a long history of progressive labor activism (Catte, 2018; Schumann & Adkins Fletcher, 2016).

Appalachia has been theorized as an internal colony whose problems of poverty and negative stereotypes stem from the concentration of its land and resources in the hands of those who reside outside the region (Lewis, 1978). The mining industry, led by exploitative “absentee investors” (Eller, 1982, p.45), brought changes to the economic and political lives of Central Appalachia and intertwined the region with the national and global economy (Eller, 1982). Despite the public perception of the Appalachia coal miner, only approximately 5% of people in the region today are employed in mining (Housing Assistance Council, 2013). As coal mining declines, few alternatives with comparable wages exist. This economic plight fuels political

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discontentment, particularly as livelihoods interweave with place-based identities that emphasize self-reliance, personal freedom, love of the land, and a strong sense of kinship (deMarrais, 1998).

The interaction between Appalachian contexts and GCE is unknown. Appalachia, like all localities, are connected to global places through trade and commerce, historic and modern immigration patterns, and human mutuality (Waterson & Moffa, 2015). While traditional boundary lines between rural and non-rural are shifting and blurring due to fluctuating job markets and housing patterns (Lichter & Brown, 2011), these changes do not necessarily ease or erase the unequal distribution of political power, human capital, and resources. Andreotti (2014) suggests connections between local places and global citizenship are fraught with issues of power that must be unpacked; that global citizenship is inherently tied to the local; and that questions should be raised about whose local gets globalized and whose local is diminished in the process. This relational dynamic offers a compelling point of entry into the study of Appalachian-global relations and GCE in the region. Waterson & Moffa (2015) theorize rural teachers can use local subject matter to bridge geographic divisions and develop global citizens that are critically conscious of place. However, little evidence exists of this “bridging” pedagogy in the current literature on GCE. Similarly, few studies privilege the voice of rural teachers that might speak to GCE’s hurdles or pitfalls in the context of their schools and communities.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Gaudelli and Heilman’s (2009) typology of global education provides the framework for this study. Gaudelli and Heilman (2009) suggest that some types of global education are more democratically-congruent than others (see Table 1). Since the central aim of social studies is preparing students for democratic citizenship (National Council for the Social Studies, 2001), this framework provided a useful distinction between various types of GCE aims that might be present in Appalachian schools.

The framework informed the construction of Likert-scale items for a questionnaire used in phase one of the study. Each Likert-scale item was aligned to a global education type (see Appendix A); however, the framework was not used prescriptively for all questionnaire items. Since this study sought to specifically understand the influence of rural contexts – something outside the typology’s original purpose – several open-ended items were developed to encourage the sharing of respondents’ perspectives on rurality and a second qualitative phase of the study was conducted to uncover context-specific relationships between GCE and rural places.

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**Table 1**

*Global Education Typology (adapted from Gaudelli and Heilman, 2009)*

Category	Type	Curricular Goal
More Democratically-congruent	Environmental	Focused problem based. Provide awareness, inquiry, and skills for technical and human solutions to create a sustainable future.
	Critical Justice	Critique based. Explore and critique power relations, oppression, and exploitation.
	Cosmopolitan	Inquiry based. Explore global experiences, foster personal/collective responsibility toward human rights, question cultural universals, and develop actions rooted in democratic processes/principles
Less Democratically-congruent	Disciplinary	Discipline based. Learning global dimensions of history, economics, geography, or literature. Avowedly apolitical.
	Human Relations	Socially based. Develop social skills and cross-cultural understanding, assert cultural universals, enhances personal identity and ability to achieve aims in social and business relations.
	Neoliberal	Focused problem based. Understand the global to maximize personal, national, economic, and geopolitical power/capital.

In addition to this global education typology, Waterson & Moffa's (2015) reconceptualized model of curriculum development for GCE in rural areas informed the analysis of data in this study. Waterson & Moffa (2015) theorized that Deweyan principles should be applied to rural GCE to emphasize local relationships and place-consciousness, or the awareness of a place's geography, culture, and history and its relationship to other places. Their framework positions familiar

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subject matter as the tool to stimulate new ways of observation and judgement on global issues. When developing GCE curriculum, Waterson & Moffa (2015) recommend rural teachers utilize funds of knowledge which stem from three interconnected levels of rural life (i.e. student, home, and community) where the interests, values, and relationships of a place provide an accessible position from which to make connections to GCE. Findings were positioned against this theoretical model to assess the successes and challenges of connecting home or community life to rural-based GCE.

### **Study Design and Methods**

In light of the dearth of knowledge of GCE in rural Appalachia, the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are high school social studies teachers' GCE aims in rural Appalachia?
2. How do teachers' perceptions of their rural contexts influence their decision-making about GCE?

This study was conducted in a two-phased mixed-methods design. Mixed research enables a topic to be examined more comprehensively than using a sole method and, consequently, provides stronger evidence when drawing a conclusion (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This study utilized a quan → QUAL design where the qualitative component came after the quantitative component and was more heavily emphasized during the research process (see Leech, 2012). The initial quantitative phase provided preliminary data and, therein, directed a purposeful, more robust qualitative investigation during the second phase of research. Given the inter- and intra-community diversity of Appalachia (see Moffa & McHenry-Sorber, 2018; Schumann & Adkins Fletcher, 2016), the qualitative component facilitated the collection of more rich, nuanced descriptions of the rural conditions influencing participants' experiences than allowable in the quantitative components of phase one alone. Lastly, the sequential design enabled a nested sampling of participants from the original quantitative sample and provided baseline data to help position interviewees' responses.

#### **Phase One – Data Collection and Analysis**

In the first phase, data were collected via an electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both closed and open-ended items. Likert scale statements, aligned with Gaudelli and Heilman's (2009) typology of global education, sought to examine teachers' aims for GCE. For example, one item stated, "Global education should emphasize working together to improve

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human rights around the world.” This statement corresponds with Gaudelli and Heilman’s cosmopolitan type of global education. Next, a series of open-ended items were utilized to capture participants’ perspectives on GCE. For example, one open-ended item stated, “In your own words, define a global citizen”. See Appendix A for the full questionnaire.

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was piloted with three social studies teachers known professionally by the researcher in one rural Appalachian school. This group provided feedback about the relevancy and usefulness of the items in depicting their GCE perspectives and pedagogies. This feedback led to a refinement of questionnaire items for clarity and relevancy.

To sample participants, the researcher used the National Center for Education Statistics (2007) searchable database of public schools. Schools were identified in the Central Appalachian region of two states with the designation of "remote" or "distant" rural. Remote rural territories are located at least 25 miles from an urbanized area (50,000 or more residents) and at least 10 miles from an urbanized cluster (25,000 to 50,000 residents). Distant rural territories are 5 to 25 miles from an urbanized area or 2.5 to 10 miles from an urbanized cluster. Central Appalachia was selected as the sole rural region to provide a geographically bound area for examination with some distinct characteristics.

With the help of an undergraduate assistant, a database was constructed containing 99 high school social studies teachers from the region’s rural schools. Each teacher had a publically available and functioning email address. The electronic questionnaire was sent to this sample. After the initial email and two follow-up emails to encourage participation, the questionnaire received a 20% response rate (n=19). Likert-scale item responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and open-ended items were analyzed using consecutive rounds of open and pattern coding to elicit themes that answered the research questions. Codes that aligned with Gaudelli & Heilman’s (2009) typology were noted. Inferential statistics were not analyzed in this study due to the low number of participants.

### **Phase Two – Data Collection and Analysis**

Two of the original participants from phase one of the study volunteered to be interviewed over the phone for a second phase of data collection. No additional sampling criteria was used for the selection of these participants due to the low number of volunteers for phase two. An interview protocol was created based on existing theories of GCE and rurality, and findings from phase one. The phone interviews lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed using Microsoft Word. Then, textual data were analyzed using consecutive rounds of

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open and pattern coding to reveal themes that helped answer the research questions. No *a priori* codes were used when analyzing the perceived impact of rural communities. In this way, themes arose from participants' unique perspectives and narratives of teaching in rural Appalachia. Additionally, the researcher applied an interpretivist perspective to analyzing the data. Interpretivism recognizes the inherent subjectivities of social science research and the researcher's personal values that contribute to the social constructions of knowledge (Denzin, 1994).

### **Participants and Settings**

The two participants in phase two taught high school social studies in two different counties of Central Appalachia. Some commonalities existed across participants and their communities. Each participant identified as white and in their mid-thirties. One identified as female and the other as male. Each of their schools were 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade and possessed majority white student populations with less than 3% racial minorities enrollment. Each school had 41% to 53% of students on free and reduced lunch. In addition to being classified as distant rural schools, all participants described their communities in exact or synonymous terms with "conservative" and "homogeneous". Participants and schools have been provided pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

The first participant, Ben, had been teaching social studies for 12 years, including 10 years in his current position as Lake County High. Ben was a native of an adjacent rural county but resided within Lake County at the time of the study. He identified as a "small town person (but) not from the sticks". Ben specialized in teaching 12<sup>th</sup> grade civics and AP US government, but reported teaching nearly every social studies course at his school over his career. Relevant to the study, Ben founded an elective course titled International Studies that specifically utilized his self-developed global education curriculum. Ben held a BA in Secondary Education, an MA in Instructional Communication, and a state teaching license for social studies, 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Lake County High is the sole secondary school in the district and is located approximately 30 miles from the nearest metropolitan area.

The second participant, Kara, had been a social studies teacher at West Creekside High for 11 years. She held a BA in Secondary Education and held two M.Ed. degrees in Reading and Educational Leadership. At the time of the interview, she had just been named as assistant principal at her school but had yet to begin her administrative work. She was raised in the community where she taught, graduating from West Creekside High, but she said, "I don't think

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of myself as a rural person. I think of myself as displaced.” This displacement was rooted in her “very progressive ideology” that was at odds with what she described as the “archaic mindset” of her community. Prior to her administrative appointment, she taught world civilizations, AP US government, and contemporary US studies. West Creekside High was one of three high schools in the district. It served the rural end of the county while the other two schools served the district’s most populated city. West Creekside High was approximately 30 miles from the nearest metropolitan area. Table 2 contains an overview of each school setting.

**Table 2**

*Setting Characteristics*

School Name	Participant Name	2017-2018 Enrollment	Racial Profile	Free and Reduced lunch	District Population	District Poverty Rate
Lake County High	Ben	400*	98% white < 2% other races	43%	~10,000	18.1%
West Creekside High	Kara	800	97% white < 3% other races	53%	~56,000	13.3%

\*Enrollment figures and other numerical data are approximations to protect school and community anonymity.

**Findings**

This section integrates themes that emerged from findings from both phases of the study. Qualitative data from open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews are prioritized for their ability to detail the experiences of rural Appalachian teachers. These qualitative descriptions are positioned against results from closed-ended items of phase one to enhance and explain the quantitative findings. Findings are organized around thematic categories that arose from the data that helped answer the research questions: What are high school social studies teachers’ GCE aims in rural Appalachia? How do teachers’ perceptions of their rural contexts influence their decision-making about GCE?

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### Global Education Aims

The most supported global education aims from the closed-ended questionnaire items related to disciplinary knowledge as evinced in the following statements: Global education should emphasize unbiased factual knowledge about places and people (4.63 out of 5); and global education should teach history, economics, geography, and literature from a neutral political position (4.63). Respondents equally supported human rights aims for their global curricula. (e.g. Global education should teach students to support the rights of all humans regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin, 4.63), though they were slightly less supportive when the item used wording that emphasized collaborative actions regarding human rights (e.g.... working together to improve human rights, 4.21). The only closed-ended item to fall under the neutral positions on the Likert scale was the statement: Global education should focus on maximizing the United States' power and wealth in the world (2.95). Similarly, environmental sustainability was only moderately agreeable when compared to other results (3.89). See Table 3 for the means for each global Likert Scale item on the questionnaire.

**Table 3**

*Questionnaire Items Means*

Question Stem:	Likert Scale Averages
Global education should:	1 – Strongly Disagree 5 – Strongly Agree
Focus on environmental sustainability.	3.89
Focus on the root causes of economic inequalities and social injustices.	4.21
Teach students to support the rights of all humans regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin.	4.63
Emphasize unbiased factual knowledge about places and people.	4.63

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Prepare students to be successful in future social and business relations.	4.42
Focus on maximizing the United States' power and wealth in the world.	2.95
Help students develop skills to solve environmental problems.	4.00
Focus on critiquing unequal power relationships that lead to oppression and exploitation of some people and places.	4.16
Emphasize working together to improve human rights around the world.	4.21
Teach history, economics, geography, and literature from a neutral political position.	4.63
Help students develop skills to achieve their individual desires in this world.	4.26
Prepare students to personally compete for positions in the global economy.	4.11

An analysis of responses to open-ended items questionnaire and interview data from phase two revealed two major categories of global education aims: Individualism and Cosmopolitanism; and one outlier, Critical Justice. The categories are evidenced with participants' responses below.

**Individualism.** Some respondents emphasized individualistic and American-centric GCE aims that align collectively to Gaudelli & Heilman's (2009) less democratically-congruent types of global education (i.e. neoliberal, human relations, and disciplinary). For these respondents, individualistic aims were stated exclusively, not in conjunction with cosmopolitan or critical justice aims. For example, one respondent on the questionnaire said, "I usually look at how [global issues] effects [sic] them or the United States". Another respondent stated "help(ing) my students discover ways that they can become responsible citizens of the town where they live, as well as their county, state, country, and the world" and "understand how things connect to them, their lives and their futures." Another respondent emphasized students learning the skills

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to “recognize bias and unreliable sources of information” and gain knowledge from “fact-based resources.”

Phase two data suggested more complexity and nuance in the use of individualistic or American-centric emphases. Notably, Ben used American-centric emphases as an entry point to stimulate students thinking about cosmopolitanism. This finding was not apparent from the phase one data alone. Ben situated America’s role in the world as the core question of his international studies class as a way to promote ethical decisions about local-global relations. He said:

I start the course by asking students: What should the role of the US be in the world? I want to get kids debating. Should American be the police force of the world? Should it be America first? Should our involvement be economic or otherwise, such as intervening when people are being oppressed elsewhere? Then I teach the world religion, various world economic and government systems. I teach about US race relations so when we talk about Sunni and Shia students realize they aren’t that different than us. They have things to work out like us... Ultimately, I come back around to the role of the US in the world.

Ben’s approach to the course signifies a critical use of an American-centered lens, humanizing global people and places, rather than the use of an unadulterated America-first position. When asked what he hoped students take away most from the course, Ben represented more cosmopolitan ways of thinking, reconciling the familiar and the different:

I want to give them an ideas of things beyond their own world, Lake County, and connect things to them... and to not be scared of diversity. I teach a lot about Islam because it’s not common in this neck of the woods. Just because someone has different skin in a different part of the world. Doesn’t mean we treat them differently.

**Cosmopolitanism.** This category emerged from data that stressed respect for cultural differences and human mutuality beyond one’s national borders. Questionnaire respondents provided phrases like “open[ing] the door to the world” or “teach[ing] tolerance and understanding of other cultures, beliefs, and customs.” Several respondents positioned their aims in relation to students’ rural existence – an interaction examined further in the next section of findings. One participant suggested students grow up in a “bubble” that is not the same as the rest of the world, so they need to understand “that it is ok if people have different views.” Similarly, another respondent stated “there is a whole lot of world beyond [students’] little corner of it.”

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Respondents shared dispositional or affective aims built upon relational ideals such as trust and understanding. One respondent epitomized this tenet, saying, "People are more alike than different and searching for this common ground will bring about understanding, empathy, and peace." Likewise, one respondent stated, "My main goal is for students to see others equally and to understand the history that makes people and groups unique." Alluding to empathy, one respondent said, "I try to challenge students to put themselves in the shoes of people with different cultures/backgrounds." Lastly, a respondent shared their aim "to help students open their minds to a larger scope and to understand that people are people, no matter where they are in the world."

Phase two participant, Kara, who taught 10th grade world history at West Creekside High, highlighted cosmopolitanism through her examination of world religions with students. She worked to bring experiences with global diversity directly to her students and some of her pedagogical tactics raised concerns from administrators as demonstrated in a vignette she shared during an interview:

I brought in an Imam when we were doing world religions and it was alarming. I had some pushback. A very telling moment is when he walked into the main office and I got a nasty call from the principal at the time wanting to know why we would have someone like that come into the school. But in the end the students loved him. He was a rock star. They thought he was cool. They wanted him to recite verses from the Quran and Islamic songs. They thought that was neat. They wanted him to write Arabic so they could see how their names looked in that language. He made the students verbally state what they identified him as and he fished out a terrorist... We had a Christian preacher come that same week and in the end, in the papers that the students wrote, they identified the Christian preacher as the most forceful to follow the way he thought. The Imam and Rabbi were welcoming to all.

Kara's decision to host an Imam, as well as other religious leaders, in her classroom displays her desires to provide students firsthand experiences interacting with people that are culturally different than them. This pedagogical strategy appeared aimed at challenging prior held assumptions and deepening cultural understanding about Islam, a stigmatized religion in her community.

**Critical Justice.** The Likert scale items that dealt with critical justice issues received generally positive ratings (4.21 and 4.16); yet, only one respondent on the questionnaire referenced

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terminology that aligns with this aim in open-ended items; hence, this data emerged as an outlier. The respondent said students should learn about “underlying assumptions and power dynamics; ethically responsible behavior; and various conceptual dimensions of global citizenship.” This represents justice-oriented aims in its acknowledgement of power inequities between nations and the complexities of global citizenship. Neither participant in phase two offered explicitly critical justice aims, though it is possible that the presence of the Imam in the vignette above moved students beyond recognitions of human mutuality to reveal the unjust treatments of a minority religion. However, it should be noted justice aims were not made explicit in Kara’s narrative, whereas cosmopolitanism was.

### **Influence of Rural Contexts on GCE**

Data were analyzed to help answer the second research question: How do teachers’ perceptions of their rural contexts influence their decision-making about GCE? One closed item asked if participants felt the rural context of their schools impacted their decisions to teach global citizenship. Respondents were split nearly 70/30 in the affirmative. Open-ended items revealed a largely unified theme that rural contexts present challenges to teaching global citizenship. Three categories emerged from data about these rural-specific challenges: lack of diversity, contrary sentiments, and isolation.

**Lack of diversity.** The most common refrain among questionnaire respondents was that rural Appalachian communities have a “lack of diversity” that makes teaching global matters difficult. For example, Ben responded on his questionnaire:

The lack of diversity makes it extremely difficult. In my nake (sic) of the woods, the only occasional difference(s) in student demographic makeup would be male or female, Catholic or Protestant, and liberal or conservative (mainly conservative). Gay or straight is too ostracizing and we literally only have handful of students of any other race other than white/Caucasian.

Another respondent suggested students “only know the points of view of their parents or what they read on social media platforms.” Several respondents suggested teaching about global matters was “more necessary” because of the perceived lack of diversity present in their communities.

In his phase two interview, Ben reported his community as “very conservative, Fox news watching, and right-sided” and stated that “as a civic teachers, that’s what I deal with. Kids have

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that kind of mindset.” When asked how he navigated teaching for global citizenship in that social context, he said:

I’m a little worried about it. My department chair is a little weary of my approach. I’ll tell my students whether I agree or disagree with them, but I’ll back it up. When debating, I want to get people to think differently, not change opinions. There are times when we should think American first, but other times America is seen as a ‘champion of democracy’ and we should take care of that and support it and be a model that people want to follow. You gotta always be careful about how you word things. I’m not antagonist the way I do it. If I have a kid that is really quiet in class and then one day they speak up, I’m just going to listen. But the other talkative kid, I’ll challenge. I use humor to ease tensions.

**Contrary Sentiments.** Respondents shared concerns that their communities were inherently at odds with global citizenship aims. One teacher wrote, “...political and religious feelings of small rural communities can make teaching certain ideas less desirable for teachers, especially new teachers who do not feel confident in their job security.” Another respondent said, “For the most part, it is difficult to teach about other cultures when there is a small town bigotry present and a lack of support for education from parents. Ignorance prevails.”

In her interview, Kara acknowledged that students’ identities were often rooted in their parents’ values and she hoped to help students “...step outside the box to see perspectives and issues for themselves.” To do so, she said teachers have to “let [students] know you are human too. See how you deal with things in order to change the way they think.” She said that she models “forward thinking” by sharing with students her own evolution on acceptance of homosexuality and gender identity moving from “being from a family that thinks it’s wrong to be gay” to her currently being close friends with a transgender man.

**Isolation.** Common phrases such as “grown up in a bubble”, “never left the state”, “remain in their rural community”, and “limited worldview” were used in questionnaire responses to describe rural students. One respondent suggested that geographic isolation produced a “lack of interest” about global issues. For other respondents, isolation produced barriers to access, but not interest, and stimulated their desires to teach GCE to “expose students to the world” or “challenge their thinking”. Another respondent focused on intersections of isolation and poverty:

The majority of my students fall into a low socioeconomic profile. Sadly, these kids have very little exposure to other ethnic, religious, political (etc.) groups and have formed perspectives based on a very "tunnel vision" environment. I focus on explaining our

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similarities rather than differences and I teach world history based on the perspectives of those involved...trying to explain why people feel/react the way they do.

In her phase two interview, Kara said that she aimed to challenge her “secluded” and “underserved” rural students. “The boundaries our kids have within the county lines, and really the state lines, it makes them close-minded. It is just the product of the inaccessibility for these kids to actually experience different people from different cultures.”

Kara, who grew up in the school’s community, made the purposeful decision to seek professional opportunities outside her largely rural state. She had been awarded multiple domestic and international fellowships so she could “surround myself with peers that are likeminded”. This professional engagement, which influenced the development of her own global mindedness, stimulated her approach to teaching GCE. Moreover, her life journey is emblematic of the type of rural student whose interest in global issues surpassed the access she had as a youth in the community.

Kara elaborated on her perceptions of rurality, stating that she believed “rural is a bad label for these students. When someone identifies a school, family, or students as being rural, at least in this areas, they mean that they come from a low SES household.” Yet, her curriculum decision-making was also stimulated by her perceptions of rurality. Kara said, “Ignorance breeds ignorance... but educators can break that cycle. Small moments can turn into a huge change... I long for the state to mirror the surrounding states when it comes to opportunities and rigor in education.”

### **Discussion**

Findings from this study, in part, challenge existing knowledge on the relationship between global curricula and community contexts. Past research suggests that teachers are not likely to teach for global citizenship aims deemed unpatriotic in the face of small town mindsets (Rapoport, 2010) and that teachers alter their social studies curriculum due to perceived community values (Romanowski, 1996; Thornton, 1989). Based on findings from this study, GCE is being taught for a variety of aims in remote Appalachia with some teachers challenging students to adopt global perspectives and probe local norms. Approaches to GCE were rooted in teachers’ professional knowledge and perceptions of their rural area. Overwhelming, teachers viewed their areas as insular and lacking diversity and they relied on their professional tact and community-based knowledge to provide GCE experiences they deemed approachable and necessary for their students.

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Participants showed support for a variety of GCE aims both collectively and individually. They did not strongly oppose any GCE aims as evidenced by the results of the questionnaire. This finding implies that a divide is present between theories of GCE and actual classroom practices. For example, democratically-congruent aims like cosmopolitanism were supported on par with less democratically-congruent aims like neo-liberalism (see Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009). This divide may be the result of the absence of GCE in state standards (Rapoport, 2009) or limited exposure to GCE in teacher education programs (Merryfield, 2000). Alternatively, varied aims among participants demonstrate that GCE is not monolithic in rural Appalachia, but reliant, in part, on teachers' professional experiences and perceptions of the needs of their rural students. Relatedly, participants demonstrated autonomy in curriculum and instruction despite school culture, state-mandated curricula, or community values; and offered concrete examples of ways they challenged the status quo in their schools and communities such as Kara's decision to host the Imam or Ben's instructional tact that challenged his largely homogeneous students' thinking.

In this study, teachers self-positioned as interlocutors for their rural students, where they possessed worldly knowledge that their students did not. This positioning paired with teachers' displays of deficit thinking, where they viewed students and communities as "lacking" instead of assessing them for their strengths or funds of knowledge, has potential to be problematic (see Waterson & Moffa, 2015). Since rural communities face marginalization at-large (Moffa, 2019), this finding raises concern about the knowledge and power dynamics within rural educational spaces. Waterson and Moffa (2015) suggest a Deweyan-backed theory of centering rural student, home, and community life to better teach global citizenship in rural schools.

Likewise, teachers characterized their communities as being insular and having contrary sentiments. Prior research suggests Appalachian teachers might actually reinforce stereotypes and prejudices toward Appalachia instead of challenging them (Reck et al., 1987); and Appalachian teachers may represent a middle class value system that is at odds with lower class students and families (Woodrum, 2004). However, phase two data contests this point to a degree by revealing tensions in teachers' thinking about rural places. Interviews with Ben and Kara evinced their personal knowledge of socio-geographic structures that produce local sentiments, where students have limited opportunities and access to travel. They also offered viewpoints on the communal strengths of their communities. When asked specifically about rural exploitation, interviewees acknowledge awareness of the power dynamics that harm their communities, but it should be noted that this did not correspond to GCE curricula that might help students criticize unjust economic exploitation.

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Azano (2011) warns that a failure to critically interrogate place hinders students' abilities to connect the familiar to larger issues that seem more remote (such as the GCE curriculum) and fails to prepare them for civic actions that might alter or improve their place. Similarly, Andreotti (2014) suggests GCE should analyze the connections between local places and globalization to reveal unjust power dynamics. Ultimately, findings point to place-consciousness as an area of growth of teachers. Critical justice aims were largely absent, but they hold potential to foster a type of place-conscious global education that could simultaneously produce global connectivity and critical knowledge of ones' place. Additionally, critical orientations to GCE could help challenge the idea that a gap needs bridged between rural communities and global issues, instead, revealing the varied and often unjust economic and political lines that already connect local and global places.

### **Limitations**

This study of rural Appalachian teachers is not generalizable to all rural contexts as characteristics differ by geographic region; however, findings should be transferable to rural contexts with similar characteristics. Also, this study examined a small sample of teachers' perceptions via electronic questionnaire and phone interviews. It did not observe or evaluate the physical communities, schools, or classrooms of the study. As such, findings should not be used to represent rural places or classrooms themselves, but only participants' perceptions of their rural contexts. Lastly, this study relied on teachers to self-select into answering a questionnaire on GCE and being interviewed. One might suspect that teachers who had a distinct interest in GCE were more likely to participate as was evinced in phase two interviews. Findings may not capture the uninformed or apathetic rural teacher.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

This study contributes new knowledge about GCE in rural Appalachia. Its descriptions of teachers' perspectives on GCE and their desires to implement various forms of global education problematize simplistic or assumptive views on rural Appalachia and its increasing anti-globalist sentiment. Generally, participants positioned rural students and community life in opposition to GCE which stimulated their commitment to bring "awareness of others" to their students. Participants relied on their own global knowledge, professional tact, and perceptions of community to navigate global education in their schools with autonomy. Rural teachers acted as interlocutors for their "isolated" students and, in many ways, the sole bearers of worldly

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knowledge which raises critical questions about teachers' own worldviews and assumptions about rurality.

Findings act as a notice for teacher preparation programs to equip pre-service teachers with both theoretical understandings of GCE and knowledge of rural community and social life. To engage in place-conscious GCE that pulls on the strengths of rural home and community life (see Waterson & Moffa, 2015), teachers need to be able to recognize the socio-geographic structures of rural places, the assets of rural communities, and the existing social, political, and economic connections between local and global life. Similarly, critical orientations to global citizenship – that typify democratically-congruent aims (see Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009) – could prepare teachers to tap into the existing power dynamics between local and global places to challenge deficit thinking about “isolated” rural communities and validate such communities as constantly evolving, globally-connected places.

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**Appendix**

**Questionnaire on Global Citizenship Education**

1. Based on your opinion as a social studies teacher, please rate the following statements. Global education should:

- Focus on environmental sustainability.
- Focus on the root causes of economic inequalities and social injustices.
- Teach students to support the rights of all humans regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin.
- Emphasize unbiased factual knowledge about places and people.
- Prepare students to be successful in future social and business relations.
- Focus on maximizing the United States' power and wealth in the world.
- Help students develop skills to solve environmental problems.
- Focus on critiquing unequal power relationships that lead to oppression and exploitation of some people and places.
- Emphasize working together to improve human rights around the world.
- Teach history, economics, geography, and literature from a neutral political position.
- Help students develop skills to achieve their individual desires in this world.
- Prepare students to personally compete for positions in the global economy.

2. What is your main goal when teaching global issues to students?

3. How often would you say that you teach any global education aims?

- Almost never
- Seldom (at least once a term)
- Occasionally (at least once a month)
- Frequently (at least once a week)
- Always (almost daily)

4. In your own words, what is a "global citizen"?

5. What are your reasons, if any, for not teaching "global citizenship" in your classes?

6. What types of activities or lessons do you implement when teaching for global citizenship?

7. Does the rural context of your school impact your decision to teach global citizenship?

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Yes/No  
How so?

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