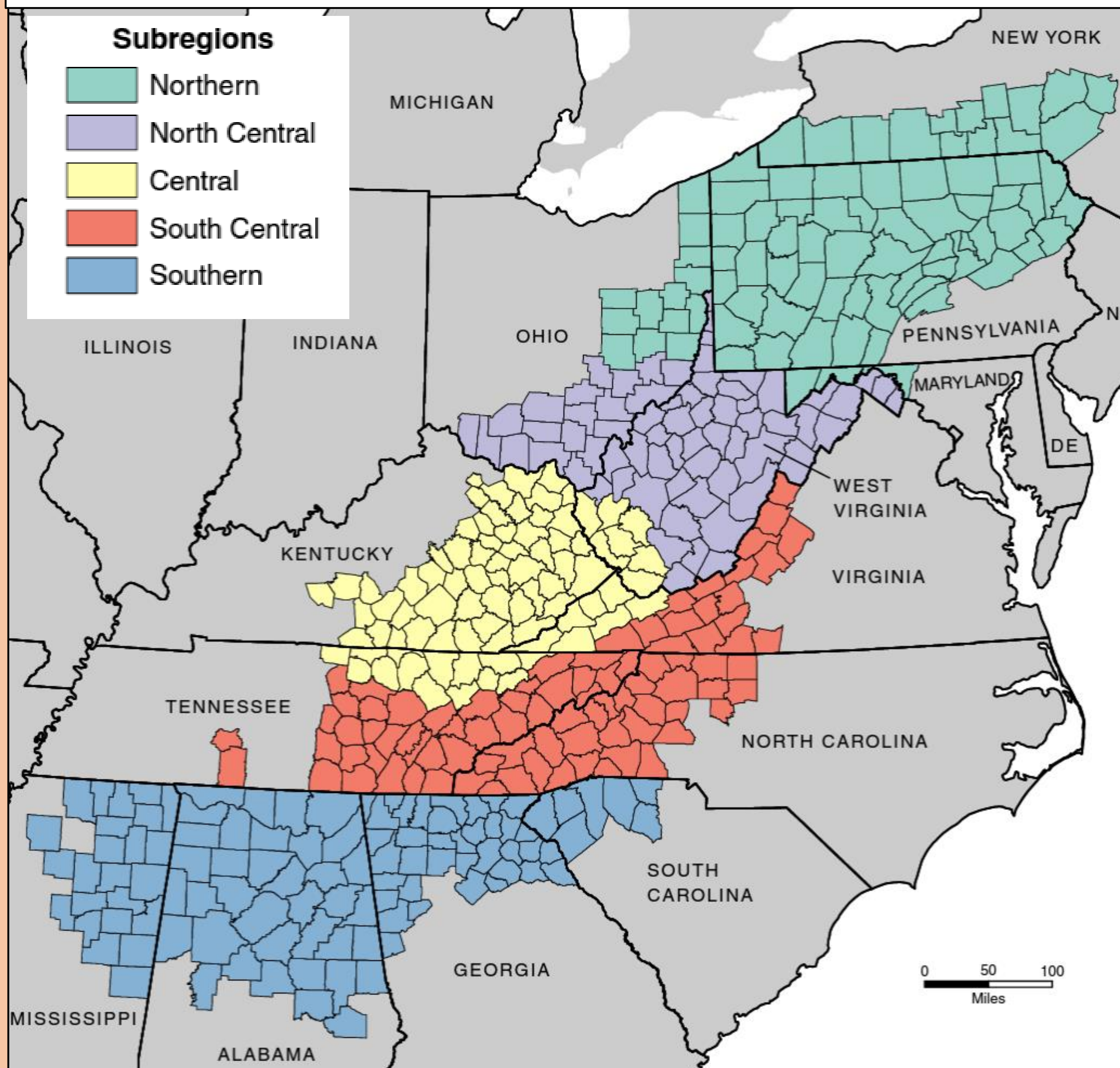


Who are the Appalachian People?

- The Appalachian people are a cultural and geographical group living among the Appalachian Mountains in the Eastern United States (See Figure 1) (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2021).
- Rural Appalachians are historically and continually characterized by poverty, low-quality educational systems (McGarvey et al., 2010), and negative stereotypes like “hillbillies”, “rednecks”, “isolationists” (Batteau, 1979; Rock & Taber, 2020), and “feeble-minded” (Catte, 2018; Powell, 2012).

Geographically

Figure 1: Subregions in Appalachia



Note: This is a map of the states of the Eastern United States. Each color section designates a subregion of Appalachia: (starting at the top) Northern (green), North Central (purple), Central (yellow), South Central (red), and Southern (blue).

Culturally

- Appalachian culture holds value in...
 - strong family and community ties (Batteau, 1979; McGarvey et al., 2010).
 - maintaining familial ownership of lands (see Figure 3) (Nesbitt & Weiner, 2001).
 - finding connection and belonging in the nature exposure from the Appalachian Mountains (see Figure 2) (McGarvey et al., 2010).

Figure 2: Appalachian Mountains



Note. Nantahala National Forest in Bryson City, NC.

Figure 3: The Shore Family Farm



Note. Shore family farm maintained 6-generations located in Boonville, North Carolina.

How are Appalachians underrepresented?

Historically

- Stereotypes centered around high poverty rates, low education levels, occupations, cleanliness, and hygiene habits (Batteau, 1979; McGarvey et al., 2010; Rock & Taber, 2020).
- These stereotypes have led to historical unemployment rates of Appalachians that choose to migrate out of Appalachia (Eller, 2008).
- The United States 1920s Eugenics Movement involved researchers' desire to prevent the spread of feeble-mindedness by seizing and sterilizing Appalachian children at the Lynchburg Colony (see Figure 5 and Figure 6) (Catte, 2018; Powell, 2012).

Figure 4: QR Code for Video of Texas A&M Pep Rally

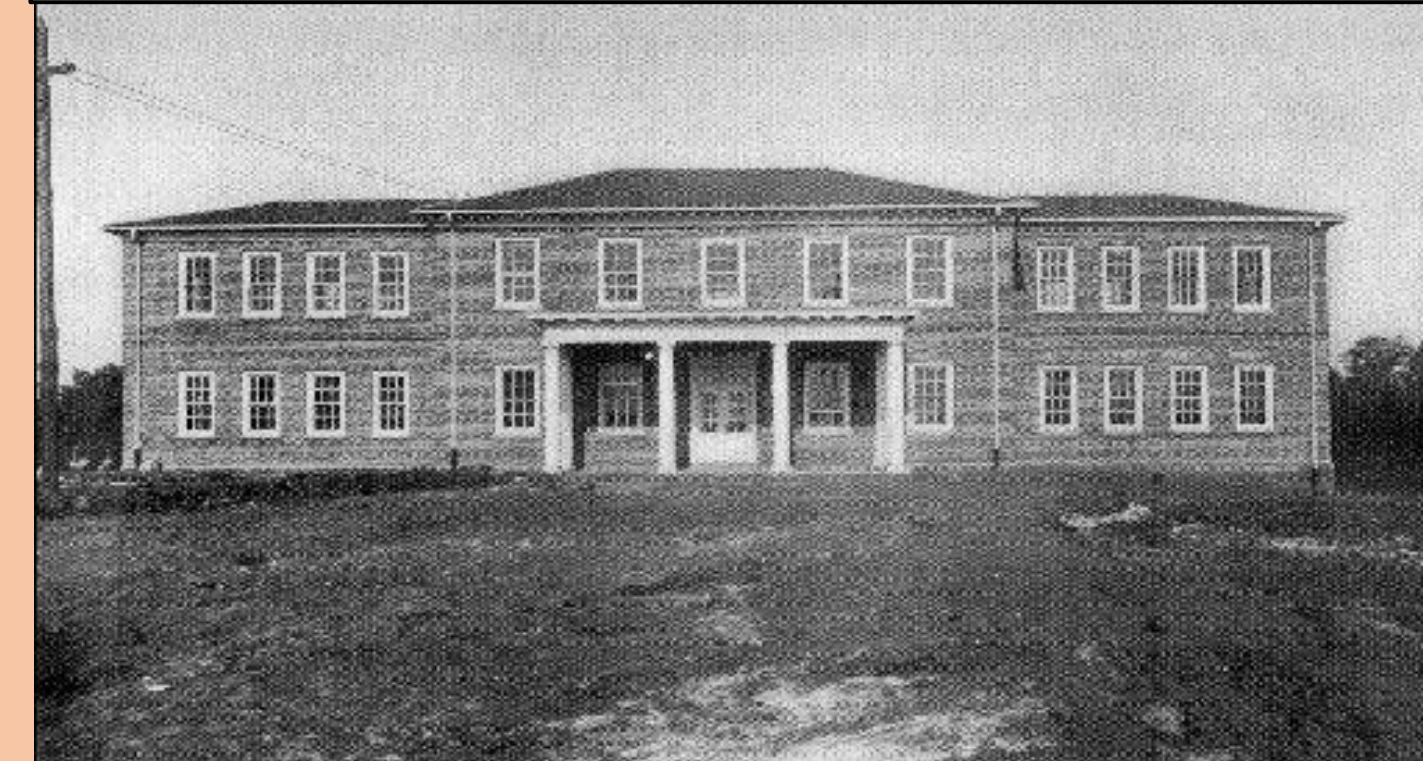


Note. In this video, Texas A&M portrays Appalachian cultural stereotypes to Appalachian State students.

Currently

- Historical stereotypes continue to be used as an insensitive insult to not just the Appalachian people, but individuals taking up temporary residency in Appalachia.
- The Ohio 1992 Human Rights Ordinance is the only U.S. law that protects Appalachians against discrimination (see Figure 7) (Rhee & Scott, 2018).
- On September 9th, 2022, at a University sanctioned football pep rally Texas A&M portrayed Appalachian State University students as “hillbillies in deep backwoods with two brain cells they are barely able to use to read their own jerseys” (see Figure 4 and Figure 8) (Galatzan, 2022).

Figure 5: Lynchburg Colony



Note. Virginia State Epileptic Colony for Feeble-Minded Women.

Figure 6: Carrie and Emma Buck



Note. Carrie and Emma were sterilized at the Lynchburg Colony.

Figure 7: Ohio Textile Mill Workers



Note. Ohio is the only place that legally protects Appalachian discrimination for employment.

Figure 8: Texas A&M Pep Squad Dressed as “hillbillies”



Note. The Pep Squad wore overalls to “look like” hillbillies.

Historically (cont.)

- President Kennedy completed a 100-day tour of poverty, much of which took place in Appalachia, to show the rest of America what economic disadvantages the Appalachians experienced.
- President Kennedy initiated a 4-step reform project to improve education, healthcare, access to government assistance programs, and employment in Appalachia. Due to his assassination, the projects never advanced past the first step (Eller, 2008).

Figure 9: President John F. Kennedy



Note. During his Presidency Kennedy enacted various public policies to support the economic and educational needs of Appalachians.

Figure 10: President Kennedy



Currently (cont.)

- Appalachians have 67% lower incomes than the national average and poverty rates 125% higher than the national average (see Figure 11) (McGarvey et al., 2010).
- Almost 13% of Appalachians have less than a High School Diploma (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2021).
- 14% of Appalachian households lack access to a computer and/or smartphone (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2021).
 - Of Appalachians that have access only 77% have a subscription to internet or phone plans (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2021).

Figure 11: QR Code for Interactive Map of Distressed Counties in Appalachia



Note. Scan this QR code to view an interactive map (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2023) of each county's economic disparities.

Why should others care about the underrepresentation of Appalachians?

- If diversity is truly going to be an initiative in social science research, scholars, researchers, and the general public needs to be educated, inclusive, and respectful of rural people and rural culture.
- When some people groups are ignored, like the Appalachians, research lacks the reflection of being diverse and generalizable to everyone.

How should researchers and scholars begin to include Appalachians in research initiatives?

- Trust needs to be built with respected local community leaders in Appalachia (i.e., schools, churches, and government).
- Research about Appalachians needs to be approached by or consulted with researchers that are Appalachian. Appalachian scholars understand the culture, dialect, and reasons for distrust of research, academia, and government.
- More awareness creates legislative action from public policies to promote government assistance programs to help improve Appalachian's quality of life without altering the unique culture and values.

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