

Getting Above Our Raising: A Case Study of Women from the Coalfields of Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky

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This study describes Appalachian women in transition, addressing the following questions: Did traditional Appalachian women establish an identity distinct from their family roles? Do younger Appalachian women construct a sense of both belonging and intimacy within the family and independence from the family? Data were collected over a five-year period. Findings show that traditional women devoted their lives to the survival of the family. Younger miners' wives and daughters who did not attend college identify strongly with their mothers. However, they want more financial independence than their mothers experienced. Contemporary women who attend college identify strongly with their fathers who support them in terms of their education. In higher education, however, these mountain women felt out of place and insecure, despite academic success. Findings are being used to develop an intervention program based on the notion that women in transition need resources and educational systems that empower them to develop their talents.

Coal miners' wives from the Southern Appalachian Highlands are often portrayed in terms of their role within the structure of the family. In James Still's (1978) novel, *River of Earth*, the father felt obliged to take in relatives until they could afford to get a place of their own. When his wife could no longer tolerate cooking and cleaning for an extended family, she burned the house down and moved herself and her children into the smoke house—a building too small for more family. As indicated by Still's novel, within the family system, coal miners' wives assume sole responsibility for care of the home. Until recently, such care included preparing their husband's lunch buckets, working in the fields and gardens, canning vegetables and meats, milking cows and churning butter, quilting, washing clothes in wringer washing machines, cooking on coal stoves, cleaning the house, caring for babies and older children, nursing aged parents, and whatever else was necessary to sustain the family. Just as work in the mines consumed the lives of their husbands, taking care of the family absorbed the physical and psychological energy of coal miners' wives.

But life in Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky is changing. Women are having fewer children. Coal companies are employing fewer men in their deep mining operations in the Appalachias. Running water, electricity, automatic washers and dryers, televisions, and automobiles are now commonplace in the Appalachian home. As a result, women from the coalfields have an opportunity to

define their position within the structure of the family and the community.

This study attempts to describe the change process that coal miners' wives and daughters from Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky are experiencing. The study tries to answer the following questions: (a) To what extent did traditional Appalachian women establish an identity that was distinct from their role as caregiver within the family? (b) Is the rising generation of Appalachian women constructing a sense of self that enables them to have both belonging and intimacy within the family and independence from the family?

Related Literature

The literature describing Appalachian people is conflicting and changing. Such confusion results, in part, from using the term "Appalachian" as though it relates to a homogeneous population. In the United States, the Appalachian mountain range stretches from Maine to Alabama and includes diverse subgroups within the population. This research addresses one distinct group—women who live in the heart of the Appalachian coalfields, including Wise, Dickenson, and Buchanan Counties in Virginia and Letcher County, Kentucky.

The literature review that follows is divided into two parts. I briefly discuss the economic and cultural characteristics of the area, after which I summarize studies relevant to Appalachian women and their families.

Characteristics of the region. This corner of Appalachia is noteworthy for several reasons. First, it was one of the areas to which many Melungeons and American Indians escaped after discriminatory legislation such as the Trail of Tears and the Free Persons of Color Acts were passed

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(Kennedy, 1997; Mira, 1998) (see Figure 1).¹ As a result of such prejudice, Irish and English surnames were adapted by many to protect mountaineers and their families from further deprivation.

Second, unlike their more prosperous neighbors, mountaineers who eked out a living in the coalfields were primarily semi-proletariat farmers. According to Dunaway (1996, p. 125), a farm is a "... capitalist enterprise when the household held surplus land, hired laborers, owned slaves, utilized tenants or croppers, or held more than minimal wealth." Using Dunaway's definition, mountaineers from this part of the Appalachia's were among the few non-capitalist farmers in the Appalachian Mountains. Living in narrow hollows of the mountains, these farmers grew feed corn, potatoes, and sorghum on the rugged ridges of the mountain.² The family home and garden were located on flatland, if possible, near a spring. In the garden, green beans, peas, sweet corn, squash, cucumbers, onions, lettuce, and cabbage were grown. Hogs foraged in the woods for acorns, berries, beech nuts, and roots. Many families had apple trees and a dairy cow. All members of the family worked the farm. During the summer months, children spent their days hoeing corn, tending the garden, putting up hay, and so on. But families rarely produced enough to take care of all of their needs. To secure goods that the farm did not produce such as shoes, clothing, sugar, and coffee, many mountaineers grew and sold tobacco. They also traded or bartered for goods. Some old-timers still say, in negotiating the procurement of goods, "Will you take it in trade?" But cash crops and trade added little to the family income. Hence, men worked in the coal mines and lumber mills.

A third significant characteristic of this region was the stark contrast between affluence and poverty that emerged in the early twentieth century. While coal mining took place in this region prior to the Civil War, by the turn of the century, coal production increased dramatically, railroads came to the region, and the Appalachian coal fields produced about 80% of the country's coal, providing fuel for trains, automobile factories, ships, electric power plants, and heating homes in both the United States and Europe (Eller, 1982).

Despite the ascendancy of coal, mining was and continues to be a dangerous and low paying occupation that took the lives of many miners, left some crippled, and most with diseased lungs. And even during the coal boom, min-

ers were paid minimal wages and received no benefits. Many miners were paid in "scrip," a currency that was only good for trading at the company store. Lastly, coal mining was insecure in that miners were laid off as soon as there was a decline in the demand for coal.

Given the wealth inherent in mining and the poverty of the miners, the coal industry had a dramatic impact on the culture of the coalfields. From an egalitarian society (Eller, 1982), an upper class that controlled the means of production reconstructed the system of social relations. A middle stratum emerged that included superintendents who managed the day to day business of mining, town officials, store keepers, and so on. From small rural communities, cities developed such as Big Stone Gap (Virginia) and Pikeville (Kentucky). In these cities, lavish homes were built and furnished. Shops catered to the tastes of the new elite. Coal miners and their families found themselves at the bottom of this class system. The literature review that follows looks at the Appalachian family, and the systems the mountaineers created to survive within the context of cultural and economic exploitation.

The Appalachian family. Lewis (1970), who studied coal-mining families in Southwest Virginia, found that Appalachian coal mining families are highly segregated in terms of household work. That is, men work in the mines; women, in the home. Within the home, women make decisions regarding food preparation, child rearing, and gardening.

Beaver (1986) asserts that Appalachian men have power and influence in both the family and community, including the church. However, women are the mainstay of the small rural church. Without their support, such churches would not exist.

Upon marriage, women are expected to accept the authority of their husbands. As husband and wife approach old age, however, women might gain status within the home as their husbands lose their place in the community and spend more time at home (Beaver, 1986).

Given their position in the home, Feine (1991) studied how rural poor Appalachian women construct a sense of self. Feine confirmed that, during childbearing years, Appalachian women continue to participate in highly structured traditional families. In terms of self-evaluation, the women in Feine's study said that they derive positive self-feelings in the belief that they are "doing right" by their children. To these mothers, doing right included accepting all pregnancies, putting the needs of the children above their own needs, and ensuring that children are physically safe and that their basic needs are met.

Looff (1971) observed that Southern Appalachian mothers "overgive" to their small children, and in so doing, socialize children towards family interdependence. Looff, however, worked primarily with children and mothers referred to mental health clinics because of school pho-

¹The Free Person of Color laws made it illegal for persons with as much as one-sixteenth "nonwhite" blood to own land, vote, or attend public school.

²An elderly friend was told by his mother that when she and her family planted feedcorn on the hillside, the dirt was so thin and rocky that they had to walk down to the family garden, fill buckets with soil, and carry the soil up the hill to cover the corn seeds.

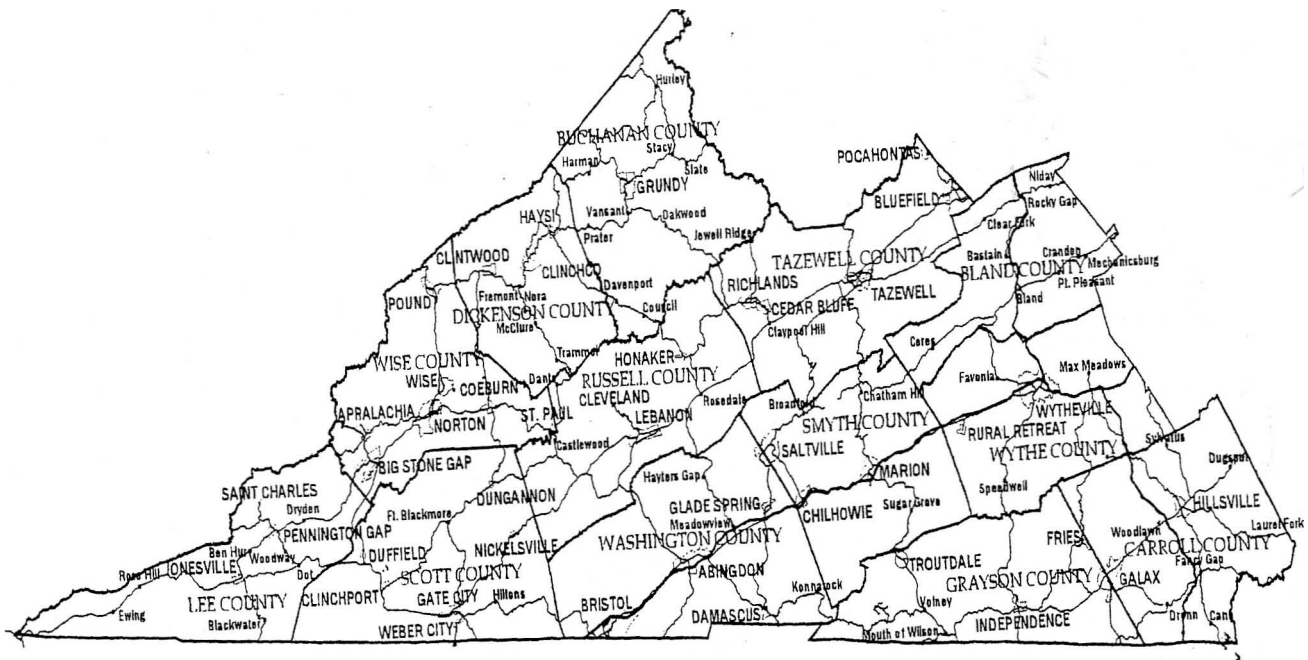


Figure 1. The counties of southwestern Virginia.

bias or other dysfunctional behaviors. Unfortunately, Loeff's findings are often generalized to all Appalachian families.

To further understand family interdependence, Abbott (1992) studied families in Eastern Kentucky and described specific ways in which Appalachian parents motivate their children to remain closely tied to the family. Findings show that parent-child co-sleeping is common in the county in which Abbott collected her data. Seventy-one percent of the children two years of age or younger were sleeping either with their parents or in their parents' bedroom in their own bed. When asked how they felt when their children were moved to their own beds, some mothers expressed relief. Others experienced intense distress and feared that the safety of their children was in jeopardy. Still others felt deserted.

As teenagers, Schwarzweller, Brown, and Mangalam (1971) observed that girls from eastern Kentucky seem to show less of a need for independence from the home than do their male counterparts. Oldest daughters are especially susceptible to such socialization in that they are expected to take care of younger siblings and to help their mothers with food preparation and other domesticities. If oldest daughters do not marry, it is assumed that they will stay home to nurse aging parents (Beaver, 1986).

To keep grown children close by, it is not unusual for Appalachian parents to give land near their home as a wedding present for their newly wed son or daughter. Living in geographic proximity to family facilitates closeness, a sense of belonging, and security within the kinship system. However, living near one's in-laws is not always conflict free. Beaver (1986) suggests that it is especially problematic for women who live near their husband's family. If a wife leaves her in-laws by returning to her own family, she will eventually be sent back (Beaver, 1986), thereby upholding traditional values that dictate that families stay together.

Survey research collected in 1958 and 1976 show that mountain families have changed little over time. The most significant change noted was the increase in the number of wives employed outside of the home (Ford, Arcury, & Porter, 1985). Most mountain women, however, maintain their role as caretaker within the home even though they work outside of the home (Beaver, 1986). Additionally, most mountain women tend to work in low-paid service industry (Maggard, 1994).

Giesen (1995) studied Appalachian coal miners' wives. Giesen showed that coal miners' wives experience chronic stress in response to the dangerousness of their husbands' work. The women in Giesen's study worried about cave-ins, explosions, fires, and other mine-related accidents.

These articles suggest that families respond to economic and cultural exploitation by developing strong family bonds, maintaining additional roles during childbearing years, and participating in local churches. However, articles do not describe how families are changing in response to new economic conditions, especially the decline in the number of men working in the mines and mills and the increase in the number of women working outside of the home. Hence the need for the study.

Method

I am a long-term member of the community and am related, by marriage, to a large family that has coalmined for three generations in Dickenson County, Virginia, near the Buchanan County line. My research began as a result of a special topics course I was teaching on women in transition. My students were concerned about the way their peers at other colleges viewed Appalachians. They feared that "outsiders" view them in derogatory ways. To explore this concept, students mailed surveys to 4-year colleges in Oklahoma, California, and New York, a convenience sample of schools where I had colleagues who agreed to distribute surveys in their classes. Surveys asked respondents to simply list ten characteristics of Appalachian Americans. In response to these exploratory surveys, my students learned that many of their peers have little knowledge of where Appalachia is or who Appalachian Americans are. Second, they learned that some of their peers still think of Appalachians as they were over 100 years ago—churning butter, sewing quilts, and so on. The current research was originally an attempt to dispel the myths associated with Appalachian women and to explain ways in which they are individuating from traditional roles. However, as the work progressed, I saw the need to develop an intervention program based on the notion that women in transition need resources and educational systems that empower them to develop their talents

Findings

Design

The study asked two basic questions related to the experience of coal miners' wives from Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky: (a) To what extent did traditional Appalachian women establish an identity distinct from their roles within the traditional family? (b) Is the rising generation of Appalachian women constructing a sense of self that enables them to have both belonging and intimacy within the family and independence from the family?

I employed qualitative methods to address these research questions. In-depth interviews were conducted over a 5-year period. Interviews took place in the homes of the

women studied, in a restaurant over a cup of coffee, or at the college in my office. I, or a research assistant, conducted the interviews. Research assistants were students in one of my research methods classes. Open-ended questions were designed to encourage women to tell their stories, especially in terms of self-concept and position within the family. Each interview took about 90 minutes. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed soon after each interview. We studied the interviews and developed themes. Themes were units of meaning about the lives of the women that were repeated across interviews and observed by at least two readers.

The population was defined as coal miners' wives and daughters from Wise, Buchanan, and Dickenson Counties in Virginia and Letcher County in Kentucky. Snowball sampling procedures were used to identify participants. Interviewing began with women I knew, since I am a part of the community. After initial interviews were completed, I asked participants for the names of women who might be interested in being included in the study. This process continued until participants were repeating themes in the interviews; a total of 41 women were interviewed. I interviewed 20 coal miners' wives who did not work outside of the home ("traditional" women). Second, to capture cross-generational differences, 21 coal miners' daughters between 18 and 28 years of age were interviewed ("contemporary" women). Within the contemporary group, two subgroups emerged: women who did not attend school beyond the high school level and women who were attending The University of Virginia's College at Wise. In the former group, 8 women were interviewed (contemporary). In the latter, 13 were included in the study (contemporary college).

Question 1: To what extent did traditional Appalachian women establish an identity that was distinct from their role as caregiver within the family?

Four themes emerged from the data that describe traditional women and their role within the family: (a) Traditional women worry about their husbands' safety on a daily basis; (b) Traditional women try to protect their husbands from the dangers that they face in the coal mines through nurturing behaviors; (c) Traditional women were devoted to providing food and other essentials for the family; (d) Traditional women put the needs of the family above their own needs. In the discussion that follows, themes are discussed and quotes that illustrate and support themes are presented.

Theme one. The theme most prevalent in the interviews with traditional women was worry about their husbands' safety. Women said they worried about explosions, rockslides, cave-ins, and black lung disease. A coal miner's wife from Gate City, Virginia, expressed her fears in the following words:

I never wanted him to work in the mines. I was always scared it would fall in, and I'd think about him being trapped way in there.

A woman from Eastern Kentucky remembered reminding her father to be safe when she was a little girl:

From the time I could talk, every time Daddy went to work I would say: "don't let no rocks fall on you." I said that to Daddy every single day.

Theme two. The second theme was that traditional women tried to compensate for the dangers their husbands faced in the mines through nurturing behaviors. In this role, traditional women developed a heightened ability to perceive and respond to the needs of the family. A coal miner's wife from Whitesburg, Kentucky, said:

I worry a lot. If I hear someone's been hurt or there has been an accident, I worry all the time. And if he gets worried it is worse cause then it is more likely that he will have an accident. I try to keep my eye on things and smooth things over around here so he has less to worry about, especially when he starts a new shift.

A coal miner's wife from Wise, Virginia, said:

When he works outside of the mines it is OK. But sometimes he has to double back and go inside the mine. Then I worry. Mostly about rock slides. But I'm also afraid of cave-ins and even shuttle cars can be dangerous. But mostly he works outside now. His attitude has totally changed since he left the inside of the mines. The stress level is not near as high now. Instead, he worked in a 30 inch high space on his hands and knees. He was a lot more grouchy then and he dreaded work. Even with knee pads, he had major pains in his legs at night.

Theme three. Traditional women assumed responsibility for the physical survival of the family. When asked to describe sources of joy in their lives, traditional women said that they most enjoyed being able to feed the family and take care of their children and grandchildren. They did not say that they most enjoyed being at a large meal with family or being with children and grandchildren. Instead, 18 out of 20 traditional women expressed their greatest joys in terms of assuring the family's survival. A woman from Wise, Virginia, said:

Well, I would say, probably, my greatest joy was to always be able to sit food on the table and to

have the necessities for the family. That was actually the backbone of what everything was—to be able to afford a family and to have those things for them.

Theme four. Traditional women put the needs of the family above their own needs. Interviews show remarkable similarity in terms of comments that reflect a tendency to suppress one's own needs and individuality to make room in their lives for the needs of the family. Below, three traditional coal miners' wives described the needs of the family in relationship to their own needs.

When the kids need things, that always comes first. I'm sure anyone with children feels this way.

If I was to see something in a store I wanted, and I knowed Owen or my young'uns wanted something, if I had the money, I'd get it and just forget about what I wanted.

I'd always put Toby before anything. There's not nothing I wouldn't have done for him. And still will.

Question 2: Is the rising generation of Appalachian women constructing a sense of self that enables them to have both belonging and intimacy within the family and independence from the family?

Eight themes were identified that describe how the rising generation of coal miners' wives and daughters are constructing a sense of self that enables them to have both intimacy and independence. Themes that exemplify familial characteristics that support independence are included in these eight themes. Note that once the interview process began, two subgroups of contemporary women were observed. That is, one subgroup of women attended college, and the other did not pursue their education beyond the high school level. Findings are presented by subgroup. Themes that pertain to contemporary women who did not attend college are presented first. Themes that emerged from interviews with contemporary women who attended college are presented second.

Three themes characterize interviews with contemporary women not attending college. These women (a) say they are closer to their mothers than their fathers; (b) admire their mothers for their caring natures but do not want to be as selfless as they were; and (c) report that the family did not support their personal development, especially in terms of higher education.

Theme one (women not attending college). Contemporary women not attending college said that they were closer to their mothers than their fathers. Several contem-

porary women were the first-born daughters in the family and, therefore, their mothers' main source of support. When describing their relationship with their mothers, some contemporary women said their mothers were like sisters to them. Their fathers, on the other hand, worked either long hours or at jobs too far away to come home after their shift. In the latter case, fathers came home only on weekends. Two coal miners' wives from Haysi, Virginia, expressed this theme as follows:

I'm trying to think who I could say that I was close to, my mother, I guess because my Daddy was gone most of the time. What I remember, when he would come home after working all day, I remember he would get up real early to leave before we would go to school and after he would leave, mom would get us up for school because she would always get him ready and he would leave early. He would come home and he would be so tired after working in the mine. I can remember that he would go to sleep on the floor, dirty because at that time they had no bath houses and he worked in a truck mine. My sister would have these diapers on and she would crawl over Daddy, him on the floor and her sitting down on him with her wet diapers on and him asleep. Probably I was closest to mom because we had more contact with her than we did dad.

I was always with my Mommy. I was a real baby. I hung on to her apron while she would be cooking and stuff. I was always right under her feet. My older sisters used to make fun of me for being so close to my mom, but I couldn't help it. I'm still closest to my mom. But I'm awful close to my sisters now too. We talk on the phone all the time and go see Mommy and dad all of the time together too. I was afraid of my daddy when he was home, which wasn't very often. He worked in the mines, so he wasn't home a lot. And when he was home, it seemed like all he did was get on us kids about everything. Poor momma had to have everything just right when he got in from work, or he'd start yelling and saying he'd worked all day and why wasn't supper on the table and what had she done all day while he was out making a living for his family.

Theme two (women not attending college). In comparing themselves to their mothers, contemporary women not attending college said that their mothers were more generous, more caring, or kinder than they are. Two women from Jenkins, Kentucky, put it this way:

I'm more independent and have a lot more of a temper than my mom. She is the kindest, most easy going person I've ever met and me, boy, I can get real pissed off in a hUFFy. So I think that she is a much nicer person than I am in a lot of ways. She takes more off people than I would.

My mother is a much better person than me, but I am trying to change. She is more considerate and understanding than me, but she has some age on me though.

Theme three (women not attending college). Contemporary women not attending college say that they want more education, but they lack the support they feel they need to pursue an education. Some did not even think a GED was within their reach. Possibly, although not clearly expressed in the interviews, contemporary women do not feel deserving of higher education. Two women from Wise, Virginia said:

Well like I said we were poor, and nobody in our family went to college. I mean I was the first one to graduate highschool in my family. I had thought about college, but it really wasn't important, because like I said nobody else in my family had ever graduated college or even attended college; so it just wasn't important, just wasn't one of those things we thought about a lot.

I wanted to finish high school, that was one of my goals growing up because nobody else had, and I wanted to learn. I was eager to learn, but as far as the family and us talking about education, that was not something that we done, and like I said we were poor and we were more interested in how we were going to live. We were just not interested in education, but it didn't seem the end to the mean, I mean hard work. Hard work was the way that we seen to come out of things. It wasn't education. So we just never thought of it being that important. That's why education isn't as important to me as to others, because that was the way I was brought up, it was church and family, it wasn't church and family and education. It was church and family. And so I guess that is what made me, me.

I wanted to sing like Patsy Cline, or maybe be a teacher. I never did cause I knew mom and dad couldn't afford to send me to school. I never graduated high school. Mom and dad couldn't afford to send me all the way through. I thought about get-

ting my GED but I don't have any use for it now. I don't have a family so it don't matter.

Five themes surfaced in the interviews with contemporary coal miners' wives who were attending college. These women (a) had fathers who were positive role models; (b) have trouble feeling at home in higher education; (c) have low academic self-esteem; (d) are disinclined to leave the mountains to attend college; and (e) are receiving help from professors to define themselves in new ways.

Theme one (women attending college). Contemporary college women attending college had fathers who spent time with them and supported their independence and their interest in higher education. Interviews showed that the women were close to their mothers, but that support from their fathers was important to their educational development. Several seniors at the college in Wise described their relationships with their fathers in the following words:

I always wanted to be able to care for myself. I think that's why dad has always been my role model. I love mom dearly, but dad has always been so independent and always been able to do things on his own. I've always wanted to be able to do that. Dad had a job and handled the money and most things. Dad really didn't want me to get married. He always wanted me to finish my education. Even after I finish my degree, he says I should keep taking courses.

My family has been the most critical part of the life choices I've made. If I hadn't had the family, I wouldn't have been encouraged to do what ever it was that I wanted to do. I dropped out of school for a semester and mom and dad were in West Virginia. They didn't know anything about it and one of my sisters slipped up and told them. Dad was really upset. He never really voiced an opinion about things, but I knew then how important my education was to him.

Theme two (women attending college). Contemporary women attending college experienced an incomplete integration into the academic world. To a certain extent, they modeled their peers and professors and identified with their academic disciplines, but such behavior conflicts with the roles modeled by family members. As a result, contemporary college women said that they act one way at home and another way at school and they feel insecure in both worlds. Two college seniors expressed this feeling as follows:

It is as if two distinct worlds exist and I'm not a traditional Appalachian woman that my mother is because I have different goals for my life. At the

same time, however, I am not comfortable allowing myself to be completely part of the college life.

In a lot of ways, it feels like you have to have two personalities. You become almost a different person. One for home and one for school or work. In the confusion, you lose sight of who you really are.

Theme three (women attending college). Contemporary women attending college are successful undergraduates who want to attend graduate or professional school. But they do not think of themselves as smart. Instead, they doubt their intellectual abilities, even in the face of academic success. Two graduating seniors said:

During my second year of college, a professor encouraged me to go on to medical school after college. I remember thinking, I'm not really smart, I have fooled these people and they think I'm smart. For some reason, I guess I thought that life would be less complex if I wasn't smart.

Even though I graduated with honors, I still feel like I faked my way through. I still feel that way. Like it was pure luck, not brains at all, just plain old luck.

Theme four (women attending college). Contemporary women attending college are reluctant to leave Southwest Virginia and Eastern Kentucky to pursue higher education and employment. Even though they say that they want to further their education to realize their dreams and potentials, they experience conflict in that they do not want to give up the security, belonging, and history that they have in the mountains. A woman interested in going to graduate school in psychology said:

If I leave, I fear I will not be able to come back and fit in again. I'll become an outsider to my own family. Just going to Berea (a college in Kentucky) put up a wall between us. It's like I'm expected to have a certain attitude or way of saying and doing things now. And I get disapproving looks and put down comments like: "I think its going to your head" or "why don't you speak English so I can understand what you are talking about."

Theme five (women attending college). Contemporary college women attending college do not define themselves in terms of the family to the extent that their mothers and grandmothers did. Instead, contemporary college women have been exposed to role models outside of the family

that reinforce parts of their personalities previously unrecognized. One graduating senior said:

When a professor told me I was a good writer, I was a little embarrassed at first. The more I've heard those kind of compliments, the easier it is to accept them instead of denying them. I'm even starting to think I might have some creative ability.

Discussion

Findings show that stark poverty and hazardous working conditions challenged traditional women to devote themselves to the survival of their families. This urge to protect the family was heightened by the real and always present dangers of coal mining, poverty, and economic exploitation. However, while the rising generation of mountain women continues to experience poverty and concerns about their husbands' safety, they are transitioning towards more independence than their mothers experienced. But the change process is difficult.

In this study, contemporary women who were the eldest in the family were less likely to pursue a college education than were their peers who were the youngest in the family. Not one of the contemporary college women in this study was the eldest in her family.

While generalizations from this small sample should be limited, Beaver's contention that Appalachian men lose authority in the community as a function of age might contribute to an understanding of the difference between the college-going rates of younger versus first born daughters of coal miners. Because with age the father is spending more time at home and relinquishing some of his authority, he might be less concerned with work-related issues and more interested in the development of the children who are still living at home, especially his youngest daughter.

Similarly, if mothers gain status in the home with age, as Beaver suggests, the youngest daughter might have the benefit of a feminine role model, her mother, who demonstrates decision making capacities.

And while younger daughters are experiencing cultural conflict in higher education, eldest daughters seem to associate their movement toward independence in self-disparaging ways. That is, they say that they might not be as "good" as their mothers. Possibly, both groups of women are associating characteristics such as intelligence and independence with masculinity and, as a result, experiencing confusion as they become aware of these qualities within themselves.

Findings from this research are being used to develop an intervention program for poor rural women from Eastern Kentucky, Southern West Virginia, and Southwest Virginia that is designed to empower women to realize and develop their talents. A counseling approach was avoided

because, in the coalfields, such intervention is heavily associated with negative stereotypes regarding mental illness. Also, counseling was not pursued because of the power imbalance it often creates, which Appalachian women have experienced all too frequently (New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, NO).

Instead, this intervention will be founded in principles and theories of learning, with services offered that are derived from the themes identified in this research. Specifically, five services will be offered that address the themes presented in this research. First, the center will recruit rural poor women and provide financial aid packages that make it possible for women who want to attend college to do so.

Second, mentors who are successful in different professional roles will work with women who want such tutelage. Both male and female mentors will be available. Women who did not receive paternal encouragement might seek male mentors who provide a means of surrogate fathering. Successful Appalachian women mentors will help students to see that woman similar to them can succeed in higher education and the professional world.

Third, a gender studies course will be designed that will address issues concerned with women's ways of knowing, power motives, and other gender related concerns. An analysis of gender issues, especially the work of Miller (1977), will help women to recognize the breadth of their abilities.

Fourth, students will conduct original research that relates to some aspect of mountain culture. Students will present their research at local, national, or international conferences. Such research will help to integrate their cultural heritage with that of the college while also enabling students to network with students and faculty working outside of the mountains.

Fifth, the center will offer courses in creative writing, Appalachian history, and oral communications. These courses will be taught by faculty from Central Appalachia and will be designed to increase skills while also increasing self-knowledge and efficacy.

Summary

This research shows that traditional mountain women devoted themselves to the care of the family and in so doing assured its survival. The rising generation of Appalachian women do not express the desire for emotional independence from the family. Not one woman said that she wanted more distance from her family. However, mountain women are seeking more financial independence than their mothers had. As a result, many women are pursuing their education. Others, however, feel conflicted about pursuing an education. For women who do pursue higher education, fathers seem to play a significant role in terms of

encouraging their daughters. Once in college, however, mountain women experience a stark form of cultural conflict.

To ease this conflict and to bring more women from the mountains into institutions of higher education, a transition center is being created to help poor rural women from the mountains of Central Appalachia to "get above their raising" while still maintaining and honoring important relationships, histories, and values.

Lastly, while women interviewed in this study did not say that they were making significant strides in terms of their voice in the community, once women complete their education and assume responsible positions in the community, mountain women will participate more fully in the community at large.

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